



# The Level of Academic Identities of Faculty Members Predicting Their Organizational Trust

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**Abstract** The main aim of this study is to examine whether academic identities of the faculty members are statistically significant predictor on their organizational trust. The population of the study, which was designed as a correlational study, consisted of 37,868 faculty members working in state universities in Central Anatolia region. The sample of the study consisted of 396 faculty members which were selected via cluster sampling method. Data of the study were collected via “Personal Information Form, Academic Identity Scale and Organizational Trust Scale”. The data were analyzed with descriptive statistics and stepwise regression analysis. According to results of the study, faculty members’ opinions on academic identity and organizational trust are high. According to the regression analysis, it was determined that personal identity and values dimensions of academic identity predict about %16.7 of faculty members’ organizational trust levels. Accordingly, it was found that as the perceptions of faculty members regarding the dimensions of personal identity and values increased, their organizational trust levels also increased. It was determined that the social identity variable did not predict the organizational trust levels of the faculty members. It can be stated that in order to increase the organizational trust levels of academic staff, some measures should be taken to increase the individual identity dimension among the academic identity sub-dimensions. For this purpose, it can be suggested to organize activities such as workshops, interdisciplinary sharing meetings, global learning networks that will encourage activities such as curiosity, motivation to learn and critical thinking.

**Keywords** Academic identity · Faculty members · Organizational trust · Regression

## Introduction

Identity is a phenomenon affected by personal and professional experiences (Kavrayıcı & Ağaoğlu, 2020). There are two different views about identity in the literature. The first view defines identity as a person’s basic intellectual structure, a phenomenon shaped by social interactions. In light of this, identity is a concept that influences a person’s mental processes, social interactions, and phenomenological perception. The second perspective views identity more as a product of the outside world. According to this viewpoint, the public can see and understand one’s identity. These interpretations, in the opinion of Benwell and Stokoe (2006), are based on the concrete behaviors of the individual, such as their attire, location, and language use. According to this perspective, observable behaviors serve as identity’s outward manifestation. This perspective also emphasizes the dynamic nature of identity formation and how it is shaped by community discourses. By following particular norms and customs, people participate in social interactions within their communities. Individuals behave in a way that reflects their social status by acting and speaking in ways that conform to established norms and guidelines in their communities (Hyland, 2012).

Every profession has a unique identity and set of traits. In light of this, researchers have recently become interested in the phenomenon of academic identity (Quigley, 2011; Shams, 2019; Wood et al., 2016). Martin, Lord, and Warren-Smith (2020) state that common perceptions of what academics do and believe in shape academic identity, which is formed in social interaction and daily

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activities (Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013). Academic identity refers to a self-design process that is formed by a person's perceptions, past experiences, and understandings of the current situation that determine the characteristics of being an academic figure (Henkel, 2000). According to another definition, academic identity includes the sum of personal perceptions and values that academics form in the university environment based on factors such as their areas of specialization, colleagues and institutional culture (Karsantık, 2019). As per Billot's (2010) perspective, an individual forms their academic identity or sense of self through imagining what it means to be an academic, thinking back on the past, and understanding the current state of the world. This is due to the fact that academic identity is a dynamic and socially constructed concept that is shaped by an individual's national, ethnic, and personal circumstances. To put it briefly, one could think of academic identity as a concept that influences a faculty member's existence as a scientist and their professional identity. However, the concept of academic identity is complex and cannot be easily encapsulated in a few sentences. It is best understood as a dynamic and ever-evolving notion that varies for each individual academic (Quigley, 2011).

The theoretical origins of the concept of academic identity date back to traditional symbolic interaction and structural symbolic interaction theories (Stets & Serpe, 2013). Examining the literature reveals that there are many discussions about academic identity, but these discussions are generally carried out in the context of the status and quality of academics and the duties of academics (Öztürk, 2008). Clegg (2008) states that academic identity is a very complex structure rather than a fixed structure and cannot be determined based on the roles of academic staff such as teaching, research and administration. However, it is evident that academic staff with harmonious, sharing, and development-oriented academic identities is essential for higher education institutions to effectively accomplish their goals (Karsantık, 2019).

