

Aybike Mergen

Curriculum Vitae

Present Position

Assistant Professor
Faculty of Business
Özyeğin University (ozyegin.edu.tr)
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Research interests: followership, emergence and effectiveness of leadership, ethical decision making, toxic leadership, cross-cultural studies, and change management.

Teaching interests: leadership theory and practice, cross-cultural leadership, ethics in business, research methods, and organizational behavior.

Education

PhD. in Management and Strategy

Feb 2015 – Aug 2022

Koç University, Istanbul, Turkey | Full Scholarship

Thesis: *The Participatory Theatre Framework (PTF) of Leadership*

Subjects studied include behavioral decision making, research methods, econometrics, and management in cross-cultural context.

M.A. in Political Science

Sep 2011 – July 2013

Sabancı University, Istanbul, Turkey | Full Scholarship

Thesis: *Leader Survivability in Non-Democracies: The Role of Blame-Shifting*

Subjects studied include analysis and research design, quantitative research methods, formal modeling and policy analysis, comparative politics, and political theory.

M.Sc. in Economics

Sep 2010 – July 2011

Tilburg University, Tilburg, Netherlands | Partial Scholarship

Thesis: *Campaign Promises and Adoption of Policies*

Subjects studied include game theory and industrial organization, competitiveness and competition policy, labor and public economics.

B.A. in Economics

Sep 2006 – June 2010

Koç University, Istanbul, Turkey | Full Scholarship

Vehbi Koç Scholar Award, completed two Honors Projects in Economics

Subjects studied include differential equations, advanced calculus, econometrics, game theory, economics of information and contracts (advanced game theory), statistics, and economic history.

Certificates

Change Management – PROSCI

June 2015

Psychology of change, theory and perspectives, change management process, organizational change competency, project management, ADKAR®

Publications

Understanding the followers of toxic leaders: Toxic illuio and personal uncertainty

Mergen, A., & Ozbilgin, M. (2021). Understanding the followers of toxic leaders: Toxic illuio and personal uncertainty. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 23(1), 45-63.

Toxic leaders are one of the main threats to the wellbeing of people in the workplace and in society in general, and followers play a critical role in constructing and maintaining toxic leaders. In this narrative review, we draw on Bourdieu's concept of illuio and incorporate it with the social and cognitive psychology approaches in an attempt to frame the dynamic system that sustains toxic leadership through continued support of the followers. More specifically, as we introduce the illuio perspective in a process-relational context to the toxic leadership discussion, we (i) address the allure of toxic leaders as an incentive for followers to join the toxic illuio as a way to cope with their high personal uncertainty, (ii) illustrate the mechanisms and processes that motivate followers of toxic leaders to remain in the toxic illuio once they join. In this context, we also briefly discuss and differentiate between the ethical and moral dimensions of toxic leadership.

Toxic illuio in the global value chain: The case of Amazon

Mergen, A., & Ozbilgin, M. (2021). Toxic illuio in the global value chain: The case of Amazon. In S. Metin Camgoz & O. Tayfur Ekmekci (Eds.) *Destructive Leadership and Management Hypocrisy: Advances in Theory and Practice*. Emerald Publishing.

Toxic leadership is often studied from a leader centric perspective, which focuses on the detrimental outcomes of leaders with destructive ideas and practices. In this chapter, we provide a global value chain perspective, which accounts for effects of corporate leadership from inception of a product or service idea to its consumption across the value chain. In particular, we demonstrate how toxic leadership is sustained through an illuio, i.e., the allure of the often charismatic leadership discourse, which is rendered unaccountable due to lack of global regulation of GVCs. This allows for global organisations and loxic leaders to exploit weaknesses in national level regulation. Drawing on a netnographic study of toxic leadership in Amazon, we demonstrate how toxic leadership created the illusion of success while perpetuating toxicity and exploitation across their complex value chains internationally.

Teaching Experience

Instructor, Koç University

Summer 2021 & Summer 2022

MGMT 450 – Next Generation Leadership

Developed the course and taught two classes of senior undergraduates virtually. The course aimed to provide students with an insight into the leadership literature with a particular emphasis on the recent developments in the field. It is designed to introduce the main approaches to leadership in the context of how they inform current best practices. Through case-studies, group exercises, simulations and application of leadership assessment tools, the course helps students to ground and utilize leadership theories in real world.

Teaching Assistant

Sep 2011 – Jun 2013

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Sabancı University

Junior level undergraduate Research Methods courses on statistics, Fall 2012 & Spring 2013

Hold weekly problem-solving sessions with mandatory attendance.

Humanity and Society I&II, Fall 2011 & Spring 2012

Hold weekly 90 mins discussion sessions that follow a 45 mins conference by the course instructor on the week's topic. Responsible for course planning, quizzes and homeworks for the session students.

Work Experience

Visiting Scholar

Sep 2017 – Aug 2022

Schulich School of Business, York University

Collaborating with Prof. Chris Bell on Participatory Theatre Framework related research projects involving theory building, survey development and validity checks, data collection, and qualitative & quantitative analysis of the collected data.

Research Assistant

Feb 2015 – Aug 2022

Graduate School of Business, Koç University

Senior member of the KU Leadership Lab. Collaborating with Prof. Zeynep Aycan on a number of research projects ranging from large scale field data collection to experiment design. Mentoring junior members of the lab.

Consultant

Aug 2014 – Jan 2015

Deloitte, Consulting – Finance Transformation

Conducted an organizational transformation project for one of the oldest and biggest industrial holding groups of Turkey.

Analyst

June 2013 – Aug 2014

EY (Ernst&Young), Advisory – Performance Improvement

Conducted an organizational transformation project, designed as is and to be processes, target operating models (TOMs) and organizational charts for each department, and produced process

KPIs, RACI analysis and role descriptions for a leading construction company. Took an active part in a project for developing a strategic road map for Turquality certification by analyzing the as-is condition and determining the necessary projects for a leading confectionery company. Involved in both research and the quantitative analysis processes of a report on the new regulations on Turkish banking sector and their effects on Turkish economic performance in the mid/long-run.

Invited Talks

Mergen, A., & Ozbilgin, M. (February, 2021) Understanding the followers of toxic leaders: Toxic illusio and personal uncertainty. CISEI Centre at University of Southampton, UK.

Mergen, A. (September, 2019) A participatory theatre approach to leadership. Schulich School of Business, York University, Canada.

Personal Information

Date of birth: January 5, 1988

Citizenship: Turkish citizen & Canadian citizen

Software: Python (specifical, R, LaTeX, SQL, MPlus, MS Project, MS Visio

Interests: Woodworking and FRP