

# The Role of Ethical Behavior Guidelines and Ethics Training on the Institutionalization of Ethics: A Study in Public Institutions

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**Abstract:** This study focuses on the relationship the perception of ethical codes and ethics training programs have on the institutionalization of ethics in Turkey's public institutions. The study additionally examines the mediating role of the sub-dimensions of ethics institutionalization. For this purpose, a survey methodology approach has been applied on a sample of 551 public servants. The statistical analyses indicate public servants' perceptions of ethical behavior guidelines to have a positive impact on the implicit and explicit institutionalization of ethics and its overall construct. Ethics training programs are also found to be a determinant of explicit institutionalization of ethics. Lastly, explicit institutionalization plays a partial mediating role on the relationship between the perception of ethical codes and the implicit institutionalization of ethics. The study provides support that ethical issues and implications are also as important in public organizations as in the private sector. The perception of ethical codes is vital for establishing an ethical culture and climate as well as for public institutions to increase their public image and quality of service.

**Keywords:** Institutionalization of ethics, principles of ethical behavior, ethics in public administration, public institutions, ethics training

## Etigin Kurumsallaşmasında Etik Davranış İlkeleri ve Etik Eğitimin Rolü: Kamu Kurumlarında Bir Araştırma

**Özet:** Bu çalışmada Türkiye'deki kamu kurumlarında etik kodların algılanması, etik eğitim programları ve etigin kurumsallaşması arasındaki ilişkiye odaklanılmıştır. Ayrıca etigin kurumsallaşmasının alt boyutlarının gösterdiği aracılık etkisi de irdelenmiştir. Bu amaçla 551 memurdan oluşan bir örneklemden anket yöntemiyle veri toplanmıştır. Yapılan istatistiksel analiz bulgularına göre kamu görevlilerinin Etik Davranış İlkelerine yönelik algısının, etigin açık kurumsallaşması ve örtük kurumsallaşması ve bütün olarak etigin kurumsallaşması üzerinde olumlu bir etkisi olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Buna ek olarak etik eğitim programlarının etigin açık kurumsallaşmasının belirleyicileri arasında olduğu görülmüştür. Son olarak, etigin açık kurumsallaşmasının etik kodlara yönelik algı ve etigin örtük kurumsallaşması arasındaki ilişkide kısmi aracılık rolü üstlendiği tespit edilmiştir. Bu çalışmanın bulguları, etik konusunun ve uygulamalarının özel sektör örgütlerinde olduğu kadar kamu sektöründe yer alan kurumlar için de önemli olduğunu göstermiştir. Bununla birlikte etik bir kültür ve iklim oluşturmak için etik kodlara yönelik algının kamu kurumlarının kamudaki imajı ve hizmet kalitesini artırması açısından hayati olduğu tespit edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Etigin kurumsallaşması, etik davranış ilkeleri, kamu yönetimi etiği, kamu kurumları, etik eğitim

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## Introduction

Ethics and ethical problems have been considered more seriously by public and private organizations in recent years. Corporate scandals and democratization of public services have established the basis for this interest among scholars. While states have tried to control and regulate private sector transactions in accordance with corporate governance rules, they have also been confronted with public demand for more transparent and accountable policies (Singhapakdi et al., 2010).

Possessing ethical values should be one of the qualifications most required of public personnel when serving the public. In this context, ethics has been defined as the philosophical search of human behavior that can be called good and bad or right and wrong. On the other hand, public administration ethics incorporates basic values that public personnel should follow while making decisions and fulfilling daily job roles such as equality, neutrality, accountability, transparency, and prioritizing public interest (Eryılmaz & Biricikoğlu, 2011). Moreover, public administration ethics expresses the unity of values that represent public personnel's acceptable and unacceptable acts and behaviors. Because performing public administration depends on both the legal and organizational structure as well as public personnel's qualifications, having public personnel follow ethical values and principles in their job routines is extremely important. As the sophistication of public personnel and their ethical behavioral patterns increase, the quality of public service should also increase. Improving ethical awareness and applications in public administration can be accomplished by institutionalizing ethics that involve explicit forms like publishing ethical codes and establishing ethics committees and ethics training programs as well as implicit configurations such as ethical leadership, culture, and climate (Singhapakdi & Vitell, 2007). Ethical codes may serve as guidelines for public servants to install better governance mechanisms in public institutions, and this need has been fulfilled by the Public Servants Ethics Board's publication of *Regulation on the Principles of Ethical Behavior of the Public Officials* (Official Gazette, 2005). These codes have served as a consequence of the institutional transformation in the Turkish public sector. This study attempts to investigate how these guidelines and further ethical implications formed the institutionalization of ethics in public institutions. Despite numerous previous studies being found about the importance of a code of ethics in private firms (Wotruba et al., 2001; Schawartz, 2002; Lere & Gaumnitz, 2003) and non-profit organizations (Gary, 2007; Handy & Russell, 2018), a lack of research appears to exist about codes of ethics and their implementation in public organizations as well a public administration ethics for different country settings. Furthermore, studying ethics in public institutions is a newly emergent area of

research (Wright et al., 2016; Downe et al., 2016). In addition, Turkey and the Turkish public sector provide a novel research context due to the country having experienced significant institutional transformations for two decades in both private and public institutions (Gül & Kiriş, 2015). Therefore, this study is a rare example of ethics research in public institutions within the context of Turkey. For this reason, the study aims to uncover how public employee perceptions about the ethical codes that resulted from institutional changes within Turkey's public sector and ethical training programs affect the institutionalization of ethics.

