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## **Examining the Effect of Ethical Awareness on the Relationship between Political Skill and Subjective Career Success**

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Date of publication: July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Edition period: January 2021 – July 2021

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**To cite this article:** Fidan, T. & Koç, M.H. (2022). Examining the Effect of Ethical Awareness on the Relationship between Political Skill and Subjective Career Success. *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management*.10(2),110- 139. doi:10.17583/ijelm.7755

**To link this article:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/ijelm.7755>

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## **Examining the Effect of Ethical Awareness on the Relationship between Political Skill and Subjective Career Success**

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### **Abstract**

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This study examined the relationship of political skills of high school teachers to their subjective career success and the moderating role of ethical awareness in this relationship. The findings demonstrated that the participants' ethical awareness and political skill scores were relatively higher than career and life satisfaction scores. Career and life satisfaction were found to increase with professional experience. Despite being a significant predictor of career satisfaction, ethical awareness had no significant effect on life satisfaction. That said, political skill was a significant predictor of both career satisfaction and life satisfaction. Moreover, ethical awareness did not moderate the effect of political skill on career and life satisfaction. Based on these findings, implementing formal methods such as the use of vision and mission statements and in-school guidelines to make the ethical provisions mentioned in the legal regulations visible in the school environment, and school administrators' creating an ethical working climate through implementing the ethical rules fairly for all teachers and students were recommended.

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**Keywords:** ethical awareness, political skill, subjective career success, high school, teacher

# Examinar el efecto de la conciencia ética sobre el vínculo entre la habilidad política y el éxito profesional subjetivo

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## Resumen

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Este estudio examinó la relación de las habilidades políticas de los profesores de secundaria con su éxito profesional subjetivo y el papel moderador de la conciencia ética en esta relación. Los hallazgos demostraron que los puntajes de conciencia ética y habilidad política de los participantes fueron relativamente más altos que los puntajes de satisfacción profesional y de vida. Se encontró que la satisfacción con la vida y la carrera aumentan con la experiencia profesional. A pesar de ser un predictor significativo de la satisfacción profesional, la conciencia ética no tuvo un efecto significativo sobre la satisfacción con la vida. La habilidad política fue un predictor significativo de la satisfacción profesional y la satisfacción con la vida. Además, la conciencia ética no moderó el efecto de la habilidad política en la carrera y la satisfacción con la vida. Con base en estos hallazgos, implementar métodos formales como el uso de declaraciones de visión y misión y pautas dentro de la escuela para hacer visibles las disposiciones éticas mencionadas en las regulaciones legales en el entorno escolar, y la creación de los administradores escolares de un clima de trabajo ético mediante la implementación de la Se recomendaron reglas éticas equitativas para todos los profesores y estudiantes.

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**Palabras clave:** conciencia ética, habilidad política, éxito profesional subjetivo, escuela secundaria, profesor.

Schools are increasingly seen as political arenas due to the existence of various interest groups competing for scarce resources. Employees in such political environments need more than solely to be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills for individual success. Personnel selection, performance evaluation, training opportunities and promotions to higher positions have become highly political processes. The growing power of political relations requires teachers to be fully conscious about what kind of behaviour to demonstrate in different interpersonal contexts. By doing so, they can implement influence strategies that can affect other teachers and administrators and thence attain career goals. In other words, a successful career has become largely dependent on teachers' political skills (Brosky, 2011; Perrewe & Nelson, 2004).

Teachers may lose their formal and informal power, which they have earned through great efforts, and may fail if they lack political skills. Teachers, who can use their political skills effectively, can warrant a positive influence on people through stimulating their feelings of trust, faith, and sincerity (Ferris et al., 2005; Swiercz & Ross, 2003). Political skill consists of a combination of social skills and the ability to demonstrate appropriate situational behaviours in the working environment (Buchanan, 2008). Politically skilled teachers can have a positive effect on their colleagues and can be perceived as individuals who are calm and self-confident in their social circle. In addition, they can turn the said situations in their own favour by interpreting social situations correctly (Ferris et al., 2007).

However, describing schools as arenas where teachers compete to reach their career goals may not be sufficient to resolve the complexity of in-school political relations; because social actors that need to be persuaded to achieve career goals may not be limited to other teachers and administrators (Durnali & Ayyıldız, 2019). Groups based on factors, such as ideological differences, gender, education, teacher union membership, professional experience, and managerial experience, are all parts of the school culture, and they can give different reactions to political strategies. The increasing level of complexity may require a specific level of political mastery that can enable

the development of an effective strategy for each situation and group (Ball, 2012; Blase, 2000).

