

Teachers' perception of organizational culture and trust relation

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ABSTRACT

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This survey explores the effect of organizational culture on organizational trust. The study group includes 253 primary and secondary school teachers working in Balıkesir, Turkey and the study has a descriptive survey design. The data was collected by School Culture Scale and Organizational Trust Scale. The results showed that the duty culture is the dominant school culture. It is the principal that the teachers trust the most. The secondary school teachers believe that a success oriented and supportive atmosphere exists at workplace and trust their coworkers more than they do the principal. The support and duty dimensions of organizational culture are significant predictors of organizational trust. Based on the results of the study, it can be suggested that school administrators enhance a supportive culture at their institutions. The theoretical significance of the study is that the results of the study will help to better understand the organizational behavior and the practical significance of the study is that these results can be used to increase the organizational efficiency.

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Organizational culture has been a central topic in the organization and management related literature for past twenty years. Research studies focusing on the relation between organizational culture and other organizational variables have been carried out both in educational institutions and other public and private organizations. Some of these studies dealt with organizational commitment (Demir & Öztürk, 2011; Sezgin, 2010), some with organizational citizenship behaviors (İpek & Saklı, 2012), and some with leadership (Tütüncü & Akgündüz, 2012; Acar, 2013). Numerous studies focused on organizational trust and organizational culture separately to study their relation with other organizational variables (Demirel, 2008; Taşdan & Yalçın, 2010; Çıtır & Kavi, 2010), yet few studies considered

organizational trust and organizational culture together (Mahdavi Fard, Zahed Babelan, & Sattari, 2013; Haugen, 2010; Weck & Ivanova, 2013). Organizational culture is defined in various ways, but a commonly accepted definition refers to the way we do things around here. Using this definition, the present study intends to find out the extent to which organizational culture is related to organizational trust. The theoretical significance of the study is that the results of the study will help better understand the organizational behavior and the practical significance of the study is that these results can be used to increase the organizational efficiency.

Organizational Trust

According to dictionary definition, trust is having belief and being committed without any fear, intimidation, and doubt. It is a crucial factor that should be considered in building and maintaining relations between individuals. Trust is unique to the individual, while organizational trust entails the entire organization (Demirel, 2008). Organizational trust is the employees' belief that the organization will act towards their benefit, or at least will not act towards their harm (Tan & Tan, 2000). The organizations where there is high level of trust among employers are commonly observed to be more successful, adaptable, and flexible (Tüzün, 2007). In such organizations, employees recognize the support provided by the employers and believe that the administrators will keep their promises (Durdağ & Naktiyok, 2011; Mishra & Morrissey, 1990). Gilbert & Tang (1998) furthers the definition of organizational trust by indicating four basic factors on which it is established; these factors include open communication in the organization, effective role of employees in the decision making process, information sharing, and sharing of feelings and expectations. Similarly, Tüzün (2007) takes organizational trust in relation with the atmosphere, defining it as an employer's having positive expectations from other employers' intentions and acts. In organizations where the members have high trust, greater responsibility is given to those in lower levels of the organizational structure and a flexible organizational structure tends to be built. On the other hand, in organizations where members have low trust, the employers are suffocated with rules and subject to strict surveillance (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). In fact, organizational trust has an effect on as many variables as the spirits of employees, organizational culture, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, occupational burn-out, and organizational cynicism (Demirel, 2008; Huff & Kelley, 2003; Türköz, Polat, & Coşar, 2013; Uslu & Ardiç, 2013; Yücel & Samancı, 2009).

Research on organizational trust has been threefold: trust for the organization, trust for colleagues, and administrators (Tan & Tan, 2000; Tüzün, 2007; Uslu & Ardiç, 2013). Trust for organization involves employees' perception of support provided to them by the organization; trust for administrators refers to expectations among individuals for a particular parameter; and trust for colleagues implies mutual trust in relations (Tokgöz & Seymen, 2013). In school organizations, students have to trust their teachers to learn, and all the school workers who have come together for organizational goals have to trust each other to achieve these goals (Ayık, Savaş, & Çelikel, 2014). Trust at school is a concept that entails accountability, gains, and democracy. The importance of organizational trust becomes all the more important at schools that its impact range is greater than its power range.

Organizational Culture

Definitions of organization culture and related concepts are mostly based on sociological (organizations have a culture) and anthropological (organizations are culture) foundations. In each of these disciplines, two different cultural approaches were developed: functionalist approach (culture is derived from collective behavior) and semiotic approach (culture depends on personal interpretation and cognitive perception). The first approach assumes that researchers can distinguish between the organizational cultures, change cultures, and measure them experimentally. The second approach assumes that nothing but culture exists in the organizations and an individual who has encountered some culture at some time has actually experienced an organizational phenomenon (Cameron & Ettington, 1988; Cameron & Quinn, 2006). Bratianu (2007) defines organizational culture as a powerful adhesive of intellectual capital, and likens the compound to a foundation which prepares two or more elements for a mutual dependence and thus to a new identity based on synergy.

