

## THE VIEWS OF ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF REGARDING ETHICAL ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOLUTIONS IN UNIVERSITIES

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### Abstract

In the Middle Ages, when universities did not gain their current meaning, they did not refer to a physical area (building etc.) but to a community. Today, universities are expressed as institutions where various stakeholders (students, administrative and academic staff) come together and academic and administrative work/transactions are carried out mostly. These stakeholders are expected to act in accordance with ethical principles in all their behaviors and relationships (Çakırel, 2009). However, various ethical problems can be encountered in universities. The purpose of this research is to reveal the perspectives of administrative staff in universities on ethics, the ethical problems they encounter while doing their jobs their opinions on the solution suggestions and to develop suggestions based on the findings obtained. The study is a qualitative research with a phenomenological pattern. The study group consists of 9 administrative staff working at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University in 2024. For the purpose of data collection, the interview form consisting of standardized open-ended questions was subjected to descriptive and content analysis using the deductive method. According to the findings, it was determined that the most common behaviors experienced by university stakeholders such as indiscipline, fraud, irresponsibility, carelessness and disrespect lead to ethical problems. In order to eliminate ethical problems, it was suggested that all university stakeholders adopt ethical values, avoid unethical behaviors, develop the institution of punishment and reward, frequently direct the personnel to compulsory ethics courses, informative seminars and workshops covering ethical problems-developments and innovations, and thus create ethical awareness in the personnel and include courses on ethics in the curriculum even for students, and take the necessary steps to establish ethical principles in universities and comply with these principles.

**Keywords:** University, administrative staff, ethics, ethical problem, ethical violation.

### INTRODUCTION

When we talk about ethics in general, they are the rules that separate the bad from the good, the wrong from the right (Bassegy & Owan, 2019). These rules include various aspects such as helping others, respecting and loving others, etc (Walia, 2022). Social changes constantly confront people with ethical problems (Aydm, 2001).

Although the words morality and ethics are related to each other, they are actually from each other (Çobanoğlu, 2013). Ethics is defined as focusing on the basis of behaviors in a moral sense and analyzing which behavior is good and morally appropriate; which behavior is bad and immoral (Kahraman, 2023). When we talk about ethics in general, we refer to the rules that separate the bad from the good and the wrong from the right. Organizations that guide something (place, profession, etc.), things that should be done and things that should not be done... In short, these are the rules that must be followed (Bassegy & Owan, 2019). Morality is the value judgments that individuals call

"right" or "good" or "wrong" or "bad" in their relationships with each other (Aktan, 2009). These rules include various aspects such as helping others, respecting and loving others, etc. Environmental and cultural values are among the various forms of economic, social, political, religious, aesthetic, health, spiritual, cognitive moral values. Knowledge of these values enables individuals to help with moral values. In addition to the welfare of the nation, it helps to progress as an ethical and moral individual (Walia, 2022).

Professional ethics are the standards of behavior that an individual should care about in order to adopt a profession (Mahdavinoor et al., 2021). Social changes constantly confront individuals with ethical problems. Ethical elements have an important effect in determining the good-bad distinction in individual behavior according to universal criteria, in the education of individuals and in the organization of the education system (Aydın, 2001). The effects of social changes on morality and ethics, and the research of types of morality on nations have led to the emergence of moral sociology (Yüce, 2010).

Universities are science fields that carry out quality education and training processes (Ataman, 2018). While these institutions fulfill their education and training functions, they also pursue a goal or ethical effort such as directing people to what is good/right (Boyacı, Erdem, Güven, Tezci, Çermik, Alkan, İcen, Börü, Şimşek, Ulutaş, Uygun, Talu, & Kırat, 2022). Universities, the number of which is increasing day by day, have great benefits for the environment in social and economic terms. In the places where they are opened, social life is revitalized, changes occur in architectural structures and new working areas are formed (Demir, 2023). In this context, universities are in intense interaction with their internal stakeholders (academic and administrative staff and students) as well as their external stakeholders (Gerçek et al., 2011).

Academic and administrative staff, who are internal stakeholders of the university, have their own duties and fulfill these duties. Academic staff mostly carry out education and teaching duties, and administrative staff carry out the administrative work and transactions of the university. Although they do not have academic duties, administrative staff have a very important place in the proper performance of university affairs (Höbel, 2013). Since universities bring together many parties, many sources of problems come together in parallel (Boyacı et al., 2022). Universities, which employ a wide range of employees, including academic and administrative staff, not only experience their own problems, but also have additional problems to those faced by administrative staff working in other institutions, since they are public legal entities with academic autonomy and a special budget (Höbel, 2013). A significant portion of these constitute ethical problems, and the ethical problems faced by administrative staff are among the issues that should be particularly emphasized.

If these rules are not implemented, it is possible to encounter various problems (Demir, 2023). Some employees who encounter unethical practices in their workplaces intervene because they are disturbed by their conscience. Some employees prefer to remain silent because they do not want to jeopardize their careers and jobs (Çiğdem, 2013). In this case, ethical problems grow exponentially.

While performing their duties, university employees are in contact with many people inside and outside the office, like a bridge (Tahtasakal, 2003). The unethical attitudes of employees in this sector, whose potential to act unethically is unlimited; corruption, unproductive behavior, bribery, abusive management and nepotism, nepotism, revenge, intimidation-pressure-intimidation (mobbing), sexual harassment, abuse of duty and authority, selfishness, violence, deception, aggression and gossip (Aydın et al., 2022).

The term exploitation, which can be described as counterproductive behavior, is expressed in the normal, morally charged sense of exploiting or wasting an individual in a way that is not morally right and wrong for the exploited individual in the first place (Arneson, 1992). Similarly, mobbing is when one or a group of people psychologically/spiritually disturb another or a group of people and is a harassment problem in work relationships (René Pedroza Floresl, 2020). Another unethical behavior,



corruption, occurs when public officials approve bribes and reward the bribe giver at the expense of others (Società Italiana degli Economisti, 2020). A rich system consisting of many separate principles connected by complex interactions is defined as corruption. (Cuadrado & Alvarez Arce, 2005). Introducing ethical rules in universities, like all institutions, and explaining to public employees the sanctions that will result from not implementing these rules will be effective in preventing corruption (Şirin, 2006). Discrimination/favoritism or nepotism are called prejudiced behaviors and partial equality should be provided to minimize these behaviors. For example, in order to provide employment opportunities for people with disabilities, organisations are obliged by law to employ people with disabilities within a certain quota. this obligation aims to reduce institutional discrimination against people with disabilities. In order to eliminate one of the unproductive behaviors, flattery/flattery, it is important to prioritize competencies in the evaluation of employees and to put them into practice consistently (Aydn, 1998).