We first present the related literature on ethical codes and institutionalization of ethics as well as the research hypotheses. Then we summarize the sampling and measuring processes in the method section. Finally, the findings and related implications for theory and practice have been relayed in the subsequent sections of the article.

## Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

### Ethics and Morals

Ethics and morals have been perceived as the same concept in everyday life. However, these concepts need to be distinguished by considering both their etymological roots and real meanings. Ethics is a field of philosophy that searches for the concepts of duty, obligation, responsibility, necessity, and virtue; it handles the judgements of right and wrong or good and bad, investigates the nature of moral action, and tries to explain how a good life happens (Cevizci, 1999, p. 18). Ethics as a word has two different kinds of usage and comes from the ancient Greek word *ethos*. The first usage  $\acute{\epsilon}\theta\omicron\varsigma$  means habit, customs, and traditions and is synonymous with morals. On the other hand, the second usage  $\eta\theta\omicron\varsigma$  corresponds to the field of philosophy in today's use of ethics and stands for reflecting on the reasons behind human actions and the traditional rules of behavior as opposed to behaviors that do not question their standards of values (Pieper, 2012). The concept of morals, which is derived from the Latin *mos*, means both customs and traditions as well as personality. In Turkish, the word *ahlak* is derived from the Arabic *hulk* and corresponds with the concept of morals in the meaning of customs, traditions, and habits as in Western languages (Tepe, 1998). Nowadays, the concept of ethics has gained a more inclusive meaning and is used as a moral philosophy (Cengiz, 1998).

Ethics is a subfield of philosophy that investigates morals, moral problems, and moral judgements (Frankena, 1988). In other words, the subject of ethics is the concept of morals (Pieper, 2012). The specific values and acts that are defined as good and bad and express the imperatives and requisites in all societies have been maintained throughout history. Societies have been surrounded by an invisible network that involves particular actions, thoughts, habits, customs, and traditions. All human beings live in this invisible network from birth. In this regard, the concept of morals can be defined as the embedded lifestyle of an individual or society, one that is arranged and become tradition through tendencies, thoughts, beliefs, customs, and habits, and the values, orders, norms, and prohibitions contained within them for a certain period of time (Ozlem, 2004). As is understood, morals lay on the truth of the variability these relationships have within societies and ages. However, ethical relationships show no change or variability in their structures (Kuçuradi, 2006). In other words, the questions and answers that ethics seek do not relate to singular actions or special cases. Ethics asks questions that are related to society as a whole and seeks answers on which everybody can agree.

While morals are defined as “the entire body of rules that are accepted for reaching vital goals and for keeping alive certain values that are also determined and decided by a certain society” (Cevizci, 2002, p. ??), ethics debates problems on a general, principled, and abstract platform by reconstructing all conditions with a formal method to define an action as moral. For this reason, ethics does not determine the concrete goals that everyone should reach or that are good on their own terms. Ethics specifies the principles and primarily shows which goal can be binding as a good goal. Ethics does not say what is good but how rather how a good judgement gains this trait (Pieper, 2012, p. 29). As a result, the normative side of morals becomes more apparent.

While ethics is the theory of behaviors that are defined as right or wrong, morality is the practice of these actions. As such, people mention ethical principles of actions rather than moral principles and address moral behavior rather than ethical ones (Bilington, 2011). Ethics symbolizes the effort of showing a wider view that comprises the whole picture, while morality is related to the details that constitute this view.

### **Classification of Ethics**

No accurate classification of ethics exists that everyone agrees on. Cevizci (2002) categorized ethics as descriptive, normative, and meta ethics. Moreover, Özlem

(2004) sorted ethics as aiming at the ultimate good, proper acts, and freedom of willpower. Finally, Pieper (2012) classified ethics as descriptive and normative ethics. However, dividing ethics as theoretical and applied ethics is more convenient. While theoretical ethics involves normative and descriptive ethics, applied ethics includes professional ethics or the field of ethics that is focused on things such as law, science, art, and public administration (Koçyiğit & Karadağ, 2016). This study is under the umbrella of applied ethics.

### *Applied Ethics*

*Ethics can be performed as an applied scientific activity rather than an autonomous (theoretical) scientific activity; as general ethical principles are applied to life and fields of action, ethics have become more tangible and relatedly interpret the demand of absoluteness and unconditionality of ethicality and morality or behavioral science. (Pieper, 2012, p. 85)*

In this context, the main concern of applied ethics is more related to the nature of application rather than theory (Motilal, 2010). Applied ethics is the art or science of expressing the ethical dilemmas and problems that emerge in distinct social contexts (Collste, 2012). It places the practical moral problems that are daily arguments in societies on the agenda. In other words, it aims to establish concrete knowledge through abstract concepts. The scope of applied ethics is very wide, and this has caused ethics to popularize. The most well-known fields of applied ethics can be summarized as political ethics, medical ethics, bioethics, environmental ethics, law ethics, security services ethics and jurisdiction ethics. Public administration ethics is also a subfield of applied ethics.

### *Public Administration Ethics and Ethical Codes*

Ethics can also be described with the concepts of duty, virtues, rules, principles, and social benefit that have philosophical aspects. Duty is fulfilling the necessary behaviors and roles for a certain job or profession. Furthermore, virtues can be described as the moral characteristics that a good person should convey. While rules mean the general written and unwritten principles that should be followed and show the basic truths about human behavior, social benefit corresponds to the maximum obtainable benefit from acts by a great number of people. For example, public administrators should be fair and honorable and should perform their profession ideally. Likewise, they should approach everybody equally and fairly and pursue law when doing their job (Svara, 2015). In this regard, public administration ethics, which has been shaped by these philosophical concepts, can be defined

as “the entirety of principles and values like the neutrality, integrity, kindness, justice, transparency, accountability, public interest, duty commitment, merit, productivity, efficiency, and qualities that public administrators and personnel should follow when making decisions and performing public services” (Eryılmaz & Biricikoğlu, 2011, p. 35).

