



## Abuse of Good Will: The Anatomy of Emotional Manipulation in Professional Relationships

**Yesim Sirakaya**

Associate Professor, Head of Labor Economics and Industrial Relations Department, St. Clements University, UK

\* Corresponding Author: **Assoc. Prof. Yesim Sirakaya**

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### Abstract

Professional relationships contain not only functional, but also the emotional and social components of modern business life. When the limits of these relationships become uncertain, positive emotions such as sincerity and trust can turn into the ground of emotional manipulation over time. This study examines the emotional manipulation forms under the guise of friendship at work with a literature -based approach. The definition of emotional manipulation, social impact theories, psychological contract violations and organizational consequences are considered as multidimensional. In particular, the effects of trust, border violations, social borrowing and passive-aggressive attitudes on the employee have been analyzed. Findings show that emotional manipulation leads to loss of psychological safety in employees, burnout and weakening in organizational commitment. In addition, it has been pointed out how these manipulative relationships pose a threat in terms of corporate ethical and professional limits. In the light of literature, the proposed institutional measures support both individual awareness and organizational health. This study emphasizes the importance of healthy boundaries and ethical communication in professional relations, making the phenomenon of "abuse of goodwill" in the workplace visible.

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### 1. Introduction

Modern business life is not only defined by distribution of tasks and hierarchical structuring; It also contains a complex network of social relations, trust and emotional interaction. It has the potential to contribute to professional friendships, psychological solidarity, feeling of belonging and productivity among employees (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003) <sup>[16]</sup>. However, these relationships may have the ground for violations of professional boundaries under the name of sincerity and abuse of goodwill. Especially in trust -based relationships, the insidious and implicit forms of emotional manipulation can reach organizational health -threatening dimensions by damaging the psychological security of the individual in the work environment (Kets de Vries, 2006) <sup>[35]</sup>. Many institutions use the discourse of "a team like a family" as a corporate communication strategy in order to increase belonging. However, such metaphoric expressions do not only justify emotional proximity among employees; It can also cause professional boundaries to be faded (Fleming, 2005) <sup>[20]</sup>. The ambiguity of these boundaries is one of the easiest floors of emotional manipulation. In the relationships established with the idea of "being like a family", implicit power games such as task transfer, emotional pressure or social exclusion can be carried out by hiding behind sincerity. Trust in the workplace is the basis of organizational commitment and fertile collaborations (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002) <sup>[15]</sup>. However, when the confidence relationship is abused, it can create psychological burdens such as indebtedness, guilt or reluctant devotion to the individual. In particular, the failure of the demands made by saying "We are friends" can consume both the task balances and emotional energy of the employees. This may lead to a sense of chronic stress, indecision and burnout in the individual (Maslach & Leiter, 2016)

[43]. Emotional manipulation often manifests in the form of passive-aggressive attitudes, guilt, emotional retreat or social exclusion (Bach & Deutsch, 2010) [3]. Therefore, it is very difficult to detect and intervene. Employees often have difficulty calling what they experience, internalize and become silent. This disrupts organizational functioning by damaging both individual performance and internal confidence. This study aims to analyze the emotional manipulation forms developed in professional-looking friendship relationships with a literature-based approach. Within the framework of social impact theories, psychological contract violations and organizational behavior text, the structural effects of manipulation on the individual on the individual will be evaluated. In addition, the importance of healthy professional boundaries and forms of communication will be drawn by making the invisible face of manipulation in the workplace.

## 2. Theoretical Foundations of Emotional Manipulation

Emotional manipulation is the process of directing the individual's emotional reactions, perceptions or behaviors, often in line with someone else's interests. This routing process is not through open pressure; trust, proximity, friendship, such as positive and indirect ways to take place in positive and indirect ways (Stosny, 2004) [59]. Especially in the work environment, such manipulation forms are widely observed in relationships where emotional interactions are replaced by rational communication processes and the boundaries become uncertain. Although emotional exploitation seems to be mutual support, it actually refers to a relational order that aims to produce unilateral interests. In his colleagues, this may manifest as demanding continuous assistance, creating emotional support expectations or making small goodies in the past into a forward-looking "secret debt" (Braiker, 2004) [5]. In such relationships, manipulator puts implicit pressure on the other party with the discourses of "I did these for you"; This pressure can cause the individual to exhibit some behaviors despite his own will. Implicit pressure, without a clear order or guidance, the individual is emotionally cornered. For example, an employee can be accused of "being cold" or "yarmak damaging the team" when he rejects his request for help. This emotional pressure weakens behavioral autonomy while shading one's freedom of decision-making (Baron & Kerr, 2003) [36]. Borrowing strategies, on the other hand, give the message that the favors are not unrequited and create a kind of psychological balance. This is a social pressure form that is defined as "good debt" and causes the individual to be voluntary, but actually causes him to exhibit a manipulated action (Gouldner, 1960) [26]. Emotional manipulation is not only the behavioral reactions of the individual; It also affects cognitive distortions and emotional mechanisms. The individual who is constantly exposed to manipulation begins to question his own limits, the capacity to think independently in decision-making processes and has internal conflicts (Greenberg & Baron, 2008) [28]. Such interactions can erode the individual's self-perception and reduce the level of self-efficacy. At an emotional level, complex emotions such as guilt, worthlessness, loneliness and anger can be seen together. Early symptoms of burnout syndrome may occur in employees who are exposed to continuous emotional pressure (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001) [42]. At the same time, these people can evolve into a structure that avoids conflicts, passive and moves away from decision-