Academic identity consists of individual identity, social identity and values dimensions (Karsantık, 2019). Social identity reflects people's awareness that they belong to a specific in-group defined through their external environment and their relationships with unrelated communities. Individual identity, on the other hand, refers to the personal characteristics of academic identity such as a sense of curiosity, a drive to learn, and critical thinking. The definition of academic identity as an identity that exists as a result of shared experiences and has common cultural values at its core brings along the values dimension. Universities are the places where experiences and cultural values related to academic identity are acquired and maintained (Günbey, 2022). Higher education institutions transform the identity of academics into a positioned identity. This identity includes the

professional title and professional knowledge provided by the institution (Karsantık, 2019).

The fact that academic identity is a concept that is also fed by organizational culture (Karsantık, 2019) indicates that it can also be affected by other organizational variables. One of the concepts closely related to organizational culture is organizational trust (Arslan & Durgun, 2020; Kandemir & Nartgün, 2019). Trust is a concept that is instinctively understood but difficult to define precisely (Hoy & Tarter, 2004). Mishra and Morrissey (1990) define the concept of organizational trust as the belief that employees believe in the words of managers and that they will adhere to their promises, and in this case, they emphasize the role of the manager in the organizational trust process. According to Bromiley and Cummings (1996), it is the belief of the employees that they have confidence in the organization, that the organization will not take advantage of them and that they will make efforts to fulfill their commitments. It has been observed that companies that are unable to foster a culture of trust either fail to meet their objectives or struggle to do so (İşcan & Sayın, 2010).

It is said that effective trust enables organizational employees to perform their duties properly and thus contribute more to organizational goals (Ayduğ & Ağaoğlu, 2017; Tschannen-Moran, 2001), despite the fact that creating an environment of trust in organizations can be challenging (Brewster & Railsback, 2003). One way to measure an organization's success is to look at the contributions made by its employees, as this will show you how much the organization accomplishes its goals. Consequently, it is imperative that staff members initially cultivate a favorable impression of the company. From this perspective, it is thought that universities, which play a leading role in the development of a country and the academic identities of the academic staff working there, may affect the trust they have in their organizations.

In conclusion, it is believed that organizational trust and academic identity are positively correlated. When an academic's academic identity is perceived as valuable and reliable by other academics and administrators, it is predicted that organizational trust will increase. This trust environment encourages academics to communicate more easily, collaborate and share information because organizational trust is considered as one of the most important antecedents of job satisfaction, a positive communication environment and good subordinate/superior relations (Gill, 2007). Moreover, academics with a strong academic identity are likely to have more self-confidence and work with higher motivation. As a result, academic institutions can become more successful, innovative and productive. For this reason, in this study, it was deemed worthwhile to investigate to what extent academics' academic identities predict their organizational trust levels. Accordingly, in this study, it is aimed to examine

the level of academic identities of academic staff in predicting their organizational trust. To achieve this, the following questions were investigated and their answers were sought:

1. What is the level of academic staff's views on academic identity?
2. What is the level of academic staff's views on organizational trust?
3. Do the academic staff's views on academic identity predict organizational trust levels in a statistically significant way?

By answering these questions, this study seeks to contribute to the literature on academic identity and organizational trust, providing insights into how these factors influence the functioning and success of higher education institutions. The findings will offer valuable information for policy-makers, administrators, and researchers aiming to foster a more effective and collaborative academic environment.

## Method

The study is quantitative in nature and is structured using a relational survey model, which is employed to ascertain whether a change exists between two or more variables and, in the event that one does, to ascertain the extent and direction of this change (Creswell, 2014). The relational survey model is deemed suitable for the research's objectives, as it aims to investigate whether the academic staff's perceptions of their academic identities are predictive of their levels of organizational trust.

## Research Sample

In the 2021–2022 academic year, 37,868 academic staff members from 24 state universities in the Central Anatolia region made up the study's population (YÖK, 2022). In the study, the cluster sampling method was applied. The population is split up into smaller groups within itself for the cluster sampling method, and a random sample is chosen from each group (Lumley, 2004). The 24 universities in the population were considered as clusters and the data collection tool was applied to the academic staff of 6 universities randomly selected from these clusters. Thus, a sample of 396 people was reached.

In order to determine the number of faculty members to be included in the sample from the population, Bartlett et al. (2001)'s formula, which is frequently used in educational research, was utilized. Accordingly, the sample size that should be taken from 37,868 academic staff with 95% interval and 5% sampling error rate is at least 380 (Bartlett et al., 2001). Therefore, it was decided that the data obtained from

396 academic staff was sufficient to represent the population. Demographic information about the faculty members in the research sample is given in Table 1.

