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The Effect of Favouritism on Employee Competencies in the Hotel Industry: Mediating Role of Employee Silence

El efecto del favoritismo en las competencias de los empleados en la industria hotelera: papel mediador del silencio de los empleados

Onur Çakır , Kırklareli University, Turquía
onurcakyr@gmail.com

Ece Doğan , Anadolu University, Turquía
ecedogantan@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the effect of favouritism on competencies through employee silence. The phenomenon of employee silence has been defined as a mediating variable that is affected by favouritism, and which affects employee competencies. Data collected from 420 employees working in hotels in the Thrace Region based on a face-to-face survey method were used to test the research hypotheses with partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The results reveal that favouritism is an obstacle that causes employee silence and, more importantly, reduces the competencies of employees, as they are not treated fairly in terms of their skills, experience, knowledge, and abilities. In addition, it may be concluded that employee silence is a factor that directly reduces competencies. While there is some discussion about the possible impacts of obstacles such as favouritism and employee silence on competencies, it can be observed that there are few studies that address their relationship separately. This research is among the first to empirically reveal employee silence as the mediator between favouritism practices and employee competencies, expanding the understanding of how silence can work as a mediator in the hospitality businesses.

KEYWORDS: Favouritism; employee silence; employee competencies; hotel establishments.

RESUMEN

Este estudio tiene como objetivo examinar el efecto del favoritismo en las competencias a través del silencio de los empleados. El fenómeno del silencio de los empleados se definió como una variable mediadora que se ve afectada por el favoritismo y que afecta las competencias de los empleados. Los datos recopilados de 420 empleados que trabajan en hoteles en la región de Tracia a través del método de encuesta cara a cara se utilizaron para probar las hipótesis de investigación con modelos de ecuaciones estructurales de mínimos cuadrados parciales (PLS-SEM). Los resultados revelaron que el favoritismo es un obstáculo que provoca el silencio de los empleados y, lo que es más importante, reduce las competencias de los empleados, ya que los empleados no son tratados de manera justa en términos de sus habilidades, experiencia, conocimientos y habilidades. Además, se concluyó que el silencio de los empleados es un factor que reduce directamente las competencias. Si bien existen algunas discusiones sobre los posibles impactos de obstáculos como el favoritismo y el silencio de los empleados sobre las competencias, se observó que existen pocos estudios que aborden su relación

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por separado. Esta investigación es una de las primeras en revelar empíricamente el silencio de los empleados como mediador entre las prácticas de favoritismo y las competencias de los empleados, lo que amplía la comprensión de cómo el silencio puede funcionar como mediador en el sector hotelero.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Favoritismo; silencio de los empleados; competencias de los empleados; establecimientos hoteleros.

I. INTRODUCTION

Businesses are making more and more investments in qualified personnel in order to survive in challenging, competitive market and obtain a competitive edge (Shih et al., 2006). Competency comprises the knowledge, skills, behaviours, and personal characteristics necessary to meet the strategic goals of the organisation and perform organisational roles in an efficient manner (Lucia and Lepsinger, 1999). In this context, roles assumed as a result of goals affiliated with the strategies created by businesses are defined as competencies. There is a direct correlation between the potential competencies that an employee has and their job performance (Tiruneh and Fayek, 2019). According to Human Resources Development Theory, transforming the knowledge, skills, and abilities of employees into business success and ensuring that personnel are competent are essential ways of improving business performance and increasing the desired organisational outputs (Shih et al., 2006). For this reason, it is observed that competency is one of the key elements for organisations in endeavours such as overcoming challenges, being creative, developing skills that cannot be copied by other businesses (Kong, 2013), gaining a competitive advantage (Čičiūnienė et al., 2016), building a strong organisational structure (Vathanophas and Thai-ngam, 2007), enhancing businesses' profitability and business image (Tiruneh and Fayek, 2019), and increasing efficiency and productivity (Potnuru and Sahoo, 2016).

Since effective management of human capital is the main determinant of business performance of hotels, hotels invest more in people (Yu and Ramanathan, 2013). In this context, employee competencies are becoming increasingly important in the human resources management practices of hotel establishments. Human resources management plays an integral role in an organisation since it brings together the work to be done with the competencies required for an individual to be able to achieve better and healthier results for the organisation in whatever situation they find themselves in. For this reason, it is observed that many of the studies are focused on human resource practices such as organisational learning culture (Potnuru et al., 2018), training, career development and performance management, as well as on increasing employees' competencies (Potnuru and Sahoo, 2016). Although it is vital to examine the role of human resources practices in increasing employee competencies, it is also important to understand the factors which cause a decrease in employee competencies, taking necessary precautions to avoid such factors. It is indicated in the literature that two of these factors are employee silence and favouritism (Safina, 2015; Elbaz et al., 2018). According to Pinder and Harlos (2001), one of the main reasons for employee silence is unjust practices, and favouritism is one of the key issues which creates injustice in an organization. It is stated that although favouritism continues to be an important phenomenon in hospitality sector, there is little empirical work regarding the consequences of favouritism in hotel context (Arici, et al., 2020). Besides that, while employee silence is significantly present in organisations, it is observed that there are few empirical studies in the literature to define, analyse and deal with employee silence (Ehtiyar and Yanardağ, 2008).

