



VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL SILENCE

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine the organizational silence perceptions of teachers who work in public high schools in the Bağcılar district, Istanbul province of Turkey, and to specify whether they differ according to different variables. The survey model was used in the study. The research was performed with 323 teachers working in vocational high schools in the Bağcılar district of Istanbul in the 2017-2018 academic year. In the study, the random sampling method was employed. The "Personal Information Form" and "Organizational Silence Scale" were used as data collection tools. In the research, descriptive statistics, the independent samples t-test, one-way analysis of variance, and the Kruskal-Wallis test were performed. The general organizational silence perceived by vocational high school teachers was found to be "low." It was revealed that the perceived organizational silence of vocational high school teachers did not vary by gender, educational level, professional seniority, subject, and union membership, while the perceived general organizational silence varied depending on age.

Keywords: vocational high school; teacher; organizational silence; demographic variables



1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations are formations established to meet the needs of people. From this point of view, it is obvious that the reason why organizations exist is human. To explain it in more detail, the reason for the existence of organizations is to ensure that people can achieve certain goals they set during their life together with more than one person or a group. The organization also has a specific structure.

This structure plays an important role in coordinating actions to be taken by the group for a certain purpose and balancing these actions. In this respect, the organization is a means of coordinating the actions of people and making them concerted to each other (Grunig & Grunig, 2008). Under the effect of the global competition, organizations want employees to express what they think, what they want to say, their experiences and opinions within the organization, and to work in team cohesion and group solidarity in order to achieve the objectives of the organization (Koçel, 2014).

However, this is not always possible, and employees prefer to keep silent instead of speaking out as expected by the organization (Özdemir & Sarioğlu Uğur, 2013). Individuals get the knowledge of the organization's policies, procedures, identity, and rules within the organization, in which they are involved, by speaking. By keeping silent, they avoid difficult or annoying situations. In this case, organizational silence occurs. Organizational silence is a condition when individuals refrain from disclosing what they know to their supervisors (Mcgowan, 2003).

A possible point of confusion about organizational silence may be the way of keeping silent. What is meant by silence is not the absence of noise or sound in an environment. It is employees' not telling their opinions, which would carry the organization they are involved to better positions, to those who can influence the situation within the organization, such as their managers, supervisors, or boss, knowingly and willfully, and their choosing to keep silent in the efforts to improve willfully. Organizational silence results in people's failure to contribute to the organizational discourse freely (Bowen; Blackmon, 2003).

According to Saçılık (2014), organizational silence;

- Represents a dynamic process and involves both personal and external factors;
- Occurs reactively with the feelings and opinions of employees of an organization concerning certain situations;



- It is crucial that there is healthy communication within the organization. It may occur when the communication of employees within the organization is suppressed.
- It is quite difficult for individuals, who are external to the organization, to understand the reactive silence that occurs.

In general, organizational silence is addressed in three sub-dimensions in the literature, including acquiescent silence, defensive silence, and prosocial silence:

Acquiescent silence: In this type of silence, individuals who are unwilling about and indifferent to the organizational circumstances deliberately hide their ideas and opinions. In this dimension, where the motivational capacity of individuals is low, they are less aware of and willing about their silence (Pinder & Harlos, 2001). Acquiescent silence involves conscious inaction and hiding of information since it is thought to be pointless to speak out.

Defensive silence: In this type of silence, many employees know the truth about particular issues and problems within the organization but dare not to speak out since they have doubts about how their superintendents will react to it (Vakola & Bouradas, 2005). It is a more proactive type of silence, which involves the awareness and consideration of alternatives, shown after a conscious decision (Van Dyne et al., 2003).

As the most important factors leading employees to keep silent include stigmatization as a trouble maker, the breakdown of the relationship, the fear of losing their job, or not getting a promotion (Milliken, Morrison & Hewlin, 2003), it can be claimed that the behavior of silence is mostly exhibited to defend oneself.

Prosocial silence: This type of silence involves the hiding of information because this is safe and not open to discussion. In this type of silence, the main goal is to protect confidential and private information, including not disclosing the organization's internal information and not mentioning the personal information of others in every setting (Van Dyne et al., 2003). The individual worries that if he/she does not keep silent, he/she will cause harm to himself/herself, other colleagues within the organization, or the organization itself, and, thus, he/she keeps silent (Durak, 2014).