At this point, Hoyle (1986, cf. Datnow, 2013) defines intra-organisational political relations as “organisational underground”. Howbeit very little is known about this underground, it is even seen as taboo; but issues, such as secret agendas, organisational factions and Machiavellism are important topics of informal communication in schools. Studies on political relations can show how and why some people and groups are indeed able to shape in-school events. However, political relations may also include disruptive and destructive behaviours, and studies conducted in schools, have not yet adequately addressed the issue of whether ethical values have the power to shape political behaviours. To avoid creating a perception that ethical values are dysfunctional may be one of the reasons for this situation. Another reason may be teachers’ reluctance to explain their political actions. Briefly, studies on political relations may reveal that schools not only constitute educational organisations but also fields of competition for employees (Datnow, 2013).

Schools are undoubtedly political environments. Politically skilled teachers can develop influence strategies for each situation and group through observing the school’s political environment (Ball, 2012; Blase, 2000). The effects of the political skill and strategies teachers use, in scientific and practical sense, on career success need to be examined. Moreover, to what extent teachers, who use political skill to increase their career success, pay attention to ethics in their attitudes and behaviours is an important matter to be dealt with. Here a question is worth posing: Are teachers acting in accordance with ethical values in their efforts to attain career success using their political skills? In other words, it is worthwhile to investigate whether ethical awareness is strengthening or weakening the effect of political skill on career success. Although there are studies on the relationship between political skill, ethical awareness and career success in the literature (e.g., Harvey et al., 2013; Lau et al., 2017), there are no studies found on teachers. This study aims to create new theoretical discussion and research areas in educational sciences by revealing “the relationship between teachers’ political

skills and subjective career success and the moderating role of ethical awareness in this relationship”.

## **Theoretical Underpinnings**

Relationships between political skill, career success and ethical awareness can be explained by using “social influence theory”. Social influence theory tries to explain how people’s thoughts, decisions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours are influenced by others (Wang et al., 2013; Goldsmith, 2015). The aims of the influencer and conformity of influence tactics to the values of the influenced person can increase the power of these tactics (Kelman, 2009). Social influence takes place in three different ways: compliance, identification, and internalization. Compliance refers to an individual’s demonstrating behaviour to make a gain or prevent a loss rather than genuinely adopting it. Identification, on the other hand, is individuals’ changing their behaviours in accordance with the wishes of the relevant person or that of the group in order to identify with a respected person or group. Internalization means that the factors affecting individuals’ thoughts and behaviours are also compatible with their values. In other words, it is about the reasons of individuals’ performing an action, because it is really useful for solving a problem or because they can approve it as a legitimate way of meeting their needs (Goodwin, 1987).

### **Political Skill**

Political skill is the ability to adapt to different and changing situations and to control one’s own reactions by paying attention to the reactions of others. In other words, political skill is individuals’ capacities to adapt their behaviours to various novel situational demands. In fact, political skill is defined as the ability to achieve personal and/or organisational goals by getting information about others in the organisation and influencing them by using this information (Ferris et al., 2002; Ferris et al., 2005; Blickle et al., 2012). Mintzberg (1983) sees political skill as making the necessary efforts to achieve objectives. Political skill is known to be confused with concepts, such

as interest. Oftentimes political skill is portrayed as a positive force and is essential for a successful career today. Politically skilled people are deemed as individuals with high self-confidence who know what to do to attain success, can influence others and give them the feeling of being in a peaceful work environment. They are also people who can position themselves in the right place and time (Ferris et al., 2007; Blass & Ferris, 2007).

