

Full Length Research Paper

The impact of teachers' organizational trust perceptions on organizational cynicism perception

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The aim of this study is to present the impact of primary school teachers' organizational trust perceptions on organizational cynicism. The research is based on descriptive survey model, with its population consisting of teachers working in primary schools¹ in Körfez District of Kocaeli Province. Sampling was not needed and preferred as it was possible to reach all the teachers in the population. The research data were collected via "organizational trust" and "organizational cynicism" scales. The research hypotheses that were developed, based on theoretical knowledge and findings, were tested in the study. Correlation and regression analysis were conducted to test hypothesis. The result of the study has indicated a significant negative relation between organizational trust perception and organizational cynicism. It has been found out that organizational trust is an effective variable in significantly predicting organizational cynicism.

Key words: Organizational cynicism, organizational trust, primary school, teacher.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid changes of the era have also influenced the organizations and their most important component, namely employees. Modern organization and management theories emphasize not only organizational productivity and efficiency but these theories also indicate the fact that organization is to be a viable environment. If organizations only consider the productivity and disregard human behaviors and sentiments, then it is unavoidable for the employees to feel unsafe and to develop negative attitudes and sentiments towards the organization itself. Such problems in the organization indicate the importance of organizational trust and organizational cynicism variables. These two variables are fundamental for both the realization of organizational objectives and satisfaction of individuals in the organization environment.

What is organizational trust?

While Baier (1986) defines trust as meeting the trustee's

expectations regarding the trust organization; Das and Teng's (1998) definition represents a condition in which one side believes that it depends on the other; and both sides have positive and powerful expectations for that they will behave responsibly and honestly to achieve mutual aims.

Lewicki et al. (1998) described organizational trust as employee's holding positive expectations towards the policies and the practices of the organization that will influence them; and the opinion that the organization will support them. Mishra and Morrissey (1990) define organizational trust as the feeling based on the perception of employee considering the reinforcement provided to the employee by the organization. Organizational trust is also described as employees' expectation from the organizational relations and behaviors web (Shockley-Zalabank et al., 2000). The level of organizational trust influences a great many variables in positive or negative ways. One of these variables is called as organizational

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¹The primary school in this document refers to the eight-year-compulsory and basic education including the two separate four-year periods applied in Turkey with a recent change in the legislature.

cynicism.

What is organizational cynicism?

Cynicism, from a general perspective, is defined as “regarding others with disfavor and not relying on others” (Brandes et al., 2008:235), “negative and insecure attitudes towards authority and institutions” (Bateman et al., 1992:768). Anderson (1996:1398), on the other hand, defines cynicism not only as a specific attitude associated with frustration, hopelessness and disappointment; but also negative sentiments and distrust towards an individual, group, ideology, social norms and institutions.

Organizational cynicism is defined as “a negative attitude towards employer organization by three dimensions: (1) a belief that the organization lacks integrity; (2) negative impact towards the organization; and (3) tendencies to disparaging and critical behavior towards the organization that are consistent with these beliefs” (Dean et al., 1998:345). Wilkerson et al. (2008:2274) defines organizational cynicism as employee’s negative attitude towards the organization itself, its practices, processes and management. While the term “cynicism” is mainly stated as an innate persistent personal trait reflecting negative perceptions with regard to human behaviors (Abraham, 2000), organizational cynicism is often associated with one’s negative attitude towards the organization worked in; an attitude involving cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions (Dean et al., 1998). In this regard, Dean et al. (1998) address organizational cynicism within three main dimensions as “cognition”, “affection” and “behavior”.

The cognitive dimension emphasizes the belief that organization and the individuals employed in the organization lack honesty. By cognitive dimension, the employees that have experienced cynicism consider that the practices in the organizations are not based on principles and official declarations prepared by the organizations are not taken seriously by the employees. Besides, employees may be involved in such behaviors as lying, tricks and intrigue. Individual behaviors in the organization are thought to be inconsistent and unreliable according to the employees. The organizational relations are believed to be determined by self interests. Thus, the employees can abandon such values as sincerity, honesty, trustworthiness for the sake of self interests, therefore involving in immoral and corrupted attitudes (Brandes, 1997; Brandes and Das, 2006; Dean et al., 1998).

