

The Relationship between School Climate and Teachers' Organizational Silence Behaviors

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KEYWORDS Silence. Voice. Climate. Principal Behavior. Teacher Behavior

ABSTRACT The purpose of this paper was to explore the relationship between school climate and teachers' organizational silence behaviors. The sample of the study, which employed a survey research method, consisted of 379 secondary school teachers in Kutahya, a city in western Turkey. The data was collected using the "Organizational Climate Scale at Schools" and the "Organizational Silence Scale". The data was analyzed through descriptive statistics, t-test, ANOVA and multiple regressions. The findings show that the level of openness of the climate of those schools under the study is "low" for school principals and "very high" for teachers. Teachers' organizational silence behaviors are at a moderate level. Teachers' organizational silence behaviors decrease as their time in service increases. School climate explains almost one-third of the total variance of organizational silence. The school principals' directive and restrictive behaviors increase teachers' organizational silence behaviors whereas supportive manners of school principals as well as teachers' collegial manners decrease silence behaviors.

INTRODUCTION

The basic criterion of effectiveness of organizations is the level of achieving their targets. Although primary responsibility for an organization to achieve its targets is of its managers, it is almost impossible to realize this aim without the support, contribution and criticism of its workers. Thus, managers should make an effort to create an organizational climate where workers may express their ideas freely. This is said to have two main advantages for organizations: First of all, organizations and employees stay together as long as they can satisfy their mutual needs. Within the framework of motivation theories, attaching importance to workers' opinions contributes to the growth of a feeling of ownership and to respond to certain needs for attention and respect. Secondly, an organization's adaptation skill in today's ambiguous global environment, that is its organizational intelligence, is only possible through its workers' contribution. Therefore, members of the organization should be able to make themselves heard

about all tasks and procedures in the organization. In this regard, it is possible to say that "silent organizations are problem organizations". This paper aims to determine to what extent the school climate predicts teachers' organizational silence behaviors.

Organizational Climate

Organizational climate, comprised of workers' behaviors and relations, is a term used in relation to the general atmosphere and emotions within an organization; because organizational climate is, to a certain extent, the personality of that organization (Hoy and Miskel 2005). The term "climate" is used as a metaphor for organizations, and refers to the psychological environment for relations within the organization (Acun-Kapikiran and Kapikiran 2011; Bayrak et al. 2014). In this regard, organizational climate is not a concrete tangible concept, but only something to be felt, which in turn affects employees' attitudes and behaviors within the organization.

There are several measurement tools in literature to determine organizational climate. This study has used "The Organizational Climate Description for Elementary Schools (OCDQ-RE)" developed by Hoy and Tarter (1997), which is commonly used to identify the organizational climate of schools. The scale describes the organizational climate, the interaction between school principals and teachers, as well as interaction

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among teachers on the basis of openness-closeness (Hoy and Miskel 2005). Openness of the school climate reveals the existence of cooperation and trust between and among the teachers and school principal. School principal behaviors influencing the climate in this scale are supportive, directive and restrictive; while teacher behaviors are collegial, intimate and disengaged.

Directive and restrictive principal behaviors that have an impact on organizational climate may be regarded as autocratic leadership behavior. Administrators with such behaviors are inclined to observe everything teachers do, to control all activities, to make decisions on their own, and to inspect teachers at a close distance (Turan 1998). As to supportive principal behaviors, these involve behaviors related to creating a warm work environment and considering the needs and preferences of the workers (Hoy and Miskel 2005).

Supportive principals display behaviors such as appreciating what is done, helping the workers, giving constructive criticism, giving importance to and supporting new ideas, and involving the workers in the decision-making process (Yilmaz 2002). In supportive principal behavior, the principal listens and the teachers are open to suggestions. In collegial teacher behavior, there is an open and professional interaction between teachers. The teachers are ambitious, accepting, and helpful to each other and their colleagues' professional efficiency. Intimate teacher behavior reflects the close social support network within the school. The teachers know each other very well, form close friendships and frequently get together. Disengaged teacher behavior, on the other hand, reflects a lack of understanding at the school and focusing on professional activities. The teachers only fill in time.