A common statement made by the related literature is that organizational culture is a “social adhesive” that puts the organization together. Organizational culture implies “the way we do things around here” (Cameron, 2008; Cameron & Ettington, 1988). It has various features, namely holistic, historical (social heritage, transference of past to future), behavioral (human behaviors that is learned and shared, life style), normative (ideals, values, life rules), functional (cohabiting and solving adaptation problems), mental (habits acquired for social control), and structural feature (symbolic behaviors that show a certain pattern and relation) (Ghinea & Bratianu, 2012). Just as every organization has a cultural framework drawn according to the aims of the organization, school organizations have cultural frameworks. This is a framework that hinges on “learner and learning”. Various definitions of school culture elements exist in the literature. According to Brown (2004), the elements of school culture are an exemplary vision, clear mission, focus on learner gains, openness to change and novelty, flexible leadership, data-based decision making systems, collective celebration of individual and group achievements, consistent parental support, and effective time management for accomplishment of tasks. According to Hoy & Miskel (2008), these elements are cooperative learning and teaching, endeavor for academic success, openness in communication, and for Fyans & Maehr (1990), they are sustainable academic success, focus on perfectionism, social recognition gained for success, and perceived sense of community. School culture represents the assumptions developed based on previous problems, which helps to better understand the entity of organization (Angelides & Ainscow, 2000; Roach and Kratochwill, 2004). The cultural approach to school is based on the assumptions that teachers and students at school, intentionally or unintentionally, reach an agreement on how they do things at school, and that they are dramatically influenced by the routine school activities (Terzi, 2000; Terzi, 2007). Indeed, some studies which investigated the effect of students’ perception of school culture on student performance (Marcoulides, Heck, & Papanastasiou, 2005) showed that the perception of the cultural surrounding of school is influential on students’ performance. The school culture is described by the metaphor of air, the existence of which is unnoticed until it is polluted (Freiberg, 1998). Any teacher, or employee, student, and parent of a school will naturally prefer to be a part of a school providing appealing conditions. An example to such an environment is a school which students and teachers are happy to be a part of and where they

feel safe and physically comfortable (Freiberg, 1998; Hansen & Childs, 1998; Hinde, 2004). On the other hand, the schools which have a negative culture are insecure places, where teachers are reluctant to change, use a sarcastic way of communication, negativity has pervaded all the levels, and members tell about failure stories (Deal & Peterson, 1998). Not incidentally, the categories of organizational culture are as varied as its definitions (Terzi, 2000). The present study employed the support, bureaucratic, success, and duty categorization of culture developed by Terzi (2005). In support culture, relations established between the individuals in the organization and trust are of utmost importance. Bureaucratic culture gives particular importance to the structural form of the organization and to the roles individuals play in this structure. In success culture, achievement of organizational goals and effective accomplishment of tasks by individuals are the focal points. Duty culture, on the other hand, places the work done in a central position and expects that any work done in an organization serve a particular purpose (Kılınç, 2014; Terzi, 2005). The unseen face of the organization called school is composed of cultural values, norms, and believes. Just as oxygen is a fundamental element of water so is trust a fundamental element of culture.

Research Questions

This study explored the relation between organizational culture and organizational trust. To this end, it sought answers to the following research questions:

1. How do teachers' perception of organizational culture and organizational trust differ according to the level of schools?
2. Is organizational culture a significant predictor of organizational trust?

Method

The study has a descriptive survey design. Data was analyzed by a Likert type "Organizational Culture Scale" and "Organizational Trust Scale". The study group is comprised of 253 primary and secondary school teachers working in Edremit, Savaştepe and Şındırgı provinces of Balıkesir in Turkey during 2014–2015 academic years. The total number of teachers working in these schools is 690, 297 being primary school teachers, and 293 secondary school teachers. Thus, the sample represents the population with a ratio of 36.6%.

