

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Investigating organizational culture perception of students studying in School of Physical Education and Sports in Turkey**

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**The aim of this study is to determine organisational culture of the students studying in School of Physical Education and Sports (SPES) in Turkey. The study group of the research is composed of 216 students studying in the third and fourth year of Physical Education and Sports Teaching, Sports Administration, Coaching Education and Recreation departments in Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University (MSKU) SPES in Turkey. In order to reach the research findings, the organisational culture and student sub culture scales developed by Erdem and İşbaşı (2001) are used. It is found that there are differences among the students studying in the SPES where ideas of students concerning organisational culture are “positive” in general. Based on sub-variables such as “belonging” and “symbols” used in the study, it is stated that there is a parallel perception of organisational culture among students.**

**Key words:** School of Physical Education and Sports, organisation, organisational culture.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In information age in which we live, all organisations are supposed to increase their power to be able to compete in national and international fields. Considering educated and additional value, supplying man-power factors as one of the most influential gains for the countries, organisational structures and relationships came into fore more apparently.

It is possible to clearly recognise the cultures included in an organisation. On the other hand, it is known that rules and applications in an organisation vary.

Presence of individuals displaying similar behaviours in an organisation is a behaviour expected by the organisation. One of the most influential reasons of displaying similar behaviours in the same organisation is the culture of that organisation. Culture is the fact that is related to human communities' past, type of production and social relationships. Organisational culture is identified as sub

– version of the culture of a society a person belongs to. Thus, organisational culture is accepted to be the system of norms, values, beliefs, symbols and habits that shape the behaviour of people who are included in an organisation.

Organisations of education are the ones that produce educative services and provide benefits towards people. They are the organisations that are either shaped by all organisations around them or the organisations that affect other organisations around them and are among the leading culture developing organisations. All activities carried out within the organisation are based on an intense interaction between the participants of the organisation, and the culture in education organisations is produced and developed within this interaction process. Culture, on the other hand, in academic organisations is known to be produced by the interaction between the

factors of administration, teaching assistants and students.

## ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Before we mention organisational culture, it is necessary to identify both organisation and culture. The concept of organisation in short includes the unity and contract a group of people signs in order for some sort of common aims and values (Malinowski, 1990). Culture on the other hand is the overall way of living in a society. It is the learned side of human behaviour. When a specific group of people's culture is mentioned, what is meant is the overall life-styles that are common in that society. In other words, culture is the framework of patterns of feeling, thinking and behaviour that are present in that society. Where culture can be material (e.g. building, clothing, devices and equipment used), it also includes nonmaterial elements (e.g. religion, law, art, language and traditions) (Tezcan, 1987).

Similar to each individual having a distinctive personality, each organisation has specific personality which differs that organisation from the others. Different characteristic structures of an organisation make that organisation visible and different from others. These characteristic features directly or indirectly affect the productivity, which is a part of organisation, and morale of staff working in an organisation (Berberoğlu and Baraz, 1999).

Environmental conditions today increased the significance of data collecting, processing capacities of organisations together with their promptness and flexibility. This issue which is known as Information Technologies (IT) started to play an important role for institutions in making strategic choices (Koçel, 2003).

Organisational culture is the system of norms, values and habits that affect the behaviour of staff working in an organisation (Malinowski, 1990). In another definition, organisational culture is a group of main suppositions formed and developed in a definite fashion in order to solve problems about external compliance and internal integration (Eren, 2012). According to Erkuş (1999), organisational culture is the information shared by the participants that form the organisation, the data interaction between those members, and formal and informal activities within the organisation.

Organisational culture also reflects; visibility of that organisation in the neighbourhood, its value, its social standards, its forms concerning other organisations and individuals around them and in what level they are. Culture with this function is one of the most influential means that bind organisation to the society and determine organisation's status, importance and even success in society (Eren, 2012).

Kilmann et al. (1985) identifies organisational culture as the combination of philosophies, ideologies, values,

suppositions, beliefs, expectations, attitudes and norms that are shared throughout centuries and hold the society together. In this respect, attention is paid to the "social combining" role of organisational culture, as it is seen in similar identifications, that bind people together (Cameron, 2008 p 431; Smircich, 1983 p. 339).

