



# Turkish Studies

Educational Sciences

Volume 13/27, Fall 2018, p. 461-478

DOI: 10.7827/TurkishStudies.14388

ISSN: 1308-2140

Skopje/MACEDONIA-Ankara/TURKEY



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Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi

Article Info/Makale Bilgisi

✍ Received/Geliş: Kasım 2018

✓ Accepted/Kabul: Aralık 2018

✍ Referees/Hakemler: Prof. Dr. Özge HACİFAZLIOĞLU - Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Faruk LEVENT - Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ali ÖZDEMİR

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## RELATIONSHIP OF ORGANIZATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY LEVELS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST LEVELS OF THE ACADEMIC STAFF\*


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### ABSTRACT


Educational organizations are one of the most significant social institutions of a society. Efficiency and administrative position of the educational institutions in a society is associated with their coordination in the direction of social expectations. The efficiency level of an educational institution requires an organizational form, adequate resources, consistent policies based on scientific and technological developments and quality employees with social needs. It is indicated that accountability, organizational commitment and organizational trust are relevant with the requirements. There has been an increase in the studies focusing on accountability policies for 20 years due to increasing the quality of education and providing improvements in the supervision and guidance of the education systems. Accountability affect the participation of the members and the time they spend on reaching the goals of the institution. The purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationship of the accountability level of higher education institutions with organizational commitment and organizational trust of

\* Bu araştırma Marmara Üniversitesi Bilimsel Araştırma Projeleri Birimi tarafından desteklenen EGT-A-090517-0322 nolu A tipi bilimsel araştırma projesinden üretilmiştir.

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teacher educators. The study was conducted in correlational survey model which is one of the quantitative research models. Whereas the population of the study included the academic staff at the state universities which are located in Istanbul and have a ten-year history, the sample of the study consisted of 510 academic staff who worked at three state universities in Istanbul in 2017-2018 academic year. The results of the study indicated that perceptions of the accountability level of higher education institutions were significantly correlated with the organizational commitment and organizational trust of the academic staff, and organizational commitment and organizational trust were significantly predicted the accountability of higher education institutions.

## **STRUCTURED ABSTRACT**

### **Introduction**

Accountability and trustworthiness of management are among the main indicators of commitment to the university. Therefore, it is important to investigate the direct and indirect relationship of the accountability level of higher education institutions with organizational trust and organizational commitment of the academic staff. Results of the research show that accountability and transparency are closely related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment and organizational trust of members. Literature also shows that there are many studies that prove positive effects of trust on the outputs of educational institutions and organizational processes. Trust is a vital element in well-functioning organizations. When the accountability literature has been reviewed, it is evident that the area is quite new and not fully conceptualized in Turkey. For this reason, the present study will contribute to understanding of the concept comprehensively and makes it become widespread. In this scope, the purpose of the present study is to investigate the direct and indirect relationship of the accountability level of higher education institutions with organizational commitment and organizational trust of academic staff.

### **Method**

The study was conducted in correlational survey model, one of the quantitative research models. Investigation of relations between two or more variables without any intervention was intended in the study. The model proposed for explaining the mediator role of the organizational trust levels of academic staff on the levels of accountability of higher education institutions and organizational commitment of academic staff was tested. Whereas the population of the study included the academic staff at the state universities located in İstanbul and with a ten-year history, the sample of the study, which was determined using cluster sampling method, consisted of 510 academic staff working at three state universities in İstanbul in 2017-2018 academic year. To develop a model for accountability in higher education and to explore the relationship between accountability, organizational trust and organizational commitment, path analysis was conducted by using the AMOS program. Organizational Trust Inventory-Short Form developed by Bromiley and Cummings (1994) and adapted to Turkish by Yilmaz (2014) was used as a one of data collecting instruments. In order to measure the levels of

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organizational commitment of academic staff, three dimensional, a 5-point Likert-type "Organizational Commitment Scale" developed by Meyer and Allen (1997) and adapted to Turkish by Wasti (2000) was used. Based on the literature review and interviews with academicians, Higher Education Institutions Accountability Scale (HEIAS) was developed by the researchers. Correlational analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM) were used to test the model proposed to explain the relationship between the organizational trust and organizational commitment levels of the academic staff and the accountability levels of higher education institutions.

### **Findings, Discussion and Conclusion**

The accountability of higher education institutions and organizational commitment and organizational trust levels of academic staff positively and significantly correlated with each other. There was a positive correlation between the levels of accountability of higher education institutions and the organizational commitment of the academic staff ( $r = .73$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Also high positive correlation between organizational commitment and organizational trust ( $r = .91$ ;  $p < .01$ ) was found. Finally, there was a positive relationship between the levels of accountability and organizational trust ( $r = .68$ ;  $p < .01$ ). It was also seen that the organizational trust levels of academic staff significantly predict the accountability levels of higher education institutions ( $\beta = .40$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The other finding was that the levels of organizational commitment of academic staff significantly predicted the levels of accountability of higher education institutions ( $\beta = .55$ ;  $p < .01$ ). The levels of organizational commitment ( $\beta = .55$ ;  $p < .01$ ) and organizational trust ( $\beta = .40$ ,  $p < .01$ ) of the academic staff significantly predicted the levels of accountability of higher education institutions. Finally, the values generated by AMOS indicated the proposed model fitted very well to the data set and it was seen that some of the values were excellently fitted.