making processes. In this process, the individual cannot name the pressure he often because he has difficulty questioning the dynamics of his relationship with the manipulator. This nurtures the "silent complaint" at the organizational level and damages the sense of psychological security (Edmondson, 1999) [17].

The social impact is the change in the presence of others' attitudes, behaviors and decisions in line with the existence, demands or implied expectations of others. In contexts where social interaction such as business environments are intense, these mechanisms of action are not often directly; Indirect, implicit and emotional ways. In particular, emotional manipulation is a strategy based on the implementation of techniques defined in social impact theories in the workplace (Raven, 1993). In this context, the principles of persuasion of Cialdini and Kelman's social influence offers an extremely favorable framework to understand the theoretical background of emotional manipulation. Robert Cialdini (2007) [81] speaks of the six basic persuasion principles that shape the thoughts and behaviors of individuals: reciprocity, commitment and consistency, social evidence, authority, appreciation and fame. These principles are directly related to social psychological mechanisms that form the basis of manipulative relations in business life.

- **Reciprocity:** According to this principle, individuals do not want to leave the good for them unrequited. Manipulative employees create a sense of indebtedness on the other side by making small aids and then try to collect this debt on the basis of "sincerity" (Gouldner, 1960) [26].
- **Commitment and Consistency:** People want to keep their previous promises and look consistent. The manipulator justifies a employee who has previously been "helped" again, based on this principle.
- **Social Proof:** People guide others' behavior. "Everyone else does this" or "team spirit requires it" discourse is a means of social pressure to manipulate the individual.
- **Lying:** People are more compatible with the people they love. The guise of friendship allows the manipulator to become a "difficult to reject" person.
- **Authority:** Individuals are more prone to comply with the directing of authority figures. This constitutes the ground for the easy performing manipulation of experienced employees or influential team members.
- **Scarcity:** It is the principle of more valuable perception of what is scarce. Discourses such as "This opportunity will not come again" or "may be late if you do not help now" create decision pressure on the employee.

Cialdini's principles reveal that manipulation is fed not only by individual tendencies but also by social psychological automatic reactions. Therefore, manipulation is not only "malicious"; It is also a systematic abuse of social habits (Cialdini, 2007) [81].

Kelman (1958) [34] classifies three basic ways of the individual's reactions to social influence: compliance, identification and internalization. These three levels are very explanatory in terms of understanding the depth and effect of manipulative interactions.

1. **Compliance:** The individual acts in accordance with someone else's expectations to avoid an external reward or punishment. In the workplace, this occurs as the manipulator's temporary compliance with his demands with the threat of "exclusion from the team" or

“withdrawal”. Although harmony is short-term and superficial, it creates emotional tension on the individual.

2. **Identification:** The individual acts in accordance with his expectations to maintain his relationship with someone else. Especially the sacrifices made with the motivation of “my friend not to break” enter this level. It is presented here with a mask of manipulation, love or commitment.
3. **Internalization:** A person adopts behavior because he now finds compatible with his own values. The individual exposed to long-term manipulation loses rationalizations such as “I have to help” or “everyone behaves like this” and loses internal resistance mechanisms against manipulation.

Kelman's classification is not only the behavior of manipulation in work environments; It shows that the individual may also affect the value system of the individual over time. This is the most dangerous dimension of manipulation: the loss of the capacity to question what it has endured (Kelman, 1958)<sup>[34]</sup>.

When the principles of Kelman's model and Cialdini are evaluated together, the manifestations of emotional manipulation in business life can be analyzed at three levels:

- **Manipulation at the level of adaptation:** actions that are concerned with the concern of “if I do not accept this task”.
- **Manipulation at the level of identification:** decisions that are shaped with emotional commitment such as *My friend in a difficult situation, I have to help*”.
- **Manipulation at the level of internalization:** psychological internalization that turns into the discourse of *of orum I feel like my duty*”.

This leads to a ground in which professional boundaries are eroded, the individual's ability to make rational decision-making is shaded with emotional ties and organizational psychological security is damaged. Manipulation makes itself invisible in these structures and shapes not only behaviors but also the individual's essence perception over time (Greenberg & Baron, 2008)<sup>[28]</sup>.