## Research Instruments and Procedures

“Academic Identity Scale,” “Organizational Trust Scale,” and “Personal Information Form” were used to gather the data. The demographic information of academic staff members, including gender, age, title, seniority, and university they work at, is collected through questions on the personal information form.

## Academic Identity Scale

The scale developed by Karsantik (2019) was utilized to determine the opinions of academic staff on their academic identities. The scale is a 5-point Likert scale (never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), mostly (4), always (5)) and consists of 3 sub-dimensions (individual identity, social identity and values) and 22 items. Karsantik (2019) conducted a factor analysis with the data obtained from 490 participants and found that the scale consisted of 3 factors. The total variance explained by these three factors is 54.2%. The 9-item individual identity dimension explains 24.3% of the variance, the 8-item social identity dimension explains 17.8%, and the 5-item values dimension explains 12.1%. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was also applied on a data set obtained from 238 participants. CFA yielded the following results:  $\chi^2/sd$  ratio of 1.004 ( $\chi^2/sd = 206.812/206$ ), RMSEA = 0.04, SRMR = 0.037, CFI = 0.98, NNFI = 0.98, GFI = 0.93, AGFI = 0.91, and the scale's fit indices were deemed appropriate and the 3-factor structure was confirmed (Karsantik, 2019). Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were computed to assess the reliability of the Academic Identity Scale: 0.86 for the individual identity dimension, 0.80 for the social identity dimension, and 0.71 for the values dimension. The overall scale's Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient was determined to be 0.90 (Karsantik, 2019).

For this study, the scale's validity and reliability values were recalculated. With respect to internal consistency ( $\alpha$ ), the scale's reliability was determined to be 0.90 for the entire scale, 0.84 for the individual identity dimension, 0.71 for the social identity dimension, and 0.67 for the values dimension. According to the fit indices ( $\chi^2/sd = 1.985$ , RMSEA = 0.063, CFI = 0.922, TLI = 0.904, SRMR = 0.065) acquired through CFA, the scale's three-dimensional structure was deemed valid.

## Organizational Trust Scale

It was created by Daboval et al. (1994). Yılmaz (2005) modified it for use in Turkish and educational institutions, and

**Table 1** Demographic information of the faculty members in the research sample

Demographic information	Variables	f	%
Gender	Female	230	58,1
	Male	166	41,9
Graduation level	Bachelor	12	3,0
	Master	71	17,9
	PhD	313	79,0
Academic title	Research Assistant	78	19,7
	Lecturer	38	9,6
	Doctor Research Assistant	30	7,6
	Doctor Lecturer	25	6,3
	Asistant Professor Doctor	58	14,6
	Associate Professor Doctor	73	18,4
	Professor Doctor	94	23,7
Age	21–30	43	10,9
	31–40	133	33,6
	41–50	124	31,3
	51 age and above	96	24,2
Tenure in the profession (years)	0–5	51	12,9
	6–10	69	17,4
	11–15	67	16,9
	16–20	47	11,9
	21 years and above	162	40,9
University Worked at	Anadolu University	96	24,2
	Ankara University	48	12,1
	Eskişehir Osmangazi University	48	12,1
	Eskişehir Technical University	14	3,5
	Hacettepe University	120	30,3
	Selçuk University	70	17,7
Total		396	100

validity and reliability tests were carried out. The measure is a scale with 40 items totaling across 4 sub-dimensions: openness to innovation, communication environment, trust in manager, and sensitivity to employees. Yılmaz (2005) conducted a factor analysis as part of the scale's validity study and found that the scale was composed of four factors. 53.9% of the variance is explained overall by the four factors. 19.4% of the variance is explained by the dimension of sensitivity to employees, 16.9% by the dimension of trust in manager, 12.6% by the dimension of openness to innovation, and 4.4% by the dimension of communication environment. The Organizational Trust Scale's total reliability coefficient, as determined by Yılmaz (2005), was 0.97. The results showed that the sub-dimensions had values of 0.95, 0.95, 0.75 and 0.92, respectively.

