The role of positive emotion towards work as a mediator in the relationship between organizational responsiveness towards teachers and isolation in professional life

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Accepted 29 March, 2013

This study was performed for the purpose of determining the mediator role of positive emotion towards work within the relationship between organizational responsiveness towards teachers in schools and social isolation in professional life, based on teacher opinions. The study was designed using a relational survey model. The study group was made up of 266 primary school teachers working in the city of Sakarya. Data were collected through survey instruments measuring responsiveness towards employees, social isolation and positive emotion towards work. Data obtained were analyzed using the LISREL Program. First, confirmatory factor analysis was performed for the measurement model which shows the relationship among the three scales. By means of the goodness of fit values obtained as a result of confirmatory factor analysis, it was understood that the measurement model was confirmed. Next, the structural model developed for the three variables was tested. According to the findings of the study, it was understood from the goodness of fit values of the path formed towards the relationship of organizational responsiveness towards teachers at schools and social isolation in professional life that there was a negatively moderate level of significant relationship between these two variables. When the positive emotion towards work is included as a mediator variable in the model for the relationship between the variables of organizational responsiveness towards teachers and the social isolation at professional life, it was seen that the standardized path coefficient between the two variables decreased. Thus, it was understood from these findings that emotion towards work “partially” mediated the relationship between organizational responsiveness towards teachers at schools and social isolation in professional life.

Key words: Social isolation, responsiveness, positive emotion towards work.

INTRODUCTION

The most significant element in realizing organizational goals is employees. Therefore, employees being guided towards organizational goals indicates the need to show more responsiveness. Being responsive towards the needs of employees is of critical importance for success in organizations (Balser and Carmin, 2009; Mosca et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2010). Responsiveness towards employees in an organization means that the organization is responsive towards their desires, expectations and demands and acts attentively in protecting their
individual interests (Tutar et al., 2009). In this respect, organizational responsiveness towards teachers at school can be explained as ensuring that teachers integrate with the school, giving the feeling that teachers are protected, making sure that appointments are made as per the teachers' expectations, ensuring their development and supporting their career goals, meeting the individual needs of teachers and being fair in decisions related to teachers and tasks to be executed (Yılmaz, 2005). For effectiveness, organizations should provide a work setting that is responsive towards employees' needs by trying to increase the minimum wage level appropriate to employees' life standards, establishing working conditions that will create work satisfaction, offering opportunities for employees' growth and development, building open communication and trust for the solution of complaints and problems and creating work settings that value human relations (Ellig, 1998; Torlak, 2001 cited in Pelit et al., 2009). Therefore, administrators should be aware of the career transitions, individual needs and emotional expectations of their employees as an ethical responsibility (Drake et al., 2002). Further, in order to remove employees' isolation, administrators should ensure that they are happy employees with a high level of work satisfaction by joining them and interacting with them as well as by showing responsiveness towards their needs (Peterson, 2012). Such administrative interaction is beneficial because it is known that employees suffering from social isolation in organizations do not make the same effort in reaching organizational goals as the other employees do and they show avoidance and neglect towards work. Furthermore, the isolation of employees of an organization decreases their organizational loyalty and effectiveness as team members. Therefore, it is necessary that the administrators consider employee isolation as an organizational problem to be solved and care about the effect of isolation on employee success and organizational effectiveness (Marshall et al., 2007; Özcelik and Barsede, 2012). Isolation in the work place is explained as the state of feeling isolated and experiencing problems in forming social relationships and getting social support in professional life (Doğan et al., 2009). In other words, an individual who has quite satisfactory and healthy relationships in his/her daily life can experience problems in forming social relationships and getting social support in his/her professional life. This may result in individuals experiencing feelings of isolation and loneliness in their work life. Thus, isolation in professional life can generally be explained as observing a disruption in the quality of interpersonal relationships and social interaction (Wright et al., 2006). Shaver and Brennan (1991) define isolation as an unpleasant situation that is experienced when there is a deficiency in social relations in the workplace. Social isolation occurs as a result of the deficiency of satisfactory friendships (Cited in: Marshall et al., 2007). Most of the time, isolation is considered as a problem that prevents employees efficiency at work. Isolation reduces employee's efficiency, deadens their creativity and damages the organization by affecting colleagues adversely (Peterson, 2012). However when employees are treated responsively, they will not feel isolated at work. Showing responsiveness towards employees' needs will make them feel they are valued. Employees who feel that their needs are cared for show more organizational loyalty, internalize organizational goals and values more and make more effort in favor of the organization (Oktay and Gül, 2003; Gül and Çöl, 2003). Employees' efforts should be supported and their needs should be cared for responsively in order for the schools to reach their goals (Denig and Quinn, 2001). Because isolation affects not only the interaction between the organization and the employees but the interpersonal relationships in the organization and work success as well (Yılmaz, 2008). Employees' having positive emotions toward work ensures that they form desirable relationships with other staff, affect them positively and cooperate with them. It is known that positive emotions towards work create sociability, benevolence, encouragement and the feelings of association with employees (Liu et al., 2010). The workplace is a rich field where both positive and negative feelings might appear (Muchinsky, 2000). While positive emotions towards work are seen as excitement, gratefulness, happiness, hope, love, pride, comfort and satisfaction; the negative emotions are desensitization, boredom, embarrassment, anger, disappointment, nervousness, depression, rage, sadness or stress, exhaustion, anxiety and fear (Schwartz, 2011; Turner, 2012). Employees with positive emotions towards the job work faster and more willingly and show more creativity at work. According to these previous studies, positive emotions towards work apparently increase organizational loyalty, organizational citizenship and performance. Also, the formation of desirable relationships with the other employees affects them positively and fosters collaboration as a result of positive emotions towards work (Staw et al., 1994).

