



# A Qualitative Case Study on the Organizational Identity of Faculty Members

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## Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to investigate the common issues and factors associated with organizational identity from the viewpoint of faculty members employed during the 2011-2012 academic year in the Faculty of Education at Mersin University in Mersin, Turkey. The sample of this study consisted of 14 faculty members, including professors, associate professors, and assistant professors from the Faculty of Education. The data was gathered by utilizing the semi-structured interview method, which consisted of 16 interview questions developed by the researcher. The data, collected from interviews, was content-analyzed by identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns of the data. Analysis of the data revealed that there are a number of common issues and factors associated with the organizational identity of faculty members. As a result of the analysis, three main categories and a number of sub-categories emerged: Identity-related issues, identity-relevant outcomes and administrative issues. Considering these results, it may be proposed that the interviewed faculty members do not identify themselves with their faculty or sub-group of the faculty but rather as discrete individuals who as a whole comprise the faculty organization.

## Keywords

Administrative Issues, Alienation, Faculty Members, Identity-related Issues, Identity-related Outcomes, Organizational Commitment, Organizational Identity, Organizational Image.

Almost all over the world, profound long-term changes have reshaped “all aspects of academic work and identity around an idealized image of corporate efficiency, a strong managerial culture, entrepreneurialism, and profit-making ideals” (Winter, 2009, p. 121). These changes were the complex responses from higher education institutions to globalization, technological developments, and changes in government funding (Churchman, 2006). Researchers have shown particular interest in the changing nature of academic work, predominantly in how an academician contextualizes their identity within this framework (Billiot, 2010; Churchman, 2006; Clegg, 2008; Harris, 2005; Jawitz, 2009; Nixon, 1996; Winter, 2009).

Many definitions of identity have been proposed by sociology, organizational behavior, social psychology, and communication researchers view this construct as a key for explaining and predicting an individual’s attitudes and behaviors (Billiot, 2010; Churchman, 2006; Clegg, 2008; Edwards, 2005; Riketta, 2005). For example, Clegg (2008) proposed that identity is a “multiple and shifting term exists alongside other aspects of how people understand their personhood and ways of being in the world.” (p. 329). Identity has been interpreted as a sense of self representing an ongoing effort of making sense of who we are in a continuum which links the past with the present and future (Billiot, 2010; Geijsel & Meijers, 2005; Henkel, 2000). Specifically, it is argued in the literature that the individual in

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an academic context constructs their identity, or sense of “academic self,” via their image of what comprises “the academic”: their past experiences and their understanding of current circumstances (Billiot, 2010; Henkel, 2000). Furthermore, Harris (2005) referred to the university as a complex and differentiated institution where various constructions of “academic” coexist.

Billiot (2010) argued that changing social, economic, and institutional contexts affect the identity of the individual academician. She noted that historically, universities have been viewed as a collective of scholars holding collegiality, collaborative management, academic freedom, ideological rewards, and peer esteem in high regard, but nowadays these values have been challenged by revised institutional ones which demand the ideological engagement and endorsement of economic and managerial priorities.

In other words, changing institutional priorities have forced academic staff to redefine their identity and those of their colleagues. Similarly, Churchman (2006) stated that social, economic, and political changes have led to the permeation of “managerialism” into the operation of universities. According to Churchman, the changes in the priorities of universities have required some changes in the meanings that academicians assign to academic tasks and their understanding of the academic role. She also noted that “through these meanings, they construct and protect their individual academic identity, which is not necessarily forged in the same terms or with the same definitions as those of the “corporate” university environment, nor in terms shared with their colleagues.” (p. 7). The literature review also showed that as a result of these mentioned changes in higher education institutions, the commitment and efforts of academicians appears to be divided among their commitment to a discipline, their nostalgic view of teaching, an awareness of market opportunities, and their desire to create new knowledge (Harris, 2005; Henkel, 2000; Winter, 2009).

As with other universities around the world, Turkish universities have been influenced with both national and international social, economic and political developments (Küskü, 2003). Specifically, higher education has a long history in Turkey, but the history of modern Turkish higher education started with the War of Independence and proclamation of the Republic of Turkey. After the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey, higher education

institutions were established in cities in Anatolia aside from Istanbul and they gained a democratic and modern feature. After the foundation of the Republic, important developments were made with respect to quality and quantity. Küskü (2003) stated that in order to live up to a fully globalized world, the escalation of higher education in terms of both quality and quantity must be adopted as the primary goal, and plans and programs should always reflect this perception.

With the establishment of the Higher Education Council (HEC) in 1982, universities were put under the centralized machinery of the HEC. After 1982, with the HEC’s policy on higher education, the number of universities, the number of faculty members, and the number of universities increased substantially (Gürüz, 2001). For example, the number of publicly founded universities was 27 in 1982, while today this number is 103. At the same time, the number of private universities in the country is now 62. A total of 45,732 faculty members are currently employed in these universities (15,520 professors, 8,486 associate professors, and 21,717 assistant professors).

Considering the cultural characteristics of a university as a higher education institution which is deeply influenced by both national and international social, economic, and political developments, and also the importance of the institutional context in which the identity is constructed, this qualitative case study was designed to identify the common issues and factors associated with the organizational identity from the viewpoint of faculty members employed during the 2011-2012 academic year in the Faculty of Education at Mersin University in Mersin, Turkey. With this aim, the faculty, which is the broadest group for carrying out the basic tasks of a university, was selected as the study group. Specifically in this study, it was sought to answer the following research question:

What are the most common issues and factors associated with organizational identity from the viewpoint of the faculty members of the Faculty of Education at Mersin University?