Employees must act in accordance with ethical rules. In this context, it is very important to establish ethical principles, which will be created according to ideal values and put into practice, along with legal regulations in our country (Aydn, 1998). In this sense, the ethical principles prepared by the Council of Higher Education include all kinds of scientific research and studies, scientific research and development projects supported and/or carried out by scientific activities and research ethics issues related to these projects, publication ethics problems related to all kinds of publications and ethical violations in biomedical research and ecological studies. It consists of headings. Actions against the ethics of scientific research and publication include plagiarism, forgery, distortion, republication, slicing, unfair authorship, and other types of ethical violations. In the context of ensuring work efficiency, Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committees should be established in Universities and these committees should pay attention to ethical violations. At the same time, they should examine allegations of ethical violations, eliminate possible unethical actions in academic-research and publication ethics, and organize educational activities in cooperation with relevant units or institutions/organizations (YOK, 2024).

### **Purpose of the Research**

The aim of this research is to reveal the views of administrative staff in universities on ethics, the ethical problems they face and the solutions they offer. In addition, the aim is to develop recommendations based on the findings obtained.

### **METHOD**

Details regarding the research model, participants, data collection instruments, data collection, and data analysis are provided in this section. The necessary ethics committee permission for the research has been obtained (Educational Sciences Institute Research and Publication Ethics Committee, 03.06.2024 and decision numbered 08/38).

### **Research Model**

A descriptive phenomenological design was used in this study to reveal what individuals gain from their experiences (Creswell and Creswell 2018). The effort to conceptualize and make sense of experiences, events in the world, perceptions, concepts, and trends is defined as a phenomenological design (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021).

### **Working Group**

The study group in this research consists of nine administrative staff members who are employed in 2024 at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University. The working group consists of people who want to participate in the study based on accessibility and volunteering. The working group was determined using a purposive sampling technique. This technique involves the deliberate selection of participants for research on a phenomenon.



**Table 1.** Participants' characteristics.

Participant	Gender	Service Year	Cadre/Position	Unit
G1	Male	15	Officer	Fine Arts Faculty
G2	Female	12	4/D Contracted	Health Culture and Sports Department
G3	Female	18	Officer	Information Processing Department
G4	Female	25	Officer	Protection Security Branch Directorate
G5	Male	10	4/D Contracted	Protection Security Branch Directorate
G6	Female	25	4/D Contracted	Protection Security Branch Directorate
G7	Male	12	Officer	Library Department
G8	Female	12	Officer	Library Department
G9	Female	11	Officer	Library Department

As seen in Table 1, 6 of the administrative staff participating in the study are female and 3 are male. 1 administrative staff has 15 years of service, 3 administrative staff have 12 years of service, 1 administrative staff have 18 years of service, 2 administrative staff have 25 years of service, 1 administrative staff have 10 years of service, and 1 administrative staff have 11 years of service. 6 administrative staff are civil servants and 3 administrative staff are on the 4/D contract (support staff) staff. 1 administrative staff works at the Faculty of Fine Arts, 1 administrative staff works at the Department of Health, Culture and Sports, 1 administrative staff works at the Department of Information Technology, 3 administrative staff works at the Department of Protection and Security, and 3 administrative staff works at the Department of Library and Documentation.

### Data Collection Tool

A semi-structured interview form (the primary data collection method in qualitative research) was used in the study (Creswell, 2015). While aiming to describe the research process in qualitative research, data collection techniques such as observation, document review and interview are used (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). The preparation of the form questions was carried out by examining the literature on ethics in detail. In line with the information obtained from the literature, six open-ended questions were created for administrative personnel and probing questions were added in order to obtain in-depth information about these questions. The interview form consisting of the prepared questions was presented to the opinion of one (1) faculty member who is an expert in the field of educational sciences, one faculty member who is an expert in qualitative research and three (3) expert academicians, one (1) in ethics education. The questions were finalized in line with the feedback from the experts. The semi-structured interview form consists of 2 parts. The first part is a demographic information form containing the following questions. It is about the personal information of the interviewed participants and includes:

Information unit about the gender of the participants, years of service, staff/duty and working hours. There are 6 interview questions in the second part. The interview questions are given below;

1. What should be the basic ethical principles in universities? Why?
2. What should be the ethical responsibilities in universities? Why? Why do you care more about this issue? According to you, which ethical behaviours managers should exhibit?
3. What should be the rules of ethical conduct in universities? What kind of ethical behavior should university staff exhibit? Where to start?
4. What are the ethical problems experienced in universities? What do you think about ethical problems? Can you tell us a few examples from your life about this issue?
5. Wat are the ethical violations experienced in universities? Have you had any problems with this?



6. What are your solution suggestions for preventing ethical problems in universities? Do you have anything else to say?

The questions were presented in an open-ended manner.

Before the interview, the participants were informed about the purpose of the research. It was explained that the participants would take part in the study without giving their real names. Afterwards, a pilot application was carried out with one person each as a civil servant (administrative staff) and a contracted personnel (4D personnel). Since it was seen that there was no problem in understanding the questions during the pilot application, no changes were made to the questions. The study group in this study was determined by the purposeful sampling method of personnel who carry out administrative work and operations in the university area. Descriptive and content analysis were performed on the data obtained from the participants.

### **Data Analysis**

The interviews were conducted on a voluntary basis at a date, time and place deemed appropriate by the participants, and coding and analysis were carried out with the same impartiality for the sake of transparency and reliability for the practitioners. Themes for the purpose and conceptual framework of the research were determined before descriptive and content analysis. The data subjected to descriptive and content analysis using the deductive method are summarized and interpreted in the context of the themes created beforehand, taking into account the research or sub-questions. Phenomenological research aimed at revealing experience, data analysis and meanings aims to create themes that can define the phenomenon and conceptualize the data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021).