It was indicated that the higher accountability levels of higher education institutions are, the higher the organizational commitment and organizational trust levels of the academic staff become. Studies with similar results regarding the contribution of accountability to the organizations were found in literature. Laszlo, Laszlo, Johnsen (2013) and Yadav (2013) emphasized that accountability, trust and satisfaction were strongly correlated with organizational commitment. As a result of present study, significantly higher positive correlation was found between organizational commitment and organizational trust levels of the academic staff. Studies show that lack of trust in organizations results in low organizational commitment (Gilbert and Tang, 1998). In a similar way, Hoecht (2006) states that trust strengthens mutual commitment and helps acting towards common goals of organizations and improvement by promoting intrinsic motivation of stakeholders. The results of present study showed that there was a significantly positive relationship between the levels of accountability of higher education institutions and the levels of organizational commitment of the academic staff. Also the levels of organizational commitment of the academic staff predicted significantly the level of accountability of higher education institutions. Dive (2008) argues that lack of accountability in organization is the reason for psychological and economic costs such as poor performance and low motivation, and emphasizes that

accountability supports the individuals to demonstrate proactive and conscious commitment to organizational goals. The result provided strong evidence that accountability and commitment affect the performance of teams positively. The results of the research in terms of accountability and trust differ greatly. In parallel with the present study, Giessner, van Knippenberg, van Ginkel and Sleebos (2013) conclude that accountability correlates positively with trust. On the other hand, studies with the opposite direction to present findings are also found in literature such as the fact that the pressures to provide accountability can be destructive for the organization. The moment when the pressure of accountability damages the autonomies of the scholars, the academic staff feel that they are not be trusted by the organization and, as a result, the sense of trust of academicians towards organizations decreases automatically (Hoecht, 2006). As a result of the findings of present study, it is concluded that the accountability level of higher education institutions is correlated with the level of organizational commitment and organizational trust of the academic staff. In order to investigate the concept deeply and disclose different affecting variables, it is necessary to carry out new studies with similar and different sample groups in which the concepts of accountability, trust and commitment are contextualized together.

**Keywords:** Higher education, accountability, organizational commitment, organizational trust.

## **YÜKSEKÖĞRETİM KURUMLARININ ÖRGÜTSEL HESAP VEREBİLİRLİK DÜZEYLERİNİN ÖĞRETİM ELEMANLARININ ÖRGÜTSEL BAĞLILIK VE ÖRGÜTSEL GÜVEN DÜZEYLERİ İLE OLAN İLİŞKİSİ**

### **ÖZET**

Eğitim örgütleri, toplumdaki en önemli sosyal kurumlardan biridir. Eğitim kurumunun toplum içindeki etkililik ve yönetsel konumu, toplumsal beklentiler doğrultusunda koordine olması ile ilişkilidir. Eğitim kurumunun etkililik düzeyi, örgütsel biçim, yeterli seviyede kaynağa sahip olma, bilimsel ve teknolojik gelişmelere dayanan tutarlı politikalar ve sosyal gereksinimlere sahip nitelikli çalışanların bulunmasını gerektirmektedir. Hesap verebilirlik, örgütsel bağlılık ve örgütsel güven kavramlarının belirtilen gelişmeler ile ilgili olduğu belirtilmektedir. Eğitime yönelik kalitenin artırılması ve eğitim sistemlerinin denetim ve rehberliğine yönelik gelişmelerin sağlanması sebebiyle 20 senedir hesap verebilirlik politikaları üzerine yoğunlaşan çalışmalarda artış gözlemlenmektedir. Hesap verebilirlik faaliyetlerinin, üyelerin katılımını ve kurumun amaçlarına ulaşma noktasında harcadıkları zamanı etkilediği görülmektedir. Bu bağlamda bu araştırmanın amacı yükseköğretim kurumlarının hesap verebilirlik düzeylerinin öğretim elemanlarının örgütsel bağlılık ve örgütsel güven ile olan doğrudan ve dolaylı ilişkisini incelemektir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda yürütülen çalışmada nicel araştırma modellerinden ilişkisel tarama modeli kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın evrenini İstanbul'da bulunan ve en az on yıllık geçmişe sahip devlet üniversitelerindeki öğretim elemanları

oluştururken; örneklemini ise 2017-2018 eğitim öğretim yılında İstanbul ilinde bulunan üç devlet üniversitesinde görev yapmakta olan 510 öğretim elemanı oluşturmaktadır. Mevcut araştırmadan edinilen bulgular neticesinde yükseköğretim kurumlarının hesap verebilirlik düzeylerine ilişkin algıların öğretim elemanlarının örgütsel bağlılık ve örgütsel güven düzeylerine ilişkin algıları ile anlamlı düzeyde ilişkili olduğu ve örgütsel bağlılık ve örgütsel güvenin hesap verebilirliği anlamlı düzeyde yordadığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yükseköğretim, hesap verebilirlik, örgütsel bağlılık, örgütsel güven.

