

## THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUST IN TOP MANAGEMENT FOR TURKISH AND EUROPEAN AIRLINE COMPANIES – A COMPARATIVE STUDY

### TÜRK VE AVRUPA HAVA YOLU ŞİRKETLERİ İÇİN ÜST YÖNETİMDE GÜVENİN ÖNEMİ – KARŞILAŞTIRMALI BİR ARAŞTIRMA

Özge YANIKOĞLU<sup>\*</sup> 

#### Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyze and compare the effects of trust in top management on turnover intention and affective commitment of airline personnel in Turkey and Europe and to test whether trust in top management has a mediating effect on the relationship between top management communication and turnover intention and between top management communication and affective commitment of airline employees. Another aim of this study is to test whether trust in top management has a moderating effect on the relationship between perceived job stress and turnover intention. Based on the data obtained from a sample of 729 airline personnel working in Turkey and Europe, the findings reveal that trust in top management has a full mediating effect on the relationship between top management communication and turnover intention and between top management communication and affective commitment. Moreover, the results reveal that trust in top management moderates the relationship between perceived job stress and turnover intention for the Turkish sample. Based on the findings of this study, managerial and practical implications are provided.

**Keywords:** Trust in top management, top management communication, affective commitment, job stress, turnover intention

**Jel Codes:** D23, M12

#### Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, üst yönetime duyulan güvenin, üst yönetim iletişimi ile işten ayrılma niyeti arasında ve üst yönetim iletişimi ile duygusal bağlılık arasında aracılık etkisinin olup olmadığını test etmektir. Çalışmanın diğer bir amacı da üst yönetime duyulan güvenin algılanan iş stresi ile işten ayrılma niyeti arasındaki ilişkide düzenleyici bir etkisinin olup olmadığını test etmektir. Türkiye ve Avrupada görev

\* **Corresponding Author:** Assist. Prof., Ozyegin University, Faculty of Aviation and Aeronautical Sciences, Aviation Management, ozge.peksatici@ozyegin.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0001-9277-6268.

**To cite this article:** Yanikoglu, O. (2022). The importance of trust in top management for Turkish and European airline companies – a comparative study. *Journal of Research in Business*, 7(2), 281-297. DOI: 10.54452/jrb.996930

**Ethics Committee:** Özyeğin Üniversitesi İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu, 13.06.2022-2022/09.

**Submitted:** 17.09.2021

**Revised:** 13.02.2022

**Accepted:** 14.02.2022

**Published Online:** 21.12.2022

yapan 729 havayolu personelinden oluşan bir örneklemden elde edilen verilerden yola çıkılarak elde edilen bulgular, üst yönetime duyulan güvenin, üst yönetim iletişimi ile işten ayrılma niyeti ve üst yönetimin iletişimi ile duygusal bağlılık arasındaki ilişkide tam aracılık etkisine sahip olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca sonuçlar, Türkiye örnekleminde üst yönetime duyulan güvenin, algılanan iş stresi ile işten ayrılma niyeti arasındaki ilişkide aracılık etkisi olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışmanın bulgularını göz önünde bulundurarak yönetsel ve pratik çıkarımlar sağlanmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Üst yönetime güven, Üst yönetim iletişimi, Duygusal bağlılık, İş stresi, İşten ayrılma niyeti

**Jel Sınıflandırılması:** D23, M12

## 1. Introduction

Airlines operate in a challenging and marginally profitable industry, and personnel cost is a significant cost item for airlines (IATA, 2017). Already high employee costs may be increased because of the employees' negative work-related attitudes such as low affective commitment and high turnover intention. Studies have revealed the importance of trust in management as an important factor in determining the work-related attitudes of employees. It has been shown that trust in management has a negative effect on turnover intention and a positive impact on affective commitment (Batt, 2002; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Hamm, 2006; Mahajan, Bishop, & Scott, 2012; Postmes, Tanis, & De Wit, 2001; Walton, 1985). Considering the service-intensive nature and relatively high labour costs of airlines, and the importance of work-related attitudes of employees, establishing trust among employees should be taken seriously by the airlines. Top management communication with the employees has been regarded as vital in establishing trust in management (Mahajan et al., 2012; Whitener, Brodt, & Korsgaard, 1998). Accordingly, employees' trust in top management is expected to increase when top management provides them with sufficient and correct information about their decisions (Whitener et al., 1998). To the best knowledge of the authors, no research addressing the importance of top management communication and trust in top management in Turkish and European aviation industry has been identified. Therefore, this study aims to reveal the relationship between top management communication, trust in management, turnover intention, and affective commitment for the airline personnel.

