University Students' Perceptions about Unethical Faculty Practices

Akademisyenlerin Etik Dışı Davranışlarına Yönelik Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Görüşleri

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ÖZET

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Etik Dışı Uygulamalar,

Hofstede Modeli,

Kültür,

Öğretim Elemanları,

Üniversite Öğrencileri,

Küresel yükseöğretim sistemleri ve onların paydaşları, artan rekabet, değişen yönetim anlayışı, azalan akademik özgürlük ve liyakatle etik uygulamalara meydan okuyan neo-liberal politikaların dönüştürücü etkilerinden oldukça etkilenmiştir. Bu etkileri göz önünde bulundurarak, bu çalışma, akademisyenlerin, öğretim ve değerlendirmeden, öğrencilere karşı olan görevlerine kadar tüm etik dışı uygulamalarına dair Türk üniversite öğrencilerinin algılarını incelemeyi hedeflemiştir. Nitel çalışmadaki 23 Türk öğrenci ile yapılan görüşme verileri Hofstede'in Kültürel Boyutlar Modeli üzerinden değerlendirilmiştir. Genel izlenim, öğrencilerin, akademik davranış kurallarına ilişkin yüksek derecede bilince sahip oldukları yönündedir. Ana bulgular ise, en sık rastlanan ilk beş etik dışı davranışın "kayırma, profesyonel yetersizlik, küçük düşürme, otonomi-sorumluluk ikilemi ve sözlü istismar" olduğunu gösterirken az sayıda katılımcının, sorun çıkarmaktan çekindikleri ya da durumun düzelmeyeceğine inandıkları için, etik-dışı uygulamalara karşı haklarını savunmuş olduğu şeklindedir. Kısaca temel öneriler: akademik liderlerin, bağımsız bir grup tarafından yürütülen, tacize karşı bir ofis oluşturmaları; fakülte üyelerinin, adil bir yaklaşıma sahip ve geri bildirime açık olmaları; öğrencilerin ise fakülte üyelerine kaygılarını belirtmeleri, gerektiğinde yetkililere şikayette bulunmaları ve akademik etik alanında bilgilerini daha da artırmaları yönündedir.

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Unethical Practices,

Hofstede Model,

Culture,

Faculty Members,

University Students,

Global higher education systems and their stakeholders have substantially been affected by the transformative effects of neoliberal policies that challenged ethical practices through increasing competition, changing managerial understanding, diminishing academic freedom and meritocracy. Considering these effects, this research aims to investigate Turkish university students' perceptions about unethical practices of faculty ranging from teaching and assessment to their service duties for students. In this qualitative study, 23 Turkish university students' interview data were evaluated from The Cultural Dimensions Model of Hofstede. The overall impression was that students had high consciousness about academic codes of conduct. As to the major findings, while the top five frequently experienced unethical practices were "favoritism, professional incompetence, humiliation, autonomy vs. responsibility dilemma and verbal abuse", only a few students defended their rights against unethical practices because they did not want to cause a problem or they had disbelief in positive change. The main implications of this study are for academic leaders to establish an anti-harassment office run by an independent body, for faculty to adopt a fair approach and be open to feedback, and for students to report concerns to faculty, make a complaint to authorities when necessary and develop their knowledge of academic ethics.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, although there have been steps taken towards the betterment of scientific ethics, these initiatives are adversely affected by both intrinsic factors originating from individual faculty characteristics and practices as well as extrinsic factors related to the transformative effects of neoliberalism. These developments have challenged ethical codes of conduct in academia through increasing competition, changing managerial understanding, and diminishing academic freedom and meritocracy. With the additional effect of the massification in higher education systems (HESs) (Macfarlane et al., 2014: 339), there has been a dramatic increase in integrity breaches, harming the reputation and reliability of educational institutions and quality of education (Altbach, 2004:7; Imran and Nordin, 2013:104).

Despite the entailments of the profession, the neoliberal transformative process has made ethics and morality debatable topics in academia (Prisacariu and Shah, 2016:152). One of the results of this process is that most faculty feel obliged to produce a considerable number of publications in a limited period to keep their jobs in this competitive academic environment. When trying to get tenured under stress, some tend to indulge in research integrity breaches (Anderson et al., 2007b: 446; Honig et al., 2014:126-127). Namely, 54% of the Dutch medical faculty felt excessive publication pressure, 24% of whom was diagnosed with burnout (Tijdink et al., 2013:1). Additionally, due to excessive faculty autonomy in teaching (Braxton and Bayer, 2011:56), ethical dilemmas (Svinicki, 1994:316-17) as well as indulgence in various abusive or unethical practices took place in increasing numbers (Osipian, 2014:257; Shaw, 2013:194). To exemplify, while 2% of researchers confessed to have altered the data minimum once (Fanelli, 2009:8), others highlighted an increasing trend in academic dishonesty (Azoulay et al., 2017:1554; Berggren and Karabag, 2019:1; Honig et al., 2014:1) regardless of the developmental level of countries (Ana et al., 2013:1; Resnik and Master, 2013:1-3).

While organizational culture, including that of universities, is shaped by organizational dynamics as well as social, economic, and political situation of the country, it also affects individual perceptions and attitudes (Tierney, 1988:3). Likewise, Hofstede et al. (2010:47), who accepted organizations and cultures as two inseparable concepts, categorized cultural country dynamics that affect organizational forces. Regarding this specification, Hofstede defined academia to have an individualistic culture (2010:23), and Turkey a collectivist one (2010:96). This cultural dynamic may have formed one of the reasons of identity clashes that faculty and students experience in the Turkish academia, causing ethical breaches. Hofstede also suggested that values of a country greatly influence organizational leadership, operations and structures as they are the parts of a society. For instance, individuals in western cultures consider each other at an equal status whereas the ones in eastern cultures respect authority more (Rockstuhl et al., 2012:1098). While Hofstede names this difference as changing "*power distance*" among cultures, he also reported it to be high in Turkish society, which can lead to other ethical dilemmas caused by the underlying belief in interpersonal inequality. Therefore, a closer look at social and organizational culture can help solve some ethical issues.

