The Interaction Between Organizational Silence Climate And Employees Behaviors In The Field Of Health

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The aim of this paper is to investigate the relation between organizational silence climate and employees' silence behaviours. This research was conducted in Antalya Education and Research Hospital within the scope of Antalya Health Management. 1837 people in the field of health participated in the study. Because of the limited time, the sample group was chosen based on stratified sampling and composed of 407 employees. The data was gathered from the volunteers through interviews between 1st May and 31st of August, 2013. On those days 407 people were interviewed. In this research it was aimed to understand whether there is a relationship among fear, self-defence, protecting relationships or indifference and employee silence. Besides, one of the main objectives is to be able to explain whether there is a relation between organizational silence climate and employees silence behaviours. Based on the demographic characteristics of the sample group (age, sex, marital status, education, working period, task) it was tired to find out whether they are related to silence behaviours or not. Based on the analyses it was found that the upper management has a great influence on employees' silence behaviours but the effect of unit managers should also be considered. It was observed that employees generally show silence behaviours based on protecting themselves or based on fear. It can be said that there is a relationship between employees' silence behaviours and organizational silence climate. In terms of demographic characteristics, the silence behaviours of employees vary according to their demographic characteristics.

Key words: Organisational Silence, Employee Silence, Organisational Behaviour

JEL classification: M31.

1. Introduction

A group of people who come together to achieve a goal is called an organization. Humankind is a living organism and each human being differs from the others in terms of their reactions to certain feelings, ideas and situations. So, human factor that is a part of the organization and human behaviour is of great importance. Especially, as service sector is human-based, reactions given by employees to certain situations are crucially important in affecting the development of the organization. The rapid developments in technology have given the companies a bigger responsibility to complete with each other. As a result, companies have started to focus more on human power. Therefore, the primary action to take is to provide a better communication within the company. In terms of expressing his/her ideas correctly, employees should not have any feeling of fear, anxiety and concern towards their employers in order to feel as a part of the organization. It is known that the employees who have a feeling of attachment to their employers are more open in sharing their knowledge with them. However, it is observed that in the organizations composed of the employees who don't have a feeling of attachment, sharing of knowledge is not implemented correctly and also "organizational silence" takes place in such organizations. There are also researches available towards examining the correlations between the organizational and managerial dimensions of silence, organizational silence and organizational loyalty, personnel performance, organizational justice and leadership style. Nevertheless, a research examining the relationship between employee silence and perceived organization culture hasn't been seen. Within this context, answer to the question "Is there is a relationship between organizational silence climate and employees silent behaviours?" is being searched for in this study. In this respect this study tries to answer this question and

To answer this question, the relevant literature was analysed, a survey was conducted statistical techniques were used to test the relationships among the variables of employee silence, organizational silence and the effects of employee silence on organizational silence.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Silence and Organizational Silence

In the past, the fact that employees remained silent was considered a matter of adaptation, while today this situation is seen as a reaction and recession.

Employee silence, which is defined as situation in which the employees can not comfortably express their opinions and ideas about specific problems, has the power to affect the way organizations develop and change in a negative way So, it is highly important that employers should be helpful to their employees in expressing their opinions and demands. Organizational silence is defined as the condition where the employees do not share their opinions or concerns about the company issues with both their employers and their colleagues. (Ozdemir and Ugur, 2013). Due to the fear of having opposing ideas, losing their jobs, getting excluded, people prefer remaining silent. Silence has five dualistic functions. As a first function, silence not only makes people come together, it also separates them. Secondly, it can both harm and heal people's relations with each other As a third function, silence both provides information and conceals it. Fourthly, it indicates both deep thought and no thought. As a final function, silence has the function of conveying both consent and assent. (Pinder and Harlos, 2001).

2.2. Factors Leading to Organizational Silence

Basic factors leading to organizational silence include values that are accepted without questioning, ideas that are expressed wrongly, and lack of cooperation among employees. (Ulker and Kanten, 2005).