Political skill requires knowing the relationships between the superiors and subordinates in the organisation and how the distribution of duties and authority are shaped within these relationships. Furthermore, it entails acquiring the knowledge of what kind of groupings and friendships are experienced among the employees, how the resources are distributed and what kind of formal and informal influence channels should be used to reach these resources. Political skill requires extensive social competencies with cognitive, emotional, and behavioural manifestations rather than behaviours specific to certain situations. Political skill consists of four dimensions (Ferris et al., 2007):

- 1. Social astuteness.** People with social astuteness demonstrate creative and intelligent behaviours when interacting with others. They can perceive social situations and personal interactions taking place in these situations accurately. They can adapt quickly to different social environments and are highly capable of observing others' behaviours.
- 2. Interpersonal influence.** People with high interpersonal skills have the ability to easily persuade other people. They can adjust their behaviours to suit each situation to be able to get desired responses from others.
- 3. Networking.** People with high networking skills do not have difficulty in developing friendships and alliances. These people are able to make friends and establish coalitions much easier than others and think the networks they create are important to achieve personal and organisational goals.
- 4. Apparent sincerity.** Apparent sincerity is about how target individuals perceive behaviours of an influencer. Politically skilled individuals can appear highly sincere, honest, and reliable to enhance the power of their influence attempts.

### **Political Skill and Subjective Career Success**

Career success is the sum of accumulated positive psychological gains as a result of work experiences (Seibert & Kraimer, 2001). According to Judge et al. (1995), the achievements of individuals as a result of their work experiences and positive effects of these achievements are called career success. Career success can be divided into two as internal (subjective) success and external (objective) success. While subjective career success is related to individuals' internal perceptions and assessments of their own careers, objective career success is associated with a publicly accepted social role and a formal position. Career satisfaction, life satisfaction and individuals' beliefs and perceptions about employment can be used as criteria for subjective career success. Elements, such as wage, wage growth rate, hierarchical level in the organisation, proximity to management, and number of promotions, comprise examples of objective career success criteria (Arthur et al., 2005; Arnold & Cohen, 2008).

Career success was initially bespoke only objective criteria, like salary, promotion or social status; but today subjective criteria, such as relationships with friends, meaningful work, career and life satisfaction, are conceived as important as objective ones (Tams & Arthur, 2010; Guo et al., 2012). Some researchers have used both objective (e.g. salary and promotion) and subjective criteria (e.g. career and life satisfaction) in a simultaneous fashion to measure career success (Ng & Feldman, 2014). On the other hand, according to Hall (1996), the subjective aspect of career success is more prominent than its objective aspect. At this point, it is important to know the factors affecting an individual's subjective judgements about career success. Variables, such as career satisfaction, job satisfaction, social support, organisational commitment, and life satisfaction, have been used to measure subjective career success (Arthur et al., 2005; Ballout, 2007; Park, 2010). Following Todd et al. (2009), career and life satisfaction variables were used to measure the subjective career success in this study. Career satisfaction refers to the satisfaction of an individual's long-term career expectations, whereas life satisfaction refers to general evaluations about an individual's

life quality. It can be stated career and life satisfaction are related to an individual's general level of happiness deriving from work and private lives.

We argue that politically skilled people will not have much difficulty in achieving career success thanks to their ability to understand and influence their environments and appear sincere. The political skill provides individuals with the necessary knowledge and abilities to understand other people and thus make it easier to reach their goals (Ferris et al., 2005; Fidan, Fidan & Öztürk, 2018). Similarly, Todd et al. (2009) state that employees with the ability of analysing social interactions in their environment can form a network of relationships and have high interpersonal influence. Also, they are sincere in their actions and able to reach the resources they need to accomplish their career and life goals easier. Dix and Savickas (1995) found in their study that political skill has a strong impact on subjective career success. Additionally, it was found that highly politically skilled employees perform better than those with low political skills (Harris et al., 2007). As a result, we contend at this point that political skills of teachers have a positive effect on their career and life satisfaction, components of subjective career success (Ferris et al., 2005; Todd et al., 2009). It is possible to develop the following hypothesis based on the discussions regarding political skill and subjective career success in literature:

**Hypothesis 1:** There is a positive relationship between political skill and career and life satisfaction.

### **The Moderating Role of Ethical Awareness**

Each profession has its own characteristics, and thus ethical principles. Professional ethics in education is the whole set of principles and standards that determine the behaviours and attitudes expected from a teacher (Aydın, 2006). Ethical awareness refers to giving importance to ethical principles and standards. Professionals who do not have ethical awareness can do more harm than good to society since they are prone to prioritize their own interests. Therefore, teachers should be able to fulfil their professional duties

satisfactorily and have ethical awareness to be competent (Whitty & Willmott, 1991). It can be claimed that the more teachers care about ethical principles and standards and reflects them to their behaviours, the more ethical awareness they have.

