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International Journal of Educational Administration and Leadership: Theory and Practice

ISSN: 2979-935X



The Role of Organizational Values in Educational Institutions: A Systematic Review

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History

Received 30.01.2025

Received in revised form
04.03.2025

Accepted 25.04.2025

Article Type: Review



ABSTRACT

This study presents a systematic analysis of graduate theses on organizational values registered in the Turkish Higher Education Council (YÖK) Thesis Center between 2010 and 2024. A total of 11 theses were examined in terms of their methodological features, thematic trends, and practical implications. Findings show that all theses used quantitative methods, with most conducted at the master's level. The most frequently used measurement tools were the Organizational Values Scales developed by Yılmaz (2007) and Akhan-Çağırtekin & Aküzüm (2020). Thematic analysis revealed that the studies primarily focused on school climate and school image. Key recommendations include developing strategies for strengthening organizational values by school administrators, expanding in-service training for teachers, and incorporating organizational value indicators into Ministry of National Education policies. The study highlights the limited use of qualitative and mixed methods and calls for greater methodological diversity in future research. The findings are expected to contribute to evidence-based policies aimed at improving organizational values in educational institutions.

Keywords:

Values, Organizational values, Content analysis, Systematic review.

1. Introduction

Educational institutions not only contribute to economic growth but also play a critical role in fostering social progress and improving living standards. In this context, identifying the key elements that influence the fundamental dynamics and developmental processes of educational systems plays a decisive role in shaping education policies (Laila, 2015). Research focusing on the factors affecting academic and social success typically categorizes these variables into three main groups: individual characteristics, family-related factors, and institutional structures (Ahmad et al., 2021; Kwok et al., 2024). The analyses show that, independent of all other factors, the most significant impact on educational outcomes is on schools and educational institutions. For this reason, many countries on a global scale prioritize school-based reform and improvement efforts in order to increase the quality of education.

In recent years, the concept of organizational values has become a significant focus of research in studies on schools. This concept is regarded as a multidimensional phenomenon that reflects the cultural fabric of an educational institution, the dynamics of interaction among its members, and the normative structures that guide institutional functioning (Fidan, 2015). In the literature, organizational values are seen as playing a central role in the construction of institutional identity, the promotion of employee commitment, the shaping of effective leadership practices, and ultimately, the enhancement of the quality of education (Ahmad et al., 2021; Çifci, 2014; Kaplan, 2015). Therefore, organizational values not only guide pedagogical practices but also

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Citation: Taktak, M. (2025). The role of organizational values in educational institutions: A systematic review. *International Journal of Educational Administration and Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 4(1), 1-8. <https://dx.doi.org/10.52380/ijedal.2025.4.1.39>

constitute a domain that deeply influences the quality of human capital in society. The significance of organizational values lies in their role as the invisible yet fundamental elements that determine how educational institutions function. In this context, some researchers have referred to organizational values as the "invisible architecture" of educational institutions (Memduhoğlu, 2011). This architecture represents a holistic reflection of the cultural climate, norms, expectations, and interactional patterns within the school environment. Included within the scope of organizational values are teachers' collective perceptions of the institution, the formal and informal structural characteristics of the organization, sources of individual motivation, and the defining role of leadership styles (Sadaf et al., 2022). These values function as a reference point that ensures the continuity of institutional identity and shape the attitudes and behaviors of all school stakeholders. Each school forms a unique identity through the distinct organizational values it upholds. These values are often so tangible that even a newly enrolled student can form a positive or negative impression of the institution based solely on initial observations (Çavdar et al., 2023). In this regard, elements such as the physical organization of the school (e.g., wall posters, corridor atmosphere, displays of student work), the nature of institutional activities, student-teacher interactions, and approaches to problem-solving are seen as concrete reflections of organizational values (Noonan, 2004). Moreover, not only students but also visiting parents and external stakeholders can often make quick and accurate inferences about a school's core values by interpreting these environmental cues.