Organizational Factors

These factors are:

- Organizational Culture: It is a system that is composed of a set of behaviors, beliefs, attitudes and habits that shape the actions of individuals or groups. (Guclu, 2003).

- Organizational Injustice Culture: It is considered as a factor that plays an important role in determining a fair environment and the behaviors of the employees.

- Organizational Silence Climate: İn certain case employees might not feel comfortable while expressing their ideas in presence of their employers. In such situations, if employers shows an aggressive reaction to their employees, the employees might avoid expressing their opinions. Although this situation is evidently against the organization policies, it might create a silence climate among the employees. (Morrison and Milliken, 2000). There are three important dimensions that cause the employers to recognize the silence climate.

These are the managers' behaviors and attitudes, department/unit managers' behaviors and attitudes, and communication facilities within the organization. (Mayhew and others 2006).

Management's Attitude

One of the reasons of organizational silence is managers' assumptions about the performance of the employees and the management within the company. According to one of these assumptions, employers believe that employees are not trustable. The managers might be afraid to receive negative reactions from their employees and this could lead to silence within the organization. In such a case, it has been observed that employers feel threatened as a result of their employees' negative reactions even though these reactions are about the future plans of the company. (Milliken and Morrison, 2000).

Department/Unit Manager's Attitude

Unit managers are responsible for managing the employees- the ones at the lowest level of hierarchy within the organization- who are expected to perform certain work or activities. The job description of unit managers also includes the management of the employers, evaluation of organizational output and the presentation of required information to the management. (Ulker and Kanten, 2009).

Communication Facilities Within the Organization

Communications is an important factor in order for companies to emerge, maintain their activities and achieve their goals. In addition, employees are able to express their social and psychological situations

thanks to communication, which is why it is crucial that there should be a correct communication between employees and employer (Johkle and Duhan, 2000).

Administrative Factors

One of the factors that cause employees in an organization to remain silent is the feeling of a possible negative reaction from their administrators in certain cases where they speak up or the belief that they will lose their jobs (Morrison and Milliken, 2000). Administrative factors leading to organizational silence are administrators' fear of receiving negative feedback, their prejudice against the employee performance, structure of the administration, and homogeneity of the administration.

Individual Factors

Employees choose to remain silent not only as a result of their personal experiences in the work place, but also as a result of observations of their colleagues (Morrison, Milliken and Hewin; 2003). Among the reasons why employees do not explicitly express their ideas to the administration are past experiences, fear of isolation, lack of trust, fear of damaging their relationships with colleagues or the administration.

National/Cultural Factors

2.3. Silent Behaviors of the Employees

Even though organizational silence has been increasing within organizations, not enough academic research has been conducted about this issue. Although Morrison and Milliken have conducted their studies about organizational silence, sufficient data has not been acquired. In their research, they aimed to analyze the process, reasons and conditions of organizational silence. Taking Morrison and Milliken's research into consideration, Pinder and Harlos started their research on organizational silence for further data. In the study, it is emphasized that silent behavior is crucial in terms of employee and organization performance.(Dyne and others, 2003). Studies show that social interactions and organizational incidents have a great impact on employees' reactions because it has been found that the stimuli resulting from social interaction has an effect on people's personalities (Amah and Okafor, 2008). It has also been emphasized that employee reactions differ depending on their sexes. It has been observed that compared to men, women have more tendency to remain silent (Brinsfield, 2009).

Acquiescent Silence

In the empirical studies, it has been concluded that in this kind of silence, employees have a relatively low participation in the improvement and development of the organization. Employees exhibit acquiescent silence by not effectively participating in organizational processes and by showing unwilling attitude to change this situation. The fact that employees have a perception of unimportance and powerlessness in the organizational processes, and have a tendency to accept the cases in which they have no effect within the organization is defined as acquiescent silence (Dyne and others, 2003). Because he accepts the conditions within the organization, the employee that is in the action of acquiescent silence does not have an effort to change the present conditions (Pinder ve Harlos, 2001).