We assert that there is a positive relationship between ethical awareness and career and life satisfaction in educational organisations where ethical behaviour is generally encouraged. Especially when the organisations' reward behaviours that are compatible with the ethical values of teachers, their career and life satisfaction can be expected to rise. Teachers' use of appropriate methods, compatible with ethical values, to reach career and life goals positively affects their psychological well-being. In other words, getting the approval of the work environment for individual actions is as important a reinforcement as a financial return and a positive feedback. Therefore, the organisation's appreciation of teachers due to their ethical behaviours can positively affect their career and life satisfaction (Chye Koh & Boo, 2001). On the flip side, teachers' engaging in unethical actions have to struggle with co-workers' reactions and the stress caused by performing such actions (Meier et al., 2013). By the same token, there are studies indicating that the high level of ethical awareness of employees affects their subjective career success positively (Okpara & Wynn, 2008; Valentine et al., 2011). Accordingly, it is possible to develop the following hypothesis based on the discussions regarding ethical awareness and subjective career success in the literature:

**Hypothesis 2:** There is a positive relationship between ethical awareness and career and life satisfaction.

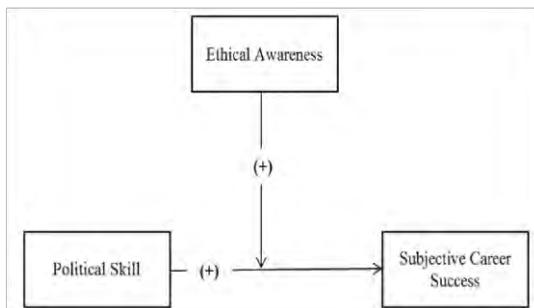
Adherence to certain patterns of behaviours in the relations between individuals of the same profession is the necessity of ethical awareness. Arguably, all professions have their own ethical disciplines. Speaking of teaching, ethically conscious teachers know what their responsibilities to their schools, colleagues and the public are, and try to show this in their attitudes and actions. It is of great importance that teachers are aware of ethical values and behave in accordance with professional ethics. Teachers, who know the principles of ethics well, are careful not to behave unethically (Aydm, 2006).

Ethically conscious teachers will try to act in accordance with ethics while using the political skill, because it requires to be aware of social norms and to demonstrate behaviours consistent with these norms (Liu et al., 2007). Teachers may get positive reactions as long as the political strategies they use in the work environment conform to ethical values (Yidong & Xinxin, 2013). Furthermore, the ethical awareness can reduce the use of negative influence strategies, such as pressure and manipulation, and encourage relatively more appropriate strategies for ethical values, such as persuasion and facilitation (Kelman, 2009). In this way, ethical awareness can enhance the power of political skill through making the interpersonal influence strategies more acceptable for the target people. Therefore, we argue that as the level of ethical awareness of teachers increases, the political skill will have a more positive effect on their career and life satisfaction. In light of the discussions on ethical awareness, political skill and subjective career success in the literature, it is possible to reach the following hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 3:** Ethical awareness positively moderates the relationship between political skill and career and life satisfaction.

The research hypotheses provide a theoretical model consisting of political skill, ethical awareness, and subjective career success. The model is presented in figure 1.

Figure 1. Research model



## **Method**

In this research, which focuses on the relationship between political skill, ethical awareness and subjective career success, “the prediction design” was used. The prediction design is a type of correlational study. In this design, independent variables emerge before the dependent variable. There is a cause-effect relationship between independent and dependent variables (Privitera & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2019).

### **Population and Sample**

The target population of the study consists of 17,074 teachers working in 309 public high schools in the 2019-2020 academic year in nine districts of Ankara Province of Turkey, which are listed in Ankara Central Region by Ankara Development Agency (2013). Ankara Central Region refers to the central urbanized area of Ankara, the capital, consisting of districts with different development levels, which can provide researchers to access schools and teachers with varying socioeconomic backgrounds. Using such kind of target population of which limits are defined by certain criteria set by governmental agencies can enable researchers to study on an accessible and socioeconomically diverse population. Furthermore, it guarantees the representation of individuals with diverse backgrounds in the sample in accordance with their proportions in the population. (Weinberg, Freese & McElhattan, 2014). According to this, the sample size was determined to be 376 (Balci, 2013).