Looking at the academic interest in the concept of "organizational values" in Turkey, the earliest examples in the Council of Higher Education Thesis Center (YÖKTez) database suggest that postgraduate theses in this field began to gain visibility in the mid-1990s (Silah, 1995). However, in the international literature, the theoretical foundations of this concept date back to much earlier, specifically the 1970s (Hodgkinson, 1970). These early studies conceptualized educational institutions not only as entities that produce cognitive and academic outcomes but also as holistic organizational systems that support the emotional, social, and moral development of individuals. The interdisciplinary nature and multidimensional structure of the organizational value concept position it as a strategically important subject not only from a theoretical but also from a practical educational policy perspective. Over time, the growing number of studies and their historical dispersion reveal recurring patterns and thematic tendencies in the research paradigm. However, to achieve a deeper understanding of the concept across different contexts, there is a need for multilayered, comparative, and critical analyses. A review of the current literature shows that comprehensive systematic reviews synthesizing similarities and differences in organizational value studies within an integrated framework remain limited. Furthermore, the literature's tendency to emphasize historical approaches creates a gap in contemporary evaluations that focus on recent postgraduate research. Responding to this gap, the current study aims to conduct a comprehensive analysis of postgraduate theses in Turkey that investigate organizational values, to comparatively evaluate the research profiles and practical recommendations of these theses, and to categorize the measurement tools used through a thematic lens, ultimately providing a methodological roadmap for future researchers.

1.1. Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to systematically analyze all postgraduate theses in the field of education conducted in Turkey between 2010 and 2024 that address the concept of organizational values, as listed in the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) Thesis Center database. The year 2010 was chosen as the starting point because it marks a period during which the YÖK Thesis Center began to implement more standardized and comprehensive digital archiving and access systems, thereby ensuring more consistent and structured access to academic data. In line with this overall aim, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What is the profile of postgraduate theses on organizational values (e.g., year of publication, university, research method, sample group)?
- Which measurement tools are used in postgraduate theses related to organizational values?
- What topics are addressed in postgraduate theses on organizational values?
- Based on the findings, what recommendations can be made for practitioners, academics, and institutions involved in education policy development?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

This study was designed using the systematic literature review method within the framework of the qualitative research paradigm. A systematic review is a methodological approach that enables researchers to analyze scientific studies on a specific topic through a transparent and replicable process (Oakley, 2002). Hallinger (2017) emphasizes the effectiveness of this method in identifying gaps in the literature and systematizing existing knowledge. The study follows the systematic review protocol proposed by Higgins and Green (2011), which includes the following steps:

- *Defining the research objective:* A systematic analysis of postgraduate theses on organizational values conducted in Turkey between 2010 and 2024.
- *Inclusion criteria:* (Theses indexed in the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) Thesis Center and available in full-text format. Studies completed within the field of educational sciences. Theses finalized between 2010 and 2024.
- *Search strategy:* The keyword “organizational value” was used to scan thesis titles.
- *Study selection:* A total of 11 postgraduate theses met the inclusion criteria and were included in the analysis.
- *Data analysis and reporting.*

2.2. Identification of Sources

In this research, postgraduate theses completed between 2010 and 2024 in the field of education and containing the term “organizational value” in their titles were examined via the YÖK Thesis Center. Only theses accessible as of 2024 were included in the study. No restrictions were applied regarding institutions or departments. However, one thesis was excluded due to access limitations. A total of 11 theses were evaluated. The concept of “organizational value” was deliberately chosen as it provides a focused lens for understanding the normative structure of educational institutions. The time frame of 2010–2024 was selected to capture structural changes in educational organizations and the digital transformation in education following the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.3. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the descriptive content analysis method. The findings were classified under themes to form meaningful categories, and these themes were presented in detailed tables supported by frequency and percentage distributions. Microsoft Excel and WordArt applications were utilized during the analysis process, and the data were also visually supported through tables and graphs. This method was adopted not only to reveal research trends related to the concept of organizational values but also to systematically examine the methodological diversity and sub-concepts addressed in the studies within the field. In this way, the current state of academic knowledge on organizational values has been assessed within a broader framework and structured to contribute meaningfully to the literature.