While there are some discussions about the possible impacts of obstacles such as favouritism and employee silence on competencies, it was observed that there are few studies that address their relationship separately (Elbaz et al. 2018; Akuffo and Kivipöld, 2019). The research aims to fill this gap in the literature. It is also thought that understanding the barriers related to employee competencies will be beneficial, especially in terms of the effective implementation of human resources practices in the organization.

Favouritism is a common behaviour practiced by many business owners and managers in the hospitality industry (Daskin, 2013; Abubakar et al., 2017). The tourism and hospitality industry, quintessentially a component of the service industry, is labour-intensive and dynamic. Due to the dynamic nature of the industry, favouritism is no rare phenomenon in tourism companies, with negative implications for behavioural consequences in various aspects of the business such as job satisfaction, intention to quit, and negative word of mouth (Arasli et al., 2006). Furthermore, considering that today's hotel businesses are more knowledge-intensive than ever and that they must continuously improve themselves and adapt to change; concealing ideas, thoughts, complaints, or instances of dissatisfaction inflicts serious damage on the business. Hiding information, not raising feedback or recommendations, and not discussing - and therefore, not resolving - situations which cause dissatisfaction will prevent employees from working effectively, both individually and as a team. From this point of view, this study aims to identify the effect of favouritism on competencies through employee silence by employing a different approach to competency literature. For this reason, the phenomenon of employee silence was defined by the study as a mediating variable that is affected by favouritism, and which affects employee competencies.

In line with the aim of the study, the second section presents a review of the literature and the formation of hypotheses while the third section explains the methodology and the findings of the study. The final section includes a summary of limitations and future study recommendations, in addition to the conclusion and discussion parts

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Employee competencies

Lucia and Lepsinger (1999) define competency as the tool which represents the necessary knowledge, skills, personal characteristics, and behaviours required to meet the strategic goals of the organisation and effectively perform one's organisational roles. While competencies, on an individual level, represent the skills, abilities, and knowledge levels of employees, they include customer information, technology, methods, transactions, and company culture on organisational level. Since competency comprises characteristics which make it possible for an individual to achieve better and healthier results for the organisation in various situations, employee competencies also contribute to the development of organisational competencies. However, employee competencies are not considered only as the set of skills required to do a job. They also include the ability of individuals to use their skills in a way that creates value or contributes to the organization (Biçer and Düztepe, 2003). According to Vathanophas and Tahi-ngam (2007), competencies are more important than strategies, business processes, services and products for businesses that wish to obtain a sustainable competitive edge. Because while strategies, business processes, services and

products can be copied by competitors; employee competencies, naturally, cannot be copied. Employee competency is an important resource in competing with other businesses and gaining advantage.

Employee competencies in tourism establishments are addressed differently. In the study where they determined the career competencies of employees in international hotels, Wang and Tsai (2012) define the most important competencies as workplace behaviours such as attitude towards the job, work ethic, occupational safety, health assurance and teamwork; followed by communication network skills. Agut et al. (2003), on the other hand, classify the competency requirements of hotel and restaurant managers in Spain as technical competencies (computer, foreign language and economic-financial) and general competencies (efficiency, self-motivation and communication).

It has also been recognised that the competencies required within an organisation may change over time (Chung, 2000). When recent tourism-related research studies are examined, it can be observed that team competence, self-competence and ethical competence come to the fore in the development of competencies (Elbaz et al., 2018). Team competence is the success or ability of employees to take positive measures to care for other employees in the organisation, to work together through innovation, to enrich the organisation's team performance and to include other employees in the process so as to obtain a greater output (Wang, 2013). In businesses that work with complex and multi-stage processes, such as tourism enterprises, a great importance is placed on team competence in order to plan their operations, increase employee participation and increase their quality of service. Although team is considered the best method among human resource development practices in the tourism sector, it is also said that it is one of the most difficult competencies to develop (Nickson, 2013).

Ethical competence is defined as the ability to implement the values and principles which serve as reference points in determining what is right and what is wrong in the decision-making and behavioural preferences of individuals (Potnuru and Sahoo, 2016). Employee characteristics such as compliance with rules in decision-making processes, as well as honesty, respect, justice and equality are at the heart of the ethical competence phenomenon. Self-competence, on the other hand, comprises the knowledge, skills and abilities that employees have and use in practice to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses, to set and follow professional and personal goals, to balance work and personal life, and to learn new things and improve themselves (Hellriegel and Slocum, 2011). Tafarodi and Swann (1995) indicate that employees with self-competence can also develop their skills and improve their efficiency, performance, success, and ability to cope with difficulties.

It is considered that competencies are closely affiliated with the factors that allow employees to perform their work in an efficient manner (Anvari et al., 2016). The headings below address the relationship between factors such as favouritism and employee silence, as well as employee competencies.

2.2 Favouritism and employee competencies

In the Oxford dictionary, favouritism is defined as “the practice of giving unfair preferential treatment to one person or group at the expense of another”. The literature mentions three types of favouritism - cronyism, nepotism and patronage (Sadozai et al., 2012). While cronyism rather refers to the favouritism towards acquaintances and friends at work,

nepotism refers to choosing relatives over other employees regardless of merit. Patronage generally refers to favouritism shown by a person in a higher position with political influence in order to protect an acquaintance or a relative and hold them harmless in unfavourable situations. Although Budhwar and Mellahi (2006) highlight the fact that favouritism practices are very common in Middle Eastern countries, it is stated that favouritism can also be seen in developed or developing countries (AL-Shawawreh, 2016).

