



Volume: 10 Issue: 2 Year: 2013

Primary school teachers' views on communication skills and organizational citizenship

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to determine the perception levels of primary school teachers on communication skills and organizational citizenship behaviors and also to determine the relationship between these two variables. This study was conducted via a descriptive qualitative relational scanning model. The participants in the study were selected from among primary school teachers who were working in Sivas, Turkey, via a simple random sampling method. In the course of the study, the data was collected via a “communication skills rating scale” and an “organizational citizenship scale”. In the analysis of the data, the arithmetical average and standard deviation values were calculated. Independent sampling t-test, one way analysis of variance and regression analysis were also carried out. It was concluded from the study that the variable of the period of service posed a significant difference for the behaviors of the conscientiousness dimension, which is one of the sub-dimensions of organizational citizenship. It was also concluded that the communication skills of primary school teachers significantly predicted their organizational citizenship behaviors.

Keywords: Communication, communication skills, organizational citizenship

Introduction

The word “komünikasyon” entered the Turkish language from the French word, “communication”, and retained the French meaning and pronunciation. Today, the word “communication” reflects the understanding of a more universal message exchange that involves communications (Engin, 2000; Zılloğlu, 1996). Bülbül (2001) points to the absence of consensus on the definition of communication and describes communication as “a mutual exchange which is carried out verbally or via writing or symbols to give, to teach, and impose information to a person

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or an audience on any subject, and to persuade the recipient of the communication to defend the views of the communicator. According to Dökmen (2003), communication is “the process of producing and transferring information and the process of interpretation.” According to Andersen, communication is “the process via which somebody else can understand us and we can understand somebody else”, while to Bereiso and Steiner, communication is “the process of transferring information, feelings, thought and skills using words, pictures, figures, graphics etc.” For Miller, communication is “one source’s intentionally transferring messages to a receiver to affect his/her behaviors.” (as cited in Ergin and Birol, 2000: 6).

According to Cüceloğlu (1995) the inner resources of an individual are accepted as a “primary source”. However, communication skills and methods are “secondary sources”. Poor communication generally results from the wrong decoding of the codes. That is why listening skills are required for communication. According to Taymaz (2000), the process of communication is used to develop the relationships between individuals or groups, and also to establish a communication network in an organization (Taymaz, 2000). The quality of communication networks develops depending on the presence of active listening skills. Within the process of communication, if the listener does not listen, he/she will make a mistake and this will cause misunderstandings, and so the listener will not respond appropriately (Balci, 1996). People with high levels of communication skills can understand their own feelings and can also express themselves; they try to understand the feelings of others and can deal with fear and anger (Bacanli, 1997).

Leadership affects organizational behaviors, and this is a crucial concept in management (Holt and Marques, 2012). The possession of communication skills, especially among leaders, makes an organization effective. Teachers can only gain a sense of team spirit and reach high achievement levels through the means of impressive communication channels (Klonsky, 2002) since disturbances within the process of communication create an atmosphere of unsociability (Matsushima & Shiomi, 2001). A person who is unsociable in relation to his/her organization cannot be expected to be dedicated to the organization or to display voluntary behaviors towards the organization. According to Baykara and Pehlivan, teachers with communication skills will be effective in solving problems in their professional lives (Baykara-Pehlivan, 2005). If the quality of the process of communication is low, this situation is reflected in the behaviors and feelings of the people (Frey, Hirschstein & Guzzo, 2002). If it is thought that most conflicts occur due to the problem of miscommunication (Caudron, 2000; Umiker, 1993), empathy increases emotional intelligence as a communication element (Badea & Pana, 2010), empathy skills increase psychological development and social awareness (Brems, 1998), and the level of intra-school

communication can determine the teachers' willingness to perform their tasks and their level of confidence in the school. Establishing impressive communication between teachers and students is possible with developing communication skills. Teachers who can efficiently use communication skills in human relations can raise and strengthen their social bonds with their schools. The quality of the communication level among teachers in a school can affect the degree of voluntary service among teachers in the school. Individuals who can establish healthy communications can take managerial and leadership roles within their own environment.