Stratified sampling method was adopted to form the sample by taking the number of teachers in each district into consideration. In the first stage the ratios of subpopulations (number of teachers in each district) to target population was determined. In the second stage the number of teachers to be included in the sample in each district was calculated by using subpopulation/population ratios. Five hundred questionnaires more than the sample size, were delivered to teachers as a measure against possible errors, and 463 of them were completed and returned. Sixty-four questionnaires were excluded due to erroneous or incomplete filling and outliers. Eventually, 399

questionnaires, more than the determined sample size, were included in the analysis. The majority of the participants were female (67%) and union members (58%) and hold an undergraduate degree (69%). While 43% of them have 1-15 years of work experience, 57% have 16 years and over experience. Only 25% of the participants held an administrative position in their past professional lives.

### **Data Collection Tools**

The data of the study were collected through Ethical Awareness Scale (EAS) developed by Koç (2017), Political Skill Scale (PSS) developed by Ferris et al. (2005), Career Satisfaction Scale (CSS) developed by Greenhaus et al. (1990) and Life Satisfaction Scale (LSS) developed by Diener et al. (1985). Similar to Todd et al. (2009), subjective career success was measured by career satisfaction and life satisfaction scales. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted with two different groups of teachers working in high schools in İstanbul, Turkey.

**Ethical awareness scale.** EAS, developed by Koç (2017), consists of eight items loaded on a single factor. It is a five-point Likert type scale valued between “definitely not an ethical issue” and “definitely an ethical issue”. The total variance explained by the EAS was 57.91%. Alpha value of the scale is .79. Items of the scale are as follows:

- (1) Compromising with professional principles for the people I do not want to hurt
- (2) Staying silent on co-workers’ receiving improper personal benefits
- (3) Disobeying the rules unless a sanction is imposed
- (4) Making false statements to persuade others if necessary
- (5) Stating uncompleted tasks as completed to supervisors
- (6) Telling a lie for bringing home the bacon if necessary
- (7) Using the authority of my profession/position to influence others
- (8) Taking someone’s making money at the expense of co-workers naturally

The single factor structure of the scale was tested with confirmatory factor analysis. Fit indices were found to be [ $X^2=39,930$ ,  $p<0.01$ ],  $X^2/sd=2.35$ ,  $RMSEA=.06$ ,  $GFI=.98$  and  $CFI=.97$ . As a result, the single factor structure of the scale was confirmed, in other words, it provided a good fit to the data (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

**Political skill scale.** There are 18 items in the original form of PSS. After adaptation and validation, we obtained a four-factor scale consisting of 15 items. PSS is a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from “totally disagree” to “totally agree”. The total variance explained by PSS is 60,50%. Alpha value of the overall scale is .90. PSS originally consists of four dimensions: social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking, and apparent sincerity. To measure the general level of political skill, the four-factor scale was used as a single factor in which all items were collected on the same factor. Sample item for this scale was “I know how to introduce myself to people”. As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis conducted in this study, fit indices for a one-dimensional scale of 15 items were found to be [ $X^2=313,992$ ,  $p<0.01$ ],  $X^2/sd=3.651$ ,  $RMSEA=.08$ ,  $GFI=.90$  and  $CFI=.91$ . Resultantly, the single-factor structure of the scale was confirmed, that is, it provided an acceptable fit to the data (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

**Career satisfaction scale.** There are five items in the original form of CSS. After adaptation and validation, we obtained a single factor scale composed of five items. CSS is a five-point Likert-type ranging from “totally disagree” to “totally agree”. The total variance explained by CSS is 63.12%. Alpha coefficient was found to be .84. Sample item for this scale was “I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for income”. As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis, fit indices were found to be [ $X^2=13,726$ ,  $p<0.01$ ],  $X^2/sd=2.75$ ,  $RMSEA=.06$ ,  $GFI=.99$  and  $CFI=.99$ . Accordingly, the single factor structure of the scale was confirmed, that is to say, it provided a good fit to the data (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

**Life satisfaction scale.** The original scale includes five items. The single factor scale, obtained as a result of the adaptation studies, consists of

five items and is a five-point Likert-type scale valued between “totally disagree” and “totally agree”. The total variance explained by LSS is 64.35%. Alpha value of the scale is .85. Sample item for this scale was “I am satisfied with my current life standards”. The single factor structure of the scale was tested with confirmatory factor analysis. Fit indices were found to be [ $\chi^2=8,194$ ,  $p>0.05$ ],  $\chi^2/sd=1.64$ , RMSEA=.04, GFI=.99 and CFI=.99. As a result, it was seen that the single factor structure of the scale was confirmed, to put in another way, it provided a good fit to the data (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

### **Control Variables**

Gender, educational status, union membership, professional experience and administrative experience were used as control variables in the study. They were dummy-coded as 0=female, 1=male; 0=graduate degree, 1=postgraduate degree; 0=union member, 1=non-union member; 0=1-15 years of experience, 1=16 years and above experience; 0=administrative experience, 1=no administrative experience.

