

## The Moderating Role of Organizational Agility in the Relationship between Environmental Uncertainty and Organizational Trust

Araştırma Makalesi /Research Article

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**ABSTRACT:** In today's business world, rapidly changing market dynamics and technological developments increase the likelihood of businesses encountering environmental uncertainties. In the face of these uncertainties, elements such as organizational trust and organizational agility have become critical for organizations to maintain their competitive advantage. This study aims to examine the moderating role of organizational agility in the relationship between environmental uncertainty and organizational trust within private sector organizations. The data were collected through an online questionnaire administered to 453 private sector employees in Kırşehir, using a simple random sampling method between April and May 2025. Statistical analysis programs were used for data analysis and the bootstrap method was used to test the moderating effect. The findings show that agility has a direct positive effect on trust, as well as balancing the negative effect of uncertainty. High agility levels contribute to the sustainability of trust even in an environment of uncertainty. These results show that organizational agility serves as an important buffer in the management of uncertainty. The situation of organizations operating in the private sector against environmental uncertainty and the status of trust in the organization against environmental change has been examined.

**Keywords:** Organizational Agility, Environmental Uncertainty, Organizational Trust

## Çevresel Belirsizlik ve Örgütsel Güven Arasındaki İlişkide Örgütsel Çevikliğin Düzenleyici Rolü

**ÖZ:** Günümüz iş dünyasında hızla değişen piyasa dinamikleri ve teknolojik gelişmeler, işletmelerin çevresel belirsizliklerle karşılaşma olasılığını artırmaktadır. Bu belirsizlikler karşısında örgütsel güven ve örgütsel çeviklik gibi unsurlar, örgütlerin rekabet avantajlarını sürdürebilmeleri için kritik hale gelmiştir. Bu çalışmada, özel sektör örgütleri içinde çevresel belirsizlik ve örgütsel güven arasındaki ilişkide örgütsel çevikliğin düzenleyici rolünün incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Veriler, Nisan-Mayıs 2025 tarihleri arasında Kırşehir'de 453 özel sektör çalışanına basit rastgele örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak uygulanan çevrimiçi anket aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Veri analizinde istatistiksel analiz programları kullanılmış ve düzenleyici etkiyi test etmek için bootstrap yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, çevikliğin güven üzerinde doğrudan pozitif bir etkiye sahip olduğunu ve belirsizliğin olumsuz etkisini dengelediğini göstermektedir. Yüksek çeviklik düzeyleri, belirsizlik ortamında bile güvenin sürdürülebilirliğine katkıda bulunmaktadır. Bu sonuçlar, örgütsel çevikliğin belirsizliğin yönetiminde önemli bir tampon görevi gördüğünü göstermektedir. Özel sektörde faaliyet gösteren örgütlerin çevresel belirsizliğe karşı durumu ve çevresel değişime karşı örgütteki güvenin durumu incelenmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Örgütsel Çeviklik, Çevresel Belirsizlik, Örgütsel Güven

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## 1. Introduction

Although developments in the global economy offer some important opportunities for companies in developing countries, they also face difficult situations due to increased competition, and environmental uncertainties. Previous studies have focused on these problems because companies in developing countries face problems such as lack of resources (Gaur et al., 2014), challenges brought by innovations (Singh et al., 1986) and challenges due to being late (Bruche, 2012). Due to these problems that organizations face, the concept of organizational agility has begun to gain importance. The concept of organizational agility, defined as the ability of an organization to adapt to uncertain situations (Sherehiy et al., 2007; Goldman et al., 1995a), not only refers to the organization taking precautions against events that negatively affect the company, but also to the organization having the ability to discover opportunities from uncertainties. Organizational agility also provides the organization with strategies to respond to external obligations, adapt, and implement new opportunities (Sherehiy et al., 2007). Especially in an environment where the environment is full of uncertainty, it is an advantage and often even a necessity for organizations to have agile characteristics (Gehani, 1995). It is very important for organizations to be agile in order to evaluate the opportunities that may arise in their immediate environment and to overcome the negative effects of globalization's pressure and competition with minimal damage (Fourne et al, 2014). Globalization, technological developments, and constant changes in market dynamics confront today's businesses with environmental uncertainties. Environmental uncertainty is defined as an organization's inability to predict future internal and external conditions and therefore having difficulty making strategic decisions (Milliken, 1987). These uncertainties can directly affect the internal processes and relationships of organizations and shake the level of trust of employees in the organization (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967). However, the capacity of organizations to respond quickly and effectively to these uncertainties, i.e. organizational agility, can play a critical role in maintaining organizational trust (Dove, 2002).