3. Findings

This study aims to systematically examine postgraduate theses focusing on organizational values in Turkey. Accordingly, the collected data were analyzed under four main categories: (1) general profile characteristics of the theses, (2) examination of the measurement tools used, (3) evaluation of other variables addressed, and (4) recommendations for practitioners, researchers, and policymakers based on the findings. Table 1 presents the distribution of the reviewed theses by publication year, thesis type, and research methodology employed.

Table 1. Profiles of Postgraduate Theses

Publication Year	2010-2015	2016-2020	2021-2024	Total
	6	4	1	11
Type of Research	Master's		Doctorate	
	10		1	11
Research Method	Quantitative			
		11		11
Sample Group	Teachers	School Administrators and Teachers		
	9		2	11

When examining Table 1, it is observed that graduate theses focusing on the concept of organizational value are largely concentrated between the years 2010 and 2015. The majority of these theses consist of master's level studies, and it is noteworthy that all research was conducted using quantitative methods. On the other hand, Table 2 presents the data collection instruments used to measure organizational values in these theses.

Table 2. Measurement Instruments Used in Graduate Theses

Measurement Instrument	f	References
The "Organizational Values Scale" developed by Yılmaz (2007) was used.	7	Akman, 2019; Altınok, 2019; Beşir, 2019; Çifci, 2014; Fidan, 2013; Kaplan, 2015; Önler, 2015
The "Organizational Values Scale" developed by Lalek (2007) was used.	2	Çakan, 2015; Kaçmaz, 2015
The "Organizational Values Scale" developed by Akhan-Çağırtekin and Aküzüm (2020) was used.	1	Akhan-Çağırtekin, 2022
The 54-item Corporate Culture Profile Scale developed by O'Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell (1991) was used. This scale was translated into Turkish by Karakurum M. (2005) and colleagues.	1	Başyayla, 2019

The most frequently preferred scale in the graduate theses was the "Organizational Values Scale" developed by Yılmaz (2007) (f7). Another commonly used scale in the studies was the "Organizational Values" scale developed by Lalek (2007) (f2).

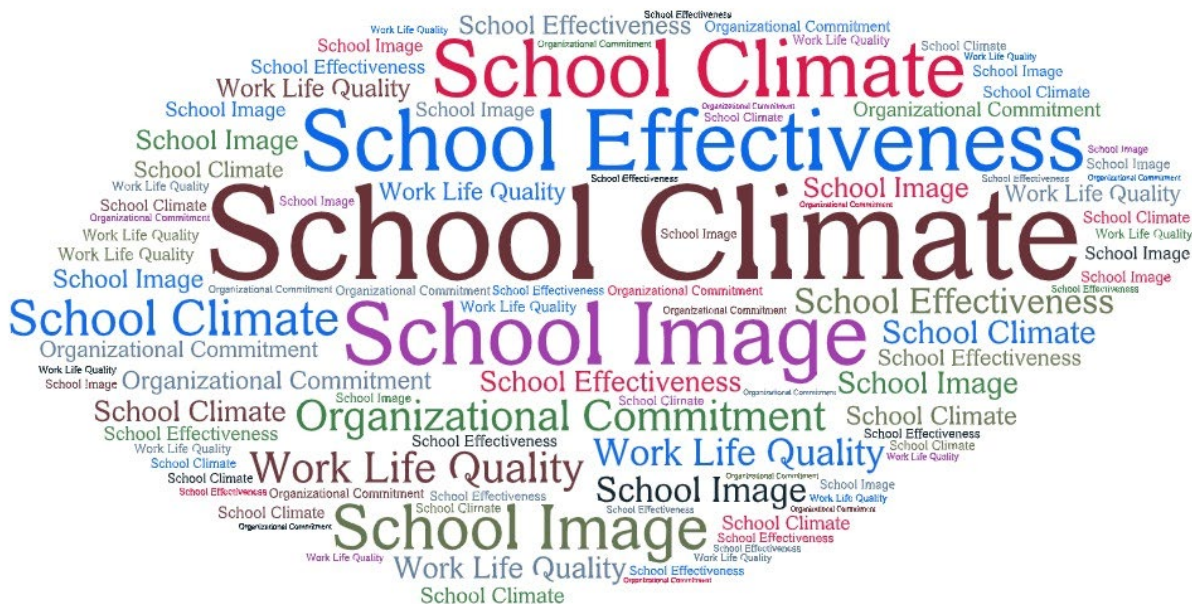


Figure 1. Word Cloud of Topics Covered in Graduate Theses

As seen in Figure 1, the most frequently addressed concept in graduate studies on organizational values is "school climate" (f=3). However, some theses have also extensively examined variables such as "school image" (f=2), "school effectiveness" (f=2), and "organizational commitment" (f=1). Table 3 provides a detailed analysis of the recommendations made in these theses for practitioners, researchers, and policymakers within the scope of this study.