### **Organizational Identity**

In recent years, researchers have shown particular interest in the construct of organizational identity. Because different researchers have used different psychological notions while conceptualizing organizational identity, there have been many overlaps and considerable variation in the way this concept

has been defined and approached (Edwards, 2005; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2010). Among the various definitions of the concept of organizational identity, the most common definition has been derived from the social identity approach. According to the social identity theory, the concept of self has two components: a personal identity and a number of identities (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Edwards, 2005; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). In order to simplify the social world and also to locate or define themselves in this world, individuals categorize themselves and other people into various social groups or categories (i.e. gender, race, etc.) based on some prototypical or group-defining characteristics that individuals either assign themselves or are assigned by others (Edwards, 2005; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). Through this categorization, individuals tend to compare themselves with other people on the basis of their membership in a particular group or category. Because individuals are motivated to achieve a positive self-esteem, which is based partly on their social identity, they need to ensure that this particular group or category is a source of positive identity while assigning themselves as members of a particular group or category (Edwards, 2005; van Dick, 2001).

In the related literature, organizations are seen as important social groups with which individuals identify themselves (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; van Dick, 2001). Hogg and Terry (2000) proposed that organizational identity is more important for many individuals than any other category they belong to, such as gender, age, race, or nationality. As a specific form of social identity, "organizational identification provides a basis for organizational attitudes and behaviors," and "this essentially underlies organizational identification's potential beneficial effects on organizational functioning" (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2010, p. 138). Strong organizational identification leads individuals to take the organization's perspective and to act in the organization's best interest (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2010). Specifically, organizational identification has been associated with favorable outcomes such as employee persistence, job involvement, job motivation, organizational citizenship behavior, success, and overall well-being (Bartels, 2006; Dutton et al., 1994; Harris & Cameron, 2005).

In addition, scholars of organizational behavior and social psychology have distinguished four different foci with identification: identification with one's

own career, identification with one's working unit or group, identification with the organization as a whole, and identification with the occupation or occupational group (Bartels, 2006; van Dick, 2001; van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2004). Van Dick (2001) argued that career identification can be seen as corresponding to a personal level of categorization, while the others fall into the group level of identification. At the personal level, individuals are motivated by personal values and pursuits that maximize their own welfare while concentrating on behaviors that promote individual competencies (Johnson, Chang, & Yang, 2010; van Dick, 2001). On the other hand, individuals with a group level identity, which is similar to social identity, incorporate their groups' values, norms, and interests in their self-concepts and they are intrinsically motivated to contribute to their groups (Johnson et al., 2010; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006).

Moreover, Dutton et al. (1994) believed that the identity of a person with his/her organization is derived from images that each member has of the organization. They proposed two organizational images which shape the strength of one's identification with an organization, namely, 'perceived organizational identity,' based on what a member believes is distinctive, central and enduring about his/her organization, and 'construed external image,' based on a member's beliefs about what outsiders think about the organization. They also noted that organizational members' evaluation of the attractiveness of these images was dependent on how well the image preserves the continuity of their concept of self and how much it enhances self-esteem.

As in any organization, organizational identity is an important factor in the academician's work behavior, since it is one of the essential factors necessary for the success of an organization. Therefore, it is required to focus on an academician's understanding of their identity and the ways in which it influences and is influenced by the work they do. However, unlike other organizations, university systems are composed of many semi-autonomous or loosely coordinated sub-systems, and the tasks and workers are grouped according to areas of knowledge. Namely, the sections of a university vary in the qualities of the body of ideas and skills with which they work (Gizir & Simsek, 2005; Trow, 1977; Weick, 1976). The broadest groupings are known as faculty, school, and college. In addition, it is claimed that universities have some cultural spheres affecting academic life, such as the culture of academic profession, institutional cultures, and the cultures of the

national systems of higher education (Masland, 1985; Toma, 1997). In summary, universities are composed of multiple cultural configurations that are dynamic in character, that is, the universities are not homogeneous organizations. For that reason, in this qualitative study, the Faculty of Education at Mersin University was selected as a case to identify the common issues and factors associated with organizational identity in an academic context from the viewpoint of faculty members.

### **The Case: Faculty of Education at Mersin University (MEU)**

MEU, from which the faculty was selected as a case for this qualitative study, is one of the 103 publicly founded universities in Turkey. MEU, located in Mersin, was opened in 1992. It serves nearly 29,391 students with nearly 1,365 academic personnel. When compared to other publicly founded universities in Turkey, it has had a relatively long history and high quality facilities. For instance, it has 20 research centers, a library of 71,563 books, 259 audio books, and 805 currently received periodicals. A computer center with extensive campus-wide network capabilities connects the institution to national and world-wide research networks. In 2001, the university initiated an institutional reform to become a member of the Bologna Process, and this initiation is still in progress.

MEU has 13 faculties, 8 schools, and 12 vocational schools. A total of 542 faculty members are currently employed in these faculties and schools (140 professors, 126 associate professors, and 276 assistant professors). Among the 13 faculties of the university, the Faculty of Education has the oldest history, and the highest number of faculty members and students. The Faculty of Education was the most convenient case for this study because it was readily available and familiar to the researcher. Besides its availability and familiarity for the researcher, this faculty is one of the more well-known publicly founded universities after the establishment of the HEC in 1982, with respect to its developments in teaching and research in Turkey. The Faculty of Education was founded in 1999. The number of academic personnel (faculty members, instructors, research assistants) was only 2 in 2000, while this number is 64 today. The Faculty has 11 undergraduate (4 of them evening), 6 master, and 4 doctoral programs, as well as 7 departments in which a total of 48 faculty members are currently employed (8 professors, 6 associate professors, and 34 assistant professors).

### **Method**

A qualitative case study design was used to investigate the common issues and factors associated with organizational identity in an academic context from the viewpoint of faculty members. The qualitative method was preferred because the phenomenon to be studied includes complex human and organizational interactions (Peterson & Spencer, 1993). Qualitative research can be defined as multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. That is, a qualitative researcher studies things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense from what the people bring them. Moreover, a qualitative study includes the use and collection of a variety of empirical materials describing routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives, such as case study, personal experience and life story (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

### **Sample**

The population of this study consists of all faculty members having an academic status of assistant, associate or full professorship employed at the Faculty of Education, except for foreign faculty members, part-time faculty members, faculty members who have administrative duties, instructors, and research assistants. Because tenure has been argued as one of the factors affecting the identity construction of individuals (Meyer et al., 2006), the academic status of faculty members was taken into consideration when selecting the sample in relation to their tenure and also the number of years of service in the current faculty. In order to enhance the representative power of the sample, the academic status of faculty members was calculated and then a random sampling strategy was used to draw the names of the faculty members from each stratum.

