

Original article

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# HOW DOES THE ETHICAL CLIMATE AFFECT PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION AND MISSION VALUE?\*

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**Abstract.** Public service motivation and mission valence are two significant and up-to-date approaches to explaining the motivation of public employees. This study aims to demonstrate the role of ethical climate in both the relationship between public service motivation and mission valence and the motivation of public service employees by adding ethical climate. The research was carried out in public universities operating in Turkey. Data was collected from a total of 1415 participants consisting of academicians, administrative personnel, and administrators with an online questionnaire form. The data obtained was evaluated with the structural equation model in three different groups for academicians, administrative personnel, and administrators. Our findings primarily confirmed the positively significant relationship between mission valence and public service motivation previously demonstrated in the literature. Secondly, it was understood that mission valence affected ethical climate. Furthermore, the findings revealed that ethical climate for all three groups had a strong mediation effect between public service motivation and mission valence. In other words, ethical climate in organizations contributes to the internalization of the organization's mission and the development of prosocial behavior.

**Keywords:** ethical climate, mission valence, public service motivation, public organizations.

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## Introduction

Employee motivation has been one of the main areas of concern for all organizations. Motivation is one of the main determinants of individual and institutional performance. It is, therefore, one of the most discussed topics in management and organizational research, regardless of the sector. Recent studies have shown that employees are motivated not only by their interests or financial motives but also by intrinsic values such as altruism, loyalty, and pro-social behavior concerning their environment (Anderfuhren-Biget et al., 2010; Paarlberg and Lavigna, 2010)

It is accepted that employees in non-profit organizations, especially public organizations, have more of this kind of motivation. This attitude of employees is called public service motivation (PSM); it is used to explain differences in motivation in public services and to indicate the mechanisms that initiate and direct behavior. At the heart of PSM theory lies the idea that employees in public organizations act with prosocial and altruistic motives (Perry and Hondeghem, 2008).

Although PMS is considered a multivariate structure, it has two faces, just like a medallion. The first is the realization of public service values and the second is the realization of the goals and objectives of public service (Anderfuhren-Biget et al., 2010; Perry, Hondeghem, and Wise, 2010; Rainey and Steinbauer, 1999). In this context, mission valence (MV) represents one side of these two faces and ethical climate (EC) represents the other side. Because the value attributed to an organization's mission by employees and the degree of employees' adaptation to the ethical climate of the organization are among the main factors affecting their behavior, decisions, and therefore motivation and performance (Potipiroon and Wongpreedee, 2021; Victor and Cullen, 1988).

The transformation in public administration encourages those who work in the field to look beyond traditional theories about motivation (Andersen et al., 2012). As a result of this orientation, interest in PSM has increased recently, and numerous studies have emerged regarding the position of PSM in public organizations. Studies conducted have demonstrated direct or indirect relationship in various areas between PSM and factors such as work satisfaction (Andersen and Kjeldsen, 2013); work quality (Park and Rainey, 2008); work motivation (Anderfuhren-Biget et al., 2010); work engagement (Mussagulova, 2021); organizational citizenship (Paarlberg and Lavigna, 2010; Pandey, Wright and Moynihan, 2008); person-organization fit (Kim, 2012); leadership (Caillier, 2016; Paarlberg and Lavigna, 2010); performance (Miao, Eva, Newman, and Schwarz, 2019); mission valence (Rainey and Steinbauer, 1999; Wright, Moynihan, and Pandey, 2012); ethics and ethical climate (Moloney and Chu, 2016; Shim and Park, 2019).

This study, different from previous ones, aims to reveal the role of EC in the relationship between MV and PSM. As a result of the findings obtained in this context, the positive mediation effect of EC in the relationship between MV and PSM and the positive contribution of MV to EC are the main contributions added to the relevant literature.

## Literature Review

### **Public service motivation**

Unlike private sector organizations, it is assumed that employees in public and non-profit sector organizations act with different motives. The motivation that leads individuals to get jobs in these organizations and to perform superiorly while working is considered more a spiritual satisfaction than financial satisfaction (Leisink, Knies, and van Loon, 2018; Rainey and Steinbauer, 1999). This attitude, which is theorized as PSM, has become one of the main approaches used in public administrations to explain the behavior of employees (Kim, 2009; Perry and Wise, 1990).

The PSM theory was put forward as an alternative to the rational choice theory, to explain the motivation of public personnel (Perry, 2000; Wang, van Witelooostuijn and Heine, 2020). The theory assumes that public service employees act according to the ethics of public service and not according to personal interests. Therefore, principles and values such as prosocial behavior, commitment to the public interest, service, and dedication to others constitute the essence of PSM (Bozeman and Su, 2015; Perry et al., 2010). Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) described PSM as “a general altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a community of people, a state, a nation, or humankind.” Vandenabeele (2007), on the other hand, took the concept from a broader perspective as “the belief, values, and attitudes that go beyond self-interest and organizational interest, that concern the interest of a larger political entity and that motivate individuals to act accordingly whenever appropriate.” Perry and Wise (1990) state that three types of rational, normative, and emotional motives lead individuals to this kind of motivation.