## Introduction

Accountability covers expectation systems, rewards and sanction systems around the school (Cerit, Kadioğlu-Ateş, Kadioğlu). Accountability consists of individual's commitment to each other; responses to problems; how performance is measured and mutual accountability between individuals (Connors, 2014 as cited in Pace, 2015). Katzenbach, Steffen and Kronley (2012) state that being accountable increases activities, participation of members, and time that individuals spend on accomplishing organizational goals. Strong ties and shared commitment make it possible for individuals to account for each other. Connors (2014 as cited in Pace, 2015) emphasizes that lack of accountability affects the performance levels of individuals. Members of organizations struggling with accountability make all kind of excuses, constantly blame others, misunderstand the aims and goals of organization and demonstrate a weak attitude. On the other hand; Giessner, van Knippenberg, van Ginkel and Sleebos (2013) note that higher organizational commitment is experienced and effective problem solving strategies are used by stakeholders at the organizations having high level of accountability.

Accountability and trustworthiness of management are among the main indicators of commitment to the university. Therefore, it is important to investigate the direct and indirect relationship of the accountability level of higher education institutions with organizational trust and organizational commitment of the academic staff.

## Theoretical framework

### *Organizational commitment as a gain of accountability*

Results of the research show that accountability and transparency are closely related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment and organizational trust of members. The positive attitudes of members contribute to achieving success and effectiveness both inside and outside of the institution (Tasci and Koc, 2007).

The high level of commitment of the academic staff to their institutions has positive impact on the effectiveness of the university (Bali and Vaidya, 2012). When considering the important duties and responsibilities of the higher education institutions, it is clearly understood how important and valuable of the role of academic staff fulfilling the requirements for the society is. Fulfilment of these responsibilities and the achievement of qualified outputs will only be possible with academicians who are deeply committed to their professions and institutions. Figure 1 shows the relationship between internal factors, stakeholders and organizational commitment in higher education (Cikrikci, 2016).



**Figure 1.** The relationship between internal factors, stakeholders and organizational commitment in higher education

As it is seen in the Figure 1, academic staff also bring different individual characteristics such as needs and responsibilities to their institutions. These characteristics are filtered through different focus groups such as colleagues, studying groups, and rectorship and result in positive or negative and high or low organizational commitment.

Organizational commitment is one of the most widely studied areas among researchers, psychologists, and human resource management practitioners (Warsi, Fatima and Sahibzada, 2009). Organizational commitment in the areas of organizational behavior and organizational psychology, in general terms, refers to the psychological commitment of members to their profession, and is expressed as the attitudes of members to their institutions (Mirza and Redzuan, 2012). Although there are conceptual and methodological uncertainties regarding the concept of commitment, common sense focuses on its association with attitudes and feelings. In the literature, there are a great number of definitions of commitment stemming from various approaches to the concept (Sharma and Sinha, 2015). For example, Bali and Vaidya (2012) describe organizational commitment as a phenomenon in which members identify themselves with the organization and goals, are glad to take part in the institution, and also wish to continue to be a member of it. According to Aubé and Rousseau (2011), commitment is a strong belief in an idea or system. One of the keys of success and performance enhancement is the intensity and level of commitment to the organization. Cooperation among the stakeholders is also the result of the organizational commitment. According to Cetin (2004), organizational commitment generally refers to psychological commitment of a person to the organization including loyalty, involvement in the profession and belief in organizational values.

Allen and Meyer (1990) have developed a comprehensive model of organizational commitment and state that individuals depend on their profession for three psychological reasons; affective, continuance and normative commitment. Affective commitment includes individuals' emotional desire to work in the workplace (Allen and Meyer, 1990; 1996). People with higher levels of affective commitment are generally recognized as having higher performance. Many motivators such as wages and prizes are not as effective as other members for those who have higher level of affective commitment and these members are happy to be in organization. For this reason, it can be stated that affective commitment is much more important than the other two dimensions (Yirci, 2014). Continuance commitment includes continuing to work consciously by considering the financial or other costs associated with separation from the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990; 1996). In continuance commitment, there is not any increase or positive effect on the performance of the members unlike affective commitment. The person intends to leave the organization quickly and easily when s/he finds better working conditions than the available facilities. For this reason, high level of continuance commitment in the organization is considered as a negative feature (Yirci, 2014). Normative

commitment is related to the need to remain in the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990; 1996). In normative commitment, members feel as they are duty-bound to the organization (Yirci, 2014).

Strong commitment to organizational goals and aims is the mental empowerment of the members (Fornes, Rocco and Wollard, 2008). Fornes et al. (2008) point out that stakeholders show their commitment to the organizations by defining their goals and values with organizational goals and values; by developing sense of belonging; by being willing to increase efforts to provide benefits to the organizations.

Commitment is also related to inclusion, positive attitude, meaning and sense of purpose, competency, job satisfaction and getting along with the leader. Table 1 shows the stages of organizational commitment (Randall, 1987).