In order to determine the ethical problems and solution suggestions of administrative personnel in universities, a framework for data analysis was made up as a result of the literature review. Within the scope of the research, themes were prepared by the researcher to identify the ethical problems faced by administrative staff at universities and to suggest solutions to these problems. A literature review was conducted for the themes. The prepared themes were examined by three field experts within the scope of the validity study.

Descriptive and content analysis methods were used in the analysis of the data, and the analyses were carried out by creating categories explaining the views of the participants in the two-month period specified for the analysis. The resulting data were read as a whole many times by the researcher. After this stage, the texts were interpreted by the researcher, the data were defined and classified. The themes of the categories created after the classification were determined. After the final shape of the categories and themes was given as a result of the examination and comparisons made, frequency tables for the data were created. In the analysis, 6 main themes and 40 categories were obtained within the scope of 6 main questions. The ethical problems experienced in universities were determined by examining and interpreting these obtained data. The opinions of the administrative staff were included under these themes with direct quotes. The problems determined for the themes and categories that emerged after the analysis and the solution suggestions for these problems are stated in the findings and conclusion sections.

Validity and Reliability Studies Consistency, credibility, confirmability and transferability concepts are used in qualitative research to ensure reliability and validity (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Open-ended questions created to collect data for the credibility of the research were presented to the suggestions and opinions of experts in the field and corrections were made according to the feedback received. Following the development of the data collection tool, the opinions of three (3) academicians who are experts in their fields were consulted until the analysis of the data. Participant confirmations were also received regarding the answers. Direct quotes were included regarding the statements of the participants in the context of the categories that emerged as a result of the data analysis and for the transferability of the research. The participants' answers regarding the themes formed after the interviews were coded as G1, G2 and presented with frequencies. In order to ensure

the consistency of the research, the codes that emerged as a result of the separate coding of the data by the researchers were compared and after agreement was reached, consistency was ensured with the findings given in their final form. In order to carry out the pilot application, interview questions were asked to one contracted and one officer personnel. After we were satisfied that the questions were understood correctly, the main application started. All data for the confirmation of the research are stored from the beginning to the end of the research and kept for review when necessary.

## RESULTS

In this section, the findings regarding the research results are given. As a result of the analysis of the data obtained from the interviews with civil servants and contracted personnel to determine the ethical problems experienced in universities, six themes were determined: ethical principle, ethical responsibility, ethical code of conduct, ethical problem, ethical violation and suggestions. Education/training and student focus on the ethical principle theme, responsibility and working hours, regulation of authority and responsibilities according to human conditions, respect/love for the individual and the job, merit-justice-equality-impartiality, distance/level of relationships and professional ethics, honesty/ Nine categories were obtained: accuracy, trust/reliability and accuracy of science, sensitivity, self-criticism and protection, fulfilling obligations and feeling of belonging to the institution, not abusing trust and protecting the benefit of the institution. Duties/responsibilities related to the theme of ethical responsibility should be done as they should be, the superior should care about merit-justice-respect and equality, scientific research-publication analysis ethics should be taken into consideration, and there are nine principles such as respect, justice, distribution of duties, responsibility, equality, not damaging corporate identity-reputation. category has been determined. Depending on the theme of ethical conduct, friendliness - using a polite language and not being negative, honesty - accuracy - accountability - diligence and justice, working hours should be taken into account, respect and distance, not pursuing personal interests and paying attention to corruption, equality and justice in general and the superior's duty. Ten categories were obtained: observing equality and justice, responsibility and duty performance, efficiency and work/problem solving, academic freedom-autonomy, and fundamental rights. Five categories were determined based on the ethical problem theme: behavioral problems, lack of sanctions, measurement and evaluation, technical problems (administrative problems), and communication problems. Two categories related to the theme of ethical violation were obtained: healthy communication-behavior violation and general ethics and professional ethics. Depending on the theme of suggestions, nine categories are: control and supervision, sanction and punishment-reward system, training, equal opportunity, detection/notification and rapid solution of unethical problems, the supervisor being an ethical role model, technical and managerial regulation, merit, corporate culture. has been determined. Themes and categories and findings related to these themes and categories are given below, with direct quotes.

**Table 2.** Participants' themes and categories regarding ethical principles.

<b>Theme: Ethical Principle</b>	
<b>Categories</b>	Being focused on education/training and students
	Responsibilities and working hours - arranging authority and responsibilities according to human conditions
	Respect/love for the individual and the job
	Emphasizing merit-justice-equality-impartiality
	Emphasizing distance/level of relationships and professional ethics
	Paying attention to honesty/truthfulness-trust/reliability and ensuring that science is in line with reality
	Being sensitive, self-criticizing and attaching importance to protection
	Fulfilling obligations and feeling a sense of belonging to the institution
	Not abusing trust and looking out for the benefit of the institution



**Table 3.** Ethica Administrative staff opinions on the theme of ethical principles.

Theme	Category	Code	f
	Focus on education/training and students (1)	Focusing on education/training and students (G1).	1
	Responsibility and working hours-authority and responsibilities should be organized according to humane manner (G1). human conditions (4)	Using duties, authorities and responsibilities in a humane manner (G1).	4
Ethical Principles	Respect/love for individuals and work (6)	Caring about and implementing the area of responsibility (G4). Paying attention to responsibility (G5)	
	Emphasizing merit-justice-equalityimpartiality(7)	Giving responsibility to the staff within ethical limits, arranging working hours according to human conditions (G9).	13
		Being people who love their jobs and respect their jobs (G1).	
	Emphasizing distance/level of relationships and professional ethics (3)	Paying attention to respect (It will ensure fewer problems). (G2).	7
	Honesty/truthfulness, trust/reliability should be taken into consideration and science should be in line with reality(4)	Having respectful relationships (G3). Respecting human dignity and labor (G5). Respecting labor (G6). Paying attention to respect (G9). Paying attention to equality (It will ensure fewer problems)(G2).	
	Being sensitive, self-criticizing and protecting should be taken into consideration (1)	Paying attention to equality among the staff(G2). Distributing responsibilities fairly among the staff (G3).	6
	Focus on education/training and students (1)	Paying attention to justice, impartiality and merit responsibilities should be organized according to human conditions (4)	
		Honesty and accuracy are valued. Science must be factua (G4).	6
	Respect/love for individuals and work (6)	Honesty, trust, reliability, attention to accuracy (G5). Reliability, accuracy, honesty are important (G6). Giving importance to honesty (G9)	
	Emphasizing merit-justice-equalityimpartiality		
Being sensitive, making self-criticism and giving importance to protection (1)	Self-criticism, protection, sensitivity (G5).	1	
Instead of obligations introduction and establishment feeling of belonging to introduction and establishment feeling of belonging to(2)	Obligations to students, colleagues and the institution must be fulfilled (G4) Feeling belonging to the institution (G9).	2	
Not abusing trust, making decisions for the benefit of the organisation (1)	Not abusing trust, making decisions for the benefit of the organisation (G9).	1	

