

## **The Effects of Manager's Humor Styles on Organizational Cynicism Perception of Employees**

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### **Extensive Summary**

#### **Introduction**

Emotions have been no longer seen as something to be overlooked or underestimated at the organizational level; on the contrary, they have become focus of interest over the recent years with an increasing number of studies into them. Within the field of organizational behavior which deals basically with the negative side of feelings, with the proliferation of studies into emotional intelligence that involves the control of feelings, virtues such as empathy, optimism, appreciation, modesty, loyalty, courtesy, forgiveness, gratitude, tolerance and humor have also become subjects that have been commonly probed into. Fields of positive psychology and positive organizational behavior, which have gained momentum from the same point forth, propound certain approaches that prove the positive effects of abovementioned concepts on not only individuals but also organizations. Accordingly, humor which is treated both as a virtue and as positive organizational behavior is one of the fundamental variables of this study. Although quite a lot of studies have been made into cynicism, which is another variable of this study, this study will try to specify whether there is a relationship between employees who mostly use sarcastic humor and exhibit a cynical attitude towards the organization with their ironical remarks and the sense of humor of managers. Moreover, the effect of the style of humor used by managers upon the perception of cynicism in employees will also be introduced. With the hypothesis that managerial qualities will profoundly influence the structure and culture of an organization, it is believed that a positive attitude exhibited by a manager within an organization will help employees to exhibit positive attitudes as well. In the next stage of this study, following a summary of the literature survey about humor and cynicism, the method of the research, the tools used, findings and suggestions in relation to the results of obtained will be presented.

#### **A Summary of the Literature Survey**

Various definitions seem to exist in the relevant literature as regards the subject of cynicism. Cynicism as a philosophy of life is viewed as withdrawal from worldly matters, staying away from worldly riches, adopting an outspoken attitude as an

everyday life philosophy, boldness in actions and knowing no shame (Ulaş, 2002). Cynicism is a movement of thought attributed to those who are described as people who are fastidious, discontented, highly critical of matters, self-seeking and filled with negative thoughts. Under the basic mentality of cynicism lies the idea that cynic people tend to leave positive personality traits such as honesty and justice in the background for the sake of his personal benefits. While cynicism may stem from individual personality traits, organizational features may also lead to cynicism (Eaton, 2000).

Humor depicted as a typical characteristic of the cynics is in fact an organizational variable which has the potential to develop healthy relationships in the workplace and solve certain prevailing problems. Humor also promotes such initiatives as building group cohesiveness, developing communication, increasing satisfaction, contributing to high efficiency and boosting creativity. Studies carried out so far have also suggested that humor is effective in establishing and sustaining organizational culture, enhancing leadership effectiveness and building up productive synergy (Romero ve Cruthirds, 2006, p. 59).

### **Method**

This is a cross-sectional descriptive study. Survey data have been gathered from the scale that was conducted on 206 instructors from a public university who volunteered to take part in the survey between January 2016 and March 2016. Therefore, the study is limited with the instructors who participated in the survey and data collection tools used during the period when the survey was conducted.

A 30-item Humor Behaviors Scale, which was developed by Cemaloğlu and his colleagues (2012), was used in order to assess the styles of humors in managers, through which employees stated how they perceived their managers. The other scale used in the study is organizational cynicism scale. Made up of three dimensions (cognitive, affective, behavioral), the organizational cynicism scale has been developed by Karacaoğlu and Erdost (2007) and its Cronbach Alpha reliability level is .872.

Research data obtained via measurement tools have been analyzed by means of statistical package program in accordance with the survey questions. As can be seen in the tables presented in the findings section, frequency, percentage, correlation and regression analysis have been used.

### **Research Hypotheses**

H1: Differences exist between the socio-demographic features of participants and their style of humor.

H2: Differences exist between the socio-demographic features of participants and organizational cynicism.

H3: There is a correlation between styles of humor and organizational cynicism.

### **Findings**

Findings obtained through the analysis of research data can be summarized as follows: 65.2 % of the participants are male, 25% between the ages of 31 and 35, 22.8% with an academic title of associate professor and 63.6% with no managerial status.

In accordance with the correlation analysis which was executed in order to determine the relationship between the variables, there seems to be a slight positive correlation between organizational cynicism and satirical, rejectionist and non-humorous styles of managers, which involve a negative attitude and thus remain outside

their affirmative, encouraging and social style of humor. That is, a correlation has been seen between the negative perceptions of employees related to the styles of humor in their managers and cognitive, affective and behavioral cynicism attitudes (H3 hypothesis has been taken as a reference). At the end of the regression analysis, it has been found that  $R = ,452$  and  $R^2 = ,204$ . A 20% difference in organizational cynicism has been explained through the perception of styles of humor, which was added into the model as an independent variable ( $F=10,281$ ,  $p=0,000$ ). In a research carried out by Nikic (2014), it was established that a dominant participative style of humor in managers led to higher satisfaction in employees, inducing them to display higher activity levels. Furthermore, it was also assessed that humor had a positive effect on team work, collaboration, relations with managers, stress levels and problem-solving behaviors (Nikic, 2014, p. 289).

Within the scope of the study, a significant difference and correlation has been seen between the independent variables and humor and cynicism scale means (H1 and H2 hypotheses have been neglected).

### **Conclusion and Suggestions**

As a result of this study, which was carried out to determine the existence of a correlation between the styles of humor in managers and perceptions of organizational cynicism, it was seen that manager's style of humor considerably affected the perception of organizational cynicism in employees, the majority of whom were males between 31 and 35 ages, with an academic title of associate professor, yet without any managerial status. Besides, there seems to be a slight positive correlation between organizational cynicism and satirical, rejectionist and non-humorous styles of managers, which involve a negative attitude and thus remain outside their affirmative, encouraging and social style of humor. That is, a correlation has been seen between the negative perceptions of employees related to the styles of humor in their managers and cognitive, affective and behavioral cynicism attitudes.

In addition to the assumption that humor is related with positive psychology, which is also the rationale of this study, it is believed that it should be regarded as positive organizational behavior and thus due importance should be attached to it in organizational studies. The primary duty of managers is to develop positive relations in the work place and make the work environment favorable for employees. The new trend in organizations establishes the accord between managers and employees in various forms and it is suggested that it is necessary to see the management beyond an upside down pyramid. In this approach, which is described as "creative alliance" and entails a number of capabilities in managers and employees alike, it is of great importance to perceive capabilities, to remove ego so as to allow ability development in others, to let others know about your awareness of what they have been doing and to establish and sustain an environment of trust. To this end, humor as an important agent can be used by managers to attain certain organizational goals such as lowering stress levels, enhancing leadership quality, improving communication, encouraging creativity and setting up an organizational culture.

Throughout the study, analyses have been made only through the perspectives of employees and how they see their styles of humor. In the following studies, the styles of humor in employees can also be integrated into the research model and this can explicitly reveal the correlation between cynicism and style of humor, paving the way to study the effect of differences in the style of humor in managers and employees.

Moreover, it is thought that it is necessary to increase the number of qualitative and quantitative studies at the organizational level across Turkey as regards humor, which is thought to have a key role in establishing a positive organizational culture.