Defensive Silence

In the basis of defensive silence, it is considered that the reason why employees prefer silence is fear. (Deniz and others, 2003). Based on fear, in order to defend himself/herself, employee prefers hiding his/her information and opinion. In other words, defensive silence can also be defined as a way of behavior that the employee deliberately adopts against threats within an organization (Dyne and others, 2003).

Pro-Social Silence

Pro social silence is defined as a situation in which the employee refuses to express his/her ideas, information and opinion even though it is in favor of himself/herself or the organization. What is important in this kind of silence is that employees avoid giving away secret information about their organization and individuals in the organization, which is in favor of the organization (Brinsfield, 2009). When certain employees have an inner will to express their feelings about the weaknesses of the organization, seeing that other employees do not feel comfortable about it, they might give in their effort to express their ideas. This is considered as a political behavior in which these employees aim not to hurt their colleagues but make them happy. As a result, employees do not share their opinion about possible solutions. The reason to this is that these employees choose to remain silent in order to maintain their smooth relationship with the decision makers and in order to maintain the organization success because they aim not to damage their relationships with the decision makers (Perlow and Repenning, 2007).

3. Research Methodology

This study aims to explain whether there is a relation between organizational silence climate and employees silence behaviours. We conducted a descriptive research through the questionnaire method to understand whether there is a relationship among fear, self defense, protecting relationships or indifference and employee silence.

In order to measure organizational silence we used the scales developed by Milliken et.al (2003), Vakola and Bouradas (2005). On the other hand, to measure the employees silent behaviors we used the scale developed by Dyne et.al (2003a,b) and Briensfield (2009).[9] And the third part is also designed to gather demographic variables as a complementary to the first two scales.

1.   Reliability

The overall reliability is measured by Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Our findings reveal that the organizational silence climate reliability of the sample is 0,703 and employees' silent behavior reliability of the sample is 0,892. These results indicate the reliability of scales used in that survey.

2. Sample

The research was conducted between the 1st of May and 31st of August 2013 in Antalya Training and Research Hospital. The target population of the study is composed of 1837 healthcare personnel. Stratified Sampling Method is determined as a sample selection criteria and 407 professional is selected from that population.

A pilot study was conducted before committing our full research. Accordingly, we interviewed with 20 persons concerning defined scales. After that the required corrections are made.

4. Findings

Our findings can be classified under two main sub-groups. While the first group reflects the demographic characteristics of participants, the second group includes some results concerning the hypothesis tests.

1. Demographic Qualities of the Office Employees Participating in the Research

The participants in this survey had a wide range of age groups, 3.7 % of those surveyed were aged below the 20 years old, 25.1 % of those surveyed were aged between 21 - 30 years old, 49.1 % were aged 31-40 years, 16.7 % were aged 41-50 years, 4.9 % were aged 51-60 years of age and 5 % were aged 61 years and over. Of the participants in the survey 71.3 % were female and 28.7 % were male. Marital status showed 41.5 % of the participants were single and 58.5 % were married. In the survey participants were asked to share their level of education. 8.6 % emphasized having completed only a high school education, 22.9 % of those surveyed indicated having completed vocational school, 42.3 % of participants had completed undergraduate, 12.5 % of those surveyed had completed graduate level with 13.7 % having completed PhD. The survey also recorded levels of work experience among participants. The study revealed that 13.0 % of respondents had been working below 1 years of experience, 40.3 % had been working 1-5 years, 21.6 % had been working 6-10 years, 16.5 % had been working 11-16 years with 8.6 % working more than 17 years.

The participants had a wide range of jobs groups 15,2% of them were specialist physicians, 8.6 % of those surveyed were physician assistants, 1.2 % of them were practicing assistants, 39.3 % of those were nurses, 1 % of those them were physical therapy and rehabilitation physicians, 5 % of those were dieticians, 1.2 % of those were pharmaceutics, 5 % of those were dentists, 32.4 % of those were other healthcare personnel.

2. Data Analysis and Hypotheses Test Results

The research is designed to test the two main hypotheses that are given below.

H1: There is a relationship between organizational silence climate and employees' silent behaviors.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model

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[9] Both scales have been used and adopted for a Turkish case by Alparsan (2010).