Whether it be extrinsic or intrinsic reasons, or the effect of culture, breaches in academic ethics endanger the physical and the psychological health of students (Callahan, 1982:335), cause unwanted experiences that cannot be erased from their memories (Hall, 2004:3), and adversely affect the quality and reputation of higher education institutions (HEIs) (also in Prisacariu and Shah, 2016:153). Hence, in the university culture, faculty modeling ethical practices is of utmost importance as it affects the education quality and students' future careers (Dawson and Overfield, 2006:1). This can be done by various ways such as faculty molding students' beliefs to bring out the best in them, and university leadership devising policies to regulate and monitor ethical standards.

The author's perspective towards unethical practices comprises faculty behaviors and attitudes in higher education (HE) that are against the acceptable norms of the academic profession including *moral values, professional* and *pedagogical competency* and *responsibilities*, and *boundaries* in faculty-student relationships. As to what can be accepted as "*immoral*" in teaching, Fulmer (2002:277-79) states situations like building intimate relationships and opening up improper conversations with students, and inviting students to non-school related activities. For "*competency*", while Menuey (2005:316) defines it to be a multidimensional term including management, didacticism, and relationality, I claim it to have an ethical side too, determining the teaching capacity of the educator. As for "*responsibilities*", Ghiaţău (2013 as cited in Ghiaţău and Mâţă, 2015:3) categorizes them as responsibilities of teaching-learning, relational, and school regulations. Finally, when "*boundaries*" between a student and faculty are exceeded, this may reach to the extent of illegal activities like sexual and monetary abuses (Lewis and Riley, 2009:418).

There have been copious studies examining student misconduct (Aslan and Yılmaz, 2021; Jian et al.,2018; Thakkar and Weisfeld-Spolter, 2012) or (un)ethical practices in academia including teaching, research and faculty service duties of faculty (Burnaz et al., 2010; Campbell, 2000; Gao et al., 2008; Pelit and Güçer, 2006) and researcher perspectives (Huybers et al., 2020). However, research reflecting university students' views on faculty unethical practices is scarce and the existing ones either examine data on fewer aspects (Dinç and Gizir, 2019) compared to the current study, or adopt a quantitative approach (Ghiațău and Mâță, 2015; Ei and Bowen, 2002; Oldenburg, 2005; Owen and Zwahr-Castro, 2007; Özcan et al., 2013) revealing a limited perspective in a sensitive issue as this and use data from lower levels of education (Uğurlu, 2008). Similarly, Macfarlane et al. (2014; p.340) states: "*Once the literature related to student conduct and the ethical preparation of other professionals is discounted, there is considerably less research focused specifically on academic faculty*". Therefore, to close the gap in the literature, this study aims at exploring the kinds of approaches and attitudes that facilitate unethical faculty practices from university students' perspectives by referring to the consequences of those practices on students too. Additionally, employing Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Model made it possible to present unique cultural practices of the Turkish academia. The following research questions (RQs) guided the study;

- How do university students perceive the concept of academic ethics?

- What kinds of attitudes and behaviors are perceived by university students to facilitate unethical faculty practices?

- How are university students affected by unethical faculty practices?

- What are university students' suggestions to create more ethical academic environments?

The paper first elaborates on the theory being used and then the concept of academic ethics referring to research findings and organizational regulations and principles. After the methods section, research findings are presented that are elaborated in the following discussion part in comparison with the related literature and the RQs. Next, implications for stakeholders in HE are provided to help build a stronger and sustainable ethical environment that would serve the growth of students, faculty and the HES. Concluding, specific contributions of the paper to the HE field are reemphasized together with some suggestions.

The broad concept of "*culture*" has been defined differently by researchers. Hofstede et al. (2010:5-6) by defining culture as "*mental software*" and "*the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others*", emphasized the shared nature of the phenomenon. Individuals both influence and are influenced by the culture of their own country, and as organizations they work in are parts of the same culture, employees' behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs are reflected into the organizational atmosphere too. Hofstede et al. call this reciprocal interaction as "*layers of culture*", i.e., "*a set of common mental programs that constitutes its culture*" (Hofstede et al., 2010:17). While unethical practices are explained by organizational culture, they can also be overcome by the management reframing that culture (Reidenbach and Robin, 1991) to fit into ethical expectations. In similar fashion, referring to the mirroring effect of organizational culture, Murphy clearly stated, "*ethical business practices stem from an ethical corporate culture*" (1989:81). Although the above stated cultural references can be adapted to the academic world too, university culture bears additional qualities. It can historically be followed back in Plato's time when higher learning was defined by master-student interaction, truth, knowledge, and freedom of thought, and philosophy of morality as ethics. Although some of these qualities have eroded in time, most remain to be valid in today's HEIs.

Culture has a significant effect in shaping faculty perceptions regarding their roles and expected behavior patterns, and reminding them of what is (un)acceptable in that culture. Hofstede (2001:5; 2011; Hofstede et al., 2010:56) examined 76 countries and regions under six dimensions to specify their social and organizational cultures as collectivistic/individualistic, high/low power distant, high/low uncertainty avoidant, indulgent/restraint orientated, long/short-term-oriented, and masculine/feminine. In this study, the first four of these concepts identified for Turkey will be examined, as they are the most relevant ones for the study focus (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Specified for Turkey
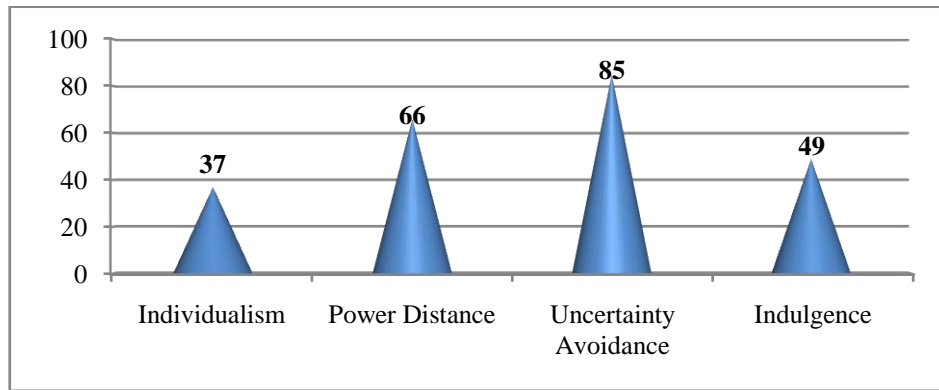
Source: Adapted from Hofstede et al., 2010.