Another critical factor that results in negative workplace attitudes, such as turnover intention, absenteeism, and low employee performance, has been listed as "job stress" (Chen & Silverthorne, 2008; Elci, Sener, Aksoy, & Alpkan, 2012; Gaither et al., 2008; Hersey & Blanchard, 1988; Orqvist & Wincent, 2006). Some industries are stressful in their nature, and aviation is one of them. Due to 24/7 on-going operations, shift-working conditions, safety concerns, and punctuality pressure, the airline personnel have been working under stressful conditions (Stokes & Kite, 2017). Although it may not be possible to change the stressful characteristic of the job being done, it is important to identify any factor that limits its effect on the negative work-related attitudes. Thus, the second aim of this study is to explore the relationship between perceived job stress, trust in top management, and turnover intention for the airline personnel.

Although there are studies on affective commitment and turnover intention of airline employees, they have been mostly limited to front-line employees such as ground handling personnel and cabin crew (Chen & Kao, 2011; 2012; Cho, Choi, & Lee, 2014; Hur, Moon, & Jun, 2013; Karatepe & Choubtarash, 2014; Ng, Sambasivan, & Zubaidah, 2011; Whiting, Donthu, & Baker, 2011; Yeh, 2014). The main reason is that the front-line employees' work-related attitudes, including intention to quit, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, are expected to impact the quality of the service they provide to customers. This, in turn, has a substantial impact on customer satisfaction. However, employees at all levels are critical for an airline's success. Negative work attitudes of all employees may have other severe consequences for the airlines. This study aims to contribute to the relevant literature by involving all airline personnel, including flight crew, operational and technical personnel, and headquarter personnel in the study. The results of this research are expected to provide meaningful implications to airline managers for business practice.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development**

Turnover intention (or intention to quit) is defined as a deliberate willingness of an employee to quit their organization (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Many studies have shown that turnover intention is a strong predictor of actual turnover behaviour (e.g. Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978; Van Breukelen, van der Vlist, & Steensma, 2004). Employee turnover represents serious costs to companies and can be a major concern for companies. High turnover rates may disrupt the quality of the service provided to the customers (Trevor & Nyberg, 2008). Replacement of an experienced or qualified employee with new inexperienced ones, recruiting and training new employees and low morale of remaining employees are among other costs of employee turnover (Alexandrov, Babakus, & Yavas, 2007).

Organizational commitment is defined as "the emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization" (Meyer & Allen, 1997). It represents a person's strong willingness to stay in the organization and to show effort towards organizational goals (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). Affectively committed employees are expected to have high acceptance of organizational goals and values (He, Li, & Lai, 2011). In addition, studies have indicated that employees with high commitment to their organization are less likely to leave their organization (Bishop, Scott, & Burroughs, 2000; Bluedorn, 1982; Ingram & Lee, 1990; Porter & Steers, 1973). Moreover, studies have revealed that employee commitment has a positive impact on the firm's performance (Angle & Perry, 1981; Lum, Kervin, Clark, Reid, & Sirola, 1998).

Top management communication represents the degree of clearness and integrity of the messages sent to the employees (Mahajan et al., 2012; Smidts, Pruyn, & Van Riel, 2001). Top management communication may provide information to employees about the important decisions that top management has taken and the accomplishments they have achieved. It may also provide information about employees' role and their contributions to the organization. Smidts et al. (2001) found that top management communication results employees to identify themselves with their organization better. Other studies have found that top management communication plays a critical role in

developing positive employee attitudes. It enables employees to conform to organizational policies, goals and norms. It also encourages employees to show effort towards attaining organizational goals (Donnellon, Gray, & Bougon, 1986). Studies have indicated a positive relationship between top management communication and organizational commitment (Hamm, 2006; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Postmes et al., 2001; Vuuren, De Jong, & Seydel, 2007; Walton, 1985). Although not referring to top management communication only, Gregson (1990) found a significant negative relationship between communication satisfaction and employee turnover intention.