H2: There is a relationship between demographic features and employees' silent behaviors.

Demographic Feature ⟷ Employees' silent behaviors

Figure 2. Conceptual Model

In this study, the interaction between organizational silence climate and employees' silent behaviors in the field of health has been observed and it has been concluded that, organizational silence climate dimensions include the management's attitude, department/unit manager's attitude and communication facilities whereas employee silence behavior dimensions are composed of indifference and subjection based silence behavior, self-defense and fear based silence behavior, and pro social based silence behavior.

When we consider the findings of the correlation analysis that was conducted in order to indicate the relationship between organizational silence climate dimensions and employee silence behavior dimensions, it has been found that while there is a considerable and positive relation between employee silence behavior and management's attitude, the relation between department manager and employee silence behavior is considerable and negative.

These findings show us that not only management's attitude but also department/unit manager's attitude has an impact on the employee silence behaviors. It has also been observed that communication facilities do not have an impact on the pro-social silence behavior, and indifference and submission based silence behavior although communication facilities have an influence on the self-defense and fear based silence behavior.

		Management's attitude	Department/ unit manager's attitude	Communication facilities	Indifference and submission based silence behavior	Self-defense and fear based silence behavior	Pro-social silence behavior
Management's attitude	P.	1					
	Sig.	,000					
Department /unit manager's attitude	P.	-,247**	1				
	Sig.	,000					
Communication facilities	P.	-,229**	,425**	1			
	Anl.	,000	,000				
Indifference and submission based silence behavior	P.	,231**	-,166**	-,033	1		
	Sig.	,000	,001	,509			
Self-defense and fea based silence behavior	P.	,272**	-,262**	-,205**	,231**	1	
	Sig	,000	,000	,000	,000		
Pro-social silence behavior	P.	,201**	-,190**	,-023	,373**	,437**	1
	Sig.	,000	,000	,641	,000	,000	

*p<0.05, **p < 0.01
Table 1. Correlation-Means-Standard Deviation Coefficients

Various analyses have been made in order to understand if health care employees' silence behaviors differ in accordance to their demographical features. Firstly, it has been observed if healthcare employees' silence behaviors differ in terms of

their sexes. As in Table 2, indifference and submission based silence behavior, self-defense and

fear based silence behavior, and pro social silence behavior, which are all sub dimensions of silence behavior, are observed to differ in terms of sexes. It has been seen that female employees exhibit more silence behavior compared to the male.

EMPLOYEE SILENCE BEHAVIOUR	Sex	N	$\overline{X}$	Std. Dev.	T	Sig.
İndifference and submission based silence behavior	Female	290	2,5143	,65791	4,508	,000
	Male	117	2,1905	,65061		
Self-defense and fear based silence behavior.	Female	290	2,6409	,69361	4,236	,000
	Male	117	2,3024	,81329		
Pro-social silence behavior	Female	290	2,8730	,65551	1,972	,049
	Male	117	2,7265	,73189		

p<0,05

Table 2. Distribution of Employee Silence Behaviors and Sex

However as in table 2, it has been also found that health employees' marriage status does not have an effect on their silence behaviors.

EMPLOYEE SILENCE BEHAVIOUR	Age	N	$\overline{X}$	Std. Dev.	F	P
İndifference and submission based silence behavior	Below 20 years of age	15	2,4476	,62826	,910	,474
	21-30	102	2,3936	,84939		
	31-40	200	2,4407	,79999		
	41-50	68	2,4622	,80341		
	51-60	20	2,2929	,74044		
	Above 61 years of age	2	1,5714	23570		
Self-defense and fear based silence behavior.	Below 20 years of age	15	2,2417	,62826	2,748	,019
	21-30	102	2,5270	,84939		
	31-40	200	2,6281	,79999		
	41-50	68	2,4816	,80341		
	51-60	20	2,3563	,74044		
	Above 61 years of age	2	1,1875	23570		
Pro-social silence behavior	Below 20 years of age	15	2,7444	,62826	,444	,818