Instruments

Organizational Culture Scale

The Organizational Culture Scale employed in this study was developed by Terzi (2005) and has been commonly used in the literature (Esinbay, 2008; Kılınç, 2014; Özdemir, 2013; Sezgin, 2010; Tanrıöğen, Baştürk & Başer, 2014). The scale has 29 five-point Likert scale type items. The scale has four dimensions including support culture, success culture, bureaucratic culture, and duty culture. Support culture is formed of 8 items (e.g. people at this school like one another.) The success culture dimension is comprised of 6 items (e.g. everyone can express his or her opinion freely about the school practices). Bureaucratic culture is comprised of 9 items (e.g. being a senior member means being privileged at this school). The duty culture is made up of 6 items (e.g. doing the scheduled task has priority in this school). The scale is a Likert type scale with five response options from 1 "Never" to 5 "Always". The higher each value is for

the scale factors, the stronger the organizational culture feature is for that dimension. Although the reliability and validity have proved to be high in the studies which used this scale (Sezgin, 2010; Terzi, 2005), exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was re-applied to the scale. It was found that the scale is four dimensional just as in the original version. The KMO value of the scale was .90, and Barlett value was .00. The total variance which explains all four dimensions was found to be 55%. Reliability analysis values (Cronbach alpha) are .70 for duty dimension, .85 for support culture, .82 for success culture, and .79 for bureaucratic dimension. The total Cronbach Alfa (α) coefficient for the scale is .91.

Organizational Trust Scale

A 20-item version of “Multi-purpose T Scale” developed by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2003) and adapted to Turkish by Özer, Demirtaş, Üstüner, and Cömert (2006) was used. The scale is comprised of three dimensions, namely trust for colleagues, trust for parents and students, and trust for the school principal. The first dimension, trust for colleagues, is made up of 7 items (e.g. teachers in my institution trust each other); the second dimension is trust for parents and students, which is made up of 8 items (e.g. the students at this school conceal their true feelings and opinions); and the last dimension, trust for the school principal, is made up of 5 items (e.g. our school principal is capable of managing this school). Özer et al. (2006) calculated the Cronbach’s Alpha reliability values of the scale: .82 (the first dimension), .70 (the second dimension), .87 (the third dimension), and .86 (overall). Exploratory factor analysis was performed again for the scale. It was seen that the scale is four dimensional as in the original form. KMO value of the scale is .89, and the Barlett value is .00. The variance value for three dimensions is 68%. The reliability values of the scale (Cronbach’s Alpha) are .81 for the first dimension, .72 for the second dimension, .88 for the third dimension, and .87 overall.

Results

Table 1 presents the results pertaining to the first research question.

Table 1
T-test for the Difference between Teachers’ Opinions according to School Types

Sub-Dimensions	School Type	N	χ^2	SD	t	p
Support Culture	Primary	130	3.76	.81	-2.307	.022*
	Secondary	123	3.97	.58		
Duty Culture	Primary	130	4.41	.75	-.950	.343
	Secondary	123	4.77	.55		
Success Culture	Primary	130	3.79	.82	-2.268	.024*
	Secondary	123	4.00	.65		
Bureaucratic Culture	Primary	130	3.07	.65	-.792	.429
	Secondary	123	3.14	.64		
Trust for Principal	Primary	130	4.26	.82	-1.649	.100
	Secondary	123	4.41	.64		
Trust for Colleagues	Primary	130	3.88	.75	-2.176	.031*
	Secondary	123	4.06	.55		
Trust Students and Parents	Primary	130	3.31	.72	.989	.325
	Secondary	123	3.23	.64		

Table 1 demonstrates that according to teachers, duty culture was dominant at schools (primary school: $X^2=4.41$, $SD=.75$; secondary school: $X^2=4.77$, $SD=.55$). Regarding the organizational trust, it was the school principal teachers that trusted the most (primary school: $X^2=4.26$, $SD=.82$; secondary school: $X^2=4.41$, $SD=.64$). Considering the support and success culture, teachers' opinions differed significantly. Secondary school teachers believed that support and success cultures existed at their school. Regarding the organizational trust, secondary school teachers trusted their colleagues more (primary school $X^2=3.88$, $SD=.75$; secondary school: $X^2=4.06$, $SD=.55$ $p=.031$; $p<.05$).

Table 2 presents the results pertaining to the second research question.

Table 2
Multivariate Regression Analysis for Prediction of Organizational Trust

Variable	B	Standard Error	β	t	p	Paired r	Partial r
Constant	1.250	.168	-	7.423	.000	-	-
Support	0.369	.062	.491	5.917	.000	.352	.256
Duty	0.249	.045	.258	4.651	.000	.283	.201
Success	0.047	.061	.066	.780	.436	.049	.034
Bureaucratic	0.017	.039	.020	.429	.668	.027	.019
R= 0.732	R ² = 0.536						
F= 71.575	p= 0.000						

As can be seen in Table 2, organizational trust could be predicted by the organizational culture dimensions ($R=.73$; $F=71.575$; $p=.000$). With the support, duty, success, and bureaucratic dimensions of organizational culture, it could explain 54% of the change in organizational trust ($R=0.732$, $R^2=0.536$). According to standardized regression coefficients, the effect of predictive variables on organizational trust were in the following order: Support culture ($\beta=.491$), duty culture ($\beta=.258$), success culture ($\beta=.066$), and bureaucratic culture ($\beta=.020$). The significance of regression coefficients showed that support and duty cultures were significant predictors of organizational trust ($p<.01$). Success and bureaucratic cultures, on the other hand, were not significant predictors of organizational trust.