**Table 1.** Stages of organizational commitment

	Individual		Organizational	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Low Level of Commitment	Creativity, effective use of human resources and innovation and originality.	Slow career progression and promotion, expulsion in the organization or distortions of organizational goals, drop-outs caused by gossiping.	The positive results of gossiping, supporting organizational development, loss of low-performing employees.	The destructive results of gossiping, organizational infidelity, illegal activities against to organization, poor outcome, absenteeism, coming late to work, labour turnover.
Moderate Level of Commitment	The development of creative individualism as a distinct identity from the organization, advanced sense of belonging, security, competency, loyalty.	Limitation of opportunities of professional development and promotion.	High level of job satisfaction, limited level of labour turnover, decrease in desire to quit .	Restricting employees' organizational behavior and citizenship roles, decrease in organizational effectiveness.
High Level of Commitment	Individual career development and behavior is rewarded by the organization, passion for work.	Restricting individual development, creativity, innovation and mobility opportunities. Change resistance, stress in social and family relationships, limited time and energy.	Safe and balanced workforce, the acceptance of requests of organization for higher production, high level of task competition and performance, meeting organizational goals.	Ineffective use of human resources, lack of organizational flexibility, innovation and adaptation, confidence in past policies and processes, getting mixed up in illegal actions on behalf of the organization.

As shown in Table 1, low level of organizational commitment is largely dysfunctional for both the individual and the organizational level. When individual career development is seriously hampered, the organization may become unstable and may be confronted with unfaithful individuals. The positive aspects of low level of commitment are the development of employees' creativity and support purge for the employee dissatisfied with the organization so that they have opportunity to find a more suitable workplace for themselves (Randall, 1987).

It is seen that the positive aspects of moderate commitment are more than negatives ones. Individuals can adapt setting by changing their degree of commitment accordingly the perceived degree of attractiveness and contextual requirements. Under these circumstances, the relationship between the needs of individuals and organizational needs can be balanced. These people will not be able to take advantage of it as quickly as those having higher levels of commitment, but they can avoid many negative consequences caused by higher level of commitment (Randall, 1987). Keeping the experienced employees provides advantages regarding both avoidance the cost of newcomers and continuation of working efficiently and consistently (Yirci, 2014).

At higher levels of commitment, there are much more advantages than the costs. Individuals can move up faster in their careers, and the organization can achieve their goals more easily. Individuals may experience problems with personal, family, social and business life, and this makes difficult for them to be satisfied with organization. The organization can lose flexibility and becomes vulnerable to unethical and illegal behavior. In short, it is important to question the widely accepted linear relationship between commitment and desired outcomes (Randall, 1987).

#### ***Accountability and organizational trust***

Trust emerges as one of the most important themes in human relationships and human behavior. Trust is defined as "social glue" that can hold together different types of organizational structure (Atkinson and Butcher, 2003), hence it is important for continuity of organizations and human relations (Yilmaz, 2008). Literature shows that there are many definitions of trust (Mirza and Redzuan, 2012). Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) define trust as the desire of the person or group to leave defendless against another person or group by relying on reliability, competence, honesty and openness of the other parties. One of the main objectives of accountability is to increase the trust level in higher education institutions (Zalec, 2013).

Essentially, the purpose of the accountability project is to increase trust in national education systems, including higher education and universities. Accountability practices also struggle against inequality in society by increasing the quality of public schools to which poor children and students' access (Zalec, 2013).

It is believed that personal and professional relationships have different forms of trust. It is stated that personal relationships are more emotional and focus on the relationship, but the professional relations are based on tasks, so the main aim is to achieve the goals (Lewicki and Wiethoff, 2006). Shapiro, Sheppard and Cheraskin (1992) point out that there are three types of trust in the development of professional relations, namely deterrence-based trust, knowledge-based trust and identification-based trust. Literature suggests that professional relations are usually based on deterrence-based trust, which requires both parties to evaluate their own interests (Lewicki and Wiethoff, 2006). Lewicki and Bunker (1996) assert that these types of trust are interconnected and trust development at one point leads to the next level of trust. Researchers also explain how trust has developed and evolved over time based on the three-level trust model. At this point, one of the important aspects is that trust change and evolve over time, but that does not mean that it turns to second and third level in all relations. In conclusion some relationships may remain at the first or second level of trust.



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When literature is reviewed, it is seen that the most common type of trust is strategic trust at higher education. At strategic trust, both parties' profits are taken into account. Žalec (2013) suggests that trust of higher education is as a form of institutional trust, and therefore it is parallel with strategic trust based on experience and perception.

To develop alternative ways to rebuild trust, following steps are suggested by Lewicki and Wiethoff (2006):

- Determination of distrust behaviors,
- Apologizing of both sides for the violation of trust,
- Negotiating of mutual expectations for the future activities,
- Establishment of evaluation procedures to ensure that the promises of both parties are fulfilled.

Literature shows that there are many studies that prove positive effects of trust on the outputs of educational institutions and organizational processes. Trust is a vital element in well-functioning organizations. Trust contributes to the development of school processes, communication and the enhancement of open climate (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000).