### **Data Analysis**

Data normality was tested by using graphical and descriptive methods. Q-Q graphs, box-plot graphs and scatter plots were examined as graphical methods. Q-Q graphs yield straight, diagonal lines implying overlaps between the existing sample and the expected normally-distributed sample. Box-plot graphs indicated that the median lines were at the centre of boxes with symmetric whiskers. Scatter plots demonstrated that the plot points look ellipsoidal. Graphical methods implied that the data were normally-distributed. In addition to these, examining skewness and kurtosis coefficients were used as a descriptive method. The skewness and kurtosis coefficients were found to have values between -1.5 to +1.5, which supports the results of the graphical methods (Garson, 2012).

The data were analysed by descriptive statistics (e.g., arithmetic mean, standard deviation and Pearson correlation coefficient) and hierarchical regression analysis. Correlation coefficients and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were used to examine the multicollinearity problem between

independent variables. Durbin-Watson test was conducted to examine whether error terms are auto-correlated. Hypothesis testing was performed by using hierarchical regression analysis. Firstly, the effects of independent variable (H1) and moderator variable (H2) on dependent variables were tested. Then, the interaction variable (H3) was included in the analysis.

## Results

Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients were computed to report mean scores, standard deviations, and correlations among variables. Table 1 shows the results.

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics and correlations among variables*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Means</b>	<b>sd</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
1. Ethical Awareness	4.44	.49			
2. Political Skill	4.12	.47	.14*		
3. Career Satisfaction	3.72	.70	.19*	.54*	
4. Life Satisfaction	3.50	.75	.17*	.49*	.75*

Note: n = 399; \*p < .01

Table 1 depicts that the participants' ethical awareness and political skill mean scores are relatively higher than those of the career and life satisfaction. There is a positive correlation between all variables. The highest relationship between the variables is .75, which suggests that there is no multicollinearity problem (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, p. 90). Furthermore, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values below 1.29 support this assumption. The variation of Durbin-Watson values between 1.88 and 1.93 shows that there is no positive or negative autocorrelation between the error terms in the regression models. Hierarchical regression analysis results are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2. Hierarchical regression analysis results**

Predictor Variables	Career Satisfaction			Life Satisfaction		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Control Variables</b>						
Female (0) vs Male (1)	-.04	-.07	-.07	-.06	-.10*	-.09
Graduate (1) vs Postgraduate (1)	.03	.01	-.01	.05	.02	.01
Union membership: yes (0) vs no (1)	.09	.02	.02	.10*	.04	.04
1-15 years (0) vs 16 years and above (1) experience	.21**	.13**	.14**	.15**	.08	.09*
Administrative experience: yes (0) vs no (1)	.01	.01	.01	.01	.02	.01
<b>Main Effects</b>						
Ethical Awareness		.10*	.09*		.08	.07
Political Skill		.52**	.52**		.47**	.48**
Ethical Awareness X Political Skill			-.05			-.08
F	4.32	27.50	24.25	3.19	20.43	18.46
R <sup>2</sup>	.05	.33	.33	.04	.27	.28
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.04	.32	.32	.03	.26	.26
ΔR <sup>2</sup>		.28	.00		.23	.00
DW			1.93			1.88

Not: n= 399, \*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; DW= Durbin-Watson

According to the results showing the effects of control variables in model 1 for predicting career and life satisfaction, professional experience was a significant predictor of both dependent variables. Further, union membership

was a significant predictor of life satisfaction. The direction of the relationship between these variables and the dependent variables indicates that the career satisfaction of the teachers with the experience of 16 years and above was higher. Similarly, it was found that the life satisfaction of non-union member teachers with the experience of 16 years and above was higher.

When independent variables were included in the second model of predicting career and life satisfaction, the professional experience remained as a significant predictor of career satisfaction. Ethical awareness ( $\beta=.10$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and political skill ( $\beta=.52$ ,  $p<.01$ ) were found to be significant predictors of career satisfaction, but only political skill ( $\beta=.47$ ,  $p<.01$ ) was found to be a significant predictor of life satisfaction. Results indicated that hypothesis 1 was supported, whereas hypothesis 2 was partially supported. The independent variables accounted for 32% of the variance in career satisfaction and 26% in life satisfaction. Moreover, effects of control variables were limited (4%, 3%).