Recent research has revealed that the PSM can also be found in private sector organizations, albeit limited (Bozeman and Su, 2015; Caillier, 2016). However, PSM is the most crucial tool that enables us to reveal the difference between private-sector and public-sector employees regarding employee motivation. It is also accepted that PSM is one of the factors positively affecting performance in public organizations, and therefore the performance of public employees will increase as the PSM level increases (Kim, 2012; Rainey and Steinbauer, 1999).

### **Mission Valence**

What affects the performance of public organizations and employees and what encourages employees to perform is an important area of interest in the literature. Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) answered these questions in their pioneering work with the concept of “mission valence.” Mission valence is defined as “perceived importance of organizational objectives” (Wright, 2007, p. 56) and “employee perceptions of the attractiveness or salience of an organization’s purpose or social contribution” (Wright et al., 2012, p. 206). As can be understood from the definitions, what determines motivation is an employee-independent entity (mission) of the institution and, on the other hand, the interaction of the emotional and cognitive characteristics (valence) of the individual.

The mission is a strategic tool adopted by modern organizations. The primary function of a mission is to establish the reason for the existence of an organization

and the task it performs in society (Carpenter and Gong, 2016). According to Rey and Bastons (2017), the mission is not only a formal statement and an application but also an important source of motivation. Contributing to the community, customers and employees, who are an important part of the mission, naturally reveals a pro-social motivation.

Valence is seen as an individual behavior in social sciences. In psychology, valence is an emotional response to an action that reflects a state of cognitive preference under conditions such as pleasure or pain, reward or punishment (Guitart-Masip, Duzel, Dolan and Dayan, 2014). In this context, it is seen as a motivating force that allows individuals to choose between alternatives and act in accordance with a system of values (Carruthers, 2018; Vroom, 1995). The characteristics of the employee's work, the needs, and expectations of the person, and many motives reveal positive or negative value, which affects motivation positively or negatively (Vroom, 1995).

In their study, Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) demonstrated that MV is an important motivator that determines the performance of public employees. In this context, they argued that "the higher the mission valence of a government agency, the more effectively the institution will perform" (Rainey and Steinbauer, 1999). In other words, the more positive the mission of the institution means to individuals – the more internalized it is (Marimon et al., 2016) – the more successful the organization will be in motivating employees and improving performance, as well as finding new personnel and support. An attractive mission to ensure the public interest and provide effective and efficient public service has become an important motivator for contemporary public organizations (Wright and Pandey, 2011). When the prior values of employees overlap with the public interest and public service, there is more active participation in the objective and mission of the organization; this, in turn, affects individual and organizational performance (Word and Park, 2015).

### **Ethical climate**

The organization, employee, and ethics relationship has a complex and multidimensional structure. The philosophical dimension of the subject aside (Woller and Patterson, 1997), it is known that there are various types of ethics in organizations, and their effects on an organization and its employees are different. EC is considered the most comprehensive and complex of ethical types in organizations (Wimbush, Shepard, and Markham, 1997). It is known that organizational context has an important role in ethical decision-making (Blome and Paulraj, 2013). It is accepted that employees in an organization share at least a minimum degree of moral reasoning. This structure called ethical climate, is considered one of the main factors affecting the decision-making behavior of organizations and employees (Victor and Cullen, 1987; Wimbush and Shepard, 1994). Victor and Cullen (1988, p. 101) describe EC as "prevailing perceptions of typical organizational practices and procedures with ethical content". EC guides employees in determining the level of acceptability of their conduct in all situations, decision-making activities, and behaviors in the workplace (Barnett and Schubert, 2002, p. 281).

The issue of ethics has also long preoccupied with those working in the field of public administration for a long time (Sherman, 2002). The ethical responsibility of public employees arises as a commitment to numerous moral principles and values in individual, institutional, professional, and social/political fields, and they have become one of the most important criteria that determine the quality of government, management, and employees (Chapman, 1998; Worthley, 1981). As a decision-making process, the values and moral principles within public activity serve to guide and motivate the attitudes and behaviors of employees. Therefore, all public organizations develop official or informal values, moral principles and codes. This code, principles, and values, which create an ethical climate in public organizations, determine not only what public personnel should do, but also how they should do it (Cullen, Victor, and Stephens, 1989). Understanding ethical principles and values for employees and improving ethical decision-making skills are seen as necessary conditions for the presentation of public service and the realization of the public interest (Goss, 1996; Stewart, 1991).

## Theoretical research model and hypotheses

### **Mission valence and public service motivation relationship**

When the objectives, principles and values within the mission are integrated in employees' beliefs and value systems, they have a great impact on individual and corporate performance (Marimon et al., 2016). In this context, MV is considered an important motivator in organizations (Wright, 2007; Wright and Pandey, 2011) and is often associated with public service motivation. In general, individuals whose primary value orientations are prosocial and align with altruistic values are more willing to serve in public service organizations, while those who work in these organizations are more willing to serve the mission and vision of the organization (Rainey and Steinbauer, 1999; Word and Park, 2015). It is also known that leaders in organizations have a significant influence on the internalization of mission (Caillier, 2016), which contributes to the motivation of public service by increasing mission valence in employees (Wright et al., 2012).