Trust-based educator-student relationships enhance the professional commitment of the educators; relationships among colleagues provide cognitive and affective conditions that provide cooperative learning and development; the trust-based relationship between educators and managers contributes to the formation of schools that consists of open communication, development-oriented stakeholders, shared vision, values and beliefs expressed clearly (Day and Gu, 2014).

Trow (1996) argues that accountability is a double-edged sword, on the one hand with a good advertising face; on the other, institution costs to fulfill the obligations. The reasons for this claim are as following (Trow, 1996):

- Accountability is an alternative to trust,
- External accountability weakens the autonomy of institutions,
- External accountability may conflict with the resolution of sensitive issues in educational institutions and effective governance.
- Accountability may threaten the freedom of professionals to define their work and may reduce diversity among educational institutions.
- Accountability transforms academic staff into pure employees.

The old methods of quality assurance are no longer trusted so increased accountability have positive effect on public trust.

### ***Significance of the study***

For implementation, expansion and protection of accountability practices; a number of values such as responsibility, transparency about the results, expansion of access, equality of opportunity, increased productivity and contribution to society's prosperity, better usage of public funding, strong economy, increased trust in institutions, internationalization, cooperation, compatibility and comparability have turned out to be a necessity (Zalec, 2013). Katzenbach, Steffen and Kronley (2012) point out that accountability increases individual participation, and the time and activities spending on accomplishing organizational goals. Strong ties and shared commitment allow individuals to be accountable to each other. According to results of the research conducted by Yilmaz (2008), there is a significant relationship between organizational commitment and organizational trust, and organizational

trust increases the level of organizational commitment. Connors (2014; cited in Pace, 2015) emphasizes that lack of accountability affects the performance levels of individuals. Members of organizations struggling with accountability develop excuses, constantly blame others, misunderstand the goals and values of organizations. Giessner, van Knippenberg, van Ginkel and Sleebos (2013), on the other hand, state that higher organizational commitment is experienced and effective problem solving strategies are used in accountable organizations by stakeholders.

When the accountability literature has been reviewed, it is evident that the area is quite new and not fully conceptualized in Turkey. For this reason, the present study will contribute to understanding of the concept comprehensively and makes it become widespread.

### ***Purpose of the study***

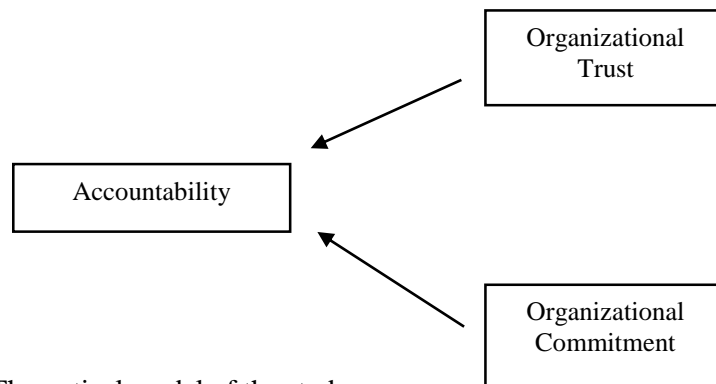
The purpose of the present study is to investigate the direct and indirect relationship of the accountability level of higher education institutions with organizational commitment and organizational trust of academic staff. In this context, the research questions are as follows:

- (1) Is there a relationship between accountability level of higher education institutions, and organizational commitment and organizational trust of academic staff?
- (2) How do the level of organizational trust, together with the level of organizational commitment, affect the accountability level of higher education institutions?

### **Method**

#### ***Research model***

The purpose of the present study was to explore the direct and indirect relations of the accountability level of higher education institutions with organizational commitment and organizational trust of academic staff. The study was conducted in correlational survey model, one of the quantitative research models. Investigation of relations between two or more variables without any intervention was intended in the study. In this context, information about the density and direction of the relations between the variables can be obtained (Bordens and Abbott, 2007; Büyüköztürk, Kilic, Cakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz and Demirel, 2013). The model proposed for explaining the mediator role of the organizational trust levels of academic staff on the levels of accountability of higher education institutions and organizational commitment of academic staff was tested. A structural equation model created in the AMOS program was used to test the proposed model. In this context, confirmatory factor analysis of the "Higher Education Institutions Accountability Scale" developed by the researchers was conducted and the relations between organizational trust and organizational commitment scales and subscales were found out. The model set by examining theories and research in the literature is shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Theoretical model of the study

### Sample

Whereas the population of the study included the academic staff at the state universities located in İstanbul and with a ten-year history, the sample of the study consisted of 510 academic staff working at three state universities in İstanbul in 2017-2018 academic year. By using cluster sampling method, three universities were randomly selected and academic staff of those universities participated in the study. Cluster sampling is used on selected clusters in the population, and all clusters in the population have the chance to be selected individually (with all elements) and equally (Karasar, 1995). Table 2 shows demographic information of the academic staff.

