

EFFECT OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT ON ORGANIZATIONAL SILENCE AND TASK PERFORMANCE: A STUDY ON ACADEMICIANS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effect of organizational support on employee silence and task performance. Particularly, the study probes the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee silence and it aims to reveal the effect of organizational support on task performance. Research data is collected from 502 academicians working in Turkish universities. Exploratory factor analyses, correlation and regression analyses are performed on the data. Data analyses revealed that, there is a negative relationship between perceived organizational support and both acquiescent silence and defensive silence, while there is a positive relationship between perceived organizational support and pro-social silence. Further, it is found that acquiescent silence and defensive silence have significantly negative effects on task performance, while pro-social silence exerts a statistically significant positive effect on task performance. Finally, perceived organizational support is found to exert a statistically significant positive effect on task performance. Research and managerial implications of these findings are discussed in detail.

Keywords: Perceived Organizational Support, Organizational Silence, Acquiescent Silence, Defensive Silence, Pro-social Silence, Task Performance

INTRODUCTION

As a result of the diversified communication channels, employees tend towards collective movements rather than individual behaviour. Organizations' expectations to survive heavily depend on their employees' performance. Both management and employees' activities, and their participation determine the survival of an organisation. When management provide the necessary support and motivation to the employees, the survival and success likelihood of the organisation increases. Employee satisfaction and commitment to the organisation is as much critical as a productive manufacturing process. It is well documented that employee satisfaction is a vital component of competitive advantage of the organisation. However, employee dissatisfaction caused by organisational atmosphere or the hierarchical structure may lead to employee silence. Although organizational silence is an emotionally difficult way of expression, it is an effective way of expressing favourable or unfavourable situations in the organization (Bagheri et.al, 2012:276). Organisational silence that is an important barrier to organisational development (Weick, 1993; Nemeth, 1997; Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Milliken et.al., 2003), can be prevented by providing organizational support to the employees who have difficulties to respond the requirements coming both from inside and outside of the organisation (Eisenberger et.alvd., 1990:56). Responding to employee silence is critical for employee performance and organisational survival. From this perspective, this study is concerned with the relationship between employee silence and performance within the context of academicians working for the universities, where a prominent hierarchical structure exists. Extant literature provides a number of empirical evidence on the positive effect of organisational support on employee outcomes. However, there is still a number of questions to be answered about the subject. Particularly, academic studies on the relationship between perceived organizational support and

organisational silence are scarce. Further, to the authors' knowledge, there is not any empirical study examining organisational silence, organisational support and task performance together. Thus, this study purports to fill in this gap by examining the effect of organizational support on employee silence and task performance. A literature review is provided in the next section. Following the theoretical background, methods and analyses section is presented. Finally, study findings are discussed.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Perceived Organizational Support

The concept organizational support stems from "Social Exchange Theory" (Blau, 1964) and "The Norm of Reciprocity" (Gouldner, 1960), and appraises employee's value, effort and contribution to his job (Eder and Eisenberger, 2008). Perceived organizational support is the degree to which employees believe that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et.al, 1986). It is a perception or judgment of how much support an employee feels or thinks an organization provides to him or her (Yoshimura, 2003). A strong organizational support leads employees to increase their efforts for company success (Polatçı, 2015) and it enhances performance by neutralizing the work stress (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). According to organizational support theory, employees value organizational support because it meets their needs for approval, esteem and affiliation, plus provides comfort (Eisenberger et.al, 1986). Empirical studies confirm the effect of perceived organizational support on various types of employee silence (i.e. not reporting). Employees who are encouraged to speak and who are appreciated by their organization tend to speak more. Similarly, management support also decreases employee silence (Yürür et.al, 2016).

Employee Silence

Hirschman (1970) defined silence as a passive but constructive response synonymous with loyalty, and since then management scientists have continued to equate silence with loyalty. At first, silence was taken as lack of utterance showing approval or commitment, but then it was conceptualized as a behavior affecting organizational performance and employees (Çakıcı, 2007: 149). According to Pinder and Harlos (2001), silence is an inherent state where the individual communicates with himself. According to Brinsfield et.al (2009) silence is a form of communication involving a range of cognitions, emotions and intentions. Employee silence is defined as "the withholding of any form of genuine expression about the individual's behavioral, cognitive and/affective evaluations of his organizational circumstances to persons who are perceived to be capable of effecting change or redress (Pinder and Harlos 2001:334).