Environmental uncertainty refers to the limitations of organizations in predicting market demands, technological innovations, and competitive threats (Duncan, 1972). This uncertainty can increase employees' concerns about the future of the organization and negatively affect trust in leaders' decision-making processes (Ashill and Jobber, 2010). Damage to the commitment and trust environment can weaken employees' sense of belonging to the organization and lead to performance losses (Kramer, 1999).

Agile organizations can create a safer work environment by reducing employees' anxiety about change (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011). Indeed, when organizations adopt agile management processes, they instill hope and confidence in employees for the future, while allowing decision-making mechanisms to accelerate and become transparent (Zhang and Sharifi, 2000).

It is stated in the literature that environmental uncertainty directly affects organizational trust, and that this effect can potentially be balanced by organizational agility (Lee and Kelley, 2008). Agile organizations reduce employees' perception of uncertainty by responding quickly to change and strengthening trust in the organization (Nandhakumar and Baskerville, 2006). In particular, when leaders adopt agile strategies, it helps employees develop a positive perspective on the organization's future (Joiner, 2009). Although previous studies have indicated that environmental uncertainty negatively affects organizational trust and that organizational agility may play a moderating role in this relationship (e.g., Lee and Kelley, 2008; Nandhakumar and Baskerville, 2006), much of the existing research has remained at a conceptual level and lacks empirical validation, particularly within specific sectoral or national contexts. Notably, there is a limited number of empirical studies that investigate this model using recent data from the private sector in developing countries such as Turkey. The originality of the present study lies in its empirical testing of the moderating role of organizational agility in the relationship between environmental uncertainty and organizational trust, using data collected from private sector employees and employing advanced statistical techniques such as bootstrapping. By doing so, this research contributes to closing a significant gap in the literature and enriches theoretical discussions by integrating the perspectives of dynamic capabilities theory and social capital theory. Furthermore, it provides practical implications for improving organizational resilience and strategic decision-making in uncertain environments.

Despite existing studies, there is a limited number of empirical research focusing specifically on the moderating role of organizational agility between environmental uncertainty and organizational trust. This study aims to fill this gap by providing statistical evidence from a private sector sample, thereby contributing to both theory and practice. Furthermore, the study integrates dynamic capabilities and social capital perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of organizational behavior under uncertainty.

## **2. Conceptual Framework**

In this study, within the framework of Social Capital Theory and Dynamic Capabilities Theory, the formation of organizational trust under environmental uncertainty conditions and the moderating effect of organizational agility in this process has been examined.

Social Capital Theory argues that relationships between individuals and groups create value through elements such as information sharing, cooperation and trust (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). In the organizational context, social capital is shaped by the trust that employees have in each other, shared norms and networks. This environment of trust accelerates the flow of information, encourages innovation and enables the organization to be more flexible against uncertainties (Putnam, 2000).

Dynamic Capabilities Theory emphasizes the ability of organizations to adapt to changing environmental conditions, capture new opportunities, and respond quickly to threats (Teece et al., 1997). Organizational agility is a reflection of these dynamic capabilities and plays a critical role in businesses gaining competitive advantage. Especially in times of uncertainty, agile organizations can quickly adapt their strategies and show resilience to market fluctuations (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000). For example, it has been shown that organizational agility increases decision-making speed and efficiency in crisis management processes (Yılmaz, 2024).

Environmental uncertainties complicate organizations' decision-making processes and increase the level of risk (Dess and Beard, 1984). Under such uncertainties, organizational trust enables employees to be more resilient to uncertainties and facilitates adaptation processes. At the same time, in organizations with high levels of trust, agility capabilities can be used more effectively (Barney, 1991). This allows the organization to develop proactive strategies against uncertainties. As a result, in today's business world where environmental uncertainties are increasing, organizational trust and agility are vital for the sustainability and competitive advantage of businesses. Studies conducted within the framework of Social Capital Theory and Dynamic Capabilities Theory show that trust and agility are mutually supportive elements. In this context, strengthening the internal social capital of organizations and developing their dynamic capabilities will enable them to be more resilient and flexible against uncertainties.