In this context, the first hypothesis of the study was formulated as follows:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Mission valence has a positive and significant effect on public service motivation.*

### **Mission valence and ethical climate relationship**

The attitudes and behaviors of employees are determined not only by individual characteristics but also by characteristics of their work and the institution in which they work (Wright and Pandey, 2011).

Therefore, the impact of the mission and EC, which are characteristics of the organization, on the employee is an undeniable fact. From here, it is possible to say that there is also a connection between MV and EC. The mission is an issue that is addressed not only as a strategic tool but also in a philosophical and ethical context. Philosophically and ethically, the mission is seen as a cultural structure that allows us to act as a unit within the organization. This structure



consists of norms and values regarding how people behave, how they act together, and how they should achieve the aims and objectives of an organization (Campbell and Yeung, 1991). In addition, the mission's contribution to meaningful work is directly related to business ethics (Michaelson, Pratt, Grant, and Dunn, 2014).

On the other hand, it is possible to consider this relationship within the framework of valuation theory. One of the many types of value included in valuation theory is moral goodness. In this kind of value, tasks, and ideals show an expansion from individuality to sociality. Moral goodness satisfies one's sense of belonging by ensuring group harmony (Shuman et al., 2013). According to McNutt and Batho (2005), the clearest example of morally correct actions in an organization is actions in which employees demonstrate a determination to follow the task, set aside their interests, and act in the opposite direction.

This style of movement is one of the main features that MV brings to the employee. Therefore, there is a very close connection between MV and EC. From here, the second hypothesis of the study is formulated as follows:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Mission valence has a positive and significant effect on ethical climate.*

### **Ethical climate and public service motivation relationship**

Perry (1996, 2000) states that it is the identity and values of the individual that drive rational, normative, and emotional motives, and therefore serve as the main elements in the theory of public service motivation (PSM) in motivating values and moral obligations. In other words, essentially, PSM is a kind of public service ethics. Values and moral principles establish a link between the self and the social world, mediating the preference for the common good over personal interests (Wang et al., 2020). The basis of ethics in public administration is how administrative discretion is exercised (Worthley, 1981). Most of the time, public employees are expected to comply with ethical principles and legal procedures (Stare and Klun, 2016).

This aims to prevent different forms of abuse of public office, such as corruption and bribery (Meyer-Sahling et al., 2018). As a value-loaded behavioral orientation, PSM is also considered an important field of research in the ethical relationship of public administration (Shim and Park, 2019; Wright and Christensen, 2021). Ethical behavior requires that the person compromise his or her interests while advising to serve the public interest. This is directly related to public service motivation. In general, it is accepted that public service motivation and ethics share the same core values and moral principles in employees (Wright, Hassan, and Park, 2016). Studies conducted so far (Potipiroon and Faerman, 2016; Shim and Park, 2019) have revealed a close relationship between PSM and ethics. An ethical climate fosters public service motivation in organizations (Moloney and Chu, 2016). Therefore, the third and fourth hypotheses of the study were formulated as follows:

H3: The ethical climate has a positive and significant effect on public service motivation.

H4: The ethical climate has a positive and significant mediating effect on the relationship between mission valence and public service motivation.

## Method

### Study design and participants

The research was carried out as cross-sectional field research. The research population consisted of personnel working at public universities in Turkey. Public staff in Turkish universities are divided into academics and administrative staff. Academics working at state universities in Turkey are subject to public personnel laws and are considered public employees. At the same time, there are some among both academic and administrative staff who hold managerial positions. The convenience sampling method was used in the research. An online questionnaire was sent to the person who voluntarily agreed to participate in the research. In the study, data were obtained from a total of 1415 participants, including academics (n=571), administrative personnel (n=578), and administrators (n=266).

### Measures

The scales “participant identification data”, “mission valence”, “ethical climate” and public service motivation” were used in the study. There were 5 questions about the demographic characteristics of the participants: “gender, marital status, age, educational status, and professional experience”.

The answers to all items on the scale were given on a 5- point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree). A scale developed by Wright (2007) with 3 items and one dimension was used to measure mission valence. The ethical climate scale is the scale with 6 items and one dimension developed by Deshpande (1996) in his research. To measure public service motivation, the 5-point scale created by Wright and Pandey (2011) by benefiting from the 40-item public service motivation scale developed by Perry (1996) was used.