While Morrison and Milliken (2000) take organizational silence as a negative behavior, Pinder and Harlos (2001) also see silent employees who deliberately withhold their evaluations about the organizational issues as harmful to themselves, to others or to the organization. Based on Morrison & Milliken (2000) and Pinder & Harlos's (2001) "Quiescent Silence" and "Acquiescence Silence" conceptualizations Van Dyne and others (2003) incorporated a third dimension (Pro-social Silence) to organizational silence concept.

Acquiescent Silence, is defined as withholding relevant ideas, information, or opinions, based on resignation. Defensive Silence is defined as withholding relevant ideas, information, or opinions as a form of self-protection, based on fear. It is an intentional and proactive behavior that is intended to protect the self from external threats. Pro-social Silence is defined as withholding work-related ideas, information, or opinions with the goal of benefiting other people or the organization – based on altruism or cooperative motives (Dyne et.al., 2003,pp.1366-1368).

Task Performance

Job performance is defined based on intentions and behaviour in the existing literature dating back to 1970s. Such definitions were focused on individual behaviour affecting organizational objectives as well as the behaviour that is limited by the environmental factors. Job performance is conceptualized as actions and behaviours that are under the control of the individual that contribute to the goals of the organization (Rotundo and Sackett, 2002). Task performance, as the first dimension of job performance

refers to the necessary responsibilities that are required to complete a task Borman and Motowidlo (1993). Task performance is related to the technical and professional features of the job.

According to Jawahar and Carr (2007) task performance means fixed duties and responsibilities that make a job differed from others. Task performance refers to behaviours and activities that support the organization’s technical core, which can involve the execution of technical processes or the maintenance of those processes (Borman ve Motowidlo, 1997).

RESEARCH METHOD

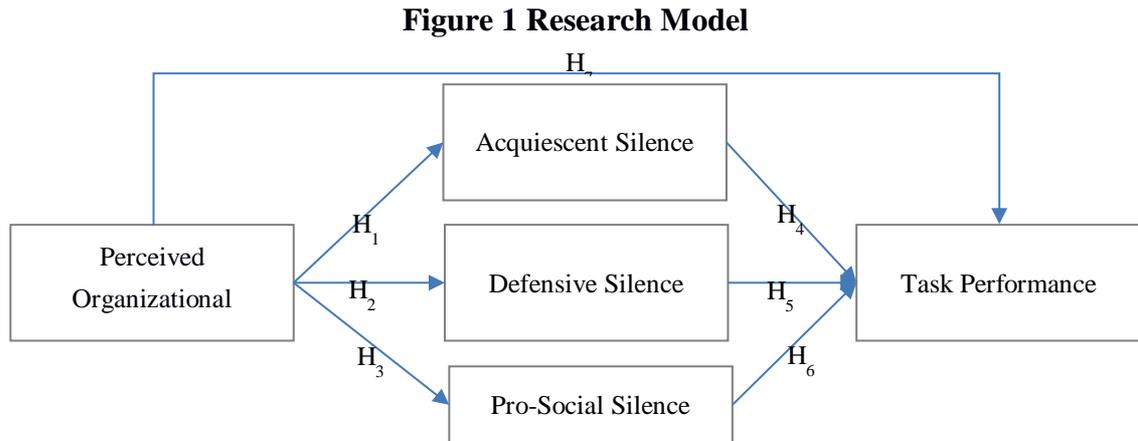
Sample and Data Collection

This study examines the effect of organizational support on employee silence and task performance. To do so, a field research is conducted. Data is collected by online survey from a random sample of academic staff working for state universities in Turkey. 502 valid responses are collected at the end of the process.

The online survey contained 8 item Perceived Organizational Support Scale (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002); 15 item Employee Silence Scale developed by Van Dyne (2003) and 9 item Task Performance Scale (Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield, 1991). All responses are taken by a 5 point Likert type scale (1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree).