Recalculated for this study were the scale's validity and reliability values. The internal consistency ( $\alpha$ ) of the scale was therefore calculated, and the results showed that the reliability was 0.98 for the entire scale, 0.96 for the sensitivity to employees dimension, 0.98 for the trust in manager dimension, 0.96 for the communication environment dimension,

and 0.94 for the openness to innovation dimension. The scale's four-dimensional structure was established by the fit indices ( $(\chi^2/sd) = 2.441$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.076$ ,  $CFI = 0.924$ ,  $TLI = 0.917$ ,  $SRMR = 0.052$ ) that were acquired through CFA.

### Data Analysis

Assumptions were examined to see if the data were appropriate for the analysis techniques to be applied before the data gathered for the study were analyzed. Outliers and missing data were investigated for this reason. No incomplete measurement tool was discovered because Google forms were used to collect the data. Scatter plots, skewness, and kurtosis coefficients were also looked at to see if the data were normally distributed in order to assess the data's suitability for analysis. It was determined that the assumption of normal distribution was satisfied because the skewness and kurtosis coefficients presented in Table 2 ranged between -1.5 and + 1.5 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2015), and parametric tests were used in the analysis.

**Table 2** Skewness and Kurtosis Coefficients for the Research Data

Variables	Skewness	df	Kurtosis	df
Individual identity	-.834	.123	.764	.245
Social identity	-.345	.123	-.114	.245
Values	-.974	.123	1.277	.245
Academic Identity	-.635	.123	.351	.245
Sensitivity to Employees	.223	.123	-.651	.245
Trust in the Manager	-.192	.123	-.940	.245
Communication Environment	-.165	.123	-.930	.245
Openness to Innovation	.023	.123	-1.048	.245
Organizational Trust	-.030	.123	-.874	.245

To address the first two sub-questions of the study, descriptive statistics were employed in the analyses. If the arithmetic mean value was between 4,20 and 5,00, the faculty member's opinions on that scale were evaluated as "quite high", if it was between 3,40 and 4,19, "high", if it was between 2,60 and 3,39, "medium", if it was between 1,80 and 2,59, "low", and if it was between 1,00 and 1,79, "quite low".

The study's last sub-objective, which was predictive, was ascertained using stepwise regression analysis. Nonetheless, the multiple regression analysis's underlying pre-suppositions were looked at before this analysis was carried out. The values of the Mahalanobis distance were determined initially in this case. The advice that the values for the two independent variables in the final model of the stepwise regression analysis should not be more than 13.82 served as the foundation for the calculation of the Mahalanobis distance values (Pallant, 2020). Four faculty members' Mahalanobis distance scores were higher than this threshold, so their information was excluded from the regression study. Consequently, the regression analysis was conducted with the data obtained from 392 participants.

Correlation coefficients between variables were computed to assess whether the singularity assumption-an additional multiple regression analysis assumption-was broken. The results showed that the assumption of singularity was met, with values obtained being less than .70 (Pallant, 2020). Next, in order to ascertain whether there was an issue with multicollinearity among the predictor variables, tolerance and VIF values were investigated (VIF = 1.88, tolerance = 0.53). It is determined that there is no multicollinearity issue in this situation. After looking at the Durbin-Watson value to see if there was any auto-correlation between the variables, it was found that 1.82 was the recommended value, which should fall between 1 and 3 (Field, 2009).

**Table 3** Descriptive statistics values for the opinions of academic staff on research variables

Variables	n	$\bar{X}$	sd	Min	Max
Individual identity	396	4.04	0.65	1.67	5.00
Social identity	396	3.84	0.58	2.13	5.00
Values	396	4.24	0.51	2.20	5.00
Academic Identity	396	4.01	0.53	2.41	5.00
Sensitivity to Employees	396	3.30	1.21	1.00	5.00
Trust in the Manager	396	3.73	1.45	1.00	5.00
Communication Environment	396	3.67	1.42	1.00	5.00
Openness to Innovation	396	3.43	1.49	1.00	5.00
Organizational Trust	396	3.53	1.30	1.00	5.00

### Ethical Procedures

The research was conducted with the approval of the Ethics Committee at the meeting of Istanbul Gedik University Human Research Ethics Committee dated 28.02.2022 and numbered 2022/3.

### Results

First of all, descriptive statistics were calculated to obtain findings on academic identity and organizational trust levels of academic staff.