### Validity and reliability of scales

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results regarding the validity and reliability of the scales used in the study, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), and Cronbach's Alpha (Cronbach  $\alpha$ ) values were examined. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted for the scales of public service motivation, ethical climate, and mission valence used in the research (Table 1). Since Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sampling adequacy (0.824) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ( $p=0.000$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), the data set was found to be suitable for factor analysis. Given the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy of 0.824 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielding a p-value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ), the dataset was deemed appropriate for factor analysis. As the factor load of the 4th and 6th items of the ethical climate scale was below 0.30, they were excluded from the analysis. As a result of EFA, public service motivation consists of 5 items, ethical climate consists of 4, and mission valence consists of 3 items. The factor loads of the items in the scales vary between 0.450 and 0.844. As a result of EFA, the total explanation rate of the scales is 59.983. AVE, CR, and Cronbach  $\alpha$  values of the scales, respectively, were .48, .82, .73 for public service motivation; .57, .84, .77 for ethical

climate and .66, .85, .80 for mission valence. AVE, CR, and Cronbach  $\alpha$  values show that the scales are reliable (Hair et al. 2014).

Table 1

**Exploratory factor analysis (EFA), AVE, CR, and Cronbach  $\alpha$  results of the scales used in the study (n=1.415)**

Items	PSM	EC	MV	AVE	CR	Cronbaach $\alpha$
PSM4	.819			.48	.82	.73
PSM3	.786					
PSM5	.684					
PSM1	.658					
PSM2	.450					
EC3		.844		.57	.84	.77
EC1		.812				
EC2		.740				
EC5		.589				
MV3			.828	.66	.85	.80
MV1			.815			
MV2			.785			
<i>Eigenvalues</i>	4.128	1.688	1.383			
<i>Total variance explained (59.983)</i>	34.396	14.063	11.523			

**Notes:** Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin= .824; Bartlett's test of sphericity  $p=0,000$ ;  $p < 0,05$ ; Approx. Chi-Square=5630,228.

**Source:** Compiled by the authors.

According to the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) result, the goodness of fitting index ( $\chi^2/df= 3.405$ , GFI= 0.981, AGFI= 0.969, CFI= 0.979, NFI= 0.971, RMSEA= 0.041, SRMR= 0.0389) are within acceptable limits (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003; Wheaton et al., 1977). According to the results of EFA, CFA, AVE, CR, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  analyses, the scales used in the study were found to be valid and reliable measurement tools.

### Statistical analysis

In the study, data obtained from academics, administrative personnel, and administrators were analyzed separately in three groups. There are three main reasons for such practice. Firstly, education, research, and contribution to society, which is the general mission in the Turkish higher education system, are tried to be fulfilled in line with the work of academics.

The task of preparing the appropriate conditions and facilities for the realization of these three missions is fulfilled by the managers and administrative per-



sonnel. Secondly, by adhering to the overall mission, each university establishes its mission, and the employees act accordingly. Third and finally, academics and administrative personnel in the Turkish higher education system have a legally different status. In other words, it carries out its activities within the framework of different legal legislation.

SPSS 26 and AMOS 26 software were used for the analysis of the research data. The demographic characteristics of participants were examined using frequency analysis. The reliability of the scales used in the study was evaluated by Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficient. The relationship between the variables was tested with correlation analysis, and the hypotheses were tested with the structural equation model (SEM). The level of significance in the evaluation of findings  $<0.05$  and the reliability range was accepted as 95%.

## Results

### Academic personnel

Of the study participants, 57.4% of the academics ( $n=571$ ) were women, 69.4% of the participants were married, 94.9% of them had postgraduate education, 46.9% of them were between 30 and 39 years old with a minimum of 23, a maximum of 75 and an average age of  $38.87 \pm 9.15$  years, 24.9% of them had 0–5 years of working experience and 26.1% of them had 6–10 years of working experience.

Table 2

### Scale mean values and standard deviations, reliabilities, and bivariate correlations

	Items	Mean+Sd	$\alpha$	MV	EC	PSM
Mission Valence	3	3.87±.80	.806	1		
Ethical Climate	4	4.09±.68	.758	.314**	1	
Public Service Motivation	5	4.05±.56	.736	.397**	.396**	1

Note: \*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Table 2 includes the number of substances for the scales used in the research, the average, the standard deviation and the  $\alpha$  coefficients as well as the correlation coefficients. The mean values of the scales are MV  $3.87 \pm .80$ , EC  $4.09 \pm .68$  and PSM  $4.05 \pm .56$ . The  $\alpha$  coefficients of the scales range from .736 to .806 and are all higher than 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). A positive-oriented significant correlation was determined between MV and EC ( $r = 0.314$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and PSM ( $r = 0.397$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). There is a positively oriented significant correlation between EC and PSM ( $r = 0.396$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

The standardized path coefficients of the relationships between the variables are given in Figure 1 and Table 3.