As seen in Table 3, the participating administrative staff expressed their opinions in the categories of education/training and student-focused, responsibility and working hours, arranging authority and responsibilities according to human conditions, respecting/liking individuals and work, merit, justice, equality, impartiality, distance/level of relationships and professional ethics, honesty/truthfulness, trust/reliability and science should be in accordance with the truth, sensitivity, self-criticism and protection, fulfilling obligations and feeling belonging to the institution, not abusing trust and looking out for the benefit of the institution. It is seen that the category of merit, justice, equality, impartiality stands out in terms of frequency. Some of the opinions of the participating administrative staff regarding the theme of “ethical principle” are given below.

G2: Respect and distance. Fewer problems are experienced.



G4: Merit should be ensured in academic and administrative staff. Politics should not come to the fore. There should be no discrimination among administrative staff.

G8: Merit is the most important ethical rule. Giving people the positions they deserve motivates them to work.

**Table 4.** Participants' themes and categories regarding ethical responsibilities.

Theme: Ethical Responsibility	
Categories	Performing duties/responsibilities as required
	The superior cares about merit, justice, respect and equality
	Paying attention to respect
	Paying attention to justice
	Distributing tasks
	Paying attention to responsibility
	Paying attention to equality
	Not harming corporate identity and reputation

**Table 5.** Administrative staff opinions on the theme of ethical responsibility Ethical Responsibility.

Theme	Category	Code	f	
Ethical Responsibility	Performing duties/responsibilities as required (5)	Fulfilling duties and responsibilities as they should be (G1).	5	
		Fulfilling duties and responsibilities of the personnel and being aware of this (G4).		
		Undertaking personal and professional responsibility for all kinds of scientific and academic behavior activities, fulfilling duties with the necessary quality and results (G5).		
		Fulfilling duties with the necessary quality and responsibility (G6).		
		(Feeling responsible for the university and the work we do, etc. (G8).		
	The superior values merit, justice, respect and equality (7)	Managers should not act according to individuals, they should be fair (G1).		7
		Equality in discipline should be ensured and the rules should be valid for everyone (G2).		
		Equality, justice and respect should be given importance. (I give importance to these rules. Because superior-subordinate relationships are at the forefront in the university. If everyone pays attention to these rules, no one can hurt each other (G3).		
		Equal compliance with the rules. The administrator treating the staff equally, Equal distribution of responsibilities. Giving importance to merit (G4).		
		(There are many ethical principles in universities. There are many ethical principles for administrators, such as treating all academic staff and students equally for administrative staff.) One of the most important ones is treating staff equally and respectfully (G8).		
Scientific research, publication analysis ethics (1)	Respecting people and the work done and giving importance to treating them equally (G8).	1		
	Universities giving importance to providing equal opportunities to staff in an ethical context (G9).			
Distribution of tasks (1)	Care should be taken to ensure that scientific research and publication-analysis ethics are the most important issue. (Scientific studies conducted at the university are the most important problem of universities, which are research institutions) (G7).	1		
	Distribution of tasks (G4).			
Corporate identity, not harming reputation (2)	Not to damage the institutional identity and reputation of the university (G5).	2		
	To take care not to damage the institutional identity and reputation of the university (G6).			



As seen in Table 5, in the theme of ethical responsibility, administrative personnel expressed their opinions in the categories of; Duties/responsibilities should be carried out as they should be and these duties/responsibilities should be fulfilled, the superior should value merit-justice-respect and equality, scientific research-publication analysis ethics should be valued, task distribution should be made, institutional identity, and not damaging the reputation. It is seen that the category of the superior should value merit-justice-respect and equality stands out in terms of frequency. Some of the opinions of the participating administrative personnel regarding the theme of “ethical responsibility” are given below.

G3: I think equality-justice-respect are the most important ethical rules. I care about these rules. Because subordinate-superior relations are at the forefront in the university. If everyone pays attention to these rules, no one can hurt each other.

G7: Scientific research and publication-analysis ethics should be the most important issue. Scientific studies conducted at the university are the most important problem of universities, which are research institutions and

G9: Universities should provide equal opportunities to personnel in terms of ethics. For example, the opportunity for promotion should be provided to personnel who meet the necessary qualifications for promotion.

This should happen with the success of the staff. This increases the motivation of the staff and enables them to work more efficiently. Managers should also support the staff at this point. Success increases as it is appreciated. In this context, merit-based appointments can be made in the work order created. This will solve one of the most common problems in the university.

**Table 6.** Themes and categories of the participants regarding the code of ethical conduct.

<b>Theme: Code of Ethical Conduct</b>	
<b>Categories</b>	Being friendly, using polite language and not being negative.
	Giving importance to honesty, integrity, accountability, diligence and justice
	Consideration of working hours
	Paying attention to respect and distance
	Not pursuing personal interests and paying attention to corruption
	General consideration of equality and justice and the supervisor's observance of equality and justice
	Responsibility and performance of duty Being efficient and a problem solver
	Academic freedom, paying attention to autonomy
	Paying attention to fundamental rights

As seen in Table 7, administrative and contract personnel expressed their opinions in the categories of being friendly- using polite language and not being negative, respect and distance, not pursuing personal interests and being careful about corruption, equality and justice in general and the supervisor's observance of equality and justice, responsibility and performance of duty, efficiency and work/problem solving, academic freedom-autonomy and fundamental rights in the theme of ethical conduct. It is seen that the categories of being friendly- using polite language and not being negative, respect and distance, equality and justice in general and the supervisor's observance of equality and justice stand out in terms of frequency. Some of the opinions of the participating administrative personnel regarding the theme of "ethical conduct rule" are given below.