In all cultures, there can be various sub-cultures. Sub-cultures, in which differences in the level of province, village, town and even neighbourhood or ethnic background are observed, can be separated from each other by a great deal of features. However, population movements caused by efforts towards development and modernisation, tendencies such as urbanisation, Industrialisation and stratification change, merge and sometimes diversify the borders of cultural richness. For all that is different within cultures, cultures tend to form mutual meaning systems that determine the differences between them and other cultures' features (Hofstede, 1991).

It can be said that different factors have effects in the formation of organisational culture. In this formation process, founders of organisations have an outstanding role. Because of the fact that the founders are not restricted by former philosophies and ideologies, it is normal for their values and beliefs to affect the organisation they are going to construct (Terzi, 2000).

According to Doğan (1997), organisational culture that can be formed in various ways can be composed of the following steps in general:

- (1) At the first phase, a single individual, namely the founder of the organisation or society, has a new idea of enterprise.
- (2) At the second phase, the founder brings one or more key person to the organisation and shares ideas with this group. These people brought into the organisation will have the point of view of the founder. All group members will agree with the idea that such an idea is good and valuable, has some risks and is worthy of spending time, money and energy.
- (3) At the third phase, the group formed by the founder try to find a building, place, fund etc. for the organisation.
- (4) At the last phase, lots of people are included in the organisation and general framework of the organisational culture would have been constructed.

Organisational culture that attracts attention by the effect of Japanese production system has resulted even in quitting Taylor type classical understanding of administration. Since it has been put forth that organisations are living structures that affect their environment and are affected by it, the significance of organisational culture has been increasing and some of its features have been recognised.

Some of the commonly accepted features of organisational culture by various authors are as follows (Eren, 2012):

- (1) Organisational culture is a learned or acquired concept.
- (2) Organisational culture should be open to be shared among group members.
- (3) Organisational culture is not in written format. It involves in thought structure, conscious and memories, belief and values of organisation members.
- (4) Organisational culture is presented in the form of regularly repeated or emerging behavioural patterns.

According to Güçlü (2003), main elements of organisational culture are values, norms and suppositions. On the other hand, ceremonies and customs, rituals, stories, myths, symbols, language, and heroes can be given as examples for the visible manner of organisational culture.

Values are identified as; the measures that are required to qualify, assess and examine, operations and activities of staff. Cultural values developed by the organisation determine how human beings, objects and events will be perceived by the organisational society. Values are concepts that are wider and more concrete than norms. A norm can not be legitimised unless it derives from cultural values. The factor that makes a norm a measure to be used by organisation members is the cultural values it is based on (Başaran, 1982). Organisational values on the other hand are the ideas that are; shared by the members of an organisation and that determine what is good and bad, and what is approved and what is not (Demirtaş and Güneş, 2002).

Norms are rules, orders and measures that are supposed to be obeyed by people with determined roles. Cultural norms are based on cultural values, and these values manage the routes, limitations, what is right and wrong to be used by people in reaching the target; consequently they govern the behaviours (Erdoğan, 1994). Norms at the same time determines how the staff will behave within the organisation and how they will interact with people (Başaran, 1982).

Norms of an organisation help human behaviours to be unknown beforehand. In forming an organisation's culture, managers are supposed to know the norms among the staff in an organisation and adjust the administrative principles to those of the staff (Özkalp, 1995). Thus, it can be possible for the manager to get to know the staff and guess their behaviours beforehand.

Treatment, thinking and feeling in individuals or groups, and principles that form the reference frame of speaking that are suppressed to unconscious phase are called "suppositions" (Bozkurt, 1996). While suppositions shape ideas, feelings and behaviours of member in an organisation, they are undisputed facts that form their preliminary acceptances concerning organisational life such as; right – wrong, meaningful – meaningless and possible – impossible (İpek, 1999). Suppositions at the same time form the reference frame and main ground of perception for members of a group to perceive, feel, evaluate and examine various cases and relationships (Şişman, 2007). Suppositions that are not even been thought of being

violated within the organisation, can act as factors that shape values with the acceptability they get in time.

The main factor of change and quality aimed at the end of change is human (Peker, 1995). Especially in the recent years, the requirement for human and humanitarian values in order for sustainable organisational success is well understood and vital importance of these values is recognised. In each organisation, the most precious source of competition in every field is qualified and acknowledged people (Drucker, 1998).

