

In the Effect of Communication Quality on Organizational Commitment Levels on Employees in Mergers: Mediator of Organizational Trust, Moderator Role of Transformational Leadership

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Abstract: From past to present, companies have preferred mergers and acquisitions for different reasons and expectations. However, studies show that a significant part of mergers and acquisitions cannot achieve the success and goals that companies expect from the merger. One of the most important reasons for this is that by focusing on financial goals in the merger and acquisition process; managerial elements such as communication, leadership and human resources are given less importance.

In this study, it is aimed to examine the role of organizational trust as a mediating variable and transformational leadership as a moderator variable in the effect of communication quality on the organizational commitment levels of employees in a merger process.

The field study was carried out by collecting survey data from the employees of the companies which went through a merger. These compiled data were used to test the relationships between the variables as stated in the hypotheses. Therefore, in addition to demographic data, the questionnaire includes expressions related to organizational commitment, communication quality, transformational leadership and organizational trust variables.

The research universe, in which the field study is applied consists of a total of 22,650 white-collar and blue-collar personnel and managers working in organizations involved in the mergers process. Therefore, according to the calculation made on the population size, the sample size should consist of at least 378 people. The questionnaire forms were delivered to 385 people and after eliminating some responses 378 observations were used in further analyses.

As a result of the analyzes, it was concluded that the quality of communication displayed during the merger process increased the affective commitment of employees, which is one of the sub-dimensions of organizational commitment, and organizational trust played a mediating variable in this increase.

Keywords: Mergers, Communication Quality, Organizational Commitment, Organizational Trust, Transformational Leadership

JEL Classification: J54

Introduction

The growth strategies of companies are basically based on two methods: internal and external growth. In the internal growth method, companies prefer to grow by investing the resources they have created or obtained from outside in new investment areas and improving their existing activities. External growth, on the other hand, is the growth model that is tried to be realized by the merger of two or more companies. These transactions, which were initially made to eliminate or reduce competition, are now based on various reasons due to changing conditions. Reasons such as reducing unit costs with scale production, benefiting from synergy effect, increasing market share, entering new marketing, manager preferences, tax advantages, technology transfer, reducing transaction costs, financial advantages (cash flow, etc.), capturing qualified labor and technical knowledge, the desire to open up to international markets have led companies to mergers and acquisitions.

Studies have emphasized that M&A (Merger and Acquisition) is a task and human integration process that requires effective management. Therefore, the management of the process is affected by a wide range of variables including language and communication, trust, autonomy, leadership, and human resource policies and practices (Cartwright and Cooper 1996; Mangham 1973). According to DeNisi and Shin (2005), merger management tends to adopt a crisis management approach due to the uncertainty of the situation and thus tends to centralize and minimize the level of communication provided to employees, fueling anxiety.

1. Merger and Acquisition Concept and Definition

In a merger, multiple companies (organizations or institutions) come together to combine and share their resources to achieve common objectives. In this transaction, the shareholders of the merging companies often remain as joint owners of the combined entity. In a merger a new entity may be formed subsuming the merging companies, whereas in an acquisition the acquired company becomes the subsidiary of the acquirer (Sudarsanam, 2003, pp. 2–3).

A merger is the merging of two companies in which only one company continues to exist. The merging company naturally ends to exist. The acquiring company gets the assets of the target company but also has to assume its liabilities. Occasionally, there are cases where two companies of the same size come together and end their existence and a completely new company is established after the merger agreement (Gaughan, 2005, p. 3).

2. Communication Quality

One of the most important processes that play a role on the success of managers and the effectiveness of organizations is the communication process. The manager contacts with his subordinates through communication (Koçel, 2010, p. 521). Communication increases the motivation of employees by explaining what needs to be done, how well they do, and what can be done to improve their performance if the work done is below the standards (Robbins, 1993, p. 328). Communication is often an afterthought, considered all the other stresses of developing M&A deals. However, poor communication sows the seeds of later failure in terms of lost credibility, reduced employee morale, destroyed value and investor lawsuits (Bruner, 2004, p. 879).