**Table 2.** Demographic information of the participants

		<i>f</i>	%
Gender	Female	420	82,4
	Male	90	17,6
Title	Research Assisstant	48	9,4
	Associate Professor	18	3,5
	Assistant Professor	30	5,9
	University Lecturer	366	71,8
	Instructor	24	4,7
	Professor	24	4,7
Administrative Function	Yes	222	43,5
	No	288	56,5
Educational Status	PHD	114	22,4
	Bachelor Degree	228	44,7
	Master's Degree	168	32,9
Professional Seniority	1-5 Years	282	55,3
	11-15 Years	48	9,4
	16-20 Years	24	4,7
	21 Years and over	24	4,7
	6-10 Years	132	25,9
Experience	1-5 Years	390	76,5
	11-15 Years	18	3,5
	16-20 Years	6	1,2
	21 Years and over	18	3,5
	6-10 Years	78	15,3

### Data collection tools

To develop a model for accountability in higher education and to explore the relationship between accountability, organizational trust and organizational commitment, path analysis was conducted by using the AMOS program.

Organizational Trust Inventory-Short Form developed by Bromiley and Cummings (1994) and adapted to Turkish by Yilmaz (2014) was used as a one of data collecting instruments. The scale requires a rating on 7 point likert scale (1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: slightly disagree, 4: neither disagree nor agree, 5: slightly agree, 6: agree and 7: strongly agree). The scale comprises two sub-dimensions including 12 items. These subdimensions are defined as "keeping promises" (8, 2, 4, 5, 7, 11, 1, 9) and "avoidance of excessive benefit" (3, 6, 10, 12). As a result of the reliability analysis, the general reliability of the scale was found as  $\alpha = .82$ . It was tested  $\alpha = .78$  for "keeping promises" and  $\alpha = .57$  for "avoidance of excessive benefit".

In order to measure the levels of organizational commitment of academic staff, three dimensional, a 5-point Likert-type "Organizational Commitment Scale" developed by Meyer and Allen (1997) and adapted to Turkish by Wasti (2000) was used. The scale was repeatedly used in subsequent

research (see Pelit, Boylu and Gücer, 2007) by testing validity and reliability. The scale includes 18 items and three dimensions; one of the dimensions is affective commitment including 6 items (example item: I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.), the second one is continuance commitment including 6 items (example item: It would be costly for me to leave this organization now.) and the last one is normative commitment including 6 items (example item: Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave my organization now). Since items 3, 4, 5 and 13 of the scale have negative meanings, these items were analyzed by reverse scored. Organizational commitment was assessed with items rated on a five point-Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). High scores from each factor of the scale indicate that high organizational commitment at that dimension. Internal consistency reliability calculated for subdimensions of the scale was determined as  $\alpha = .85$  (for continuance commitment),  $\alpha = .70$  (for affective commitment) and  $\alpha = .83$  (for normative commitment). Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the whole scale was computed as  $\alpha = .92$ .

Based on the literature review and interviews with academicians, Higher Education Institutions Accountability Scale (HEIAS) was developed by the researchers. Accountability of higher education institutions was assessed with items rated on a five point-Likert scale ranging from "Never = 1", "Rarely = 2", "Sometimes = 3", "Often = 4", "Always = 5". The high scores from each factor of the scale indicate that the level of accountability at that dimension is high. HEIAS consists of 18 items and four dimensions, namely, "Effectiveness" including 7 items; "Responsibility" including 4 items; "Transparency" including 4 items and "Measurement" including 3 items. Internal consistency calculated for subdiemnsions of the scale was determined as  $\alpha = .89$  (for Effectiveness);  $\alpha = .93$  (for Responsibility);  $\alpha = .69$  (for Transparency) and  $\alpha = .88$  for Measurement).

#### ***Data analysis***

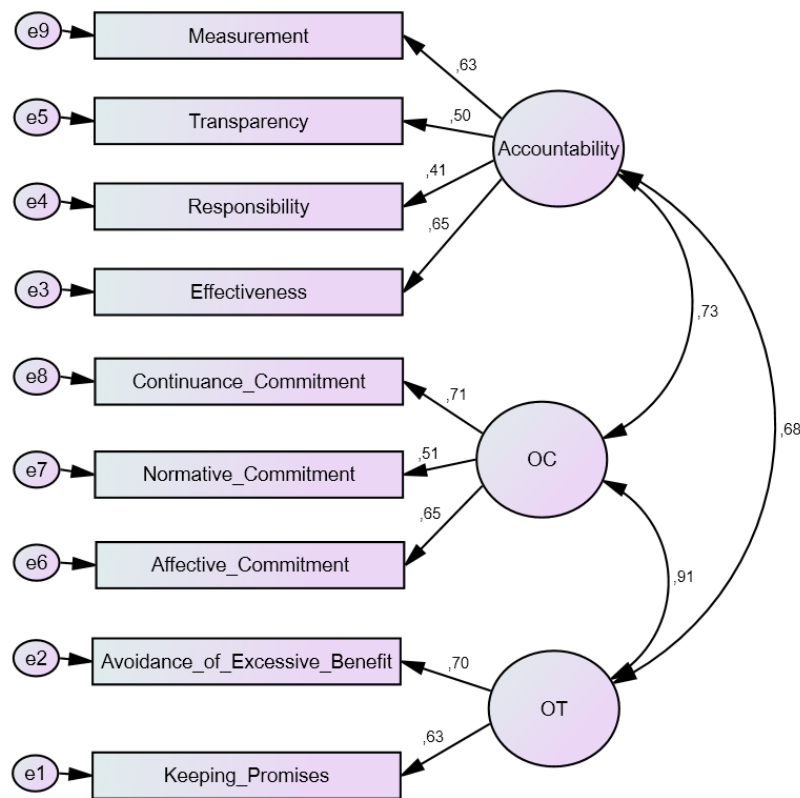
Correlational analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM) were used to test the model proposed to explain the relationship between the organizational trust and organizational commitment levels of the academic staff and the accountability levels of higher education institutions. By using SEM, models are created between latent and /or observed variables (Reisinger and Turner, 1999; Yilmaz 2004b). SEM is a comprehensive statistical technique used to test causal relationships between observed and latent variables. SEM is also a useful technique for solving problems related to the formulation of theoretical structures.