In the third model, when the interaction variable was entered in the model, it was found that it ( $\beta= -.05$ ,  $p>.05$ ;  $\beta= -.08$ ,  $p>.05$ ) had no significant effect on career and life satisfaction. In other words, hypothesis 3 was rejected. What is more, the interaction variable did not cause any increase in variance. It was found out that ethical awareness did not moderate the relationships between political skill and career and life satisfaction. This points to that ethical awareness does not weaken or strengthen the influence of political skills on subjective career success.

## **Discussion**

In this study, we aimed to examine the relationship between ethical awareness, political skill and career and life satisfaction, the last two of which were also tested as subjective career success dimensions. Unlike previous studies in the related literature (e.g., Ballout, 2007; Buchanan, 2008; Chye Koh & Boo, 2001; Koonmee et al., 2010), we included ethical awareness in the study as a moderator variable and examined whether it moderated the effect of political skill on career and life satisfaction. The findings indicated

that the career and life satisfaction of teachers with the experience of 16 years and above was relatively higher. There are similar findings in the literature. For example, Beutell and Wittig-Berman (1999) and Lounsbury et al. (2004) suggest that the career and life satisfaction often increase with experience, since teachers learn in time about what other actors in a school environment expect from them and how they can meet these expectations through which methods and with the help of whom (Blase, 2000).

Also, according to the findings, the effects of control variables on the career and life satisfaction were limited. The political skill largely accounted for the variability in the career and life satisfaction. As Todd et al. (2009) accentuated earlier, political skill positively affects career and life satisfaction. On the other hand, ethical awareness has a positive significant effect on career satisfaction but no significant effect on life satisfaction. Findings on the effect of ethical awareness on career satisfaction were largely overlapped with the previous research findings in the literature. Ethical awareness has usually been regarded as one of the factors positively affecting the career satisfaction of employees in organisations with ethical climates. To that end, person-organisation fit in terms of ethical values might lead employees to feel more secure in making career-related decisions and less anxious about receiving negative reactions in work environment (Okpara & Wynn, 2008; Valentine, et al., 2011). Nevertheless, unlike the findings of this study, a high level of ethical awareness is often associated with higher life satisfaction (Lee et al., 2018). Further to that, it was found that ethical awareness did not have as strong an effect as political skill on career satisfaction. To wit, teachers' awareness of ethical values is not as effective as their political skills in attaining career and life satisfaction. Yet, when the findings of this study were examined, it was seen that the mean score of ethical awareness of the participants was higher than those of other variables. This may be due to the fact that participants do not see ethical values as effective as political skill in reaching the resources required to achieve career and life satisfaction. Positive effect of political skill on career and life satisfaction, on the other hand, can be attributed to its providing possibilities of accessing the necessary resources. Accordingly, we argue that teachers have a high level of ethical awareness;

but ethical values have not been institutionalized enough to be one of the important antecedents of achieving career and life goals yet. At this point, Lee et al. (2018) underpins that ethical values should be institutionalized explicitly and implicitly to be effective on career and life satisfaction and explicit institutionalization affects employee behaviours through implicit institutionalization. While explicit institutionalization refers to the expression of ethical values as formal rules and structures, such as ethical codes, policy documents, and boards, implicit institutionalization refers to the understanding of employees that ethical behaviours are important for the functioning of the organisation (Lee et al., 2018).

Aside from these, ethical awareness did not strengthen or weaken the effect of political skill on career and life satisfaction. This finding is largely contradictory to theoretical discussions and research results in the related literature. For example, Gotsis and Kortezi (2010) pinpoint that ethical awareness can reduce negative political behaviours, such as subordinates' engaging in ingratiating superiors, a superiors intimidating subordinates for his/her interests, and leaders' using impression management to build non-realistic images. Thusly, organisational politics becomes more constructive and can provide beneficial results for any party. Similarly, Gill et al. (2014) found that ethical leadership can lead to positive organisational outcomes through strengthening the influence of political skill on commitment. Unlike these discussions and findings, participants' ethical awareness did not affect the political strategies they use to achieve career and life satisfaction. To rephrase it, we claim that teachers, participated in this study, do not care much about the compliance of political strategies, used to access the resources they need, with ethical values. Ethical values have been transformed into formal rules and structures in Turkey through legal regulations, such as Law on the Establishment of the Ethics Committee for Public Officials and Amendments to Some Laws (Law No. 5176) (RT Official Gazette, 2004), Regulation on the Principles of Ethical Behaviour for Public Officials and Rules and Procedures of Application to the Commissions (RT Official Gazette, 2005), and Procedures and Principles regarding Works of Ethics Commission of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE, 2016). In this instance, it is possible to say that these legal regulations have not yet been able to form a working