**Rousseau's Psychological Contract Theory:** The psychological contract refers to a form of expected mutual agreement between the individual and the organization (or its representative, the administrator, team-mate, leader, etc.). This concept argues that business relations are maintained not only by official job definitions, but also by mutual obligations perceived (Rousseau, 1995)<sup>[53]</sup>. Psychological contracts, employees, work, managers and colleagues what expects; what they are willing to offer in return. Rousseau (1995)<sup>[53]</sup> divides psychological contracts into two basic types: transactional (functional/economic) and relational (based on emotional/commitment). Transactional contracts cover more short-term, specific task and award relations; Relational contracts include long-term, trust-based, mutual loyalty and goodwill expectations. Friendships and emotional proximity in the workplace often develop on the basis of relational psychological contracts. However, if the limits of these agreements are not defined clearly, the expectations become unilaterally and the door is opened to manipulation. At this point, the individual is expected to show understanding, dedication or empathy from the individuals in which he / she

has a “professional business relationship, as in personal relationships. Thus, professional boundaries become faint in the face of emotional demands. The violation of the psychological contract is that the individual's implicit agreement with the organization or colleague perceives that it is not fulfilled by one side (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994)<sup>[52]</sup>. This perception can lead to serious psychological consequences such as loss of trust, low motivation and emotional exhaustion in the individual. Since emotional manipulation often progresses in the appearance of sincerity, loyalty and friendship, the individual is not at the moment of manipulation; He realizes that he has a violation through his results. For example, an employee takes over the workload with the idea that “my friend trusted me”. But over time, when he realizes that this trust is abused and that he constantly transfers the responsibilities of the other party, he feels deceived. This is a clear violation of the psychological contract. Moreover, this violation is not only the task; It is in an emotional field and may shake the individual's value (Morrison & Robinson, 1997)<sup>[52, 47]</sup>. Violations of relational psychological contracts, especially “We are a family”, “Can we sell each other?” It becomes more invisible in corporate cultures decorated with such expressions. The employee does not only experience professional failure when he does not meet what is expected of him; It can also be accused of loyalty, ungrateful or unfaithful. These accusations also weaken the employee's psychological strength and shake the commitment to the organization (Conway & Briere, 2005)<sup>[10]</sup>. Such violations in relationships that appear sincerity often occur when personal emotions move to a manipulatively professional environment. This is especially more common in non-hierarchical or emotionally close teams whose boundaries are not evident. Such relationships established under the name of friendship constitute one of the most fragile forms of the psychological contract.

### 3. Appearances of Manipulation in Professional Relationships

Professional business relations are shaped within the framework of role definitions, fields of responsibility and organizational norms. Although concepts such as respect, cooperation and trust in these relationships are essential, the maintenance of these relations within certain limits is important for organizational balance (Sias, 2005)<sup>[57]</sup>. However, the evolution of colleague to the emotional intimacy, that is, the grounding of personal friendship, can lead to erosion of professional boundaries. These boundary violations create serious imbalances in the distribution of tasks, communication and decision-making processes over time. The faintness of the difference between colleague and private friendship causes employees to have difficulty protecting professional distance. This is more common in the vicinity of individuals with high emotional intelligence and strong social skills. These people develop strong ties in their environment through their intimacy and intimacy skills; However, over time, these bonds become a tool for a kind of responsibility and burden (Bridges & Baxter, 1992)<sup>[6]</sup>. Excessive personalized business relations may cause organizational decisions to move away from objectivity, deteriorate the perception of justice between employees, and to remain under extra burden of certain employees. Especially in modern office environments where horizontal relations are at the forefront rather than hierarchical relationships, such friendships become open to manipulation.



While friendly relationships weaken the individual's ability to "say no, the sharing of the workload through emotional commitment becomes unfair (Morrison & Nolan, 2007) <sup>[48]</sup>. In-house intimate relationships can enable employees to be supported emotionally and strengthen their social ties. However, this sincerity becomes the basis of emotional manipulation and role uncertainty in unlit relationships. In particular, the task transfer presented in the appearance of "friendly assistance" may turn into a systematic responsibility shift over time (Fleming & Spicer, 2004) <sup>[21]</sup>. In such cases, the manipulative employee usually positions himself as a victim, tired, emotionally exhausted or "one who expects support". It justifies whether or not to perform a task by suggesting the friendship relationship. The other employee quietly undertakes the job to avoid the deterioration of this relationship. Although this may seem like a support behavior in the short term, the long-term psychological contract violation creates a feeling of burnout and injustice (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) <sup>[12]</sup>. Although there are sentences such as "Can you handle it for my place, you do it easier about it" or "you do it faster, I am very overwhelmed", innocent and temporary demands, but it indicates that manipulation gains continuity when repeated frequently. Such systematic demands create an organizational structure that is open to abuse, while instability to share task sharing among employees. Moreover, if this manipulation form is not noticed by managers, it increases the workload of high-performance individuals and reinforces the perception that manipulative individuals are rewarded. This leads to both individual exhaustion and damage to organizational trust (Greenberg, 2011) <sup>[27]</sup>.

