

## Organizational Silence in Sports Employees

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### Abstract

Organizational silence can be defined as a way of behaviour belonging to men and women employees in the organization exhibited without reflecting their feelings, ideas, concerns and suggestions related with their workplaces, works for which they are responsible or other activities of the organization. In the period of organizational silence, silence, in other words, decision of not talking clearly about problems and subjects, is an important subject to be laid emphasis on when it is considered that it prevents organizational learning, decreases revealing of different ideas within the organization, prevents innovativeness and creativeness. In this regard, the purpose of this study was to investigate the sports employees, according to some variable of organizational behavior silence. Sports expert and trainers participated in the research, who were employed in Mugla and Antalya Provincial Directorate of Youth Welfare. 52.8% (67 people) of sports employees participated in the research were male whereas 47.2% (60 people) were female. "Organizational Silence Scale" developed by Cakici (2008) and adapted by Soycan (2010) was used. The data obtained from the scale in the research were analyzed by means of SPSS 21.0 statistical software program. In the research, frequency analysis to compare the groups and t-test (gender, marital status, age groups) as well as Anova tests to investigate the differences between groups were used. Consequently, a significant difference was found between the perception of organizational silence in sports employees and gender variable. It was determined that values of organizational silence sub-dimensions of female employees such as administrative and organizational causes, subjects related with work, lack of experience, isolation and fair of damnification in relations were higher than those of male employees. Female sports employees indicated organizational silence behaviour more. Depending on the findings of the research, it was suggested for the directors of Youth Welfares to form a participant culture in their institutions, to encourage their female sports employees to talk clearly and to increase the frequency of interviews with them.

**Keywords:** organizational silence, sports employees, gender

### 1. Introduction

The concept of organizational silence was first introduced in 1980s in the theories of administrative justice, which had been formed following the ethical and administrative scandals happened at that time. During the 1980's, silence and voice were studied through the lens of justice theory. Issues of fairness and mechanisms of voice in organizational settings were the main focus. The exposure of corporate scandals and ethics violations brought a scholarly focus on whistle blowing and boat rocking. In the 1990's, scholars continued to focus on voice mechanisms and it was not until the year 2000, as a result of Morrison and Milliken's highly publicized article in the *Academy of Management Review*, that scholars began to focus on the relation between management practices, organizational policies and silence and other antecedents to a "climate of silence" (Bogosian, 2012).

Silence is preserving of employees their ideas, information and opinions about improvement of their work and institution meaningly (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Although organizational silence is a difficult type of expression feelingly, it is an effective way of expressing satisfied or unsatisfied situations in the organization (Bagheri et al., 2012). In the study of Henriksen and Dayton (2006), organizational silence was defined as a collective fact by talking less or acting with opinions that might be a solution for important problems faced by

the organization. Along with organizational silence and silence concepts are investigated as active, deliberate, intentional and purposeful behaviour (Çakıcı, 2007), it was determined that the employees having high level of education were more aware towards silence and considered this as a problem (Çakıcı, 2010).

The reasons which affect the preferences of organizational silence, can be referred to organizational, administrative and personal factors (Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003). Organizational silence directly leaves impression on decision making process and limits organizational efficiency. When silence prevails in the organization, employees cannot make qualified decisions and changes there. They cannot lead to developments in the organization. When they have mistakes associated with the organization, they cannot check them. They still keep on making mistakes without correcting them. So especially the managers of organization must cope with organizational silence and analyze it in details (Panahi & Danaeifard, 2010).

Cakici's (2008) opinion clears out that the employees have necessary information about the development of organizations even though they do not tell the authorized persons in the organizations. They prefer to become silent. There are some reasons for not sharing these issues with the authorized ones. For instance, the employees do not want to lose their coworkers' trust and they may have lose their jobs. Communicative problems may occur between the employees and the managers. But these problems may be solved with types of communication mechanisms such as face-to-face meetings, evaluation meetings between the employees and the managers.

The employees think that their organizational commitment, organizational trust and job satisfaction are affected in negative ways when they keep in silence, even they may resign from their jobs in such a situation. When they cannot express their opinions, they have negative feelings as well (Detert & Edmondson, 2005). In addition to these, Park and Keil (2009) considered silence from a different angle and divided into three dimensions including intentional silence (that is, employees prefer to keep in silence), defensive silence (that is, employees keep in silence in order not to have conflicts with other people and their own interests) and collective silence (that is, employees compromise to keep in silence).