Distribution of the sample by academic status was determined as follows: 3 professors, 1 associate professor, and 10 assistant professors, a total of 14 faculty members. The mean age of the sample was 41 with an age range from 35 to 50 years old. Moreover, the average number of years of service of faculty members within their current faculty was 7.3 with a range of 1 to 11 years. In the sample, faculty members sampled constitute 29.2% of the total number of faculty members employed. In addition, the number of assistant professors alone constitutes 71.4% of the total sample. This is quite consistent with the faculty members' profile of the

faculty where the number of assistant professors (34) is higher than the sum of the professors and associate professors (8 and 6 respectively).

### Instrument

In order to collect the data in this study, a semi-structured interview template including 16 open-ended questions was developed through a comprehensive literature review to conceptualize the subject matter and the opinions of the experts on qualitative research and educational administration. After revision based on the opinions of the experts, the open-ended questions included in this template were tested by means of a pilot study in terms of their sequence, content, wording, and approximate length of interview time.

Conducting a pilot study was preferred in this study, because it is one of the most frequently used procedures to acquire validity and reliability studies. The validity and reliability of a qualitative case study is obtained by employing various procedures (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). Silverman (1993) stresses that reliability is achieved through a number of means, such as pretesting interview schedules, training interviewers in the use of fixed-choice answers, and inter-rater reliability checks on the coding of answers to the open-ended questions. Also, Simsek and Louis (1994) suggest a way for deciding whether an interview schedule is valid or not. This is to compare it with an already validated schedule. When such a comparison is absent, the researcher can increase the validity of the interview schedule by using a certain number of pilot tests.

Specifically, the pilot study was carried out on three faculty members from different departments. Also, out of the three faculty members, two were assistant professors, the other an associate professor. Then, the final version of the template was obtained. The template included basic questions related to the themes that appeared based on the related literature. Namely, a sense of belonging, organizational image, shared characteristics, and commitment. As an example, the interviewees were asked to identify themselves as academicians, and then to identify the similar and dissimilar characteristics between them and the others. Before making appointments with the interviewees, preliminary meetings were made with each of them separately to inform them about the research. A typical interview took nearly 1 hour 50 minutes.

In addition, the redundancy of data gathering and procedural challenges to explanations were some

procedures employed to obtain the validity and reliability of the case studies. These procedures are known as triangulation using multiple analysts, multiple sources, multiple methods, and multiple investigators (Hall & Hall, 1996; Patton, 1990; Silverman, 1993; Stake, 1998). Moreover, Stake (1998, p. 97) points out that since “no observation or interpretation is perfectly repeatable, triangulation serves also to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen.” In this study, the validity and reliability were also achieved through triangulation using multiple analysts. In order to triangulate the data analysis in this study, four interview transcripts were randomly selected and given to a second person who is familiar with qualitative research for analysis. The final categories were constructed after comparing the categories drawn from the second person and the last reviewing.

### Data Analysis

Analysis of the qualitative data included the process of identifying, coding, and categorizing the masses of information obtained during data collection. After rounds of reviewing and processing the raw data, the researcher was able to reduce the data into major analytical categories. As a result, three main categories, which include a number of sub-categories, emerged: identity-related issues, identity-relevant outcomes and administrative issues. Some issues raised by the faculty members with respect to their faculty were categorized mainly as identity-related issues including the sub-categories of *shared characteristics*, *sense of belonging*, *loyalty*, *organizational image*, *individualistic identity (or individualism)*, *sub-disciplinary identity*, and *perceived organizational identity*. Under the other main category of identity-related outcomes, four sub-categories emerged, *affective commitment*, *continuance commitment*, *low motivation*, and *alienation (isolation)*. Some other issues which were raised were categorized as administrative issues, including three sub-categories, *ineffective administrators*, *lack of policy*, and *non-participative decision making process*.

Moreover, in order to show the fairness and accuracy of the data analysis and to provide evidence for the interpretations and conclusions, the findings were presented by displaying examples of the original material on which the description and classification was based. The findings were also well supported by comprehensive literature.

**Results**

Analysis of the data revealed that there are a number of common issues and factors associated with organizational identity. As a result of the analysis, three main categories including a number of sub-categories emerged: *Identity-related issues*, *identity-relevant outcomes* and *administrative issues* as can be seen Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*The Common Issues and Factors Associated with Organizational Identity from the Views of Faculty Members*

Main Categories	Sub-categories
<b>Identity-Related Issues</b>	Shared characteristics
	Sense of belonging
	Loyalty
	Organizational image
	Individualistic identity (or individualism)
<b>Identity-Related Outcomes</b>	Sub-disciplinary identity
	Perceived organizational identity
	Affective commitment
	Continuance commitment
<b>Administrative Issues</b>	Low motivation
	Alienation (isolation)
	Ineffective administrators
	Lack of policy
	Non-participative decision making process

**Identity-related Issues**

The main category of identity-related issues included seven sub-categories: *Shared characteristics*, *sense of belongingness*, *loyalty*, *organizational image*, *individualistic identity (or individualism)*, *sub-disciplinary identity*, and *perceived organizational support*. The sub-categories of *shared characteristics*, *sense of belonging* and *loyalty* are the most common aspects of the construct of identification. Moreover, the sub-categories of *organizational image* and *perceived organizational support* took place under this main category because they are influencing factors in the construction of organizational identity. In addition, because they are related to the constructed identities of faculty members, the sub-categories of *individualistic identity* and *sub-disciplinary identity* were included in this main category.