Favouritism is one of the most important problems facing today's hotel industry (Abubakar et al., 2017). Some of the negative effects of favouritism on employees and organizations in the hospitality industry are low job satisfaction, intention to quit, and negative word of mouth (Arasli et al., 2006), as well as a distrustful work environment, political games, job stress (Daskin, 2013), employee cynicism, work withdrawal (Abubakar et al., 2017), organizational justice (Arici et al., 2021) and workplace incivility (Arici et al., 2020).

Conservation of Resource Theory (COR) suggests that favouritism exhausts employees' resources, and employees who are not favoured and ignored at the workplace might respond with negative behaviours toward completing their tasks; and in turn favouritism becomes a workplace stressor that prevents employees to utilize their competencies in organizations' favour. Research on favouritism has shown that such behaviour is one of the most important sources of conflict and stress in organizations. Examining the impact of favouritism on organizational politics and perceptions of work stress among frontline managers in hotels in Northern Cyprus, the study found that favouritism has the potential to create a distrustful work environment and cause real performers to get involved in political games (Daskin, 2013). In other words, under pressure to give preferential treatment, hotel managers have taken unfair actions in terms of recruitment, selection, evaluation, promotion, and disciplinary procedures. This can also be associated with the ethical competencies of employees. As is seen, working in an unfairly competitive environment leads employees to engage in manipulative and self-serving behaviours. Considering that employee characteristics such as willingness to follow rules, honesty, and fairness in decision-making underlie ethical competence, it becomes clear that favouritism causes managers in particular to behave unethically. Another study on the travel and tourism industry examined the impact of favouritism on the competencies of tourism workers in Tehran. The results showed that favouritism has a significantly negative impact on employees' self-competence, team competencies, ethical competencies, cultural competencies, and job performance (Dehghani et al., 2019).

Another important problem encountered in hospitality industry is employee silence. Although employees' silence behaviours were perceived as an indicator of compliance in the past, today it is considered as a reaction and withdrawal (Dyne et al., 2003). As favouritism increases within organizations, employees look for ways to deal with the unfair working environment. Silence emerges an emotion-based coping mechanism used by employees who encounter negative situations in the workplace (Knoll and van Dick, 2013). It is an unpleasant situation for an employee to work under an incompetent superior who reached his/her position via favouritism. The inequality between contribution of employees to the benefits they received causes employees to think that they work in an unfair environment (Büte, 2011). For this reason, employees may choose to remain silent both because they fear that voicing their opinions and views against favouritism can be perceived as an act of rebellion, and they consider silence as an emotional defence mechanism against injustice.

Based on the relationships in the relevant literature, it was determined that favouritism is a direct factor in reducing individual, team and ethical competencies in hotel businesses, and that it leads to employee silence. The following hypotheses have been proposed based on empirical arguments.

H₁: Favouritism is negatively related to self-competencies.

H₂: Favouritism is negatively related to team competencies.

H₃: Favouritism is negatively related to ethical competencies.

H₄: Favouritism is positively related to employee silence.

2.3 Mediating effects of employee silence between favouritism and employee competencies

What are the elements in the structures and processes of organisations that prevent employees from expressing their thoughts, ideas, suggestions, and concerns in a sincere and honest way? Studies conducted to find an answer to this question are based on efforts carried out under the leadership of Hirschmann in the 1970s. The concept of organisational silence was coined as employee silence in the EVNL (Exit, Voice, Neglect, Loyalty) model developed by Hirschmann (1970). According to Hirschmann (1970), an individual facing negative situations in an organisation may demonstrate a “Voice” behaviour, which expresses the behaviour of developing ideas and expressing complaints in order to change the organisation, or they may demonstrate a silence behaviour in which concerns, recommendations and complaints are not raised but kept to oneself.

Dyne et al. (2003) suggests that organisational silence occurs when employees remain silent for fear that their ideas or opinions might cause a reaction or that their opinions will not be well-received. Conlee and Tesser (1973) indicated that employee silence is caused by the fear of raising negative situations to their managers and not wanting to be the bringer of bad news. They defined this situation as the MUM effect. Noelle-Neumann (1974) indicates that people’s behaviour in relation to raising their concerns, ideas or complaints regarding an issue or keeping silent is shaped by attitudes in society. According to this theory, the spiral of silence, if individuals think that they will receive the support of the society in which they live, they will express their thoughts, concerns and objections without any reservation, while they will choose to remain silent if they think that they will not be supported (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). If we adapt this situation to the business domain, employees compare their opinions with those of their colleagues and managers as well as the prevailing culture, values, and objectives, and may refrain from expressing unusual opinions due to fear of exclusion. When this situation becomes a culture that prevails in the organisation as a whole, organisational silence occurs in the business. According to Pinder and Harlos (2001), one of the main reasons for employee silence is unjust practices, and favouritism is one of the key issues which creates injustice in an organization. Some empirical evidence confirms the positive relationship between employee silence and favouritism in the workplace. In a study which examines the impact of organisational nepotism on silence, alienation, and engagement in 5-star hotels in Turkey, it was determined that nepotism has a positive correlation with employee silence and alienation and a negative correlation with organisational engagement (Pelit et al., 2015). The study itself suggests that employee silence is negatively related to self, team, and ethical competencies.