Organisations, which are composed of people, are said to be derived from the ideas that focus on people. According to these ideas, human beings are considered as individuals where they are sometimes considered as a group. Thus, it is accepted that changes in their values and behaviours as an individual or as a group constitutes the base of organisational change (Peker, 1995).

Organisational culture is constituted by uniting aforementioned factors and these factors gives ideas about the level and quality of the organisational culture. However, main determiner of these factors is human factor. Ties between the staff are observed to be strong in organisational structures with strong culture whereas in organisational structures with weak culture, levels of motivation, dedication and interaction is found to be low.

Formation of culture and its effects in academic organisations display a similar pattern. As we think that culture in academic organisations is composed of factors of administration, teaching assistant and student, it is clear that presence of an organisational culture that can form a synergy between these factors will most probably affect organisational dedication and organisational success in a positive way in the long run.

## METHODOLOGY

### Study group

Study group of this research is composed of 880 students studying in SPES in MSKU. The sampling on the other hand is composed of 35 students from Physical Education and Sports Teaching, 74 students from Sports Administration, 70 students from Coaching Education and 37 students from Recreation departments, totally 216 students studying in MSKU, SPES in Turkey. Students that could not be able to complete their education within 4 education years are not included in the study.

### Data collection instrument

In this study, organisational culture and student sub culture sub-scales questionnaire developed by Erdem and İşbaşı (2001) is used. It includes 5 Point Likert Scale and totally 31 statements. Original questionnaire is composed of five sub – dimensions. These sub – dimensions are determined as; organisational structure – operation, power distance, communication – relationships, symbols and belonging.

### Analysis of the data

In analysis of the data, before testing organisational culture and sub

**Table 1.** One sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results that display organisational culture and student sub – culture levels of the students involved in the study.

	Total point	Organisational structure and effectiveness	Communication and relationship	Power distance	Seriousness	Symbols
N	216	216	216	216	216	216
Mean	96,7639	11,4074	21,8102	9,7963	10,4028	6,8843
Std. Deviation	15,1650	3,1580	4,3814	2,0426	2,5663	1,7707
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	1,012	1,440	1,252	1,549	1,829	1,831
P	0,047	0,032	0,047	0,017	0,002	0,002

**Table 2.** Mann Whitney u-test results that display organisational culture and student sub – culture levels of the students involved in the study based on classroom variable.

	Classroom variable	N	Sequence average	Sequence total	U	Z	P
Organisational structure and effectiveness	3 <sup>rd</sup> class	106	109,91	11650.00	5681,000	-0.326	0.745
	4 <sup>th</sup> class	110	107,15	11786.00			
Communication and relationship	3 <sup>rd</sup> class	106	106,76	11316.50	5645,500	-0.403	0.687
	4 <sup>th</sup> class	110	110,18	12119.50			
Power distance	3 <sup>rd</sup> class	106	109,25	11581.00	5750,000	-0.176	0.860
	4 <sup>th</sup> class	110	107,77	11855.00			
Belonging	3 <sup>rd</sup> class	106	106,76	11316.50	5645,500	-0.405	0.686
	4 <sup>th</sup> class	110	110,18	12119.50			
Symbols	3 <sup>rd</sup> class	106	110,66	11729.50	5601,500	-0.505	0.614
	4 <sup>th</sup> class	110	106,42	11706.50			
Total point	3 <sup>rd</sup> class	106	107,38	11382.00	5711,000	-0.259	0.795
	4 <sup>th</sup> class	110	109,58	12054.00			

–culture levels in different variables concerning the students studying in SPES, normal distribution of the subjects was examined through One Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test (Table 1). As it is presented in Table 1, distributions are not found to be in line with normal distribution, and afterwards Mann-Whitney U Test and Kruskal - Wallis Test is conducted, respectively. Reliability coefficient of the scale is found to be Alpha= 0.8429.

As seen in Table 1, the result is found to be  $P < 0.05$ . This shows that data distributions are not in line with normal distribution.

## FINDINGS

Table 2 shows the difference between classroom variable, organisational structure and effectiveness levels is found to be insignificant [U value=5681, 000  $P=0.745 > 0.05$ ].

Difference between classroom variable, communication and relationship levels is found to be insignificant [U value=5645,5 00  $P=0.687 > 0.05$ ].

An insignificant difference is found between classroom variable and power distance [U value=5750,000  $P=0.860$

$> 0.05$ ]. Difference between classroom variable and seriousness levels is found to be insignificant [U value=5645,000  $P=0.686 > 0.05$ ]. An insignificant difference is found between classroom variable and symbol [U value=5601,500  $P=0.614 > 0.05$ ].