3. Organizational Commitment

In general, the desire of individuals to stay in the organization is also expressed as their commitment to the goals and values of the organization (Doğan & Kılıç, 2007, p. 38). Organizational commitment is seen as the sum of internalized normative pressures to act in a way that achieve organizational goals and interests. The stronger the commitment, the stronger the tendency for the individual's actions to be guided by such internalized standards rather than considering the consequences of those actions (Weiner, 1982, p. 421).

4. Organizational Trust

Interpersonal trust is defined as the expectation by a person or group that the word, verbal or written statement of another person or group can be trusted (Rotter, 1967, p. 651). Studies have shown that trust is necessary for the success of the organization; however, it has been demonstrated that its creation requires long and self-sacrificing efforts. Sharing values, beliefs and a shared vision by the individuals in the organization can only be achieved with broad-based organizational trust (Demircan & Ceylan, 2003, pp. 139-140).

5. Transformational Leadership

According to Burns (1978), leadership is one of the most observed but least understood phenomena in the world (Bass, 1981, p. 7). A definition of leadership that will be widely accepted by the majority of theorists and researchers is as follows: "Leadership is a process of social influence in which a person can receive the help and support of others in the fulfillment of a common task (Chemers, 2014, p. 1).

Leadership expert James McGregor Burns introduced the concept of transformational leadership in his book “Leadership” (1978). Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership approach that causes change in individual and social systems (Tang, 2019, p. 17). Transformational leadership; It can be found at all levels in teams, departments, divisions, and the organization as a whole. Visionary, inspiring, daring and ethical are words that describe transformational leaders. They are very confident risk takers who seize or create new opportunities. They are also mindful types of leaders who understand the interactions of technology, culture, stakeholders and external environmental forces (Hellriegel & Slocum, 2011, p. 329).

6. Application Section

6.1 Method

The field study was carried out by collecting survey data from the employees of the companies which went through merger/acquisition. These compiled data were used to test the relationships between the variables as stated in the hypotheses. Therefore, in addition to demographic data, the questionnaire includes expressions related to organizational commitment, communication quality, transformational leadership and organizational trust variables.

6.2 Research Model

The main purpose of this study, as shown in the theoretical model of the research in Figure 1. is to determine how the organizational commitment levels of the employees in the merger/acquisition process are affected by the quality of communication in the process and whether organizational trust plays a mediating variable and the transformational leadership levels of managers play a moderating variable in this effect.

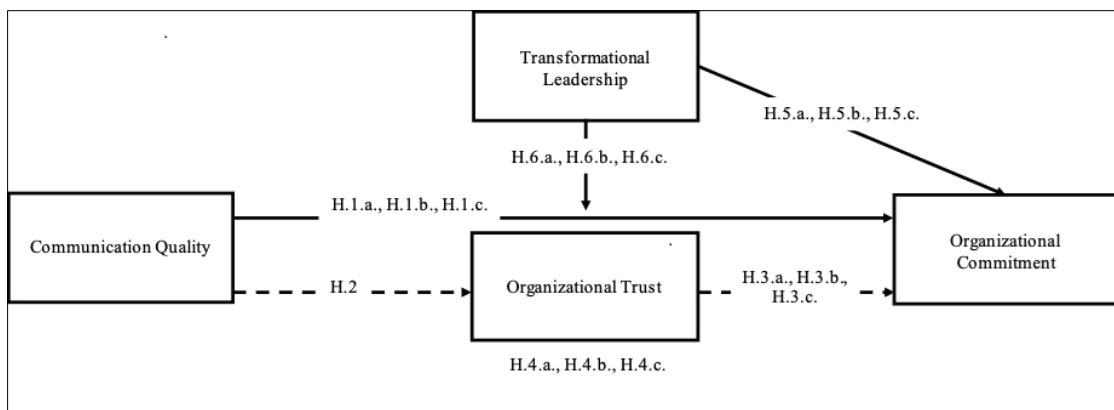


Figure 1. Theoretical Model of Research

6.3 Hypotheses of the Research

H.1. Communication quality has a significant effect on the organizational commitment levels of employees in company mergers/acquisitions.

H.2. Organizational trust plays a mediating role in the effect of communication quality on employees' organizational commitment levels in company mergers/acquisitions.