As it can be understood from the literature, positive emotion towards work decreases the feeling of isolation at work. In this respect, it is thought in this study that the variable positive emotions towards work would mediate between the variables of organizational responsiveness towards teachers at schools and the state of isolation in professional life. Thus, the problem statement of this study is whether positive emotions towards work mediate the relationship between organizational responsiveness towards teachers at schools and the state of isolation in professional life.

The purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to find out whether positive emotions towards work mediate the relationship between
organizational responsiveness towards teachers at schools and the state of isolation in professional life according to teacher's opinions at primary schools. The following hypotheses were tested for this purpose:

**Hypothesis 1:** There is a negative significant relationship between organizational responsiveness towards teachers at schools and isolation in professional life.

**Hypothesis 2:** Positive emotion towards work mediates the negative significant relationship between organizational responsiveness towards teachers at schools and the isolation in professional life.

**METHOD**

**Research model**

The study used relational survey model. Teacher opinions in the study were surveyed in terms of determining whether positive emotion towards work mediates the relationship between organizational responsiveness towards teachers at schools and the state of isolation in professional life.

**The study group**

The study group for this research was made up of 266 primary school teachers working in the city of Sakarya. Unbiased sampling was used. A total of 123 of the teachers participating in the study were female (46.2%) while 143 of them were male (53.8%). In terms of experience, 169 of the teachers have 1 to 10 years of experience (63.5%), 71 of them have 11 to 20 years of experience (26.7%) while 26 of them have 21 years and more experience (9.8%). According to level of education, 12 participants have a college (2-year) degree (4.5%), 221 of them have a undergraduate degree (83.1%) and 33 of them have a graduate degree (12.4%).

**Data collecting scales**

Data in the study was collected through the responsiveness towards employees subscale of the organizational trust scale which was adapted by Yilmaz (2005) into Turkish for schools, social friendship at workplace subscale which was adapted into Turkish by Doğan et al. (2009) and emotions towards work scale by Staw et al. (1994). The reliability and validity studies of these scales are as follow: The factor loads of responsiveness towards employees scale vary from 0.613 to 0.801 and the reliability coefficient calculated was found to be .95 (Yilmaz, 2005). The reliability coefficient was found .88 in this study. The Positive Emotion Towards Work Scale, which was developed by Staw et al. (1994), had a reliability coefficient of 0.74. The Positive Emotion Towards Work Scale is a unidimensional and ten item scale. The scale was translated with translation-back translation method by three field experts who are masters in both languages. After translation of the Turkish form was finalized, the scale was submitted to field experts for content validity and the scale was finalized. For the preliminary application the scale was applied to 150 high school teachers in the city of Nevşehir. As a result of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis of data obtained at the end of the preliminary application goodness of fit values were found to be at a good level: GFI = 0.87, AGFI = 0.88, CFI = 0.78, NFI = 0.64, RMR = 0.016 and RMSEA = 0.073, Chi-square = 449.27, df = 206, \( \chi^2/df = 2.18 \), \( p = 0.00 \) for testing the theoretically developed model that the model was confirmed and there are significant relationships between organizational responsiveness towards teachers at schools and isolation in professional life. Thus, \( H_1 \): There is a negative significant relationship between organizational responsiveness towards teachers at schools and isolation in professional life” was confirmed. Also, based on Figure 1, it is seen that there is a negative moderate level significant relationship among variables, the standardized path coefficient regarding the relationship between organizational responsiveness towards teachers at schools and isolation in professional life being \(-0.44 \) (\( t = -5.62 \)). This finding can be interpreted that social isolation decreases as the level of responsiveness shown towards employees increases.