In the literature, organizational citizenship is described as the display of voluntary behaviors towards an organization. The well-accepted description of organizational citizenship behavior concerns individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that, in the aggregate, promotes the effective functioning of the organization. When these behaviors are neglected, no punishment is discussed; this is a personal situation and involves the efficiency of the organization. Organizational citizenship behavior has been named differently in various studies including extra-role behaviors, social organization behaviors, organizational spontaneity or civil organizational behaviors (as cited in Polat & Celep, 2008; Sezgin, 2005). The formal role behavior for organizations is related to the structure, system and rules of the organization (Organ, 1988; Organ & Konovsky, 1989) while informal role behavior is expressed as organizational citizenship (Moorman, 1993; Schnake, 1991) and extra-role behaviors (Feather & Rauter, 2004; Hunt, 1999; Bolon, 1997; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986; Katz & Kahn, 1966). In addition, the behaviors of the members of organizations, outside of their legal obligations, are accepted as organizational citizenship behaviors. Organ and Ryan (1995) emphasize that organization citizenship behaviors involve the voluntary helping behaviors of an individual within the organization towards the organization or other individuals. This situation is not regarded as a formal requirement for an employee; instead, it is accepted as the personal choice of the employee (as cited in Polat, 1997). Volunteering behaviors, which can differ according to the employee's commitment to their organization and their trust in the organization, develop depending on the informal relationships that are beyond the formal structure and processes of the organizations. Çelik (2007) explains the features of organizational citizenship behavior as follows:

Organizational citizenship behaviors:

- Are not a part of job definitions,
- Are not behaviors exhibited in expectation of reward, or out of fear of punishment,
- Cannot be gained with formal education,
- Are discretionary behaviors,

- Have subjective boundaries,
- Are important in terms of the function of the organization,
- Are humane values.

It was concluded from the studies in the literature such prerequisites as supportive manners and behaviors on the part of the leaders (Çelik, 2007), the manager's manner (Ladebo, 2004), informal communication (Kandlousi, Ali & Abdollahi, 2010), social interaction (Gorse & Emmitt, 2009), social interaction for organizational citizenship (Gorse & Emmitt, 2009) and shared leadership (Khasawneh, 2011) affect organization citizenship behaviors. In this context, for the efficiency of teachers, there must be good communication with managers and a high level of intra-school social interaction. Teachers who can establish better communications with the school managers and other shareholders of the school are especially expected to have high levels of commitment to the school, and to exhibit more voluntary behaviors towards it. In this context, the sharing of leadership, which can be accepted as one of the important prerequisites, will increase or decrease according to the quality of the relationship between employees and managers. As a result, shared leadership requires good use and management of the communication process. If it is thought that leadership behaviors as a whole affect most of the result variables of the organization, it is clear that one of these result variables is organizational citizenship behavior. Organizational citizenship behavior can be accepted as a concept that is affected by communication skills with several dimensions.

For the examination of the dimensions of organizational citizenship behavior, according to Organ, *altruism* is defined as direct and voluntary actions that help others with problems related to work. *Conscientiousness* refers to the prioritization of developing organizational behaviors and fulfilling a task beyond expectations. The behavior of a teacher who comes to school in spite of being sick and is in need of a vacation can be defined as conscientious behavior. +