SPSS and AMOS programs were used for confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling.

#### **Results**

##### ***The relationship between accountability level of higher education institutions, and organizational commitment and organizational trust of academic staff***

At first to test the endogenous and exogenous variables of the data with SEM, the relationship between organizational trust, organizational commitment and accountability levels of higher education institution are found out. Results are shown in Figure 3.

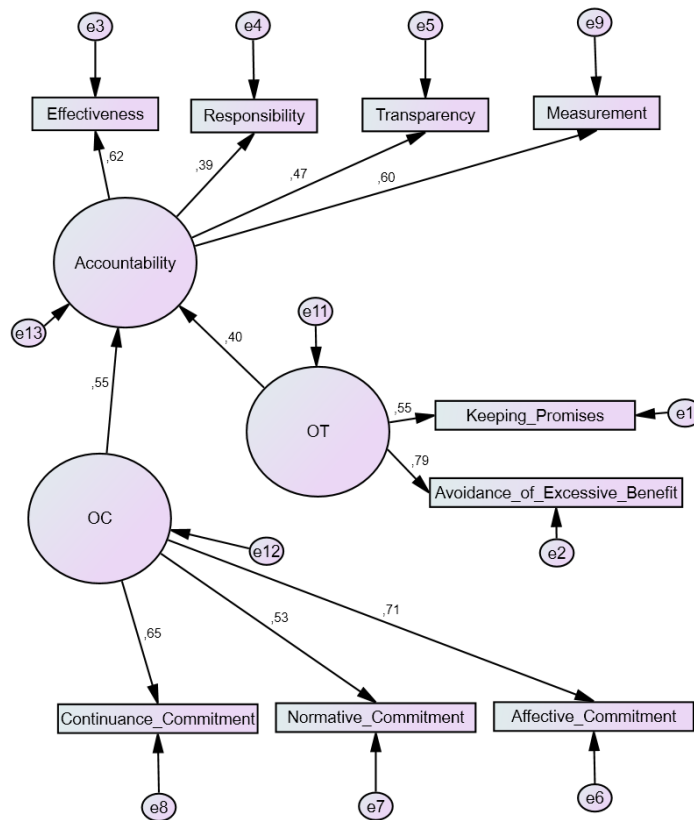


**Figure 3.** Relationship between accountability levels of higher education institutions and organizational trust and organizational commitment perceptions of academic staff

Figure 3 shows that the accountability of higher education institutions and organizational commitment and organizational trust levels of academic staff positively and significantly correlated with each other. Correlational relationship between the variables is indicated by a bi-directional arrow. There is a positive correlation between the levels of accountability of higher education institutions and the organizational commitment of the academic staff ( $r = .73$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Also high positive correlation between organizational commitment and organizational trust ( $r = .91$ ;  $p < .01$ ) is found. Finally, there is a positive relationship between the levels of accountability and organizational trust ( $r = .68$ ;  $p < .01$ ).

***Effects of organizational trust and organizational commitment of academic staff on the accountability level of higher education institutions***

Considering the effects of organizational trust and organizational commitment of academic staff on the accountability level of higher education institutions, the obtained model is displayed in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** Predictions about effects of organizational trust and organizational commitment levels of academic staff and accountability levels of higher education institution (Model 1)

When the model shown in Figure 4 is examined, it is seen that the organizational trust levels of academic staff significantly predict the accountability levels of higher education institutions ( $\beta = .40, p < .01$ ). The other finding is that the levels of organizational commitment of academic staff significantly predict the levels of accountability of higher education institutions ( $\beta = .55; p < .01$ ). The table of path coefficients for the model is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Path coefficients of model

Path	Standardized $\beta$	Standard Error	P
OC $\rightarrow$ A	.553	.043	.00
OT $\rightarrow$ A	.395	.051	.00

Table 4 shows that the levels of organizational commitment ( $\beta = .55; p < .01$ ) and organizational trust ( $\beta = .40, p < .01$ ) of the academic staff significantly predicted the levels of accountability of higher education institutions. Lastly, goodness of fit indices for the model obtained in the study is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Goodness of fit indices of the model

Fit Index	Criteria	Value
$\chi^2$ / d.f.	$\leq 3.00$	2.678
GFI (Goodness of Fit Index)	$\geq 0.90$	.96
AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index)	$\geq 0.90$	.93
NFI (Normed Fit Index)	$\geq 0.90$	.91
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	$\geq 0.90$	.95
IFI (Incremental Fit Index)	$\geq 0.90$	.95
TLI (Tucker – Lewis Index)	$\geq 0.90$	.92
RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)	0.05 – 0.08	.06

Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger and Müller, 2003; Kline, 2005.