Public administration ethics can also be described as the behaviors of public personnel that occur in accordance with law, ethical codes, and diverse rules (Özdemir, 2008). As these definitions suggest, the behaviors of public personnel can be positioned as ethical if they are compatible with laws and ethical codes. Ethical codes are systematic efforts that describe acceptable behaviors (Plant, 2001); they are formal, written, and declaratory documents that involve moral behavioral patterns to guide employees in organizations (Schwartz, 2001). Ethical behavioral codes function as guidelines for public servants while doing their daily work, increase the trust of citizens toward the state, and enhance the quality of public service.

A close relationship exists between ethical behavioral principles and laws. Ethical behavioral codes can arrange subjective conditions that are sometimes unable to be legally regulated. Ethical codes involve three different meanings: The first meaning involves the ideals and goals ethical codes seek to achieve. The second meaning, involves the rules that are compatible with these ideals and goals. The third meaning involves the sanctions that are applied when people do not follow ethical codes (Chandler, 1983).

Until 2005, the provisions involving ethical codes had shown a dispersed outlook in Turkey’s legislations. Ending this legislative dispersion of ethical codes has been attempted by constructing the Ethical Board of Public Servants in 2004 with the aims of transparency, neutrality, accountability, and public interest in public servants’ services (Law No. 5176). The ethical codes that bind all public administration and public services in the Republic of Turkey were published by the Ethical Board of Public Servants in 2005 under the name *Regulation on the Principles of Ethical Behavior of the Public Officials and Application Procedures and Essentials*.\*\* The reason for publishing this legislation is summarized in Article 1 as, “to establish ethical culture in public, to determine the principles of ethical behavior of the public officials who have to abide while executing their duties.” Also, Article 23 of the legislation ensures that public servants employed in public service are subject to these principles, stating, “Public officials are responsible to abide by the principles of ethical behavior determined in this Regulation while performing their duty.

These principles constitute one part of the legislation that arranges the employment of public officials.”

The legislation identifies ethical behavior principles through the 18 articles, which can be summarized as: (1) public service consciousness in performing duties, (2) consciousness of serving the community, (3) compliance with service standards, (4) commitment to the objective and mission, (5) integrity and impartiality, (6) prestige and trust, (7) decency and respect, (8) notification to the competent authority, (9) avoiding conflict of interest, (10) not using the duty and authorities to derive benefit, (11) prohibition of receiving gifts and deriving benefits, (12) making use of public domain and sources, (13) avoiding extravagance, (14) binding statements and factitious statements, (15) notification, transparency, and participation, (16) managers’ liability to render account, (17) relations with former public officials, and (18) declaring property.

### **Institutionalization of Ethics**

Sims (1991) introduced the main ideas about the institutionalization of ethics and revealed the indications about an institution that have ethical values to be based on employees’ ethical behaviors and continuity and become identical to the behaviors in that institution. In another definition, institutionalization of ethics is described as the formal and bare overlap between the ethical values and behaviors of institutions or organizations in daily work life (Carslon & Perrewe, 1995). The institutionalization of ethical principles can be done in two ways: The first way is the existence of an organizational culture that supports ethical behaviors. Organizations or institutions should create a culture that prioritizes and cares about ethical behavior, and they should develop this culture in the aftermath of this process. Secondly, ethical codes should be created and implemented in an organization. Additionally, ethical codes explain the general value system of the organization, describe the goals of the organization, and present a road map that helps make decisions compatible with these codes. Moreover, ethics training programs are another popular way to institutionalize ethics nowadays (Sims, 1991).

Institutionalization of ethics is defined as the degree to which ethics are incorporated into decision-making processes explicitly and implicitly in an organization. Incorporation of ethics into decision-making processes implicitly implies manifesting ethical behavior indirectly and accepting that behavior as vital for the organization (Singhapakdi & Vitell, 2007). The most important component of the explicit institutionalization of ethics is having ethical codes in an organization.

In this respect, ethical codes present a significant opportunity to public administrators for comparing and supporting ethical issues and raising awareness about them among public employees. Another important component of the explicit institutionalization of ethics is ethics training. Organizations should encourage the usage of ethical codes in ethics training programs and show how ethical codes have become concrete in daily work life. Furthermore, ethics committees and guidelines that regulate the ethical policies of organizations are the other components of explicit institutionalization of ethics (Brenner, 1992; Jose & Thibodeaux, 1999).

The implicit institutionalization of ethics involves organizational culture, incentive systems for ethical behavior, ethical leadership, fair promotion policies, and performance assessment. An ethical organizational culture is the main instrument for extending ethical behavior as it shapes the ethical behaviors and moral atmosphere in organizations. Ethical leadership as the other component of implicit institutionalization of ethics contributes to managerial decision-making processes by making the ethical dimension more visible and establishing ethical principles over those processes. In addition to this, ethical leadership indicates the presence of a role model in organizations who applies ethical principles and determines the moral standards of the organization (Jose & Thibodeaux, 1999).

