

Relationship between Primary School Teachers' Perceived Social Support and Organizational Trust Level

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Abstract

Perceived social support and organizational trust have gained importance in organizational life along with the human relationship among organizations. While social support concept has been accepted as the support obtained from individual's surroundings, organizational trust is defined as the result of consistent behaviors based on mutual respect and courtesy, and it considers members' benefit and is usually gained gradually. First aim of this study was to define the level of primary school teachers' perceived social support and organizational trust, and the second aim was to exhibit the relationship between perceived social support and organizational trust. This study was designed with correlational survey method and quantitative data collection methods were used. The sample of the study was consisted of 151 volunteer primary school teachers in 10 different primary schools in Kars city center. Data were gathered through the Organizational Trust and Teacher Professional Social Support scales. Results of the study indicated that there exists a medium level positive correlation between primary school teachers' perceived social support and organizational trust. There is also a medium level positive correlation between administrative support and trust towards school principal, and between the level of colleague support and trust towards colleagues.

Key Words

Perceived Social Support, Organizational Trust, Primary School Teacher, the Relation between Social Support and Trust.

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Previous studies indicated that socio-emotional support and material support are important for employees. In the beginning of the 1900s, organizational based studies were about how an employer could benefit more from their employees. Hawthorne studies in the 1930s indicated the importance of socio-emotional support for employees (Zagenczyk, 2006, p. 9). Based on all these developments, it can be concluded that organizational social support has evolved in extension of the understanding about how to improve the human relations in organizations (Taşdan, 2008), and social support concept can be traced back to Lewin's ideas. Lewin (1935, 1948) mentioned based on Gestalt psychology and Koffka's (1935) thoughts that constituting a group is interdependence within group members. According to Lewin (1935), interdependence between group members is originated from common goals (as cited in Johnson and Johnson, 2005, p. 288).

There are various definitions of social support in related literature. According to Yıldırım (1997), social support is defined as social and psychological support gained from individual's surroundings. Similar definition was made by Cohen and Syme (1985, p. 4) as "resources provided by others." Besides, Farmer and Farmer (1996, p. 483) defined social support as a "processes of social exchange that contribute to the development of individuals' behavioral patterns, social cognition and values."

According to House (1981), there are four types of social support; which are emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support. Thoits' (1986, p. 417) social support definition covers these types and means contributive functions provided by family members, colleagues and other friends.

Many studies were conducted for examining the relationship between different variables and social support. Some of them are Littrell, Billingsley and Cross (1994), Greenglass, Fiksenbaum and Burke (1996), and Somech and Ron (2007). Studies realized about perceived organizational social support showed that it has an effect on participation of the members of an organization, increases members' performances and has a positive effect on members' behaviors (Eisenberger, Fasolo & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1987) and in addition to these benefits it decreases absenteeism and quitting job (Eisenberger & others, 1990; Shore & Wayne, 1993). Based on these results, it can be concluded that organizational social support is very effective in organizational activity (Yoon & Lim, 1999). Besides, when the employees

dedicated to organizations strive for goals of the organization see that their performances are rewarded; they will feel responsible to realize the goals of the organization (Venkatachalam, 1995).

Along with the level of perceived social support in organizational life, the level of employees' perceived trust is also important. As well trust has taken attention in several different social science fields (Psychology, sociology, political science, economics, anthropology, history and socio-biology) and these fields defined trust concept from the window of their own disciplinary approaches (Lewicki & Bunker, 1995). Trust is one of the important factors in human relations as well as in human behaviors (Doney & Cannon, 1997). Besides, psychological state of comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another is another definition of trust made by Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt and Camerer (1998). People's general expectations about promises of a group to other people, groups and organizations, things done and relying on their promises are defined as trust (Balci, 1993, p.9). With respect to Fukuyama (1998), trust is collectively shared by people based on norms, and it is an expectation of regular, honest and collaborative societies. Organizational trust concept is defined in terms of the result of consistent behaviors based on mutual respect and courtesy, and it considers members' benefit and is usually gained gradually (Taylor, 1989). Nyhan and Marlowe (1997) defined organizational trust as employees' trust towards managers and organization itself.

Mishra (1996) preferred to define organizational trust from multidimensional perspective instead of defining from one dimension and these are; 1) Multi level: Result of interaction among colleagues, individuals, teams and organizations, 2) Culture – Rooted: Connected with organization's own beliefs, values and norms, 3) Based on communication: Result of communication behavior like true information and decisions for making it clear, 4) Dynamic: Trust changes constantly in its forming process, 5) Multi-dimensioned: Individual's perceptions are affected and formed by intellectual, emotional and behavioral factors (Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis & Winograd, 2000 cited in Tüzün Kalemci, 2007, p. 105).