**Table 7.** Administrative staff opinions on the theme of ethical code of conduct.

Theme	Category	Code	f
		The staff should be friendly (G1).	
Being friendly, using polite language and not being negative (3)		Negative behaviors and thoughts should be avoided (G4). A polite language should be used. The university staff should also comply with all the rules I mentioned. (Because this is necessary for a healthy work environment and for things to go smoothly) (G8).	3
Emphasizing honesty, integrity, diligence and justice (2)		Honesty, integrity, diligence, caring about justice, etc. (G4). (Honesty is very important. Personnel should be honest with their superiors and colleagues while fulfilling their duties and responsibilities. This is very important for the health of mutual business relationships) (G9).	2
Emphasizing working hours (1)		Giving importance to working hours (G1).	1
Ethical, Code of Conduct		As long as there are ethical moral rules, there should also be ethical business ethics	
		Giving importance to interpersonal respect and distance (G2).	
	Paying attention to respect and distance (4)	Superiors and officers showing respect to each other (G3). Being respectful. University personnel also complying with all the rules I mentioned. (Because this is necessary for a healthy work environment and for things to progress properly) (G8).	4
		Giving importance to respect for superiors. University personnel showing respect to their superiors in an ethical context and performing their duties in this context. (This is important for the health of the institutional culture). Personnel showing respect for their jobs in an ethical context.	
		In this case, it is very important for the development of a healthy corporate culture. Respect should be at the forefront in the behavior of the staff towards their colleagues (G9).	
	Avoid personal gain and beware of corruption (2)	Paying attention to corruption-related issues in working conditions (G7). Not reflecting personal interests on work, etc. University staff should also comply with all the rules mentioned. (Because this is necessary for a healthy work environment and for the proper progress of work) (G8).	2
The importance of equality and justice in general and the superior's observance of equality and justice (3)	The superiors should observe equality and justice (G3). Everyone should be treated equally regardless of gender, language, religion, or race (G7). Everyone should be treated equally. University staff should also abide by all the rules I mentioned. (Because this is necessary for a healthy work environment and for things to go smoothly) (G8).	3	
Responsibility and performance of duties (2)	Fulfillment of responsibilities of civil servants (G3). Fulfillment of assigned duties (G4).	2	
Being productive and problem-solving (2)	The staff should be problem solvers, not problem tellers (G1) They should prioritize efficiency while performing their duties (G7)	2	
Academic freedom, caring about autonomy (1)	Emphasizing academic freedom and autonomy, academic integrity, responsibility and accountability (G5)	1	
Giving importance to fundamental rights (2)	Protection and strengthening of fundamental rights (G5) Protection and strengthening of fundamental rights (G6)	2	



G7: Using polite language, treating everyone equally, not reflecting personal interests on work, etc. University personnel should also comply with all the rules I mentioned. Because this is necessary for a healthy work environment and for the correct progress of work.

G8: Respect for the supervisor is important. University personnel should respect their supervisors in an ethical context and perform their duties in this context. In an ethical context, staff should respect their work. Respect should be at the forefront of staff's behavior towards their colleagues. In this case, it is very important for the development of a healthy corporate culture.

**Table 8.** Participants' themes and categories regarding ethical issues.

Theme: Ethical Issue	
Categories	Having behavioral problems
	Emphasis on measurement and evaluation
	Technical problems (Administrative problems)
	Communication problem

**Table 9.** Administrative staff opinions on the ethical problem theme.

Theme	Category	Code	f
Ethical Issue	Problems with behavior (12)	The staff not complying with working hours and using all the opportunities provided by the law to the fullest without thinking about the disruption of work. For example, too many class cancellations and the failure of the superiors to follow up on this (G1).	12
		(I did not experience any problems) (G2).	
		Academicians, especially in universities, seeing themselves as superior.	
		They do not respect the civil servants and try to oppress them and apply mobbing. Many academicians are seen shouting at the civil servants (G3).	
		Indiscipline, carelessness, negligence, forgery (G5). Indiscipline, irresponsibility, forgery (G6).	
		Many problems. People putting aside ethical principles and acting in accordance with their own interests. (I do not react to such actions or such people anymore. There are many things I have experienced but I do not want to give information about this) (G8).	
		The staff not complying with the principles of honesty towards their colleagues and superiors (G9).	
		No respect for duty. (In the unethical behaviors we observe, we first try to talk to our staff member, and if we do not get an answer, we report the situation to the superior) (G9).	
		The fact that merit is not taken into consideration creates unrest among the staff	
		(G4). The fact that situations that may lead to plagiarism in research are not sufficiently taken into account, and that duties and responsibilities are not treated with merit (G7).	
Assignments that are not in line with merit are a problem (G9).			
(In the early years of my profession, when the library started providing service 24/7, there was a period when I was given responsibilities outside of ethical boundaries as a staff member, and my working hours were very irregular due to shifts. Again, in the early years of my profession, I was unfairly warned by my superior, who is no longer here, in an unethical way) (G9).			



Lack of sanctions (1)	The staff does not comply with working hours and uses all the opportunities provided by the law without thinking about the disruption to work. For example, too many class cancellations and the failure of the supervisors to follow up on this (G1).	1
Emphasis on measurement and evaluation (3)	Not considering merit also creates unrest among staff (G4). Not taking into account situations that may lead to plagiarism in research, not acting with merit in duties and responsibilities (G7). Assignments that are not in line with merit are problematic (G9). There are inequalities in the distribution of tasks. Of course, the given task is done properly. But sometimes there is unrest when not treated equally (G4).	3
Having technical problems (Administrative problems) (5)	(In the early years of my profession, when the library started providing service 24/7, there was a period when I was given responsibilities outside of ethical boundaries as a staff member and my working hours were very irregular due to shifts. Again, in the early years of my profession, I was unfairly warned by my boss, who is no longer here, in an unethical way) (G9). Not considering merit also creates unrest among the staff (G4). Not taking into account situations that may lead to plagiarism in research, not acting competently in duties and responsibilities (G7). Assignments that are not in line with merit are problematic (G9). In universities, especially academics see themselves as superior. They try to oppress and mob civil servants by not respecting them.	5
Having communication problems (2)	Many academics are seen shouting and yelling at civil servants (G3). (In the early years of my profession, when the library started to provide service 24/7, there was a period when I was given responsibilities outside ethical boundaries as a staff member and my working hours were very irregular due to shifts. Again, in the early years of my profession, I was unfairly warned by my boss who is not here now in an unethical way)(G9).	2

As seen in Table 9, in the ethical problem theme, administrative staff have expressed their opinions in the categories of behavioral problems, lack of sanctions, measurement and evaluation, technical problems (administrative problems) and communication problems. It is seen that the behavioral problems category stands out in terms of frequency. Some of the participant administrative staff opinions regarding the “Ethical Problem” theme are given below.