Organizations should direct their employees about what kinds of ethical behavior they should have and express the rules and principles clearly. However, they should care more about the implicit institutionalization of ethics for their ongoing activities. The implicit institutionalization of ethics can create an organizational culture that heads toward ethical behavioral principles by benefiting from managers' general approach and ethical leadership qualifications. Moreover, the implicit institutionalization of ethics may include some of the components of explicit institutionalization of ethics. For instance, when manager training programs contain ethical components, they can understand and appreciate the importance of ethics in the success of the organization. The institutionalization of ethics provides a more positive organizational climate alongside controlling ethical problems in organizational setting (Vitell & Singhapakdi, 2008). The literature on the institutionalization of ethics has shown it to have significant relationships with organizational outcomes, whether they are related with ethics or not. For example, the explicit institutionalization of ethics positively influences the implicit institutionalization of ethics (Singhapakdi et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2018; Popoola et al., 2017). Additionally, both the implicit and explicit institutionalizations of ethics have a significant positive effect on employees' comprehension about the importance of



ethics in their organizations. Furthermore, the implicit institutionalization of ethics has a positive effect on employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and solidarity in organizations (Singhapakdi & Vitell, 2007; Vitell & Singhapakdi, 2008).

### Hypotheses

As mentioned before, the presence of ethical codes or principles is an important component of the institutionalization of ethics (Jose & Thibodeaux, 1999) because ethical codes shape ethical values and get approval in their environments (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Long & Driscoll, 2008).

The emergence of ethical behaviors in organizations is highly related to ethical decision-making processes. These processes are mostly affected by organizational culture because organizational culture specifies the collective norms that will also affect employee behavior in organizations. In other words, a strong organizational culture regarding ethical behavior is closely related to a strong normative ethical structure (Trevino, 1986). Organizations, especially governmental organizations, can have a normative or rule-based structure through the presence of laws, legislations, and ethical codes. At this point, an organizational culture that supports ethical behavior would also ensure the institutionalization of ethics and the manifestation of ethical behavior by the employees in that organization (Carlson & Perrew, 1995). Moreover, recent studies have started to realize the importance of ethics and ethical behavior in governmental organizations as ethical behaviors impact government's accountability, trust, and efficiency (Wright et al., 2016, p. 647). For example, Raile (2012) investigated how public employee perceptions about a positive ethical climate are affected by different working conditions in the context of the USA. Additionally, Downe et al. (2016) provided evidence about leaders' role in applying ethical conduct in the UK's local governmental institutions. However, not enough research has occurred in the literature on public employees' ethical behaviors in developing countries like Turkey that have undergone drastic institutional reforms.

The ethical codes and employees' acknowledgement of these codes will become a significant part of the organizational culture and facilitate the traditionalizing of ethical behavior in the organizational setting. In other words, the presence of ethical codes or principles are the initial point of the institutionalization of ethics. In this respect, the existence of the Regulation on the Principles of Ethical Behavior of the Public Officials and Application Procedures and Essentials is an important step for as-

asuring the institutionalization of ethics in Turkey's public administration. Therefore, the related hypothesis that will investigate the relationship between public servants' ethical behavior principles and the institutionalization of ethics is stated as:

*Hypothesis 1:* The perception of public personnel towards ethical behavioral principles positively affects the institutionalization of ethics.

The institutionalization of ethics has been explained through two dimensions: implicit and explicit institutionalization. The most significant tool of explicit institutionalization of ethics is the presence of ethical codes in the organizations. These ethical codes guide employees in comparing which behaviors are ethical in regard to the criterion of proper behavior and the degree of the importance ethics have in that organization. Consequently, the existence and perception of public servants' ethical behavior principles will impact the explicit institutionalization of ethics in Turkey's public administration. Based on this argument, the following hypothesis would be:

*Hypothesis 2:* The perception of public personnel toward the ethical behavior principles positively affects the explicit institutionalization of ethics.

The other significant tool of the explicit institutionalization of ethics is the presence of ethics training for employees. Ethical behavior codes and rules become functional in organizations through ethics training programs (Tüsiad, 2003). As Uzun (2017, p. 114) proposed that "Ethics training programs are crucial for organizations as they help employees recognize the common behavioral standards that are expected from them for understanding and implementing these standards and developing joint solutions toward the ethical problems they face in the organizational setting." Ethics training programs are closely related to the explicit institutionalization of ethics due to their aid for showing employees the ethical dilemmas and issues more concretely in daily work life and how they can behave according to ethical rules.

Article 20 of the Regulation on the Principles of Ethical Behavior of the Public Officials and Application Procedures and Essentials necessitates that public administrators train their personnel about ethical issues. Article 25, "Establishing Ethical Culture and Training," instills the Ethical Board of Public Servants with the charge of ethics training in public institutions. As is understood, ethics training programs explicitly fall under the responsibility of administrators to institutionalize ethics in public institutions. Thus, the next hypothesis is:

*Hypothesis 3:* The ethics training programs that are provided to public personnel positively affect the explicit institutionalization of ethics.

The implicit institutionalization of ethics occurs in organizations through ethical organizational culture and leadership, incentive systems for ethical behavior, fair promotion policies, and manager's fair behavior toward employees as opposed to expressing ethical behavior principles directly (Jose & Thibodeaux, 1999). Even if the implicit institutionalization of ethics appears to only affect positive employee behavior, it cannot emerge without the existence of the explicit institutionalization of ethics (Singhapakdi & Vitell, 2007; Lee et al., 2018; Popoola et al., 2017). Organizations can prepare the groundwork for the implicit institutionalization of ethics by developing ethical codes and ethics training programs (Singhapakdi et al., 2010). Ethical codes and ethics training programs can also affect the implicit institutionalization of ethics, but this effect is primarily related to the presence of the explicit institutionalization of ethics. In conclusion, the presence and perception of ethical codes in public organizations provides the explicit institutionalization of ethics and then contributes to the implicit institutionalization of ethics. In this respect, the related hypotheses are:

*Hypothesis 4:* The perception of public personnel toward ethical behavior principles positively affects the implicit institutionalization of ethics.