### **3. Literature Review**

#### **3.1.Environmental Uncertainty**

Environmental uncertainty is a critical factor affecting the strategic decision-making processes and performance of businesses. In the literature, environmental uncertainty is associated with the frequency and predictability of changes in the external environment in which businesses operate (Duncan, 1972). In this context, Milliken (1987) addressed environmental uncertainty by dividing it into three subcategories: situational uncertainty, impact uncertainty, and response uncertainty. Situational uncertainty refers to the difficulties businesses have in perceiving changes in the environment; impact uncertainty refers to the inability to predict the results of these changes; and response uncertainty refers to the uncertainty about how to respond to these results.

Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) examined how organizations use differentiation and integration processes in the face of environmental uncertainty, emphasizing the need to develop flexible structures to ensure effectiveness in complex environments. Similarly, Dess and Beard (1984) determined the dimensions of the organizational task environment and demonstrated that these dimensions are directly related to environmental uncertainty.

How technological developments affect environmental uncertainty also has an important place in the literature. Tushman and Anderson (2018) examined how technological disruptions change organizations' perceptions of environmental uncertainty and how these processes reshape organizational structures. In addition, Pfeffer and Salancik (2015) revealed how organizations depend on external environmental factors within the framework of resource dependency theory and how these dependencies require strategies to cope with uncertainty.

Galbraith (1973) and Thompson (1967) emphasized the role of organizational design in coping with environmental uncertainty and addressed how organizations are structured in the face of complexity and uncertainty. Finally, Daft and Weick (1984) stated that the way organizations interpret environmental uncertainty directly affects their strategic decision-making processes.

Environmental uncertainty, defined as the rate of change in environmental instability (Gligor et al., 2016), indicates the error rate in the decision-making process of environmental factors (Rasi et al., 2019). Environmental uncertainty has a negative effect on the performance of the organization (Inman and Green, 2022).

### **3.2.Organizational Trust**

Organizational trust is a general expression of the trust that employees have for individuals, groups, and management within the organization. This concept determines the quality of relationships within the organization and has significant effects on employees' motivation, commitment, and performance. In environments where organizational trust is high, cooperation among employees increases, communication channels become more open, and the organization's efficiency increases in general.

Various factors play a role in the formation of organizational trust. Asunakutlu (2002) stated that leadership style, communication processes, and perception of justice are of critical importance in the formation of organizational trust. In particular, managers' display of a fair and transparent management approach reinforces employees' trust in the organization. In addition, open and honest communication is considered a fundamental element in the construction of trust.

The results of organizational trust have also been widely discussed in the literature. Bagraim and Hime (2007) stated that organizational trust has a positive relationship with employees' emotional commitment, and that this situation increases employees' desire to stay in the organization. Similarly, Tokgöz and Seymen (2013) found that organizational trust has positive effects on organizational identification and organizational citizenship behaviors. These findings show that trust encourages employees' extra-role behaviors.

Organizational trust is also closely related to the psychological contract. The psychological contract includes the mutual expectations of employees in their relationships with the organization. Korkmazyürek and Varoğlu (2020) stated that

organizational trust reduces perceived violations of the psychological contract and thus strengthens employees' commitment to the organization.

Research conducted in the education sector also emphasizes the importance of organizational trust. Özer et al. (2006) determined that teachers' perceptions of organizational trust are positively related to their motivation and hope levels. This shows that trust in educational institutions increases teachers' professional satisfaction and performance.

As a result, organizational trust is a critical concept that produces positive results at both individual and organizational levels. Managers' display of fair, transparent and supportive leadership, creation of open communication channels and consideration of employees' expectations are important steps in establishing organizational trust. In this way, organizations can achieve a more efficient, harmonious and competitive structure.