H.3. Transformational leadership of managers plays a moderating role in the effect of communication quality on the organizational commitment levels of employees in company mergers/acquisitions.

6.4 Pilot Study

A pilot study was carried out in order to finalize the determined questionnaire form before proceeding to the actual implementation phase of the research. 48 white and blue-collar employees participated in the pilot study. During the interviews made with them, it was stated that they did not have any difficulties in participating in the survey, and that the questions were clear and understandable. Thereupon, no changes were made in the questionnaire and the questionnaire was presented to the participation of the entire sample in its current form.

6.5 Universe and Sample

The research universe in which the field study is applied consists of a total of 22,650 white-collar and blue-collar personnel and managers working in organizations that have gone through the mergers/acquisition process. Therefore, according to the calculation made on the population size, the sample size should consist of at least 378 people. The questionnaire forms were delivered to 385 people and after eliminating some responses 378 observations were used in further analyses.

6.6 Limitations of the Research

The most basic limitation of the study is that the research was carried out in a company that merged in Istanbul and the results of the study were formed only according to the answers of the people who participated in the research. Due to cost and time constraints, it was not possible to eliminate this constraint. It was not possible to carry out the aforementioned research in all enterprises subject to merger in Istanbul. Therefore, a questionnaire was applied to the employees determined by the random sampling method in a determined enterprise.

6.7 Measures

The following scales regarding the variables were used in the questionnaire form to be used in the research:

- Lazaridis's (2003) five-item Communication Quality scale, consisting of a single factor, was used as the scale indicating the communication quality in mergers/acquisitions.
- In order to measure the transformational leadership perceptions of the respondents about their managers, the 19-item transformational leadership dimension of the Multiple Leadership Scale developed by Bass and Avolio (1994) was used. This scale was adapted into Turkish by Bildik (2009) and the reliability coefficient of the one-dimensional scale (Cronbach Alpha) was 0.95.
- In order to measure the level of organizational trust, another variable, the 12-item short form of the Organizational Trust Inventory developed by Cummings and Bromiley (1996) was used. The adaptation of the scale to Turkish was carried out by Tüzün (2006), and the reliability coefficient of the scale (Cronbach Alpha) was 0.958.
- In the measurement of organizational commitment, the last variable in the research model, the 18-item Organizational Commitment Scale developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) was used. The scale was adapted into Turkish by Han, Dağlı, and Elçiçek (2018) and the reliability of all sub-dimensions (Cronbach Alpha) including affective commitment (0.80), continuance commitment (0.73) and normative commitment (0.80) are above the acceptance criteria (0.70).

6.8 Analysis and Findings

Data regarding the demographic information of the employees participating in the field survey are summarized in Table 1. below. According to this, the genders of the participants were close to each other, but men constitute 58.7% of the total sample and women constitute 41.3%. While 57.1% of the respondents stated that they were married, 42.9% of the respondents were single. When the educational status of the participants is examined, it is seen that 83.6% of the participants are university graduates, whereas 10.1% are high school graduates and only 6.3% are primary and secondary school graduates. In addition, 64% of the participants are white-collar employees without managerial duties, 18.3% are managers and the remaining 17.7% are blue-collar employees.

Considering the age distribution of the participants, 6.3% are under the age of 24, 25.1% are in the 25–29 age range, 18.5% are 30–34, 17.7% are 35–39, 15.1% are 40–44 years old, and the remaining 17.2% of them are over 45 years old. Considering the job tenure

of the participants before the merger, 33.3% of them are 0–2 years, 14.3% of them are 3–4 years, 13.2% are 5–6 years, 9.5% are 7–8 years, 7.9% are 9–10 years and the remaining 21.7% of the respondents have more than 10 years of job tenure before merger. Finally, when the total job tenure of the employees participating in the research is examined, 10.3% of them are 0–2 years, 14.6% are 3–4 years, 7.7% are 5–6 years, 8.7% are 7–8 years, 10.3% are 9–10 years and the remaining 48.4% have a total job tenure of more than 10 years.