Trust in management refers to employee faith in organizational managers and their goal achievement and the belief that their actions will be beneficial or at least will not be harmful to employees (Kim & Mauborgne, 1997; Renzl, 2006). Since 1964 when Argyris proposed its' importance for organizational performance, trust in management has been identified as an important determinant of employee performance, satisfaction, and commitment to the organization (Wong & Cummings, 2009). Many studies have found that trust affects employee attitudes, behaviors, and performance (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Research has also revealed that trust is an important factor in determining job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Lambert, Jiang, & Hogan, 2008; Lambert & Hogan, 2009; McKnight, 2009; Whitener, 2001). Other studies have reported that trust in top management has a negative correlation with employee's intention to quit (Costigan, Itler, & Berman, 1998; Hunter & Tan, 2006; Thite, 2006). In addition, studies have proposed that trust in top managers has a negative relationship with work exhaustion (McKnight, 2009), employee performance (Mayer & Gavin, 2005) and job stress (Lambert et al., 2008).

Research has proposed that top management communication has an effect on establishing trust in management. Accordingly, employees' trust in top management is expected to increase when top management provides them sufficient and correct information about their decisions (Mahajan et al., 2012; Whitener et al., 1998). Other studies have found that well-communicated employees on organizational achievements and decisions are more likely to foster trust in top management (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989; Driscoll, 1978; Elsbach & Eloffson, 2000; Whitener et al., 1998). In addition, Mahajan et al. (2012) demonstrated that trust in management fully mediates the impact of top management communication on affective commitment among drivers of a trucking company in the US. Considering the relevant literature, this empirical study aims to test the following hypothesis in the Turkish and European aviation contexts:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Trust in top management mediates the effect of top management communication on affective commitment.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Trust in top management mediates the effect of top management communication on turnover intention.

Job stress represents an employees' physical and emotional reaction caused when the job requirements do not match the abilities, sources, or needs of the employee (NIOSH, 1999; Rice, 1992). It can result from various factors in the working environment such as the work task, physical attributes of the working environment, job attributes, role conflict, relationships at work and employee capabilities

(Cooper & Marshall, 1976; Jou, Kuo, & Tang, 2013). Studies have found that job stress is an important determinant of job satisfaction, turnover intention, employee performance, absenteeism and burnout (Chen & Silverthorne, 2008; Elci et al., 2012; Gaither et al., 2008; Hersey & Blanchard, 1988; Keinan & Malach-Pines, 2007; Ortqvist & Wincent, 2006; Whitehead, 1989).

Many studies have found that trust in top management is likely to affect turnover intention (Costigan et al., 1998, Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Thite, 2006) and that job stress is a significant determinant of turnover intention (Elci et al., 2012; Gaither et al., 2008; Keinan & Malach-Pines, 2007; Ortqvist & Wincent, 2006). Considering the importance of trust in management, this study aimed to test whether trust in management can shape the relationship between job stress and turnover intention in Turkish and European aviation contexts. Accordingly, it is hypothesized as follows:

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Trust in top management moderates the relationship between perceived job stress and turnover intention.

The model of the study can be found on Figure 1.

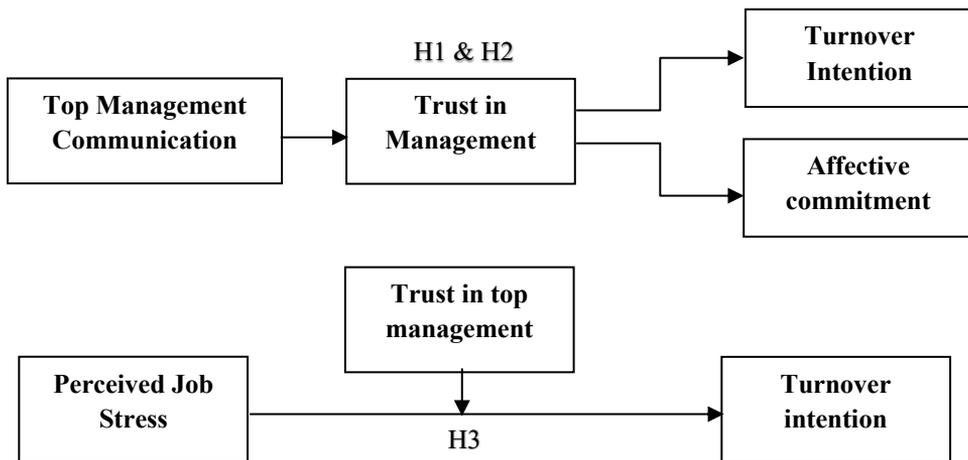


Figure 1: Model of the Study

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Sample

This study gathers data from 407 airline personnel working in Turkey 322 airline personnel working in Europe (UK, Germany, France, Spain). The questionnaire is prepared with Google docs and sent to the respondents via LinkedIn, a professional social networking platform. As a total, one thousand three hundred sixty-five questionnaires are distributed, and only 729 answers are received for a response rate of 53%. The employees in the sample involve cabin and cockpit personnel, headquarter

personnel (working at departments such as commercial, finance, accounting, human resources, strategic planning, IT, etc.), technical personnel (e.g. Technician, Engineer), operations personnel (e.g. ground operations, dispatch, OCC). The sample characteristics of both samples are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Sample Characteristics