Organizational structure, character, fear of negative feedback, organizational and environmental factors, leadership style, organizational climate and culture, conformance with general ideas, decision-making processes, management processes, culture and perceptions (Afkhani & Sadrabad, 2012; Greenberg & Edwards, 2009). Those ideas, opinions and information expressed and silenced it's not often stress, anxiety, dissatisfaction and depression and finally decreased interest in work and job commitment and the reasons are leaving their jobs (Perlow & Repenning, 2009; Nikmaram et al., 2012). In this regard, the main purpose of this research was to investigate organizational silence behaviour of sports employees in terms of some variables.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1 The Method of the Study*

The study was conducted with relational scanning model, which is one of the general scanning models. "Scanning Models are the research approaches that aim to describe an existing or past situation as is" (Karasar, 2000). "Relational scanning models aim to determine the existence or the level of the co-variation between two or more variables" (Karasar, 2000).

### *2.2 The Universe and the Sampling of the Study*

The universe of the study consists of Provincial Directorate of Youth Welfare employees, sampling group is consisting of 67 male, 60 female employees from Mugla and Antalya provinence.

### *2.3 Data Collection Tool*

"Organizational Silence Scale" developed by Cakici (2008) and adapted by Soyacan (2010) was used. In an earlier research, Cakici (2008) designed a survey that groups the reasons why employees choose to remain silent at work. The questionnaire consists of five groups of reasons: administrative and organizational reasons (13 items), subjects related with work (6 items), lack of experience (4 items), fear of isolation (4 items), and fear of damaging relationships (3 items). The question of "to what extent do the following reasons affect you to remain silent?" was asked to each respondent. Responses are categorized using a 5-point Likert Scale and ranged as, "Very ineffective" (coded 1), "Ineffective" (coded 2), "Neither effective nor ineffective" (coded 3), "Effective" (coded 4), and "Very effective" (coded 5) for each item. Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for the employees remain silent questionnaire and obtained an Alpha score of 0.945.

The data were collected with face to face meeting and questionnaires filled out by participants.

### 2.4 The Analysis of Data

The data obtained from the scale in the research were analyzed by means of SPSS 21.0 statistical software program. In the research, frequency analysis as well as t-test (gender, marital status, age groups) and Anova tests were used to compare the groups and to investigate the differences between groups.

### 3. Results

Table 1. Demographic information of sports employees participated in the research

Variables	Groups	N	%
Gender	Female	60	47.2
	Male	67	52.8
Age	18-24	43	33.9
	25-34	51	40.2
	35-39	33	26.0
	40 and over 40	37	20.7
Marital Status	Married	83	65.4
	Single	44	34.6
Total		127	100.0

Table 2. Investigation of organizational silence sub-dimensions of participants in terms of gender variable

Organizational Silence Sub-dimensions	Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	ss	t	p
Administrative and Organizational Reasons	Female	60	3.52	.602	5.835	0.00*
	Male	67	2.75	.848		
Subjects related with work	Female	60	3.28	.722	3.618	0.00*
	Male	67	2.72	.991		
Lack of Experience	Female	60	2.97	.639	6.846	0.00*
	Male	67	2.12	.749		
Fear of Isolation	Female	60	3.16	.730	3.634	0.00*
	Male	67	2.58	1.01		
Fear of damaging relationships	Female	60	3.26	.680	3.540	0.01*
	Male	67	2.72	.992		

\*p < 0.05

As it can be seen in Table 2, properties of administrative and organizational reasons, subjects related with work, lack of experience, fear of isolation and fear of damaging relationships which are sub-dimensions of organizational silence were significantly different in terms of gender variable ( $p < 0.05$ ). While silence due to administrative and organizational reasons was  $3.52 \pm .602$  in females, it was found as  $2.75 \pm .848$  in males. Silence due to subjects related with work was determined as  $3.28 \pm .722$  for females whereas it was  $2.72 \pm .991$  in males. Silence depending on lack of experience was  $2.97 \pm .639$  for females while it was  $2.12 \pm .749$  in males. Silence related with fear of isolation was found for females and males as  $3.16 \pm .730$  and  $2.58 \pm 1.01$ , respectively. Silence depending on fear of damaging relationships was  $3.26 \pm .680$  for females whereas it was found as  $2.72 \pm .992$  for males. It was indicated that organizational silence behaviour was found higher in female employees.