As it can be understood from Figure 2, when positive emotion towards work was included in the model regarding the relationship between the variables of organizational responsiveness towards teachers and isolation in professional life as a mediator variable, it was
seen that the standardized path coefficient for the relationship between organizational responsiveness and isolation in professional life decreased to -0.20 and positive emotion towards work served as a mediator. This
Figure 3. "t" values regarding the mediator role of positive emotion towards work in the relationship between organizational responsiveness and isolation in professional life.

is also understood from the fact that the model designed for the mediator test produced fine values of goodness of fit (GFI=0.83, AGFI=0.81, CFI=0.87, NFI=0.76, RMR=0.043 RMSEA=0.057 and Chi-square=850.75, df=459, $X^2$/df= 1.85, p=0.00). When the positive emotion towards work variable was added among the organizational responsiveness towards employees and social isolation in professional life variables, considering the relationships among the variables in the measurement model, it was expected that the path value between two variables decreased from -.44 to -.20. Thus, it can be concluded from these findings that emotion toward work “partially” mediated the relationship between organizational responsiveness towards teachers at school and social isolation in professional life. As it can be understood from Figures 2 and 3, positive emotion towards work contributed to the negative relationship between organizational responsiveness shown towards teachers at school and social isolation in professional life. Thus, it can be concluded that "H2: Positive emotion towards work mediates the negative significant relationship between organizational responsiveness towards teachers at schools and the isolation in professional life” was confirmed.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted in order to determine the mediator role of positive emotion towards work in the relationship between organizational responsiveness towards teachers at school and social isolation. According to the findings of the study, it is seen that there is a negative moderate level of significant relationship between organizational responsiveness towards teachers at school and social isolation in professional life. Based on this conclusion, it can be inferred that as the level of responsiveness shown to teachers increases, teachers’ social isolation in the work place decreases.

This finding is similar to that which Marshall et al. (2007) demonstrated in that employees would have the
perception of isolation as long as they were not supported by their supervisors and colleagues in the workplace, they could not form satisfactory friendships and when there was lack of opportunities for social network access. According to Ren et al. (2010), a general lack of social integration in the workplaces leads to isolation, and people need friendship, social support, and identity and attachment relationships. Yılmaz (2005) stated the indicators of responsiveness towards teachers at school provide integration with the school and give the feeling to the teachers that they are protected. Rowden (2000) discovered in their study that there was a positive relationship between responsiveness towards employees' needs and their emotional attachment to the organization (Cited in; Shastri et al., 2010).

According to Whitener et al. (1998), to ensure trust, wealth and loyalty feelings in employees, administrators should show a genuine interest in them. In particular, they should care for the employees' needs and interests and act in a way that they protect employees' interests while avoiding abusing them in favor of the organization (Cited in: Hunt et al., 2009). In another study, one of the main reasons for employees' isolation in the workplace was found to be lack of support. According to the study, organizations and supervisors can reduce the isolation feeling of employees by being a coach, initiating social relationships in the organization and creating an atmosphere for integration (Ren et al., 2010). Employees search for belonging and social relationships to fulfill their own needs at the organizations. It is seen that employees who suffer from isolation in professional life at an organization are the ones who perceive that they do not have the support of that organization (Lam and Lau, 2012). Thus, it can be concluded from the theoretical studies and previous research in the literature that employees who are shown responsiveness in the organization will not suffer from isolation. This is also observed in the findings of the present study. It is understood from the goodness of fit values of the path formed for the relationship between organizational responsiveness shown towards teachers and social isolation in professional life that there is a negatively significant relationship between organizational responsiveness shown towards teachers at schools and isolation in professional life. When the positive emotions towards work variable was added to the model for the relationship between organizational responsiveness shown towards teachers at schools and isolation in professional life, it was seen that positive emotions towards work had a partial mediator effect on this issue. There is a moderate level of positively significant relationship between organizational responsiveness shown towards employees and positive emotions towards work. Similarly, Gülmez and Dörtlol (2009) stated in their study that employees were happy about the responsiveness shown to them by their supervisors.

Based on the results of the study, positive emotion towards work makes a partial contribution to the negative relationship between organizational responsiveness shown towards teachers at schools and isolation in professional life. According to Isen (2001), there is a positive relationship between positive emotion and social behaviors desired in the workplace. In the present study, it was understood that this fact was confirmed by the goodness of fit values formed as a result of testing the mediator model. Thus, it was seen that emotion towards work partially mediated the relationship between organizational responsiveness shown towards teachers at schools and isolation in professional life. Based on these findings, it can be suggested to organizations that they should be aware of the importance of being responsive towards their employees who have the key role in reaching their organizational goals, in order for them to not feel isolated, and include arrangements that will encourage employees to create positive feelings towards work.

REFERENCES