H₅. Employee silence is negatively related to self-competencies.

H₆. Employee silence is negatively related to team competencies.

H₇. Employee silence is negatively related to ethical competencies.

Adams' Equity Theory (Adams, 1965) argues that unfair systems in an organization demotivate employees. This results in an increased number of disinterested and unmotivated employees who are feeling desperate and unwilling to be part of anything or make an effort to change their situation. Employee competencies include the skills required to do a job, as well as the demonstration of these skills in a way that creates value for or contributes to the organization. This value is created in a workplace environment where knowledge is generated and shared by employees (Biçer and Düztepe, 2003). Employee silence causes a negative organizational atmosphere for emergence of new ideas, demonstration of skills, and information sharing; and thus represents a significant danger to the organization (Morrison and Milliken, 2000). In this case, it is also reasonable to conclude that the silence caused by favouritism would have an adverse effect on employees' competencies. From this perspective, we can conclude that favouritism in the hotel industry is an important factor that diminishes employee competencies through employee silence. Examining the effects of favouritism on employee silence and competencies can expand our knowledge and understanding, as well as developing theories on the role of favouritism in organizational processes. Thus, employee silence in hotel businesses was defined as an mediating variable that is affected by favouritism and which decreases employee competencies; the following hypotheses were suggested in this regard:

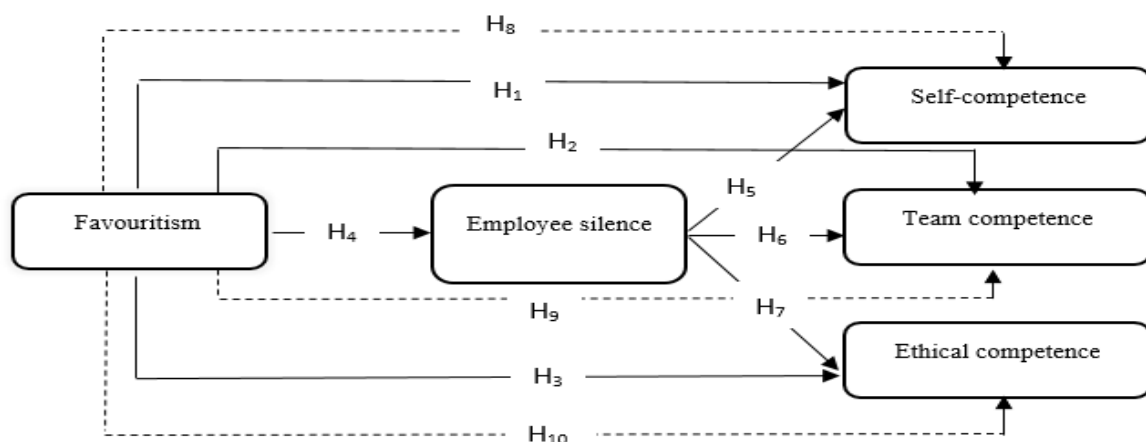
H₈. Employee silence mediates the relationship between the favouritism and self-competence.

H₉. Employee silence mediates the relationship between the favouritism and team competence.

H₁₀. Employee silence mediates the relationship between the favouritism and ethical competence.

Within the scope of hypotheses, a model for the direct and indirect effects of favouritism and employee silence on employee competencies was developed and tested. (Figure 1.).

Figure 1. Conceptual model



III. METHODS

3.1 Data collection and sampling

Hotels in Turkey are categorised into two: ones operating under municipal certificate, and those with a tourism management certificate issued by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Accommodation facilities with municipal certificates were excluded from the study because they are generally small-sized family businesses and do not have an institutional structure. Most of the tourism studies conducted in Turkey usually focuses on the Mediterranean cities, such as Antalya, Muğla etc. In order to test the model in a different context other than seasonal hotels, the Eastern Thrace Region is selected as research area. After obtaining the necessary permissions from 40 hotels' managements out of 59 hotels with tourism management certificate in the region (68%), face-to-face surveys were conducted on the 420 employees who volunteered for the study via convenience sampling method between December 2020 to March 2021. In terms of the sample's characteristics, Table 1 shows that participants were mostly consisted of hotel employees between 25-44 years old (65.9%). As for gender, a slightly higher proportion of males was recorded (50.5%). Moreover, employees mostly held a high school diploma (27.9%), with an associate degree the next common qualification (21.9%). Participants were mostly single (57.1%), with married participants making up 42.9% of the total. Moreover, 34.8% of the respondents worked in the food and beverage department, followed by 31.2% in the front office. In the study, those who gave 3 or higher points to at least one of the items in the favouritism scale were identified as being exposed to favouritism in the workplace. 328 of the participants, in other words 78.10%, stated that they faced a certain type of favouritism in the workplace. The number of those who did not encounter any favouritism is only 72 (21.90%).