Table 1. Findings Related to Demographic Variables

Gender	n	%
Male	222	58.7
Female	156	41.3
Total	378	100.0
Marital status	n	%
Single	162	42.9
Married	216	57.1
Total	378	100.0
Education	n	%
Primary education	24	6.3
High school	38	10.1
University and above	316	83.6
Total	378	100.0
Position	n	%
Blue Collar Employee	67	17.7
White Collar Employee (Office Worker)	242	64.0
Manager (with at least 1 subordinate)	69	18.3
Total	378	100.0
Age group	n	%
20–24	24	6.3
25–29	95	25.1
30–34	70	18.5
35–39	67	17.7
40–44	57	15.1
45+	65	17.2
Total	378	100.0
Previous Job Tenure	n	%
0–2 Years	126	33.3
3–4 Years	54	14.3
5–6 Years	50	13.2
7–8 Years	36	9.5

Gender	n	%
9-10 Years	30	7.9
10+ Years	82	21.7
Total	378	100.0
Total Job Tenure	n	%
0-2 Years	39	10.3
3-4 Years	55	14.6
5-6 Years	29	7.7
7-8 Years	33	8.7
9-10 Years	39	10.3
10+ Years	183	48.4
Total	378	100.0

In order to make the following statistical tests, one of the factors examined in the control of the data is whether the data is normally distributed. As a result of the normality analysis performed again with the remaining data, the values given in Table 2. were obtained. According to George and Mallery (2010), skewness and kurtosis values are between -2 and +2, indicating that the data are normally distributed. Thus, the remaining observations provide the normality conditions, allowing for statistical analyzes where we can examine regression, mediation, and moderator variable effects.

Table 2. Normality Test Values

Variables	Mean	St. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Communication Quality	3.87	0.93	-0.97	0.60
Affective Commitment	4.14	0.73	-0.82	0.19
Continuity Commitment	3.22	0.70	0.40	-0.12
Normative Commitment	3.07	0.75	0.53	0.13
Organizational Trust	3.91	0.67	-1.02	1.29
Transformational Leadership	4.04	0.74	-1.20	1.55

The results of the validity and reliability analyzes are shared in Table 3. Accordingly, all the scales used in the research were above 0.60 and the scales explained more than 50% of the total variance. As a result, scales passed the validity test. Further, all scales meet the criterion that the Cronbach Alpha value of them should be above 0.7, so the model passes the reliability test as well (Hair et al., 2010; Hinton et al., 2014; Nunnally, 1978).

Table 3. Validity and Reliability Analysis Results

Variables	Cronbach Alpha	Item Number	KMO Test Result	Bartlett Test of Sphericity	Total Variance Explained
Communication Quality	0.914	5	0.853	0.000	74,950
Organizational commitment	0.816	18	0.838	0.000	58,580
Organizational Trust	0.907	12	0.901	0.000	64,954
Transformational Leadership	0.966	18	0.959	0.000	70,880

6.8.1 Correlation Analysis

According to correlation analysis results there is a statistically significant and positive relationship between the quality of communication with affective commitment (0.41), organizational trust (0.55) and transformational leadership (0.42) at $p < 0.01$ significance level. However, no statistically significant relationship was found between the communication quality and the sub-dimensions of organizational commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Therefore, considering the theoretical model of the research, it will not be meaningful to search for a regression between the variables that cannot be correlated. For this reason, the statistical analysis of the relationship between communication quality and organizational commitment was examined only through the affective commitment sub-dimension.

Table 4. Correlation Table

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
Communication Quality (1)	1	0.41**	-0.06	0.05	0.55**	0.42**
Affective Commitment (2)		1	0.13*	0.18**	0.54**	0.28**
Continuity Commitment (3)			1	0.66**	0.06	0.04
Normative Commitment (4)				1	0.20**	0.16**
Organizational Trust (5)					1	0.49**
Transformational Leadership (6)						1

When the correlation relations of the sub-dimensions of organizational commitment are examined, it has been determined that all sub-dimensions have positive and statistically significant relations with each other, as would be expected. On the other hand, it was found that affective commitment had positive and statistically significant relationships with organizational trust (0.54) and transformational leadership (0.28) at $p < 0.01$ significance level. Interestingly, while there was no statistically significant relationship

between continuance commitment and organizational trust and transformational leadership, it was determined that normative commitment had significant and positive relationships, albeit weakly, between organizational trust (0.20) and transformational leadership (0.16).