Based on the data in Table 4, it is evident that the majority of the reviewed postgraduate theses offer significant recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. Among the suggestions for practitioners, one of the most frequently emphasized points is that school administrators should implement practices and develop regulations aimed at strengthening organizational values (f4). Recommendations for researchers highlight the importance of conducting studies using different samples, methodologies, and variables (f3). For policymakers, it is underlined that teams should be established in schools to assess and enhance organizational values, and that the Ministry of National Education should introduce legal regulations to allocate time in school staff members' weekly schedules for activities that promote interpersonal interaction.

Table 3. *Analysis of the Recommendations Sections in Graduate Theses*

Theme	Sub-theme	f	References
Practitioners	1. Social responsibility projects and aid campaigns can be organized for students in need to improve teachers' perceptions of organizational values.	4	Akhan-Çağırtekin, 2022; Başyayla,2019; Beşir,2019; Kaçmaz,2015; Kaplan,2015
	2. Activities encouraging teachers to pursue postgraduate education and professional development to increase their commitment to schools.	3	Akhan-Çağırtekin, 2022; Başyayla, 2019; Kaplan,2015
	3. Raising awareness among teachers about the importance of their work by ensuring participation in meetings and rules, to prevent indifference.	1	Altınok, 2019
	4. The importance of organizational values for educational institutions can be conveyed through seminars and in-service training for school staff.	3	Akman, 2019; Çıfci, 2014; Fidan, 2013
Researchers	1. Conducting studies with different sample groups.	10	Akhan-Çağırtekin, 2022; Akman, 2019; Altınok, 2019; Başyayla, 2019; Beşir, 2019; Çakan, 2015; Çıfci, 2014; Kaçmaz, 2015; Önler, 2015
	2. Conducting research using different methods.	6	Akhan-Çağırtekin, 2022; Akman, 2019; Altınok, 2019; Çakan, 2015; Çıfci, 2014; Önler, 2015
	3. Conducting studies involving different variables.	9	Akhan-Çağırtekin, 2022; Akman, 2019; Altınok, 2019; Beşir, 2019; Çakan, 2015; Çıfci, 2014; Kaçmaz, 2015; Önler, 2015
	4. Investigating why teachers have low perceptions of organizational values and image, and conducting studies to raise their awareness.	1	Akman, 2019
Policy Makers	1. Policy makers can make regulations to encourage and support teacher training institutions and educational activities to motivate the teaching profession.	3	Beşir, 2019; Çakan, 2015; Kaçmaz, 2015
	2. Policy makers can enact legal regulations and improvements regarding teachers' working durations at schools.	2	Beşir, 2019; Fidan, 2013
	3. The importance of organizational values for educational institutions can be emphasized through seminars and in-service training for teachers and administrators.	3	Beşir, 2019; Fidan, 2013; Önler, 2015

4. Conclusion and Discussion

This study aimed to systematically analyze postgraduate theses in Turkey that focused on the topic of organizational values in the field of education between 2010 and 2024, based on predefined research themes. The distribution of these theses over the years reveals a concentration between 2010 and 2015, while a noticeable decline is observed after 2020. This downward trend may be attributed to decreased interest in educational research following the COVID-19 pandemic or limitations in research funding. During this period, master's theses were found to dominate, whereas doctoral dissertations remained considerably limited. This suggests that while master's students have shown more interest in the topic, doctoral-level research in the context of organizational values has not developed adequately. This discrepancy can be explained by methodological factors such as the relatively quicker and more practical data collection processes involved in master's studies (Karaman & Bakırcı, 2010). Moreover, the structured and tangible framework offered by the subject of organizational values, along with its potential for producing practical outcomes, makes it especially appealing for master's research. However, increasing the number of doctoral studies would significantly contribute to the theoretical depth and methodological diversity of the field.