*Hypothesis 5:* The explicit institutionalization of ethics mediates the relationship between public personnel's perception toward ethical behavioral principles and the implicit institutionalization of ethics.

The proposed research model can be seen in Figure 1.

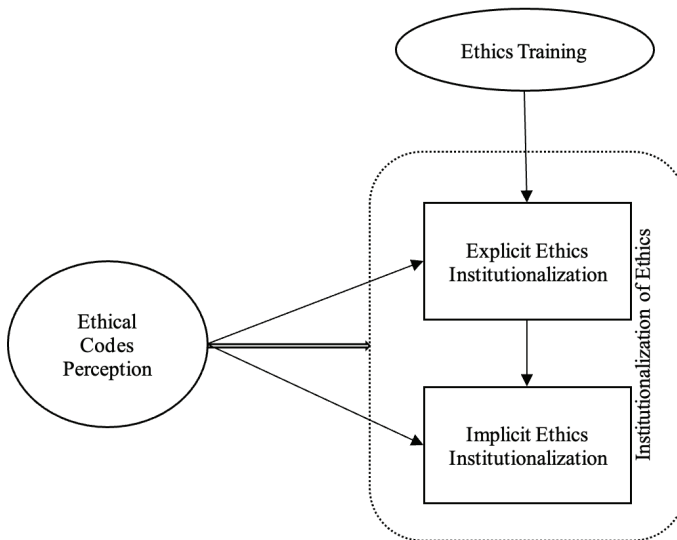


Figure 1. Proposed research model.

## Method

This study aims to find how the perception of public servants in Diyarbakır Province toward ethical behavioral principles affect the institutionalization of ethics. For this reason, a survey has been developed to conduct the research. The survey was distributed by hand and collected by the researcher after face-to-face contact with the participants. The first part of the survey is composed of demographic and yes/no questions. The second part of the survey includes the scales for collecting data on perceptions about ethical behavioral principles and the institutionalization of ethics. The surveys were collected between April and July of 2019. The participants were assured that their personal information would not be shared by third parties due to the sensitive nature of questions related to ethical issues. The results of the surveys have been analyzed using the statistical software SPSS 25.

## Sample

This study uses the simple random sampling method to reach the maximum number of public servants in Diyarbakır Province. The relevant permissions were from authorities for collecting the survey data. According to information gathered from the governorship of Diyarbakır, 65,000 public personnel were found in Diyarbakır Province in 2019. The main criteria for sample selection is based on the Law of Public Servants No. 657, which classifies public officers as public servants, contracted personnel, and public labor. The research sample was selected as public servants as the majority of public officers are public servants. The final sample of the study contains the 551 participants who had no missing or incorrect information in their survey responses.

The sample of the study consists of 222 (40.3%) females and 329 (59.7%) males, of whom 29 (5.3%) are managers and 522 (94.7%) are employees. The ages of the sample are distributed as follows: 21-25 (3.3%), 26-30 (8.2%), 31-35 (18.7%), 36-40 (23.2%), 41-45 (24.3%), and over 45 (22.3%). The participants' education levels are as follows: high school (3.1%), undergraduate (89.3%), and graduate (7.6%). Participants' monthly income range is: 2,500-3,499 TL (5.8%), 3,500-4,499 TL (32.7%), 4,500-5,499 TL (42.5%), 5,500-6,499 TL (13.4%), and 6,500-7,499 TL (5.4%). The sample's marital status is: 433 (78.6%) married, 69 (12.5%) single, and 49 (8.9%) divorced.

## Scales

All scale items have been measured using 5-point Likert type questions ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The scale items for measuring

perceptions about ethical behavioral principles were developed by the researcher according to the Regulation on the Principles of Ethical Behavior of the Public Officials and Application Procedures and Essentials. The questions related to the ethical behavioral principles were also checked by academicians who are experts in public administration. The final scale consists of 18 items that cover all the principles in the legislation.

The institutionalization of ethics is measured using Singhapakdi and Vitell's (2007) scale that includes 24 items with two sub-dimensions. The original scale is composed of 15 items that measure implicit institutionalization and nine items which measure explicit institutionalization. The Turkish adaptation of the scale was used in the previous studies from Torlak et al. (2014) and Kandemir (2010) with high levels of reliability (0.83 and 0.88). In this study, the Institutionalization of Ethics Scale was adapted to Turkish by having three bi-lingual academicians compare Kandemir's (2010) version with the original. The adaptation of scale items was made in accordance with public personnel's work life jargon.

### Factor Analyses

Exploratory factor analyses have been applied to the study's scales to determine the validation of the scales. Both scales have KMO values higher than the .70 threshold value. Bartlett's significance tests also show significant results for both scales, which indicate the data from this study to be suitable for factor analysis and further testing of the hypotheses. Table 1 summarizes the results from the exploratory factor analysis regarding perceptions about ethical behavioral principles. The factor loadings for all the scale's items have acceptable values, and the two sub-dimensions have been found to have a high level of reliability according to the .70 criteria. The first 15 questions form the first factor and explain 58.38% of the total variance. The last three questions form the second factor and explain 16.63% of the total variance. Further testing of the hypotheses has been conducted by adding two factors to create a single variable for perception. Cronbach's alpha value for all the items has been calculated as .976.

Table 1.