Hofstede (2001:87, 215) indicates that "*high-power-distance*" (66%) and "*non-individualistic*", i.e. collectivistic cultures like Turkey (37%), tend to value interpersonal relationships so much that for the sake of avoiding open conflicts and maintaining harmony, may refrain from taking autonomous action and obey instead. As nepotism may also be seen more often in these cultures, they need time to build trust-based relationships (Hofstede, 2010:118). The hierarchy that is brought with this understanding suggests inequality in relationships and corruption (Hofstede, 2011:9) in social and work life. Whereas in individualistic and low-power-distance countries, people feel responsible to maintain the culture of integrity (Gottardello and Karabag, 2020:3). According to Hofstede's cultural evaluation, Turkey also scores high on "*avoiding uncertainty*" (85%) about the future (2001:151; Hofstede Insights, n.d.) that is indicative of being less tolerant of different views, and needing more rules and laws in the face of anxiety rather than preserving inner control (Hofstede, 2011). The fact that Turkish culture displays more rigid and less flexible behaviors both in social and work life also situates Turkey among "*less indulgent*" (49%) but more restrained countries (Hofstede Insights, n.d.).

Not being flexible and tolerant, avoiding conflicts, and having a dominant patriarchal culture in social and organizational life make it difficult for Turkey to resolve unethical issues and implement related policies in HEIs. On the contrary, in indulgent, low-power-distance and individualistic countries, faculty members feel responsible for communicating with students about the expected values, and students feel more belonged to the organization due to perceived equality between faculty and students (Cortina et al., 2017:8). In such an academic setting, it is no surprise that academic honesty flourishes easily and fewer unethical practices take place. Whereas the disadvantage that high power distant and collectivist cultures bring to organizations can still be overcome by a careful re-planning of the organizational culture by the leadership.

2. ETHICS AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXTS

The concept of "ethics" has commonly been used in the HE literature synonymously with the word "*integrity*" (Couch and Dodd, 2005; Hosseini et al., 2018). In this paper too, it is preferred to use these words interchangeably. Callahan (1982:338) defines ethics as "*a set of mutual rights and obligations that ought to govern human relationships*" and explains the wide extent of those relationships in academia as the relationship between faculty and students, faculty and their colleagues as well as their discipline, the administration, and finally the relationship between the members of the university and society. The definition of academic ethics for the European Network for Academic Integrity (ENAI, n.d.) is as; "*moral values that are recognized and abided by the academic community*". Codes of ethics for each profession have been developed to protect the benefits of the profession and the members of that profession. Besides, Jacob and Hartsorne (2003:3) underline that ethical codes "*enhance the prestige of a profession and reduce the precived need for external regulation and control*". Accordingly, ethical responsibilities of faculty can be stated as improving oneself by doing meticulous research, and when doing this, abiding by the principles of research integrity such as civility, taking good charge of the research in support of others (Huybers et al., 2020:147), as well as candor, accountability, and impartiality (Shaw and Satalkar, 2018:79).

Academic integrity, on the other hand, is usually used synonymously with honesty and firmness in moral principles. Actually, it covers more than that like what the Chinese word "*Chengxin*" refers to; driven from the

Confucian understanding, meaning "*honesty, truthfulness and sincerity*" or how Macfarlane defines it as "*values, behavior and conduct of academics in all aspects of their practice*" (Macfarlane et al., 2014:340-341). There are different international institutions that defined ethics and one of the earliest is The American Association of University Professors (AAUP). It created the Statement on Professional Ethics in 1966, which took its final form in 2009. The statements refer to professors' role ranging from their obligation to be truth seekers to confidentiality between professors and students, and avoidance of any kind of harassment (AAUP, n.d.). The more well-known the American Psychological Association (APA) developed codes of ethics first in 1953 to be revised many times later on, just like the "*Principles for Professional Ethics*", formed by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) in 1974 and revised in the later years (Jacob and Hartshorne, 2003:8). Another organization, the ENAI, which aims to build a network to support academic integrity in Europe, has created various working groups and publications to elaborate on this issue. The International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI, n.d.) addresses cheating, plagiarism and academic dishonesty in HE and defines academic integrity as "*honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage*". Turkey, on the other hand, regulated all breaches of integrity under the Ethical Conduct Principles of the Council of Higher Education (22/10/2014; No: 62074) (CoHE, 2014), the details of which will be explored to in the discussion section. In this paper, academic integrity refers to researcher responsibilities, values and conduct as well as the ethical interaction between the organization and its members.

Ethical breaches at individual or organizational level range from getting a person write an academic work of another with a monetary exchange and using another person's data (Büken, 2006:168), or non-research related unethical practices including harassment and abuse. Among Turkish studies, Dinç and Gizir (2019:30), reported unethical faculty practices perceived by students in relation to faculty professionalism, attitudes, behaviors, and assessment. Aydın et al. (2012:51)'s study indicated that faculty adopted their responsibilities more than they practiced them, which could have been due to lack of awareness or not being able to internalize them. When Burnaz et al. (2010:139) resorted to faculty own opinions about the most unethical faculty practices, they found that faculty received gifts and money in exchange of grades, and treated students differently and according to their own interests. Last but not least, Yıldız et al. (2013:291) investigating ethically unacceptable faculty behaviors based on faculty perceptions came out with the most significant as consuming alcoholic drinks with students, inconsistent grading, discrimination over different characteristics of students, and sharing student grades with administrators. When such kinds of studies do not draw a very bright picture about academic integrity in the Turkish academia, the Corruption Perception Index 2021 (Transparency International, 2022:para.1) reported Turkey to have lost 12 points since 2013 ranking 96th among 180 countries, based on the public sector data. This data can be thought as equivalent of unethical practices in academia, the latter being a part of the same societal culture. This suggests the need for HEIs to recuperate their damaged images through sound policies about academic integrity.