From a methodological standpoint, all of the theses analyzed employed a quantitative research design. This reflects the widespread use of data collection tools such as surveys and scales designed for large sample groups. Nonetheless, the absence of qualitative and mixed-method approaches limits the exploration of organizational values from multifaceted and context-sensitive perspectives. This finding aligns with the results of Ahmed et al.'s (2021) systematic review of scholarly articles on organizational values, which similarly highlighted the underrepresentation of qualitative and mixed-method studies in the literature. Regarding research populations, the analysis revealed that the studies predominantly focused on teachers, followed by school administrators and pre-service teachers. While this emphasis is meaningful considering the pivotal role teachers play in shaping organizational values, the limited representation of other key stakeholders—such as students and parents—hinders a holistic understanding of the broader impact of organizational values within the educational ecosystem. For instance, Taşdan and Erdem (2010) demonstrated the significance of interactions between school administrators and parents in shaping organizational values. In this context, future studies should aim to include a wider range of stakeholders and employ multidimensional data collection strategies to make more substantial contributions to the literature. Within the 11 postgraduate theses examined, four different organizational values scales were utilized, with the most frequently adopted being the "Organizational Values Scale" developed by Yılmaz (2007). The widespread use of this scale is likely due to its strong validity and reliability, as well as its practical ease of application. Additionally, scales such as the "Organizational Climate Scales" developed by Lalek (2007) and Akhan-Çağırtekin & Aküzüm (2020) were also used, enabling a more multidimensional analysis of organizational values. While the use of standardized scales facilitates comparative analyses across studies, efforts to develop new instruments may introduce innovative perspectives to the field.

The most commonly addressed thematic area in the theses was "school climate." Given that school climate reflects individuals' emotional bonds and sense of belonging to educational institutions, its close relationship with organizational values is expected. Furthermore, variables such as school image, organizational competence, organizational commitment, and quality of work life were also frequently examined. These findings demonstrate that organizational values have multifaceted effects on the structural and cultural dimensions of educational institutions, suggesting that the topic warrants not only managerial but also socio-psychological exploration. Accordingly, future studies should further investigate the interactions among these variables and explore how organizational values are shaped in different socio-cultural contexts. In conclusion, postgraduate theses in Turkey focusing on organizational values in education highlight the theoretical richness and practical significance of the concept. However, there are evident limitations in terms of methodological diversity and stakeholder representation. The influence of organizational variables and leadership approaches on these values plays a fundamental role in the transformation of education systems. In this regard, the findings of the reviewed theses are expected to guide the formulation of educational policies, the planning of school-based practices, and the restructuring of teacher education programs. Future research that incorporates more innovative, interdisciplinary, and in-depth analyses will make meaningful contributions to the development of the literature on organizational values.

5. Recommendations for Future Research

The current body of research is predominantly based on quantitative methods, limiting in-depth understanding of organizational values. Future studies should encourage the use of qualitative (e.g., interviews, focus groups, ethnographic studies) and mixed-method designs. In particular, participatory designs such as action research may be preferred to examine how organizational values are reflected in daily practices.

The limited number of doctoral dissertations in the field delays the theoretical and methodological maturation of the topic. Institutions such as universities and TÜBİTAK should provide doctoral scholarships and project funding to encourage high-quality research. Additionally, specific courses or seminars on organizational values could be offered within doctoral programs. Comparative studies with different countries' education systems should be conducted when examining organizational values in the Turkish context. Such research can help illuminate both universal and context-specific dimensions of organizational values, thereby guiding policymakers. In this regard, international data sources such as PISA and TALIS can be utilized. The overrepresentation of teachers in existing research has resulted in the neglect of other stakeholders' (students, parents, school leaders, education specialists) perspectives. Future research should be designed to capture the

impact of organizational values on all stakeholders. For instance, topics such as the influence of parent-teacher collaboration on organizational values or the reflections of students' perceptions on school climate warrant in-depth investigation.

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