Exploratory Factor Analysis of the Ethical Behavior Principles Scale

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2
The personnel in this institution are conscious of public service while performing their duties	.878	
The personnel in this institution are conscious of serving citizens while performing their duties	.874	
The personnel in this institution act according to interests of the country, welfare of society, and the service goals of their institutions.	.858	
The personnel in this institution perform their duties according to the determined standards and procedures.	.854	
The personnel in this institution are conscious about not taking gifts and being self-interested while performing their duties.	.840	
The personnel in this institution perform their duties within the framework of decency and respect.	.834	
The personnel in this institution avoid actions that damage citizens' public trust in public service and the principle of justice or foster disbelief while performing their duties.	.829	
The personnel in this institution act according to the principles of law, justice, equality, and integrity while performing their duties.	.828	
The personnel in this institution are aware they are not to use public buildings, vehicles, properties, and resources other than for public goals and service needs while performing their duties.	.826	
The personnel in this institution know to avoid lavishness while performing their duties.	.820	
The personnel in this institution put public interest ahead of self-interest while performing their duties.	.815	
The personnel in this institution are conscious of their duty to inform the public, be transparent, and be involved while performing their duties.	.813	

The personnel in this institution avoid kinship, partner, friend, countryman, political favoritism and discrimination while performing their duties.	.803
The personnel in this institution inform authorities about unethical/immoral acts that they confront while performing their duties.	.797
The personnel in this institution know to not express unsubstantiated declarations or statements that bind their institutions while performing their duties.	.731
The personnel in this institution regularly provide declarations of property.	.873
The personnel in this institution are aware they are not to favor public personnel who are retired or have left the institution while performing their duties.	.841
The managers in this institution take prompt precautions as entailed by their authority and roles to prevent unethical/immoral acts or processes.	.759
Variance Explained (%)	58.38 % 16.53%
<i>Cronbach's α</i>	.975 .831
<i>KMO = .969; Bartlett's = 10,255.295; p &lt; 0.05</i>	

The original version of the Institutionalization of Ethics Scale has two sub-dimensions. The results from the exploratory factor analysis (Table 2) also found a structure with two factors after eliminating Items 6, 12, 14, and 24. These items were removed from the scale due to cross-loading being present under both factors. Only Item 18, which is originally located among the second factors, was moved to the first factor in this study. The items in Factor 1 are compatible with the original scale, represents the dimension of implicit institutionalization with 13 items, and explains 40.94% of the total variance. Factor 2, which represents the explicit institutionalization of ethics, is also compatible with the original scale, has seven items, and explains 35.44% of the total variance. The reliability of both dimensions is shown to have acceptable values greater than .70, as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2.

Table 2.

Exploratory Factor Analysis of Institutionalization of Ethics Scale

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2
Items	Factor 1	Factor 2
Upper management has established a legacy of integrity for the organization.	.799	
Upper management believes that ethical behavior, not just legal compliance, is paramount to the success of the organization.	.796	
My organization values integrity and ethics as much as profit and performance.	.781	
Upper management consistently enforces ethical standards.	.768	
My organization consistently enforces ethical standards and codes	.767	
Upper management in my organization accepts responsibility for unethical and illegal decision making on the part of employees.	.766	
Managers in my organization take responsibility for encouraging integrity and ethics at work.	.753	
My organization has a sense of responsibility among employees for maintaining and ethical reputation.	.744	
Open communication exists between superiors and subordinates on discussing ethical conflicts and dilemmas.	.722	
Upper management believes our organization should help improve the quality of life and general welfare of society.	.712	
Upper management consistently punishes ethical transgressions.	.706	
A shared values system and an understanding of what constitutes appropriate behavior exists in my organization.	.682.	
Upper management evaluates ethics training programs on a regular basis.	.650	
My organization has no training programs that effectively communicate ethical standards and policies. ®		.871



My organization has no ethics committee or team that deals with ethical issues in the organization. ®	.861	
My organization has no formal ethics training program focusing on ethics. ®	.841	
My organization has no upper-level people responsible for ethics compliance programs. ®	.802	
My organization has training programs to create an effective ethical culture in order to prevent misconduct within it.	.783	
My organization does not conduct ethics audits on a regular basis. ®	.726	
Upper management is not involved in ethical training programs. ®	.672	
Variance Explained (%)	40.94 %	35.44 %
Cronbach's	.971	.952
<i>KMO = .975; Bartlett's <math>\chi^2 = 13,250.786; p &lt; 0.05</math></i>		
® Reverse-scored item		

## RESULTS

All of the research hypotheses have been tested through linear regression analyses using SPSS 25. A correlation analysis was conducted as the preliminary step to observe the relations among variables. Table 3 summarizes the means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlation values. As seen in Table 3, all of the variables have significant and positive relations with each other.

Table 3.

### Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1.Ethical Codes Perception	2.73	1.01	1				
2.Implicit Institutionalization of Ethics	2.81	1.13	.741**	1			
3.Explicit Institutionalization of Ethics	2.92	1.20	.525**	.820**	1		
4.Institutitonalization of Ethics	2.86	1.11	.660**	.951**	.957**	1	
5.Ethics Training	0.44	0.49	.353**	.553**	.686**	.652**	1

\*\*Correlation is significant at  $p < 0.01$  (2-tailed).

The findings from the regression analyses can be seen in Table 4. Firstly, the effect of perceptions toward ethical behavioral principles on the institutionalization of ethics in Hypothesis 1 has been tested using simple linear regression analysis. According to the adjusted  $r^2$  value of 0.434 for this regression model, perceptions toward ethical behavioral principles can be said to account for 43% of the variance in the institutionalization of ethics with a moderate level relationship. In addition, the variable of perceptions toward ethical codes is shown to have a positive and significant relation with the dependent variable ( $\beta = 0.66, p < 0.01$ ), which gives support to Hypothesis 1. Similarly, perceptions of ethical codes explain 27% of the variance in the explicit institutionalization of ethics and show a positive and significant relationship with explicit institutionalization ( $\beta = 0.52, p < 0.01$ ), which supports Hypothesis 2. The correlation coefficient for this model is 0.52, which represents moderate level relationships between the related variables.

