

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Impact of teachers' perceptions of organizational support, management openness and personality traits on voice**

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**The purpose of this research is to study the impact of perceived organizational support and management openness and teacher personality traits on teacher voice. Voice is defined as the discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions or concerns about work-related issues with the intent to improve organizational functioning. Sample of the study consisted of 223 teachers working at 10 randomly selected primary schools in Altındağ, Çankaya, Etimesgut, Keçiören, Mamak and Yenimahalle districts in downtown Ankara. Results showed that teachers displayed a medium level of voice. Significant correlations were found between teacher voice and teachers' personality traits, and organizational variables (perceptions of organizational support and management receptivity). Regression analysis showed that extraversion and perceived management openness were the strongest predictors of teacher voice.**

**Key words:** Teacher voice, personality traits, organizational support, management openness.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

To strive in today's highly competitive organizational environments, perform effectively, make good decisions, and correct problems before they escalate, organizations depend on the knowledge, ideas and observations of their employees. Employee input in the form of information, ideas, suggestions or even criticisms is an important and valuable resource for organizations. Employees' voicing their ideas and suggestions for improvement may play a critical role in promoting organizational functioning.

Yet, research (Morrison and Milliken, 2000; Pinder and Harlos, 2001; Milliken et al., 2003; Perlow and Williams, 2003; Çakıcı, 2007; Bayram, 2010) has shown that employees are often reluctant to speak up, both to those in positions of authority and to their teammates, when they have potentially important information to share. Widespread employee silence may deny an organization potentially valuable knowledge, thus undermining

organizational performance (Detert and Edmondson, 2006). Organizations where employee voice is encouraged and prized are closer to carrying out organizational goals (Daley and Vasu, 2005). Furthermore, studies have shown that employee voice has positive effects on productivity and job satisfaction and employee turnover (Travis et al., 2011). Voicing of multiple and diverse viewpoints may also enhance the effectiveness of organizational decision making processes (Morrison and Milliken, 2000).

All the evidence suggests that employee voice is a desirable organizational behavior (Travis et al., 2011) and research into variables that might have an impact on voice is important for all organizations (Cheng and Lu, 2007) and schools alike.

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of selected organizational characteristics of primary schools

and personal traits of teachers working at these schools on teacher voice. Organizational characteristics of primary schools selected for investigation are perceived organizational support and management openness. Teachers' personal traits were defined in terms of five-factor personality model.

## VOICE

Voice is defined as the discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, or opinions about work-related issues with the intent to improve organizational or unit functioning (Morrison, 2011). Voice is a discretionary and essentially constructive behavior whose intent is to bring about improvement and positive change. Thus, Van Dyne and Le Pine (1998) defines voice as a type of extra role behavior that challenges status quo but that is constructive in its nature.

Voice depends on conscious and deliberate decision of an employee (Van Dyne et al., 2003). Message that is conveyed through voice could be a way to improve (Van Dyne and Le Pine, 1998), a situation of unfairness or misconduct (Pinder and Harlos, 2001), a strategic issue of importance (Dutton and Ashford, 1993), or an opinion that differs from the views of others (Premeaux and Bedeian, 2003).

Voice and silence are closely associated. Some researchers (for example, Milliken and Lam, 2009; Milliken et al., 2003; Morrison et al., 2011; Tangirala and Ramanujam, 2008) view silence and voice as opposite ends of the same continuum. They suggest that when an individual has potentially important information, suggestion or concern, he or she can either choose to express (voice) or withhold it (silence). From this perspective, a high level of one implies a low level of the other, and factors that predict one also predict the other, albeit in the opposite direction. Some other researchers (for example, Brinsfield et al., 2009; Kish-Gephart et al., 2009; Van Dyne et al., 2003) contend that voice and silence should be viewed as separate constructs. According to this view, voice and silence can co-exist, they are rarely absolute (that is, complete voice or complete silence) and individuals may show considerable variance regarding voice or silence across issues and over time (Morrison, 2011).

The literature on voice in organizations has its origins in Albert Hirschman's (1970) seminal work "*Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*," which defines voice as one of four possible reactions to firm related dissatisfaction; others being exit, loyalty and neglect. Voice involves organizational members' or customers' expressing their dissatisfaction directly to management, or to some other authority to which management is subordinate, or through general protest addressed to anyone who cares to listen. Hirschman defined voice as "any attempt at all to change rather than escape from an objectionable state of affairs,

whether through individual or collective petition to the management, through appeal to a higher authority with the intention of forcing a change in management, or through various types of actions and protests" (p.30). According to Hirschman, voice "can be graduated, all the way from a faint grumbling to violent protest; it implies articulation of one's critical opinions" (p.16).

In the period until the early half of 1990's studies based on Hirschman's model defined voice as one of the ways in which employees express work related dissatisfaction (Farrell and Rusbult, 1992; Withey and Cooper, 1989). Research carried out in this period gave conflicting results, partly due to the breadth in operationalization of the construct. Thus, later studies suggested more specific definitions of voice. In addition, scholars have begun to view voice as a form of prosocial (focused on others rather than self) behavior (Morrison, 2011).

Research on voice focus on two broad areas: individual factors (personal variables, employee attitudes) and contextual factors (organizational variables) (Cheng and Lu, 2007).

It has been shown that both individual factors and contextual factors have an impact on an employee's decision to voice his/her suggestions, ideas or concerns (Ashford et al., 1998).

Studies investigating the relationship between personal and demographic variables and voice rest on the basic assumption that some employees display higher levels of voice than others (LePine and Van Dyne, 2001).

## DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND VOICE

Relationship between voice and demographic variables does not have strong theoretical grounds. Consequently this line of research has yielded inconsistent and sometimes conflicting results. For instance, Miceli and colleagues (cited in Morrison, 2011), found no significant relationship between gender and whistleblowing, a construct related to voice, whereas other studies (Detert and Burris, 2007; LePine and Van Dyne, 1998) found higher levels of voice for male employees.

On the other hand, research studying the relationship between voice and years of professional experience and experience in the organization found positive links (Burris et al., 2008; Detert and Burris, 2007; Tangirala and Ramanujam, 2008). In the study carried out by Milliken et al. (2003) many employees stated their lack of tenure or experience in the organization as one reason why they were silent. Employees who are new or have limited experience in the organization may fail to voice their concerns and suggestions either because they do not have enough credibility to do so or this may be risky for their image in the organization. Similarly, a greater sense of investment in the organization, and thus a greater motivation to ensure its effectiveness may account for more experienced employees' higher levels of voice

(Morrison, 2011).

Supporting this idea, Rusbult et al. (1988) found that employees with a sense of greater investment in their organizations and good job alternatives displayed a higher level of voice.

Milliken et al. (2003) argue that younger and less experienced employees in lower positions in the organization are more aware of potentially negative outcomes of voice; and display lower levels of voice due to their lack of power and credibility in the organization.

Similarly, LePine and Van Dyne (1998) found that female and non white employees with a college degree displayed lower levels of voice compared to their male and white counterparts without a college degree.

In the light of evidence presented so far, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What level of voice do primary school teachers in Ankara display on school related issues?  
Is there a significant difference in teachers' voice levels in terms of;
2. gender;
3. years of experience as a teacher,
4. years of experience at current institution?

## PERSONALITY TRAITS AND VOICE

Relationship between voice and personality traits has been another widely studied area of research (LePine and Van Dyne, 2001).

Viewed in terms of Motowidlo et al. (1997) distinction between task performance and contextual performance, voice can be defined as a form of change oriented contextual performance, because it involves such behaviors as making suggestions for organizational improvement, expressing constructive ideas for better organizational functioning, and trying to convince other employees for working harder. There is a significant relationship between personality and contextual performance. Thus, it stands to reason that voice and personality traits are also related (Motowidlo et al., 1997).

Five Factor Personality Model (FFM) defined by Norman (1963) has been the most widely used model in personality related studies. FFM was validated in studies carried out in various countries in 1990s (Deniz and Erciş, 2008). FFM defines personality in terms of five factors: Extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience. Brief explanations about each factor are presented below.

**Extraversion:** Extraverts tend to be positive, social, energetic, joyful, and interested in other people. These individuals are often described as dominant, assertive, domineering, and forceful (Costa and McCrae, 1992). Introverts are reserved rather than unfriendly, independent rather than followers, even-paced rather than

sluggish.

**Agreeableness:** Individuals high in agreeableness are described as altruistic, trusting, cooperative, compliant, and "moved by others' needs" (Costa and McCrae, 1992). The disagreeable/antagonistic individuals, on the other hand, are egocentric, skeptical of others' intentions, and competitive rather than co-operative (Rothmann and Coetzer, 2003).

**Conscientiousness:** Conscientiousness is associated with achievement orientation (hardworking and persistent), dependability (responsible and careful) and orderliness (planful and organised). Conscientious individuals are purposeful, strong-willed and determined. On the negative side, high conscientiousness may lead to annoying fastidiousness, compulsive neatness or workaholic behavior. Low scorers are less exacting in applying them (Rothmann and Coetzer, 2003). In organizational settings where success is linked to interdependence and smooth relationships, highly conscientious employees tend to be more cooperative with other employees (Le Pine and Van Dyne, 2001).

**Neuroticism:** A high neuroticism score indicates that a person is prone to having irrational ideas, being less able to control impulses, and coping poorly with stress. A low neuroticism score is indicative of emotional stability. These people are usually calm, even-tempered, relaxed and able to face stressful situations without becoming upset (Hough et al., 1990).

**Openness to Experience:** Openness to experience includes active imagination, aesthetic sensitivity, attentiveness to inner feelings, a preference for variety, intellectual curiosity and independence of judgement (Rothmann and Coetzer, 2003). Individuals high on openness to experience are described as creative, inquisitive, introspective, and attentive to inner feelings (Costa and McCrae, 1992). They are more willing to question authority and prepared to entertain new ethical, social and political ideas. People scoring low on openness tend to be conventional in behavior and prefer the familiar to the novel, and their emotional responses are somewhat muted (Rothmann and Coetzer, 2003).

In a laboratory study of 276 individuals, investigating the relationship between personality traits and voice LePine and Van Dyne (2001) found positive relationships between voice and five factor personality traits of conscientiousness and extraversion. The relationship between voice and conscientiousness, they argued, is accounted for by those individuals' achievement orientation and willingness to talk about ideas intended to improve the situation. Similarly extraverted individuals are more comfortable and skilled in communicating their ideas. The relationships between voice and neuroticism, and agreeableness were negative. There was no significant relationship between voice and openness to experience. Individuals who score high on neuroticism may feel insecure or embarrassed and avoid speaking up not to draw attention to themselves. Agreeable individuals

tend to value cooperation and conform to norms, possibly causing them to go along with suggestions made by others rather than voice their thoughts. LePine and Van Dyne did not offer an adequate explanation on lack of a significant relationship between openness to experience and voice. But, it is contended that openness to experience includes a number of diverse components, and as such it is described as the most amorphous and heterogeneous dimension of the FFM (Hough, 2003).