Difference between classroom variable and organisational culture total points is found to be insignificant [U value=5601,500  $P=0.614 > 0.05$ ]. As shown in Table 2, no difference were found between classroom variable and organisational culture total points [U value=5601,500  $P=0.614 > 0.05$ ].

Table 3 shows that the difference between department variable, organisational structure and effectiveness levels was found to be significant [ $\chi^2$  value = 24,875  $P=0.000 < 0.05$ ].

Reviewing the results of this difference, it is found out that organisational structure and effectiveness levels of students studying at the Department of Physical Education and Sports Teaching are found to be higher than

**Table 3.** Kruskal-Wallis test results that display organisational culture and student sub – culture levels of students involved in the study on department variable.

	Department variable	N	Sequence average	Sd	X <sup>2</sup>	P	Significant difference
Organisational structure and effectiveness	Physical Education and Sports Teaching	35	99.54	3	24,875	0.000	1-3
	Coaching Education	70	112.64				1-4
	Recreation	37	67.93				2-3
	Sports Administration	74	129.11				3-4
Communication and relationship	Physical Education and Sports Teaching	35	103.77	3	17,982	0.000	1-3
	Coaching Education	70	111.35				2-3
	Recreation	37	73.05				3-4
	Sports Administration	74	125.76				
Power distance	Physical Education and Sports Teaching	35	97.39	3	11,133	0.011	1-4
	Coaching Education	70	108.57				3-4
	Recreation	37	86.18				
	Sports Administration	74	124.85				
Belonging	Physical Education and Sports Teaching	35	98.59	3	2,029	0.567	Nay
	Coaching Education	70	114.51				
	Recreation	37	102.16				
	Sports Administration	74	110.67				
Symbols	Physical Education and Sports Teaching	35	114.99	3	3,607	0.307	Nay
	Coaching Education	70	113.32				
	Recreation	37	91.61				
	Sports Administration	74	109.32				
Total point	Physical Education and Sports Teaching	35	93.50	3	22,388	0.000	1-4
	Coaching Education	70	112.66				2-3
	Recreation	37	73.16				3-4
	Sports Administration	74	129.33				

the ones studying at the Department of Recreation where those levels are found to be higher in students studying at the Department of Sports Administration than the ones studying at the Department of Physical Education and Sports Teaching. Besides, organisational structure and effectiveness levels of students studying at the Department of Recreation were found to be lower than students studying at the Department of Sports Administration.

The difference between department variable, communication and relationship levels are found to be significant [ $X^2$  value =17,982  $P=0.000<0.05$ ]. In addition, communication and relationship levels of students studying at the Department of Recreation are found to be lower than the students studying at the Departments of Coaching Education, Sports Administration and Physical Education and Sports Teaching.

Furthermore, difference between department variable and power distance level is found to be significant [ $X^2$

value =11,133  $P=0.011<0.05$ ]. The finding revealed that, power distance level of students studying at the Department of Sports Administration were found to be higher than the students studying at the Departments of Physical Education and Sports Teaching and Recreation.

No difference was found between department variable and symbol levels [ $X^2$  value =2,029  $P=0.567>0.05$ ].

Also, the difference between department variable and organisational culture total points was found to be significant [ $X^2$  value = 13,072  $P=0.004<0.05$ ]. The findings revealed that, organisational culture total points of students studying at the Department of Sports Administration are higher than the results of students studying at the Departments of Physical Education and Sports Teaching and Recreation. Besides, organisational culture total points of students studying at the Department of Recreation were found to be lower than the students studying at the Department of Coaching Education.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the findings above, the difference between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> class students studying in SPES in the aspects of organisational structure effectiveness, communication – relationship levels, power distance, belonging, symbol level and organisational culture total levels is found to be insignificant ( $P>0.05$ ). This case can be explained as students to be effected similarly by the factors that constitute organisational culture.