Acts of *courtesy* can include regular communication with colleagues and forewarning them so that they are not surprised when events fail to turn out the way they expected. If a teacher forewarns his/her colleagues about the possible results of a problem even before that problem arises, this behavior can be called courtesy. *Civic virtue* is trying to develop ideas on organizational issues and expressing these ideas. If a teacher actively participates in the activities that help adapt the school to educational innovations and help maintain the innovations, this behavior can be evaluated under this dimension. *Sportsmanship* is trying to help other members of the organization over a problem in the organization, despite this not being compulsory; not complaining about difficult issues; and also having a positive manner towards the organization. Not complaining about

the lessons in spite of their being quite hard can also be presented as an example of sportsmanship (Khasawneh, 2011; Polat, 2007; Kemer, 2001; İşbaşı, 2000). The effect of communication skills organizational citizenship behavior and its sub-dimensions (Khasawneh, 2011) can be strengthened especially if managers keep the communication channels open as required by their leadership roles. Therefore, the present study aimed to determine primary school teachers' perception on communication skills and organizational citizenship behaviors, and also to describe the relationship between communication skills and organizational citizenship behaviors. In this context, an attempt was made to find answers to the following research problems:

1. Is there a significant difference between primary school teachers' communication skills and organizational citizenship behaviors depending on the variable of sex?
2. Is there a significant difference between primary school teachers' perceptions on communication skills and organizational citizenship behaviors depending on the variable of period of service?
3. Do the communication skills of primary school teachers predict their organizational citizenship behaviors?

Method

The aim of this study was to determine the perception levels of primary school teachers on communication skills and organizational citizenship behavior and to present the relationship between these two variables. So, this study was conducted via a descriptive and relational scanning method.

Participants

The participants of this study were chosen from among teachers who were working in a city center in Turkey in the academic year, 2010-2011 via a simple random sampling method. Within the process of sampling, 15 schools were determined and the researchers went to these school and the teachers were informed about the subject of the research. The teachers were asked to participate in the study. Out of nearly 550 teachers, 303 teachers agreed to participate voluntarily in the study. Within the process of data collection, researchers were assigned to be "companions" to each teacher, and in this way, forms going missing and the wrong filling out of forms was prevented.

Table 1

Numeric data on sampling

| Features of Participants | | N | % |
|--------------------------|--------|-----|------|
| Sex | Female | 139 | 45.9 |
| | Male | 164 | 54.1 |
| | Total | 303 | |
| Period of Service (Year) | 1-7 | 84 | 27.7 |
| | 8-14 | 100 | 33 |
| | 15+ | 119 | 39.3 |
| | Total | 303 | |

Data Collection Tools

In this study, two different scales were used due to existence of two basic variables (*communication skills and organizational citizenship behaviors*). The data was collected via a Communication Skills Evaluation Scale (Cronbach Alpha=0.91) which was developed by Korkut (1996) and the Organizational Citizenship Scale (Cronbach Alpha=0.97) which was prepared by Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1989), developed by Podsakoff et al. (1990) and Moorman (1991) and then adapted to Turkish by Polat (2007).

Data Analysis

The aim was to determine teachers' perceptions on communication skills, organizational citizenship behaviors and its sub-dimensions; standard deviation and arithmetic average values were calculated. With the evaluation arithmetic averages, perception levels of 1.00-1.79 was determined as "too low", 1.80-2.59 "low", 2.60-3.39 "normal", 3.40-4.19 "high" and the range of 4.20-5.00 was determined as "too high". To test whether the perception levels of the participants changed according to the variables of sex and period of service, independent sampling t-test and one-way variance analyses were carried out. Regression analysis was conducted to determine to what extent teachers' perceptions on communication skills affect organizational citizenship behaviors. Regression analysis was conducted with the data obtained from the communication skills evaluation scale and oriented to organizational citizenship behavior and its sub-dimensions. With this method, it was aimed to test whether not only communication skills affect organizational citizenship behaviors as a whole but also the behaviors under the sub-dimensions of this variable.

Findings

RQ 1: In order to answer the first problem of the study, arithmetic average and standard deviation values were calculated and independent sampling t-test was carried out (Table 2).