Organizational Silence

The silence behavior of the workers' within the institution is caused by individual and institutional reasons. While individual reasons are related more to personality traits, institutional characteristics are shaped in accordance with the quality of relationships found within the institution. While in the organizational silence climate work place the workers have either individual or collective views which may be beneficial for the organization, they prefer to remain silent (Morrison and Milliken 2000, 2003; Pinder and Harlos

2001; Tangirala and Ramanujam 2008, 2009), or feel compelled to remain silent instead of expressing them. A majority of members within an organization preferring to remain silent, in terms of organizational issues, may transform silence into a collective behavior.

There may be many reasons as to the silence behavior of organizations' workers and many types of silences in return; because silence behavior is a complex and multi-leveled phenomenon (Van Dyn et al. 2003). There are various classifications related to silence in literature. Organizational silence can generally be defined as silence with the purpose of protection, accepted silence (Pinder and Harlos 2001; Kish-Gephart et al. 2009), silence for the good of the organization (Van Dyne et al. 2003) and silence with the purpose of interest. In this paper, the workers' silence behavior with the purpose of protection has been researched.

Silence with the purpose of protection is the worker remaining silent due to not feeling secure. This silence is based on fear. In organizations, this silence type is generally caused by the behaviors of the administrator. The fear of being punished, not getting a promotion, being faced with pressure, etc. pushes the worker to remain silent (Bisel and Arterburn 2012). The level of awareness in workers who display silence behavior with the purpose of protection is high and these people take alternatives into consideration. The individuals think that the most correct strategy to be followed is to hide their thoughts, knowledge and ideas (Van Dyne et al. 2003). In the study of Milliken et al. (2003), it is stated that about one fourth of the workers are not able to express their problems, due to a fear of retaliation or punishment. Accepted silence is rather the inability of the individual to speak out, due to a feeling of inadequacy. In this type of silence, the organization workers who feel inadequate prefer to remain silent, since they believe that their thoughts will not be given importance and they will not be able to contribute to the development of the organization in any way (Pinder and Harlos 2001; Van Dyne et al. 2003; Amah and Okafor 2008). Silence for the benefit of the institution is more of an institutional citizenship behavior. The worker hides information and his views about the organization in order for the organization or his colleagues not to be harmed. Silence with the purpose of interest is the worker

remaining silent with the idea that this will be to the interest of the workers within a relationship of exchange. This type of silence may be evaluated as a political tactic.

One of the important reasons of worker silence within the organization is the social culture in which the worker lives in or has been raised in. In Huff and Kelley's study (2003), which makes a comparison between the tendency of insecurity in individual and communitarian cultures, it has been shown that the organizational trust tendency of communitarian cultures is lower. Therefore, it may be stipulated that silence behaviors for the benefit of the organization, which require feminine characteristics such as silence with the purpose of protection and sacrifice based on lack of trust in societies that are communitarian and display feminine characteristics, are higher. Especially Turkish literature on organizational trust studies show that, workers have low trust in particular in the administrators of organizations and trust them less than their colleagues (Ozer et al. 2006; Cokluk-Bokeoglu and Yilmaz 2008; Polat and Celep 2008; Yilmaz 2009; Altinkurt and Yilmaz 2012b; Wasti et al 2013).

Relationship between Organizational Climate and Organizational Silence

Organizational climate is one of the important study areas of organizational behavior literature. Many researchers, who try to explain the behaviors of the workers within the organization, have chosen climate sometimes as affecter and sometimes as a variable. Worker silence (in particular, silence based on fear) is a phenomenon which may both decrease the contribution of the workers to the organization (Morrison and Milliken 2000) and create negative effects on the mood of the workers. In fact, if these behaviors are not given importance to, or are not taken into consideration, they may become a characteristic of organizational culture. Therefore, it is important to identify the reasons behind organizational silence behaviors of the workers.