A significant difference ( $P<0.05$ ) was observed between department variable, organisational structure and effectiveness levels. Based on this finding, it is found that organisational structure and effectiveness level of students studying in the Department of Sports Administration are higher than those of the other students studying in different departments. On the contrary, the department with the lowest effectiveness level is found to be the department of Recreation. This can be given as the reason of students studying in the Department of Sports Administration to have strong relationships with the scholars and school administration with respect to the other students studying in other departments. On the other hand, low levels of organisational structure and effectiveness levels found in the students studying at the department of Recreation can be explained by unclear opportunities of employment in this field. This issue can be considered as the valid reason also for other sub – dimensions of organisational culture.

When studies in different fields are observed, it is found out that the results obtained in this study, concerning organisational structure and effectiveness sub – dimension, are in parallelism with the ones conducted by Erdem and İşbaşı Özen (2001) and Köksal (2007).

The difference between department variable and communication and relationship levels is found to be significant ( $P<0.05$ ). According to this, communication and relationship levels of students studying at the Department of Recreation are found to be lower with respect to the students studying at the departments of Coaching Education, Sports Administration and Physical Education and Sports Teaching. It is found out that the results obtained in this study are in line with the ones conducted by Erdem and İşbaşı Özen (2001), Köksal (2007), and Yavuz and Yılmaz (2012). The difference between communication and relationship levels of Recreation department students with respect to the students from other departments can be due to their being closed to communication with scholars and their inability to have communication and relationship with their friends in other departments.

A significant ( $P<0.05$ ) difference is observed between department variable and power distance levels. According to this difference, power distance perception of students studying at the department of Sports Administration is found to be higher than students studying at the departments of Physical Education and Sports

Teaching and Recreation. Results obtained in this study display similarity with the results obtained by Köksal (2007), where they don't have parallelism with those obtained by Erdem and İşbaşı Özen (2001).

It is found out that there is a significant difference between department variable and belonging levels ( $P>0.05$ ). Students to have sense of belonging, which they attribute importance; can be interpreted as the students having good relationships between themselves and the organisation. The results obtained in this study are also in line with the results obtained by Erdem and İşbaşı Özen (2001), Şahin-Firat (2007), Köksal (2007) and Aslan (2008). In this case, it can be said that a sense of unity is present in both students and scholars in all departments and they all act by thinking about the other.

It is found out that there is no difference between department variable and symbol levels ( $P>0.05$ ). The results obtained in this study display parallelism with the results obtained by Erdem and İşbaşı Özen (2001), and Köksal (2007). In this case, it can be said that a sense of symbols remind similar things for all student which means they are perceived at the same levels by all students.

It is found out that there is a significant difference between department variable and organisational culture total points. ( $P<0.05$ ) According to this result, it is understood that organisational culture perception of students studying at the Department of Sports Administration is higher than those students studying at other departments. In this respect, Department of Sports Administration is followed by Coaching Education, Physical Education and Sports Teaching and Recreation respectively.

Department of Sports Administration displaying the highest values in organisational culture total points can be interpreted as having the students with good level of organisational culture perception in this department with respect to the other departments. Based on this finding, it is concluded that, interaction between students, scholars and administration of this department is in more positive levels. Besides, findings obtained in this study are in similar vein with the results obtained by Köksal (2007).

It is not surprising to have low results in organisational culture total point of Recreation Department due to the aforementioned reasons. In this case, it can be claimed that, organisational culture perception in the Department of Recreation is lower than other departments.

When the entire scale is taken into consideration, ideas of students about “organisational culture” are found to be mainly “positive” although there are various differences between departments. As it is seen in “belonging” and “symbols” sub – variables, presence of no difference between ideas of students participated in the study can be considered as the clue of a perception that imply a parallel structure concerning organisational culture.

Although the claim that a powerful organisational culture will result always in positive conclusion, is open for discussion, it is clear that it poses a great importance

in strengthening the ties among the organisation and developing a sense of belonging on the part of the organisation members. When this subject is considered by taking universities into consideration, organisational culture has a powerful effect in terms of increasing education quality in the long run and turning universities into a centre of attraction.

Even though organisational culture bears a substantial quality, it wouldn't by itself be considered to improve a sense of belonging in the members of an organisation. In order to improve organisational culture in vocational schools, both physical conditions and education quality should be taken into consideration. Here, there are roles to be undertaken by the administrative board of vocational schools. Besides these roles, it is of utmost importance for administrative board by giving serious consultancy services concerning students, school and studentship to make people own the organisation they belong to.

It is recommended to researchers who will study organisational culture to make researches concerning the determination of expectations both by students and scholars in order to put forth other sub – dimensions.

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