Table 2

The Results of independent sample t-test on the first problem of the study

| Scales | Sex | N | \bar{X} | S | sd | t | P |
|----------------------------|--------|-----|-----------|-------|--------|------|------|
| Communication Skills | Female | 139 | 105.49 | 8.68 | 299.01 | .785 | .433 |
| | Male | 164 | 104.60 | 11.09 | | | |
| Organizational Citizenship | Female | 139 | 80.82 | 9.01 | 301 | .740 | .460 |
| | Male | 164 | 81.60 | 9.32 | | | |

It was concluded from the independent sampling t-test conducted that the variable of sex does not pose a significant difference either for participants' communication skills ($t=.785$ and $p>.05$), or organizational citizenship behaviors ($t=.740$ and $p>.05$). Concerning the arithmetic averages, it was concluded that the perceptions of participants on both communication skills and organizational citizenship behaviors had close values in female and male participants. In addition, we can say that perceptions of female teachers were more similar to each other compared with those of the male teachers ($S=8.68$), while the perceptions of the male teachers had a wider range ($S=11.09$).

RQ 2: In order to answer the second problem of the study, arithmetic average and standard deviation values were calculated and independent sample t-test was carried out (Table 3).

Table 3

The Results of one way anova on the second problem of the study

| Variables | Period of Service (Year) | N | M | S | sd | F | P |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--------|-------|------|-------|-------|---|
| | | | | | | | |
| 8-14 (b) | 100 | 104.89 | 10.05 | | | | |
| 15+ (c) | 119 | 105.76 | 10.64 | | | | |
| Total | 303 | 105.01 | 10.05 | | | | |
| Altruism | 1-7 (a) | 84 | 31.69 | 4.62 | .783 | .458 | |
| | 8-14 (b) | 100 | 31.80 | 4.59 | | | |
| | 15+ (c) | 119 | 32.38 | 3.95 | | | |
| | Total | 303 | 32.00 | 4.36 | | | |
| Civic Virtue | 1-7 (a) | 84 | 15.78 | 2.59 | 1.797 | .168 | |
| | 8-14 (b) | 100 | 16.12 | 2.69 | | | |
| | 15+ (c) | 119 | 16.48 | 2.56 | | | |
| | Total | 303 | 16.17 | 2.62 | | | |
| Conscientiousness | 1-7 (a) | 84 | 16.38 | 3.17 | 3.900 | .021* | |
| | 8-14 (b) | 100 | 17.14 | 3.15 | | | |
| | 15+ (c) | 119 | 17.59 | 2.87 | | | |
| | Total | 303 | 17.10 | 3.08 | | | |
| Sportsmanship | 1-7 (a) | 84 | 16.36 | 3.31 | 1.260 | .285 | |
| | 8-14 (b) | 100 | 15.51 | 4.06 | | | |
| | 15+ (c) | 119 | 16.05 | 3.76 | | | |
| | Total | 303 | 15.96 | 3.75 | | | |

* $P<.05$

It was concluded from the one-way variance analysis conducted that there was no significant difference in primary school teachers' perceptions on communication skills depending on the period of service ($f=.689$, $p>.05$). In addition, it was observed that the period of service related to conscientiousness, which is one of the sub-dimensions of the organization citizenship behaviors, is an effective factor that poses significant difference ($F=3.9$, $p=.021$). It was concluded from the Scheffe Test conducted that this finding was obtained according to the perceptions of teachers who had a period of service of 1-7 years and teachers who had a period of service of 15 years and above. It was concluded from the examination of the arithmetic averages that teachers with a period of service of 1-7 years ($\bar{X}=16.38$) displayed fewer behaviors related to the sub-dimension of conscientiousness when compared with the teachers who had a 15 years and above of period of service ($\bar{X}=16.38$). Similarly, it was also concluded that behaviors related to the sub-dimension of conscientiousness have higher arithmetic averages in parallel with the period of service.

RQ 3: Regression analysis was conducted to answer the third problem of the study.