In a study carried out with 334 professionals in Greece, Nikolau, Vakola, and Bourantas (2008) explored the relationship between the five-factor model of personality and employees' voice behavior towards their immediate supervisor and the top management of their company. Findings of the study demonstrated a significant relationship between personality and voice behavior towards the immediate supervisor, but not towards the top management of the company. Conscientiousness and emotional stability (low neuroticism) are the strongest predictors of employees' voice behavior.

Consequently, this study attempts to answer the following research question regarding the relationship between teachers' voice and personality traits;

5. Is there a significant relationship between primary school teachers' voice and their personality traits defined by the five factor model (that is, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience)?

Relationship between voice and organizational variables have also been widely studied by researchers. Research on organizational variables related with voice rests on the assumption that even the most proactive employees with high levels of job satisfaction read the organizational context before voicing and decide whether it is safe to speak up or not (Milliken et al., 2003). Employees' perceptions of the level of support that the organization provides for them, called perceived organizational support, is one of the organizational variables thought to be related with voice.

### **PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT**

One contextual factor that has an impact on an employee's decision to voice or withhold information or any other kind of input is his/her perceptions concerning the level of support that the organization gives to him/her. Perceived organizational support (POS) refers to employees' beliefs about the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. POS is influenced by those favorable treatments by the organization such as fair treatment of the employees, superior support, organizational rewards, favorable working conditions, pay, promotion, job enrichment, praise, approval and influence over organizational

policies (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Studies found significant relationships between POS and various organizational outcomes such as lower absenteeism (Eisenberger et al., 1986), job performance (Eisenberger et al., 1990), organizational citizenship behavior (Shore and Wayne, 1993), job satisfaction (Eisenberger et al., 1997) and affective commitment (Eisenberger et al., 1990; Shore and Wayne, 1993).

In a meta analysis of more than 70 studies concerning POS, Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) showed that POS is related to outcomes favorable to employees (for example, job satisfaction, positive mood) and the organization (for example, affective commitment, performance, and lower withdrawal behavior). The consequence most strongly linked to POS is affective commitment. Employees strongly reciprocate organization's caring and positive valuation by increasing their emotional bond to the organization. Extra role behaviors directed toward the organization may also be salient ways to reciprocate organizational support. In another study POS has been found to be related to steelworkers' creative suggestions for improving their plant's operations (Eisenberger et al., 1990).

In a study carried out with 374 hotel employees in Turkey, Erenler (2002) found a negative relationship between POS and employee silence. In another study by Milliken et al. (2003) employee perceptions of supervisor-employee relationship and supervisor support were found to be positively related with employees' tendency to voice their suggestions, concerns and ideas. In a survey study of issue selling with 1019 female managers from various industries, Ashford et al. (1998) studied the conditions under which female managers raised and promoted gender equity issues in their organizations. The results suggested that perceptions of a high level of organizational support and of a warm and trusting relationship with critical decision makers enhanced the perceived probability of selling and diminished the perceived image risk in selling. In a study on 213 urban bus drivers in UK, Tucker et al. (2008) examined how employee perceptions of organizational and coworker support for safety influence employee safety voice. Their findings suggested that, controlling for age and personality traits, bus drivers spoke out more about safety issues when they perceived that their organization supported safety (that is, encouraged, listened to, and took action on safety suggestions).

### **PERCEIVED MANAGEMENT OPENNESS**

Another contextual clue that employees attend to before deciding to voice or withhold any kind of input is perceived management openness. Perceived management openness refers to the extent to which management is believed to encourage employees to offer input and make suggestions (Premeaux and Bedeian, 2003). Employees are more likely to voice their opinions, concerns and even

dissent about the matters in their organizations if they are encouraged by the management to do so; or if they are provided with formal channels to express their opinions to the management, or both (Huang et al., 2003).

One of the first studies investigating the relationship between voice and perceived management openness to employee opinions and suggestions was carried out by Saunders et al. (1992). They found that employees were more likely to voice when they believed that their direct supervisors (a) made consistent and sound decisions, (b) encouraged employee participation, (c) were fair in their decisions and (d) could be reached by employees and did not punish those who expressed their opinions or concerns.

In a study carried out with 118 telecommunications employees, Premeaux and Bedeian (2003) investigated the influence of self monitoring on the relationship between two individual (locus of control and self esteem) and two contextual (top-management openness and trust in supervisor) factors and speaking up. The findings of the study showed that low self-monitors spoke up more often as self esteem, top management openness and trust in supervisor increased.

In another study carried out with 275 white-collar employees from different organizations Morrison and Phelps (1999) investigated the factors that motivated employees to engage in a form of extra role behavior called taking charge. Taking charge was found to be related to felt responsibility, self efficacy, and top management openness.

Ashford et al. (1998) suggest that in organization where management is not tolerant toward diverse opinions, employees tend to withhold rather than share the information they have or their opinions about organizational matters.

In a study with employees from multinational organizations Huang et al. (2003) found that management openness and employee participation were negatively associated with employee propensity to withhold opinions on organizational matters.

In another study with 3149 employees and 223 managers of a restaurant chain, Detert and Burris (2007) found a significant relationship between management openness and voice. This relationship was mediated by employee safety perceptions, meaning that perceived manager openness fostered voice by creating enhanced feelings of psychological safety.