### **3.3.The Role of Organizational Agility in Managing Uncertainty and Sustaining Trust**

Organizational agility refers to an organization's ability to rapidly sense and respond to environmental changes with speed and flexibility (Sherehiy et al., 2007; Zhang & Sharifi, 2000). It is increasingly recognized as a dynamic capability that enables organizations to navigate uncertainty and seize emerging opportunities. Agility not only helps in adapting to external pressures but also supports internal cohesion by reinforcing employee confidence in the organization's resilience. In this context, organizational agility serves a dual role: it mitigates the adverse effects of environmental uncertainty and simultaneously enhances trust by fostering transparency, responsiveness, and participatory decision-making. Hence, agility operates as a crucial moderating factor that links uncertainty and trust, contributing to organizational sustainability and strategic success.

Organizational agility brings together a series of activities that enable organizations to create value in an unpredictable and complex environment (Weber and Tarha, 2014). The uncertainty or sudden change of the environment is a characteristic of it. Organizational agility, on the other hand, provides a number of important advantages such as sensing sudden changes in the market, early recognition of emerging opportunities, and analyzing the difficulties that change brings or may bring in advance (Braunschiesidel and Suresh, 2009). Agility has emerged as a competitive element for organizations in constantly changing and uncertain environments (Mirghafoori et al., 2017). Organizational agility is to respond successfully to expected or unexpected changes in the environment in order to turn them into advantages (Zhang and Sharifi, 2000). At the same time, organizational agility is a feature that increases the quality of the organization's competitive advantage and thus increases its performance (Sambamurthy et al., 2003). Organizational agility enables the organization to respond quickly to external

demands, adapt and implement strategies (Sherehiy et al., 2007). Therefore, it can be said that environmental uncertainty is the driving force of organizational agility.

### **3.4.Environmental Uncertainty, Organizational Agility, and Organizational Trust Relationship (Hypothesis Development)**

The hypotheses developed in this study are grounded in two key theoretical frameworks: Dynamic Capabilities Theory and Social Capital Theory. Dynamic Capabilities Theory (Teece et al., 1997) emphasizes an organization's ability to adapt to changing environments, respond to threats, and leverage emerging opportunities. In this context, organizational agility is conceptualized as a manifestation of dynamic capabilities, enabling firms to navigate uncertainty while preserving trust and performance. Meanwhile, Social Capital Theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) highlights the role of trust, shared norms, and relational ties in facilitating collaboration and knowledge exchange within organizations. From this perspective, organizational trust functions as a critical resource that supports resilience in times of uncertainty. Thus, the hypotheses proposed in this study are designed to examine the interaction between environmental uncertainty, trust, and agility through both relational and capability-based theoretical lenses.

Environmental uncertainty is defined as a result of rapid and unpredictable changes in the external environment of organizations (Khandwalla, 1976). This uncertainty can affect the strategic decision-making processes of organizations and weaken the sense of trust of managers and employees in the future (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2015). Organizational trust, on the other hand, refers to the belief and commitment of employees to the goals, values and leadership team of the organization (Taşkın and Dilek, 2010). A strong sense of organizational trust increases the motivation of employees and supports the resilience and adaptability of the organization in times of uncertainty (Tokgöz and Aytemiz Seymen, 2013). Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed.

H1: Environmental uncertainty has a negative and significant effect on organizational trust.

Although academic studies directly addressing the relationships between organizational agility, environmental uncertainty and organizational trust are limited, there are studies that examine these concepts indirectly. For example, Atkinson et al. (2022) analyzed the impact of competitive intelligence on organizational agility in their study and revealed how strategic flexibility and organizational innovation shape this relationship. The study emphasizes how environmental uncertainties affect organizations' agile strategy development processes. For example, Pashutan et al. (2022) showed that environmental uncertainty moderates the effect of IT resources on performance.