As seen from the above-mentioned sub-dimensions of silence, employee silence is not a one-time thing but rather an ongoing process. As long as the motivation for silence is stronger than the motivation for speaking out, silence increases (Brinsfield, 2009). The increasing



silence of employees has a negative impact on the level of welfare of employees by reducing their productivity (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008).

First, the behavior of keeping silent may spread throughout the organization and start a loop of miscommunication (Milliken & Morrison, 2003). Silence may cause individuals to pay a high psychological price, such as abasement, anger, grudge, and resentment. It may break down interpersonal interaction, kill creativity, and, thus, decrease productivity. Research has shown that keeping silent does not make it right or make people more productive. It only suppresses differences beneath the surface and strongly triggers destructive power.

Schools are organizations where cooperation and social relationships are at the highest level. Therefore, organizational silence is a very serious problem for schools that can be described as an organization of communication and interaction. The reason for this is the fact that schools, where many teachers from different fields of study work together, are unable to actively make use of teachers, especially on the subjects concerning their own fields of study, and lead them to keep silent, which means the inability to use the existing potential (Ayduğ, Himmetoğlu & Turhan, 2017).

It can be claimed that particularly vocational high schools are among organizations where there is the highest number of fields of study and the highest diversity. It is considered important for these educational organizations where there is a great diversity of fields of study to reach large segments of society and to reveal the levels of silence of teachers teaching in these fields of study. Therefore, this study's goal was to determine the level of the organizational silence perceived by teachers working in public vocational high schools and whether it varied depending on different variables. Therefore, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What is the level of organizational silence perceived by teachers working in vocational high schools?
2. Does the level of organizational silence of vocational high school teachers vary depending on the variables of gender, age, educational level, professional seniority, the length of employment in the school, subject, and union membership?

2. METHOD

This section of the study includes the study model, study population and sample, data collection tools, and data analysis.



2.1. Study Model

The study was designed using the survey model. Survey models are approaches aiming to describe a past or current situation as it is. The incident, individual, or object, which is the subject of the study, is tried to be described according to its own conditions and as it is. No effort is made to change or influence it in any way. There is what is desired to be known. What is important is to observe and identify it properly (Karasar, 2014). In the study, the data collected using data collection tools were analyzed to investigate the teachers' levels of organizational silence.

2.2. Study Population and Sample

The target population of the study consisted of teachers working in vocational and technical high schools located in the Bağcılar district, Istanbul, in the 2017-2018 academic year. According to the data obtained from the Bağcılar District Directorate of National Education, there were 13 vocational and technical Anatolian high schools in the Bağcılar district, and there were a total of 857 teachers employed in these high schools.

As indicated by Balcı (2013), the theoretical sample size for populations of different sizes is 277 people in a population of 1000 people with a tolerable margin of error of 5% and at a confidence interval of 95%. Considering the theoretical sample size for populations of different sizes, it is observed that 277 individuals are sufficient for a population of 857 people.

According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2011), it is possible to select a sample size, which is statistically sufficient to represent the population, through statistical calculations by a totally random method, from a population. The random sampling method was used in the study. The quantitative data collection tools were distributed to 450 teachers working in the vocational high schools in the Bağcılar district, and 410 data collection tools were received back.

Eighty-seven out of 410 data collection tools were excluded from the assessment since they were incomplete or incorrect. Three hundred twenty-three data collection tools were assessed in the study. The distribution of the teachers included in the study by their demographic characteristics is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of teachers by their demographic characteristics (N=323)

Variables	Group	f	%
Gender	Female	170	52.6
	Male	153	47.4
Age	24 to 29 years	78	24.1
	30 to 39 years	142	44.0



	40 to 49 years	84	26.0
	50 years and above	19	5.9
Educational Level	Bachelor's Degree	247	76.5
	Postgraduate	76	23.5
Professional Seniority	0 to 5 years	106	32.8
	6 to 10 years	96	29.7
	11 to 15 years	37	11.5
	16 to 20 years	39	12.1
	21 years and above	45	13.9
Subject	Non-Math or Sciences	107	33.1
	Math/Sciences	74	22.9
	Profession	142	44.0
Union Membership	Yes	230	71.2
	No	93	28.8