		Turkey		Europe	
		Valid percentage (%)	N	Valid percentage (%)	N
POSITION	Headquarter (Commercial, Finance, Accounting, Human Resources, Strategic Planning, IT, etc.)	23.8	97	32.6	105
	Operations (e.g., Ground operations, dispatch, OCC*, Technical units)	38.6	157	36.6	118
	Flight Crew (Pilot) & Cabin Crew	37.6	153	30.8	99
AGE	18 – 25	5.2	21	9.9	32
	26 – 35	54.1	220	37.6	121
	36 – 45	29.0	118	23.3	75
	46 – 55	9.8	40	22.0	71
	56 – 65	2.0	8	7.1	23
GENDER	Male	55.7	227	52.4	169
	Female	44.3	180	47.6	153
EDUCATION	High School	2.9	12	29.2	94
	Undergraduate (University degree)	68.1	277	33.9	109
	Masters or PhD	29.0	118	37.0	119

### 3.2. The Measuring Instruments

Trust in top management is measured with six items from the scale developed by Cook and Wall (1980). Exemplary items are “The management of this organization tries to understand the employees’ point of view” and “I feel quite confident that the firm will always try to treat other employees and me fairly.” Four items from Mahajan et al.’s (2012) study are used to measure top management communication. Sample items for the scale are “The management of this organization informs the employees about company’s plans” and “The management of this organization sufficiently informs employees about the status of the company”. Turnover intention is measured by four items based on Mobley et al.’s (1978) study. Sample items are “I often think about quitting my present job” and “I will soon start searching for a new job”. Affective commitment is assessed by Meyer and Allen’s (1997) six-item scale. Sample items are “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this company” and “I feel emotionally attached to this company.” Lastly, perceived job stress scale is adopted from Arasli and Tumer’s (2008) study. Sample items are “I often feel under stress at work” and “The stress and tension at work are very high”. The respondents are required to indicate their level of agreement

with each statement using a five-point scale (1 – strongly disagree; 5 – strongly agree). The data is analyzed with SPSS 20 and AMOS 21. To examine the hypotheses concerned, analyzes are conducted separately for Turkish and European samples. Structural equation modelling (SEM) and PROCESS macro are used to test the proposed research hypotheses.

#### 4. Results

The measurement model is subjected to confirmatory factor analysis for reliability and validity check. For both samples, the results of the confirmatory factor analysis show that the magnitudes of the standardized loadings range from .61 to .92 and all t-values are significant. Individual items under each factor are reliable because all standardized loadings are greater than 0.6. The results demonstrate a good fit for the 5-factor measurement model for Turkish sample ( $\chi^2 = 555.2$ ,  $df = 179$ ,  $\chi^2 / df = 3.10$ ; CFI = .946; IFI = .946; RMSEA = .072; SRMR = .056), as well as for the European sample ( $\chi^2 = 486.0$ ,  $df = 179$ ,  $\chi^2 / df = 2.71$ ; CFI = .937; IFI = .937; RMSEA = .073; SRMR = .066) (Appendix 2).

The average variance extracted (AVE) by trust in top management, top management communication, turnover intentions, affective commitment and perceived job stress are .60, .74, .74, .71 and .76 respectively for Turkish sample. For European sample, the average variance extracted (AVE) for the same factors are .68, .70, .86, .61, and .63 respectively, which confirmed convergent validity. For both samples, since all composite reliabilities (CR) are greater than 0.8 (Appendix 2), the models satisfy the prerequisite of construct reliability. Discriminant validity is also satisfied as all square roots of variance extracted estimates are greater than the correlations between the constructs, as shown on Table 2 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