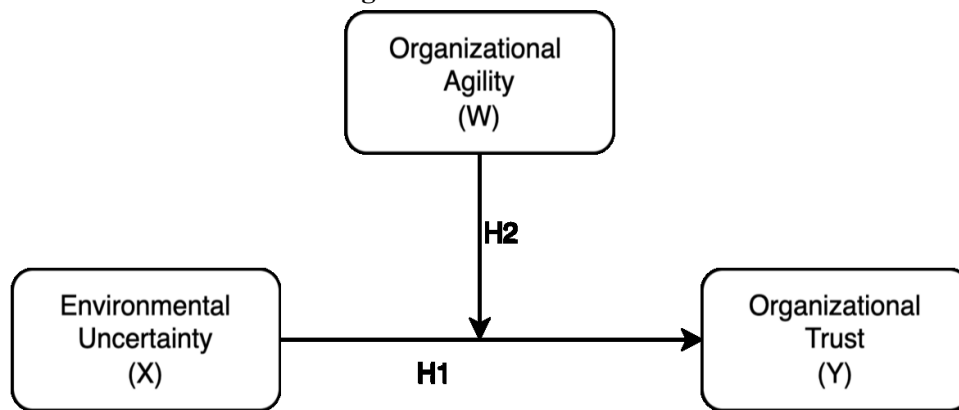
Ahammad et al. (2021) have shown that strategic agility plays a critical role in moderating the effects of environmental uncertainty on organizational outcomes, indirectly highlighting the potential for agility to sustain trust under uncertainty.

Environmental uncertainty can undermine organizational trust by creating a sense of unpredictability and loss of control among employees. As employees become unsure about the organization's future direction and the reliability of leadership decisions, their trust in the organization tends to decline (Ashill & Jobber, 2010; Kramer, 1999). However, not all organizations are equally vulnerable to uncertainty. Organizational agility, defined as the ability to rapidly adapt, restructure, and respond to external changes, serves as a strategic buffer. When employees perceive their organization as agile and responsive, they are more likely to maintain confidence in its leadership and future outlook, even under uncertain conditions. In this regard, agility is expected to moderate the relationship between environmental uncertainty and organizational trust by weakening the negative impact of uncertainty. Therefore, following hypothesis was developed.

H2: Organizational agility has a moderating role in the relationship between environmental uncertainty and organizational trust.

**3.5. Research Model:** The research model is shown in the figure below. Two hypotheses were created within the scope of the research.

**Figure 1: Research Model**



## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Sample

According to the 2022 data published by the Social Security Institution (SGK), the number of formally employed private sector workers registered under the 4A category in Kırşehir province is reported to be 22,775 individuals (SGK, 2022). Within this context, the sample size of 453 participants used in the study corresponds to approximately 2% of the total population. In social sciences research, for a population of this size, a sample of approximately 378 participants is generally considered sufficient to achieve a 95% confidence level with a  $\pm 5\%$  margin of error. Therefore, the sample size of 453 is statistically adequate and possesses strong representativeness. Moreover, the use of a simple random sampling method further enhances the validity and generalizability of the sample to



the target population. The data were collected through an online questionnaire between April and May 2025.

Ethics committee approval was given by the Kırşehir Ahi Evran University Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee with the decision number 2025/06/04 dated 26.03.2025.

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Information**

		Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>	Woman	168	37.1
	Male	285	62.9
	Total	453	100.0
<b>Educational Background</b>	High school	53	11.7
	Undergraduate	312	68.9
	Master	88	19.4
	Total	453	100.0
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	183	40.4
	Married	270	59.6
	Total	453	100.0
<b>Age</b>	18-25	33	7.3
	26-33	151	33.3
	34-41	131	28.9
	42-49	104	23.0
	50 and above	34	7.5
	Total	453	100.0
<b>Sector</b>	Medical	18	4.0
	Finance	36	7.9
	Food	119	26.3
	Tekstil	87	19.2
	Construction	66	14.6
	Tourism	24	5.3
	Furniture	82	18.1
	Automotive	21	4.6
	Total	453	100.0
<b>Position</b>	Employee	398	87.9
	Administrator	55	12.1
	Total	453	100.0
<b>Total Years of Work</b>	1-5 Years	73	16.1
	6-10 Years	70	15.5
	11-15 Years	130	28.7
	16-20 Years	53	11.7
	21-25 Years	81	17.9
	26 Years and Above	46	10.2
	Total	453	100.0

#### 4.2.Data Collection Tools

To determine the perceptions of the level of environmental uncertainty, the scale developed by Khandwalla (1976) and used by Waldman et al. (2001) was used. The answers in the scale were taken on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly disagree,

5=Strongly agree). The reliability coefficient of the scale was determined as .88. The Turkish validity analyzes of the scale were conducted by Çalışkan and Akkoç (2012). A scale consisting of 17 items and four sub-dimensions developed by Akkaya and Tabak (2018) was used to measure organizational agility. The answers in the scale were taken on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Never, 5=Always). A scale form consisting of 17 questions and three sub-dimensions developed by Çalışkan (2021) was used to measure organizational trust. The answers in the scale were taken on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree).