An overall analysis of correlations revealed that support culture and organizational trust correlated by 35%, duty culture and trust by 28%, success culture and trust by 4%, and bureaucratic culture and trust by 3%. The effect of culture dimensions on each other was also analyzed and correlations were found between the following pairs: support culture and trust (26%), duty culture and trust (20%), success culture and organizational trust (3%), and bureaucratic culture and organizational trust (2%). The regression equation of prediction of organizational trust by organizational culture was formulated as follows:

Organizational trust= (1.250) + (0.369 support) + (0.249 duty) + (0.047 success) + (0.017 bureaucratic).

Discussion

This study aimed to analyze the connection between organizational culture and organizational trust based on the opinions of primary and secondary school teachers. The findings of the study have revealed that the dominant culture is the duty culture and the highest level trust dimension is trust for the principal. There are significant differences between teachers as regards support

and success culture and trust for colleagues. These results are in accordance with those of other studies (Tanrıöğen, Baştürk, & Başer, 2014) which used the same scale. The research has revealed that teachers trust the principals the most. Studies exist in the literature that support this finding (Ayık, Savaş, & Çelikel, 2014; Bilgiç, 2011; Çelik, 2015). However, there are some other studies, whose findings contradict with this result (Baş & Şentürk, 2011; Bökeoğlu & Yılmaz, 2008). Studies in the latter group have shown that teachers trust more to their colleagues whereas they trust their principals less. Akın & Orman (2015) also dealt with the relation between levels of teachers' organizational trust and organizational commitment and found that teachers trust students and parents the most. These two groups are followed by colleagues and principals.

The results of the study revealed that organizational culture significantly predict organizational trust, which is confirmed by many studies in the related literature. Kahveci and Demirtaş (2014) performed a study in primary and secondary schools and found that organizational culture is a significant predictor of organizational trust. Similarly, Alizadeh and Panahi (2013) pointed to the significant and positive relation between organizational culture and organizational trust. Some research studies have found positive and significant relations between organizational culture and organizational trust. Ellonen (2005) also focused on the relation between trust and organizational culture and found that clan and adhocracy cultures have a positive and significant effect on organizational trust while hierarchy culture has negative effect. Yüksel (2009), who carried out a study in educational institutions, also found that a significant and positive relation exists between organizational culture and organizational trust. Koşar & Yalçinkaya (2013) provided evidence for the effect of teachers' organizational trust levels on the organizational behavior and for the fact that teachers' perception of organizational culture in their workplace has an intermediary influence on this effect to a certain extent. One of the remarkable results of the study is that a supportive school culture increases teachers' sense of trust. It is also noteworthy that a bureaucratic culture has little effect on organizational trust.

Conclusion

The present study intends to explore the interaction between organizational culture and organizational trust in relation with primary and secondary school teachers. The findings of the study revealed that the duty culture is the most dominant culture as perceived by the teachers. It is the school principal that teachers trust the most. Following this, trust for students and parents ranked the lowest. Data derived from teachers significantly vary in terms of the relation between support and success culture and trust for colleagues.

The major finding of the study is that organizational culture is a significant predictor of organizational trust and support culture was found to be the most powerful predictor of trust. Another major finding seems to be that bureaucratic culture has little, if any, effect on trust. This can be attributed to the fact that the processes of the school organization do not take place over official documents but rather through informal network.

In the related literature, there are varied results concerning the sub-variables of organizational trust and culture, which can be attributed to the differences in data collection instruments and samples used. Nevertheless, it is commonly acknowledged in the literature that

organizational culture is a significant predictor of organizational trust and that there are significant and positive relations between the two as regards culture. The findings of the present study, as well as those in the related literature, seem to suggest that teachers' positive perception of school culture increases organizational trust. Based on the results of the study, it can be suggested that school administrators enhance a supportive culture at their institutions, which inherently fits the realm of schools. Not incidentally, teachers trust school principals more than they do their colleagues because the school principal is a remarkable symbol of the school culture. As the research was carried out with a small study group, further research should be conducted with a greater sample size and in schools with different cultures, which will increase the generalizability of results and shed light onto the cultural background of organizational trust.

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