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An Investigation Of The Relationship Between Deontic Justice And Perceived Social Competence

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Abstract

The purpose of this present study was to examine the relationships between deontic justice and perceived social competence. Participants were 311 (171 female and 140 male) university students, between age range of 18–24, who completed a questionnaire package that includes the Turkish version of Deontic Justice Scale and the Perceived Social Competence Scale. The relationship between deontic justice and perceived social competence was examined using correlation analysis and the stepwise regression analyses. According to correlation results, moral obligation ($r = .40$), moral accountability ($r = .43$), and moral outrage ($r = .42$) related positively to social competence. The results of stepwise regression analysis showed that perceived social were predicted positively moral obligation ($\beta = .22$), moral accountability ($\beta = .22$), and moral outrage ($\beta = .18$). In addition, stepwise regression analysis showed that deontic justice account for 26% of the variance in perceived social competence. Results have shown that deontic justice is an important predictor of perceived social competence.

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1. Introduction

Both justice or fairness and behavioural ethics are concerned with questions of ‘right and wrong’ or “ethical and moral’ in the context of social and personal life. Fairness or justice that may be used interchangeably by most social scientists because they are so closely linked (Wierzbicka, 2006). They are related with what people think as ethically appropriate, and not only has what served their economic self-interest or group-based identity (Cropanzano,

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Goldman, & Folger, 2003). Justice involves a type of moral appraisal and refers conforming to certain standards of ethical propriety (Crawshaw, Cropanzano, Bell, & Nadisic, 2013). The concept of justice or fairness has become a gradually remarkable construct in the social sciences over the last three decades (Colquitt, 2001) and researchers emphasizes the importance of justice because injustice may lead to such things as theft, sabotage, and even violence (Cropanzano et al., 2003).

In deontology theory, justice or perceptions of fairness is not only accepted as moral obligation but also is not viewed as a selfish behaviour (Folger 1998, 2001). People value justice simply because it is moral (Colquitt & Greenberg 2001, p. 221). Deontic justice which is relatively new concept, developed by Folger (2001) and it refers to the extent to which justice judgments and actions derive from a sense of duty and moral obligation. The origins of the concept of deontic can be found in the Greek word "deon", which refers to a sense of obligation or duty (Rupp, Shao, Thornton, & Sharlicki, 2013). The deontic perspective contends that people should consider fairness as an end in itself (Folger, 1998, 2001). The assumption of deontic justice is caring for oneself and others. Deontic justice suggests that a behavior is fair as long as it conforms to norms of moral obligation, both for oneself and for others (Folger, 2001; Buegre, 2012).

1.1. Social Competence

Social competence is vital process for healthy and good development (Spence, Barrett & Tuner, 2003). Social competence which composes of social adjustment, social performance, and social skills (Cavell, Meehan, & Fiala, 2003), can be described as "the flexible regulation of affect, cognition and behaviour in the service of attaining social goals without unduly constraining opportunities for social partners to attain their goals, and without entering onto a developmental trajectory that would constrain opportunities for attaining future goals not yet anticipated" (Vaughn et al., p. 328). Social competence requires having the capability to feel positively about oneself, positive or compatible relationships with family and peers (Raver & Zigler, 1997) and maintaining positive social interactions with others without desisting from personal goals (Rubin & Rose-Krasnor, 1992). Social competence also includes regulating one's emotions, communicating feelings, interacting in a positive way with others, and creating and maintaining effective and reciprocal social relationships (Fabes, Gaertner, & Popp, 2006).

According to Socrates competent individuals can manage well the circumstances they encounter daily, and can possess judgment which is accurate in meeting occasions as they arise and rarely miss the expedient course of action (Schirvar, 2013). Social competence grows as we combine personal and environmental resources for positive social outcomes, includes the absence of negative behaviours alongside the presence of positive behaviours, begins in childhood period and affected by culture heavily. (Bierman & Welsh, 2008). Previous studies indicated that social competence was related to financial success (Baron & Markman, 2003), academic achievement (Wentzel, 1991) and behavioural adjustment (Goldfried & D'Zurilla, 1969). Social competence may also be a related concept with fairness. Some studies reported a positive correlation between fairness judgements and or social competence (e.g. Vandiver, 2001). Therefore the aim of the present study is to examine the relationship between deontic justice and social competence.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Participants were 311 university students [171 (55%) were female and 140 (45%) were male] enrolled in various undergraduate programs at mid-size state university, Turkey. Of the participants, 68 (22%) were freshman, 90 (29%) were sophomores, 93 (30%) were juniors, and 59 (19%) were seniors. Their ages ranged from 18 to 24 year-old ($M = 19.9$, $SD = 1.4$).