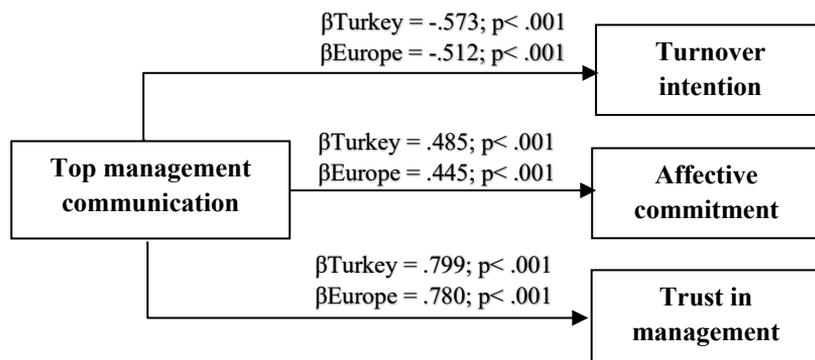
**Table 2:** Discriminant Validity Results

Turkish sample								
	CR	AVE	MSV	AC	TIM	ITQ	TMC	PJS
AC	.937	.713	.349	<b>.844</b>				
TIM	.857	.599	.591	.581	<b>.774</b>			
ITQ	.919	.741	.429	-.591	-.655	<b>.861</b>		
TMC	.919	.740	.591	.437	.769	-.528	<b>.860</b>	
PJS	.911	.773	.236	-.228	-.414	.486	-.291	<b>.879</b>
European sample								
	CR	AVE	MSV	AC	TIM	ITQ	TMC	PJS
AC	.904	.615	.331	<b>.784</b>				
TIM	.893	.676	.557	.575	<b>.822</b>			
ITQ	.925	.755	.391	-.471	-.625	<b>.869</b>		
TMC	.902	.698	.557	.392	.746	-.458	<b>.836</b>	
PJS	.837	.632	.231	-.346	-.481	.435	-.403	<b>.795</b>

CR= composite reliability; AVE= average variance extracted; MSV= maximum shared variance

In order to check the mediating effect of trust in top management between top management communication and turnover intention and between top management communication and affective commitment, separate analyses are conducted for the European sample and Turkish sample via SEM.

The results reveal that, for Turkish sample, top management communication has a significant negative effect on turnover intention ( $\beta = -.573$ ;  $p < .001$ ), and a positive effect on affective commitment ( $\beta = .485$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and trust in management ( $\beta = .799$ ;  $p < .001$ ) (Figure 2). For European sample, the results also reveal that, top management communication has a significant negative effect on turnover intention ( $\beta = -.512$ ;  $p < .001$ ), and positive effect on affective commitment ( $\beta = .445$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and trust in management ( $\beta = .780$ ;  $p < .001$ ) (Figure 2). Therefore, the first condition of the mediating effect for both samples is ensured. Before the mediating variable is put into the model, the independent variable, top management communication has a significant direct effect on dependent variables (turnover intention and affective commitment) and a significant direct effect on the mediating variable (trust in management).



Model fit Turkey =  $\chi^2/\text{df}$ : 4.74, CFI: .92, IFI: .92 NFI: .90, RMSEA: .096

Model fit Europe =  $\chi^2/\text{df}$ : 3.79, CFI: .92, IFI: .92 NFI: .90, RMSEA: .093

**Figure 2:** Correlation Test Results for Turkish & European Samples

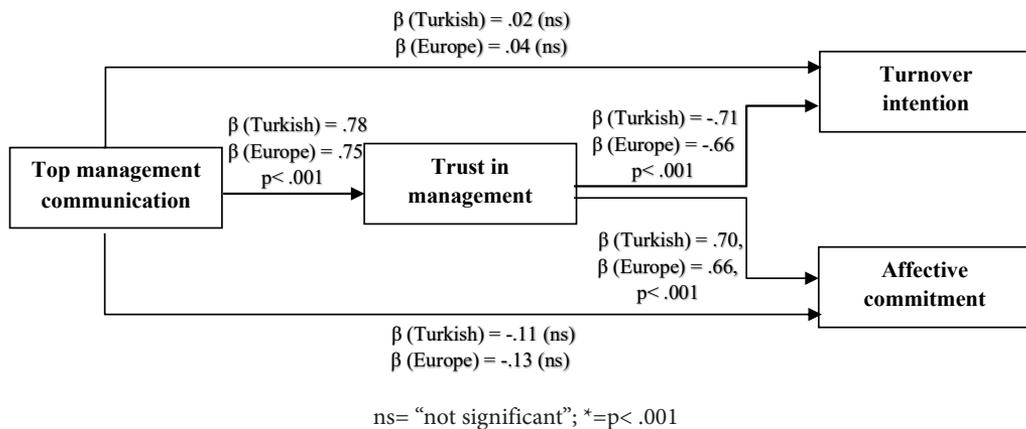
As a second step of the mediation, the mediator variable is included in the model, and direct and indirect effects of independent and mediating variables on dependent variables are observed. For the Turkish sample, in the presence of a mediator, the direct effects of top management communication on affective commitment ( $\beta = -.110$ ,  $p = .220$ ) and turnover intention ( $\beta = .023$ ,  $p = .822$ ) become insignificant, whereas the indirect effect of top management communication on affective commitment ( $\beta = .546$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and turnover intention ( $\beta = -.548$ ,  $p < .001$ ) are still significant (Table 3, Figure 3). The results, therefore, confirm full mediation of trust in top management between top management communication and turnover intention and between top management communication and affective commitment.