In the affective dimension, individuals owning cynic attitudes are seen both as people holding negative emotions towards the organizations and individuals who have negative beliefs for the organizations worked in (Dean et al., 1998). The emotional dimension of organizational cynicism involves disrespect, anger, annoyance and embarrassment (Abraham, 2000). Cynic individuals,

as an example, may feel anger and contempt for the organization or experience a sense of agitation, disgust and even embarrassment when they think about the organization. Hence, cynicism is related to all kinds of negative sentiments (Brandes, 1997; Dean et al., 1998).

In the behavioral dimension, employees may have the tendency to make pessimistic predictions regarding the practices and occasions within the organization. They may show negative attitudes and act in a way to humiliate others (Dean et al., 1998). Employees occasionally adopt certain behaviors as complaining, scoffing and criticizing. Cynic behaviors may also be represented by verbal behaviors in the organizations. Meaningful glances, humiliating and condemning laughter among employees may be the examples of cynic behaviors (Brandes and Das, 2006). Employees may use humor in a cynic way to demonstrate cynic behaviors (Dean et al., 1998). In this way, individuals adopting cynic behaviors ridicule with the aims of organizations they work in, restate the boundaries of duties and make sarcastic comments (Brandes, 1997). Besides, cynic employees may neglect behaviors that are to contribute to the organizational development: resistance to change, absenteeism, discrediting the organizations etc. (Abraham, 2000; Reichers et al., 1997; Wanous et al., 2000).

Similarly, cynicism has been associated with such negative consequences as apathy, resignation, alienation, hopelessness, distrust of others, suspicion, contempt, disillusionment, and scorn in addition to decreased performance, interpersonal disputes, absenteeism, job turnover, and burnout (Andersson, 1996; Andersson and Bateman, 1997; Dean et al., 1998).

Dean and colleagues, however, used a variety of attributes (facets) to make comparisons between various forms of cynicism, also covering employee and organizational cynicism; organizational cynicism and ‘competing’ constructs, such as organizational commitment, trust, job satisfaction, and alienation, with the main focus in the current study being primarily on employee and organizational cynicism.

Organizational trust and organizational cynicism relationship

As understood from the various definitions and properties of cynicism; cynicism is internally based on distrust against human nature (Eisinger, 2000:55). When employees feel insecure in their organization, cynicism comes to existence (Özgener et al., 2008). In other words, cynicism comes up in times of distrust and an increase in the level of cynicism is considered as an indicator of distrust (Thompson et al., 2000). Employees whose perception of cynicism is high have lower levels of trust towards their seniors (Anderson and Bateman, 1997; Brandes et al., 1999). In addition, it has been seen that as the organizational cynicism levels increase, the level

of organizational trust decreases in the studies that examine the relation between organizational trust and organizational cynicism (Chrobot-Mason, 2003; Macaskill, 2007).

In cynicism definitions, such premises that are alleged to be influential in building trust as honesty, reliability, cooperativeness, ethical coherence and favorableness (Mayer et al., 1995) are stated to be absent. The belief/disbelief on whether employees are honest, reliable, cooperative, moral or favorable in the organization appears as a determinant of cynicism and trust.

When these premises are felt in the organization at high levels, it is thought that a powerful trust is going to be achieved while the individuals are considered to be cynic in the lack of these premises (Özler et al., 2010). In this regard, organizational trust premises are thought to influence organizational cynicism both directly and via organizational trust.

