Relationship between Political Discrimination Level Perceived by Teachers and Teachers’ Organizational Cynicism Levels

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Abstract

Problem Statement: Political discrimination is directed against individuals on the basis of their political party membership and views, including their socio-political and moral attitudes. People subjected to discrimination have a high level of professional exhaustion, slow upward career mobility, low morale and performance, less initiative, psychological problems, low job satisfaction and physical health problems. Political discrimination and cynicism, an unfavored attitude within an organization, were seen to possibly have a relationship, and an empirical test was, therefore believed to contribute to the literature.

Aim of the study: This study aims to reveal the relationship between the political discrimination level perceived by teachers in school and their organizational cynicism level.

Method of the study: This research utilizes a correlational screening format. The study group consists of 280 elementary school teachers serving in central district of Kirsehir province. The Political Discrimination Scale for Teachers and the Organizational Cynicism Scale for Teachers were used to determine

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1 A part of this study was verbally presented at the 2nd International Eurasian Educational Research Congress held between June 8 and 10, 2015.
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Results of the study: Findings of the research revealed a medium level of significant relationship between political discrimination perceived by teachers and their organizational cynicism. Additionally, discrimination in social relationships and discrimination in administrative affairs were found to affect organizational cynicism. Accordingly, discrimination in social relationships and administrative affairs was found to be a significant predictor of organizational cynicism.

Conclusion and Recommendations: Results of the study demonstrate a relationship between political discrimination and organizational cynicism, and teachers' perceptions of political discrimination play a significant role in promoting cynical behavior. The study recommends that to decrease teachers' cynicism, school principals should assure that teachers are not experiencing political discrimination in school.

Keywords: Organizational behavior, school administration, unethical behavior

Introduction

Unethical behavior refers to conflicts and behavioral problems within an organization which may be experienced from time to time. Depending on situations arising as a consequence of such behaviors, organizational culture and employee loyalty, performance and motivation weaken (Ozdevecioglu & Aksoy, 2005). Discrimination, also frequently seen in organizations, can be considered a type of unethical behavior. Discrimination is described as the victimization of a person because of a specific quality or as prevention of individual(s) in a society, organization, or group from making use of rights and opportunities granted to others (Ataov, 1996: as cited by Demir, 2011). Another description is that discrimination is a cultural/political attitude that turns any type of difference or otherness relationships into a power relationship and a hierarchy issue (Somay, 2012). Elements suggested as the cause of discrimination are observed sometimes as inborn qualities such as gender, age, race, color, etc. and sometimes as acquired qualities such as language, religion, marital status, political views, etc. Some inborn or acquired physical conditions or disabilities, however, are also considered within the scope of discrimination.

Political discrimination is used to define unethical behaviors faced due to personal political views. International Labor Organization (ILO) (2006) defined political discrimination as discrimination against individuals on the basis of their political party membership and views, including their socio-political and moral attitudes. However, discriminatory behaviors also manifest itself as favoritism toward people who share the same political views. Individuals who are politically discriminated
against may be deprived of rights granted to fellow employees for prejudicial reasons.

While any type of discrimination is prohibited by a series of laws at the national and international level, it is a phenomenon experienced by employees in organizations. It has been found that individuals who believe they are discriminated against in their employing organization have lower professional satisfaction, organizational dedication, psychological well-being and commitment than those who believe that they are not discriminated against. It has also been found that people subjected to discrimination have a high level of professional exhaustion, slow upward career mobility, low morale and performance, less initiative (Fernandez, Silvan-Ferrero, Molero, Gaviria & Garcia-Ael, 2015; Demir, 2012; Leasher & Miller, 2012; Esty, Griffin & Hirsch, 1995; Gallinsky, Bond & Friedman, 1993), psychological problems, low job satisfaction (Cassidy, Howe, Warden & O’Connor, 2004) and physical health problems (Mays, Cochran & Barns, 2007). Treating individuals at equal levels differently reduces their productivity and weakens the organization’s strength of sustainability, and from an ethical point of view, contradicts fairness criteria (Fritzsche, 1997; Yamak & Topbas, 2004; Demirel, 2011). Also, employees may not prefer organizations in which discriminatory behavior is displayed and be more inclined to quit their jobs. Furthermore, an organization’s image may be damaged.