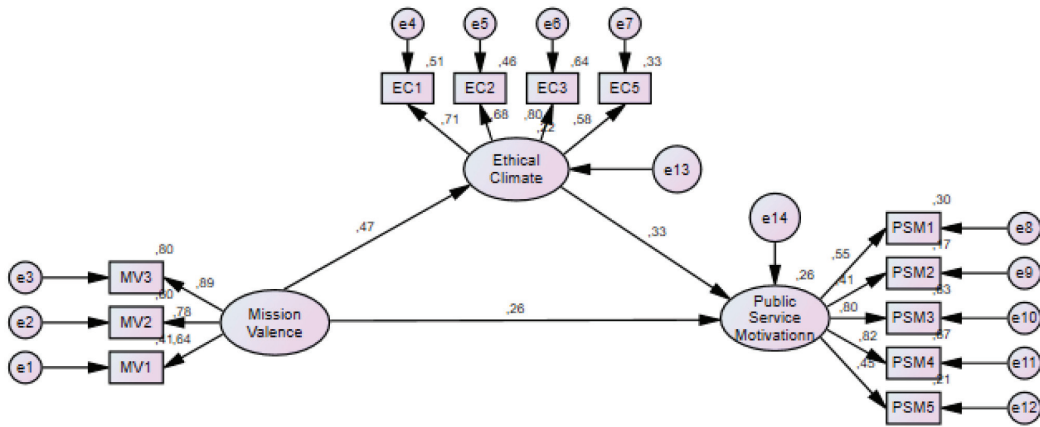


Figure 1. Structural equation model and path analysis

Source: Compiled by the authors.

According to the results of the structural model, the chi-square statistics ( $\chi^2 = 148.520$ ) and the goodness-of-fit index ( $df = 51, \chi^2 / df = 2.912, GFI = 0.956, AGFI = 0.933, CFI = 0.956, NFI = 0.934, RMSEA = 0.058, SRMR = 0.0486$ ) appear to be within acceptable limits (Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger, and Müller, 2003).

Table 3

Hypothesis testing

	Ethical Climate				Public Services Motivation			
	$\beta$	S.E.	C.R.	p	$\beta$	S.E.	C.R.	p
Mission Valence					.413	.030	7.018	.000
R <sup>2</sup>					.171*			
Mission Valence	.473	.042	8.374	.000				
R <sup>2</sup>	.224*							
Ethical Climate					.446	.041	7.431	.000
R <sup>2</sup>					.199*			
Mission Valence					.259	.031	4.460	.000
Ethical Climate					.328	.044	5.337	.000
R <sup>2</sup>					.255*			
Std. Indirect Effect					.155*(.105, .231)			

Note: \*p>0.001.

Source: Compiled by the authors.

MV has a statistically significant and positive effect on the PSM levels of academics ( $\beta = .413; p < 0.001$ ). According to this result, H1 was supported. MV has a statistically significant and positive effect on EC ( $\beta = .473; p < 0.001$ ).

According to this result, H2 was supported. EC has a statistically significant and positive effect on the PSM levels of academics ( $\beta = .446$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). According to this result, H3 was supported. Finally, SEM is established to determine the mediating effect of EC on the effect of MV on PSM levels of the academics participating in the study. According to the results of feed analysis, MV ( $\beta = .259$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and EC ( $\beta = .328$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) affect PSM. MV and EC variables describe 25.5% of changes in the PSM variable ( $R^2 = .225$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). While MV's impact on PSM alone is  $\beta = .413$  and  $p < 0.001$ ; this impact has decreased when the EC variable is included in the model ( $\beta = .259$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). According to this result, EC does not have a full mediating role in the effect of MV on PSM; however, it has a partial mediating role (Baron and Kenedy, 1986). This mediating effect is also supported by the results of the bootstrap analysis of the indirect effect of MV on PSM through EC ( $\beta = 0.155$ , 95%, GA = .105, .231). Therefore, H4 was partially supported.

### Administrative personnel

Of the study participants, 52.8% of the administrative personnel ( $n=578$ ) were women, 71.8% of the participants were married, 57.6% of them had postgraduate education, 40.5% of them were between 30 and 39 years old, with a minimum of 20, a maximum of 66 and an average age of  $39.84 \pm 8.14$  years, 24.6% of them had 6–10 years of working experience, while 20.6% of them had 11–15 years of working experience.

Table 4

### Scale mean values and standard deviations, reliabilities, and bivariate correlations

	Items	Mean+Sd	Ca	MV	EC	PSM
Mission Valence	3	3.35±.48	.808	1		
Ethical Climate	4	4.00±.76	.771	.423**	1	
Public Service Motivation	5	4.08±.56	.725	.342**	.329**	1

Note: \*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Table 4 includes the number of substances for the scales used in the research, the average, the standard deviation and the Ca coefficients as well as the correlation coefficients. The mean values of the scales are MV  $3.35 \pm .48$ , EC  $4.00 \pm .76$  and PSM  $4.08 \pm .56$ . The Ca coefficients of the scales range from .725 to .808 and are all above 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). A positive-oriented significant correlation was determined between MV and EC ( $r = 0.423$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and PSM ( $r = 0.342$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). There is a positively oriented significant correlation between EC and PSM ( $r = 0.329$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

The standardized path coefficients of the relationships between the variables are given in Figure 2 and Table 5.