Table 1. Sample's demographics

		No. of participants	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	208	49.5%
	Male	212	50.5%
Marital status	Single	240	57.1%
	Married	180	42.9%
Educational background	Literate	16	3.8%
	Elementary school	71	16.9%
	Middle school	66	15.7%
	High school	117	27.9%
	Associate degree	92	21.9%
	Bachelor's degree	58	13.8%
Departments	Front office	131	31.2%
	Food and Beverage	146	34.8%
	Housekeeping	94	22.4%
	Other	49	11.6%
Age	0-24 years old	58	13.8 %
	25-34 years old	161	38.3 %
	35-44 years old	116	27.6 %
	45+ years old	85	20.2 %

3.2 Questionnaire development and measures

The literature was taken into account in the development of the questionnaire form. In this context; team, self, and ethical competencies of the employees were measured with the scales developed by Elbaz et al. (2018). In the measurement of employee silence, the scale comprised of four dimensions and 12 items developed by Knoll and van Dick (2013) was used. In order to measure favouritism dimension, eight item scale developed by Büte (2011) was utilized. All items of the scales were measured on five-point Likert scale ranging from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree.

3.3 Data analysis

In the study, sample demographics were analysed by using IBM SPSS Statistics 22.0, while the measurement and structural model were tested by utilizing Smart PLS3 (Ringle et al., 2015). Partial least squares (PLS) method is a variance-based structural equation modelling method (SEM) that can be used to analyse cause-and-effect relationships. PLS-SEM is widely used for theory testing and confirmation of model structures (Chin et al., 2003). In addition, PLS-SEM has been recommended as a more suitable method for testing complicated models and relationships than traditional SEM (Hair et al., 2010). To control common method bias, we utilized Harman's single factor approach. By utilizing factor analysis, all 41 items of the scales included in the measurement model were forced to form a single dimension. And the AVE value was 0.220, which is much lower than the reference value (<0.50), thus confirms the absence of common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In order to check non-response bias, early respondents' (top 5%) demographics (e.g. gender, marital status, level of education etc.) and scores on our measurement items were compared with the late respondents (bottom 5%) by utilizing Chi-square test and t-test (Armstrong and Overton, 1977). Chi-square test results revealed that there are no significant differences between early and late respondents in terms of sample demographics. Furthermore, t-tests results showed that none of the variables significantly differed between the two sub-groups. PLS algorithm was utilized to test the validity and reliability of the measurement model. Then, blindfolding and two-tailed bias corrected bootstrapping methods (5000 subsamples) were utilized to test structural model and calculate the path coefficients.

IV. RESULTS

4.1 Measurement model

The SmartPLS3 (Ringle et al., 2015) programme was used to determine the validation and reliability of the scales used in the study as well as the structures shown in the conceptual model. In the testing of the convergent validity of structures in the measurement model, it was ensured that the average variance extracted (AVE) values and factor loadings of the expressions within the structures were greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010). As factor loadings were examined, the expression; "I always feel that I need someone I know or a friend in a high-level position" had a negative factor loading and therefore it was excluded from the favouritism scale. When AVE values were examined, it was determined that the only dimension with an AVE value of below 0.50 was the team competence dimension. In order to increase the AVE value, the expression with the lowest factor loading; "I am very good at integrating information and suggestions from individuals into a plan" was excluded from the team competence scale. The analysis was repeated after these two items were removed and

it was seen that the factor loadings of all expressions and AVE values of the structures were higher than the reference value of 0.50. Thus, the convergent validity of the model was achieved (Table 2.). Discriminant validity was confirmed by the discriminant table (Table 3.), whereby diagonal elements of the square roots of AVE values are greater than their corresponding below-diagonal elements in the correlation of the constructs and HTMT ratios (above-diagonal elements) were lower than 0.90 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). In order to assess internal consistency and composite reliability, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were calculated. Constructs with reliability coefficients greater than 0.7 could be considered reliable (Hair et al., 2010). The composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of constructs were greater than 0.70, thus demonstrating reliability and satisfying the requirements for internal consistency (Table 3.).

Table 2. Results of confirmatory factor analysis, reliability, and construct validity

First Order Constructs	Items	Factor Loading	t-value	p value	Mean	Std. Dev.
Favouritism (AVE= 0,696, CR= 0,941)	I always feel that I need someone I know or a friend in a high-level position (Fav1).*	-0.030	0.466	0.641	2.85	1.22
	Supervisors are afraid of subordinates who are related/acquainted to high-level executives. (Fav2).	0.717	14.842	0.000	2.05	0.79
	I am always careful when speaking to family, acquaintances, or relatives of the organization's executives (Fav3).	0.773	22.853	0.000	2.28	0.93
	Executives are more interested in keeping friends and acquaintances in good positions than they are in those employees' performance or the organization's profitability (Fav4).	0.856	27.663	0.000	2.09	0.89
	The expectations of executive relatives and acquaintances are given priority (Fav5).	0.869	31.329	0.000	2.05	0.96
	Organizations permitting employment of executives' relatives have a hard time attracting and retaining quality people who are not relatives (Fav6).	0.894	58.132	0.000	2.10	0.93
	Hotels permitting employment of executives' relatives have a difficult time firing or demoting them if they prove inadequate (Fav7).	0.872	49.387	0.000	2.06	0.96
	High-level executives of this hotel have a hard time demoting or firing friends and acquaintances (Fav8).	0.845	27.306	0.000	2.06	0.95
Acquiescent Silence (AVE= 0,771, CR=0,910)	I remain silent at work....	0,825	29,569	0,000	1.65	0.79
	because my superiors are not open to proposals, concerns, or the like (Acq1).	0,933	99,233	0,000	1.66	0.82
	because I will not find a sympathetic ear anyway (Acq2).	0,873	46,233	0,000	1,89	0.69
	because nothing will change anyway (Acq3).					