Finally, when the relations between organizational trust and transformational leadership are examined, it has been determined that there is a moderately strong (0.49), positive and statistically significant relationship at $p < 0.01$ significance level, as can be predicted between these two variables.

6.8.2 Regression Analysis

Based on the findings in the correlation table, first of all, the regression model between the independent variable, the communication quality, and the dependent variable, organizational commitment, was examined. However, continuance commitment and normative commitment variables, which could not be found to have a significant relationship with the communication quality in the correlation table, were not included in this regression model, so only the affective commitment sub-dimension was examined as the dependent variable.

Table 5. Dependent Variable: Affective Commitment

R ²	F	Sig.	
0.168	75.95	0.000	
Model	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	2,897	19,817	0.000
Communication Quality	0.320	8,715	0.000

According to the results of the regression analysis performed on the model in which the communication quality was examined as the independent variable and affective commitment as the dependent variable, the model's explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.168$) was statistically significant ($F = 75.95$, $p = 0.00$), although it was not very high. When the results of the coefficient analysis are examined, it has been determined that the quality of communication has a statistically significant effect on affective commitment as a dependent variable ($t = 8.715$, $p = 0.00$) and a one-unit increase in communication quality increases the affective commitment of employees to the organization by 0.320 units.

Moderating Variable Analysis

Following the regression analysis, it was examined whether transformational leadership played a moderator role in the effect of communication quality on affective commitment. For this hypothesis test, Hayes's Process macro was run in SPSS and Hayes' Model 1 (Figure 2) was used for this.

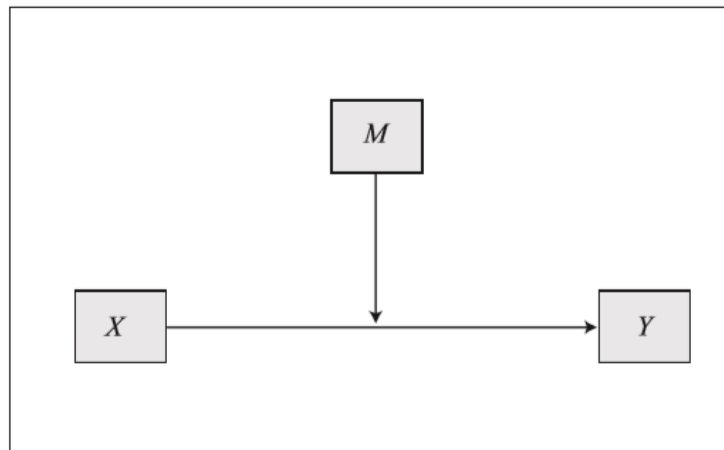


Figure 2. Hayes' Model of Moderating Variable Role (Model.1)

As a result of the analysis, since the p value of Int_1 variable in Table 6. which shows whether transformational leadership plays a moderator role in the effect of communication quality on affective commitment, was 0.600 ($p > 0.05$), it was determined that transformational leadership did not play a statistically moderator role in this relationship.

Table 6. Dependent variable: Affective Commitment

Model	β	t	Sig.	LLCI	ULCI
(Constant)	2.241	3.363	0.000	1.038	3.444
Communication Quality	0.367	2.118	0.035	0.026	0.707
Transformational Leadership	0.207	1,294	0.196	-0.108	0.523
int_1	-0.023	-0.526	0.600	-0.108	0.062

Mediating Variable Analysis

Finally, it was examined whether affective commitment plays a mediating role in the effect of communication quality on affective commitment. For this hypothesis test, Hayes's Process macro was run in SPSS and this time Hayes' 4th Model (Figure 3) was used.