Table 1 shows that 52.6% of the high school teachers included in the study are female, and 47.4% of them are male. The mean age of the teachers aged between 24-64 years is 35.54 ± 7.61 . Moreover, the age of 30 to 39 years is the largest age group with a percentage of 44.0%. Most of the teachers (76.5%) hold a bachelor's degree, while 23.5% of them hold a master's degree. The mean professional seniority of the teachers is 10.50 ± 7.53 years (ranging from 1 year to 44 years). At the same time, the group of teachers with the professional seniority of 0 to 5 years is the largest group, which constitutes 32.8% of the study population. Of the teachers, 33.1% and 22.9% are non-math or sciences and math/sciences teachers, respectively, and the remaining 44.0% teach vocational courses, and 71.2% of the teachers are union members.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

The personal information form, which was prepared by the researchers, and the "Organizational Silence Scale," which was developed by Van Dyne et al. (2003) and translated into Turkish by Taşkıran (2011), were used to reveal the level of organizational silence of teachers.

2.3.1. Personal Information Form

The personal information form prepared by the researchers was used to obtain the socio-demographic information of the participants. The personal information form includes questions about gender, age, educational level, professional seniority, subject, and union membership.

2.3.2. Organizational Silence Scale

The level of organizational silence of teachers was measured by the scale, which was developed by Van Dyne et al. (2003) and translated into Turkish by Taşkıran (2011). The original version of the Organizational Silence Scale consists of 15 items and 3 sub-dimensions.



The sub-dimensions are acquiescent silence (items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5), defensive silence (items 6, 7, 8, 9, 10), and prosocial silence (items 11, 12, 13, 14, 15). The scale was prepared in the form of a 5-point Likert-type rating scale. The items on the 5-point Likert-type scale are rated as follows: "(1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neither agree nor disagree, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly agree".

The answer codes assigned to each item in the scale range between 1.00 to 5.00 in the order from negative to positive according to these rates. By assuming the intervals in the assessment instrument, first, the lower and upper limits for the options were determined. In interpreting arithmetic means, the intervals were determined to be 1.00-1.80 "very low," 1.81-2.60 "low," 2.61-3.40 "satisfactory," 3.41-4.20 "high," and 4.21-5.00 "very high." The suitability of the Organizational Silence Scale for this study conducted with teachers was investigated by checking its confidence through item analysis and is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Confidence analysis for the Organizational Silence Scale

Dimension/Scale	Item Number	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Organizational silence scale	15	0.819
Acquiescent silence	5	0.804
Defensive silence	5	0.885
Prosocial silence	5	0.839

Table 2 presents the results of the confidence analysis conducted for the Organizational Silence Scale consisting of three sub-dimensions. Accordingly, the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) for "Acquiescent silence," which is the first sub-dimension of the scale, was found to be $\alpha=0.804$, while the reliability coefficients for "Defensive silence," which is the second sub-dimension, and "Prosocial silence," which is the third sub-dimension, were found to be $\alpha=0.885$ and $\alpha=0.839$, respectively.

Finally, when all items (15 items) were analyzed together, the reliability coefficient for the Organizational Silence Scale (Cronbach's alpha) was found to be $\alpha=0.819$. This value shows that the reliability of the overall scale is very high. The item analyses conducted for the Organization Silence Scale and its sub-dimensions showed that the reliability level of the scale and its sub-dimensions was satisfactory for this study.

2.4. Data Analysis

SPSS statistical package software was used in analyzing and assessing the study findings. The data collected were analyzed statistically for the purposes of the study, using the frequency and percentage calculations to determine the sample group. The t-test, which is a parametric test, was used for dual groups. At the same time, the one-way analysis of variance



(ANOVA), which is also a parametric test, and the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test were used for three or more groups to investigate whether the levels of perceived organizational silence varied by demographic variables. In all statistical calculations, the level of significance was considered to be .05, and the results were assessed accordingly.

3. FINDINGS

This section includes the findings and interpretation of the study data.

3.1. Findings and Interpretation for the First Subproblem

The descriptive statistics on the organizational silence perceived by vocational high school teachers are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics results of the level of organizational silence perceived by vocational high school teachers (N=323)

Dimensions of Organizational Silence	\bar{x}	sd	Level
Organizational silence (General)	2.56	0.57	Low
Acquiescent silence	2.14	0.73	Low
Defensive silence	2.04	0.83	Low
Prosocial silence	3.48	0.97	High

Table 3 summarizes the level of organizational silence perceived by the vocational high school teachers included in the study. Accordingly, the level of organizational silence perceived by vocational high school teachers was generally found to be "low" ($\bar{x}=2.56$). In this study, the levels of acquiescent silence and defensive silence of vocational high school teachers were also found to be "low" [$\bar{x}=2.14$) and ($\bar{x}=2.04$)], respectively, while the level of prosocial silence ($\bar{x}=3.48$) was found to be "high."