Pro-Social Silence (AVE= 0,790, CR= 0,918)	because I do not want to hurt the feelings of colleagues or superiors (Pro1).	0,879	44,464	0,879	1.64	0.79
	because I do not want to embarrass others (Pro2).	0,895	59,625	0,895	1.64	0.77
	because I do not want others to get in trouble (Pro3).	0,892	48,630	0,892	1.61	0.76
Opportunistic Silence (AVE= 0,814, CR= 0,929)	to not give away my knowledge advantage (Opp1).	0,898	44,674	0,898	1.71	0.81
	because of concerns that others could take an advantage of my ideas (Opp2).	0,910	59,506	0,910	1.67	0.84
	because that could mean having to do avoidable additional work (Opp3).	0,899	55,220	0,899	1.64	0.79
Quiescent Silence (AVE= 0,706, CR= 0,873)	because I fear of negative consequences. (Qui1).	0,570	10,724	0,000	2.25	1.24
	because I fear disadvantages speaking up. (Qui2).	0,950	149,503	0,000	1.69	0.83
	not to make me vulnerable in the face of colleagues or superiors (Qui3).	0,944	128,294	0,000	1.72	0.85
Employee Silence (AVE= 0,620, CR= 0,950) (Second Order Construct)	Acquiescent Silence	0,841	29,585	0,000	1.73	0.67
	Pro-Social Silence	0,926	77,270	0,000	1.63	0.69
	Opportunistic Silence	0,932	101,591	0,000	1.67	0.73
	Quiescent Silence	0,888	51,483	0,000	1.89	0.80
Self-Competence (AVE= 0,503, CR= 0,887)	Owing to my capabilities, I have much potential (Self1)	0,614	9,592	0,000	4.37	0.65
	I succeed at much (Self2)	0,640	12,868	0,000	4.40	0.62
	I have done well in life so far (Self3)	0,907	51,740	0,000	4.35	0.63
	I perform very well at a number of things (Self4)	0,718	14,825	0,000	4.38	0.60
	I am a capable person (Self5)	0,597	7,662	0,000	4.39	0.64
	I have much to be proud of (Self6)	0,531	5,341	0,000	4.40	0.59
	I am talented (Self17)	0,803	20,784	0,000	4.10	0.62
	I am very competent (Self8)	0,787	20,105	0,000	4.08	0.57
Team Competence (AVE= 0,507, CR= 0,877)	I am very good at integrating information and suggestions from individuals into a plan (Team1)***	0,582	5,962	0,000	4.29	0.51
	I can work very effectively in a group setting (Team2)	0,602	8,072	0,000	4.21	0.53
	I can contribute valuable insight to a team project (Team3)	0,649	8,915	0,000	4.31	0.54
	I can easily facilitate communication among people (Team4)	0,708	12,083	0,000	4.37	0.56
	I am effective at delegating responsibility for tasks (Team5)	0,749	15,361	0,000	4.39	0.59
	I can effectively coordinate tasks and activities of a group (Team6)	0,845	28,072	0,000	4.41	0.58
	I am able to resolve conflicts among individuals effectively (Team7)	0,725	15,809	0,000	4.44	0.58
	I do feel I can take on a leadership role in a group and be effective (Team8)	0,678	12,381	0,000	4.40	0.64

Ethical Competence (AVE= 0,525, CR= 0,844)	I have the ability to deal with moral conflicts and problems (Ethic1).	0.582	7.390	0.000	4.44	0.58
	I can defend my ethical decision (Ethic2).	0.680	10.089	0.000	4.40	0.58
	I maintain fair process at all times (Ethic3).	0.876	35.149	0.000	4.40	0.60
	I respect the dignity of those affected by the decisions (Ethic4).	0.649	9.659	0.000	4.38	0.61
	I have the ability to take decisions in ethical dilemmas (Ethic5).	0.798	20.746	0.000	4.15	0.53

Notes: All items are measured on five-point Likert scale ranging from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree. All loadings are significant at the 0.01 level or better. All internal reliability estimates are above the 0.70 cut-off value. * Item excluded from the scale due to negative factor loading. ** Item excluded from the scale to increase AVE value above 0.50.

Table 3. Reliability and discriminant validity (entire group)

Model	Construct	Correlations of the constructs				
		1	2	3	4	5
Entire Group	1. Favouritism	0.834	0.221	0.182	0.172	0.249
	2. Employee Silence	0.210	0.898	0.174	0.314	0.210
	3. Self-Competence	-0.182	-0.158	0.731	0.494	0.397
	4. Team Competence	-0.160	-0.283	0.417	0.712	0.375
	5. Ethical Competence	-0.226	-0.190	0.302	0.313	0.725
	Cronbach's Alpha	0.927	0.919	0.851	0.837	0.774
	Composite Reliability	0.941	0.943	0.887	0.877	0.844
	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	0.696	0.806	0.535	0.507	0.525
	Mean	2.10	1.73	4.39	4.39	4.41
	Std. Deviation	0.766	0.641	0.419	0.418	0.407

Note: The diagonal elements of boldface are the square roots of AVEs, Values below the diagonal are the correlation of five constructs and above-diagonal elements are HTMT ratios.