Dean et al. (1998) and Abraham (2000) have detailed cynicism as five distinct levels: identity cynicism, organizational cynicism, occupational cynicism, employee cynicism and organizational change cynicism. As lack of trust is considered as a reason for cynicism; it can be stated that lack of self confidence leads to identity cynicism; lack of organizational trust leads to organizational cynicism; lack of interpersonal trust leads to employee cynicism, lack of trust for the job leads to occupational cynicism; and finally lack of trust regarding processes leads to organizational change cynicism (Özler et al., 2010). This study has focused on the relationship between organizational trust and organizational cynicism. Based on the provided information, the hypotheses of the study have been formed as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Organizational trust will negatively be affected related to organizational cynicism.

Hypothesis 1a: Organizational trust will negatively be affected related to cognitive cynicism.

Hypothesis 1b: Organizational trust will negatively be affected related to emotional cynicism.

Hypothesis 1c: Organizational trust will negatively be affected related to behavioral cynicism.

METHODS

Research design

As the study aims to determine the relation between teachers' perception of organizational trust and organizational cynicism, a descriptive research model has been adopted. Descriptive research is used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomena to describe "what exists" with respect to variables or conditions in a situation. The methods involved the range from the survey which describes the status quo, the correlation study which investigates the relationship between variables, the developmental studies which seek to determine changes over time. In this study relational screening model was used. Relational screening is carried out to determine the relation between two or more variables and to obtain clues about cause-effect relation (Büyükoztürk et al.,

2008).

Participants

The purposeful sampling method was used in this study. This method aims to find the most appropriate sample regarding the research questions (Sencer, 1989). The sampling of the research consists of the teachers (n=313) working in 77 state primary schools in Körfez-Kocaeli, Turkey, during 2011 to 2012 educational term. Private primary schools were excluded in the research.

A questionnaire was delivered to all teachers of Kocaeli (Körfez district), Turkey. The mean job tenure of the teachers was 13.5 years (S.D.=10.1). 313 teachers participated in the research; 64% of which were female (N=201), and 36% being male (N=112). The length of occupational service ranged between the minimum 1 year and maximum 33 years, with an average of 5.80 (S.D.=5,27). The average number of teachers in the schools where the participating teachers worked in is 41.70 (S.D.=46,17).

Measurement tools

The data were collected by means of "Organizational Trust Scale" and "Organizational Cynicism Scale". All multi-item measures used a 5-point Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Organizational trust scale

Organizational trust perception has been measured with the organizational trust scale developed by Daboval et al. (1994). The adaptation of the scale with 21 items has been made by Kamer (2001). In the factor analysis, it has been seen that the scale is one dimensional and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale has been estimated as 0.94 (Table 1).

Organizational cynicism scale

"Organizational Cynicism Scale" (OCS) developed by Brandes et al. (1999) was used in the research. This scale consists of 13 items. Erdost et al. (2007) and Karacaoğlu and İnce (2012) examined primarily the factor structure and psychometric properties of organizational cynicism scale in our country. There are three dimensions in the organizational cynicism scale: cognitive, affective and behavioral. There are five items in cognitive, four items in affective, and four items in behavioral dimensions. Brandes et al. (1999) figured out the factor loadings in cognitive dimension items as 0.63 to 0.81; the factor loadings in emotional dimension items as 0.75 to 0.80, and the factor loadings in behavioral dimension items as 0.54 to 0.80. In addition, they estimated the dimensions' Cronbach's Alpha Internal Consistency Coefficients respectively, 0.86, 0.80 and 0.78.

Factor analysis and varimax rotation were applied to the organizational cynicism scale, as its factor loadings ranged from 0,515 to 0,901. High factor loadings show that the questions share a common variance of the other questions. In other words, the factor loadings are explained with 50.47% and 75.93% of total variance in all the variables. The organizational cynicism scale's Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Analysis was done in SPSS and the reliability was found to be 0,90. Therefore, the scale's reliability is on the level of acceptable Cronbach 0.70 (Table 1). The results of the research data made by Brandes et al. (1999), Erdost et al. (2007), Kalağan (2009) and Karacaoğlu ve İnce (2012) supported our related findings.

Table 1. Items and Cronbach's alpha coefficient for variables *organizational trust* and *organizational cynicism*.