There are studies on organizational climate and organizational silence in literature. Especially researches on organizational silence have been carried out in organizations beyond just educational organizations. However, even among all the research conducted within educational organizations (Amah and Okafor 2008; Alparslan

2010; Bayram 2010; Tulubas and Celep 2012; Kahveci and Demirtas 2013; Laeeque and Bakhtawari 2014; Yaman and Ruclar 2014), there has been no research directed at identifying the effect of organizational climate on teachers' silence behavior.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper was to explore the relationship between school climate and teachers' organizational silence behaviors. With this purpose, answers to the following research questions were sought:

1. What are the teachers' views on school climate?
2. What are the teachers' views on organizational silence behaviors?
3. Do the teachers' organizational silence behaviors show differences in accordance with their gender, school type and in comparison to seniority variables?
4. How does school climate predict teachers' organizational silence behaviors?

METHOD

The survey research methodology was employed in the study. A total of 2,379 secondary teachers in Kutahya, a city in western Turkey. In the identification of the sample, disproportionate sampling technique has been used. The sample size has been calculated as 331 for the 95% trust level. Taking into consideration that there may be deficiencies in the receipt of the scales, it has been decided to give place to the views of 450 teachers. Analysis has been performed using data compilation tools for the 379 responses that have been received, and which were useable.

The female participants are female are 54.1% (n=205) and male 45.9% (n=174). 74.4% of the total participants (n=282) work in public high schools and 25.6% (n=97) work in vocational high schools. The seniority of the teachers who participated in the study, range from between 1 to 35 years' service. 15.3% of the participants have 10 or less years (n=58), 47.5% have 11-20 years (n=180) and 37.2% have 21 years and more (n=141) seniority.

One of the data compilation tools used in the study is "Organizational Climate Scale at Schools" which has been developed by Hoy and Tarter (1997) and adapted in to Turkish by

Altinkurt and Yilmaz (2013). The scale consists of a total of six dimensions: "Supportive Principal Behavior, Directive Principal Behavior, Restrictive Principal Behavior, Intimate Teacher Behavior, Collegial Teacher Behavior, and Disengaged Teacher Behavior". The scale consists of 39 quartet Likert type items and all the items are answered in intervals of "1: Rarely Occurs", through to "4: Very Frequently Occurs". There are two items in the scale which are scored adversely. A total score is not achieved from the scale, however depending on the factors, the school's openness levels can be calculated in terms of organizational climate. If the calculated Openness Scores (OS) are >600, they are evaluated as "very high"; if between 551-600, "high"; if between 525-550, "above average"; if between 511-524, "slightly above average"; if between 490-510, "average"; if between 476-489, "slightly below average"; if between 450-475, "below average"; if between 400-449, "low" and if <400, "very low" (Altinkurt and Yilmaz 2013).

As a result of the factor analysis carried out during the scale's adaptation, the sub dimension items' factor load value has been determined to change between 0.46 and 0.82 and item total correlations between 0.35 and 0.77. In addition, it has been reported that the variance rate which is rendered with the sub factor has been determined as 51% and that the Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the factors alternate between 0.70 and 0.89. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha inner consistency coefficients have been calculated again and Cronbach's Alpha inner consistency coefficients of the factors have been determined to change between 0.66 and 0.82.

The other data compilation tool used in the study is "Organizational Silence Scale". The scale has been developed by Kahveci and Demirtas (2013). The scale consists of 18 Likert type items and all items are answered within the interval of "1: I definitely do not agree", through to "5: I completely agree". There is an item which is calculated adversely in the scale. Explanatory and confirmative factor analysis has been done for the scale's structure validity. As a result of the explanatory factor analysis, it has been reported that the factor load value of the items range between 0.48 and 0.78 and the variation rate which renders the whole scale is 57% and Cronbach's Alpha inner consistency coefficient is 0.89. The scale's goodness of fit values which are calculated with Confirmative Factor Analysis is as fol-

lows: $\chi^2/sd=3.07$, GFI=0.91, AGFI=0.88, RMSEA=0.69, CFI=0.92, NFI=0.88. In this study, the scale's Cronbach's Alpha inner consistency coefficient has been calculated as 0.90.