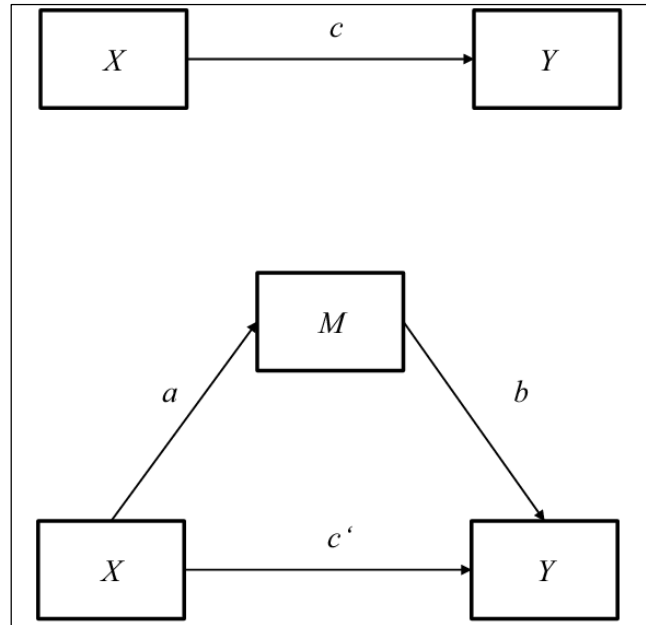


Figure 3. Hayes' Mediator Variable Effect Model (Model.4)

As a result of the process, it was determined that organizational trust plays a partial mediating role in the effect of communication quality on affective commitment. To show this step by step, it has been shown above that communication quality has a significant effect on affective commitment. That is, the c -path used in the mediation analysis was significant (0.320, $p=0.000$). In addition, when we look at whether organizational trust has a significant effect on affective commitment, it has been determined that this effect is also in question, that is, path b is also significant (0.489, $p=0.000$). Finally, it was found that communication quality has a statistically significant effect on organizational trust, that is, a -path was also significant (0.395, $p=0.000$).

Table 7. Dependent variable: Affective Commitment

Model	β	LLCI	ULCI
Direct Effect			
Communication Quality–Affective Commitment	0.127	0.049	0.206
Organizational Trust–Affective Commitment	0.489	0.380	0.597
Communication Quality–Organizational Trust	0.395	0.334	0.457
Indirect Effect			
Communication Quality–Organizational Trust–Affective Commitment	0.193	0.132	0.260
Total Effect			
Communication Quality–Affective Commitment	0.320	0.248	0.393

When looking at the c' -path, which shows the direct effect of communication quality on affective commitment, it was found that this path was also significant according to the results of Hayes' Process macro (0.127, $p=0.000$). Here, it was determined that the indirect effect of organizational trust on the effect of communication quality on affective commitment was significant (LLCI: 0.132, ULCI: 0.260) and this effect value was 0.193. As a result, it was found that the organizational trust variable played a partial mediation role in the effect of communication quality on affective commitment.

7. Summary and Conclusions

According to the results of the correlation analysis made in the study, it was determined that there was a statistically significant and positive relationship between the quality of communication with affective commitment, organizational trust and transformational leadership at the level of significance. On the other hand, it was found that affective commitment has positive and statistically significant relationships with organizational trust and transformational leadership at the level of significance.

It has also been determined that there is a significant relationship between organizational trust and transformational leadership. According to the results of the regression analysis performed on the model in which the communication quality is examined as the independent variable and affective commitment as the dependent variable, the model is statistically significant, although it is not very high. Similarly, when looking at the effect relationships between other variables in the model, it is seen that the independent variable of transformational leadership also has an effect on the dependent variable of affective commitment. Finally, organizational trust, which is thought to have an effect on the dependent variable of affective commitment in the theoretical model, was subjected to the independent variable regression analysis and it was determined that the explanatory power of the model was high and the model was statistically significant. Considering the effect of communication quality on organizational trust as the last regression hypothesis in the research model, it is seen that the model is significant and its explanatory power is relatively high. When the relations between moderator and mediator variables are examined, it is determined that transformational leadership does not play a moderator role in the effect of communication quality on affective commitment; It has been determined that organizational trust plays a partial mediation role.

According to the data obtained from the study, it has been determined that the quality of communication to be displayed in the merger process has an effect on the affective

commitment of the employees and their trust in the organization. It has also been observed that a successful transformational leadership behavior throughout the process has positive effects on the affective and normative commitment of individual employees to the organization and their trust in the organization. Therefore, from the very beginning of the merger process; It is understood that effective, accurate and timely communication affects all these variables and plays a role in providing the expected benefits from the merger.

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