When the literature is investigated, different types of discrimination are seen. Discrimination may be based on gender, social gender roles (Bora, 2012), age (Baybora, 2010; Buz, 2015; Cayir, 2012), race, religion, ethnic origin, disability, education level, socio-economic status, homosexuality and political views (Demir, 2011; Cayir & Ayan-Ceyhan, 2012). An investigation of the research conducted in educational institutions reveals that gender discrimination receives the greatest attention (Bastug & Celik, 2011; Gonel, Kaplan, Ucer & Orhan, 2012; Esen, 2013). Only a limited number of studies focus on political discrimination (Keskinkilic-Kara, 2015).

Research shows that political discrimination experienced in organizations affects employee behavior as well as the organization’s efficiency. Political discrimination and cynicism, an unfavored attitude within an organization, were seen to possibly have a relationship, and an empirical test was, therefore, believed to contribute to the literature.

Cynicism

A cynic is defined as a person who believes that people only care about their self-interests and, therefore, considers everyone selfish; the school of thought describing this attitude is called “cynicism” (Erdost, Karacaoglu & Reyhanoglu, 2007). Cynicism can be defined as a negative attitude having cognitive, affective and behavioral components. In other words, it is a “dislike and distrust of others” (Brandes, Dharwadkar & Dean, 1999). Organizational cynicism is a belief in unfairness, and distrust of an organization and. It is a complex attitude involving cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects resulting in beliefs arising from actions based on such beliefs and distrust (Johnson & O’Leary- Kelly, 2003). The feeling that organizational
cynicism lacks honesty reflects the cognitive dimension. In cognitive dimension, cynical people are seen to lack organizational principles and rules, not take official affairs and rules seriously; demonstrate inconsistent, untruthful and deceitful behaviors; have difficulty trusting others, and value their self-interests above everything else (Brandes, 1997; Dean, Brandes & Dharwadkar, 1998). Affective dimension subsumes powerful and negative emotional reactions against organizations such as disrespect, anger, agitation and embarrassment (Abraham, 2000). Behavioral dimension, on the other hand, subsumes pessimistic forecasts about future events in organization and elements, such as irony, contempt, and critical expressions against organization (Ozgener, Ogut & Kaplan; 2008; Kutanis & Cetinel, 2009; Ozgan, Cetin, Kulekci, 2012; Yildiz, 2013). Eaton (2000) indicated that the organizational cynicism consists of the belief that an organization lacks integrity, negative effects toward the organization are present, and disparaging and critical behaviors are displayed. The fundamental ideas in the organizational cynicism concept is a lack of honesty, integrity, justice, sincerity and cordiality. Within an organization, leaders or other employees pursue their self-interests, thus causing behaviors based on secret motives and deceit (Abraham, 2000). Types of organizational cynicism are personality, social, employee, organizational change and occupational/professional cynicism (as cited by: Pelit & Pelit, 2014). Personality cynicism is defined as the general perception of human behaviors as negative. While social cynicism is a lack of trust of people in a country toward their government and public organizations, employee cynicism generally targets organizations, senior management, and other entities in the work environment. Organizational change cynicism refers to a pessimistic view of a change carried out in an organization to achieve success. Lastly, occupational/professional cynicism is described as negative and distrustful attitudes toward authority and organizations.

Cynicism is experienced in both private and public organizations. Cynicism in public organizations is primarily a result of the bureaucratic organizational structure (Albrecht, 2002; as cited by Kalagan & Guzeller, 2009). Cynical employees have an important role in determining the underlying causes of organizational problems, and therefore, contribute significantly to the efforts exerted toward organizational change (Bommer et al., 2005; as cited by Kalagan & Guzeller, 2009). Any type of discrimination applied in organizations may result in organizational cynicism.

The present study aims to determine whether or not there is a significant relationship between political discrimination perceived by teachers and their organizational cynical behaviors. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. Is there a significant relationship between the level of political discrimination perceived by teachers and organizational cynicism?