When studies in Turkey and abroad are examined, trust and organizational trust concept were investigated in different dimensions both in educational institutions and other organizations. In Bryk and Schneider

(2003) study, they examined the relationship between school principals' role and trust concept in primary school in Chicago and found that school principals' role is important in developing a trust-worthy environment and providing regularity in school. In other study in the USA, Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) investigated how the relationship between school principal and teachers and within teachers affected teachers' class activities. When studies in Turkey are examined about trust concept, trust was investigated in a relation with social rights in management sector by Özen-İşbaşı (2001), Güneser (2002), Arı (2003), Yaşar (2005) and Tüzün Kalemci (2007). Trust and organizational trust concepts were investigated in educational institutions by Turan (2001), Yılmaz (2006), Özdil (2004), Polat and Doyuran (2005), and Çokluk-Bökeoğlu and Yılmaz (2008). Studies showed that behaviors and roles of managers in organizations are very significant in realizing organizational trust and continuation of it (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Eisenberger, 2002).

When studies in educational sciences are examined, the level of teachers' perceived social support was investigated in relation with variables like job satisfaction, stress and performance. In related literature, perceived social support is associated with organizational trust. In addition, high level of perceived social support increases trust and intended developments (Organ & Konovsky, 1989). Literature indicates that justice and trust in organizations increase employees' perceived social support. Although relationship between perceived social support and justice is investigated many times, the relationship between organizational trust and perceived social support has not taken that much attention by researchers. Therefore, in this study, it was aimed to investigate the relationship between the level of primary school teachers' perceived social support and trust.

This study first aimed at defining the level of primary school teachers' perceived social support and organizational trust, and second aim was to present the relationship between primary school teachers' perceived social support and trust. To achieve these aims, the following questions guided this study.

1. What is the level of primary school teachers' perceived social support? Does the level of perceived social support show meaningful difference according to teachers' gender, major, length of time in their school, seniority, educational level, where they work and size of the school?

2. What is the level of primary school teachers' perceived organizational trust? Does the level of perceived organizational trust show meaningful difference according to teachers' gender, major, length of time in their school, seniority, educational level, where they work and size of the school?
3. Is there a relationship between primary school teachers' perceived level of social support and organizational trust?

Method

Model

This study, which aimed at determining the level of primary school teachers' perceived social support and organizational trust and the relationship between them, was a correlational survey method design.

Sample

Sample of the study was composed of 151 volunteer primary school teachers in 10 different primary schools in Kars city center.

Instrument

There are two different instruments used in this study; the Organizational Trust Scale and Teachers Professional Social Support Scale. The Organizational Trust Scale which was developed by Yılmaz (2006) has three dimensions; "Trust to Administrator", "Trust to Colleagues" and "Trust to Stakeholders". In "Trust to Administrator" dimension there are 7 items and its Cronbach-alfa reliability coefficient is $\alpha = .89$. "Trust to Colleagues" dimension has 8 items and its Cronbach-alfa reliability coefficient is $\alpha = .87$. And in "Trust to Stakeholders" dimension there are 8 items and its Cronbach-alfa reliability coefficient is $\alpha = .82$. Total variance of the scale is 45.31 % and Cronbach-alfa coefficient is $\alpha = .92$ (Yılmaz, 2006).

For determining the level of primary school teachers' perceived social support, Kaner's (2006) the Teachers Professional Social Support Scale was used. Kaner's scale's reliability and validity results are as follows: Scale is composed of 5 dimensions and 44 items. In factor analysis result for whole scale, total variance explained is 60.78 % and Cronbach alfa internal consistency coefficient is .95.

When validity and reliability coefficients were separately realized for each dimension of the scale, these results were found: In “Administrator Support” dimension, there are 19 items and total variance for this part was found as 22.49 %, “Colleague Support” dimension has 13 items with total variance 19.12 %, “Parents and Social Support” is composed 4 items with total variance 7.18 %, “Student Support” has 3 items with total variance 5.72 % and “Efficient Education Support” has 5 items with total variance 6.22 %. Cronbach-alfa internal consistency coefficients are as follows: “Administrator Support” dimension has .95, “Colleague Support” dimension has .94, “Parent and Social Support” dimension has .79; “Efficient Education Support” dimension has .69 and “Student Support” dimension has .88. And these Cronbach-alfa values of each dimension show that the scale is reliable.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data collection was performed by the researchers. Data gathered from primary school teachers were first analyzed with descriptive statistics methods, such as arithmetic mean and standard deviation. According to teachers’ personal and professional characteristics; organizational trust and social support perceptions were controlled for determining the possible differences. Gender and major related comparisons were done with t-test; and seniority, length of time in their schools, number of students in their school (size of the school), where they work related comparisons were done with one-way ANOVA test. When F values were found meaningful, LCD test was used for finding the cause of the difference. Kruskal Wallis H test was used for finding whether teachers’ perceptions about social support and trust level differs according to educational level or not. The relation between the level of perceived social support and organizational trust of primary school teachers were analyzed by Pearson Moment Correlation test.