As seen in Table 3, it was determined that the opinions of the academic staff about their academic identity levels were at the level of "Mostly" ( $\bar{X} = 4,01$ ,  $ss = 0,53$ ). Based on this finding, it can be stated that the academic identity levels of the academic staff are high. When the scores of the academic staff from the Academic Identity Scale were analyzed in terms of the sub-dimensions of the scale, it was determined that the opinions of the academic staff regarding their individual identity levels were "Mostly" ( $\bar{X} = 4,04$ ,  $ss = 0,53$ ), their opinions regarding their social identity levels were "Mostly" ( $\bar{X} = 3,84$ ,  $ss = 0,53$ ) and their opinions regarding their values levels were "Always" ( $\bar{X} = 4,24$ ,  $ss = 0,53$ ). Therefore, it can be said that the faculty members evaluate the values dimension as very high and the individual identity and social identity dimensions as high. It was determined that the organizational trust level of the academic staff was at the level of "high" ( $\bar{X} = 3,53$ ,  $ss = 1,30$ ). When the organizational trust variable was examined in terms of sub-dimensions, it was found that the opinions of the academic staff regarding the sub-dimensions of trust in the manager ( $\bar{X} = 3,73$ ,  $ss = 1,45$ ) and communication environment ( $\bar{X} = 3,67$ ,  $ss = 1,42$ ) and openness to innovation ( $\bar{X} = 3,43$ ,  $ss = 1,49$ ) were at "High" level, while their opinions

regarding the sub-dimensions of sensitivity to employees ( $\bar{X}=3,30$ ,  $ss=1,21$ ) was at “Medium” level.

The research’s final sub-goal is to ascertain whether organizational trust levels are significantly predicted by the academic staff’s perspectives on academic identity. As seen in Table 4, correlation analysis was done to ascertain the relationships between the variables before moving on to the stepwise regression analysis.

A correlation analysis revealed a significant correlation between academic identity and each of the organizational trust sub-dimensions. Organizational trust was found to have a positive and small relationship with the social identity (0.258) sub-dimension, and a positive and moderate relationship with the values (0.354) and individual identity (0.392) dimensions. When it was found that there was a significant correlation between the academic staff’s organizational trust levels and the academic identity sub-dimensions, stepwise regression analysis was started. The models and corresponding values that the stepwise regression analysis generated are shown in Table 5.

When the results of the stepwise regression analysis in Table 5 are examined, it is seen that the individual identity variable is included in the model first. Accordingly, the individual identity levels of the academic staff are a statistically significant predictor of their organizational trust at a rate of 15.4% ( $R^2=0.154$ ). This predictive power of individual identity on organizational trust is positive. Accordingly, it was determined that as the individual identity perceptions of the academic staff increased, their organizational trust levels also increased. In the second model, the values dimension was added to the model. The values dimension explains 1.3%

of the organizational trust levels of the academic staff. It was determined that the predictive power of the values dimension on organizational trust was positive and as the perceptions of the academic staff regarding the values dimension increased, their organizational trust levels also increased. The individual identity and values sub-dimensions together predicted 16.7% ( $R^2=0.167$ ) of the organizational trust levels of the academic staff. The social identity variable did not have any effect on predicting the organizational trust levels of the academic staff.

**Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations**

Determining the academic staff’s levels of academic identity is one of the sub-objectives connected to academic identity, which is the study’s independent variable. The findings for this sub-objective showed that academic staff members have high levels of academic identity. Similar findings were made by Alosi and Saleh (2022), who discovered that Anbar University faculty members had high levels of academic identity. It is important to note at this point, though, that academic staff members do not have particularly very high levels of academic identity. Since academics are under institutional pressure to produce specific research outputs and take on managerial/administrative responsibilities while teaching, Billot (2010) claims that there is a conflict between academics’ perceptions of their own professional identities and the identities that the institutions they work for want them to have. It may be claimed that the circumstances validate the study’s conclusions that academic staff members have not very high levels of academic identity.

**Table 4** The coefficients of correlation among the variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1-Individual identity	1								
2-Social identity	.759**	1							
3-Values	.685**	.558**	1						
4-Academic Identity	.948**	.899**	.780**	1					
5-Sensitivity to Employees	.435**	.303**	.389**	.421**	1				
6-Trust in the Manager	.341**	.214**	.323**	.325**	.838**	1			
7-Communication Environment	.337**	.208**	.300**	.316**	.844**	.952**	1		
8-Openness to Innovation	.369**	.251**	.313**	.352**	.861**	.925**	.925**	1	
9-Organizational Trust	.392**	.258**	.354**	.374**	.937**	.969**	.967**	.954**	1