21-30	102	2,8415	,84939		
31-40	200	2,8417	,79999		
41-50	68	2,8260	,80341		
51-60	20	2,8167	,74044		
Above 61 years of age	2	2,1667	23570		

p<0,05

Table 3. Distribution of Employee Silence Behaviors and Age

According to table 3, another finding is that there is not a considerable relation between age and employee silence behavior dimensions, such as *indifference and submission based silence behavior*, *pro-social silence behavior*. On the other hand, it has been seen that *self-protection and fear based silence behavior* has a considerable relation with the sample group's age range. While it has been found that health employees above the age of 60 have less *self-protection and fear based silence behavior*, health employees between the age of 31 and 40 have an intensive tendency for this dimension of silence behavior. In addition, it has been observed that the health employees' years of experience does not have an impact on the employees' silence behavior. Health employees' silence behaviors have been observed to differ according to their jobs.

EMPLOYEE SILENCE BEHAVIOUR	JOBS	N	$\overline{X}$	Std. Dev.	F	Sig.
İndifference and submission based silence behavior	Nurses	160	2,5321	,66832	4,691	,000
	Dentists	2	1,0000	,00000		
Self-defense and fear based silence behavior.	Nurses	160	2,5977	,66892	3,236	,001
	Dentists	2	1,0000	,00000		
Pro-social silence behavior	Physical therapy and Rehabilitation Physicians,	4	3,2083	,25000	2,376	,017
	Dentists	2	1,7500	,11785		

p<0,05

Table 4. Distribution of Employee Silence Behaviors and Jobs

According to table 4, ıt has been found that the employee group that is least affected by the employee silence behavior dimensions is dentists. When we take a look at the highest averages, it has been found that nurses show the highest degree of *indifference and submission based silence behavior,* and *self-protection and fear based silence behavior.* However, *pro-social silence behavior* has been seen to be intensively high among the physical therapy and rehabilitation physicians.

As a last finding, it has been observed that education level of the employees does not have an effect on their silence behaviors.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

When the literature review and research findings are taken into consideration, it can be concluded that although employees' behavior of silence is perceived by the management as a kind of acceptance of

all the conditions in a work place, it does not necessarily mean that employees always agree with or accept all conditions.

The reason is that though employees do not accept the conditions provided by the management, in order to protect their relation with the management or protect themselves, they might prefer remaining silent. If employees who consciously or unconsciously show the behavior of silence do not express their ideas and opinions about the organization, this could affect the organization in a negative way. It is not easy for the employees to express their ideas comfortably in an organization. The first thing to do to solve this problem of silence within an organization is that management should create a more transparent communication network between the employees and the management, as a result of which employees will feel more comfortable in expressing their opinions.

The employees who feel that their ideas and opinions are valued by the management will trust their organizations more and as a result, this will prevent the silence climate from happening within an organization. If job security and principle of meritocracy are promoted in an organization, it will lead to an increase in employee commitment and a decrease in fear, which in turn, will create suitable conditions to stop organizational silence within a company. As far as the findings of this study are concerned, it has been found that compared to men, women have a relatively bigger tendency to show silence behavior. In order to decrease silence behaviors within an organization, the management should periodically organize seminars in which employees feel more confident in terms of expressing their opinions.

Besides, nurses compared to other occupational groups were found to be silent. For this reason especially for nurses an organizational climate in which they are able to express themselves and feel that their opinions are valuable should be set. Besides for employees who protect themselves and who prefer fear based silence to express their ideas explicitly suggestion boxes or such formal arrangements can be planned. In this study, the interaction between organizational silence climate and health employees' silence behaviors has been analyzed.

Studies to be carried out in the future can be done on employees working in different units and fields, too.

Departing from these results, we believe that the different aspects of the organizational silence could be examined. For instance, studying the correlation between organization culture and the types of silence and the impacts of personal qualities over the silence would be an important contribution to the existing literatures. Finally, a focus on the effects of organizational silence on employees' work performance and the employees' commitment to the organization can also be considered as the potential for the further studies.

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