3. METHOD OF RESEARCH

As the topic is a sensitive one questioning the perspectives of students about unethical faculty practices, an in-depth method of inquiry was chosen through a qualitative study.

Phenomenological design was used for the study that made it possible for the researcher to elaborate on the subject via lived experiences of students (Marshall and Rossman, 2006:55).

Two sampling types were used as maximum variation purposeful sampling as well as snowball method. Participating female and male Turkish students (Table 1) studied in different academic disciplines and classes in 3 state and 2 foundation universities in both central and rural cities of Turkey. The suggested sample size in phenomenological studies is 3-10 (Creswell, 2014:189) and 1-2 or 30-40 in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2012:209). In this study, the saturation level was reached with 23 participants, 4 in individual interviews, and the others in 3 focus groups of 5, 6 and 8 students.

Quasi-structured and tape-recorded interviews were conducted through telephone conversations and face-to-face focus group meetings during the fall semester of 2018-19 academic years, which typically lasted 45 minutes. Expert opinion was received for the five-question-instrument that was prepared by the researcher using the related literature. Sample questions are; "*What do academic ethics mean to you?*" and "*How often have you been exposed to unethical faculty practices?*". Completing data transcription, inductive content analysis was done using the MAXQDA software where the codes and the themes were determined using inductive analysis and referring to the RQs and the theoretical framework.

Before conducting the interviews, the formal permission from the Human Subjects Committee was received (November 26, 2018; no: 92007518-605.01/00000023833). For trustworthiness, based on Creswell's (2014) suggestions, member check was done by asking them to make any changes on their interview data if necessary. Transferability was maintained by making data descriptions as detailed as possible. The participants were probed with extra questions to reveal their observations and experiences in full to enable reflectivity. Students were included into the study on voluntary-basis and no information revealing their identities were asked for in order not to pose any threat to their physical and/or psychological health. Clear instructions for the purpose of the study, anonymity and confidentiality on the informed consent were given to the participants before the study. The data were made accessible only to the researcher, saved in a file with a password in the computer, and will be kept until a publication is produced within a year.

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Participants

PARTICIPANTS	GENDER	CLASS	FACULTY/DEPARTMENT	UNIVERSITY TYPE
P1*	F	3	Sociology	P**
P2	F	3	Sociology	P
P3	F	1	Cognitive Science	P
P4	F	4	International Relations	P
P5	F	3	Economy	F
P6	F	3	Economy	F
P7	M	3	Psychology	F
P8	F	2	Political Science	F
P9	M	2	Engineering	F
P10	M	3	Foreign Trade	F
P11	M	3	Foreign Trade	F
P12	F	4	Business Administration	F
P13	F	4	Psychology	F
P14	F	2	Psychology	F
P15	F	3	Psychology	F
P16	M	4	Psychology	F
P17	F	4	Engineering	F
P18	F	3	Political Science	F
P19	F	4	Psychological Guidance and Counselling (PGC)	F
P20	F	4	PGC	F
P21	F	4	PGC	F
P22	F	4	PGC	F
P23	F	4	PGC	F

*P1-4: Individual interviews; P5-12: Focus group 1; P13-18: Focus group 2; P19-23: Focus group 3

** P: Public; F: Foundation

As the interviews were translated from Turkish to English, there could have been a validity problem. However, the researcher having the English language degree and belonging to the same culture with the participants, this threat was tried to be prevented at its best.

4. FINDINGS OF RESEARCH

The data lent itself for 4 themes, their sub-categories and 33 codes (Table 2) the analysis of which can be seen below.

Table 2. Themes and Codes Determined for the Study

NO	THEMES	SUB-CATEGORY	CODES	PARTICIPANTS	ƒ	MEANING	RQs
1	Academic Ethics		1. Trust 2. Meritocracy 3. Protection 4. Equity 5. Publication ethics 6. Codes of conduct 7. Values	P2,9,12,13, P3,5 P20,21 P10,17 P2,3 P4 P19	Low Low Low Low Low Low Low	How students perceived ethical faculty practice	1
2	Unethical Practices	Building Rapport	8. Favoritism 9. Verbal, psychological abuse 10. Humiliation 11. Sexual, physical, emotional abuse 12. Privacy breach	P1,2,3,5,7,8,9,10,17,18,21 P1,3,5,6,11,15,17 P3,4,11,12,14,15,17,21,22,23 P3,9,10,20,22,23 P3,7,13,15	High High Medium Medium Low	Faculty practices ranging from maltreatment to unfair assessment	2
		Teaching, Assessment	13. Professional competence 14. Autonomy vs. responsibility 15. Unfair assessment 16. Discrimination	P1,2,3,4,7,18,19,20,21,22,23 P3,4,14,17,20,21, 22,23 P8,10,18,19,20,21 P3,4,6,9,16	High High Medium Medium		
3	Tangible Effects of Unethical Practices on Students	Positive Effects	17. Defending rights 18. Unaffected 19. Empathy, consciousness	P3,12,13,21,22 P13,21 P4	Medium Low Low	Tangible positive and negative effects of faculty practices on students	3
		Negative Effects	20. Non-reactive, passivized students 21. Disappointment 22. Reserved, avoidant 23. Career change 24. Trust issues 25. Lack of belief in positive change	P3,9,14,15,17,19,20,23 P3,23 P1,15,17 P3 P3 P13	High Low Low Low Low Low		
4	Student Suggestions	For Leadership	26. Faculty inspection 27. Opportunities 28. Anti-harassment office	P5,7,9,12,21 P1,3,4,14 P3,5	Low Low Low	Students' views about building and maintaining ethical academia	4
		For Faculty	29. Fairness and feedback reception 30. Labor of love	P2,23 P10	Low Low		
		For Students	31. Reporting to authorities 32. Reflecting concerns to faculty 33. Ethics Courses	P1,2,3,4 P2,17 P3	Low Low Low		