Variable	Items	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Organizational trust (1)	21	.94
Organizational cynicism (2)	13	.90
Cognitive cynicism (3)	5	.92
Emotional cynicism (4)	4	.97
Behavioral cynicism (5)	4	.75

Table 2. Means, standard deviations and correlations for variables *organizational trust* and *organizational cynicism*

Variable	n	Mean	STD	1	2	3	4
Organizational trust (1)	313	3.34	.74	-	-	-	-
Organizational cynicism (2)	313	2.88	.78	-.75*	-	-	-
Cognitive cynicism (3)	313	2.82	1.08	-.73*	.90*	-	-
Emotional cynicism (4)	313	2.31	1.13	-.64*	.84*	.63*	-
Behavioral cynicism (5)	313	3.53	.67	-.25*	.53*	.32*	.20*

* $p < .01$

Data analysis

To examine the relation between teachers' organizational trust and organizational cynicism, correlation analysis has been made. When the correlation coefficients are assessed; if the correlation coefficient is between 0.70 and 1.00, it has been interpreted as "high", it has been interpreted as "medium" between 0.69 and 0.30; and if it is 0.29 and below it has been interpreted as "low" level (Büyüköztürk, 2005) and when it gets closer to 0.00, it has been interpreted as irrelevant. To control the effect of the organizational trust perception on the organizational cynicism, a regression analysis has been applied.

RESULTS

Means, standard deviations and correlations for all variables are listed in Table 2. Because our hypotheses are predicated on the previously obtained relationship between cynicism and trust, we first examined this relationship.

Hypothesis 1 tested the impact of organizational trust on organizational cynicism. Both the Pearson correlation coefficient between trust and cynicism ($r = -.75$, $p < .01$) and the regression of trust on cynicism ($\Delta R^2 = .56$ $F(1,312) = 389,830$, $p < .001$, $\beta = -.75$, $SE = .04$, $t = -19.744$, $p < .01$) were negative and significant, providing support for the presumed relationship. Organizational trust indicated a highly significant 56% of the variance in organizational cynicism. Hypothesis 1 was also supported: organizational cynicism was significantly and negatively related to organizational trust. Whitener et al. (uncertain publishing date) have also reached similar findings. Group cynicism was significantly and negatively related to initial trust in the group ($\beta = -.90$, $SE = .10$, $t_{201} = -8.61$, $p < .01$). This leads

to higher levels of trust and lower levels of cynicism in organizations.

Hypothesis 1a tested the impact of organizational trust on cognitive cynicism. Both the Pearson correlation coefficient between trust and cognitive cynicism ($r = -.73$, $p < .01$) and the regression of trust on cognitive cynicism ($\Delta R^2 = .53$ $F(1,312) = 351,732$, $p < .001$, $\beta = -.73$, $SE = .06$, $t = -18.755$, $p < .01$) were negative and significant, providing support for the presumed relationship. Organizational trust indicated a highly significant 53% of the variance in cognitive cynicism. Hypothesis 1a was also supported: cognitive cynicism was significantly and negatively related to organizational trust.

Hypothesis 1b tested the impact of organizational trust on emotional cynicism. Both the Pearson correlation coefficient between trust and emotional cynicism ($r = -.64$, $p < .01$) and the regression of trust on emotional cynicism ($\Delta R^2 = .42$ $F(1,312) = 220,499$, $p < .001$, $\beta = -.64$, $SE = .07$, $t = -14.849$, $p < .01$) were negative and significant, providing support for the presumed relationship. Organizational trust indicated a highly significant 53% of the variance in emotional cynicism. Hypothesis 1b was also supported: emotional cynicism was significantly and negatively related to organizational trust.