In another study, Tangirala and Ramanujam (2010) found that managers' consultation behavior led employees to feel more influential, leading to more voice. These effects were especially strong when the employee had high job satisfaction and when the manager had high perceived status (cited in Morrison, 2011). Studies carried out in Turkey yielded similar results. For instance in a study carried out in Kayseri, Karacaoğlu and Cingöz (2009) found a weak negative relationship between leader openness, interactional justice and employee

silence. In another study carried out in Antalya, Erenler (2002) found that management openness had a negative influence on employee silence.

All the evidence suggests that there exists an association between perceived management openness to employee input in the form of opinions, suggestions and criticism on organizational matters and voice. Employees constantly read the organizational context for clues about how organization responds to their attempts to improve organizational functioning (Ashford et al., 1998). When managers give messages hinting that they show a real concern for and care about employees' opinions and take these seriously employees may feel more willing and comfortable voicing their concerns. When managers show little tolerance towards different opinions, adopt a negative attitude toward opposing viewpoints or do not set up official upward communication channels, employees tend to avoid expressing work or organization related problems, concerns and/or constructive suggestions Huang et al., 2003).

In the light of the arguments presented so far, this study aims to answer following research questions:

6. Is there a significant relationship between primary school teachers' voice and their perceptions of the level of support their schools provide them with?
7. Is there a significant relationship between primary school teachers' voice and their perceptions about openness of school administrations to teachers' opinions and suggestions?
8. The three variables (teachers' personality traits, perceived organizational support and perceived management openness) taken together, which variable(s) has a stronger influence on teachers' voice?

A review of Turkish organizational behavior literature on voice and silence show that there are few studies on both constructs and rather than voice most studies focus on organizational/employee silence. Studies in the Turkish literature can be grouped into two broad categories. Studies in the first category focus on the issues on which employees remain silent and reasons of silence. The second group of studies investigate the relationship between organizational silence and certain organizational variables.

For instance, Çakıcı (2007) and Bayram (2010) studied the level of silence at two universities among academics and staff, issues on which they remained silent and reasons of silence. Both studies indicate that silence is a widespread phenomenon even at universities and among academics. Examples of studies in the second category are Erdoğan's (2011), and Zehir and Erdoğan's (2011) research about the influence of performance on the relationship between organizational silence and leadership; Eroğlu et al.'s research (2011) about the relationship between organizational silence and commitment and Karacaoğlu and Cingöz's (2009) research about the

influence of leadership behaviors and organizational justice on employee silence. Other studies (for instance Erenler, 2002; Bildik, 2009; Kahveci, 2010; Alparslan, 2010) focused on similar variables.

It has stated that both individual factors and contextual factors have an impact on an employee's decision to voice his/her suggestions, ideas or concerns (Ashford et al., 1998). Personality traits underlie several forms of individual behavior. Personality has also been widely used to explain differences in a variety of work-related outcomes. Literature suggests that it may be associated with voice. Besides, voice is also a contextually embedded phenomenon. As Ashford et al. (1998) suggests employees 'read the context for clues' regarding how their suggestions, ideas or concerns will be received. Two contextual factors, perceived organizational support and management openness, have been selected for investigation in this study. Previous research supports selection of both factors. The extent to which management of an organization is believed to be encouraging employees to offer input and make suggestions (perceived management openness) and valuing employees' contributions and caring about their well-being (perceived organizational support) are a major influence on context favorability.

Thus, this study may contribute to the existing literature in various ways. Opinions, concerns, suggestions, and criticisms of teachers as the practitioners of core functions of schools are a valuable source of input for school administrations. If teachers are encouraged to voice information, opinions and suggestions they have, school administrations can address to issues of real significance for improvement of the quality of education. Besides, teacher voice toward school administration and colleagues can promote sharing of good practices among teachers, which may be a valuable contribution to the improvement of instruction and education at schools. Yet studies (Çakıcı, 2007; Bayram, 2010) show that silence is a widespread phenomenon at schools and among educators. Since few studies have been carried out on teacher voice especially at primary school level, I hope that this study may contribute to fill in a gap in the literature.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Model

This study is a survey research (Büyüköztürk et al., 2010) with teacher voice as the dependent variable and three other groups of variables; demographic variables, personality traits and two organizational factors, as independent variables.

### Sampling

This study was carried out in five districts of downtown Ankara in the spring term of the academic year 2009 to 2010. According to the statistics of the National Ministry of Education, the total number

of teachers working at 478 primary schools in five districts of downtown Ankara was 18320, as of 2009 to 2010. To select the sample of the study, a list of primary schools in five districts of downtown Ankara was retrieved from District Educational Directorates' web sites. For each district two primary schools were picked up randomly, narrowing the sample of the study to 10 primary schools. Next, school administrations were contacted for the due administrative procedures and permission for application was obtained from each school principal individually. Before application, teachers, either individually or in groups, were informed at each school about the purpose of the study and confidentiality was promised. The researcher had to stay at each school for a full day to distribute and collect back questionnaire forms to teachers. 223 teachers agreed to participate in the study. Participants were 65.5% female (146 teachers) and 34.5% male (77 teachers). In terms of teaching experience in years teachers with 11 to 15 years of teaching experience (25.6%) and teachers with 21 years or more teaching experience (23.3%) formed the majority. In terms of experience at current school, teacher with 1 to 3 years of experience at their current school made up 29.1%, those with 4 to 6 years 19.7%, and 7 to 10 years 27.8% of the sample. 23.3% of participants told they had been working at their current school for more than 10 years.