4.1. Theme 1: Academic Ethics

Referring to the first RQ, university students' perceived academic ethics as interpersonal "*trust*": "*there are cases where the thesis subject of some students was published in an article by their advisor before students had done it, i.e., trusting the faculty?* (P3), and "*if a student writes funny things on the exam paper, the faculty should not expose them*" (P9). Some others described academic ethics as non-discrimination and "*meritocracy*": "*Not treating students according to how they get dressed, put make up on, or identify themselves politically. The criteria should totally be success-oriented*" (P5). Others mentioned the safety aspect of academic ethics as: "*Being a professional, not doing harm, but protecting your occupational development, yourself, and your department*" (P20); or "*equity*" in terms of presenting everyone equal opportunities, and "*publication ethics*" regarding the importance of security and reliability of the collected data. While P4 underlined the importance of "*codes of conduct*" by saying "*both students and faculty acting within certain rules at the university*", another valued "*occupational and personal values*" in terms of the extent to which they can use their own values.

4.2. Theme 2: Unethical Practices

Students said as a side note that unethical practices did not happen frequently and not by all faculty, but piled up throughout the years and were shared for the sake of the interview. Regarding the second RQ, the most frequently perceived facilitator of unethical faculty practice was "*favoritism*".

While some faculty were said to favor their relatives studying at the same university by giving them higher grades, others treated some students better, depending on which political view they supported. Making monetary profit was another unethical practice that is also an illegal activity: "*The instructor had a list showing how much students need to pay for an AA, BA or BB. I filed a criminal complaint, the instructor got a fine*" (P9). A considerable number of students reported "*verbal and psychological abuses*" towards students including threats and intimidation;

> … faculty members always get angry and insult students in front of their peers. … a faculty member also told a student to decide about her thesis topic as soon as possible and not stay in this university for the PhD degree. […] I was told that everybody was trying to finish their thesis and find a way to leave the soonest time possible (P3).

Making students feel invaluable through "*humiliation*" by shouting at or despising them about the way they expressed themselves in English was another concern. A psychology student, P14, said: "*An instructor had said once that 'only 3 or 4 of you will be psychologists, the rest, secretaries.' We had done nothing bad to hear this; our grades were high too. It affected our motivation*". P15 said another male faculty, when giving numerical examples in the class, told a female student: "*How many men would want you in this lifetime? 2, maximum 3.*" (P15). Likewise, P17, an engineering student pointed out the uncaring and disheartening dialogue of a faculty;

> Usually in that course, the average is very low in exams. The instructor said 'Don't worry; you can get 3, 4, and if not, you can change your department, and it goes on like that, you will get used to it'. Sometimes he says, 'Continue to pay for your school; at the end of the day, it is how the private sector survives'. Rather than giving advice, his approach is like this. Even if you have the motivation, it fades away.

P11 exemplified a faculty comparing his living standards with students' socio-economic situation, and putting himself in a competitive state with them: "*My son is also a student but cannot go to the university by car. I cannot do it either as I have to think about the money I pay for gas; but you can do it every day*". A small group of students said after some faculty get a title such as department head, they change their behavior toward students and respond to them rudely; or some other male faculty was said to display sexual innuendos to female students. These, I named as "*misuse of legitimate power*", affecting faculty-student relationship negatively. Some other faculty were said to surpass the line of sincerity;

> A male faculty frequently calls our friend and asks how he is doing etc. One night the faculty calls my friend and asks if he is at home. Then he comes and sits with them although my friend tells him that he has his girlfriend and home mates with him. He stays with them until 1 a.m. and then leaves (P3).

A large group of students told about "*sexual, physical, and emotional abuses*" of their faculty toward them. P10, a male student expressed as "*One day our classroom was a bit hot and the girls asked the air conditioning to be turned on when our instructor (male) said 'the girls are always hot!'*". Another male faculty was said to say "*the aim of a girl coming to school by putting on a red lipstick is clear*" (P9). Others said their male instructor "*had very sexist attitudes; liked to make sexist jokes*" (P22), or commented about the physical appearance of female students as: "*your skirt looks good on you, your legs look nice!', or there were things like going out with students to have fun or have a drink*" (P22). The same instructor was said to have "*a relationship with one of the female students, […] and reflected this to the student's grades and gave her the exam questions*" (P20). Finally, "*privacy breach*" was exemplified by a few students who said the text messages between them and the instructor or their exam papers were revealed (anonymously) to the whole class without their permission and were made fun of by the instructor. Their photos during an exam were also said to be taken and made public via instructor's Instagram account.

About "*teaching and assessment*", "*professional competence*" was the most recurring theme with time management and availability issues such as not announcing the mid-term results in a timely manner, arriving at class late or not at all coming to the classes and causing students to miss necessary information, and being picky about which student to spare time to. They also said some faculty taught non-expertise topics, and hence, were incapable of answering students' questions; were unqualified to teach in English; prepared unclear exam

questions causing students to get low grades, or because of miss-planning put some students in disadvantaged positions and created inequality.