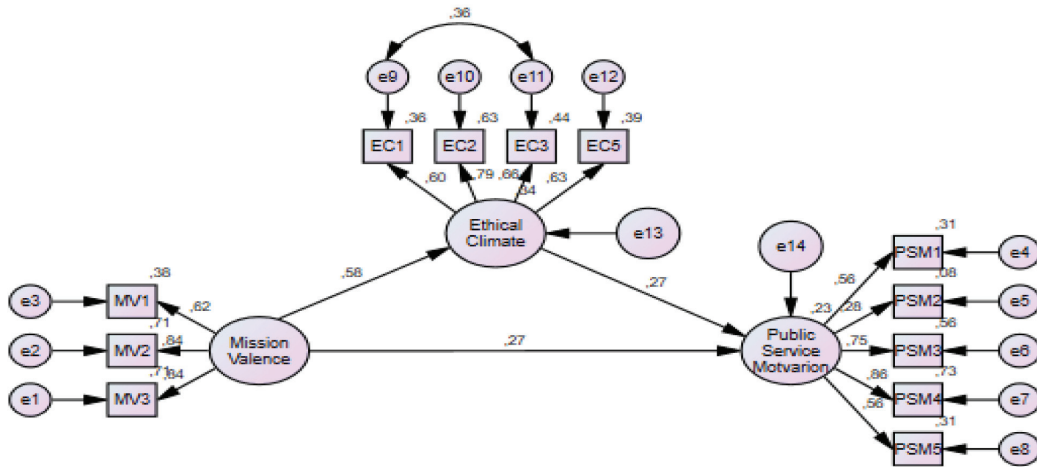


Figure 2. Structural equation model and path analysis

Source: Compiled by the authors.

According to the results of the structural model, the chi-square statistics ( $X^2 = 127.611$ ) and the goodness of fit index ( $df = 50$ ,  $x^2 / df = 2.552$ ,  $GFI = 0.964$ ,  $AGFI = 0.945$ ,  $CFI = 0.966$ ,  $NFI = 0.946$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.052$ ,  $SRMR = 0.0478$ ) appear to be within acceptable limits (Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger and Müller, 2003).

Table 5

Hypothesis testing

	Ethical Climate				Public Services Motivation			
	$\beta$	S.E.	C.R.	p	$\beta$	S.E.	C.R.	p
Mission Valence					.421	.021	7.485	.000
R <sup>2</sup>					.177*			
Mission Valence	.581	.034	9.495	.000				
R <sup>2</sup>	.337*							
Ethical Climate					.423	.043	6.683	.000
R <sup>2</sup>					.179*			
Mission Valence					.266	.024	4.128	.000
Ethical Climate					.271	.047	3.949	.000
R <sup>2</sup>					.228*			
Std. Indirect Effect					.157*(.091, .253)			

Note: \*p>0.001.

Source: Compiled by the authors.

MV has a statistically significant and positive effect on the PSM levels of administrative personnel ( $\beta = .421$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). According to this result, H1 was

supported. MV has a statistically significant and positive effect on EC ( $\beta = .581$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). According to this result, H2 was supported. EC has a statistically significant and positive effect on the PSM levels of administrative personnel ( $\beta = .423$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). According to this result, H3 was supported. Finally, a SEM is established to determine the mediating effect of EC on the effect of MV on the PSM levels of administrative personnel participating in the study. According to the results of the feed analysis, MV ( $\beta = .266$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and EC ( $\beta = .271$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) affect PSM. MV and EC variables describe 22.8% of the changes in the PSM variable ( $R^2 = .228$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). While MV's impact on public service motivation alone is  $\beta = .421$  and  $p < 0.001$ ; this impact has decreased when the EC variable is included in the model ( $\beta = .266$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ).

According to this result, EC does not have a full mediating role in the effect of MV on PSM; however, it has a partial mediating role (Baron and Kenedy, 1986). This mediation effect is also supported by the results of the bootstrap analysis of the indirect effect of MV on PSM through EC ( $\beta = 0.157$ , 95%, GA = .091, .253). Therefore, H4 was partially supported.

### Administrators

Of the study participants, 60.9% of the administrators ( $n=266$ ) were men, 83.1% of the participants were married, 48.1% had postgraduate education, 34.6% of them were between 30–39 years old with a minimum of 26, maximum of 65 and an average age of  $43.80 \pm 9.08$  years, 20.7% of them had 11–15 years of working experience.

Table 6

### Scale mean values and standard deviations, reliabilities, and bivariate correlations

	Items	Mean+Sd	Ca	MV	EC	PSM
Mission Valence	3	3.84±.80	.767	1		
Ethical Climate	4	4.04±.73	.766	.432**	1	
Public Service Motivation	5	4.19±.52	.740	.250**	.346**	1

Note: \*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Table 6 contains the number of substances for the scales used in the study, the average, the standard deviation and the Ca coefficients as well as the correlation coefficients. The mean values of the scales are MV  $3.84 \pm .80$ , EC  $4.04 \pm .73$  and PSM  $4.19 \pm .52$ . The Ca coefficients of the scales range from .740 to .767 and are all above 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). A positively oriented significant correlation was determined between MV and EC ( $r = 0.432$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and PSM ( $r = 0.250$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). There is a positively oriented significant correlation between EC and PSM ( $r = 0.346$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

The standardized path coefficients of relationships between variables are given in Figure 3 and Table 7.