Research Model and Hypotheses

Research model and proposed hypotheses are shown on Figure 1.



Hypotheses

H₁: There is a negative relationship between perceived organizational support and acquiescent silence.

H₂: There is a negative relationship between perceived organizational support and defensive silence

H₃: There is a positive relationship between perceived organizational support and pro-social silence.

H₄: There is a negative relationship between perceived organizational support and task performance.

H₅: There is a negative relationship between defensive silence and task performance.

H₆: There is a positive relationship between pro-social silence and task performance.

H₇: There is a positive relationship between perceived organizational support and task performance.

Analyses and Results

A total of 502 participants filled the online questionnaire. Data analysis was performed by using SPSS program. 58,6% of the respondents were males and 41,4% were females. 18,1% were single and 81,9% were married at the time of data collection. 30,7% of the respondents were aged between 34-41, whereas only 3,4% were older than 57. 33,5% of the participants were lecturers, 2% were translators and experts.

Reliability of the scales were assessed by inter-item consistency and Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were calculated for each scale. An exploratory factor analysis is performed to check scale dimensionality (KMO = 0,909; Bartlett's test of sphericity $p < 0,001$). Table 1 shows the results of exploratory factor analysis (factor loadings) and reliability analyses (Cronbach Alpha coefficients). The table also shows the descriptive statistics including item means and standard deviations. Principal components analysis suggested five factors which explained 64,94% of the total variance. All of the scale items loaded adequately on the corresponding factors. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients showed satisfactory reliability for each scale.

Table 1 Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis and Reliability Analyses

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Factor Load	Cronbach's Alfa
Perceived Organizational Support				
My organization values my contribution to its well-being	3.21	1.148	.827	.942
My organization really cares about my well-being.	3.20	1.140	.861	
My organizations cares about my general satisfaction at work.	3.10	1.199	.875	
My organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work.	3.28	1.208	.816	
My organization fails to appreciate any extra effort from me (R).	3.18	1.239	.820	
My organization would ignore any complaint from me (R).	3.33	1.187	.793	
Even if I did the best job possible, my organization would fail to notice(R)	3.29	1.229	.811	
My organization shows very little concern for me (R).	3.33	1.245	.746	
Acquiescent Silence				
I am unwilling to speak up with suggestions for change because I am disengaged.	2.88	1.280	.724	.743
I am unwilling to speak up with suggestions for change because I believe that my colleagues will make the right decision.	2.05	.911	.649	
I keep my ideas about solutions to problems to myself.	1.97	1.082	.456	
I keep any ideas for improvement to myself because I have low self-efficacy to make a difference.	1.85	1.002	.560	
I am unwilling to express my ideas for change in disengaged areas because I don't want to increase the work load.	2.31	1.133	.648	
Defensive Silence				
I withhold new information dues to fear about my future in the organization.	2.02	1.090	.693	.906
I withhold relevant information due to fear.	2.25	1.190	.807	
I omit pertinent facts in order to protect him/her self.	2.25	1.167	.837	
I avoid expressing ideas for improvements, due to self-protection	1.99	1.022	.812	
I do not speak up and suggest ideas for change, based on fear	1.97	1.111	.742	
Pro-social Silence				
I withhold confidential information, based on cooperation	3.85	1.185	.757	.876
I protect proprietary information in order to benefit the organization	3.94	1.104	.855	
I withstand pressure from others to tell organizational secrets.	4.03	1.062	.798	
I refuse to divulge information that might harm the organization	4.09	1.075	.829	
protects confidential organizational information appropriately, based on concern for the organization.	4.06	1.060	.776	
Task Performance				
I achieve all of the goals of my work	3.69	.937	.572	.897
I adequately work based on the performance criteria of my department supervisor.	4.12	.829	.724	
I meet the formal performance requirements of my job.	4.25	.792	.766	
I perform all the necessary tasks of my job.	4.36	.783	.812	
I take more responsibilities than the given task.	4.16	.890	.744	
I am appropriate for a higher position at the job.	3.70	.997	.630	
I have all the necessary skills at work. I can professionally handle all the duties.	3.97	.883	.768	
In general I show a good performance and fulfil the given duty.	4.27	.729	.836	
I plan to achieve my work goals and complete the assigned work on time.	4.32	.781	.787	

After verifying the scale dimensionality and reliability, a composite measure was created by averaging the responses on the corresponding items under each scale. Consequently, we computed five composite

variables in order to be used to test the research hypotheses. Bivariate correlations amongst these composite variables are shown on Table 2.