Another frequent ethical breach was about faculty either not taking enough "*responsibility*" about student related duties or making themselves unquestionable by having too much "*autonomy*". To give an example, students said faculty did not compensate their own mistakes although they expected students to make up for their mistakes and take on many responsibilities like the ones written in the syllabus. Students also said faculty having too much autonomy, limited students' autonomy like not being able to choose the study groups they wanted to be in. Some faculty were said to give inadequate input in project works affecting students' performance negatively and putting them in disadvantaged positions compared to their counterparts. Minority of students said some faculty "*lacked pedagogical competence*". An example was that only one faculty among others interfered with students bullying a male student in the classroom although it was said to be an ongoing issue, which seriously affected the flow of the lesson.

An average amount of students thought that they were sometimes "*unfairly assessed*". They said some instructors, rather than rounding their grades up (e.g., 84.5 to 85), rounded them down, causing students to get a lower grade. While some thought there were instructors who tended to give higher grades to some students whom they had closer relationships with, a few others said students were "*discriminated*" against their gender, religious or political beliefs through lower grades.

Although authors did not specifically ask for the "*reasons of unethical faculty behaviors*", students came up with some, one of which was faculty "*personal characteristics*": "*If the faculty feels like behaving unethically, s/he will do it, either in this or another school*" (P13). One of those characteristics was lack of empathy;

> During the finals, I had spent the whole night in the emergency care service. I had emailed the instructor saying that I wouldn't be able to make for the next day's exam and that I had a medical report. He replied that he did not accept the report and that I had to come to the exam, and so did I (P21).

Another important faculty personal characteristic was told to be "*being closed to feedback*": "*The problem originates from the fact that we are not open to getting feedback as a society. We take feedback very personally. […] I think the main solution lies in communicating with the faculty; we cannot build a healthy communication*" (P23). P14 explained another reason of unethical behavior as "*upbringing and past experiences*" of faculty: "*… they had also been treated like that when they were students. They tell this to us. When we say like 'the questions are so hard!', they say 'we used to be asked much harder'*".

4.3. Theme 3: Tangible Effects of Unethical Behaviors

The third RQ explored how university students were affected by unethical faculty practices. For the "*positive effects*", an average number of students said they "*defended their rights*" when they were exposed to an unjust or unethical behavior. This was done by filling in the end-of-the term student evaluations or writing a petition to authorities. At other times, students said that when they talked to the faculty, their grades were lowered. On the other hand, few students said they were "*unaffected*" by unethical faculty behaviors, and did not take that faculty as role models: "*I said to myself 'in the future I will definitely not be such kind of a person!'*" (P13). Developing "*empathy and consciousness*" appeared as an important effect on P4 who, considering students with disabilities, said: "*If one day I were to take place in this profession, academia, […] I would want to be a faculty who compensates the disadvantages students' experience*".

As for the negative effects, most students were "*non-reactive and passivized*" when exposed to unethical or unjust behaviors as they did not want to be punished through ways like being marked off or treated badly in a jury. P22 expressed her despair as: "*To whom would you complain about the faculty? There are times we are helpless in the face of some ethical breaches*". I observed that those students also displayed "*reserved and avoidant*" behaviors usually minimized their conversation time with the unethical faculty, or settled for a low grade. P17, reflecting her nervousness said: "*When I cannot get an answer to my questions, I look for another faculty who approaches more mildly […]. I cannot go to my advisor but to other faculty, and still feel hesitant*".

A few students said that unethical faculty practices caused them to feel "*disappointed*" and experience "*trust issues*": "*When I first came here, I was disappointed when I realized I could not see the virtue I was looking for in all faculty. Then I understood that there were people who executed their occupation well and others badly*" (P23). As some students "*lacked belief in positive change*" about faculty behaviors, they thought about changing

their careers or finding a job, in case they cannot continue with their academic careers. This, I found, as a serious outcome affecting the direction of students' future lives.

4.4. Theme 4: Student Policy Suggestions

About the fourth RQ, students had some suggestions for "*academic leadership, faculty and students*" to make academia more ethical. They desired *academic leaders* to organize professional and personal developmental "*opportunities*" for both faculty and students like seminars on awareness rising about ethics, preventing mobbing, and coping with stress. Due to excessive faculty autonomy and disbelief in the CoHE to take action, they suggested universities to work with independent auditors to solve unethical practices. Yet, students thought nothing much could be done for "*faculty inspection*" other than taking student evaluations more seriously. Additionally, students suggested having an anti-mobbing or "*harassment office*" to solve both faculty and student problems. Their wishes from *faculty* were that they could be "*fairer*" and more open to collaborate with all students who wanted to improve themselves academically, "*accept feedback*" as an opportunity for personal development, not as an attack to their identity, and have "*love of labor*" to affect students positively. For their *peers*, students thought "*reporting their concerns first, to the related faculty, and if does not work, to authorities*" was a good idea. In that case, students wanted to be ensured that rights of both students and faculty would be protected objectively. Students who benefitted from taking an "*ethics course*" recommended it to their friends too, as she said she learned about her rights and that she could make a complaint if something happens.

5. DISCUSSION

University students' perceptions about faculty members' unethical practices toward them were explored through a phenomenological design, supported by Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Model. The findings were discussed in reference to the CoHE's Ethical Conduct Principles (2014), international organizations' decisions and faculty research. While drawing out conclusions based on students' views about such a sensitive issue as faculty unethical practices, judgments and generalizations were avoided.

To start with, Turkish undergraduate students were quite aware and knowledgeable of the scope of academic ethics just like the ones in Suditu et al. (2021:5)'s study, and had strong expectations of faculty to present ethical behavior. The concepts students raised were in parallel with what Banks (2015:8-9) called "*professional virtue ethics*". Accordingly, while students described academic ethics as "*interpersonal trust and confidentiality*", Banks named them as "*trustworthiness*", "*care*" and "*respecting*" privacy and dignity. Equally, students' non-discrimination, "*meritocracy, equity and protection*" specification overlaps with Banks' "*justice*", and "*courage*" in facing critical and serious situations. What students named as "*publication ethics*" were explained as "*practical wisdom*", indicating doing what is ethically desirable. Another thing is that, the finding that reported Asian researchers as the least aware (50%) group about university research code of conduct not only made them vulnerable to criticism of students (Huybers et al., 2020:167) but also supported Turkish students' critical perspective about their faculty members.