G3: Academicians in universities, in particular, see themselves as superior. They try to oppress and mob civil servants by not showing respect to them. I have seen many academics yelling at civil servants. G4: Inequalities in the distribution of tasks... Of course, doing the given task properly... But sometimes when you are not treated equally, you get restless.

G8: There are many problems. People put aside ethical principles and act in accordance with their own interests. I do not react to such actions or such people anymore. There are many things I have experienced, but I do not want to give information about this.

**Table 10.** Participants' themes and categories regarding ethical violations.

Theme: Ethical Violation	
Categories	Lack of healthy communication - violation of behavior
	General lack of attention to ethics and professional ethics



**Table 11.** Administrative staff opinions on the theme of ethical violation.

Theme	Category	Code	f
Ethical Violation	Lack of healthy communication-behavior violation of behavior (10)	(I did not encounter any violations, I did not have any problems) (G1) Many academics and administrative officers were seen swearing. A very disrespectful way of conducting relationships. An education like university These are very saddening events in the institution (G2) Discrimination among staff (G6). Many different types of violations of the code of conduct occur (G7). Employees not complying with the principles of honesty towards their colleagues and superiors (G9). Failure to respect duty. (In the unethical behaviors we observe, we first try to talk to our employee friend, and if we do not get an answer, we report the situation to the superior) Employees not complying with the principles of honesty towards their colleagues and superiors (G9). Not considering merit also creates unrest among the staff (G4). Situations that may lead to plagiarism in research are not taken into consideration sufficiently, and duties and responsibilities are not treated with merit (G7). The problem of assignments that are not in line with merit (G9). (In the early years of my profession, when the library first started providing 24/7 service, there was a period when I was given responsibilities outside ethical boundaries as a staff member and my working hours were very irregular due to shifts. Again, in the early years of my profession, I was unfairly warned by my supervisor, who is not here now, in a way that would be unethical) (G9). Managers not acting in accordance with the principles of equality, merit, and impartiality. Employees not treating their colleagues with respect. Incorrect distribution of tasks (G3). Neglect and abuse of duty due to personal interests (G4). Abuse and neglect of duty for personal interests (G5). Conducting poor quality studies in scientific research (G6). Many different types of violations in terms of general ethical principles and professional ethics. (I have experienced problems with professional ethics) (G7).	10
	Lack of attention to ethics and professional ethics in general (11)	Employees not complying with the principles of honesty towards their colleagues and superiors (G9). Lack of respect for duty. (In the unethical behaviors we see, we first try to talk to our staff member, if we do not get an answer, we report the situation to the superior) (G9). Disregard for merit among the staff causing unrest (G4). Situations that may lead to plagiarism in research are not taken into consideration sufficiently, and duties and responsibilities are not treated with merit (G7). Assignments that are not in line with merit are problematic (G9). (In the early years of my profession, when the library first started providing service 24/7, there was a period when I was given responsibilities outside ethical boundaries as a staff member, and my working hours were very irregular due to shifts. Again, in the early years of my profession, I was unfairly warned by my supervisor, who is not here now, in an unethical manner) (G9).	11

As seen in Table 11, in the ethical violation theme, administrative personnel have expressed their opinions in the categories of healthy communication-behavior violation, ethics in general and professional ethics. It is seen that healthy communication-behavior violation and ethics in general and professional ethics categories stand out in terms of frequency. Some of the participant administrative personnel opinions regarding the theme of “Ethical Violation” are given below.

G2: I have seen many academics and administrative managers swearing. Relations are conducted very disrespectfully.





This is very upsetting in an educational institution such as a university.

G3: Administrators not acting in accordance with the principle of equality, merit and impartiality... Personnel not treating their colleagues with respect... Improper distribution of tasks...

G7: There are many different types of violations in terms of rules of conduct, general ethical principles and professional ethics.

**Table 12.** Themes and categories of participants' suggestions.

Theme: Suggestions	
Categories	Having control and supervision
	Implementing a sanction and punishment-reward system
	Providing training
	Ensuring equality of opportunity
	Detection, reporting and rapid resolution of unethical issues
	The supervisor being an ethical role model
	Making technical and administrative arrangements
	Giving importance to merit
	Creating a corporate culture

**Table 13.** Opinions of administrative staff on the theme of preliminary recommendations.

Theme	Category	Code	f
Suggestions	Presence of control and supervision (2)	Increasing the control system. For example, monitoring lessons and working hours (G1). Emphasizing the importance of frequently reviewing employee-supervisor relationships (G9).	2
	Implementation of a sanction and punishment-reward system (1)	Developing the institution of punishment and reward to prevent ethical problems. Punishing a superior who swears. Punishing personnel who do not fulfill their responsibilities, whether academic or administrative personnel. No other situation is possible (G3).	1
	Provision of training (3)	Providing more training on ethical rules of conduct (G2). In order to prevent ethical problems, various trainings should be provided for academic, administrative staff and students when they start the institution. If we start from the concept of lifelong learning, ethical principles actually start from the family, so it is thought that it is a little late for students or staff who come to the university (G8). Emphasizing staff training (G9).	3
	Provision of equal opportunities (1)	Application of the principle of equality (G4). Identifying and reporting unethical problems (G5).	1
	Detection, reporting and rapid resolution of unethical problems (3)	If there is a problem detected, warning should be given and reporting to the necessary superior (G6). Any ethical problem should be resolved quickly and permanently (G9).	3
	Provision of the supervisor as an ethical role model (1)	In order for all sub-divisions to behave ethically, first of all, the administrations must behave ethically and set an example for everyone (G8).	1
	Provision of technical and administrative arrangements (1)	Causes poor quality publications, such as academic incentives removal of practices, appointments based on knowledge and merit based on managers' top-down not appointed (G7)	1
	Giving importance to merit (1)	Application of merit-neutrality (G4).	1
	Creating corporate culture (1)	Taking steps to improve corporate culture (G9).	1



As seen in Table 13, in the theme of suggestions, administrative personnel have expressed their opinions in the categories of Control and inspection, sanction and punishment-reward system, education, equal opportunities, detection-reporting and rapid solution of unethical problems, the superior being an ethical role model, technical and administrative regulations, merit and institutional culture. It is seen that the categories of education and detection-reporting and rapid solution of unethical problems stand out in terms of frequency. Some of the opinions of the participating administrative personnel regarding the theme of “Suggestions” are given below.