Hypothesis 3 proposes a positive relationship between ethics training programs and the explicit institutionalization of ethics. In the related simple linear regression model, public servants who have an ethics training program can explain 47% of the variance in the dependent variable at a moderate level relationship. The positive and significant association between ethics training and explicit institutionalization ( $\beta = 0.68, p < 0.01$ ) provides support for Hypothesis 3. In a similar vein, Hypothesis 4 suggests a positive relationship to exist between perceptions toward ethical codes and the implicit institutionalization of ethics. According to the findings in Table 4, perceptions toward ethical codes can also explain 54% of the variance in the implicit institutionalization of ethics and shows a positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.74, p < 0.01$ ) relationship with it. Thus, Hypothesis 4 is also supported.

Baron and Kenny (1986) has been applied to test the mediating effect of the explicit institutionalization of ethics on the relationship between perception of public personnel toward ethical behavioral principles and the implicit institutionalization of ethics. The findings from the regression analyses are shown in Table 5. In the first step, a significant and positive relationship ( $\beta = 0.74, p < 0.01$ ) was detected between perceptions toward ethical codes and implicit institutionalization. Additionally, the second step found a significant and positive relationship ( $\beta = 0.52, p < 0.01$ ) to exist between perceptions toward ethical codes and the mediating variable of explicit institutionalization. Similarly, the third step found the relationship between the mediating and dependent variables to be positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.82, p < 0.01$ ). The last step tested the joint effects of the mediating and independ-

Table 4.

## Regression Analyses Results for Hypotheses 1-4

	Variable	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	Total	VIF
Hypothesis 1	Constant	0.89	0.10	-	8.76	0.00		
DV: Institutionalization of Ethics	Ethical Codes Perception	0.72	0.03	0.66	20.56	0.00	1.00	1.00
		= 0.435; Adj. = 0.434; = 422.75; p = 0.00						
Hypothesis 2	Variable	B	SE.	$\beta$	t	p	Total	VIF
DV: Explicit Institutionalization of Ethics	Constant	1.22	0.12	-	9.75	0.00		
	Ethical Codes Perception	0.62	0.04	0.52	14.44	0.00	1.00	1.00
		= 0.275; Adj. = 0.274; = 208.67; p = 0.00						
Hypothesis 3	Variable	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	Total	VIF
DV: Explicit Institutionalization of Ethics	Constant	2.18	0.05	-	43.67	0.00		
	Ethics Training	1.66	0.07	0.68	22.09	0.00	1.00	1.00
		= 0.471; Adj. = 0.470; = 487.94; p = 0.00						
Hypothesis 4	Variable	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	Total	VIF
DV: Implicit Institutionalization of Ethics	Constant	0.57	0.09	-	6.14	0.00		
	Ethical Codes Perception	0.82	0.03	0.74	25.82	0.00	1.00	1.00
		= 0.549; Adj. = 0.548; = 666.96; p = 0.00						

DV: Dependent Variable

ent variables on implicit institutionalization. According to Table 5, the perception toward ethical codes ( $\beta = 0.47, p < 0.01$ ) and explicit institutionalization ( $\beta = 0.55, p < 0.01$ ) both show positive and significant relationships with the dependent variable. However, the power of the positive and significant effect perceptions toward ethical codes decreased from  $\beta = 0.74 (p < 0.01)$  to  $\beta = 0.42 (p < 0.01)$  when both the independent and mediating variables are entered into the regression model. This result provides partial support for Hypothesis 5, which proposes explicit institutionalization to mediate the relationship between perceptions toward ethical codes and implicit institutionalization. The Sobel test, which analyzes the significance of the decrease in  $\beta$  scores and the mediation model, was applied to validate the mediating effect of explicit institutionalization (Sobel, 1982). This partial mediating effect was also found to be significant ( $Z = 14.378; p < 0.01$ ), which reinforces the argument in Hypothesis 5.

Table 5.

Mediation Analysis of Explicit Institutionalization of Ethics

Steps	Regression Coefficients			Model
	B	SE	$\beta$	Statistics
1 <sup>st</sup> Step				= 0.54
IV = Ethical Codes Perception	0.82	0.03	0.741***	= 666.96
DV = Implicit Institutionalization of Ethics				$p < 0.01$
2 <sup>nd</sup> Step				= 0.27
IV = Ethical Codes Perception	0.62	0.04	0.525***	= 208.67
MV = Explicit Institutionalization of Ethics				$p < 0.01$
3 <sup>rd</sup> Step				= 0.67
MV = Explicit Institutionalization of Ethics	0.77	0.02	0.820***	=
DP = Implicit Institutionalization of Ethics				1127.55
				$p < 0.01$
4 <sup>th</sup> Step				= 0.80
IV = Ethical Codes Perception	0.47	0.02	0.428***	=
MV = Explicit Institutionalization of Ethics	0.55	0.02	0.595***	1133.76
DP = Implicit Institutionalization of Ethics				$p < 0.01$

IV = Independent Variable; DV = Dependent Variable; MV = Mediator Variable; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$

## Discussion

The importance of ethical behavior and good governance has become more apparent in both private and public sectors in recent years. Although a considerable amount of research about the determinants and consequences of ethical behavior in private firms has been accumulated so far (Singhapakdi & Vitell, 2007; Jose & Thibodeaux, 1999; Victor & Cullen, 1988), ethics and its reflections on the practices of government institutions and employees have not been noted enough in the literature. The principles that public servants have to follow while performing their roles and duties in organizations have been generally regulated in laws and legislations. These dispersed regulations in Turkey's public administration have been united under the Regulation on the Principles of Ethical Behavior of the Public Officials and Application Procedures and Essentials by Ethical Board of Public

Servants that was established in 2004. These principles have provided a basis for the institutionalization of ethics as they determine the ethical codes that public servants in Turkey's public administration have to follow. As mentioned before, the institutionalization of ethics means the explicit and implicit inclusion of ethics into decision-making processes in organizations (Singhapakdi & Vitell, 2007). Another important issue for installing ethical awareness and ethical behavior in public administration is training employees about ethical issues and regulations, because ethical codes cannot be adopted by employees effectively in organizations without ethics training programs. Consequently, public services related to institutionalized ethical values become more effective and efficient.