**Table 3:** Test Results of Mediating Effect of Trust in Management for Turkish and European Samples

<b>Turkish sample</b>			
<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Direct effect (x→y)</b>	<b>Indirect effect</b>	<b>Result</b>
TMC→TIM→TI	.023(ns)	-.548*	Full mediation – H1 supported
TMC→TIM→AC	-.110(ns)	.546*	Full mediation – H2 supported
<b>European sample</b>			
TMC→TIM→TI	-.040 (ns)	-.497*	Full mediation – H1 supported
TMC→TIM→AC	-.105 (ns)	.495*	Full mediation – H2 supported

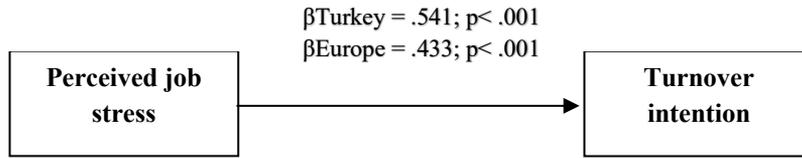
ns= “not significant”; \*= p< .001

The same analyses are conducted for the European sample. Similar to the results of the Turkish sample, it is found that in the presence of a mediator, the direct effects of top management communication to affective commitment ( $\beta = -.105, p = .234$ ) and turnover intention ( $\beta = .040, p = .634$ ) become insignificant, whereas the indirect effect of top management communication to affective commitment ( $\beta = .495, p < .001$ ) and turnover intention are ( $\beta = -.497, p < .001$ ) still significant (Table 3, Figure 3). The results, therefore, confirm full mediation of trust in top management between top management communication and turnover intention and between top management communication and affective commitment. As a result, it can be concluded that H1 and H2 are supported for both samples. While conducting the regression analysis, age, gender and position are used as control variables. The effects of other control variables are insignificant, meaning that they don't matter to the outcome.



**Figure 3:** The Findings of Tested Model for Turkish and European Sample

In order to test H3, SEM analyses are conducted for Turkish and European samples. As a first condition of the moderation effect, the independent variable must be a significant predictor of the dependent variable. The results reveal that, for both Turkish ( $\beta = .541; p < .001$ ) and European samples ( $\beta = .433; p < .001$ ), perceived job stress has a significant effect on turnover intention (Figure 4).



**Figure 4:** Hypotheses Test Results of Impact of Perceived Job Stress on Turnover Intention

The moderating effect of trust in top management on the relationship between perceived job stress and intention to quit is tested through SPSS PROCESS tool (Hayes, 2012). When the analysis is applied to Turkish sample, the moderating effect of trust in top management is found significant ( $r^2 = .4367$ ,  $F = 104.1274$ ,  $p < .001$ ) (Table 4). In other words, since the interaction effect of trust in top management and perceived job stress on turnover intention is significantly different from zero, there is evidence of moderation – that is, the effect of perceived job stress on turnover intention depended on the values of trust in top management. Thus, it can be concluded that H3 is supported for Turkish sample.