3.2. Findings and Interpretation for the Second Subproblem

Whether there was a significant difference between the levels of organizational silence perceived by vocational high school teachers by the variable of gender was tested by the t-test, the results of which are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Results of the t-test showing the variance of the organizational silence perceived by vocational high school teachers by the variable of gender (N=323)

Dimension/Scale	Gender	Descriptive Statis.			t-test		
		n	\bar{x}	sd	t	sd	p
Organizational silence (General)	Female	170	2.59	0.57	1.22	321	0.223
	Male	153	2.51	0.58			
Acquiescent silence	Female	170	2.14	0.71	0.07	321	0.948
	Male	153	2.15	0.75			
Defensive silence	Female	170	2.09	0.83	0.95	321	0.345
	Male	153	2.00	0.82			
Prosocial silence	Female	170	3.55	0.94	1.42	321	0.158
	Male	153	3.40	0.99			



As seen in Table 4, no significant difference was found between the levels of organizational silence [$t(321)=1.22$; $p>.05$] and its sub-dimensions of acquiescent silence [$t(321)=0.07$; $p>.05$], defensive silence [$t(321)=0.95$; $p>.05$], and prosocial silence [$t(321)=1.42$; $p>.05$], as perceived by vocational high school teachers according to gender.

Whether there was a significant difference between the levels of organizational silence perceived by vocational high school teachers by the variable of age was tested by the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test, the results of which are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Results of the Kruskal-Wallis test showing the variance of the organizational silence perceived by vocational high school teachers by the variable of age (N=323)

Dimension/Scale	Age	Descriptive Statist.		Kruskal-Wallis test			M-W test
		n	Seq. Mean	X ²	sd	p	
Organizational Silence (General)	Age of 24 to 29 (1)	78	185.60	9.20	3	0.027*	1 and 4
	Age of 30 to 39 (2)	142	161.15				
	Age of 40 to 49 (3)	84	163.58				
	Age of 50 ≥ (4)	19	141.16				
Acquiescent silence	Age of 24 to 29 (1)	78	187.60	8.55	3	0.036*	1 and 4
	Age of 30 to 39 (2)	142	157.19				
	Age of 40 to 49 (3)	84	159.50				
	Age of 50 ≥ (4)	19	146.92				
Defensive silence	Age of 24 to 29 (1)	78	175.05	4.25	3	0.236	-
	Age of 30 to 39 (2)	142	165.05				
	Age of 40 to 49 (3)	84	146.23				
	Age of 50 ≥ (4)	19	155.34				
Prosocial silence	Age of 24 to 29 (1)	78	177.60	4.92	3	0.178	-
	Age of 30 to 39 (2)	142	154.96				
	Age of 40 to 49 (3)	84	153.96				
	Age of 50 ≥ (4)	19	186.11				

As shown in Table 5, it was found that the level of the general organizational silence varied by the age of vocational high school teachers [$X^2(3)=9.20$; $p<.05$] and that the level of the general organizational silence of the vocational high school teachers in the age group of 24 to 29 years (mean rank =185.60) was found to be higher than that of the vocational high school teachers in the age group of 50 years and above (mean rank=141.16).

No significant difference was revealed between the perceived level of defensive silence [$X^2(3)=4.25$; $p>.05$] and prosocial silence [$X^2(3)=4.92$; $p>.05$]. However, a significant difference was identified between the levels of acquiescent silence by the age of vocational school teachers [$X^2(3)=8.55$; $p<.05$]. The post-hoc Mann-Whitney test revealed that the level of acquiescent silence of the vocational school teachers in the age group of 24 to 29 years (mean rank =187.60) was higher than that of the teachers in the age group of 50 years and above (mean rank =146.92).