In the study descriptive statistics, t-test and ANOVA and multiple regression analysis have been used in data analysis. In the study, Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between the two points of view. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine whether school climate significantly predicted teachers' organizational silence behaviors. Correlation coefficient as an absolute value ranging from 0.70 to 1.00 was considered as a high correlation, ranging from 0.69 to 0.30 as a moderate correlation and ranging from 0.29 to 0.00 as a low correlation (Buyukozturk 2009).

RESULTS

In this section, primarily the teachers' views on school climate and organizational silence behaviors have been given place to. Then, the level as to which school climate predicts teachers' organizational silence behaviors has been tried to be determined.

According to the teachers who participated in the study, school principals display the most restrictive ($M=2.53$, $S=0.62$) behaviors. These are followed successively by supportive ($M=2.42$, $S=0.54$) and directive ($M=2.26$, $S=0.55$) behaviors. The climate scale used in the study is quartet Likert type scale. Therefore, the display of principals with these kinds of behaviors is close to the "usually" level. Meanwhile, the teachers display collegial ($M=2.83$, $S=0.43$) and intimate ($M=2.55$, $S=0.53$) behaviors the most, and disengaged ($M=1.96$, $S=0.48$) behaviors the least. The collegial behaviors of the teachers are close to the "very frequently" level; their intimate behaviors are close to "usually" level and their disengaged behaviors are close to "sometimes" level. A total score is not achieved from the scale. However, it is possible to calculate an openness score for the school climate. According to this, the openness level of the schools' climate where the study was conducted is "low" for principals ($OS=407.6$) and "very high" for teachers ($OS=722.9$).

According to the findings achieved from the study, the organizational silence of the teachers is middle level ($M=2.91$, $S=0.66$). The teachers' organizational silence behaviors do not display

differences in accordance to gender [$t_{(377)}=0.003$; $p>0.05$], school type [$t_{(377)}=0.54$; $p>0.05$] variables. Although the level of silence of female teachers ($M=2.95$, $S=0.59$) in comparison to male teachers ($M=2.88$, $S=0.73$); those who work in public high schools ($M=2.93$, $S=0.65$) in comparison to those who work in vocational schools ($M=2.89$, $S=0.70$) is higher, the difference is not of a statistically meaningful level. The organizational silence levels of the teachers display difference in accordance to the service duration [$F_{(2-376)}=13.24$; $p<0.05$] variable. The seniority of the teachers has been separated into three groups: 10 years and less, 11-20 years and 21 years and more. The difference is between teachers who have over 20 years of seniority ($M=2.73$, $S=0.58$) and other teachers and between teachers who have 11-20 years of seniority ($M=2.94$, $S=0.72$) and teachers who have less than 11 years of seniority ($M=3.24$, $S=0.49$). As the teachers' service duration increases, their organizational silence behaviors decrease.

In the study, multi regression analysis has been performed in order to determine whether school climate predicts the teachers' organizational silence levels. The results pertaining to this analysis are given in Table 1.

As it can be seen from Table, a positive and low level of relationship has been found between the teachers' organizational silence behaviors and directive ($r=0.24$) and restrictive ($r=0.22$) principal behaviors which affect school climate; and a negative and middle level relationship with supportive principal behavior ($r=-0.38$). When the other variables were checked, a positive and low level relationship has been found between the teachers' organizational silence behavior and directive ($r=0.20$) and restrictive ($r=0.24$) principal behaviors and a negative and low level relationship with the supportive ($r=-0.19$) principal

behavior. While a negative and middle level ($r=-0.42$) relationship between teachers' organizational silence and collegial teacher behavior, which is one of the aspects that effects school climate, a negative and low level ($r=-0.26$) relationship has been found with intimate teacher behavior. There is no relationship between disengaged teacher behavior and organizational silence. When the other variables are checked, a negative and low level ($r=-0.24$) relationship has been found only between the teachers' organizational silence behaviors and collegial teacher behavior.