#### 4.3.Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected from 453 private sector employees were analyzed using statistical software, incorporating both reliability and validity assessments. Reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, with all scales demonstrating high internal consistency. Construct validity was examined through exploratory factor analysis using principal component analysis with varimax rotation. To test the research hypotheses, hierarchical regression analysis was conducted, and the moderating role of organizational agility in the relationship between environmental uncertainty and organizational trust was assessed using Hayes' PROCESS Macro with bootstrap resampling.

### 5. Results

Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were calculated to determine the internal consistency levels of the measurement tools used in the study (Table 2). Cronbach's Alpha value for the Environmental Uncertainty scale was .856, Cronbach's Alpha value for the Organizational Trust scale was .915, and Cronbach's Alpha value for the Organizational Agility scale was .924. These values show that the scales have a high level of internal consistency.

**Table 2:** Results of Reliability Analysis of Scales

	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Değişken Sayısı
Environmental Uncertainty	,856	,857	4
Organizational Trust	,915	,916	17
Organizational Agility	,924	,925	17

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed using principal component analysis with varimax rotation. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test of sphericity confirmed the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Factor loadings of the items belonging to all three scales are generally at an acceptable level (Table 3). In the Environmental Uncertainty scale, the factor loadings of four items range from .639 to .793, and all items strongly reflect the criterion. In the Organizational

Trust scale, the factor loadings of 17 items range from .498 to .795; especially the high loading values of items such as OT2, OT4, OT8, and OT15 support the structural validity of the scale. In the Organizational Agility scale, there are 17 items, and the factor loadings range from .389 to .779; despite the relatively low loading values of some items (e.g. OA1, OA9, OA16, and OA17), it is seen that the factor structure of the scale is generally sufficient. These results show that the relevant scales provide valid measurements.

**Table 3:** Communalities of Scales Items

Organizational Uncertainty	Extraction	Organizational Trust	Extraction	Organizational Agility	Extraction
OB1	.674	OT1	.647	OA1	.389
OB2	.639	OT2	.795	OA2	.618
OB3	.696	OT3	.601	OA3	.779
OB4	.793	OT4	.719	OA4	.681
		OT5	.672	OA5	.643
		OT6	.600	OA6	.634
		OT7	.666	OA7	.614
		OT8	.706	OA8	.727
		OT9	.579	OA9	.481
		OT10	.681	OA10	.639
		OT11	.498	OA11	.516
		OT12	.627	OA12	.538
		OT13	.668	OA13	.706
		OT14	.678	OA14	.570
		OT15	.731	OA15	.738
		OT16	.514	OA16	.424
		OT17	.586	OA17	.498

The dependent variable is Trust (Organizational Trust), the independent variable is Uncertainty (Environmental Uncertainty), and the moderator variable is Agility (Organizational Agility). The regression model was tested with data obtained from 453 participants. The model was found to be generally significant ( $F(3, 449) = 204.97, p < .001$ ). The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of the model was calculated as .578. This value shows that 57.8% of the variance in the confidence level is explained by the variables in the model. The mean square error (MSE) of the model is .1044 (Table 4).

**Table 4:** Model Summary

R	R <sup>2</sup>	MSE	F	p
0.760	0.578	0.1044	204.97	<.001

The regression analysis results reveal that environmental uncertainty has a statistically significant negative effect on organizational trust ( $B = -0.0717, p = 0.0003$ ), indicating that as uncertainty increases, employees' trust in the organization tends to decrease (Table 5). Conversely, organizational agility demonstrates a strong positive influence on trust ( $B = 0.7328, p < .001$ ), suggesting that agile organizations foster higher levels of trust among employees. Most

notably, the interaction term between environmental uncertainty and organizational agility is positive and significant ( $B = 0.1406$ ,  $p < .001$ ), supporting the hypothesis that agility moderates the relationship between uncertainty and trust. This finding implies that organizational agility mitigates the negative impact of environmental uncertainty on trust, thus acting as a buffer. In other words, in agile organizations, the detrimental effects of uncertainty on trust are significantly reduced.