Table 3. Investigation of organizational silence sub-dimensions of participants in terms of marital status variable

Organizational Silence Sub-dimensions	Marital Status	N	$\bar{X}$	ss	t	p
Administrative and Organizational Reasons	Married	60	3.08	.868	-.667	0.506
	Single	67	3.18	.772		
Subjects related with work	Married	60	2.89	.889	-1.573	0.127
	Single	67	3.16	.949		
Lack of Experience	Married	60	2.50	.798	-.484	0.636
	Single	67	2.57	.853		
Fear of Isolation	Married	60	2.77	.907	-1.515	0.142
	Single	67	3.03	.974		
Fear of damaging relationships	Married	60	2.89	.880	-1.491	0.138
	Single	67	3.14	.916		

$p > 0.05$

It can be seen in Table 3, properties of administrative and organizational reasons, subjects related with work, lack of experience, fear of isolation and fear of damaging relationships which are sub-dimensions of organizational silence were not significantly different in terms of marital status variable ( $p > 0.05$ ). It was determined that whether the sports employees were married or single did not affect the level of organizational silence. However, it was observed that organizational silence average values of single sports employees were higher than those of married sports employees.

Table 4. Investigation of organizational silence sub-dimensions of participants in terms of working period variable

Organizational Silence Sub-dimensions	Working Period in the organization	N	$\bar{X}$	ss	F	p
Administrative and Organizational Reasons	1-5 years	43	3.21	.895	0.825	0.441
	6-10 years	51	3.00	.929		
	11-15 years	33	3.17	.550		
Subjects related with work	1-5 years	43	3.00	.982	1.562	0.214
	6-10 years	51	2.84	.914		
	11-15 years	33	3.20	.803		
Lack of Experience	1-5 years	43	2.68	.881	2.363	0.098
	6-10 years	51	2.33	.787		
	11-15 years	33	2.61	.729		
Fear of Isolation	1-5 years	43	2.89	.989	0.781	0.460
	6-10 years	51	2.74	.950		
	11-15 years	33	3.00	.840		
Fear of damaging relationships	1-5 years	43	3.00	.967	0.182	0.166
	6-10 years	51	2.82	.877		
	11-15 years	33	3.20	.803		

As it can be seen in Table 4, properties of administrative and organizational reasons, subjects related with work, lack of experience, fear of isolation and fear of damaging relationships which are sub-dimensions of organizational silence were not significantly different in terms of working period variable ( $p > 0.05$ ). Although a significant difference was not found for organizational silence behaviour of working periods of sports employees, it is interesting that the organizational silence behaviour average values of people whose working period was between 11-15 years were high.

#### 4. Conclusion and Discussion

In this study, organizational silence behaviour of sports employees was investigated in terms of some variables and following results were found:

52.8% (67 people) of sports employees participated in the research were male whereas 47.2% (60 people) were female. Moreover, 33.9% of the participants were between 18-24 years old, 40.2% of them were in the group of 25-34 years old, 26% of them were between 35-39 years old whereas 20.7% of them constituted of sports employees who were 40 years old and over 40. 65.4% (83 people) of the participants were married whereas 34.6% (44 people) were single (Table 1).

As it can be seen in Table 2, properties of administrative and organizational reasons, subjects related with work, lack of experience, fear of isolation and fear of damaging relationships which are sub-dimensions of organizational silence were significantly different in terms of gender variable ( $p < 0.05$ ). While silence due to administrative and organizational reasons was  $3.52 \pm .602$  in females, it was found as  $2.75 \pm .848$  in males. Silence due to subjects related with work was determined as  $3.28 \pm .722$  for females whereas it was  $2.72 \pm .991$  in males. Silence depending on lack of experience was  $2.97 \pm .639$  for females while it was  $2.12 \pm .749$  in males. Silence related with fear of isolation was found for females and males as  $3.16 \pm .730$  and  $2.58 \pm 1.01$ , respectively. Silence depending on fear of damaging relationships was  $3.26 \pm .680$  for females whereas it was found as  $2.72 \pm .992$  for males. It was indicated that organizational silence behaviour was found higher in female employees. It was considered that many factors such as culture in which she was grown, upbringing, personality affected level of silence (Table 2). Whether the employee was female or male made difference in exhibiting this behaviour. It seemed that females were in a tendency of being more silent than males (Brinsfield, 2009). In the study where organizational silence behaviour of teachers was investigated in terms of gender variable, a significant relationship was not found between organizational silence and gender, however, organizational silence average of females ( $X = 10.57$ ) was found higher than that of males ( $X = 10.07$ ) (Köylüoğlu et al., 2015). Exhibition of employees such a silence behaviour is closely related with their culture. In another study, the working environment of Japanese was more warmly and friendly than American. For this reason, "silence" behaviour might be valuable and positive one in order not to wreck this mood. On the contrary, silence in America is unvaluable and nonsense (Fujio, 2004). One of the general properties of Turkish society is dependence on authority and communities. This property might render people self-closed and introvert as well as might make them sceptical and trustless. For this reason, the members of an organization become distanced from problems as long as they are not interested themselves. They expect public services to be performed by others ve they feel like "unconcern" (Aytaç, 2007). The people who think that organizational culture is strict and objection against seniors is considered as disrespect, perceive this situation as normal and they consider this a s a way of maintaining discipline and simplifying the administration. The directors who focus more on primary works of that day than long-term results might not distinguish their employees to be understood by keeping quiet (Bildik, 2009).