Table 2 Bivariate Correlations

	Perceived Org. Supp.	Acquiescent Silence	Defensive Silence	Prosocial Silence
acquiescent Silence	-,329(**)			
Defensive Silence	-,515(**)	,609(**)		
Pro-social Silence	,109(*)	-,084	-,007	
Task Performance	,126(**)	-,235(**)	-,144(**)	,287(**)

** P< 0.01

* P< 0.05

According to the bivariate correlation analyses, Acquiescent silence is found to have a significantly positive correlation with perceived organizational support ($r=0,515$, $p<0,001$). Defensive silence is found to have a significantly positive correlation with task performance ($r=0,287$, $p<0,001$). Perceived organizational support is also found to have a significantly positive correlation with task performance ($r=0,126$, $p<0,001$). These findings exert significant interactions between the study variables. However, weak to moderate correlations amongst the study variables do not pose a multicollinearity risk for the regression analyses in the next step.

Hypotheses Testing

In order to test the research hypotheses we performed a series of multiple regression analyses. Table.3 shows the results of the first regression analysis where perceived organizational support predicts acquiescent silence. According to regression analysis results, perceived organizational support is a significant predictor of acquiescent silence ($F= 60,599$, $P<0,001$). Perceived organizational support has a significantly negative effect on acquiescent silence ($\beta= -,329$, $p<0,001$). Based on this finding, we accept the first hypothesis (H1). Perceived organizational support has a negative effect on acquiescent silence.

Table 3 Regression Analysis: The Effect of Perceived Organizational Support on Acquiescent Silence

Model	Independent Variable	Stand. β	T	Sig.	Adjusted R ²	F Value	Model Sig.
1	Perceived Organizational Support	-.329	-7.785	.000	.106	60.599	.000

Dependent Variable: Acquiescent Silence

Table.4 shows the results of the second regression analysis where perceived organizational support predicts defensive silence. According to regression analysis results, perceived organizational support is a significant predictor of defensive silence ($F= 180,099$, $P<0,001$). Perceived organizational support has a significantly negative effect on defensive silence ($\beta= -,515$, $p<0,001$). Based on this finding, we accept the second hypothesis (H2). Perceived organizational support has a negative effect on defensive silence.

Table 4 Regression Analysis: The Effect of Perceived Organizational Support on Defensive Silence

Model	Independent Variable	Stand. β	T	Sig.	Adjusted R ²	F Value	Model Sig.
1	Perceived Organizational Support	-.515	-13.420	.000	.263	180.099	.000

Dependent Variable: Defensive Silence

Table.5 shows the results of the third regression analysis where perceived organizational support predicts pro-social silence. According to regression analysis results, perceived organizational support is a significant predictor of pro-social silence ($F= 6,010$, $P<0,005$). Perceived organizational support has a significantly positive effect on defensive silence ($\beta= ,109$, $p<0,015$). Based on this finding, we accept the third hypothesis (H3). Perceived organizational support has a positive effect on pro-social silence.

Table 5 Regression Analysis: The Effect of Perceived Organizational Support on Defensive Silence

Model	Independent Variable	Stand. β	T	Sig.	Adjusted R ²	F Value	Model Sig.
1	Perceived Organizational Support	.109	2.452	.015	.010	6.010	.015

Dependent Variable: Pro-social Silence

Table.6 shows the results of the fourth regression analysis where perceived organizational support predicts task performance. According to regression analysis results, perceived organizational support is a significant predictor of task performance (F= 8,053, P<0,005). Perceived organizational support has a significantly positive effect on task performance (β = ,126, p<0,005). Based on this finding, we accept the fourth hypothesis (H4). Perceived organizational support has a positive effect on task performance.