**Shared Characteristics:** Analysis of the data showed that faculty members do not have shared characteristics referring to shared values, goals, beliefs and interests about the faculty. Throughout the interviews, the most common and frequently raised issue by almost all faculty members was

about incongruent goals or a lack of common goals among them. Besides a lack of shared goals, analysis of the data revealed that faculty members do not share similar scientific, professional and organizational values. As one faculty member complained:

“Another concern is ethical values regarding both in the scientific field and the relationship with students. Such as, some faculty members tell the students their problems with me. Some of them reflect the problems among the colleagues to the students. Others derive benefits from students by using them for chores of their research. Then, reward these students with a high grade. Such things don’t match up with professional ethical values. This situation negatively affects my motivation to conduct collaborative studies and to be cooperative in this faculty. In addition, I think that they (other faculty members) don’t care about science, about ethical values in science. They care only about having an academic title.” (Interviewee 1)

**Sense of Belonging:** Along with the issue of lack of shared characteristics, the same faculty members who were interviewed stated that they do not have a sense of belonging to their faculty. One of them noted that,

“Everybody in this faculty works for their own personal goals, and so they arrange their works considering these goals. In here, individuals make something for the faculty or for others if they will get some individual benefits, otherwise they don’t. They serve for some goals that I don’t defend or approve. I can’t be like them. I can’t look like them. I don’t feel (a sense) of belonging to them.” (Interviewee 8)

**Loyalty:** By relating to a lack of shared characteristics referring to common goals and values, and also a lack of a sense of belonging with their loyalty to the faculty, almost all interviewees mentioned that they do not need to support organizational goals or defend their faculties. A specific example of this issue is the following:

“I am not doing anything for this faculty anymore. So I have isolated myself. I don’t want to join any activities or projects of the faculty. If it is possible, I’ll never come in here. I already skip the meetings with any of the faculty whenever possible. I go to seminars and meetings elsewhere. When people from outside the faculty negatively criticize the faculty, I don’t feel the urge to defend it. In the past, I defended

this faculty when anybody criticized it, and I was embarrassed when the faculty was remembered notoriously.” (Interviewee 7)

**Individualistic Identity (Individualism):** One of the most common issues raised by the interviewed faculty members was *individualistic identity (individualism)*. According to the interviewees, almost all faculty members in their faculty act on behalf of their individual benefit. As one faculty member complained “We do not follow common goals that serve a collective well-being. They involve common projects if these projects give them opportunity to gain monetary rewards,” (interviewee 2). Similarly, another interviewee noted that:

“Anybody in this faculty who works for common goals, they only try to achieve individual benefits, such as money, title, status etc., but especially monetary rewards. They do not have scientific goals, ethical values. Even we do not have similar scientific manners, we do not have shared ethical values.” (Interviewee 9)

**Organizational Image:** Considering the previously presented findings of this study, it may be stated that there is no consistency between the attributes faculty members use to define themselves and the attributes used to define the image of the faculty as a social group (perceived organizational identity). In addition to the perceived organizational identity, the result of the analysis revealed that almost all faculty members believed that being members of this faculty confers negative attributes on them. They interpreted the external image of their faculty as unfavorable. As one interviewee remarked:

“I feel ashamed to say that I am an academician at the Faculty of Education to people who are familiar with the faculty. I introduce myself to these people by referring to the sub-discipline to which I belong, because human beings have a tendency to categorize people. I don't want to be categorized with such people in here.” (Interviewee 3)

**Sub-discipline-based Identity:** Analysis of the data revealed that all interviewees identified themselves with their sub-disciplines. They saw their own sub-disciplines as more special and prestigious than those of others within their faculty. More than half of the interviewees explicitly stated that they introduce themselves to outsiders, especially to faculty members from other faculties in the university, by emphasizing their own sub-disciplines, not their faculty, because they are ashamed of being from this faculty. One commented:

“I don't tell anyone that I am from the Faculty of Education, rather I talk about my sub-discipline. My sub-discipline is more prestigious than this faculty. I believe in myself. In any conversation with somebody, I emphasize my sub-discipline to separate myself from others in the faculty, that is, I try to give them a message of ‘I am different from others in the faculty. Don't confuse me with others. Don't identify me with them.’ ” (Interviewee 11)

**Perceived Organizational Support:** More than half of the interviewed faculty members complained about an unfair reward system or not being rewarded, being neglected and disregarded by the administrators and others in the faculty. This refers to perceived organizational support (POS). One of them explicitly stated that:

“Their (other faculty members' in the faculty) goals aren't compatible with my goals. At one time, I worked for things to support the goals of the faculty. I made great effort for the faculty and the students' sake, although these things were not my business. But nobody appreciated my effort. Rather, they negatively criticized me. It was like they punished me for my efforts.” (Interviewee 13)

### Identity-relevant Outcomes

Under this main category, four sub-categories emerged: *affective commitment*, *continuance commitment*, *low motivation*, and *alienation (isolation)*.

**Affective Commitment:** Affective commitment (AC) refers to emotional attachment to one's organization or work group and involves an acceptance and internalization of the organization or work group's goals and values, and a willingness to make extra effort on the organization or work group's behalf (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Johnson & Yang, 2006; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). However, analysis of the data revealed that the goals and values of the interviewed faculty members were not congruent with those of other faculty members. Related with this issue, one interviewee stated that:

“In a university, each faculty as a whole has to set its goals defining the qualities of their graduates and research, and the rules and procedures one must follow to achieve these common goals. Unfortunately, there is not any common goal, procedure followed, rule or value. Each faculty member in this faculty has their own goal.