**Table 4:** Hypotheses Test Results of Moderating Effect of Trust in Management for Turkish Sample

Model	coeff	se	T	p
Constant	2.1368	.4665	4.5803	.0000
PJS	.7768	.1378	5.6367	.0000
TIM	-.1263	.1463	-.8631	.3886
Interaction (PJS * TIM)	-.1666	.0460	-3.6223	.0003
<b><math>R^2 = .4367</math> <math>F = 104.1274</math> <math>p &lt; .001</math></b>				

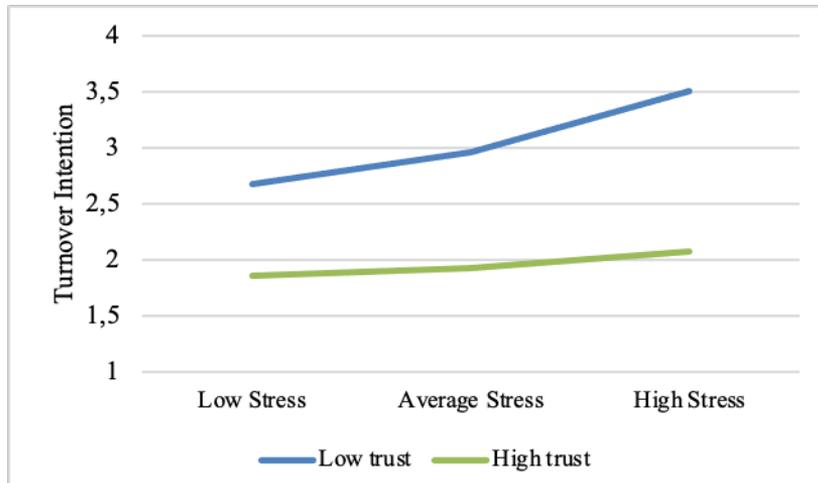
*Dependent variable = Turnover intention*

According to the conditional effects table, 2.2 represents low trust in top management (TIM), 3 represents medium TIM and 4 represents high TIM. When the trust in top management is high, the moderation effect is not found significant ( $p = .114$ ) (Table 5). The moderation effect is only significant at low and medium TIM values.

**Table 5:** Conditional Effects of the Focal Predictor at Values of the Moderators

TIM	Effect	Se	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
2.200	.4102	.0532	7.7076	.0000	.3056	.5148
3.000	.2769	.0451	6.1380	.0000	.1882	.3656
4.000	.1103	.0696	1.5837	.1140	-.0266	.2471

Data for visualizing moderating effect is used to plot the moderating effect of trust in top management and perceived job stress on turnover intention. As can be seen on the Figure 5, when perceived job stress of employee is high, trust in top management becomes more important since perceived job stress has a more significant impact on turnover intention when trust in top management is low.



**Figure 5:** Illustration of Moderating Effect of Trust in Top Management and Perceived Job Stress on Turnover Intention for Turkish Sample

When the same analysis is conducted on European sample however, the moderating effect of trust in top management is not found significant ( $p = .28$ ) (Table 6). Whether the TIM values are high or low, there is no significant difference at the relationship between perceived job stress and turnover intention. It can be concluded that H3 is not supported for European sample. While doing the analysis, in order to cope with collinearity problem, necessary tests are conducted. First, the correlation between two independent variables is checked, and it is lower than 0.5. In addition, VIF values are checked, and the VIF values of the independent variables are below 5 for both samples.

**Table 6:** Hypotheses Test Results of Moderating Effect of Trust in Management for European Sample

Model	coeff	Se	T	p
Constant	3.6760	.5772	6.3691	.0000
PJS	.3708	.1655	2.2403	.0258
TIM	-.4434	.1629	-2.7220	.0068
Interaction (PJS * TIM)	-.0545	.0504	-1.0810	.2805

$R^2 = .4367$   $F = 104.1274$   $P = .0000$

*Dependent variable = Turnover intention*

## 5. Discussion of the Results

This study aims to contribute to the relevant literature in various ways. Although several studies have tested the relationship between two of the factors included in this study, it is worth revealing the more complicated relationship among them. The findings have revealed that trust in top management has a full mediating effect on the relationship between top management communication and turnover intention and between top management communication and affective commitment for both European

and Turkish samples. What this practically means for the industry managers is that top management communication results in increased trust in top management, which in turn can have a strong effect on affective commitment and turnover intention. When the top management sufficiently informs the employees about the status of the company and its future plans, employees are more likely to believe that top management is competent, tries to understand employees' point of view, treat employees fairly, and make meaningful decisions for the company's future. Trust in top management, in turn, would result employees staying in the organization for longer times, not thinking about quitting their jobs. Since turnover intention is a good predictor of actual turnover, lower turnover intention is expected to result in lower employee turnover. In this way, the firm would avoid the negative consequences associated with high employee turnover. Trust in top management would also result in employees having a higher affective commitment, feeling emotionally attached to the company, and feeling as if the company's problems are their own. Affectively committed employees are expected to have high willingness to stay in the organization and to embrace organizational goals and values better. As a result, it is recommended to airline top managers to pay more attention to communicating with employees effectively. This would result in increased trust in top management and lead to higher affective commitment and lower turnover intention. The results have been the same for both European and Turkish samples. This indicates that independent of the region, top management communication impact on trust in top management and consequently on turnover intention and affective commitment is valid.