Whether there was a significant difference between the levels of organizational silence perceived by vocational high school teachers by the variable of educational level was tested by the t-test, the results of which are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Results of the t-test showing the variance of the organizational silence perceived by vocational high school teachers by the variable of educational level (N=323)

Dimension/ Scale	Educational Level	Descriptive Statis.			t-test		
		n	\bar{X}	sd	t	sd	p
Organizational silence (General)	Bachelor's Degree	247	2.58	0.57	1.32	321	0.188
	Postgraduate	76	2.48	0.57			
Acquiescent silence	Bachelor's Degree	247	2.16	0.72	0.61	321	0.540
	Postgraduate	76	2.10	0.75			
Defensive silence	Bachelor's Degree	247	2.14	0.84	2.18	321	0.039*
	Postgraduate	76	1.85	0.78			
Prosocial silence	Bachelor's Degree	247	3.49	0.96	0.36	321	0.716
	Postgraduate	76	3.44	1.00			

As observed in Table 6, no significant difference was found between the levels of organizational silence [$t(321)=1.32$; $p>.05$] and its sub-dimensions of acquiescent silence [$t(321)=0.61$; $p>.05$] and defensive silence [$t(321)=0.36$; $p>.05$] by the personal attainment of vocational high school teachers according to educational level. However, a significant difference was found between the levels of defensive silence of vocational high school teachers holding a bachelor's degree and postgraduate degree, which was in favor of teachers holding a bachelor's degree [$t(321)=2.18$; $p<.05$]. The analysis of the mean scores of educational levels showed that teachers holding a bachelor's degree ($\bar{X}=2.14$) had a higher level of defensive silence than teachers holding postgraduate degrees ($\bar{X}=1.85$).

Whether there was a significant difference between the levels of organizational silence perceived by vocational high school teachers by the variable of professional seniority was tested by the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test, the results of which are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Results of the Kruskal-Wallis test showing the variance of the organizational silence perceived by vocational high school teachers by the variable of professional seniority (N=323)

Dimension /Scale	Professional Seniority	Descriptive Statis.		Kruskal-Wallis test		
		n	Seq. Mean	X ²	sd	p
Organizational Silence (General)	0 to 5 years	106	171.70	1.95	4	0.745
	6 to 10 years	96	160.05			
	11 to 15 years	37	157.26			
	16 to 20 years	39	156.74			
	21 years and above	45	151.76			
Acquiescent silence	0 to 5 years	106	170.21	1.68	4	0.795
	6 to 10 years	96	159.76			
	11 to 15 years	37	160.70			
	16 to 20 years	39	160.46			



	21 years and above	45	149.83			
Defensive silence	0 to 5 years	106	169.08	2.32	4	0.678
	6 to 10 years	96	166.51			
	11 to 15 years	37	148.03			
	16 to 20 years	39	153.76			
	21 years and above	45	154.32			
Prosocial silence	0 to 5 years	106	166.57	4.10	4	0.392
	6 to 10 years	96	150.06			
	11 to 15 years	37	159.26			
	16 to 20 years	39	158.06			
	21 years and above	45	182.38			

As seen in Table 7, no significant difference was found between the levels of organizational silence [$X^2(4)=1.95$; $p>.05$] and its sub-dimensions of acquiescent silence [$X^2(4)=1.68$; $p>.05$], defensive silence [$X^2(4)=2.32$; $p>.05$], and prosocial silence [$X^2(4)=4.10$; $p>.05$], as perceived by vocational high school teachers according to professional seniority.

Whether there was a significant difference between the levels of organizational silence perceived by vocational high school teachers by the variable of subject was tested by the parametric one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), the results of which are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Results of the ANOVA test showing the variance of the organizational silence perceived by vocational high school teachers by the variable of subject (N=323)

Dimension/Scale	Subject	Descriptive Statis.			ANOVA	
		n	\bar{x}	sd	F	p
Organizational Silence (General)	Non-Math or Sciences	107	2.58	0.55	0.19	0.826
	Math/Sciences	74	2.53	0.42		
	Profession	142	2.55	0.66		
Acquiescent silence	Non-Math or Sciences	107	2.20	0.68	0.58	0.563
	Math/Sciences	74	2.15	0.68		
	Profession	142	2.10	0.79		
Defensive silence	Non-Math or Sciences	107	2.08	0.86	0.79	0.455
	Math/Sciences	74	2.12	0.70		
	Profession	142	1.98	0.86		
Prosocial silence	Non-Math or Sciences	107	3.46	0.96	2.01	0.136
	Math/Sciences	74	3.31	0.83		
	Profession	142	3.58	1.03		

As observed from Table 8, no significant difference was found between the levels of organizational silence [$F(2;320)=0.19$; $p>0.05$] and its sub-dimensions of acquiescent silence [$F(2;320)=0.58$; $p>0.05$], defensive silence [$F(2;320)=0.79$; $p>0.05$], and prosocial silence [$F(2;320)=2.01$; $p>0.05$], as perceived by vocational high school teachers according to subject.