About the most dominantly perceived unethical faculty practices, "*favoritism*" (affecting assessment too) came the first, be it related to gender differences, political and religious views, and financial benefits, despite the CoHE (2014:5)'s regulation about "*protection and strengthening of basic rights*" and "*respect toward others*". In UNESCO's Convention against Discrimination in Education, it was highlighted that favoritism cannot be a way to promote and admit students into education systems (Poisson, 2013:11). Despite these regulations, Ghiaţău and Mâţă (2015:1) reported favoritism as one of the most recurring unethical theme influencing assessment and teaching methods as well. It is no surprise that in large-power-distance countries the ones who hold the power are more privileged over others, which is another way of favoring someone (Hofstede (2011:76).

"*Sexual, physical and verbal abuses*" as well as "*humiliation*" and "*discrimination*" were perceived as unethical by quite a number of students, some of which were also illegal activities. Braxton and Bayer (1999 as cited in Braxton et al., 2011:67) categorized them as harsh misconduct behaviors that suggest negativism and sarcasm, and violation of norms that cannot be challenged. Turkish students perceived faculty-student dating relationships as unethical and as faculty abusing their power. In like manner, Leach (2013:89) framed sexual violence in educational institutions as abuse of power in exchange for better grades. In Quatrella and Wentworth (1995:255)'s study, while 40-year-old professor dating an 18-year-old undergraduate student was perceived as unethical, with a 25-year-old graduate assistant it was admissible, just like a 25-year-old graduate assistant dating an 18-year-old student, which was perceived as acceptable too. The difference between the current study

findings with others can be explained with cultural differences. Supplementarily, other researchers associate both faculty behaviors (Macfarlane et al., 2014:342) and whether students judge them ethical or not with students' cultural backgrounds (Keith-Spiegel et al., 1993:157-159). It may be this difference that allows some students to resist faculty discrimination and humiliation, and some others to accept them. While Hofstede (2010:293-294) clarifies this difference by "*restrained cultures*", where individuals, including the Muslim world, adopt stricter sexual norms, Khatri (2009:7) explains it with the limitless power directors exert on subordinates. Accordingly, despite the uneasiness most Turkish female students felt when exposed to physical or emotional attempts of faculty, they could not dare to resist them due to the high-power-distance-culture manifested in superior (faculty) - subordinate (student) relationships. As for the solution, in Turkey it was only in 2014 that the CoHE regulated these abuses under the "*respect*" category, which required valuing differences, and being against discrimination and abuse. Discrimination and abusing students to make benefits has also been stated as an unethical isse in Dinç and Gizir's study (2019:29). Whereas in the United States (US), for instance, the legislation in the Education Amendments to prevent sex-based discrimination dates back to 1972 (Streng and Kamimura, 2015:65), which enabled many universities to start taking precautions since then. Unfortunately, despite early measures, not all sexual assaults, even in the American colleges are not reported due to certain characteristics of party culture among youth (Armstrong et al., 2006:496) or concerns about privacy and not being credible (Sable et al., 2006:160). The continuity of harassment issues not only in Turkey but also abroad suggests the need for all universities devising more substantial policies and follow up their implementation.

A large number of students perceived faculty not taking on enough "*responsibility*" to guide them, spare time to them or intervene unethical student behaviors like bullying one another. Students associated these with "*professional incompetency*" in teaching and with too much "*faculty autonomy*", limiting students' autonomy to affect their academic success negatively and create unfairness. Similarly, in the study of Thakkar and Weisfeld-Spolter (2012:86), faculty took no action for a reported cheating incident. Although it is desired that faculty has the freedom of opinion in research and teaching, the autonomous nature of HE may lead to unethical practices ranging from academic integrity to career development in academia (Transparency International, 2013:13). Kitchener (1984:46) stated that ethical principle of autonomy necessitates people to allow others "*to make autonomous choices*", which, based on students' expectations, need to be taken for both faculty and students, respecting each other's autonomy. In CoHE's document (2014: 4,11) as well, Turkish faculty are encouraged to educate students to treat each other with respect, and they themselves to take on personal and occupational responsibility in scientific and academic behavior, but at the same time to be free in their choices, suggesting autonomy. For assessment, while an average number of students thought they were "*unfairly assessed*", unfair assessment was the most important element of academic dishonesty in Friedman et al. (2005:12)'s study, and an issue raised by students in Dinç and Gizir (2019:29) too. The above stated student perceptions suggest faculty to own balanced autonomy and more responsibility, and be emphatic and fair to favor students' development and protection.

For students, the reasons for the lack of faculty ethical behaviors ranged from faculty exposure to similar unethical practices in their past and to personal characteristics like lacking empathy or being closed to feedback. Whereas research indicates that pressures when going up the career steps (Bouter, 2015:149) such as workload and the need to publish (Roberts et al., 2001:534-535) are the predecessors of unethical practices. There is also age/experience factor that seems to diminish the efforts to prevent misconduct. Namely, Huybers et al. (2020:166) reported that mid-career faculty (11-15 years) did not believe in the effectiveness of ethical codes to dissuade people from committing ethical breaches as opposed to early career researchers (less than five years). This may either means that more mature faculty have already observed their colleagues disregarding ethical codes or that organizations lack preventive regulations. Apart from these, the mismatch between what academic institutions expect of faculty about their academic integrity roles and what faculty understands of them (Gottardello and Karabag, 2020:2) may also constitute a reason for ineffective implementation of integrity and standard formation. Both students' views and the previous research reveal a lot about the factors behind unethical faculty behaviors, suggesting decision makers to prepare clear and comprehensive policies.