Another important factor that results in high turnover intention has been job stress. Aviation is a stressful industry in nature, and the level of stress of personnel can be quite high. It might be difficult to change the job's stress level, but it is worth identifying any factor that shapes the relationship between perceived job stress and turnover intention. The findings have revealed that for Turkish airline employees, trust in top management moderates the relationship between perceived job stress and turnover intention. In other words, for the Turkish sample, when top management creates a high trust of employees, this might limit the turnover intention to some degree. It can be concluded that for the Turkish sample, when perceived job stress of employees is high, trust in top management becomes more important since perceived job stress has a more significant impact on turnover intention when trust in top management is low. In contrast, this moderating effect is not found significant for the European sample.

There can be several reasons why the findings of the two samples are different. First of all, looking at the average trust in management scores of both samples, it can be seen that the mean score of the European sample is 3.318, whereas it is 3.06 for the Turkish sample. Thus, it can be concluded that the Turkish sample has a lower level of trust in management. In the case of European sample, already high level of trust in management might not affect the relationship between perceived stress and turnover intention. Whereas, in the Turkish sample, a low level of trust in management moderates the relationship between the two variables. In other words, job stress may have a more significant impact on turnover intention when trust in top management is low. A higher level of trust in management might not affect the overall turnover intention even if the job is stressful, as in the European sample.

The first finding of the study has proved that top management communication results in a higher level of trust in management. Combining the two findings, it may be suggested top managers to

give more importance to maintaining the trust of employees, as low trust may lead to high levels of turnover intention, especially when the perceived job stress level of the employee is high.

Until now, the studies on affective commitment and turnover intention conducted to airline employees have been limited to flight personnel or front-line employees only. By taking all types of personnel into consideration, this study aimed to differ from other studies. In addition, to the best knowledge of the authors, no research addressing the importance of top management communication and trust in top management on airline personnel in Turkey and in Europe has been identified. This study also differed from other studies in this respect and aimed to contribute to the relevant literature with a considerable sample size.

One limitation of the study could be the heterogeneity of the samples which involve different aviation professions such as cabin crew, pilots, technical personnel, and headquarters personnel. Each profession has its own dynamics; therefore, they should be analyzed separately as the results might be different. Thus, as a future study, the answers of each profession could be compared to see whether there are any differences among them. In addition, as a further study, comparing different sizes of airlines would also be beneficial in bringing insights into how the size of the company would affect the relationship between top management communication, trust in top management, turnover intention, and affective commitment.

## **6. Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to analyze the effects of trust in top management on turnover intention and affective commitment of airline personnel in Turkey and Europe and to test whether trust in top management has a mediating effect on the relationship between top management communication and turnover intention and between top management communication and affective commitment of airline employees. Another aim of this study was to test whether trust in top management moderates the relationship between perceived job stress and turnover intention. In order to reach the aims, data was obtained from a sample of 729 airline personnel working in Turkey and in Europe.

The findings revealed that for both European and Turkish samples, trust in top management has a full mediating effect on the relationship between top management communication and turnover intention and between top management communication and affective commitment. The findings also showed that for Turkish airline employees, trust in top management moderates the relationship between perceived job stress and turnover intention. In contrast, this moderating effect was not found significant for the European sample. It is expected the results of this research to provide meaningful implications to airline managers for business practice.

### **Conflict of Interest**

No conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

### **Financial Support**

The author(s) has not received any financial support for this study.

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## Resume

**Özge YANIKOĞLU (Assist. Prof.)**, She works as an assistant Professor at Ozyegin University Faculty of Aviation and Aeronautical Sciences. She has a Ph.D. in Management and Organization from Marmara University. She received her first master's degree in Marketing from Bahçeşehir University in 2010. Then, she received an MSc degree in Air Transport Management from Cranfield University in 2013. Her main research area includes management, strategy, organizational behavior, and aviation management.