**Table 5:** Regression Analysis

Variables	B	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	3.9182	.0155	253.42	<.001	3.8879	3.9486
Uncertainty (X)	-0.0717	.0199	-3.60	.0003	-0.1107	-0.0326
Agility (W)	0.7328	.0302	24.26	<.001	0.6735	0.7922
Interaction (X × W)	0.1406	.0315	4.46	<.001	0.0786	0.2026

The conditional effects analysis demonstrates that the impact of environmental uncertainty on organizational trust varies depending on the level of organizational agility (Table 6). At low levels of agility ( $-1$  SD), environmental uncertainty has a strong and significant negative effect on trust ( $B = -0.1489$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that in less agile organizations, uncertainty considerably reduces employee trust. At average agility levels, the effect remains negative but weaker ( $B = -0.0717$ ,  $p = 0.0003$ ). However, at high agility levels ( $+1$  SD), the effect of environmental uncertainty on trust becomes statistically insignificant ( $B = 0.0055$ ,  $p = 0.7993$ ). These findings clearly show that as organizational agility increases, the negative impact of environmental uncertainty on trust diminishes, and in highly agile organizations, uncertainty does not significantly harm trust levels. This reinforces the role of agility as a protective factor in uncertain environments.

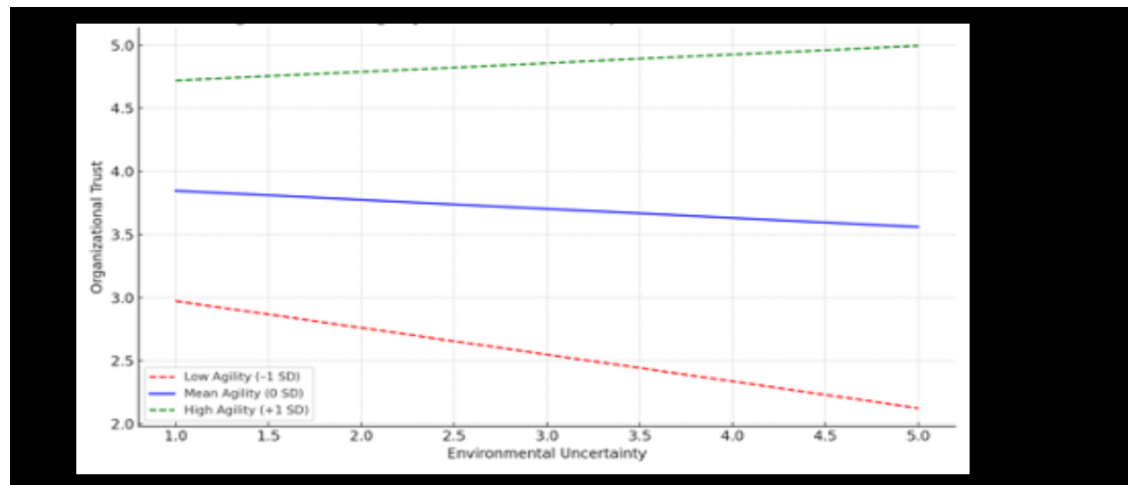
**Table 6:** Conditional Effects of Environmental Uncertainty at Different Levels of Agility

Agility Level	Effect	Std. Error	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Low ( $-1$ SD)	-0.1489	0.0303	-4.91	<.001	-0.2084	-0.0893
Mean (0)	-0.0717	0.0199	-3.60	0.0003	-0.1107	-0.0326
High ( $+1$ SD)	0.0055	0.0217	0.25	0.7993	-0.0372	0.0482

The figure below illustrates the moderating effect of organizational agility on the relationship between environmental uncertainty and organizational trust. The lines represent the predicted levels of trust at low ( $-1$  SD), mean (0 SD), and high ( $+1$  SD) levels of organizational agility. As shown, when agility is low, environmental uncertainty significantly decreases organizational trust. However, at high levels of

agility, this negative effect becomes negligible, indicating that agility serves as a buffering mechanism. This interaction pattern supports the hypothesis that organizational agility mitigates the adverse impact of uncertainty on trust.