Also, it seems that they have already forgotten scientific values. I believe that their values are based on their individual benefits, so these values are changeable. I can't accept their continuously changing values. I can't work with their values. I don't feel myself as one of them. I am alone in this faculty. I don't want to work for this faculty or anybody in this faculty." (Interviewee 10)

**Continuance Commitment:** Except for two of the interviewed faculty members, all others noted that they have an intention to leave the faculty, but they could not leave because of a lack of alternative or desirable employment opportunities and the cost of leaving the faculty. One interviewed faculty member explicitly expressed her/his concern in this way:

"I know that the situation of any university or faculty that I could go to will be the same as this faculty. I know that none of them are much better than this faculty. If I knew of any others that would be much better than here, I would go there immediately. That is, there is no alternative. So there is no reason to leave the faculty. Also, here in this faculty, lots of people know me. I set my living standards here. If I go to a new place, I must set new living standards, and becoming acquainted with new people takes a long time." (Interviewee 14)

**Low Motivation:** The other most frequently mentioned issue was low motivation. This refers to the faculty members not having much enthusiasm for conducting scientific research, improving their intellectual qualities, teaching students, and making extra effort on the faculty's behalf. Faculty members related this issue to the disappointments they experienced due to double standards, an unfair reward system if rewarded at all, individualistic manners of other faculty members, overloaded teaching requirements, a non-participative decision making process, and being neglected and disregarded by administrators and others in the faculty. One faculty member commented:

"In the past, I gave lectures willingly. When I felt inadequate at teaching, or I relayed things to the faculty, I felt bad, but now, I don't feel like that. Doing scientific studies and reading a new book or new article related to my sub-discipline are important to me, but I don't have any motivation to do this. I was not rewarded for my efforts; it is too hard for me." (Interviewee 2)

**Alienation (Isolation):** The issue of alienation (isolation) was raised by all but two of the

interviewees. The interviewees who raised alienation as an issue mentioned some possible causes of alienation (isolation), namely, an impersonal faculty climate in which faculty members feel more detached from each other which is a reflection of a culture-associated functional solidarity rather than communal solidarity, formalization, individualism among faculty members, overloaded teaching requirements, lots of unsolved personal and organizational problems, a lack of trust for administrators and other faculty members, a lack of common goals, and a non-participative decision making process in the faculty. As an example related to this issue, especially due to formalization, an interviewee said that "I am not a government official, I am a scientist. I am a professional. As a scientist, you cannot live in such a bureaucratic context. You can't do science in such an authoritarian and rule-based structure." (Interviewee 7)

#### Administrative Issues

Results revealed that faculty members hold administrators responsible for low motivation, alienation and individualism among faculty members, for overloaded teaching requirements, for the existence of lots of unsolved personal and organizational problems, for a lack of common goals, and for the non-participative decision making process within the faculty. These raised issues were categorized under the main category of administrative issues including the three sub-categories: *ineffective administrators*, *lack of policy*, and *non-participative decision making process*.

**Ineffective Administrators:** Almost all faculty members mentioned that their administrators do not have skills to develop a shared vision, to coordinate faculty members around shared organizational goals, and do not have values which are the main characteristics of ineffective administrators (Kalargyrou, Pescosolido, & Kalargiros, 2012; Trocchia & Andrus, 2003). An interviewee commented that:

"We do not share a vision. Developing a vision is the responsibility of the administrators. But administrators in this faculty haven't been able to develop a vision or common goals which guide our daily actions. So each faculty member acts on her/his own individual path." (Interviewee 3)

In addition, all faculty members pointed out that the existing organizational rules and procedures are used differently for different individuals by the

administrators in their faculty. They also argued that such a situation leads them to feel insecure and to doubt the existence of fairness in the administrative process within the faculty. Trocchia and Andurus (2003) stated that possessing integrity, honesty and fairness are the top three characteristics of effective departmental leadership. Related to this issue, the interviewees emphasized that they lost their trust in the administrators. One faculty member explicitly stated that:

“The faculty doesn’t have any administrative values or standards. Administrators make decisions based on personal values and also their personal relations with some faculty members. That is, they behave differently to people who they have a close relationship with. This leads people in here to fawn over administrators. I can’t be such a person. I don’t trust the administrators. Thus, I don’t feel secure.” (Interviewee 4)

The interviewees also stated that their administrators do not have some general administrative skills such as organizing, planning, problem solving, and communication skills. One noted that:

“In this faculty, we do not know what will happen tomorrow. All the meetings, official writings, teaching and exam programs etc. are made urgently. Administrators do not have any plan or program for anything. Sometimes we can’t give our lectures because of such urgent things.” (Interviewee 2)

Another one also commented that:

“There is not any formal or informal medium for communicating our ideas, feelings, experiences, or scientific studies. But more importantly we do not have common values, procedures, or visions that need to be developed and communicated to us by our administrators.” (Interviewee 6)

**Lack of Policy:** The interviewees related the issue of ineffective administrators with the lack of policies. In this study, policy refers to a premeditated rule set to guide organizational direction, faculty members as employees, and decisions, and to regulate, direct and control actions and conduct. Specifically, faculty members related ‘policy’ with a shared organizational vision, an organizational philosophy, a basis for daily operations in the faculty, and also for an organizational culture. The interviewees especially complained about the lack of policy on teaching. As one interviewee stated:

“We have different cultural backgrounds. We don’t have a shared vision, goal or aim. What

are the qualities of our graduates? Why are we in here? For what? There is not any common answer to these questions. There are not any formal or informal common educational goals of the faculty.” (Interviewee 1)

Similarly, another interviewee stated that, “Each faculty member views ‘education’ differently. Therefore, each of them educates students in her/his own way. Students are confused.” (Interviewee 9)

#### **Non-participative Decision Making Process:**

Although participative decision making is seen as one of the aspects of effective leadership in higher education, all interviewees complained that they are not involved in decisions which affect them, or debate issues that concern them. One of the interviewees commented that, “The administrators don’t have a faculty member-centered understanding. We are intellectuals, but we can’t be involved in the decision making process in this faculty. This leads us to feel worthless.” (Interviewee 8)

Another pointed out that, “The administrators complain that faculty members don’t do anything for the faculty or they aren’t involved in any activity in the faculty, but they make decisions without asking faculty members’ opinion about the topics.” (Interviewee 12)

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

As a result of this study, three main categories including a number of sub-categories emerged: *Identity-related issues*, *identity-relevant outcomes*, and *administrative issues*. The first three sub-categories appearing under the main category of identity-related issues are the most common aspects of the construct of identification. These aspects are: “*shared characteristics*,” which implies a certain similarity between an individual and other members within the organization regarding values, goal, attitudes and beliefs, “*sense of belonging*” refers to an employee feeling they really belong to a part of some group, and “*loyalty*” is related to the attitudes and behaviors that support or defend the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Bartels, 2006; Edwards, 2005; Lee, 1971; Meyer, Becker, & van Dick, 2006; Riketta, 2005; van Dick, 2001).