Table 6 Regression Analysis: The Effect of Perceived Organizational Support on Task Performance

Model	Independent Variable	Stand. β	T	Sig.	Adjusted R ²	F Value	Model Sig.
1	Perceived Organizational Support	.126	2.838	.005	.014	8.053	.005

Dependent Variable: Task Performance

Table.7 shows the results of the last regression analysis where three dimensions of employee silence predicts task performance. According to regression analysis results, employee silence dimensions are significant predictors of task performance (F= 29,157, P<0,001). Acquiescent Silence and Defensive Silence have significantly negative effects on task performance (β = -,235, p<0,001 and β = -,144, p<0,005 respectively) Pro-social Silence has a significantly positive effect on task performance (β = ,287, p<0,001). Based on these findings, we accept H5, H6, and H7. Acquiescent silence and defensive silence have negative effects on task performance while pro-social silence has a positive effect.

Table 7 Regression Analysis: The Effect of Employee Silence on Task Performance

Model	Independent Variable	Stand. β	T	Sig.	Adjusted R ²	F Value	Model Sig.
1	Employee Silence						
	Acquiescent Silence	-.235	-5.400	.000	.053	29.157	.000
	Defensive Silence	-.144	-3.263	.001			
	Pro-social Silence	.287	6.693	.000			

Dependent Variable: Task Performance

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study examined the effect of perceived organizational support on employee silence and task performance. The findings have a potential to shed some light on the interactions between these variables.

In today's changing work environment, high uncertainty, organizational downsizing, mergers and other trends raised the importance of employees in achieving organizational goals. Thus, it is vital to organizations to know their employees. (Eisenberger et.al. 2016). Employee performance is positively affected by the perception of high organizational support (Kurtessis et.al 2015; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). At this stage it is important to relay maximum employee contribution to the organization. Further, perceived organizational support decreases job stress, compensates employees' emotional needs and improves welfare (Byrne and Hochwarter, 2006). However, sometimes employees do not speak up even they have a suggestion, concern or information about a problem, and keep their silence (Morrison,2014). Before informing their managers, expressing ideas or speaking about a problem, employees pay attention to whether their managers will take responsibility and stand by them (Milliken et.al., 2003).

This study probed the effect of perceived organizational support on various dimensions of employee silence. Results showed that as perceived organizational support increase, acquiescent silence and defensive silence decrease, while pro-social silence increase. Similar studies in the existing literature confirm the negative effect of perceived organizational support on employee silence (Tekmen, 2016; Kuluap and Çakmak, 2016; Yürür et.al, 2016)

Another question to be addressed in this study was the effect of employee silence on task performance. Results showed that as acquiescent silence and defensive silence increase, task performance decreases. On the other hand, as pro-social silence increase, task performance also increases. Similar results were obtained by previous studies in the literature (Brinsfield, 2009; Tayfun and Çatır, 2013).

A final question examined in the current study was the relationship between perceived organizational support and task performance. Results of the data analyses revealed that as perceived organizational support increase, task performance also increases. When employees see their organization as supportive, their performance increase (Eisenberger et.al.,1997; Caesens et.al.,2016). In other words we can say that employees pay the motivation created by organizational support back with their superior performance (Armeli et.al. 1998).

Expressing their innovative ideas and suggestions in a supportive work environment, academicians may improve their performance and keep up with the fast-changing science and education industry. Particularly working in state universities where organizational hierarchy is relatively high, managerial attitudes and behavior have significant influence on the productivity of academicians. If they feel that their efforts are not well appreciated, they will respond with negative emotions and prefer keeping silent rather than sharing their expertise and experience to improve organizational performance.

This study has some limitations. First of all, it is limited with the data collected from academicians working for the state universities. Higher education industry is a unique sector that has its own genuine work conditions. Thus, replicating this study in different sectors may reveal distinctive results. Another limitation is keeping perceived organizational support as the only antecedent of employee silence. In the real life situations, there are many other factors that may contribute to employee silence. Future studies may integrate other work related / organizational factors that may influence employee silence into the model. Further, possible variations caused by employee demographics and working conditions may also be controlled in future studies.

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