Table 4

The Results of Regression Analysis on the Third Problem of the Study

| The predicted | Model | B | ShB | β | T | P | R |
|---|----------------------|--------|------|---------|-------|------|------|
| Organizational Citizenship | Stable | 25.57 | 4.5 | | 5.66 | .000 | |
| | Communication Skills | .530 | .04 | .58 | 12.3 | .000 | .31 |
| <i>R= .31; R²=.096; F= 153.218; P=.000</i> | | | | | | | |
| Altruism | Stable | 4.887 | 2.1 | | 2.3 | .022 | |
| | Communication Skills | .258 | .02 | .595 | 12.8 | .000 | .595 |
| <i>R= .595; R²=.354; F= 161.04; P=.000</i> | | | | | | | |
| Conscientiousness | Stable | 14.432 | 1.8 | | 6.73 | .000 | |
| | Communication Skills | .045 | .02 | .145 | 2.54 | .011 | .829 |
| <i>R= .829; R²=.687; F=6.47; P=.011</i> | | | | | | | |
| Civic Virtue | Stable | 4.432 | 1.44 | | 3.089 | .002 | |
| | Communication Skills | .112 | .014 | .42 | 8.219 | .000 | .428 |
| <i>R= .428; R²=.183; F=519.439; P=.000</i> | | | | | | | |
| Sportsmanship | Stable | 3.822 | 2.16 | | 1.77 | .078 | |
| | Communication Skills | .116 | .02 | .03 | 5.64 | .000 | .31 |
| <i>R= .31; R²=.096; F=31.89; P=.000</i> | | | | | | | |

According to the regression analysis conducted, it was observed that the communication skills of primary school teachers is an important predictor of organizational citizenship behaviors ($R=.31$, $R^2=.096$ and $p<.005$). Concerning the sub-dimensions of organizational citizenship

behaviors, it was concluded that communication skills significantly predicted conscientiousness ($R=.829$, $R^2=.687$ and $p< .005$), altruism ($R=.595$, $R^2=.354$ and $p< .005$), civic virtue ($R=.428$, $R^2=.183$ and $p< .005$) and sportsmanship ($R=.31$, $R^2=.096$ and $p< .005$) according to their impact values.

Discussion and Suggestions

As a result of this study, it was observed that the variable of sex does not pose a significant difference for either communication skills ($t=.785$ and $p>.05$) or organizational citizenship behaviors ($t=.740$ and $p>.05$). According to a study conducted by Durukan and Maden (2010) on teachers, it was found that the communication skills of women displayed a significant difference when compared with those of men.

In this study, no significant difference was observed in the perceptions of primary school teachers on communication skills depending on their periods of service. In the study of Durukan and Maden (2010), it was found that the communication skills of teachers who had low seniority were higher when compared with other teachers. However, a significant difference that was observed only related to conscientiousness, which is one of the sub-dimensions of organizational citizenship behaviors. It was concluded that teachers with low seniority exhibited less behaviors that are related to the sub-dimension of conscientiousness. *Conscientiousness*, one of the sub-dimensions of organizational citizenship behaviors, refers to prioritization of developing organizational behaviors and fulfilling a task beyond expectations. According to this description, it can be suggested that teachers with low seniority think only on a day at a time basis, and they can be thought to be people who have not completed their bureaucratic socialization.

According to the results of the regression analysis, the communication skills of primary school teachers are a significant predictor of organizational citizenship behaviors. In addition, a significant relationship in a positive way was determined between primary school teachers' perceptions on communication skills and organizational citizenship behaviors. According to the findings obtained from the literature, situations related to intra-organization communication processes such as informal communication and social interaction (Kandlousi, Ali & Abdollahi, 2010; Gorse & Emmitt, 2009) are affected by organizational citizenship behaviors. At the end of this study, it was found that communication skills have an effect on organizational citizenship behaviors and they especially predicted the sub-dimensions of organizational citizenship behaviors, conscientiousness, altruism, civic virtue and sportsmanship, respectively.

With reference to these conclusions it is suggested:

- Those teachers should be provided with in-service education to enable them to increase their communication skills.
- That more opportunities should be created for teachers to establish better communications in the school environment.
- Educational studies should be conducted with a view to increasing teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors, and to enable managers to base their business on two-way communication.
- Managers should be informed on new approaches to management within the service period.

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