The values generated by AMOS indicated the proposed model fitted very well to the data set and it was seen that some of the values were excellently fitted. In this context, it is concluded that the correlations between the levels of accountability of higher education institutions, organizational trust and organizational commitment of academic staff were significant ( $p < .01$ ). In other words, any intervention on accountability of higher education institutions and the level of organizational trust and organizational commitment of the academic staff will affect these three concepts.

### Discussion and conclusion

The results of the present study, which aims to investigate the relationship between the accountability levels of higher education institutions, and the levels of organizational commitment and organizational trust of academic staff with path analysis, indicated that the accountability levels of higher education institutions were positively correlated with the organizational commitment and organizational trust levels of academic staff. This result means that the higher accountability levels of higher education institutions are, the higher the organizational commitment and organizational trust levels of the academic staff become. Studies with similar results regarding the contribution of accountability to the organizations are found in literature. Laszlo, Laszlo, Johnsen (2013) and Yadav (2013) emphasized that accountability, trust and satisfaction were strongly correlated with organizational commitment.

As a result of present study, significantly higher positive correlation was found between organizational commitment and organizational trust levels of the academic staff. Although organizational commitment and organizational trust are strongly associated with each other, they differ conceptually. While organizational commitment expresses the self-definition of an individual with institutional goals, organizational trust is about the belief of stakeholders in members and leaders of the organization. Studies show that lack of trust in organizations results in low organizational commitment (Gilbert and Tang, 1998). In a similar way, Hoecht (2006) states that trust strengthens mutual commitment and helps acting towards common goals of organizations and improvement by promoting intrinsic motivation of stakeholders. It is projected that trust and commitment will expand from the individual level to the organizational level and so it is more likely to gain the vision of the organization with the expansion of the cycle. Taskin and Dilek (2010) investigated the effect of organizational trust on organizational commitment and concluded that there was a strong relationship between organizational trust and affective commitment. Organizational trust was correlated with normative commitment at the moderate level; and lastly there was no relationship between organizational trust and continuance commitment. Yilmaz (2008) found out that organizational commitment was significantly correlated with organizational trust. Therefore, it is once again emphasized that organizational trust makes the level of organizational commitment increase.

The results of present study showed that there was a significantly positive relationship between the levels of accountability of higher education institutions and the levels of organizational commitment

of the academic staff. Also the levels of organizational commitment of the academic staff predicted significantly the level of accountability of higher education institutions. Dive (2008) argues that lack of accountability in organization is the reason for psychological and economic costs such as poor performance and low motivation, and emphasizes that accountability supports the individuals to demonstrate proactive and conscious commitment to organizational goals. Riketta and Landerer (2002) point out that that higher accountability is associated with a weaker correlation of attitudinal organizational commitment with in-role performance. The result of study conducted by Pace (2015) shows that accountability and commitment are the major predictors of employee performance. The result provides strong evidence that accountability and commitment affect the performance of teams positively. It is emphasized that actions promoting organizational commitment will also increase accountability and team performance (Pace, 2015). It is an undeniable fact that qualified human resources will be trained with the help of high performing academic staff.

The results of the research in terms of accountability and trust differ greatly. In parallel with the present study, Giessner, van Knippenberg, van Ginkel and Sleebos (2013) conclude that accountability correlates positively with trust. Zalec (2013) emphasizes that the reason behind the increased accountability policy is to increase trust in national school systems, including higher education and universities. Accountability and trust are connected phenomena according to literature. The foundation of trusting environment provides timely and truthful information about institutional matters for stakeholders (Kalman and Gedikoglu, 2014). On the other hand, studies with the opposite direction to present findings are also found in literature such as the fact that the pressures to provide accountability can be destructive for the organization. The moment when the pressure of accountability damages the autonomies of the scholars, the academic staff feel that they are not be trusted by the organization and, as a result, the sense of trust of academicians towards organizations decreases automatically (Hoecht, 2006). Bovens (2003) argues that exaggeration of accountability and transparency practices will lead to an increase in expectations rather than legalism and also notes that the reduction of trust in institutions is one of the negative aspects of public accountability.

As a result of the findings of present study, it is concluded that the accountability level of higher education institutions is correlated with the level of organizational commitment and organizational trust of the academic staff. In order to investigate the concept deeply and disclose different affecting variables, it is necessary to carry out new studies with similar and different sample groups in which the concepts of accountability, trust and commitment are contextualized together.

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