In the related literature, organizational identity is defined as a process by which the goals of the individual and those of the organization become increasingly integrated or congruent (Hall,

Schneider, & Nygren, 1970). In this perspective, the notion of self is used as becoming integrated with the organization as a social group by integrating organizational goals and values into one's own identity. However, the results of this study showed that faculty members do not share characteristics which qualify as shared values, goals, beliefs or interests about the faculty. Along with the issue of lack of shared characteristics, interviewees stressed that they do not have a sense of belonging to their faculty. The concept of identification as a sense of belonging seems to be a phenomenon resulting from common goals shared with others in the organization (Bartels, 2006; Lee, 1971).

Moreover, loyalty which refers to support for organizational goals, objectives and policies, and the defense of the organization from outsiders is seen as one of the common aspects of identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Bartels, 2006; Edwards, 2005; Lee, 1971). In this study, interviewees stated that they do not need to support organizational goals. But, it is stated in the literature that individuals have to help the organization to improve in order to gain a positive concept of self from being in an organization (Hogg & Terry, 2000; van Dick, 2001). So it is expected that members of an organization need to engage themselves in and beyond their roles, show low absenteeism, etc. in order to enhance their own self-esteem. Similarly, Dutton et al. (1994) stated that strong identification impels increased cooperation with members of an organization as well as additional effort towards tasks that contribute to coworkers and the organization. However, considering the findings presented above, it may be proposed that faculty members do not need to give additional effort to tasks or to cooperate with other faculty members in their faculty.

In addition, the sub-categories of *individualistic identity* and *sub-disciplinary identity* were included in this main category, because they are related to the constructed identities of faculty members. Also, the sub-categories of *organizational image* and *perceived organizational support* took place under this main category because they are influencing factors in the construction of organizational identity.

Individualistic identity appeared as one of the most common issues raised by the interviewees. Johnson et al. (2010) stated that the individual identity level as one of the multiple identity levels (e.g. collective, relational) involves "self-definitions based on one's sense of uniqueness, where self-

worth is derived from being different, and better-than others." (p. 230). They pointed out that people with strong individual identities are motivated by personal values and pursuits that serve their own welfare, which is similar to the cultural value of individualism. Individualism can be related to competition, self-reliance and emotional distance from in-groups. In an organizational setting, individual-oriented people tend to behave in ways that help them obtain valued economic and socio-emotional rewards (e.g. pay, promotion, power and respect) and prevent the loss of investments they have already accrued. However, individuals who strongly identify themselves with an organization are likely to focus on tasks that benefit the whole organization rather than on purely self-interested ones (Dutton et al., 1994).

Gizir and Simsek (2005) pointed out that individualism was one of the most important factors negatively influencing communication in an academic context. They related individualism with alienation, competition, lack of common goals and inadequate exchange of scientific knowledge among faculty members. Although there are some other reported causes in their study, individualism, alienation and competition were mainly associated with the promotion system based on publications and other criteria that impel faculty members to work individually. Similarly, in the present study, all the interviewees related individualism with the promotion based system. Furthermore, besides some other issues related to the academic identity, Billot (2010) argued that less co-operation with peers due to an individually designed system of assessment leads to identity issues in an academic environment. In sum, the individualistic identity of academicians seems to be related to the 'publish or perish' mentality referring to a tendency to rely on the official listing of high quality journals to measure the performance of academics (Gendron, 2008).

Moreover, van Dick (2001) explicitly stated that "when work context and/or task structure focuses on an individual level (e.g. working alone or under individual reward structures), the personal level of self-categorization is activated and the person will act on behalf of individual benefits" (p. 273). Also, he pointed out that if a person's focus of his/her identification is on his/her own career, it is to be expected that this person would concentrate on behaviors that promote individual competencies.

Faculty members interviewed in this study also interpreted the image of their faculty as unfavorable and believed that being members of

this faculty confers negative attributes on them. It seems that there is no consistency between the attributes faculty members use to define themselves and the attributes they use to define the image of the faculty as a social group. It is proposed in the literature that organizational members strongly identify themselves with the organization when their identity as an organizational member is more salient than alternative identities, and when their concept of self has many of the same characteristics they believe define the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994). Dutton et al. (1994) mentioned about two organizational images shaping the strength of one's identification with the organization. The first image, perceived organizational identity, is based on what the member believes is distinctive, central and enduring about his/her organization while the second image, construed external image, is based on a member's beliefs about what outsiders think about the organization. They also noted that organizational members evaluate the attractiveness of these images by how well this image preserves the continuity of their concept of self, and how it enhances their self-esteem. In sum, it is proposed that these two organizational images affect the cognitive connection that an organizational member creates with his/her organization and the kinds of behaviors that follow.

The results also show that faculty members perceive their own sub-disciplines as more special and prestigious than those of others within their faculty, and they tend to identify themselves with their sub-disciplines. This seems to be related to faculty members using the positive image of their sub-discipline to define themselves, and also to the faculty feeling a negative image of the faculty because of the negative attributes conferred on them as previously mentioned. It has been argued that both the discipline and the institution play an important role in the formation of academic identity (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Clark, 1987). Harris (2005) proposed that academic identity has been related to subject discipline rather than the institution itself because of the intense differentiation in the higher education system from the marketing of education and research. The discipline seems to be a "central context within which academics contract their identities, their values, the knowledge base of their work, their modes of working and their self-esteem" (Henkel, 2000, p. 22). Billot (2010) noted that "the lure of being part of a group conflicts with the heterogeneity of academic staff and this hinders the development of a cohesive organizational identity"

(p. 713). In addition, Winter (2009) argued that academicians express more commitment to their disciplines and less commitment to their organizations' management and business direction because of the incongruous values between the academicians and the market-oriented higher education institutions.