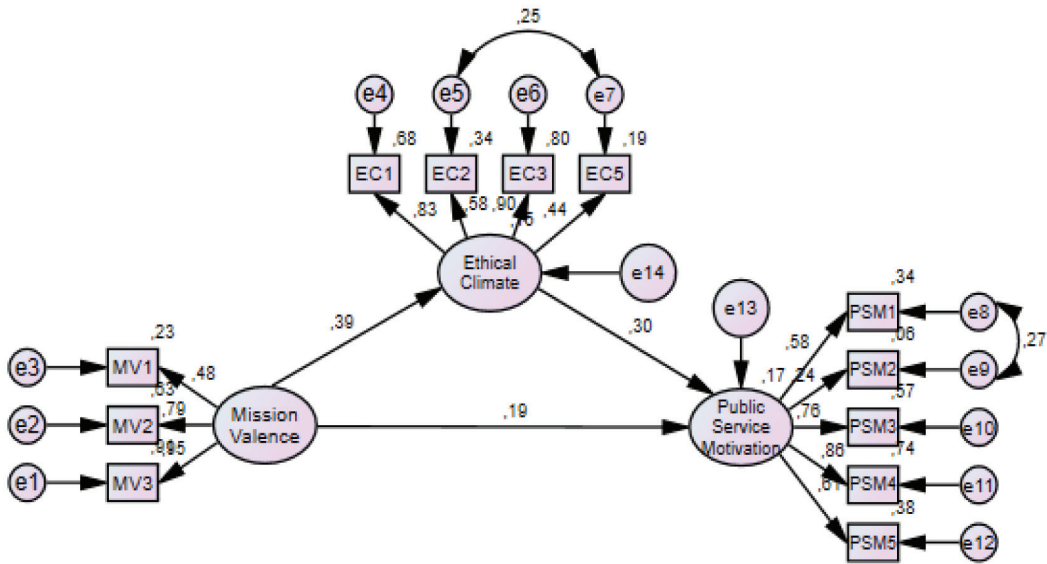


Figure 3. Structural equation model and path analysis

Source: Compiled by the authors.

According to the results of the structural model, the chi-square statistics ( $X^2 = 105.052$ ) and the goodness of fit index ( $df = 49$ ,  $x^2 / df = 2.144$ ,  $GFI = 0.938$ ,  $AGFI = 0.901$ ,  $CFI = 0.951$ ,  $NFI = 0.912$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.066$ ,  $SRMR = 0.0731$ ) appear to be within acceptable limits (Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger and Müller, 2003).

Table 7

Hypothesis testing

	Ethical Climate				Public Service Motivation			
	$\beta$	S.E.	C.R.	p	$\beta$	S.E.	C.R.	p
Mission Valence					.308	.028	4.028	.000
R <sup>2</sup>					.095*			
Mission Valence	.387	.049	5.429	.000				
R <sup>2</sup>	.150*							
Ethical Climate					.366	.040	4.703	.000
R <sup>2</sup>					.134*			
Mission Valence					.186	.027	2.461	.014
Ethical Climate					.296	.042	3.690	.000
R <sup>2</sup>					.165*			
Std. Indirect Effect					.116*(.042, .212)			

Note: \*p>0.001.

Source: Compiled by the authors.



MV has a statistically significant and positive effect on the PSM levels of administrators ( $\beta = .308$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). According to this result, H1 was supported. MV has a statistically significant and positive effect on EC ( $\beta = .387$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). According to this result, H2 was supported. EC has a statistically significant and positive effect on the PSM levels of administrators ( $\beta = .366$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ).

According to this result, H3 was supported. Finally, SEM is established to determine the mediating effect of EC on the effect of MV on PSM levels of the administrative personnel participating in the study. According to the results of feed analysis, MV ( $\beta = .186$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and EC ( $\beta = .296$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) affect PSM. MV and EC variables describe 16.5% of changes in the PSM variable ( $R^2 = .165$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). While the influence of MV on PSM alone was  $\beta = .308$  and  $p < 0.001$ , this impact decreased when the EC variable was included in the model ( $\beta = .186$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). According to this result, EC does not have a full mediating role in the effect of MV on PSM; however, it has a partial mediating role (Baron and Kenedy, 1986). This mediation effect was also supported by the results obtained from bootstrap analysis of the indirect effect of MV on PSM through EC ( $\beta = 0.116$ , 95%;  $GA = .042, .212$ ). Therefore, the H4 hypothesis was partially supported.

## Discussion

In this study, our primary goal was to demonstrate the role of EC in the MV and PSM relationship. The initial expectation of the study was that different results could emerge in the three different groups (academics, administrative personnel, and managers) that made up the research population. This is because, as already mentioned, these groups are subject to different legal regulations within the Turkish university structure and the tasks assigned to them within the framework of the general mission are different. In addition, there are academics and managers (deanship, department head, institute directorate, etc.) in the administrator's group. However, the findings indicate that all hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4) are supported in all three groups.