Regarding the third RQ, most students showed "*reserved*" behaviors to face faculty unethical practices as they lacked belief in change and lost trust in people. Such kind of pessimistic approach reminds one of Hofstede et al. (2010)'s high-restraint-culture specification where people feel restricted to express their ideas. On the other hand, in the CoHE (2014)'s ethical regulations, faculty was encouraged to refrain from behaviors that shatter student trust. For the fourth RQ, students' suggestions for solution highlighted the need for anti-mobbing and/or "*harassment offices*", which has also been indicated by Thakkar and Weisfeld-Spolter (2012:87) as a necessary measure. Other suggestions ranged from "*developmental opportunities*" for faculty to "*fair*" treatment of students and faculty "*being open to feedback*", all of which can be explained with Hofstede et al. (2010;

Hofstede, 2011)'s four dimensions. They indicated the need for a more individualistic and a lower power distance culture represented by freedom of expression, a more indulgent culture promoting tolerance and calmness in contrast to being argumentative.

"*Academic leaders*" may search effective ways for ethical codes to be used not only by faculty but also students and administrative staff. This passes through not just expecting them to internalize the codes on their own but explaining them the importance and details of the codes (Giorgini et al., 2015). As also Anderson et al. (2013:246) suggested, organizational members should be involved both in execution and preparation of these codes for more inclusivity. Another thing is to take faculty inspection more seriously by thoroughly invigilating student evaluations, and asking department heads to make regular appraisals with faculty to prevent potential problems and meet their needs. HEIs may also ask an independent body made up of professionals such as psychologists, faculty members and sociologists to organize university visits, get feedback from all stakeholders and suggest solutions for issues to ensure academic integrity. Additionally, staff may be trained continuously for academic integrity (Bouter, 2015:148; Steneck, 2013:252-253), teaching and learning practices and faculty-student relationship may be improved (Harper et al., 2018:1857), and a mentorship system may be developed for checking ethical and research conduct (Anderson et al., 2007a:860). Opening ethics courses for students may also help raise awareness about ethically (un)acceptable behaviors, student and faculty rights and responsibilities.

As for "*faculty*", which also interests academic leaders, it is necessary to learn advanced research methods, and for academic leaders to value quality rather than the quantity of faculty publications and eliminate research-related financial worries of researchers (Ertekin et al., 2002:62; Kansu and Ruacan, 2002:763). Additionally, to set example to students for academic integrity, positive and supportive atmosphere in HEIs needs to be created (Young et al., 2018:13). While all these will help prevent faculty tendencies for favoritism, humiliation, and abusive behavior, they will also foster empathy and openness to feedback, and improve students intellectually and personally. The most apparent "student implication", also driven from the theoretical perspective, is to feel more willing to express their opinions and defend their rights against unethical faculty practices. It is also advisable to make use of opportunities like participating in ethics courses or academic integrity programs for all stakeholders (Sefcik et al., 2020:30).

Considering the strong bond between society and universities, free seminars and education programs on desired ethical practices should be organized for the public. The contribution of artists, thinkers and faculty to these facilities may encourage people's involvement more and reinforce the significance of such kinds of ethical conduct.

The CoHE should plan visits to universities irrespective of complaints being made or not about unethical practices, and using online data collection tools, may scrutinize the ethicality of academic activities resorting to the perspective of faculty, students and academic leaders. Depending on the outcome, necessary actions may to be taken including judicial interventions. To prevent any kind of harassment, all universities need to build anti-mobbing/harassment offices and raise awareness about the prevention of abusive behaviors.

Based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions model, there is the need for low-power-distant cultures in HEIs that emphasize equality between individuals, and more individualistic perspectives respecting freedom of thought and privacy. In order to change the existing patterns not serving academic integrity and to enable openness to change, cultural uncertainty avoidance level should be lowered. To educate students respecting ethical values, a more optimistic approach and inclusivity should be attained displayed in an indulgent culture rather than a restraint culture characterized by pessimism and rigidness.

6. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate faculty unethical practices in the Turkish HES from university students' perceptions from the lens of Hofstede's cultural dimensions. The first finding was about the theoretical framework, which indicated the need for perception and behavior change in the Turkish academia. Students were in need of less power distance between them and faculty to practice a more individualistic culture represented with free expression of ideas, as well as a more indulgent culture characterized by transparency in decisions and intentions. Whereas it is also thought that both students and faculty also need to be more willing and courageous for open communication, which also necessitates embracing uncertainty, and hence, being more tactful and ready for change.

In the second place, country-specific, top five frequently experienced unethical faculty practices were framed as "*favoritism, professional incompetence, verbal and psychological abuse, autonomy vs. responsibility, and humiliation*". Although students were quite critical of unethical faculty practices, they themselves were diffident and reserved in finding solutions to the issues. I believe that previously explained cultural influences have a significant role in students presenting these attitudes.

The third contribution of the study is to help raise awareness in academia about academic integrity breaches and praise ethical practices so that comprehensive, quality and solution-oriented policies can be developed. Studies like this that integrate students' views into the problem solution can help elevate ethical standards in HEIs through strict regulations. It is not only because students are the reason of existence of HEIs, represent the desires of the young generation, and hence, one of the most important stakeholders in HE, but also they are the most affected group by ethical breaches being in direct contact with faculty.

To conclude, enhancement of HE in global standards, especially for the developing countries like Turkey, will only be possible in the long run through cherishing ethical codes of conduct by all members of HEIs. This will affect the reputation of the existing institutions positively and increase the chances of new HEIs to be successful agents of academic ethics. As in developing HESs not much research has been conducted on academic ethics from HE students' perspectives, I hope that the findings can ignite the desire in decision makers to develop solution-oriented and strictly implemented policies.

Although rich data from diverse backgrounds were collected, to widen the perspective the study presents, future researchers may plan a mixed method study by including faculty, leadership and administrative staff's perspectives. Additionally, a comparative study with another country can also be conducted as it may be interesting to see how similar and/or different the two cultures respond to unethical practices and how they approach in resolution of issues. In this sense, there may be things to learn from each other, adopt policies accordingly, or devise appropriate measures for our culture.

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