2. To what the extent does the level of political discrimination perceived by teachers predict organizational cynicism?

There is some research on organizational cynicism, but research on political discrimination and its effects is limited and the relationship between political
discrimination and organizational cynicism has not been studied in the current literature. It is expected that the findings of this study will provide empirical evidence for explaining the political discrimination and organizational cynicism and will help principals to understand the effects of political discrimination. Also this study will benefit the teachers, as managing without any discrimination is a duty of each principal.

**Methodology**

*Research Design*

This research is a descriptive study conducted with a relational screening model. “Relational screening models are research models that aim to determine the co-variance between two or more variables and/or determine its extent.” (Karasar, 2009, 81).

*Research Sample*

The study group included 280 teachers selected based on the simple random sampling method from the elementary schools in central district of Kirsehir in Turkey. Of the participants, 52.1% were female and 47.9% were male. Of the participants, 41.4% had 1-5 years of service, 23.2% had 6-10 years of service, 22.9% had 11-15 years of service, 8.9% had 16-20 years of service and 3.5% had 21 or more years of service. Undergraduate degrees were reported by 93.9% of the respondents, while 5.4% had a graduate degree and 7% had an associate degree.

*Research Instrument and Procedure*

Two different scales were used to collect data in the study. The Political Discrimination Scale for Teachers (PDST) developed by Keskinson-Kara and Buyukoksuz (2013) was used to determine the political discrimination level perceived by teachers. The PDST is comprised of 28 items. It is a 5-point Likert-type scale comprising two dimensions, discrimination in social relations and discrimination in administrative affairs. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the entire scale is .97. The Cronbach Alpha coefficients of the PDST sub-dimensions are .98 for the sub-dimension of discrimination in social relations and .84 for the sub-dimension of discrimination in administrative affairs.

The Organizational Cynicism Scale (OCS) developed by Sagir and Oguz (2012) was used to determine teachers’ organizational cynicism level. OCS is a 5-point Likert-type scale consisting of 25 items and 4 dimensions. Cronbach Alpha coefficients of the sub-dimensions of the scale are .86 for the sub-dimension of alienation from employing organization, .88 for the sub-dimension of factors decreasing performance, .85 for negative attitudes toward school and .68 for the sub-dimension of employee participation in decisions and applications; it is .89 for the entire scale.
Data Analysis

The statistical analysis of the data collected in the study was performed using The Statistical Package Program for Social Sciences. When the normality of the data set was examined, it was found to have a parametric distribution (p > .05). During the data analysis, Pearson correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between political discrimination and organizational cynicism, and regression analyses was used to determine the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

Result

The correlation analysis results are presented in Table 1. An absolute value of correlation coefficient suggests a high level of relation if it is between 0.70-1.00; a medium level of relationship if it is between 0.70-0.30; and a low level of relationship if it is between 0.30-0.00 (Buyukozturk, 2009). According to the correlation analysis result in Table 1, there is a medium level of significant relationship between political discrimination perception and organizational cynicism of perception. A medium level of significant positive relationship was found between teachers’ political discrimination perceptions and the sub-dimensions of organizational cynicism, alienation from employing organization (r=.396; p<.01), factors decreasing performance (r=.541; p<.01) and negative attitudes toward school (r=.307; p<.01). A medium level of significant positive relationship was found between the sub-dimension of discrimination in administrative affairs of political discrimination and the sub-dimensions of organizational cynicism, alienation from employing organization (r=.418; p<.01), factors decreasing performance (r=.568; p<.01) and negative attitudes toward school (r=.312; p<.01). A low level of significant negative relationship was found between the sub-dimension of discrimination in social relations and the sub-dimension of participation in decisions and applications of organizational cynicism (r=-.155; p<.01). Similarly, a low level of significant negative relationship was found between the sub-dimension of discrimination in administrative affairs of political discrimination and the sub-dimension of participation in decisions and applications of organizational cynicism (r=-.204; p<.01).