Trust is not just a functional requirement in business life; it is also the basis of organizational commitment, teamwork and cooperation. However, when this valuable concept is abused with manipulative intentions, the individual causes great damage to both emotional and behavioral levels (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002) <sup>[15]</sup>. Especially when the trust established in a friendship relationship becomes open to manipulation, the individual's ability to make decision-making, the ability to set limits and the perception of psychological security is seriously damaged. One of the most commonly used tools of emotional manipulation at work, "abuse of confidence", often works with social borrowing strategies. Asking for help in manipulative relationships is not a one-time demand, but a chronic behavior. These requests for assistance cause the individual to be forced to provide continuous support by exploiting the empathy (Molm, 2003) <sup>[45]</sup>. In particular, the person who positions himself in a "emotional burden heavily" constantly tries to focus on his own needs. Rejecting aid is questioned through emotional concepts such as friendship, loyalty or conscience. One of the most commonly used mechanisms in this strategy is that the assistance is not explicitly appreciated, but in return, it is constantly waiting for more. In time, the helping individual begins to feel like a "used" person. This leads to unfair distribution of workload in the organizational context, psychological depletion and inability to protect the boundaries of the individual (Greenberg, 2011) <sup>[27]</sup>. Another common form of social manipulation is the presentation of assistance as a mandatory friendship indicator. In this approach, "Friendship" is used as an emotional trump: "I wouldn't say no if I were in your place", "If you really care if you care if you care", the individual puts the individual into an emotional dilemma.

Such manipulations cause the individual to question not only his duties but also the value system (Bach & Deutsch, 2010) <sup>[3]</sup>. This is a clear example of emotional blackmail in professional relationships. The employee feels compelled to accept loads that exceed their capacity, with the idea that not helping will be perceived as a personal betrayal. Over time, this creates the problem of "not being able to say no" and causes chronic emotional fatigue (Fritz & Sonnentag, 2005) <sup>[23]</sup>. Especially individuals who start a new work, who are afraid of being excluded in the team or care about emotional bonds become more prone to this pressure. The threat implied that the relationships will be damaged in case of rejection of assistance prevents the individual from making decisions freely. In the social psychology literature, it has been known that individuals have changed their behavior by fear of exclusion by the group (Williams, 2007) <sup>[66]</sup>. This fear in the workplace becomes more pronounced especially in groups of informal friends or "core team" structures. The manipulator can passively exclude a person who does not meet a task or expectation: the person is punished with behaviors such as not being taken into group conversations, kept away from common projects, and ignoring social activities. Although such exclusions are not expressly expressed, it is perceived by the individual as a strong social message. In order to "adapt" and "not to be rejected, the individual fulfills demands at the expense of breaking his own limits. This damages the self-confidence of the person over time, disrupts the perception of self and deepens the sense of burnout (Twenge *et al.*, 2001) <sup>[63]</sup>. In addition, the threat of exclusion, competition and insecurity among employees. Individuals may remain silent to manipulations in order to protect their own place or accept the tasks they do not want. This is the harbinger of a toxic organizational climate (Edmondson, 1999) <sup>[17]</sup>, where psychological security disappears.

Emotional pressure is a implicit and often invisible psychological manipulation strategy rather than open conflicts at work. This strategy aims to provide control by addressing its emotions without direct physical or managerial sanctions on the individual. Such interactions, which can also be called as Covert Bullying at work, disrupt the peace of work, shake organizational trust and increase the feelings of burnout, loss of self-confidence and loneliness in the individual (Rayner *et al.*, 2002) <sup>[51]</sup>. These strategies, one of the most common forms of emotional manipulation, can be gathered under three basic headings: passive-aggressive behaviors, guilt and indirectly guiding the peace of work. Passive-aggressive behaviors emerge by indirectly making the individual feel the other side instead of direct expression of anger, anger or discontent. When this behavior is used as a manipulative tool, it does not give the other chance to clearly set limits and drags it into an emotional confusion (Long, 2008) <sup>[40]</sup>. Passive-aggressive manipulation examples can be included in the workplace:

- To deliver or not to explain this late or missing from expected
- Avoiding an eye contact, cutting communication
- Punishment by responding with silence in response to the request for help
- To damage the self-confidence of the other party with expressions of irony and screw

Such behaviors ensure that the manipulator protects the sense of control, but also a psychological superiority that forces the other side to "adapt to adaptation" without entering the open