G3: In order to prevent ethical problems, the institution of punishment and reward should be developed. A superior who swears should be punished. Personnel who do not fulfill their responsibilities, whether academic or administrative personnel, should be punished. It is not possible in any other way.

G8: In order to prevent ethical problems, various trainings should be provided first for academic, administrative personnel and students when they start the institution. If we start from the concept of lifelong learning, ethical principles should actually start from the family, so I think it is a little late for students or personnel who come to the university. In order for all sub-divisions to behave ethically, first of all, managements should behave ethically and be an example to everyone.

G7: To eliminate practices that cause poor quality publications, such as academic incentives, assignments should be based on knowledge and merit, and managers should not be appointed from the top down

## DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, and SUGGESTIONS

In the literature, studies have been conducted on various topics such as non-compliance with rules regarding ethical issues, disclosure of confidential information, use of university resources/facilities, profit relationship with suppliers, competition with the university, etc. (Gerçek et al., 2011; Aydın et al., 2022; Aydın, 1998). In this study, administrative staff opinions regarding ethical issues experienced in universities and solution suggestions were examined.

A great many positive and negative opinions were reported in the research in the context of ethics. When we analyze the general problems experienced in the university regarding ethics, it is seen that the most frequently mentioned problems are stated as “behavioral problems”. This is followed by technical problems/administrative problems, measurement and evaluation, lack of sanctions and communication problems, respectively. In the light of this data, it can be evaluated that there are serious problems regarding ethics in the university within the scope of the research. These data are consistent with the data in the studies of Gerçek et al. (2011), Aydın (2022) and Aydın (1998).

Given the issues Aydın (2001) raised years ago, including bigotry, abuse, neglect, and favoritism, it is likely that these problems still exist. It is also possible to view this problem as a matter of negligence or indifference. These results have also been expressed by (Arneson, 1992). This shows that behavioral problems have been experienced not only in Turkey but also worldwide since the past. The fact that the university is not sufficiently institutionalized in every respect causes ethical elements, like other elements, not to be implemented properly.

Although the issue of ethics is important for universities, the negative opinion on this issue is both very high and behavioural problems are experienced at the highest level today. It has been an issue that has been expressed from the beginning that there are serious behavioural problems in universities in terms of ethics (Aydın, 1998; Gerçek et al., 2011). The research result that there are behavioural problems remains as an unresolved problem despite the long years that have passed. Between the research of Gerçek et al. (2011), Aydın (2022) and Aydın (1998) and this research, René Pedroza Flores<sup>1</sup> (2020) and Società Italiana degli Economisti (2020) have also conducted research on ethics, all three of which have drawn attention to behavioral problems. As a result of comparing the research result with these studies, it has been seen that the problem still continues and therefore triggers other

problems. When the data is examined, it will be understood that behavioral problems are also shown as the main reason why ethics as a system cannot be fully established on an institutional basis. Although these findings were made long ago by Gerçek et al. (2011) and Aydın (1998), it is seen that this situation has not been seriously resolved yet. The opinions are also expressed by the parties with at least ten (10) years of 4/D contracts and eleven (11) years of civil servants.

The findings that unproductive behaviors lead to ethical problems in the studies conducted by Aydın et al. (2022), Arneson (1992), René Pedroza Flores1 (2020) and Aydın (1998) are consistent with the results of this research. As a result of the data obtained in the research, the following results were reached: In the university, the most problems are experienced in the category of behavioral problems in the ethical context. Suggestions were also expressed more in this area. The most important problems are indiscipline, fraud, irresponsibility, carelessness and disrespect. The most frequently expressed suggestion was that merit and impartiality should be implemented.

The ethical principles that the participants emphasized the most are merit, justice, equality, impartiality and respect/love for the individual and the job. These principles are also expressed by experienced/senior personnel at the university. In addition, education/trainingstudent-focused, responsibility and working hours-arrangement of authority and responsibilities according to human conditions, distance/level of relationships-professional ethics, honesty/truthfulness-trust/reliability and science being in accordance with the truth, sensitivity-self-criticism-protection, It has been concluded that the principles mentioned by the participants in the context of ethical principles are fulfilling their obligations-feeling of belonging to the institution, fulfilling their obligations and feeling of belonging to the institution, not abusing trust and looking out for the benefit of the institution, etc. Participants have also made various suggestions in this context. It has been concluded that the personnel mostly stated that the principles of merit, equality, justice, impartiality and respect should be ensured. In addition, other suggestions made by the participants are education/trainingstudent-focused, arranging duties-authority-responsibility-working hours according to human conditions, honesty-truthfulness-trust-reliability, science being in accordance with the truth, self-criticism-protection-sensitivity, fulfilling obligations to students-colleagues-institution, feeling of belonging to the institution, not abusing trust and making decisions for the benefit of the institution. This is a remarkable result in the context that ethical principles are of vital value for the individual and the institution.

In the research, it was determined that the university administrative staff had the idea that in order for all subordinates to behave ethically, management should first act ethically and set an example for everyone. At the same time, in the context of the ethical responsibility theme, it was concluded that supervisors should bear a responsibility such as caring about merit, justice, respect and equality. In addition, performing the duties/responsibilities as they should be, valuing scientific research-publication analysis ethics, distributing tasks and not harming the institutional identity-reputation were among the responsibilities mentioned by the participants in the context of ethical responsibility. It was concluded that they stated that in order to solve these problems, scientific research-publication-analysis ethics should be accepted as the most important issue, the staff should fulfill their duties and responsibilities, and care should be taken not to damage the corporate identity-reputation of the university. This is a remarkable result in terms of what should be cared about in the context of ethical responsibility.