Furthermore, results revealed that faculty members have a perception about the extent to which the organization does not value their contribution nor care about their well-being. This refers to perceived organizational support (POS) (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Also, interviewees mentioned there is an unfair reward system; they are not rewarded but neglected and disregarded by the administrators and others in the faculty. Fairness, supervisory support, organizational rewards and job conditions, which are general forms of perceived favorable treatments received from an organization, result in POS (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). It has been argued that POS meets socio-emotional needs (e.g. the need for self-esteem, approval and affiliation), leading individuals to incorporate organizational membership and role status into their social identities, while a reduced POS leads individuals to reduce the importance of the organization in their self-concept (reduced identity) and to separate their own self-concept from the organization (Fuller, Hester, Barnett, Frey, & Relyea, 2006; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Zagenczyk, Gibney, Few, & Scott, 2011).

Identity-relevant outcomes appeared as the second main category including four sub-categories (*affective commitment, continuance commitment, low motivation, and alienation/isolation*). It must be noted that organizational commitment is one of the most strongly related constructs to organizational identification. Meyer et al. (2006) argued that commitment to the collective is seen as one of the identity-relevant outcomes, because identification leads to the development of commitment for the target. As one of the most studied concepts in organizational behavior, organizational commitment can be defined as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979, p. 226). Meyer and Allen (1991) proposed that organizational commitment consists of three components: Continuance commitment, normative commitment, and the most relevant for comparing organizational identification, affective commitment. In this

study, affective commitment and continuance commitment emerged as significant identity-relevant outcomes as a result of the analysis.

Identification is seen as a “base” or “determinant” for the development of affective commitment (AC) (Herrbach, 2006; van Dick, 2001). AC refers to emotional attachment to one’s organization or work group and involves an acceptance and internalization of the organization or work group’s goals and values, as well as a willingness to make an extra effort on the organization or work group’s behalf (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Johnson & Yang, 2006; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). It is argued that the collective self-concept level or group identity and affective commitment are positively associated because both have a shared group-oriented focus and internalization of group-level goals and values (Johnson & Yang, 2006; Johnson et al., 2010). However, analysis of the data revealed that the goals and values of the interviewed faculty members are not congruent with those of other faculty members. In addition, it was observed that almost all interviewees were unwilling to take on a task or give extra effort for the faculty. However, it is proposed in the literature that organizational members who feel effectively committed to their organizations show extra-role behavior and more citizenship behavior for improving an organization (Meyer et al. 2006; van Dick, 2001). Furthermore, AC is related to the support and fairness that employees are exposed to while at work (Johnson et al., 2010). Yet almost all faculty members complained about a lack of support from both their colleagues and administrators through their academic and organizational activities promoting the faculty or the university.

Moreover, continuance commitment (CC) is related to the recognition of an individual’s “cost” associated with leaving an organization (e.g. reduction in pay, pension, benefits or facilities) and “profit” associated with continued membership in the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Gautam, van Dick, & Wagner, 2004; Johnson et al., 2010). In addition, it is proposed that employees with strong CC continue their current membership in an organization due to a lack of alternative job opportunities. Specifically, Johnson et al. (2010) stated that CC associated with instrumental concerns can be divided into “sacrificed investments” and “few alternatives.” “Sacrificed investments” refers to the compliance out of fear of losing investments that have been accrued in the organization, while “few alternatives”

refers to “the compliance due to the inability to locate more desirable employment opportunities elsewhere” (Johnson et al., 2010, p. 229). They relate individual-oriented employees’ behaviors, which satisfy external constraints for obtaining rewards or avoiding punishment, with the psychological mechanism of compliance as an extrinsic form of motivation underlying CC. Similarly, Johnson and Yang (2006) observed a positive association between employees’ chronic individual identity and their CC. So it may be proposed that faculty members with individual identities maintain their membership in the faculty due to a lack of alternatives and the perceived cost of leaving the faculty, which refers to CC.

Low motivation is the other most frequently raised issue under this main category. Interviewees related low motivation to the double standards, unfair reward system, individualistic manner of other faculty members, overloaded teaching requirements, non-participative decision making process, and being neglected and disregarded by administrators and others in the faculty. In regard to this issue, van Dick (2001) points out that motivational loss appears when group members cannot identify their individual inputs or consider individual contributions as is really needed. Similar to the results of the present study, Winter and Sarros (2002) noted that the academic work environment becomes demotivating when a person is not being recognized or rewarded, or when the person also has little opportunity to influence a university’s decision making.

Similarly, faculty members complained about the impersonal faculty climate, formalization, individualism amongst faculty members, the overloaded teaching requirements, lots of unsolved personal and organizational problems, a lack of trust for administrators and other faculty members, a lack of common goals, and the non-participative decision making process in the faculty. These issues are related to alienation. Greene (1978) proposed that identification with one’s professional norms and values, but not with the organizational ones is associated with stronger feelings of conflict and alienation from the organization, particularly within more formal organizational settings. For several researchers, formalization has been considered a source of alienation, especially for professionals, because it serves the same function as professional norms and values, but it seems less valid to the professional and sometimes conflicts with professional norms (Aiken & Hage, 1966;

Gouldner, 1958; Greene, 1978). According to Kornhauser (1962), this inevitable conflict between scientists and their organizations stems from the basic organizational dilemma of autonomy versus integration. In addition, Churchman (2006) mentioned that academia is described as a very lonely and isolated occupation.