### Instruments

The questionnaire forms distributed to teachers had two parts. The first part of the questionnaire form involved questions about teachers' gender, years of experience as a teacher and years of teaching experience at their current school. The second part of the questionnaire included four scales: Five Factor Personality, Perceived Organizational Support, Perceived Management Receptivity and Voice scales. Brief information about each instrument is presented below.

*Teacher voice scale:* Employee Voice Scale developed by Van Dyne and LePine (1998) has since been used at various studies and various types of organizations as a reliable measure of voice. Various studies obtained satisfactory Cronbach's alpha reliability values for the scale. For instance (Van Dyne and LePine, 1998; Gao et al., 2011) found Cronbach's alpha values of (.82) and (.89) respectively.

A pilot study was conducted at two primary schools in Ankara in order to adapt the scale into Turkish. Adaptation of the scale into Turkish was carried out in three steps as suggested by Brislin et al. (1973); translation into target language, evaluation of the translation and final evaluation by experts.

Translation of the original scale into Turkish was made by two Turkish national academicians, one being the author himself. Both translators had a BA degree in English Language Teaching (ELT) and one had a MA degree in ELT and both worked independently to translate the original scale into Turkish. Translated scales were reviewed and evaluated by a team of three experts with MA in different areas. One expert had an MA degree in Turkish Language and Literature, the second expert in Management and Organization and the third in Educational Sciences. All team members knew English at "proficient user" level. Those experts were asked to read the translated forms separately and evaluate the translation according to clarity of expression, wording and appropriateness to the target language. Following independent evaluation team members came and worked together to agree on what they believed was the most suitable and best expression of each item. Thus a final draft was obtained. Next, this final draft was e-mailed to three associate professors; two from the field of Management and Organization and one from the field of Educational Administration. Taking their suggestions into consideration, the author obtained the final form of the scale to be used in pilot study.

The original employee voice scale developed by Van Dyne and LePine, a 7 point Likert scale, was modified and transformed into a 5 point Likert scale for use in the Turkish context. There are three reasons for that change. Five point Likert scales are claimed to be more practical (Köklü, 1995), more widely used and easier to handle for subjects and researchers in the Turkish context (Akin et al., 2009).

In the next phase, a pilot study was conducted in two primary schools located in two different districts of downtown Ankara. Schools were randomly selected from the list of all schools in downtown Ankara. 55 teachers participated in the pilot study.

In order to examine the appropriateness of factor analysis The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used. KMO was found to be (.722) over (.6) and Bartlett's Sphericity Test  $\chi^2$  value (179.885) ( $p < .01$ ) significant. Thus, it was concluded that factor analysis is appropriate. Analysis yielded a single factor structure with an eigenvalue of (3.879). Detailed item factor loadings for the scale is presented in Table 1.

Item factor loadings were found to be over (.70) and 6-item scale with single factor explained 62% of total variance. Reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) for the scale as a whole was (.874). Item-total correlations were over (.56) and no substantial increases in alpha could have been achieved by eliminating any item. Analyses indicated that the Turkish version of the scale could be used with confidence.

The adapted voice scale yielded satisfactory statistical results in the main study too. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was found (.873). Item analysis for the scale is presented in Table 2.

Item-total correlations were over (.56) and no substantial increases in alpha could have been achieved by eliminating any item. The adapted scale consists of 6 items with five point Likert type ranging from (1) "Never" to (5) "Always".

*Five factor personality scale:* Five factor personality scale developed by John et al. (1991) was used in this study. Scale has 44 items, each a short expression describing personality and five factors; neuroticism, extraversion, openness (to experience), agreeableness and conscientiousness. It is a five point Likert type scales with responses ranging from (1) "Never Correct" to (5) "Always Correct". John and Srivastava (1999) state that alpha values between (.75) and (.90) have been obtained by different studies.

The scale was adapted into Turkish by Alkan (2006) who reported following alpha values: (.87) for the scale as a whole and (.67) to (.89) for factors. In the study carried out by Ulu (2007) alpha value was (.81) for extraversion, (.64) for agreeableness, (.79) for conscientiousness, (.80) for neuroticism and (.81) for openness to experience (Ulu, 2007). Cronbach alpha coefficients for the *five factor personality scale* are presented in Table 3.

As can be seen from the table Cronbach alpha values for the factors and the scale as a whole are over (.70).

The scale asks participants to state "to what extent each expression holds true for them." There are 8 items for neuroticism, 8 items for extraversion, 10 items for openness to experience, 9 items for agreeableness, and 9 items for conscientiousness. 16 of those items are reverse scored.

*Perceived management receptivity scale:* In order to measure the degree to which school administrations are open to and welcome teachers' ideas and suggestions, 6 items that Ashford et al. (1998) adapted from House and Rizzo's (1972) Top Management Receptiveness Measure was used. Scale is a five point Likert type scale with responses ranging from (1) "Never" to (5) "Always." One item is reverse scored. In two separate studies, Erenler found alpha values of (.906) and (.875) respectively for the Management Receptivity Scale (Erenler, 2002). In this study, the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) for the six items measuring perceptions of school administrations' openness to teachers' ideas and suggestions was found to be (.84). Item-whole correlations for

items are over (.56) and no substantial increases in alpha could have been achieved by eliminating any item.

*Perceived organizational support scale:* In order to quantify teachers' perceptions of the degree of support schools provide for them, this study used the 8-item short version of 36-item Perceived Organizational Support Scale developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986). The short version has been used by numerous researchers (Rhoades et al., 2001; Eisenberger et al., 1997; Lynchet et al., 1999 cited in Erenler, 2002). Scale is a five point Likert type scale with responses ranging from (1) "Never" to (5) "Always." Two items are reverse scored.