conflict. The targeted individual becomes unresponsive, closed or drifted to the feeling of guilt (Tepper, 2000) <sup>[61]</sup>. The sense of guilt is one of the most powerful means of manipulation. When manipulative employees do not fulfill their own obligations or fail, they resort to emotional manipulation techniques to impose this situation and make conscientious responsibility to someone else (Baumeister *et al.*, 1994) <sup>[4]</sup>. Especially statements such as “this happened because of you” or “If you helped you would have come to this point” may cause the individual to feel responsible for a direct guilty. This sense of guilt shakes the individual's perception of self-efficacy, weakens decision-making processes and blinds his self-confidence. Moreover, the individual, who acts with a sense of guilt, has difficulty protecting his boundaries and develops a “compensation” attitude towards the manipulator: more helping, more tasks, such as being silent. This transforms into a cycle that increases the sustainability of manipulation (Tangney & Dearing, 2002) <sup>[60]</sup>. Emotional manipulation can cause indirectly deterioration of working peace, not only among individuals, but also at the team level. People who are silent bullying can direct perceptions within the team without creating conflict using group dynamics. For example, behaviors such as shaking his reliability, humiliating jokes or ignoring his ideas in the group with sentences that contain negative implications about an employee are difficult to intervene (Einarsen *et al.*, 2011) <sup>[19]</sup>. These manipulative people often make themselves as “innocent” or “well-intentioned” and establish an invisible power relationship within the team. This is frequently seen in individuals who are not in the leading position but high social power. The group members often remain silent because they are hesitant to oppose this person, so that the work peace appears in an artificial harmony, but is actually full of emotional tension (Salin, 2003) <sup>[54]</sup>. This “peace” environment provided by manipulation leads to insecurity, passive resistance and emotional alienation among team members. Over time, this will also damage organizational performance by weakening in-house innovation, open communication and psychological security.

#### 4. Organizational Consequences: From Psychological Security to Burnout

Psychological security is that the individual can act without fear of punishment, humiliation or exclusion while expressing his ideas, emotions and feedback at work (Edmondson, 1999) <sup>[17]</sup>. This concept is not limited to the right to express itself, but also directly related to many variables such as organizational learning, creativity, open communication and team efficiency. In environments with high psychological security, employees do not hesitate to make mistakes, may take risks and develop questioning attitudes. However, in organizations where emotional manipulation is common, this environment of trust is largely damaged. Particularly implicit pressures under the mask of friendship prevent the individual from expressing his own feelings, limits and thoughts clearly. The manipulator may underestimate the anxiety of the other party, make their reactions exaggerated, or show a punishing attitude with emotional retreat (Edmondson & Lei, 2014) <sup>[18]</sup>. In time, such behaviors cause the individual to develop beliefs such as “my voice is not valuable” or “whatever the result will not change”. Employees of manipulation often prefer to remain

silent for fear of labeling as “the person who causes problems”. This silence stops organizational learning and reduces innovation capacity. In addition, an artificial harmony occurs, not real among employees. Apparently, a conflict, but a tense communication environment prevails (Detert & Burris, 2007) <sup>[13]</sup>. Another consequence of manipulative relationships that damage psychological security is the blinding of the skills to set boundaries and self-expression in the individual. In particular, the behavior of saying “no” is suppressed by fear of being guilty, exclusion or crusher in manipulative relationships (Brown, 2015) <sup>[7]</sup>. Even if the individual feels the need to protect his / her time, labor or emotional capacity, he accepts demands in order not to risk the friendship relationship. This causes continuous violation of personal boundaries, damage the individual's self-esteem, and burnout over time. The inability to limit is a mechanism that works in favor of the manipulator. The employee, who constantly feels obliged to be “harmonious”, “helpful” or “friendly, throws his own needs to the background and begins to carry an invisible burden. This leads to unjust workload distribution, role-related uncertainties and tension between employees (Kahn *et al.*, 1964) <sup>[33]</sup>. The anxiety of self-expression directly affects not only the psychological goodness of the individual, but also the ethical atmosphere of the organization. In environments where emotional manipulation is widespread, indirect narratives, implications and silence come to the fore instead of open communication. This causes misunderstandings, insecurity and disconnections within the team.

Although emotional manipulation is perceived as invisible and harmless in the short term, it produces serious psychological and behavioral costs at the long term at the individual and organizational level. In particular, it can have devastating effects on employee's job satisfaction, organizational commitment and psychological resistance. Manipulative relationships weaken individuals' belonging to the organization and working motivation, while triggers emotional exhaustion and role conflicts (Zapf & Einarsen, 2005) <sup>[67]</sup>. This may cause loss of productivity, increased labor cycle and low performance in the work environment. One of the most distressing effects of emotional manipulation is that it becomes the source of chronic stress. The employee, who is constantly under emotional pressure, loses the perception of trust over time, alert in social relations and begins to question his interactions with his colleagues. Working on a psychological level where it can be used at any time, emotionally abused or risks a “insufficient” consumption consumes the mental energy of the individual (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) <sup>[38]</sup>. Although these manipulative processes do not create an open crisis or threat, it makes the employee's stress level chronic with small but frequently repeated emotional tensions that can be defined as “micro stressors”. This constant constant state can have physiological effects on the immune system over time; Sleep problems, symptoms of anxiety, difficulty concentration and cooling from work may manifest (Sonnentag & Frese, 2003) <sup>[58]</sup>. Developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981) <sup>[41]</sup>, the burnout model consists of three basic dimensions: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Reduced Personal Accomplishment. This model is widely used in explaining the long-term effects of stress on the individual, especially in professions where human relations are intense. Emotional manipulation can also create effective and destructive results

in these three dimensions:

- **Emotional exhaustion:** The employee consumes its energy when it is constantly exposed to manipulative demands. Unrequited expectations, the feeling of borrowing, the inability to say "no" causes the individual to consume emotional resources quickly (Maslach & Leiter, 2016) <sup>[43]</sup>. This fatigue is mental and emotional rather than physical. The employee is no longer tired of not only workload, but also the injustice in relationships.
- **Depersonalization:** As burnout progresses, the individual begins to distance his colleagues and work. Especially in environments where manipulative relationships are intense, the emotional withdrawal of employees to weaken their social ties and to protect themselves is common and the decrease in the level of empathy is common. This is not only an individual defense mechanism, but also a reaction that disrupts the dynamics of the team (Maslach *et al.*, 2001) <sup>[42]</sup>.
- **Decrease in personal success:** Manipulative relationships adversely affect the individual's perception of self-efficacy. The employee, who feels that he is used constantly, does not satisfy his work, believes that his efforts do not appear and in time he believes that he does not realize what I do ". This reduces job satisfaction and emotionally breaks the employee from the organization (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998) <sup>[56]</sup>.

### 5. Institutional Preventive Approaches and Construction of Ethical Boundaries

The sustainability of healthy relationships in the workplace is not only with the goodwill of individuals; It is possible by systematically defining certain ethical principles and boundaries of the institutional structure. In this context, the concept of professional boundaries has a critical place in organizational psychology literature in terms of both individuals recognizing their role and respecting the boundaries of others (Garman *et al.*, 2000) <sup>[25]</sup>. In order to prevent emotional manipulation, structured training programs are needed, focusing on both the individual awareness of employees and the definition of relationships. Professional boundaries refers to the psychological, social and behavioral limits in which the individual defines which behaviors are appropriate, effective and ethical in business relations (Peterson, 1992) <sup>[49]</sup>. These boundaries play a role that prevented the personalization of colleague, the development of emotional dependence or the shifts of responsibility. However, many employees are intuitively establishing these boundaries and often difficult to realize that these limits are violated. Research shows that especially young employees or emotionally sensitive individuals have more difficulty in distinguishing personal ties with professional limits (Frone, 2000) <sup>[24]</sup>. This is one of the floors that facilitate emotional manipulation. For this reason, institutions should organize trainings to their employees about what professional boundaries are, which behaviors exceed the "sincerity" limit, and in what cases it is an indicator of trust. Trainings to teach professional boundaries are not only theoretical information; It should also include practical examples, case analysis and role-playing techniques. The following titles are important to configure the content of such trainings:

Differences of professional relationships and personal relationships

- Symptoms of Emotional Manipulation: How to

understand?

- Skills to put limits and say no
- The thin line between helping and being used
- Equivalent Ethics of Equal Workload Sharing and Task Delegation
- Psychological Safety and Open Communication Techniques

The trainings in which these contents are transferred to employees are not only individual awareness; It also contributes to the transformation of organizational culture. In particular, the leadership of the managers in this regard and an attitude that does not normalize boundary violations is an example of the institution (Hirschhorn, 1990) <sup>[29]</sup>. Regular trainings on professional boundaries transform not only individual behaviors, but also the ethical climate and relationships of the organization. Through these trainings, employees learn to respect the borders of others and feel competent in defending their own limits. This plays an important role in the reconstruction of psychological security, especially in manipulation (Clark, 2020) <sup>[9]</sup>. It is recommended that corporate training programs should also be compatible with human resources policies and support after post -training behavioral observations. Supervision sessions or secure feedback channels, where employees share experience after the training, also contribute to the institutionalization of this transformation.

One of the main reasons why emotional manipulation in the workplace is sustainable is that there is no safe and open communication ground where employees experience psychological pressure or boundary violations. Manipulation is not often not by open conflicts; Since silence is implicitly carried out in implicit ways such as implication, creation of guilt and emotional retreat, it is difficult to express what they experience (Rayner *et al.*, 2002) <sup>[51]</sup>. For this reason, it is critical that institutions that want to build a healthy and ethical working environment strengthen the open communication culture and create transparent feedback systems. Open communication culture refers to an organizational atmosphere where employees can express their ideas, emotions and problems to senior managers or teammates and share their views without fear of being punished (Edmondson, 1999) <sup>[17]</sup>. Employees in environments dominated by this culture can clearly raise their emotional manipulation or boundary violations; This allows manipulative relationships to become visible.

However, open communication culture should be supported not only at the discourse level but also at the application level. Employees should not be mocked, excluded or discredited when they give feedback. In order for this culture to be established, managers should take a modeling role, that is, an attitude that can both receive feedback and give constructive feedback (Ashkanasy *et al.*, 2000) <sup>[1]</sup>. Reporting problems based on indirect and personal perceptions such as emotional manipulation is often not possible with traditional performance systems or complaint mechanisms. Therefore, institutions must establish transparent and multi -channel feedback systems. These systems; It should provide employees with environments in which they can safely report emotional difficulties, internal tensions or signs of manipulation (Detert & Trevino, 2010) <sup>[14]</sup>. The following applications may increase the effectiveness of this system:

- **Anonymous Notification Tools:** Systems where employees can clearly report the pressure they



experience, but their identity will be preserved.