\*\* p < .001

**Table 5** Results of regression analysis

Model	Variables	B	SH <sub>B</sub>	β	T	P	R <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	F	p
1st Model	Individual Identity	3.581	.426	.392	8.41	.000	.154	.151	70.78	.000
2nd Model	Individual Identity	2.572	.580	.281	4.43	.000				
	Values	3.352	1.320	.161	2.54	.000	.167	.163	39.11	.000

\*Dependent variable: Organizational trust

It was determined that the faculty members evaluated the values dimension as very high and the individual identity and social identity dimensions as high. Since identity refers to the enduring beliefs, values, motives and experiences that characterize individuals in the same professional role (Ibarra, 1999), it is expected that the values dimension would be very high. The connection between values and academic identity has been largely overlooked in higher education literature, despite a few significant studies (Winter, 2009). Therefore, it is important to conduct research on how values influence the development of academic identity. Social identity reflects people's awareness that they belong to a specific in-group defined through their relationships with external environments and unrelated communities (Günbey, 2022). The social identity theory states that identity includes the knowledge of the social group to which the individual belongs. Individuals acquire their identities through the social categories in which they place themselves. However, since each individual differs in the elements specific to social categories, their social identities are unique (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). A social group consists of individuals who have socially shared characteristics or who see themselves as members of the same group. In this case, individuals whose selves are compatible with the characteristics of the group are included in the group, while those who are incompatible are excluded (Stets & Burke, 2000). In this sense, the fact that the social identity dimension was not very high in the study can be interpreted as that not all of the academic staff experienced the feeling of being included in the academic community group. According to social identity theory, individuals tend to display a more positive image when they join certain groups (Tajfel, 1981). In this context, it can be stated that some measures should be taken to increase their commitment to the academic world in order to improve the image of academic staff. Moreover academic identity has individual identity features such as sense of curiosity, learning motive and critical thinking (Günbey, 2022). Although the scores of the academic staff in this dimension are also high, it is seen that they are not at the desired level. However, among the personal characteristics of talented academics, characteristics such as being curious, inquisitive, innovative, social, independent, creative, result-oriented are put forward (Akar, 2019). It can be said that faculty members should create opportunities to develop their individual characteristics to increase their individual identity levels.

The results showed that organizational trust levels of the faculty members were high. In the international literature, there are not many studies on the organizational trust levels of academicians. Only in a study conducted with data collected from Isfahan University staffs in Iran, similarly, the organizational trust levels of employees were found to be high. However, the study did not include a statement that all participants were academic staff (Chitsaz-Isfahani &

Boustani, 2014). In a study conducted by Goh and Sandhu (2013) with academics in Malaysia, it was found that the affect-based trust of academics was similarly high. In a study conducted at a state university in Turkey, the organizational trust levels of academics were found to be high (Karaca-Çakınberk et al., 2014). In some studies, it was found that the organizational trust levels of academic staff were at a medium level (Demir, 2022; Tutuş & Düşükcan, 2023). Based on all these results, it can be concluded that the trust of academic staff in the institution they work for is high but needs to be improved. In addition, based on the differences between the results of the studies, meta-analysis studies on the organizational trust levels of academicians can be recommended. In addition, it has been concluded that international researches on the organizational trust levels of academic staff should be designed because organizational trust is one of the basic elements of organizational efficiency and welfare (Tutuş & Düşükcan, 2023) and is important for the performance of employees.

Furthermore, it was found that the academic staff rated the sub-dimensions of trust in the manager, openness to innovation and communication environment as high, and the sub-dimensions of sensitivity to employees as medium. *Trust in the manager* is based on the employees' perception of the administrator as effective and competent and also on their belief that the administrator will solve problems successfully, which forms the basis of trust in the administrator (Polat, 2007). In this sense, it can be concluded that academic staff evaluate the administrators of their institutions as effective and competent. The high evaluation of the *communication environment dimension* (Yılmaz, 2006), which is related to the healthy execution of human relations in the organization and increasing organizational effectiveness and productivity, can be expressed as an indicator that a healthy interaction environment has been created in academic institutions. *Openness to innovation* means that administrators listen to the opinions of faculty members and integrate these opinions into their practices, that faculty members can easily make suggestions about the institution, and that the institution is open to change, development and innovations based on the needs and suggestions of faculty members (Yılmaz, 2005). Considering that universities are organizations that need to be innovative, it is clear that it is an expected result that academics evaluate the openness to innovation dimension as high.