Various studies found satisfactory reliability coefficients for the scale. For instance Eisenberger et al. (1986) (.97); Erenler (2002) (0.862), Uçar (2009) (.88) and Çakar and Yıldız (2009) (.83). In this study Cronbach's alpha value for the 8 items measuring Perceived Organizational Support was computed as (.861). Item-whole correlations for items are over (.56) and no substantial increases in alpha could have been achieved by eliminating any item.

## DATA ANALYSIS

First, in order to check the dataset for normality of distribution Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed. After checking for normality of distribution, independent samples T-test was used to compare means of two groups and one-way ANOVA was used for multiple group comparisons. In case of a significant variance between groups Tukey test for multiple comparisons was used to find the source of variance. In order to test variance homogeneity hypothesis Levene test was utilized. To quantify the correlation between variables Pearson correlation coefficient was computed and to understand how the typical value of the dependent variable changes when any one of the independent variables is varied, regression analysis was performed. Results were interpreted at (.01) or (.05) confidence intervals. All analyses were performed using IBM SPSS 16 software.

## RESULTS

First, this study aimed to explore the level of voice teachers displayed on school related matters. Descriptive statistics on teacher voice are presented in Table 4.

Mean for teacher voice is 3.63, which refers to a slightly above medium level of teacher voice.

Next, this study aimed to analyze variance in teacher voice in terms of three variables: gender, years of experience as a teacher and years of experience at current institution. Independent samples t test results analyzing the variance in teacher voice according to gender are presented in Table 5.

As seen in Table 5, female and male teachers display a very similar level of voice on school related matters. The difference is very small and not significant [ $t(223) = -0.06$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ].

ANOVA results comparing teacher voice according to years of teaching experience are presented in Table 6.

As seen in Table 6, teacher voice increases as teachers gain more teaching experience, with the exception of teachers who have 21 or more years of experience.

Teachers who have 1 to 5 years of teaching experience

**Table 1.** Item factor loadings for the voice scale

No	Item	Factor Loading
1	Okulu ilgilendiren konularla ilgili önerilerde bulunurum.	.740
2	Okulu ilgilendiren konularda görüşlerimi açıkça ifade ederim ve diğerlerini konuya dâhil olmaya teşvik ederim.	.868
3	Okulumdaki diğer öğretmenlerin benimle aynı görüşte olmadığını bilsem de iş ile ilgili konulardaki düşüncelerimi onlarla paylaşıyorum.	.705
4	Düşüncemin okul için faydalı olabileceğini değerlendirdiğim bir konu ile ilgili daha kapsamlı bilgi sahibi olmaya çalışırım.	.700
5	Okuldaki çalışma ortamının niteliğini etkileyebilecek konulara katkı sağlamaya çalışırım.	.790
6	Okuldaki yeni proje veya değişikliklerle ilgili düşüncelerimi açıkça söylerim.	.890

**Table 2.** Voice scale item analysis

Item	Corrected item-whole correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item eliminated
1	.632	.859
2	.794	.829
3	.587	.866
4	.567	.868
5	.671	.852
6	.812	.826

**Table 3.** Five factor personality scale reliability analysis

Factors	No of items	(Cronbach $\alpha$ )
Neuroticism	8	.720
Extraversion	8	.766
Openness (to experience)	10	.720
Agreeableness	9	.807
Conscientiousness	9	.792
Total	44	.725

**Table 4.** Descriptive statistics on teacher voice

	n	$\bar{X}$	SD
Voice	223	3.63*	.71

\*Item value: 1=never, 5=always

display a significantly lower level of voice than teachers with 16 to 20 years of professional experience [ $F_{(4,218)}=2.44$ ;  $p<0.05$ ]. The difference between other experience groups is not significant.

ANOVA results comparing teacher voice according to

**Table 5.** Variance in voice in terms of teachers' gender

Gender	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	t	p
Female	146	3.63*	0.67	-0.06	0.95
Male	77	3.64*	0.80		

\*Item value: 1=never, 5=always

years of experience at current institution are presented in Table 7.

According to Table 7, teacher voice increases as teachers gain more experience at a particular school. Yet, only the difference between voice levels of teachers with 1-3 and 10+ years of experience at their current schools is significant [ $F_{(3,219)}=3.67$ ;  $p<0.05$ ].

Next, this study aimed to explore the correlation between teachers' personality traits and their voice levels. Findings are presented in Table 8.

As seen in Table 8, the relationship between personality traits and voice on school related matters is significant ( $p<0.05$ ). Relationship is positive for extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness; and negative for neuroticism. The relationship is strongest for extraversion.

Next, this study explored the relationship between



**Table 6.** Teacher voice according to years of teaching experience

Teaching experience (yrs)	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	F	p	Variance
1-5	44	3.39	.44			
6-10	36	3.70	.75			
11-15	57	3.72	.58	2.44	0.04	1-5 – 16-20
16-20	34	3.84	.86			
21 +	52	3.56	.84			

**Table 7.** Teacher voice according to years of experience at current institution

Expr. at current inst. (yrs)	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	F	p	Variance
1-3	65	3.45	.55			
4-6	44	3.56	.65			
7-10	62	3.68	.71	3.67	0.01	1-3 – 10+
10+	52	3.87	.88			

**Table 8.** Correlation Between Teachers' Personality Traits and Voice

Personality traits	Voice	
	r	P
Neuroticism	-.16*	.02
Extraversion	.41**	.00
Openness (to experience)	.33**	.00
Agreeableness	.16*	.01
Conscientiousness	.26**	.00

**Table 9.** Correlation between voice and two organizational variables

	Voice	
	r	p
Perceived Organizational Support	.25**	.00
Perceived Management Openness	.38**	.00

\*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$

teacher voice and two organizational variables: perceived organizational support and perceived openness of school administrations. Pearson's correlation coefficients for both relationships are presented in Table 9.