Properties of administrative and organizational reasons, subjects related with work, lack of experience, fear of isolation and fear of damaging relationships which are sub-dimensions of organizational silence were not significantly different in terms of marital status variable. It was determined that whether the sports employees were married or single did not affect the level of organizational silence. However, it was observed that organizational silence average values of single sports employees were higher than those of married sports employees. It was considered that organizational silence behaviour was affected by factors such as organizational trust, work satisfaction, dependence to organization and work experience (Table 3). The study titled with "Sounds of silence: Organizational trust and decisions to blow the whistle" by Binikos (2010) showed that the employees remained less silent in the organization when they increased their trust in each other and the organization, thus there was a meaningfully negative relation between organizational trust and organizational silence. Furthermore, the study titled with "Analysis of Job Attitudes of Employees of State Organizations, Explaining Organizational Silence and Organization Silence Behavior Climate" by Panahi and Danaeifard (2010)

showed that there was a significantly negative relation between organizational silence and organizational commitment.

When the employees of organization remained silent more, they had less organizational commitment. Furthermore, there was a significantly negative relationship between organizational commitment and managers and supervisors' attitudes. The reason for that the employees had low organizational commitment when managers and supervisors had high negative attitudes. And there a significantly negative relationship between organizational silence and job satisfaction. That is, when the employees were more silent, they were less satisfied with their jobs. Moreover, when the top managers and the supervisors had more negative attitudes to the employees of organization, the employees had less job satisfaction, this showed a negative relation between managers and supervisors' attitudes and job satisfaction. Deniz et al. (2013) researched on organizational silence and organizational commitment in their study "The Relationship Between Silence of Employees and Organizational Commitment in a Private Health Company", their findings also showed a negative relation between organizational silence and organizational commitment.

Properties of administrative and organizational reasons, subjects related with work, lack of experience, fear of isolation and fear of damaging relationships which are sub-dimensions of organizational silence were not significantly different in terms of working period variable. Although a significant difference was not found between organizational silence behaviour and working periods of sports employees, it is interesting that the organizational silence behaviour average values of people whose working period was between 11-15 years were high (Table 4). Köylüoğlu et al. (2015) found that, organizational silence at "Manager", "Teacher" and "Medium" extents do not have significant variances. In other words, participants from all years of experience groups have similar perceptions. Partoniya (2014) in the study "the impact of trust on organizational silence and its challenges in Iran" found that there was an inverse and significant relationship between trust and organizational silence. Organizational silence was barrier for organizational success and trust could reduce the impact of this item. Trust was an important factor to help organization management to reduce silence impacts in organization. Bagheri, Zarei and Aeen (2012) discussed that a culture of silence developed from management's beliefs that consequently make these managers develop structures which hinder voicing of issues. 65.2% of the respondents felt that the organizational culture supported employees speaking up.

Consequently, a significant difference was found between organizational silence perception of sports employees and gender variable. In female employees, it was determined that silence values belonging to administrative and organizational reasons, subjects related with work, lack of experience, fear of isolation and fear of damaging relationships were higher than those of male employees. Female employees indicated organizational silence behaviour more than male employees. A significant difference was not found between organizational silence and marital status as well as working period variables. However, it is interesting that the organizational silence average values of people who were single and whose working period was between 11-15 years were high. Depending on the findings of the research, it was suggested to the directors of Youth Welfare that they should form a participant culture, encourage their female sports employees to speak frankly and increase the frequency of interviews with their employees.

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