*Sensitivity to employees* is related to managing organizational processes in a fair and egalitarian manner, promotions, recruitment, rewarding, remuneration, and performance evaluations in a satisfactory manner in order to positively affect employees' experiences within the organization. In addition, it is also important that cooperation is maintained effectively, coordination is supported by the management, and employees have a say in organizational decisions and

policies (Aktuna, 2007). It can be stated that there are some deficiencies in higher education institutions in terms of sensitivity to employees. In this context, it can be said that universities have not yet been able to implement the emphasis on putting the human element at the center of the organization since the neoclassical management approach.

The last sub-objective of the study is to determine whether the academic staff's views on academic identity are significant predictors of their organizational trust levels. As a result of the analyses conducted to find an answer to this sub-objective; it was determined that the dimensions of individual identity and values were significant predictors of the organizational trust of the academic staff. These two variables predicted 16.7% of the organizational trust of academic staff. There is no study in the literature that deals with the relationship between academic identities of academic staff and organizational trust. It is not possible to compare the findings of this study with those of other comparable studies in this particular context. Therefore, it can be stated that the findings of this study are pioneering and reveal the unique character of the research. However, there are studies examining the relationships between academic identity and different variables in the literature. Karsantık (2019), in his research conducted with academics, revealed that academic identity and higher education culture are effective in the formation of academic leadership perception. Farazmarzi et al. (2019) found that 41% of academic achievement was explained by optimism and academic identity variables. In his investigation into the connections between university students' academic identity patterns, academic passion, and psychological growth, Abdellatif (2022) discovered that academic identity patterns can predict both academic passion and psychological development. Farazandeh et al. (2022) conducted a study with applied sciences students at Tehran University and found that cognitive learning strategies have an effect on students' academic identity development. However, it is seen that these studies are generally related to the academic identity status of university students. In this context, it can be said that scientific studies on the academic identity levels of academicians should be emphasized and this gap in the literature should be filled.

The research's findings allow for the formulation of some recommendations. First, it can be said that actions aimed at enhancing the individual identity dimension within the academic identity sub-dimensions should be taken for raising the organizational trust levels of academic staff. For this purpose, it can be suggested to organize activities such as workshops, interdisciplinary sharing meetings, global learning networks that will encourage activities such as curiosity, motivation to learn and critical thinking. To increase the perceptions of faculty members on the dimension of sensitivity to employees, universities should emphasize a leadership style that prioritizes the well-being and professional growth of staff. University administrators should be trained to adopt

a more empathetic, transparent, and supportive management approach, ensuring that employees feel valued and included in decision-making processes.

Since academic identity and organizational trust variables were examined together for the first time in this study, further research can be conducted in which similar variables are examined together to determine whether the findings are valid in larger sample groups. The literature reveals that while academic identity has been the subject of numerous studies conducted abroad, Turkey has seen relatively few studies on the topic. For this reason, it is recommended to conduct qualitative, quantitative and mixed method studies with different sample groups in order to explain and understand academic identity. Furthermore, researches can be done to investigate the connections between academic identity and other organizational behavior factors that work well in educational settings, such as organizational justice, organizational commitment, leadership styles, and work satisfaction.

### Limitations of the Study

One of the primary limitations of this study is the sample size and composition. The data were collected from 396 academics who work at 6 different universities, which may not be representative of all academicians in Turkey. As a result, the findings may not be generalizable to all higher education settings. Future research could benefit from a larger, more diverse sample to increase the generalizability of the results.

The reliance on self-reported data are another limitation of the study. Participants were asked to provide their perceptions of organizational trust and academic identity. While self-reports are a common method for assessing subjective experiences, they are subject to biases such as social desirability, memory recall issues, or participants' personal interpretations of the survey questions. Future research could incorporate objective measures or multiple data sources (e.g., peer evaluations, institutional records) to enhance the validity of the findings.

This study focused on a single variable that is thought to affect organizational trust. Other potential variables, such as faculty workload, institutional support, leadership style, could also play significant roles in shaping organizational trust. Future research should consider a more comprehensive model that includes additional variables and examines their interrelationships to offer a more nuanced understanding.

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**Data Availability** The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, Damla Ayduğ, upon reasonable request.

#### Declarations

**Conflict of interest** The author has no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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