As can be seen in Table 9, there is a significant positive relationship between perceived organizational support and teacher voice ( $r = .25$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Similarly, the relationship between perceived openness of school administrations and teacher voice is also significant and positive ( $r = .38$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Finally, this study seeks to compare impacts of two sets of variables on teacher voice: personal traits of teachers and organizational variables of schools. Stepwise regression was performed for this

comparison. In the first step, only demographic variables were entered into regression analysis. After controlling for demographic variables, teachers' personal traits were entered into regression. After controlling for organizational variables of schools, two organizational variables of schools were entered in the final step: perceived organizational support and perceived management openness. Findings of stepwise regression analysis are presented in Table 10.

Results of stepwise regression analysis show that demographic variables alone explain 5.1% of variation in teacher voice. In the next step entering personality traits into analysis increases explanatory power of the model significantly ( $\Delta R^2 = .193$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Personality traits alone explain 19.3% of variance in teacher voice. Among demographic variables in the first step, impact of years of experience at current school on teacher voice ( $p < .01$ ) is significant. In the second step, extraversion ( $\beta = .338$ ,  $p < .01$ ), agreeableness ( $\beta = .181$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and openness (to experience) ( $\beta = .175$ ,  $p < .05$ ) are the personality traits that have a significant effect on teacher voice. Gender and years of teaching experience in the first step, and conscientiousness and neuroticism in the second step have no significant effect on teacher voice ( $p > .05$ ). Finally entering perceived organizational support and management openness into analysis increases explanatory power of the model significantly by 19.7% ( $\Delta R^2 = .197$ ;  $p < .01$ ). As a whole model explains 44.2% of variance in teacher voice. In the third step, effects of perceived management openness ( $\beta = .325$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and perceived organizational support ( $p < .05$ ) on teacher voice are significant.

## DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate effects of two

**Table 10.** Stepwise regression comparing impacts of two sets of variables on teacher voice

Variables	$\beta$	Voice	
		$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$
Step 1		.051	3.953
Demographic variables			
Gender	.001		
Professional expr.	-.087		
Institutional expr.	.270**		
Step 2		.193*	10.96
Personality traits		*	4
Extraversion	.338*		
Openness	.175*		
Agreeableness	.181*		
Conscientiousness	.028		
Neuroticism	.131		
Step 3		.197*	37.33
Organizational variables		*	9
Perceived Org. Support	.169*		
Perceived Mngmnt.	.325*		
Openness	*		
Total R <sup>2</sup>	.442**		
N=223			

\* p&lt;0.05 \*\* p&lt;0.01

organizational variables of schools and teachers' personality traits on teacher voice on school related matters. Organizational variables selected for analysis were teachers' perceptions of the degree of openness of school administrations to teachers' opinions and suggestions and the degree of organizational support schools give to teachers. 223 primary school teachers working at 10 primary schools in five districts of downtown Ankara participated in the study. Two primary schools were randomly selected for each district.

Results show that teachers display a slightly above medium level of voice. They voice their opinions, concerns or suggestion at a level between "sometimes" and "often". This finding supports findings of previous studies conducted at Turkish school settings (Çakıcı, 2007; Bayram, 2010) and in other countries at various types of organizations (Morrison and Milliken, 2000; Pinder and Harlos, 2001; Milliken et al., 2003; Perlow and Williams, 2003). Comparison of employee voice or silence at different types of organizations and in different cultures is beyond the scope of this study. Yet results show that employee failure to voice, as a phenomenon, exists and can be pretty widespread. This study adds to the existing literature by indicating that primary schools are no exception to this assertion. Primary school teachers, too, avoid voicing and may withhold their opinions, concerns or suggestions, or information of significance on school

related matters at times.

The second important finding of this study is the lack of a significant difference in teacher voice in terms of teachers' gender. As stated in related literature review above, the relationship between gender and voice is not grounded on strong bases and therefore studies investigating this relationship have found conflicting results (Morrison, 2011). Findings of this study supports the view that gender has no significant effect on voice.

Regarding the relationship between teaching experience and voice, this study found that except for teachers with 21 years or more teaching experience, teachers display a greater level of voice as they gain more experience in profession. New and less experienced teachers (1-5 years) display a significantly lower level of voice than more experienced (16-20 years) teachers. Experience at current school has a similar impact on voice. Teachers with a greater experience at their current schools are more voiced than those with less experience. Again difference between voice levels of the least (1-3 years) and the most experienced groups of teachers is significantly higher for the experienced group. Yet, results of stepwise regression analysis also support this assertion.

Literature on voice and experience (Milliken et al., 2003; Burriss et al., 2008; Detert and Burriss, 2007; Tangirala and Ramanujam, 2008) shows that there exists a significant relationship between voice and both

professional and institutional experience.