**Figure 2:** Interaction between Environmental Uncertainty and Organizational Trust at Different Levels of Organizational Agility



## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the relationship between environmental uncertainty and organizational trust, with a specific focus on the moderating role of organizational agility. The results revealed that environmental uncertainty negatively influences organizational trust, aligning with prior theoretical expectations. More significantly, organizational agility was found to buffer this negative effect, suggesting that organizations equipped with higher levels of agility can maintain employee trust even under conditions of ambiguity and instability.

From a theoretical standpoint, these findings contribute to the ongoing discourse in organizational behavior by integrating insights from Dynamic Capabilities Theory and Social Capital Theory. While the former emphasizes an organization's ability to sense and adapt to environmental changes, the latter highlights the role of trust as a key intangible asset that enhances cooperation and resilience. This study adds to the literature by positioning organizational agility not only as a strategic or operational competency, but also as a relational mechanism that protects internal trust structures during times of external uncertainty. In doing so, it deepens the conceptual understanding of agility's multi-dimensional influence within organizations.

Studies examining the relationships between environmental uncertainty, organizational agility and organizational trust reveal how these concepts interact with each other. There are findings that organizational agility increases organizational trust by mitigating the negative effects of environmental uncertainty. Merdan (2022) examined the effect of strategic management processes on

organizational agility and perceived environmental uncertainty and stated that strategic management plays an important role in reducing the negative effects of environmental uncertainty. This shows that organizations can become more resilient to uncertainties by adopting agile structures. Atkinson et al. (2022) examined the effect of competitive intelligence on organizational agility and its relationship with strategic flexibility and organizational innovation. The results show that competitive intelligence contributes to faster and more effective decisions in uncertain environments by increasing organizational agility. Yıldırım (2022) addressed the concept of organizational agility and stated that agile organizations are more resilient to uncertainties. This shows that the negative effects of environmental uncertainties on organizational trust can be minimized through agility. Tallon and Pinsonneault (2011) found a positive relationship between organizational agility and firm performance. Another study found a significant positive relationship between environmental production and financial performance (Inman et al., 2011). Teoh et al. (2017) found in their study that strategic agility mediates the relationship between enterprise risk management and firm performance. Ahammad et al. (2021) found in their study that organizational agility is one of the most important factors for firm performance in environmental uncertainty. They also stated that organizational agility plays a key role in organizations in environmental uncertainty and in providing competitive advantage. Pashutan, Abdolvand, and Harandi (2022) found in their study on information technology managers that strategic partnerships are effective on organizational performance and environmental uncertainty has a regulating effect on this. Inman and Green (2021) found that agile manufacturing mediates the relationship between environmental uncertainty and performance in their study of 136 American companies.

On a practical level, the findings suggest that managers and decision-makers must proactively foster agility within their organizations—not only in terms of structural flexibility or rapid reconfiguration, but also in communication, leadership, and employee engagement practices. When employees perceive their organization as agile and responsive, their sense of psychological safety and commitment tends to remain stable, even in uncertain environments. Therefore, organizations should invest in training programs that cultivate agile leadership, facilitate transparent communication channels, and reinforce employee participation in decision-making processes.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the sample is geographically restricted to private sector employees in the Kırşehir province of Turkey, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, the cross-sectional nature of the data does not allow for causal interpretations. Third, the study relies on self-reported measures, which may be subject to response biases such as social desirability. Future research could address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs, expanding to multiple regions and sectors, and incorporating multi-source or objective performance data.

Based on the study's findings, several policy implications can be proposed. Organizational policies should emphasize the development of internal capabilities that align with agility—such as adaptive HRM systems, rapid feedback mechanisms, and inclusive decision-making structures. Especially in SMEs or resource-constrained environments, institutional support for agile transformation and agile leadership development could enhance long-term organizational resilience.

For future research, scholars might explore how other psychological and structural factors—such as psychological safety, perceived organizational support, or digital capability—interact with agility in shaping trust. Additionally, mixed-methods or longitudinal approaches could offer richer insights into the temporal dynamics of uncertainty and trust. Exploring cross-cultural variations in how agility is perceived and enacted would also contribute meaningfully to global organizational studies.

In summary, this study advances both theoretical and practical understanding of how organizations can maintain trust in uncertain environments through agility. It provides a foundation for further empirical and conceptual inquiry into the interplay between external challenges and internal relational strength.

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