Results

Results of the study indicated that primary school teachers’ perceived social support obtained from school principal, colleagues, parents, school medium and students do not change according to teachers’ gender, major, and educational level. Previous studies about perceived social support show both consistent and contrasting results with this study’s

results. In Altay's study, "the Relationship between School Administrators' Occupational Burnout Level and Multidimensional Perceived Social Support", school administrators' perceived social support level does not change according to the last institution they had graduated, their professional and administrative seniority, size of the school and number of the teachers in their schools.

Novice teachers and teachers with seniority more than 10 years have perceived more social support than teachers with 2-6 years of seniority. Another result of the study, which is parallel to the previous one, is that novice teachers and teachers with seniority more than 10 years perceived more social support from school administrator, colleagues and parents than teachers with 2-6 years of seniority. Also in Altay's (2007) "The Relationship between School Administrators' Occupational Burnout Level and Multidimensional Perceived Social Support" study, there is not a meaningful relationship among the school administrators' professional seniority and the total of multidimensional perceived social support and its sub-dimensions (parents, friends, private person) (Altay, 2007, p. 110).

Results of this study indicated that there is not any relationship between primary school teachers' perceived trust level and teachers' gender, educational level, size of the school, teachers' seniority and their place of work. In Özdil's study in Ankara, it was also found that teachers' gender, seniority and teachers' length of time in their school do not cause any effect on the level of trust between school and teachers. Teachers' seniority does not cause any effect on teachers' perceived trust level as found in Çokluk- Bökeoğlu and Yılmaz's (2008) study.

The result of this study indicated that there is a positive medium level relationship between teachers' perceived administrative social support level and trust level. Based on this result, it can be concluded that when teachers' perceived trust level increases teachers trust to school will also increase. Additionally, there is a positive medium level relationship between teachers' perceived administrative social support and trust to school principal. Similar result was found between teachers' colleague social support level and trust to colleague. Also there is a positive medium level relationship between teachers' perceived parents and society social support and trust to other stakeholders in school. According to the results of Cosner's (2009) study realized with 11 school principals indicated that school principals are significant actors in establishing trust environment in schools.

Literature about the relationship between social support and organizational trust, there are studies which are indirectly related with this topic. In Stinglhamber, De Cremer and Mercken's (2006) study, it was found that perceived organizational trust partially affect justice and trust in organizations and besides perceived administrative social support also affects trust to administrative justice. Eisenberger, Fasolo and Davis-LaMastro's study about the results of organizational social support represents that perceived social support is efficient in development of organizational trust (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990, p. 57). Moreover, in Tan and Tan's study (2000, p. 242), one of the results indicates that there is a strong relationship between organizational social support and organizational trust. Aykan investigated the relationship among teachers' organizational social support and trust perceptions and burnout level in preschools Kayseri city center. Results of Aykan's study indicated that there is a negative relationship among perceived organizational social support and trust and emotional burnout level (Aykan, 2007).

Teachers in small sized schools have more positive attitudes towards their occupation and they have better relationships with their colleagues (Karakütük & Tunç, 2004). In a study realized by Karakütük, Tunç, Güngör, Bülbül and Özden (2006) schools having students less than 600 are named as small sized; school having students between 601 and 1000 are named as middle sized; and schools having students more than 1001 are named as big sized. The study "Primary school teachers' management tendencies: Malatya Province Case" realized by Aksu (2004) also shows that schools having students less than 500 are named as small sized; schools having students between 501 and 1500 are named as middle sized; and schools having students higher than 1501 are named as big sized. In this study, it is observed that when the size of the school increases, parental support to teachers decreases. This indicates that in small sized schools, teachers may have more chance to allocate time to their students and help them to solve their problems.

In establishment of trust environment in schools teachers have an important role, so they should be supported multi directionally by school administrative and parents. Results of perceived social support gained from school administrator and parents may result in positive relations based on trust.

This study about the relationship between social support and organizational trust is restricted with the sample of the study. It is also recom-

mended to repeat this research in a larger sample with secondary school teachers and tertiary education instructors. This study was performed with quantitative methods and lacked qualitative data part. This study can be repeated in a smaller sample with qualitative methods, too. It is recommended to study the relationship between perceived social support and organizational support concepts beside the job satisfaction, organizational citizen, organizational justice and organizational loyalty concepts.

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