Relatively lower level of voice of teachers with less experience at their current schools may have to do with the feeling that they lack enough credibility and recognition to voice their opinions and suggestions comfortably or that it may be risky for their image to do so. On the other hand, teachers with a greater experience both in profession and at institution may feel that they have a greater investment of time and energy in school leading to a stronger sense of ownership or identification with the institution. Thus they may have developed a higher motivation to improve its effectiveness and tend not to refrain from behaviors like voice which may be deemed risky by less experienced teachers.

A positive relationship was found between teacher voice personality traits of extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness. This relationship was negative for neuroticism and strongest for extra-version. Stepwise regression analysis which showed that predictive power of extraversion on teacher voice was strongest supports this finding. In terms of predictive power extraversion was followed by openness to experience and agreeableness.

Generally speaking, these findings support findings of previous research on voice and personality (LePine and Van Dyne, 2001; Nikolau et al., 2008). These studies also found a strong association between voice and extraversion. Other traits that were also powerful predictors of voice was conscientiousness in LePine and Van Dyne's study (2001); and conscientiousness and emotional stability (low neuroticism) in Nikolau et al. (2008).

Since extraverted individuals are more comfortable and skilled in communicating their ideas, it stands to reason that extraverted teachers display higher levels of voice and predictive power of extraversion on voice is strongest. Since in some cases voice may involve an attempt to change the status quo, it can be hypothesized that extraverted individuals feel less pressurized to comply and speak up with greater ease, comfort and skill.

Individuals who are high on neuroticism may sometimes be anxious, tense, insecure and may avoid speaking up not to draw attention to themselves. Thus it is also reasonable that individuals with high scores of neuroticism display lower levels of voice. The relationship between agreeableness and voice was significant and positive as well its predictive power on voice. Although agreeable individuals may tend to conform to norms in general and go along with suggestions of others rather than voice, teachers in Turkish primary school context did not avoid voicing what they knew or thought and they did not think this attitude could damage their relationships with others. A similar pattern of relationship exists between openness to experience and voice. Since individuals open to experience value originality, creativity and curiosity, they have a greater tendency to voice even diverse opinions or suggestions.

The relationship between conscientiousness and voice is positive, yet conscientiousness has no significant predictive effect on voice. As stated before, conscientious people are planned, organized, and careful, but on the negative side they may be annoyingly fastidious or compulsively neat. High levels of carefulness or planning may breed a tendency in some individuals to think twice before and maybe avoid voicing what he/she thinks or feels. Because in some cases voice may entail spontaneity.

A positive relationship was found between teacher voice and their perceptions of the support their schools give to them. This finding supports findings of previous research on voice and perceived organizational support (Erenler, 2002; Milliken et al., 2003; Ashford et al., 1998; Tucker et al., 2008). Similarly a positive relationship was found between teacher voice and teachers' perceptions about school administrations' openness to their ideas. This finding too supports findings of previous similar research (Premeaux and Bedeian, 2003; Huang et al., 2003; Detert and Burris, 2007; Tangirala and Ramanujam, 2010; Erenler, 2002; Karacaoğlu and Cingöz, 2009). Teachers display a higher level of voice on school related matters when they feel that school organizations value their contributions and care about their well-being and that school administrations encourage them to offer opinions or suggestions and take these seriously.

The most remarkable finding of this study concerns comparative effects of organizational and personality factors on teacher voice. Results of stepwise regression show that personality traits alone explain 19.3% of variance in teacher voice. Entering perceived organizational support and perceived management openness into the model added an additional 19.7% to its explanatory power increasing the overall explanatory power to 44.2%. Although both organizational factors had a significant effect on teacher voice, effect of perceived management openness was stronger.

Results prove that voice is the result of a complex process involving personality traits and organizational factors. There is no doubt that personality factors have an important effect on voice. But personality is not the sole factor determining whether teachers voice or withhold what they think or what they feel. Extraverted and agreeable teachers who are also open to new experiences voice their opinions, concerns or suggestions only after they read the organizational context, clues as to whether school administrations show a real concern for their opinions and suggestions and really cares for them and their values. On the other hand, even if organizational context is favorable, even if school administrations are really open to teacher input and care for their well being, some teachers, especially those who may sometimes be nervous, anxious or fastidious may avoid voicing their opinions of criticism.

As it involves such behaviors as offering constructive suggestions for organizational improvement, expressing

ideas for smoother organizational functioning and convincing other employees to perform better, voice is defined as a form of productive work behavior. It is important that teachers, as the key actors at schools, voice their ideas, suggestions and even criticisms about issues concerning education and teaching.

When teachers believe that their opinions and suggestions are taken seriously and acted upon by the school administration they will be less likely to avoid speaking up. Another factor teachers feel is important is the degree of support schools give to teachers. Teachers who feel that schools care for them and value their well being they are prone to voice what they think or feel.

It is important that school administrations show a real and intimate concern for teachers as persons, listen to what they have to say and do what they think needs to be done to improve quality of education at schools. Because it is teacher that can take a close-up picture of students and their learning. School administrations should also develop and effectively use channels that teachers can use for upward communication.

A main limitation of this study concerns its sample. This study was carried out at ten primary schools in Ankara. Further research at various school levels and settings is needed to substantiate its findings. Also research studying the effects of various other organizational variables on voice is needed.

This study confirmed the key role of extraversion as a personality trait on voice. Various studies, including this study, seem to have reached different conclusions on effects of other personality traits. This difference may have to do with cultural differences. Additional research is needed to understand the effect of culture on employee voice.

Also more research is needed to shed light on other organizational factors that may have an effect on voice. To better understand the effect of organizational context on voice, effects of such variables as perceptions of organizational justice, leadership, and organizational climate on employee voice should be investigated.

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