The last main category of administrative issues included three sub-categories: *ineffective administrators*, *lack of policy*, and *non-participative decision making process*. Considering today's competitive and changing environment of higher education institutions, and also the importance of faculty deans and departments chairs in higher education administration, research has focused on the examination of required skills and behaviors that make effective leaders in higher education (Barge & Musambira, 1992; Bryman, 2007; Kalargyrou et al., 2012; Trocchia & Andrus, 2003). The related research revealed some aspects of leadership behavior associated with effective leadership in higher education. Providing a sense of direction or strategic vision, facilitating the direction set, being considerate, treating academic staff fairly and with integrity, being trustworthy, and allowing the opportunity to participate in key decisions, which are some mentioned aspects of effective leadership, were also argued by the faculty members interviewed in this study. Faculty members complained about the existence of unfairness in administrative processes, double standards, an unfair reward system (or not being rewarded), administrators not having the skills to develop a shared vision and organizational goals, and a non-participative decision making process. The related literature repeatedly shows the significance of the participative decision making for many academicians, especially those who associate "autonomy" with "the ability to be responsible for their own work and to get on with that work in an untrammled and unconfined way." (Bryman, 2007, p. 700).

Identification as the idea of a person's concept of self can be seen as a fundamental human motivation reflecting both a need to belong and as an adaptiveness to a complex and changing social environment (Bartels, 2006; Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Rousseau (1998) stated that "all forms of identity involve a sense of the individual as part of the larger organizational entity (I as part of We)" (p. 7). In other words, Rousseau saw organizational identification as a personification of the organization "we." Two alternative beliefs about self, named as "different individuals" and "distinct subgroups," are contrasted with this identification

of "I as part of We" (Rousseau, 1998, p. 219). "Different individuals" reflects how individuals see themselves and other employees in an organization as discrete individuals without the meaningful whole comprising the organization, while "distinct subgroups" reflects the individual as part of one subgroup whose interests compete with or are in conflict with other subgroups. Considering the results, it may be proposed that the interviewed faculty members do not identify themselves with their faculty or a subgroup in the faculty, but rather they may be seen as discrete individuals without a meaningful whole comprising the faculty as an organization. This proposition seems acceptable when considered in an academic context in which faculty members work individually to obtain valued economic and socio-emotional rewards (e.g. pay, promotion, power and respect) and also to prevent the loss of investments they have already accrued. Rather than working cooperatively with their colleagues for shared goals, by not having similar characteristics with their colleagues, not having motivation to make scientific studies, to improve their intellectual qualities, to teach the students, or to make extra effort on the faculty's behalf, there exists a sense of alienation (isolation) and a perception about the extent to which the organization does not value their contribution or care about their well-being. Working with ineffective administrators also does not help this situation.

In addition, it may be argued that the interviewed faculty members identify themselves with their sub-disciplines and continue their current membership in their faculty due to a lack of alternatives for locating more desirable employment opportunities elsewhere, as well as a fear of losing the investments they have accrued in the faculty. So, it can be concluded that the conditions of the faculty in which faculty members work are not sufficient for them to construct a deep structure identity, rather, it seems that these conditions lead them to feel more detached from each other which is a reflection of culture associated functional solidarity rather than communal solidarity.

Besides the changing social, economic and institutional contexts of universities, the nature of universities as academic organizations may also be taken into consideration while drawing a conclusion in this study. Universities as organizations exhibit some critical distinguishing characteristics that affect all organizational processes, namely, goal ambiguity or multiplicity and complexity of goals

and mission, administrative structure (or dualism of control), academic profession (or high degree of professionalism), and cultural configuration (Birnbbaum, 1988; Cohen & March, 2000; Gizir & Simsek, 2005; Patterson, 2001; Rowland, 2002). For example, Birnbbaum (1988) claimed that universities are more diverse, fragmented, and specialized; their missions do not become clearer, rather, they multiply and become sources of conflict instead of integration. The result of having a lack of shared goals among the faculty members sampled in this study seems to be reasonable when considering this characteristic of universities.

In addition, assistant professorship is contractual and renewed every three years (up to four times). Universities themselves recruit and employ these individuals, but it requires the approval of the HEC in Turkey. Furthermore, unlike other associate professors in any faculty, associate professors employed in the faculties of education must have at least one individually written publication which is in an indexed international journal, besides other requirements, in order to get the title of associate professorship in Turkey. In this study, the number of assistant professors alone constitutes 71.4% of the total sample. This is quite consistent with the faculty members' profile of the faculty where the number of assistant professors (34) is higher than the sum of the professors and associate professors (8 and 6 respectively). So, it may be proposed that the promotion system based on publications and other criteria impelling faculty members to work individually has caused the faculty members to construct an individualistic identity (or individualism).

The modern philosophy of administration is mainly concerned with the achievement of the organizational objectives through employee's voluntary cooperation. Such cooperation requires administration to provide conditions under which employees can best achieve their own personal goals by working toward the achievement of the

organization's objectives. It is especially more imperative when the employees in question are academicians. Furthermore, as an employee's organizational identification influences the behavior that is conducive to the organization, it is crucial that administrators gain insight into the antecedents of identification (Bartels, Pruyn, De Jong, & Joustra, 2007). Administrators also should take into account the fact that a faculty or a university is composed of multiple identities, and the existence of multiple identities within the organization is not problematic. Similarly, Churchman (2006) proposed that the ideal way to respond to the changing political, economic and societal demands of universities is to foster these identities. She also suggested that administrations should be aware of the presence of individual identities, and the employee's identification with different organizational levels.

As previously mentioned, organizational identity is an important factor for an academician's work behavior since it is one of the essential factors necessary for organizational success. Consequently, it is required to focus on academicians' understanding of their identity and the ways in which it influences and is influenced by what they do at work. Accordingly, it is recommended that academicians' identity should be studied in relation with how they think, feel, and act in their organizations. Also, the relationship between academicians' identity and each main category or sub-category should be studied separately in detail.

Finally, it must be noted that the results need to be considered as descriptive due to the common issues and factors associated with organizational identity from the viewpoint of faculty members at a single time and place. That is, although faculty members in various institutions of higher education may likely share common concerns, caution must be used in generalizing the results reported in this study.

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