Whether there was a significant difference between the levels of organizational silence perceived by vocational high school teachers by the variable of union membership was investigated by the t-test, the results of which are presented in Table 9.



Table 9: Results of the t-test showing the variance of the organizational silence perceived by vocational high school teachers by the variable of union membership (N=323)

Dimension/Scale	Union Membership	Descriptive Statis.			t-test		
		n	\bar{x}	sd	t	sd	p
Organizational Silence (General)	Yes	230	2.53	0.59	1.40	321	0.162
	No	93	2.63	0.53			
Acquiescent silence	Yes	230	2.12	0.75	1.07	321	0.287
	No	93	2.21	0.68			
Defensive silence	Yes	230	2.04	0.84	0.04	321	0.970
	No	93	2.05	0.80			
Prosocial silence	Yes	230	3.40	1.01	2.06	321	0.044*
	No	93	3.64	0.84			

As seen from Table 19, no significant difference was found between the levels of organizational silence [t(321)=1.40; p>.05] and its sub-dimensions of acquiescent silence [t(321)=1.07; p>.05] and defensive silence [t(321)=0.04; p>.05] perceived by vocational high school teachers according to union membership. However, a significant difference was determined between the levels of prosocial silence of vocational high school teachers who were union members and those who were not, which was in favor of teachers who were union members [t(321)=2.06; p<.05]. The analysis of the mean score related to union membership shows that the level of prosocial silence of teachers who are not union members (\bar{x} =3.64) is higher in comparison with those who are union members (\bar{x} =3.40).

4. CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, AND SUGGESTIONS

The level of the general organizational silence perceived by vocational high school teachers was found to be "low." Afşar (2013), Karabağ Köse (2014), and Kolay (2012) found low levels of organizational silence in their studies. In the present study, the levels of acquiescent and defensive silence of vocational high school teachers were "low," while the level of prosocial silence was found to be "high".

According to these results, it can be claimed that teachers exhibit the behavior of silence for protection purposes and choose to keep silent to protect their organization and colleagues. In their study conducted on research fellows, Kutlay (2012) found a high level of silence in the dimension of prosocial silence, while they concluded that the level of silence was high in the dimensions of acquiescent and defensive silence.

According to Yanık (2012), the mean score of prosocial silence is higher than those of the other sub-dimensions. When the findings obtained from the study are compared to those obtained from the previous studies, it is observed in parallel to the findings of this study that

employees do not keep silent much with the low level of perceived organizational silence (Oruç, 2013; Bildik, 2009).

This can be considered favorable. It is not wrong to claim that a democratic environment is attempted to be created in organizations, and everybody expresses their opinions freely. On the other hand, Milliken and Morrison (2003) emphasized that it should be determined well when the tendency to keep silent is functional and when it is dysfunctional or harmful, by indicating that the freedom of individuals in an organization to such an extent that they express their opinions randomly may create an extremely chaotic environment.

In accordance with the findings of the study, the perceived level of organizational silence is low in schools where vocational high school teachers are employed. In other words, teachers express their opinions, suggestions, and problems at a high level. Therefore, voice diversity, which may create chaos, as emphasized by Milliken and Morrison (2003), in vocational high schools, can be mentioned.

No significant difference was determined in the levels of organizational silence of vocational high school teachers according to gender. In other words, it can be argued that the variable of gender is not a differential variable for organizational silence. According to Bayram (2010), Kılıçlar and Harbalıoğlu (2014), Kahveci and Demirtaş (2013), Özdemir and Sarıoğlu Uğur (2013), Taşkiran (2010), Sezgin Nartgün and Kartal (2013), Ruçlar (2013), Alparslan (2010), Kaygın and Atay (2014), and Yanık (2012), no significant difference was revealed in the level of organizational silence in terms of the variable of gender. The results of the study support these findings.

It was found that the general levels of organizational silence of vocational high school teachers varied by age. Moreover, vocational high school teachers at the age of 24 to 29 had a higher level of organizational silence than teachers at the age of 50 years and above. According to Bayram (2010), Ruçlar (2013), and Kutlay (2012), research fellows with a lower age average exhibit more organizational silence than those with a higher age average. No significant difference was found between their perceptions of defensive silence and prosocial silence.