2.2. Measures

Deontic Justice Scale was developed by Beugre (2012) and consist of 18 items (e.g., I have a moral obligation to uphold the principles of fairness) is a 5-point Likert (1 = disagree 7 = strongly agree) scale. The scale has three dimensions: moral obligation, moral accountability, and moral outrage. Turkish adaptation of this scale had been

done by Akin, Gediksiz, Çitemel, and Akdeniz (2013). Reliability coefficients were .75, .77, and .85 for three dimensions, respectively. The findings of the confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the fit index values of the model were as follow: $\chi^2 = 185.52$, $df = 130$, $p = .00101$, $RMSEA = .039$, $CFI = .94$, $IFI = .95$, $GFI = .93$, $AGFI = .71$, and $SRMR = .051$.

Perceived Social Competence Scale was developed by Anderson-Butcher, Iachini, and Amorose (2007). The scale comprised of 6 items (e.g., I get along well with others) and each item ranges from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much) scale. Yield total scores from 6 to 30 where a higher score indicates a higher social competence level. The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the original form was .87. Turkish version of the scale had been done by Akin et al. (2012). The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the Turkish form was .80. Results obtained from the confirmatory factor analyses demonstrated that 6 items yielded one factor as original form and that the one-dimensional model was well fit ($\chi^2 = 7.34$, $df = 7$, $RMSEA = .010$, $CFI = 1.00$, $RFI = 0.99$, $IFI = 1.00$, $AGFI = .98$, $GFI = .99$, $NFI = .99$, and $SRMR = .018$).

2.3. Procedure

Data collection took a participant approximately 7 minutes to complete the data set. Participants voluntarily participate and are free to fill out questionnaires without pressure and based on their own affects and ideas. Researchers encouraged the students to keep their answers confidential and reminded them not to talk with classmates about their answers. The instruments were administered to the students in groups in the classrooms.

In this study, the analysis of the data was carried out by Pearson correlation and stepwise regression method analysis. The analysis were applied via SPSS 15 for windows.

3. Results

Means, standard deviations, and inter-correlation for all the study variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	Mean	Standard Deviations
1- Social Competence	-				26.16	2.81
2- Moral obligation	.40**	-			36.20	3.09
3- Moral accountability	.43**	.51	-		27.08	2.76
4- Moral outrage	.42**	.39**	.59**	-	17.55	2.52

** $p < .01$

Preliminary correlation analysis showed that moral obligation ($r = .40$, $p < .01$), moral accountability ($r = .38$, $p < .01$), and moral outrage ($r = .35$, $p < .01$) related positively to social competence.

Deontic justice dimensions (moral obligation, moral accountability, and moral outrage) were used in a stepwise multiple regression analysis to predict social competence. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Result of Stepwise Regression Analysis

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	R	R^2	F
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	<i>B</i>	<i>SE_B</i>	β				
Step 1							
Moral accountability	.44	.05	.43	8.40	.43	.19	70.55*
Step 2							
Moral accountability	.31	.06	.30	5.21			
Moral obligation	.23	.05	.25	4.30	.48	.23	46.52*
Step 3							
Moral accountability	.19	.07	.18	2.81			
Moral obligation	.20	.05	.22	3.90	.51	.26	36.64*
Moral outrage	.25	.07	.22	3.63			

* $p < .001$

According to the results of multiple regression analysis, the model was statistically significant, $F_{(3, 307)} = 36.638$, $p < .001$, and accounted for approximately 26% of the variance of social competence. Moral accountability entered the equation first, accounting variance in predicting social competence ($R^2 = .186$, adjusted $R^2 = .183$). Moral obligation entered on the second step accounting for an additional 4% variance. Lastly, moral outrage entered on the third step accounting for an additional 3% variance. The standardized beta coefficients indicated the relative influence of the variables in last model with moral accountability ($\beta = .18$, $p < .001$), moral obligation ($\beta = .22$, $p < .001$), and moral outrage ($\beta = .22$, $p < .001$).

4. Discussion

The purpose of this research is to investigate the relationships between deontic justice and social competence. Findings have demonstrated that there is a positive relationship between social competence with moral obligation, moral accountability, and moral outrage dimensions of deontic justice. Bierman (2004) defined social competence as the “capacity to coordinate adaptive responses flexibly to various interpersonal demands and to organize social behaviour in different social contexts in a manner beneficial to oneself and consistent with social conventions and morals” (p. 141). Social competence requires maintaining social relationships with caring about fairness and not harming another person or violates moral principles. Similarly deontic justice involves not only caring for one but also for others (Folger, 2001). Additionally Montada (1998) propounded that justice is an ought. It is a moral imperative for social life. Wojciszke (2005) suggested that both morality and competence dominates person-perception and are posited to constitute two basic kinds of content in person.

Fairness of a leader or administrator in an organization may substantially impact leadership effectiveness. Fairness of a leader is associated with more desirable follower affective/evaluative responses and behaviour (Van Knippenberg, De Cremer, & Van Knippenberg, 2007; De Cremer, & Van Knippenberg, 2008). Consistently, studies has shown a significant positive relationship between the leadership behaviours and emotional and social competencies of administrators (Beytekin, 2010).

Towards the results of the present study, more significant investigations may be performed to determine the relationship between deontic justice as a new construct that implies that individuals both react to the treatment they themselves receive and to the treatment of others and some other variables to extend our knowledge about these concepts.

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