4.2 Structural model and results of hypotheses testing

Before testing the structural model, we utilized blindfolding procedure in SmartPLS3 to calculate Stone-Geisser Q^2 values to test the model's predictive power. By following the guidelines suggested by Chin (2010), we found out that all the Q^2 values of each endogenous constructs were greater than zero with 0.499 for organisational silence, 0.346 for team competence, 0.359 for self-competence, and 0.305 for ethical competence. Therefore, we concluded that the model proposed in the study exhibited high predictive relevance for all endogenous latent variables.

The path coefficients in the structural model were tested by utilising the bias-corrected bootstrapping method (5000 subsamples) on SmartPLS3. According to the analysis results, eight out of 10 hypotheses developed within the scope of the study were supported. When the results of the hypothesis tests summarised in Table 4 were examined; it was determined that favouritism had a negative and significant effect on self-competence ($\beta=-0.155$, $t=2.951$, $p<0.01$) and ethical competence ($\beta=-0.195$, $t=3.743$, $p<0.001$) but has no direct significant effect on team competence ($\beta=-0.105$, $t=1.820$, $p=0.069$). The findings of the study supported hypotheses H_1 and H_3 , while H_2 was not supported. Evaluating the impact of employee silence on competencies; it was determined that there is a negative impact on team competence ($\beta=-0.261$, $t=5.013$, $p<0.001$), ethical competence ($\beta=-0.149$, $t=2.579$, $p<0.05$) and self-competence ($\beta=-0.125$, $t=2.981$, $p<0.01$). Therefore, hypotheses H_5 , H_6 and H_7 were supported.

Table 4. Standardized structural estimates and tests of the hypotheses

Paths	β	t-stats	p values	Bias Corrected 95% Interval		Supported
				Lower	Upper	
H ₁ : Favouritism → Self-Competence	-0.155	2.951	0.003**	-0.244	-0.036	Yes
H ₂ : Favouritism → Team Competence	-0.105	1.820	0.069 ^{ns}	-0.209	0.014	No
H ₃ : Favouritism → Ethical Competence	-0.195	3.743	0.000***	-0.285	-0.080	Yes
H ₄ : Favouritism → Employee Silence	0.210	2.987	0.003**	0.061	0.341	Yes
H ₅ : Employee Silence → Self-Competence	-0.125	2.981	0.003**	-0.200	-0.035	Yes
H ₆ : Employee Silence → Team Competence	-0.261	5.013	0.000***	-0.358	-0.152	Yes
H ₇ : Employee Silence → Ethical Competence	-0.149	2.579	0.010*	-0.258	-0.028	Yes

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0,05, ns= not significant (p>0,05)

Following the recommended procedures for mediation tests in PLS-SEM (Nitzl et al., 2016), the indirect effects of favouritism on self-competence, team competence and ethical competence, through employee silence, were evaluated. The results are summarised in Table 5. Favouritism had a significant negative indirect effect on self-competence through employee silence ($\beta=-0.026$, $t=2.010$, $p<0.05$, CI: -0.058 to -0.006), thus supporting H₈. Within this framework, it can be stated that employee silence has a complementary partial mediation effect on the negative impact of favouritism on self-competence and that it amplifies the negative impact. Favouritism was found to have no direct effect on team competence ($\beta=-0.105$, $t=1.820$, $p>0.05$). However, favouritism had a significant negative indirect effect on team competence through employee silence ($\beta=-0.055$, $t=2.506$, $p<0.05$, CI: -0.102 to -0.017) suggesting full mediation, and supporting H₉. Employee silence was found to have no mediation effect on the relationship between favouritism and ethical competence ($\beta=-0.031$, $t=1.837$, $p>0.05$, CI: -0.075 to -0.006) suggesting H₁₀ is not supported.

Table 5. Results of mediation analyses

Paths	β	t-stats	p values	Bias Corrected 95% Interval		Supported	Mediation Type
				Lower	Upper		
H ₈ : Favouritism → Employee Silence → Self-Competence	-0.026	2.010	0.045*	-0.058	-0.006	Yes	Partial (Complementary Mediation)
H ₉ : Favouritism → Employee Silence → Team Competence	-0.055	2.506	0.012*	-0.102	-0.017	Yes	Indirect Only (Full Mediation)
H ₁₀ : Favouritism → Employee Silence → Ethical Competence	-0.031	1.829	0.067 ^{ns}	-0.075	-0.006	No	No Effect (Nonmediation)

*** p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0,05, ns= not significant (p>0,05)

V. CONCLUSION

5.1 Theoretical implications

In this study, we tried to determine the role of favouritism on competencies through employee silence. In this context, employee silence was defined as a mediating variable that is affected by favouritism and that affects employee competencies. Results have shown that favouritism has a negative impact on the self-competence, team competence and ethical competence of the employee. In a study addressing the relationship between favouritism,

employee competencies, and organisational performance in the field of tourism; Elbaz et al. (2018) concluded that favouritism has a significant negative impact on employee competencies in travel agencies -affecting company performance. Elbaz et al. (2018) also have shown that favouritism has a negative impact on the self-competence and team competence of the employee.