The most important ethical rules in universities are respect-distance, smiling-using a polite language-not being negative, equality-justice in general and especially the superior's observance of equality-justice. In addition, honesty-truthfulness-accountability-diligencejustice, impartiality, caring about working hours, not pursuing personal interests-paying attention to corruption, responsibility-performance of duties, efficiency and work/problem solving, academic freedom-autonomy and protection and strengthening of fundamental rights were the rules mentioned by the participants in the context of the ethical code of conduct. It was concluded that they stated that the personnel control system should be increased in the context of the ethical code of conduct; for example, following up on

courses-following up on work hours and frequently reviewing the relations of the personnel with each other and their superiors. This is an important result in terms of a healthy work environment and the correct progress of the work.

Behavioral problems are one of the most important ethical problems expressed by the participants, including experienced/senior personnel. The most highlighted problems:

- ✓ Indiscipline, fraud, irresponsibility, carelessness and disrespect,
- ✓ Staff not complying with working hours,
- ✓ Using all the opportunities provided by the law to the fullest, without thinking that there will be a problem,
- ✓ Workload, for example too many classes being canceled and superiors not following up,
- ✓ Academics at universities consider themselves superior, do not respect civil servants and try to put pressure and mobbing on them,
- ✓ Personnel put aside ethical principles and act in their own interests,

The problems that the participants mentioned regarding inequalities are ethical problems.

Results like not considering merit and inciting dissatisfaction among the employees, as well as failing to consider circumstances that could lead to plagiarism in research and task distribution, have also emerged. Participants have also made various suggestions in this context. The implementation of merit-impartiality, detection and reporting of unethical problems- warning if there is a detected problem- reporting to the necessary superior, solving any ethical problem quickly-permanently and implementing the principle of equality. These results are important in terms of the health of mutual business relations and the development of a healthy corporate culture.

The ethical violations that the participants emphasize the most are generally ethical-professional ethics violations and healthy communication-behavior violations. The violations that the participants mentioned were; managers not acting in accordance with the principles of equality-merit-impartiality, Staff treating their colleagues disrespectfully improper distribution of tasks, neglecting-misusing tasks due to personal interests, conducting poor quality studies in scientific research staff members' disregard for the values of integrity toward superiors and coworkers, and not respecting their duties. In addition, the conduct of relationships very disrespectfully due to the swearing of many academics and administrative superiors, discrimination among staff, many different types of violations in terms of rules of conduct, staff not complying with the principles of honesty towards their colleagues and superiors, not respecting their duties, individuals being charged with responsibilities outside ethical boundaries, etc. were obtained. The violations that the participants mentioned were concluded. It was concluded that in case of unethical behavior, talking to the personnel and reporting the situation to the superior if no response is received, applying the principle of equality, removing practices that cause poor quality publications such as academic incentives, making assignments based on knowledge and merit, not appointing managers from the top down. The institution of punishment and reward should be developed to prevent ethical problems.

The suggestions that the participants emphasized the most were education and detection-reporting and rapid resolution of unethical problems. At the same time, the sanction-punishment-reward system and equality of opportunity should be ensured through control-supervision, the supervisor should be an ethical role model, technical and managerial regulation should be provided, merit should be ensured and corporate culture should be created, etc., etc., it was concluded that the participants mentioned in the context of suggestions. Participants also made various opinions supporting these categories:

- ✓ Increasing the control system in the context of tracking lessons and overtime,
- ✓ Frequently reviewing staff-supervisor relations,



- ✓ Developing the institution of punishment and reward to prevent ethical problems, for example, punishing a superior who swears,
- ✓ First of all, providing various trainings for academic, administrative staff and students when they start the institution,
- ✓ Punishing personnel (academics or administrative) who do not fulfill their responsibilities,
- ✓ Detecting and reporting unethical problems, solving any ethical problem quickly and permanently,
- ✓ In order for all subordinates to behave ethically, first of all, management must act ethically and set an example for everyone,
- ✓ Removal of practices that cause poor quality publications, such as academic incentives,
- ✓ Implementation of the principle of equality and impartiality,
- ✓ Appointments are made based on knowledge and merit, and managers are not appointed topdown,
- ✓ Taking steps to improve the corporate culture.

### **Suggestions for Practitioners:**

This study was prepared by examining the literature on the subject in detail.

Any ethical problem should be solved quickly and permanently. Problems should be detected and reported, if there is a problem, the relevant person should be warned and reported to the necessary superior. The relationships of the personnel with each other and with their superiors should be reviewed frequently and control processes should be applied this regard. The control system should be increased in the context of monitoring lessons and working hours. In order to solve these problems, all university stakeholders should adopt ethical values and avoid unethical behaviors. In order for all subordinates to behave ethically, superiors/managements should act fairly, impartially, respectfully, give importance to knowledge and merit and be an example to everyone. When this is the case, a healthy institutional culture can be contributed to.

Professional ethics is an important ethical field of study in terms of the qualities that university stakeholders have. Failure of managers to act in accordance with the principles of equality-merit-impartiality, failure of personnel to treat their colleagues with respect, failure to properly distribute tasks, neglect-abuse of duties due to personal interests, conducting poor-quality studies in scientific research, failure of personnel to comply with the principles of honesty towards their colleagues and superiors, and failure to respect duty are actions that fall outside the context of professional ethics principles. In order to prevent such ethical problems, penalties and rewards should be developed.

In higher education institutions, all personnel (academic, administrative, contracted, etc.) should be frequently directed to compulsory ethics courses, information seminars and workshops covering ethical problems, developments and innovations, and thus ethical awareness should be created in the personnel. Even for students, courses on ethics should be included in the curriculum.

### **Recommendations for Researchers:**

Opinions of personnel who did not respond positively to the research for various reasons should be investigated.

The factors affecting managers' thoughts and behaviors regarding not paying attention to ethical behavior, not caring about ethical behavior, or not using it effectively should be investigated.



The reasons why ethical problems are still experienced despite being expressed by superiors should be investigated.

The opinions of users and employees regarding ethical problems should be mutually investigated, and the reasons for the differences should be determined.

### **Ethics and Conflict of Interest**

Ethical procedures in conducting the study were adhered to by the researchers and they declare that no conflict of interest exists. Details regarding the research model, participants, data collection instruments, data collection, and data analysis are provided in this section. The necessary ethics committee permission for the research has been obtained (Educational Sciences Institute Research and Publication Ethics Committee, 03.06.2024 and decision numbered 08/38).

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