Effect of Fear of Negative Evaluation of Employees on Organizational Silence

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Extensive Summary

1. Introduction

In the global business world where intense competition is taking place, organizations are in need of experienced, responsible, creative, motivated, committed and innovative employees who are knowledgeable and willing to share this in order to meet consumers' expectation in the best and speedy manner without sacrificing quality, to gain a sustainable competitive advantage against their competitors, to become leader in the industry and to create a positive image (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1997). The ability of employees to have these skills and use them easily and freely within the organization is possible by removing organizational and managerial barriers, by creating a positive organizational culture and by providing the necessary support from the organization (Dimitris and Vakola, 2007).

Employees are able to work more effectively and efficiently in organizations inwhich that they are valued, their participation to decisions is provided, their ideas, thoughts and knowledges are shared freely, their behavior is not underestimated, organizational justice is fully provided, and thus, their performances may become high. On the contrary of these cases, at any time when encountered to a problem or an opportunity employees may consciously exhibit silence behavior in order to protect themselves from harm and danger that may arise and to avoid from being excluded and being worthless. Fear of negative evaluation is one of the factors that constitute the basis of silence, nonspeaking and/or unresponsiveness behavior of employees in front of the events (Milliken and Morrison, 2003).

Fear of negative evaluation is defined as the consideration of others' negative evaluations about the performance, abilities and behaviors of the individual, and living distress, anxiety and fear due to these and avoidance from such environments (Erdoğan and Uçukoğlu, 2011; Leary, 1983). Organizational silence can be clarified as a form of behavior which employees made consciously, actively and in a way oriented towards an

aim.Organizational silence can be defined as hiding or not telling ideas, thoughts and knowledge about behavioral, emotional and/or cognitive evaluations against manager, boss, leader and other individuals who have the ability of problem solving and influencing organizational change and development (Çakıcı, 2008; Erigüç et al., 2014).While it is expected from employees to have creativity, internal entrepreneurship characteristics, more knowledge sharing, higher organizational commitment and higher job satisfaction, and therefore increased organizational performance in the context of modern management approaches, it can be seen that employees are unconcerned and in silence consciously against organization due to various reasons. This silence behavior of employees negatively affects the rise of new and creative ideas and the formation of synergy (Çavuşoğlu and Köse, 2016). In this context, the following research hypotheses have been established in order to understand the relationship between fear of negative evaluation and organizational silence and its dimensions.

H₁: The fear of negative evaluation of employees has a positive and significant effect on organizational silence.

H₂: The fear of negative evaluation of employees has a positive and significant effect on "acquiescent silence" dimension of organizational silence.

H₃: The fear of negative evaluation of employees has a positive and significant effect on "defensive silence" dimension of organizational silence.

H₄: The fear of negative evaluation of employees has a positive and significant effect on "prosocial silence" dimension of organizational silence.

2. Methodology

The main purpose of the research is to examine the effect of employees' fear of negative evaluation on their organizational silence levels. The population of the research consists of 120 employees working in a public institution located in Kastamonu province city center. Due to possibility of reaching the whole of the employees in this public institution, full enumeration utilized in the research. In the research process, 120 questionnaires were sent to the population of the research. 109 recycled questionnaire forms (90.8% response rate) statistically accepted to represent the population. Participants, data gathering technique and measures can be clarified as the limitations of the study. For gathering the data questionnaire technique was used. The research questionnaire consists of three parts; the first part is related to the demographic characteristics of the employees, the second part is measuring the fear of negative evaluation and the last part is related to organizational silence. The questions in the second and third part were scaled in the five-point Likert type. In order to measure the fear of negative evaluation of the employees, "Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale" which has been developed by Leary (1983) and adapted to Turkish by Çetin et al. (2010) was used. The scale consists of 11 items and one dimension. "Organizational Silence Scale", developed by Dyne, Ang and Botero (2003), was used to measure the organizational silence level of employees. The scale consists of 15 items and 3 dimensions. The internal consistency analyses of the scales of fear of negative evaluation and organizational silence were examined with Cronbach Alpha and found over 70%. Additionally, confirmatory factor analysis results of the scales showed good fit values.

3. Findings

Findings of correlation and regression analyses which were conducted for understanding the relationships between fear of negative evaluation and organizational silence and its dimensions were examined. When correlation analysis findings related to the variables are examined, it can be seen that there is a significant and positive relationship (r=,576; p<,01) between fear of negative evaluation and organizational silence. Findings demonstrate that there is a significant and positive relationship between fear of negative evaluation and acquiescent silence (r=,567; p<,01) and defensive silence (r=,466; p<,01). However, no relation is observed between prosocial silence. When the findings of the regression analysis between the variables are evaluated, it can be seen that 29,1% of organizational silence is explained by fear of negative evaluation. According to these findings, fear of negative evaluation of employees has a significant and positive effect on their organizational silence levels (β =,546, p<,01). Thus, the first hypothesis (H$_1$) of the research is supported. When the findings of the regression analysis betweenfear of negative evaluation and subdimensions of organizational silence are examined, it can be seen that 31,5% of acquiescent silence and 21% of defensive silence is explained by fear of negative evaluation. However, there isn't any relationship found between prosocial silence and fear of negative evaluation. According to these findings, fear of negative evaluation of employees has a significant and positive effect on their acquiescent silence (β=,567, p<,01) and defensive silence (β=,466, p<,01) levels. Thus, the second (H$_2$) and the third hypotheses (H$_3$) of the research are supported while the fourth hypothesis (H$_4$) is rejected.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

When the findings of the research are evaluated; there appears to be a strong, significant and positive relationship between fear of negative evaluation and organizational silence and its subdimensions (acquiescent silence and defensive silence). However, no relation is observed between fear of negative evaluation and prosocial silence as a subdimension of organizational silence. Employees fear that they may be negatively evaluated by their managers, leaders or employers as well as by other colleagues due to their knowledge, thoughts, ideas and/or behaviors in the business environment cause them to be in silence, nonspeaking and/or unresponsiveness behavior. Organizations must establish and maintain a transparent and equitable organizational culture for their employees to express their opinions and ideas freely in every environment. At the same time, managers must make employees participate in decisions, feel them that they are valuable and provide them support in all matters. Employees who clearly perceive themselves in a safe and equitable organizational culture can clearly and confidently use their knowledge and experience in the direction of their organization's purposes. Ultimately, communication channels should be kept open, appropriate and logical answers should be given to requests and complaints, participation in decisions should be ensured, fairminded compensation and motivation should be provided and employees should feel valued by the organization.