However, a significant difference was identified between the levels of acquiescent silence according to the age of vocational school teachers. The level of acquiescent silence of teachers at the age of 24 to 29 years is much higher than that of teachers at the age of 50 years and over. Afşar (2013) and Bayram (2010) stated that the young age group of 20 to 30 years

exhibits more silence behaviors in general, indicating that this age group exhibits a higher level of silence, particularly on issues such as administrative problems and employee performance.

This finding implies that the age group of 24 to 29 years is more affected by inner dissatisfaction, stress and alarming conditions, unjust and authoritarian attitudes of administrators, by choosing to keep silent instead of speaking out in difficult situations and keep even more silent on matters in which they have insufficient knowledge and experience.

Furthermore, it can be asserted that teachers believe that they will be regarded as a troublemaker and grievant due to their reactions to events and conditions. The results are supported by the findings obtained from the study conducted on teaching assistants in the sub-dimensions of work-related issues and the lack of experience by Ruçlar (2013) and the findings acquired from the study carried out by Çakıcı (2008).

No significant difference was revealed in the levels of organizational silence of vocational high school teachers by educational attainment. According to Ruçlar (2013) and Yanık (2012), no significant difference was determined in the level of organizational silence for the variable of educational attainment.

However, a significant difference was found between the levels of defensive silence of vocational high school teachers with a bachelor's degree and postgraduate degrees, which was in favor of teachers with a bachelor's degree. The analysis of the mean scores of educational attainment showed that teachers holding a bachelor's degree had a higher level of defensive silence than teachers holding postgraduate degrees.

It can be claimed that vocational high school teachers in the bachelor's degree group make a risk analysis for inconveniences, which may be caused by their opinions on the matters about which they will speak out. Thus, they get the idea that speaking out may result in unfavorable outcomes. In other words, it can be argued that vocational high school teachers in the postgraduate group are more successful in self-expression.

No significant difference was determined in the levels of organizational silence of vocational high school teachers according to professional seniority. The results show that all sub-dimensions of the scale used are perceived similarly by the groups of seniority. In other words, it can be claimed that the variable of professional seniority is not a differential variable for organizational silence. According to Özdemir and Sarioğlu Uğur (2013), Kahveci (2010), Kahveci and Demirtaş (2013), Sarıkaya (2013), Sezgin Nartgün and Kartal (2013), Koray

(2013), no significant difference is found in the level of organizational silence in terms of the variable of seniority.

No significant difference was revealed in the levels of organizational silence of vocational high school teachers according to the field of study. The levels of organizational silence of vocational high school teachers having different subjects are similar. In other words, it can be argued that the variable of subject is not a differential variable for organizational silence.

No significant difference was identified in the levels of organizational silence of vocational high school teachers according to union membership. In other words, it can be claimed that the variable of union membership is not a differential variable for organizational silence. However, a significant difference was found between the levels of prosocial silence of vocational high school teachers who were union members and those who were not, which was in favor of teachers who were not union members.

The analysis of the mean score related to union membership shows that the level of prosocial silence of teachers who are not union members is higher than that of teachers who are union members. It can be asserted that vocational high school teachers withhold their ideas, information, or opinions about the job they perform to benefit other people or the organization based on feelings of altruism and cooperation.

The following suggestions can be made in line with the findings obtained from this study conducted to determine the level of the organizational silence perceived by teachers and whether it varies depending on different variables.

Suggestions for research

- The level of the general organizational silence perceived by vocational high school teachers was found to be "low." The levels of acquiescent and defensive silence of vocational high school teachers were "low," while the level of prosocial silence was found to be "high." It is observed that teachers keep silent to protect the interests of their schools or the social circle in their school. The personal and organizational impacts of this may be investigated. Advantages and disadvantages for an individual and the organization may be revealed.
- It was observed that the levels of the general organization silence and acquiescent silence of vocational high school teachers at the age of 24 to 29 were higher than



those of older teachers. School administrators can treat younger teachers in a more sensitive manner. Furthermore, more orientation may be provided to the teachers in this group.

- Suggestions for researchers
- The subject of the study can be applied to teachers serving at different levels of education in public and private schools.
- The study can be conducted in schools in cities and districts with different social, economic, and cultural conditions to make a comparison.
- The study may be carried out using a mixed method.

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