- **Open Door Policy:** Managers are open to listening to employees regularly and support this situation through communication.
- **Feedback Training:** Developing both feedback and receiving culture.
- **360 degree assessment:** The structure that allows feedback not only to subordinate relationships, but also on a horizontal level (between teammates).
- **Psychological Counseling Lines:** Safe channels where employees can express their emotional challenges that offer professional consultants.

These systems increase not only the solution of problems, but also the organizational awareness by revealing the prevalence, form and effects of emotional manipulation. Moreover, the hearing of the voices of the employees makes them feel valuable and strengthens organizational commitment (Morrison, 2014) <sup>[46]</sup>. Open communication and transparent feedback systems enable visible processing of corporate ethical culture. Employees learn not only to managers, but also to approach each other in an honest, respectful and boundaries. The presence of such systems makes it difficult for manipulators to maintain their behavior; Because manipulation is no longer in silence, but under the risk of visibility and response (Milliken *et al.*, 2003) <sup>[44]</sup>. Therefore, it is recommended that institutions not only establish a system, but also to periodically evaluate the functioning and reliability of these systems. Otherwise, the perception of the so-called "Open Door Policy" as formality only may damage employees' belief in the system. Corporate ethics is not only a compliance with laws and regulations; It is a set of basic principles that determine the content, form and limits of the relations established by employees with each other and the organization. Code of Ethics or Ethics Guidelines is a critical institutional tool in terms of embodiment and adoption of these principles throughout the organization. In particular, the presence and applicability of ethical guides are vital in the prevention of difficult, implicit and relationship-based violations such as emotional manipulation (Kaptein, 2008) <sup>[31]</sup>. Ethical guides; They are official documents that clearly define the values of the institution, acceptable behavior, communication limits and problem-solving methods. These documents reflect not only the legal regulations but also the organization's own cultural and ethical priorities (Trevin *et al.*, 1998). Ethical guides define not only what employees should do, but also how they should behave; In this respect, it functions. Employees in environments where emotional manipulation are common have difficulty in the name of their violation. The feeling of "something is wrong, but I don't know exactly what it is", is one of the basic psychological effects of manipulation. At this point, ethical guides make it easier for them to recognize and express their border violations by providing a descriptive ground to employees (Valentine & Barnett, 2003) <sup>[64]</sup>. Manipulation often cannot become a clear complaint because it occurs under the mask of goodwill, friendship, helpful or empathy. Ethical guides make it easier for employees to distinguish what is appropriate or not when such "gray space" behaviors contain such "gray field" behaviors. For example, such statements may be included in ethical guides:

"Cooperation should be based on reciprocity;  
"Emotional proximity cannot be a justification for the period

of duty."

"No employee has to take extra responsibility for a friendship relationship."

"Indirect pressure through social exclusion, implication and guilt is unacceptable."

Such explanations make manipulative behavior clearly defined that it contradicts institutional norms. In addition, ethical guides show that employees are not alone, that the institution has a principle stance against certain behaviors, which strengthens psychological security (Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008) <sup>[32]</sup>. The effectiveness of ethical guides is not only with their existence; It is measured by how it is applied within the institution. Although many institutions are successful in creating ethical rules, these rules are not supported by trainings, not sampled by the managers or not with transparent audit systems, the documents remain only "symbolic" (Weaver *et al.*, 1999) <sup>[65]</sup>.

In this context, for ethical guides to be effective:

Modeling by the managers,

Internalization with training programs,

Reference in conflict solution processes,

Accessible and understandable by employees,

It is necessary to periodically review according to current organizational problems.

Ethical guides reduce organizational uncertainty in the face of implicit violations such as emotional manipulation and support employees' courage to limit. Thus, the institution is not only performance-oriented; It also becomes a structure that maintains human dignity and psychological integrity.

The psychological effects of emotional manipulation at work are often invisible; However, these effects may have serious consequences such as anxiety disorders in the individual, burnout, loss of self-confidence, social withdrawal and weakening of belonging (Leiter & Maslach, 2009) <sup>[39]</sup>. Recognizing, expressing and milking such psychological difficulties is not only with individual awareness; It is possible by providing systematic psychological support to the employees of the institution. At this point, the presence of structured psychological counseling and support mechanisms in organizations directly affects both individual goodness and corporate sustainability. The understanding of psychology of modern organization sees not only physical but also emotional and mental goodness of employees as a basic performance variable (Quick *et al.*, 2000) <sup>[50]</sup>. In institutions where manipulation and border violations are common, employees often see this as a "personal weakness"; This prevents asking for help. Therefore, psychological counseling services should be integrated into the organization, not only on demand, but in a proactive and accessible manner. Employee support programs (Employee Assistance Programs - EAP) are becoming widespread as corporate structures that provide professional support especially in stress, emotional strain, interpersonal conflicts and burnout. These programs; Individual Consultancy, Group Therapy, Crisis Response Services, PsychoEigration Seminars and Routing Systems (Attridge, 2009) <sup>[2]</sup>. Emotional manipulation is often a form of interaction in which the individual is difficult to define the problem he experiences and cannot name it. Psychological counseling support contributes to employees to analyze the complex relationships they experience, rebuild their limits and develop emotional resistance (Schein, 2009) <sup>[55]</sup>. In addition, psychological support received at the individual level develops resistance to manipulation by increasing

organizational awareness. In this context, the functions of the psychological support mechanisms presented within the institution should include:

Early identifying and directing emotional strain situations  
Developing boundaries, self-efficacy, self-confidence and conflict management skills

Defining and coping ways of toxic relationships forms

Analyzing organizational risks by listening to individual complaints

The execution of these services in accordance with the privacy principle ensures that employees volunteer to receive support and contribute to the destruction of the perception of “asking for help = weakness ((Cooper & Cartwright, 1994)<sup>[11]</sup>. The integration of psychological counseling services to the institution is not only the duty of a department; It requires the support of the entire organizational structure from senior management to human resources. In this context, the recommended strategies for successful integration are:

- **Making visible by corporate communication:** The scope, purpose and access methods of the service should be explicitly announced to all employees.
- **Support with trainings:** Short trainings that give mental health literacy should be offered to all managers and employees.
- **Managers' Model:** The people in the administrator position should be encouraged to benefit from consultancy services.
- **Data -based monitoring:** The effectiveness of the services provided should be periodically evaluated by surveys, reports and employee feedback.
- **Cooperation with External Experts:** Collaborations with licensed psychological counselors out of the institution contribute to the protection of professional level.

This systematic structure allows the organization to fulfill its ethical responsibility and strengthen the sense of psychological security and endurance of employees (Kirk & Brown, 2003)<sup>[37]</sup>.

## 6. Conclusion

This study has discussed the phenomenon of emotional manipulation, which has become increasingly invisible and complex in professional business relations, from a multidimensional point of view of literature. A wide theoretical framework ranging from psychological contract violations to social impact theories, from passive-aggressive behaviors to organizational ethical structures is not only the individual of manipulation; It also revealed that it is closely related to organizational culture, ethical climate and institutional structures. The progression of manipulation based on positive values such as sincerity, friendship and trust makes it difficult to identify and intervene. In this context, the literature is not only an inter -individual problem of emotional manipulation; It also shows that there is a risk area that damages psychological security and reduces job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Edmondson, 1999)<sup>[17]</sup>. In the current literature, emotional manipulation is largely shaped through qualitative observations, clinical examples or factual definitions. However, it is seen that quantitative measurement tools are limited in this field and the studies that show the dimensions, prevalence or effects of manipulation empirically are lacking (Salin, 2003)<sup>[54]</sup>. For future research, it is recommended to

develop quantitative studies in the following areas:

- **Emotional Manipulation Scales:** Especially psychometric tools specific to business life should be developed.
- **Correlation Studies:** Relationships between manipulation and burnout, intention to quit, psychological security should be examined.
- **Experimental Studies:** The effects of different types of manipulation (passive-realization, guilt, social exclusion) should be tested as comparison.

This study shows that emotional manipulation is a multi -layered phenomenon and shows that this structure should be more systematically modeled. In the literature, a holistic theoretical model that explains how manipulation begins in work environments, how it driving and which organizational factors are fed. A theoretical model that can be developed can integrate the following variables:

- **Individual factors:** self-efficacy, conflict management style, emotional endurance
- **Relational factors:** Professional boundaries, psychological contract, social borrowing
- **Organizational factors:** Ethical climate, leadership style, open communication level, psychological security perception

Such a model will guide both researchers and human resources practitioners in terms of developing and healing strategies. The perception of emotional manipulation may vary depending on cultural norms and social value systems. Especially in high -context cultures (for example, Turkey, Japan, India), the fact that face -to -face relationships and “acting together” value may lead to progress in more implicit ways of manipulation (Hofstede, 2001)<sup>[30]</sup>. In such cultures, “no” means “putting a limit” or “giving critical feedback” can carry a social risk.

In the future research:

It can be handled comparatively how manipulation is defined in different cultural structures, how it is experienced and when it is noticed.

In collectivist and individualistic cultures, how professional boundaries are established and what kind of consequences they have when these limits are violated can be investigated. Cultural codes of manipulation can be analyzed by analyzing culture -specific linguistic, emotional and behavioral clues.

In this context, interdisciplinary studies will contribute to both psychology, anthropology and management sciences literature.

This article aims to make a unique contribution to both literature and practice by making the phenomenon of “abuse of goodwill” in the workplace visible in the academic context. As the relationship between emotional manipulation with institutional structures is revealed, the ethical, communicative and psychological resistance levels of organizations can be developed more healthily.

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