Hypothesis 1c tested the impact of organizational trust on behavioral cynicism. Both the Pearson correlation coefficient between trust and behavioral cynicism ($r = -.25$, $p < .01$) and the regression of trust on behavioral cynicism ($\Delta R^2 = .06$ $F(1,312) = 20,580$, $p < .001$, $\beta = -.25$, $SE = .05$, $t = -4.536$, $p < .01$) were negative and significant, providing support for the presumed relationship. Organizational trust indicated a low significant 6% of the variance in behavioral cynicism. Hypothesis 1c was also supported:

behavioral cynicism was significantly and negatively related to organizational trust.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The first finding of this research is organizational cynicism is negatively and significantly related to trust. Andersson (1996), described organizational cynicism "... can be defined best as both a general and specific attitude, characterized by frustration, hopelessness, disillusionment, as well as contempt toward and distrust of a person, group, ideology, social convention, or institution." (p. 1397-1398). Andersson and Bateman (1997) and Dean et al. (1998) said that distrust is the belief-component of organizational cynicism. There are indications that trust is a belief (Andersson and Bateman, 1997), and organizational cynicism is an attitude, distrust might be a precursor to organizational cynicism. Cynic employees have low levels of critical thinking capabilities and are not worthy of trust (Abraham, 2000). There are some researches that support the theoretical information and findings of this research. A significant and negative relation between group trust and cynicism ($r=.53$); and between managerial trust and cynicism ($r=.19$) has been found in a research conducted by Whitener et al. (Tb). Turner and Valentine (2001) found out a negative and significant relation ($-.27$) between trust and cynicism. In Ribbers' research (2009), it has been emphasized that a correlation between organizational trust and organizational change cynicism is available. On the contrary, certain studies (Ribbers, 2009; Özler et al., 2010) have indicated that organizational trust is both the reason and outcome of organizational cynicism, thus resulting in a correlation between the two. Upon this finding, we can also state that the relation between organizational trust and organizational cynicism follows a cyclical trend. A similar finding was also reached in Thompson et al.'s (2000) study.

Organizational cynicism has been associated with a host of negative outcomes, such as apathy, resignation, alienation, hopelessness, distrust of others, suspicion, contempt, disillusionment, and scorn, as well as poor performance, interpersonal conflict, absenteeism, job turnover, burnout (Andersson, 1996; Andersson and Bateman, 1997; Dean et al., 1998). Also organizational cynicism has negative correlation with some variables such as organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviour, participation in group, job satisfaction (Dean et al., 1998; Rubin et al, 2009, Kalağan and Aksu, 2010), motivation, organizational change (Rubin et al., 2009), organizational politics, organizational justice, violations of psychological contract, perceived organizational support, organizational stress, performance (Kalağan and Aksu, 2010). As can be seen, organizational cynicism is an important organizational and individual variable. The most important predictor of organizational cynicism is organizational trust (Kanter and Mirvis, 1989). The basis

of cynicism is distrust (Eisinger, 2000). Most of the negative consequences of organizational cynicism on employees and organizational can be decreased by increasing the trust in workplace and reducing organizational cynicism.

The second finding of this research is it has been concluded that organizational trust is significantly and negatively related to organizational cynicism's sub-dimensions: cognitive, affective and behavioral cynicism. However, another significant research finding is that organizational trust is more related to cognitive and affective sub-dimensions of organizational cynicism compared to behavioral sub-dimensions. Organizational cynicism includes negative attitudes towards organization which are belief, affect and behavior. According to Ajzen (2001), an attitude is a part of a thought-action process that starts at a belief, and possibly ends in a behavior. The organizational cynicism starts with belief, continues with affective reactions and ends with negative behaviors (Özgener et al., 2008). So, this can be reason for why organizational trust affects cognitive and affective sub-dimensions of organizational cynicism more than behavioral sub-dimension of organizational cynicism.

The primary responsibility of administrators regarding the management of organizational cynicism should be to gain employees' trust. It is assumed that cynicism will not be encountered in organizations that trust employees, let them involve in the decision making process, develop empathy and interaction, share responsibilities (Gül and Ağıroz, 2011). In an environment where trust is available, cynic sentiments are hard to encounter with while the number of cynics increase in organizations where distrust is dominant.

This research is limited to relationship between organizational trust and organizational cynicism. Further researchers can test the new models they develop about the relationship between organizational cynicism and other variables.

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