All of the principal and teacher behaviors which affect school climate have a middle level and meaningful relationship between the teachers' organizational silence levels ($R=0.55$, $p<0.01$). School climate renders 30% of the organizational silence total variance. The order of importance of school climate dimension on the silence levels of the teachers are as follows: collegial teacher behavior, restrictive principal behavior, supportive principal behavior, directive principal behavior, intimate teacher behavior and disengaged teacher behavior. When the results of the t-test related to the meaningfulness of regression coefficients have been analyzed, it has been determined that supportive, directive and restrictive principal behaviors and collegial teacher behavior predict the teachers' organizational silences. Intimate and disengaged teacher behaviors do not have a meaningful effect on silence. According to the findings, the regression equality of organizational silence is as follows:

Organizational Silence = 2.69-0.23 Supportive principal behavior + 0.24 Directive principal behavior + 0.24 Restrictive principal behavior - 0.10 Intimate teacher behavior - 0.45 Collegial teacher behavior + 0.08 Disengaged teacher behavior

Table 1: Regression analysis results of organizational silence behavior estimation

Variables	B	Standard error	β	T	p order (r)	Zero-(r)	Partial
Constant	2.69	0.36	-	7.58	0.00	-	-
Supportive principal behavior	-0.23	0.06	-0.19	3.68	0.00	-0.38	-0.19
Directive principal behavior	0.24	0.06	0.17	3.83	0.00	0.24	0.20
Restrictive principal behavior	0.24	0.05	0.21	4.66	0.00	0.22	0.24
Intimate teacher behavior	-0.10	0.07	-0.08	1.45	0.15	-0.26	-0.08
Collegial teacher behavior	-0.45	0.10	-0.29	4.72	0.00	-0.42	-0.24
Disengaged teacher behavior	0.08	0.06	0.07	1.43	0.15	0.03	0.07

R=0.55 R² = 0.30
 F₍₆₋₃₇₂₎ =26.83, p = 0.00

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this paper was to explore the relationship between school climate and teachers' organizational silence behaviors. In addition, it has been questioned whether there is a difference between teachers' organizational silence behaviors and gender, school type, branch and seniority. Finally, it has been tried to identify on which level organizational climate predicts teachers' silence behaviors.

According to the teachers who participated in this study, school principals display the most restrictive behaviors. These are followed by supportive and directive behaviors. In parallel with this finding, it has been determined that the school climate openness level where the study has been carried out is "low" for principals and "very high" for teachers. It is noteworthy that the openness level of school climate is closed in terms of principal behaviors. The reason for this finding is the directive and restrictive behaviors of school principals and this effects school climate negatively. The studies in literature support this finding as well. In Bayrak et al.'s (2014) study, in which the same scale has been used on elementary and middle schools, the same results have been attained. Again, in studies carried out in Turkey on administrators' power preferences (Aslanargun 2009; Bayrak et al. 2014; Altinkurt and Yilmaz 2012a, 2012b; Yilmaz and Altinkurt 2012), the school administrators high usage of legal and compelling power explains why directive and restrictive behaviors of administrators which affect climate are displayed highly. However, in order to be able to create an open organizational climate, school principals need to display supportive behaviors instead of restrictive behaviors. In Eshraghi et al.'s study (2011), it has been determined that democratic leadership behaviors affect climate positively and effect authoritative leadership behaviors negatively. According to the Meta analysis study carried out by Parker et al. (2003), there are relationships between organizational climate and the workers' work satisfaction, attitude towards work, psychological state of well-being, motivation and performance.

The other purpose of the study is to determine the level of teachers' organizational silence behaviors and whether these behaviors differentiate in accordance with individual variables. According to the findings of the study, the orga-

nizational silence of the teachers is in the middle level. Teachers' organizational silence behaviors do not differ according to gender school type. Previous studies (Ehtiyar and Yanardag 2008; Alparslan 2010; Bayram 2010; Erenler 2010; Taskýran 2010; Knoll and Van Dick 2013; Nartgun and Kartal 2013) also found no difference between the silence behaviors of the workers' and the gender variable. However, some other studies found a difference between the workers' silence behaviors and the gender variable. According to Esfahani et al.'s (2013) and Whiteside and Barclay's (2013) studies, women showed passive silence behavior more than men. In Sehitoglu's (2010) study also, women showed silence behaviors for the benefit of the organization more than men. In this study, female teachers' silence behaviors are higher than male teachers, but the difference was not statistically meaningful. The main reason for relatively higher women's silence behavior might be related to patriarchal characteristics of the Turkish culture.