Accordingly, this study has tried to examine the effect perceptions about ethical codes and ethics training have on the institutionalization of ethics in public sector institutions. The study's findings have revealed perceptions toward ethical behavioral principles tend to have a positive relationship with both the explicit and implicit institutionalization of ethics. Also, this perception shows a positive effect on the overall institutionalization of ethics in public organizations. These findings have fortified the arguments that ethical codes can be guidelines to employees on how they should behave when performing their daily work in organizations. In addition, the presence of codes of ethics provides a normative foundation for public employees' ethical behavior and strengthens the institutionalization of ethics (Schwartz, 2002). The findings from the positive relation between public employees' perceptions about ethical codes and the institutionalization of ethics have also been used to test the embedded determinants of the construct of the institutionalization of ethics in public organizations within the context of different countries (Singhapakdi & Vitell, 2007; Vitell & Singhapakdi, 2008; Torlak et al., 2014). The practical implication of these findings indicates the presence of ethical codes to be able to increase public employees' trust in their institutions. Ethical codes may also guide them as to why they should prioritize public interest over self-interest when these two are in conflict. Furthermore, ethical behavioral codes determine public servants' acceptable work behaviors, and this creates a kind of declaration about the responsibility public institutions have toward citizens. Another important implication of these findings would be the role ethical guidelines have on future progress about ethical issues and public service quality in Turkey's public administration. Because Turkey's public sector has experienced significant institutional reforms in recent years, the findings from this study may indicate that the reforms on establishing an ethical work environment may be beneficial for public employees' perceptions toward their work and future performance.

In addition to this, the study's results indicate that, when public servants have participated in an ethics training program, their perceptions about the explicit institutionalization of ethics are positive. This finding is compatible with the proposition that the explicit institutionalization of ethics can be accomplished through ethical codes and ethics training programs in organizations, as well as the ethical boards and committees there (Singhapakdi & Vitell, 2007, 2008). Public administrators and institutions should focus more on ethics training programs to properly merge constructed laws and administrative structures with ethical codes. Public servants may be confronted with special circumstances in daily work life due to personal or family relations, political or administrative pressures, and financial worries. Ethics training programs can provide tangible guidelines for public employees about how to act under these circumstances. In this way, ethical codes in public services can be appropriately concretized for both employees and citizens. As a result, the explicit institutionalization of ethics in public organizations can be completed.

The last finding of the study is about the mediating effect explicit institutionalization has on the relationship between ethical codes perception and the implicit institutionalization of ethics. According to the results for Hypothesis 5, explicit institutionalization partially mediates the positive effect the perceptions toward ethical codes have on implicit institutionalization. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Lee et al., 2018; Singhapakdi et al., 2010). As mentioned before, ethical codes and ethics training programs increase public employees' ethical awareness, but this is not sufficient for embedding the implicit formation of the institutionalization of ethics. Furthermore, public employees' ability to be satisfied with the organizational setting and managerial applications has significance. This can be achieved not only with ethical codes and ethics training but also with organizational justice, ethical leadership, and reward mechanisms. Public administrators continuous promotion of ethical guidelines and codes for establishing the explicit institutionalization of ethics may also enhance the production of implicit ethical outcomes such as ethical climate, ethical leadership, fair reward systems, organizational justice, and employee satisfaction in the public sector (Singhapakdi et al., 2010). Moreover, other types of explicit institutionalization of ethics like mission statements, ethical committees, regulations, and ethics training programs in the long run can transfer the effect of ethical codes into embedded institutionalization of ethics (Lee et al., 2018). These constructs can also be analyzed within public organizations contexts in future studies.

The study also has some limitations. Firstly, the use of ethics as a synonym of morals may cause some misunderstandings in the context of Turkey. Additionally, the concept of ethics has been observed to have negative connotations among public servants when conducting a survey study. This situation may damage perceptions toward questions and cause drawbacks due to fear among employees in a survey study. Another limitation of the study is the common subjective understanding human beings have in relation to the concept of ethics in their daily lives. People tend to think that others choose to behave more unethically than themselves, which may cause distortions for the results of this study. The study only being applied in Turkey's Diyarbakır Province can be considered another limitation.

### **Practical Implications**

The findings from this study have revealed that the Ethical Board of Public Servants should take on more responsibility in regard to establishing ethical committees in public institutions for the future. Additionally, public administrators may form more professional and formal relationships between their employees in order to effectively operationalize ethical principles and actions in public service. Due to the currently overly politicized and disharmonized context in Turkey's public administration, public administrators generally may muddle through (*idare-i maslahat* in Turkish) ethical issues and problems in public institutions. This problem can be solved by coercing public administrators to apply ethical principles and encouraging public servants to whistle blow on ethical problems in their institutions. Moreover, the consciousness that manifests itself in public service is a trustworthy transaction between the state and citizens and should be imposed on public servants. This can be done by not only selecting employees who can perform standard job roles and public service but who also convey ethical values and awareness.

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