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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<td>2. Discrimination in Administrative Affairs</td>
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Table 1 Continue

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<th>5</th>
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<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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<tr>
<td>3. Discrimination</td>
<td>.478*</td>
<td>.983*</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Alienation from Employing Organization</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.418*</td>
<td>.396*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Factors Decreasing Performance</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.568*</td>
<td>.541*</td>
<td>.617*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Negative Attitudes Toward School</td>
<td>.101</td>
<td>.312*</td>
<td>.307*</td>
<td>.526*</td>
<td>.483*</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Employee Participation in Decisions and Applications</td>
<td>-0.155*</td>
<td>-0.204*</td>
<td>-0.218*</td>
<td>-0.205*</td>
<td>-0.102</td>
<td>-0.209*</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Organizational Cynicism</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.516*</td>
<td>.488*</td>
<td>.820*</td>
<td>.904*</td>
<td>.667*</td>
<td>.033</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.01

The regression analysis results is presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Regression Analysis Results for Prediction of Organizational Cynicism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Discrimination in Social Relations</td>
<td>-0.331</td>
<td>0.162</td>
<td>-0.110</td>
<td>-2.042</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination in Administrative Affairs</td>
<td>0.349</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>0.550</td>
<td>10.248</td>
<td>.042</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R=0.52, R²=0.27, p<.05
As a result of the regression analysis conducted to reveal to what extent
discrimination in social relations and discrimination in administrative affairs are
believed to affect organizational cynicism predict organizational cynicism, these two
variables were found to affect organizational cynicism ($R^2=0.27$). Discrimination in
social relations and discrimination in administrative affairs combined explain 27% of
organizational cynicism (Figure 1). According to standardized regression coefficients,
relative order of importance of predictor variables in respect of organizational
cynicism is discrimination in administrative affairs ($\beta=0.550$) and discrimination in
social relations ($\beta=-0.110$). In view of the significance tests of the regression
coefficients, the predictor variable of discrimination in social relations is a significant
predictor of organizational trust at ($p<0.01$) level, and that of discrimination in
administrative affairs is at a ($p<0.05$) level.

![Figure 1. Statistical model](image)

**Discussion Conclusion and Recommendations**

This research sought to determine the level of the relationship between political
discrimination perceived by teachers and cynical behavior in organizations. According to the research data, there is a medium level of significant relationship
between political discrimination perceived by teachers and their organizational cynicism. When sub-dimensions are examined, a medium level of significant positive relationship was found between political dimension perceived by teachers and the sub-dimensions of organizational cynicism, alienation from employing organization, factors decreasing performance, and negative attitudes toward school.

A medium level of significant positive relationship was found between the sub-
dimension of discrimination in administrative affairs of political discrimination and the sub-dimensions of organizational cynicism, alienation from employing organization, factors decreasing performance and negative attitudes toward school. A low level of significant negative relationship was found between the sub-
dimension of discrimination in social relationships of political discrimination and the sub-dimension of participation in decisions and applications of organizational cynicism. Given such findings, it may be suggested that displays of discrimination in
social relationships decrease teachers’ organizational cynicism level, albeit slightly. Similarly, a low level of significant negative relationship was found between the sub-dimension of discrimination in administrative affairs of political discrimination and the sub-dimension of participation in decisions and applications of organizational cynicism. Also, discrimination in social relationships and discrimination in administrative affairs were found to affect organizational cynicism. Discrimination in social relationships and discrimination in administrative affairs together explain 27% of organizational cynicism and relative order of importance of predictor variables in respect to organizational cynicism is discrimination in administrative affairs and discrimination in social relationships. According to this, discrimination in social relationships and administrative affairs was found to be a significant predictor of organizational cynicism. This research result is congruent with the expectations, and teachers’ cynical behaviors increase as political discrimination increases because any type of unfair and unethical behavior tends to decrease the cynicism level. When the literature is examined, no research was found directly focusing on political discrimination and the relationship between discrimination and cynicism. However, any type of discrimination is an ethical problem. Research conducted by Khan (2007) revealed that a lack of ethical behaviors leads to cynicism, and those findings are consistent with this research. Similarly, the findings of the research revealing that injustice and intimidation experienced in organizations increase employees’ cynical behaviors (Kutanis & Cetinel, 2009; Guzel & Ayazlar, 2014; Gul & Agiroz, 2011; Pelit & Pelit, 2014) are also consistent with those of this research. A way of preventing cynical behaviors among teachers in educational institutions may be through an effective school administration that does not allow discrimination, values diversity, and is based on fair and ethical behavior.