The teachers' organizational silence behaviors decrease as their service durations increase. In the studies in literature, there are comparisons according to age rather than service duration. In these studies (Cakici 2008; Bayram 2010; Taskiran 2010; Kutlay 2012; Yaman and Ruclar 2014), the workers' silence behaviors decrease as their age increases. The schools where the study has been carried out are public (state) schools and teachers who work in public schools in Turkey have a high degree of job security. Therefore, these teachers are not in fear of losing their jobs and thus display silence behaviors. In addition, as the age and service duration of these teachers, who are at an experienced and calm (Bakioğlu 1996) stage in terms of their careers, increases, their self-esteem and occupational maturity increases as well. However, in Turkish society which displays feminine characteristics (Hofstede 2005), people who are older and have more experience think that they have the right to voice their opinions with more ease. This is even reflected in Turkish proverbs. For instance, "water belongs to children, speaking belongs to the elderly" is a Turkish proverb that emphasizes that older people have more right in voicing their opinions.

The last purpose of the study is to identify which level of school climate best predicts the teachers' silence behaviors; and to do this, multi regression analysis was performed. All of the

principal and teacher behaviors which affect school climate form a middle level and meaningful relationship between themselves and the teachers' organizational silence behaviors. When the other variables have been checked, it was observed that there is a positive and low level relationship between directive and restrictive principal behavior and teachers' organizational silence behaviors; and a negative and low level relationship with supportive principal behavior. In terms of teacher behaviors, a negative and low level relationship has been found only between inter-professional collegial teacher behavior and the teachers' organizational silence behaviors. When the results of the t-test related to the meaningfulness of regression coefficients have been analyzed, it has been determined that supportive, directive and restrictive principal behaviors and collegial teacher behavior are predictors of the teachers' organizational silence. Intimate and disengaged teacher behaviors do not have a meaningful effect on silence. School climate explains about one third of organizational silence total variance. Therefore, while the school principals' directive and restrictive behaviors increase the teachers' silence behaviors, supportive principal behavior and collegial teacher behaviors decrease silence behaviors. The directive and restrictive behaviors of school principals increasing the teachers' silence behaviors point to a state of anxiety based on a lack of trust. Collegial teacher behaviors decreasing silence behaviors can be explained by group dynamics.

CONCLUSION

The high level of school principals' restrictive and directive behaviors points to the fact that there is a silence climate in schools. In organizations where the silence climate is dominant, the members of the organization do not trust each other and in particular do not trust their administrators. Trust, which may be defined as believing in the person or group one interacts with without fear, hesitation and suspicion, is also quite important in terms of organizational life. In organizations where fear is dominant, this may cause the workers to be silent and feel a degree of cynicism and alienation. People who work in such organizations increasingly become more silent, as they feel threatened and think that they will encounter problems if they were to talk. Because people who work in organizations where

there is a silence climate believe that speaking out will not solve problems and that telling others about their thoughts and worries will be dangerous.

The worker's developing a positive or negative attitude towards their organizations mostly depends on the behaviors of the administrators. Therefore, the followers' amount of contribution depends on how much they trust the leader. Within this framework, school administrators need to make an effort to create a democratic and open organization climate where workers can easily express themselves and workers need to display behaviors which support these efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Organizational silence is one of the study areas which may be regarded as new in literature. The number of studies, in particular those on educational organizations, are limited. In order for this subject to become better understood, more studies need to be carried out on teachers' silence behaviors. In addition, it is known that silence behavior changes in accordance with cultural characteristics. Therefore, it is suggested that further studies be conducted to identify any relationships between organizational silence and cultural values. One of the limitations of this paper is trying to determine teachers' silence behaviors based on the measurement tool within the framework of lack of trust. In addition, new studies may be carried out to identify silence behaviors based on individual characteristics and personal interest.

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