climate where ethical behaviour is acknowledged and considered as a prerequisite for achieving the resources needed to succeed.

### **Theoretical and Practical Implications**

This study contributes to the existing literature on the relationships between ethical awareness, political skill and subjective career success. The results showed that although teachers had a high level of awareness of ethical values, this situation did not have much effect on increasing their subjective career success, and success was largely accounted for through political skill. Along with that, this study implies that high level of ethical awareness may not guarantee the compliance of political strategies, teachers use to reach the resources they need, with ethical values. Hence, theory development should focus on conditions limiting the effects of ethical values in organisations and explore other factors than ethical awareness that can potentially control the use of political strategies.

The results indicated that legal regulations, enacted by the government, may not be sufficient for the institutionalization of ethical values in schools. For this reason, the ethical provisions, ruled by central legal regulations, should be made visible in the school environment. For example, formal methods, such as including ethical values in vision and mission statements and issuing in-school guidelines to check the compliance of teacher and student behaviours with ethical values, can be used for this purpose (Cady et al., 2011). We also suggest that school administrators should create an ethical working climate through fairly implementing ethical rules, prescribed by formal regulations, for all stakeholders viz. teachers, administrative staff and students. It goes without saying that, school principals should also demonstrate ethical leadership behaviours and apply these ethical rules themselves in the first place to set an example. In this way, the internalization of ethical values by school stakeholders can be facilitated. In any case, to ensure that political skill is used in accordance with ethical values, ethical values at first need to become a part of the institutional environment of schools and acquire the power to shape political strategies used by administrators and teachers (Koonmee et al., 2010). The fact that informal relationships have a

great weight in a school environment may negatively affect the institutionalization efforts as they may pose a threat to the standardization of formal procedures. On this account, school administrators should have a sufficient consciousness about negative effects of political relations in order to fairly assess lowly and highly politically skilled teachers.

### **Limitations and Further Research Implications**

This study has a number of limitations that must be addressed in future studies. Firstly, this study was conducted with a sample of teachers working in public high schools in Ankara, Turkey and data were collected at a specific time and place. Thereupon, the results may not be generalized to teachers working in other teaching levels, in private schools or in dissimilar socio-cultural contexts of other locations. We suggest testing the validity of the results of this study by using samples selected from cities of different sizes in future studies. The use of samples selected from private schools as well as public schools may enable the generalization of results to distinctive school environments. The use of longitudinal research designs in future studies may also reveal how the relationships between ethical awareness, political skill and subjective career success may change over time.

The second limitation of the study is that the research model includes ethical awareness; but there are no variables regarding the institutionalization of ethics. In future studies, in addition to ethical awareness, we suggest investigating the institutionalization process of ethical values in schools and factors, such as formal and informal relations, potentially shaping this process. Along the same lines, it can be examined whether ethical leadership has a moderating effect in the institutionalization of ethical values. Identifying barriers to the institutionalization of ethical values may unearth the reasons for the weak impact of ethical awareness on subjective career success. Studies can also be conducted to investigate whether political skill leads to institutionalization of ethical or unethical behaviour.

The third limitation of the study was that only ethical awareness was included in the study as a moderating variable. In future studies, the impact of variables such as leader-member exchange, mentorship, perceived

organisational support and proactive personality, which may potentially moderate the effect of political skill on subjective career success, can be examined. Alongside these, we recommend that future studies should investigate how political skill, which is not controlled by ethical values, affects schools, administrators and teachers.

The fourth limitation of the study was that the data were gathered by using a self-report measure and the participants were informed about the content of the study before the application. In future studies, it is advisable to collect data from third-party observers accompanied by a self-report measure or use variables that are not based on participant views. Using such kind of variables may also serve as an additional precaution against common method variance problem.

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