Following a detailed examination of the findings, it was concluded that favouritism has a direct negative impact on the self-competence of employees and also reduces self-competencies through employee silence. This finding notes that employee silence may create a butterfly effect in an organisation, leading to important consequences in the decrease of self-competencies in its employees. The situation for ethical competencies is completely the opposite. Despite the direct impact of favouritism in the decrease of ethical competencies of employees, there is no mediation impact of employee silence in this process. Finally, it was concluded that favouritism does not impact team competence directly. Furthermore, we could say that favouritism first increases employee silence and then decreases team competence indirectly through employee silence. It can be argued that there is a full mediating effect of employee silence on the relationship between favouritism and team competence.

The results of the study also show that, in addition to its mediation effects, employee silence also has a direct impact on the decrease in team competence, self-competence and ethical competence. Studies in the literature suggest that employee silence may lead to different negative impacts on organisations by decreasing performance (Morrison and Milliken, 2000; Premeaux, 2001), decreasing knowledge-sharing (Takhsha et al., 2020) and creating emotional burnout (Jahanzeb et al., 2018). On the contrary, this study addressed employee silence as a danger factor in terms of competencies and showed that in the event employees take no action or raise no concerns regarding the important issues or topics the organisation faces, this may have a negative impact on their competencies. This study also found that favouritism is a barrier that leads to employee silence and, more importantly, reduces employee competencies as employees are not treated fairly in terms of their skills, experience, knowledge, and abilities. From this perspective this research is among the first to empirically reveal employee silence as the mediator between favouritism practices and employee competencies that expands the understanding of how silence can work as a mediator in the hospitality businesses.

5.2 Managerial implications

This study found that favouritism is a barrier that leads to employee silence and, employee silence was found to be a factor that directly reduces professional competencies. Considering that competencies are an important source of competitive advantage for hotel businesses operating in a labour-intensive industry, it can be argued that managerial inferences will help top management plan their policies in a way that minimizes favouritism and employee silence. The practical findings of this study may be of particular value to hoteliers seeking to create a healthy work environment and culture. A prominent finding of the study was that top management should review existing policies or take decisive actions to develop new policies and procedures to create a work environment where favouritism is kept to a minimum.

Arasli et al. (2006) argue that favouritism completely cripples human resources practices and affects employees' perceived levels of fairness. The study argues that favouritism also negatively affects employee competencies. The first duty of HR departments in this context should be to create a transparent selection system that ensures the fair recruitment of candidates. Moreover, the public sector can take actions to regulate human resources policies and practices. For example, graduates of tourism and hospitality management could be selected to fill some of the vacant positions advertised by tourism businesses. While this might help form a recruitment system free of favouritism, it might also ensure the employment of competent employees trained in their field.

Another finding of the research is that silence in an organization reduces the competencies of employees. This is because perceptions of inequity for remuneration by non-family members or employees with no acquaintances in high positions can lead to silence and ultimately affect its viability. For this reason, hotel managers should pay attention to the fair distribution of wages and rewards depending on each individual's contribution to their establishment. This makes it possible for hotel owners or managers to retain competent employers in their hotels.

One of the key focuses of this study is the role of employee silence in terms of favouritism and competencies. In this regard, hotel managers can create a working environment that improves social relations among employees. In particular, employees can be trained on how to work efficiently with each other in the workplace. These training programs should teach employees about the importance of good relations and productive cooperation. As well as promoting team spirit, it can reduce organizational silence (Karatepe, 2016; Arici et al., 2020).

Finally, competencies are considered as a vital source for the success and retaining competitive advantage of hotel businesses. This is why it is so important for hotel owners and managers in the hospitality industry to know how to retain and satisfy talented and high-performing employees or managers in order to achieve their business goals. When hotels create a work environment where favouritism is minimized through new policies and procedures, employees become collaborators who can freely express their opinions like a family member, and this allows for the development of competencies that cannot be replicated in organizations

5.3 Limitations and future research

This empirical research has some limitations. First, the sample of this study is limited to 3, 4 and 5-star hotel employees operating in Turkey, therefore the findings of this study may not be applicable in different cultural settings and for further generalizations, a larger sample size in other countries is needed. In addition, this study only conducted on hotel employees. Therefore, future studies could test the hypothesized relationships in different service settings such as airlines, restaurants, and travel agencies etc. Future studies may utilize in-depth interviews to provide a better understanding about the relationships between favouritism, employee silence and employee competencies. Moreover, future studies may consider other mediating or moderating variables in the relationship between favouritism and employee competencies. (e.g., cynicism, ostracism, perceived incivilities). Finally, future research may use advance statistical methods such as fuzzy sets (fsQCA) (Shamout, 2020),

artificial neural networks (Abubakar, 2020; Martinez-Torres and Toral, 2019) and bayesian networks (Assaf et al., 2018) to test hypothesized relationships and models' outcomes.

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CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data Collection, Statistical Analysis, Writing-Review & Editing.

Author 2: Literature Review, Writing Original Draft, Visualization, Review & Editing.