The results revealed that MV positively affected PSM in all three groups (H1).

Employees seem to have succeeded in internalizing their part in the mission and transforming it into a prosocial drive (Marimon et al., 2016). This result is consistent with findings of previous studies that have demonstrated the positive relationship between MV and PSM (Caillier, 2016; Rainey and Steinbauer, 1999; Word and Park, 2015; Wright, et al., 2012).

One of the important results of the study is that MV affects EC in a meaningful way (H2). This primarily reveals the ethical dimension of the organization's mission (Campbell and Yeung, 1991). From the findings obtained, it is understood that the values that dominate the organizational mission coincide with the ethical climate, and these values are adopted by employees (McNutt and Batho, 2005; Rey and Canes, 2017). The adoption of values reveals moral values, which translates into prosocial behavior (Shuman et al., 2013).

An important aspect of public service motivation is values and moral principles (Shamir, 1991). The findings of this study revealed that the ethical climate has a positive significant effect on public service motivation (H3). Employees who

are allowed to live the values that are important to them are also highly motivated by public service (Kim, 2012). Therefore, the result is the studies in the literature that reveal the positive interaction between ethics and public service motivation (Meyer-Sahling et al., 2018; Shim and Park, 2019).

Finally, study findings have revealed that EC has an important mediation effect in the positive relationship between MV and PSM (H4). Unlike the private sector, public institutions and public service have their own values and moral principles. Both institutional structures and actions-processes are shaped within these values and principles (Stazyk and Davis, 2015). Values and moral principles are considered driving forces behind the choices made by individuals and organizations (Maesschalck, van der Wal, and Huberts, 2008). This reveals a moral motivation for work and duty (Shamir, 1991).

According to the conclusion of the research linking the values and moral principles within the ethical climate to the mission increases altruistic motives, which leads to greater satisfaction and therefore more motivation among employees (Andersen et al., 2012).

Although the findings of this research reveal a positively significant relationship between all three variables, there is also a “dark side” to public service motivation, as Rayner, Reimers, and Chao (2018) point out. In their study, they found that there was no meaningful relationship between PSM, job satisfaction, and burnout. The main reason for this result is that “the cultural differences of countries are important factors in measuring the motivation of public service” (Kim, 2009; Kim et al., 2013). Another issue that should be addressed within the framework of the differences between the countries is the statements suggested by Moloney and Chu, (2016). According to them, high levels of PSM can easily coexist with unethical behavior in public organizations in underdeveloped and developing countries. Therefore, it is useful to approach our results with a broader perspective taking into account these dimensions.

The results of our research have practical implications. Our study highlights the importance of the ethical climate within an organization and employees’ adoption of its mission. Therefore, organizations should consider the opinions of their employees when determining their mission. During the mission-setting process, they should establish a mission that is compatible with the employees’ values and principles. To achieve this, an ethical climate must be created and maintained within the organization that aligns with the values and principles of the employees. An ethical climate and mission that align with the principles and values of employees will enhance their motivation and ensure their commitment to the organization and its work. This, in turn, can increase both individual and organizational performance.

## Limitations and recommendations for future studies

The study is of course subject to several limitations and the results should be addressed within the framework of these limitations. The research has a cross-sectional design. Only data from higher education institutions were collected within the Turkish public administration structure. The data obtained is limited

and reflects the Turkish public administration culture. Therefore, it is not possible to say that the results of the research are generalized for the entire field of public administration. Hence, qualitative and quantitative studies including more comprehensive and different public institutions are needed in the future. Secondly, the EC and PSM scales used in the research are the adapted and abbreviated formats of the original scales (Deshpande, 1996; Wright and Pandey, 2011). Not all dimensions on the original scales were addressed individually. It will be useful to carry out future studies in the context of these dimensions in terms of increasing the depth of the subject and diversifying the results obtained from this study.

In addition to limitations, our work also has several implications for future studies. MV's impact on EC can contribute to the understanding of meaningful work in public organizations. Meaningful work is a concept that expresses one's commitment to the work and the satisfaction gained from the work. Prosocial motives and contributions to the common good are the underlying factors in the behavioral dimension of meaningful work (Michaelson et al., 2014). Considering that the overlap of the mission with the values of the EC increases altruistic and prosocial motives, it is naturally possible that it will positively affect the employees' search for meaning in the work. Addressing this issue in future studies will give a different perspective on public employee motivation. As in many studies, it was found that ethics has a significant correlation with PSM. In this context, the inclusion of an ethical dimension in future scale development studies related to public service motivation will benefit a healthy measure of public service motivation.

## Conclusion

This study sheds light on the role of ethical climate in public service motivation within the existing limitations, while showing that the valence of the mission influences the ethical climate. In this context, the study also emphasizes from another perspective how important and valuable the mission is for public organizations and that they must create an ethical climate for the employee motivation and performance of public organizations.

In the context of the results obtained, it is considered that the study will primarily contribute to the growing literature on public service motivation and ethical relationships. In addition, bringing up the relationship between mission valence and ethical climate can be considered another important contribution.

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