The duty of preventing any type of discrimination and its possible negative effects in educational organizations rests with policymakers and scientists. Another way of ensuring organizational justice and preventing discrimination is through cooperation of the Ministry of National Education. The academic institution should impose ethical standards as required qualifications for school administrators. An equal distance kept by school administrators and teachers to all in school will also have a positive impact on the school climate. Harmony among school administrators and teachers would eliminate negative feelings toward school. The most important limitation of the present study determining the relationship between political discrimination and organizational cynicism is that it was conducted only in Kirsehir province. It is recommended that future research conducted in are include a larger sample and focus on determining the relationship between cynicism and political discrimination in respect to organization factors such as organizational support, organizational policies and organizational covenant violations, organizational silence, and organizational trust. Also, causes, consequences, and effects of discrimination and cynicism can be investigated in detail using different tools. This study recommends that to decrease the teachers’ cynical behaviors school principals should assure that teachers are not experiencing political discrimination in school.
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Öğretmenlerin Alğuladıkları Siyasi Ayrımcılık İle Örgütel Sinizm Düzeyleleri Arasındaki İlişki

Atıf:

Özet

Araştırmanın Bulguları: Analiz sonuçlarına göre öğretmenlerin algıladıkları siyasi ayrımcılık ile örgütsel sinizm arasında orta düzeyde anlamlı bir ilişki olduğu (r=.488; p<.01). Öğretmenlerin algıladıkları siyasi ayrımcılık ile örgütsel sinizmin alt boyutları olan çalıştığı kurumdan uzaklaşma (r=.396; p<.01), performansı düşüren etkenler (r=.541; p<.01) ve okula karşı olumsuz tutumlar (r=.307; p<.01) arasında pozitif yönde orta düzeyde anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmuştur.

Siyasi ayrımcılığın yönetisel işlerde ayrımcılık alt boyutu ile örgütsel sinizmin çalıştığı kurumdan uzaklaşma (r=.418; p<.01), performansı düşüren etkenler (r=.568; p<.01) ve okula karşı olumsuz tutum (r=.312; p<.01) arasında pozitif yönde orta düzeyde anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmuştur. Benzer şekilde siyasi ayrımcılığın sosyal ile ayrımcılık alt boyutu ile çalışanların karara ve uygulamalarına katılmısı (r=-.155; p<.01) alt boyutu arasında negatif yönde düşük düzeyde anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmuştur. Örgütsel sinizm üzerinde etkisi olduğu düşünülen sosyal ilişkilerde ayrımcılık ve yönetisel işlerde ayrımcılığın örgütsel sinizmi ne düzeyde yordadığını ortaya koymaya yönelik olarak yapılan regresyon analizi sonucunda, bu iki değişkenin örgütsel sinizm üzerinde etkisi olduğu belirgin olmuştur (R²=0.27). Sosyal işlerde ayrımcılık ve yönetisel işlerde ayrımcılık birlikte örgütsel sinizmin %27’sini açıklamaktadır (Şekil 1).

önen sırası yönetsel işlerde ayrımcılığ ve sosyal ilişkilerde ayrımcılıktır. Buna göre, sosyal ilişkilerde ve yönetsel işlerde ayrımcılığın örgütsel sınızmin anlamı bir yardımcı olduğu belirlenmiştir. Araştırmanın sonucu beklentilere uygun niteliktedir ve siyasi ayrımcılığın arttıkça öğretmenlerin sinizm düzeyini artırmaktadır çünkü her tür adil olmayan, etik dışı davranışın sınızim düzeyini artırma etkisi söz konusudur. Eğitim örgütlerinde öğretmenlerin sinizm davranışlarını önlenenin bir yolu olarak ayrımcılığa yer vermeden, farklılıklara değer vererek, adil ve etik davranış temelinde bir okul yönetiminin etkili olabileceği görülmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Örgütsel davranış, sınızim, okul yönetimi, etik dışı davranış.