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The Predictive Relationship between Organizational Communication and Climate in Universities

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to investigate the predictive relationship between communication and climate in universities. The research was designed in a descriptive survey model. The data were collected from 776 faculty from Turkish public universities by using Organizational Communication and Organizational Climate scales. After detecting the normal distributions for data set, descriptive, correlation and regression analyses were performed. The perceptions of faculty about communication and climate in their universities were found at a medium level. In addition, there is a strong relation between communication and climate, and organizational communication could explain %65 of faculty's organizational climate perceptions. According to these findings, the quality of communication is a powerful factor which influences faculty's perceptions about general atmosphere in their universities. As a result, to generate more favorable atmosphere in their organizations, university managers should operate different formal and informal communication channels to enhance positive collegial interactions among academic staff.

Keywords: Higher education, University, Faculty, Organizational communication, Organizational climate

Introduction

Human beings as a part of community have a special skill to create a better personal understanding of themselves and their environment, to establish harmonious relations with others and to benefit from the knowledge which is mankind's heritage. This skill is called 'Human's Communication Power' and communication is described as sharing emotions, ideas and information between at least two people using different tools and methods (Keskin-Vural, 2012; Harris & Nelson, 2008). According to this definition, communication has some core elements, and these are *Sender*, *Message*, *Coding*, *Channel*, *Receiver* and *Feedback* (Hoy & Miskel, 2010; Yüksel, 2013). In this perspective, organizations such as institutions, companies, foundations, clubs, parties, hospitals and schools are established by people to reach their common goals, so they

Discussion and Conclusion

In this research, the perception levels of faculty about organizational communication and organizational climate in Turkish public universities were explored. In addition, the correlations between communication and climate in universities were examined. Furthermore, the predictive power of organizational communication on faculty's organizational climate perceptions was investigated. Then, the results related to faculty's opinions about communication and climate in universities, which are in the order of the research questions, are discussed below.

The communication systems in Turkish public universities are not so effective as much as expected to enrich interaction among staff formally and informally, to facilitate quick and multi-way communication especially with top management and to provide alternative channels to obtain faculty's feedback and suggestions about organizational policies and practices. This insufficiency of organizational communication in universities may be arisen by varied factors because the quality of communication in universities is affected by many variables like communication systems, managers' communication skills, collegial interactions, and clear vision and mission statements navigating internal and external relations, and the efficiency of communication in universities is needed to be improved by establishing new communication channels as well as evolving existing ones (Beytekin & Arslan, 2013; Gizir & Simsek, 2005). In this regard, the organizational communication in universities may be empowered by establishing different formal and informal communication channels such as *departmental, faculty and institutional level web-site announcements*, *e-mail groups*, *bulletins*, *internal telecommunication systems*, *voice-message systems*, *regular committee meetings*, *online official reports*, *formal research groups*, *disciplinary faculty meetings*, *social activities*, *celebration ceremonies* and *sportive competitions*.

The general atmosphere in Turkish public universities is not highly favorable in terms of providing for faculty desired work environments because of insufficient support from management, heavy academic expectations, inadequate institutional infrastructure, less appreciation for achievements, limited participation in decision-making, restricted interactions among staff and more dictating management approaches. This result can be arisen by the combination of some factors such as valuing faculty's successes, respecting their personalities, their interactions with administrators, academic development opportunities, key personal targets, performance review policies and fairness of promotion/reward system, and universities have several weaknesses in these aspects according to faculty's expectations towards an ideal work environment (Arabacı, 2011; Balcı-Bucak, 2002; McMurray & Scott, 2013). Therefore, university management might strengthen collegiality, transparency and fairness in organizational operations to contribute positively to the organizational climate by forming *clear*

organizational goals, *reasonable individual performance targets*, *apparent performance evaluation criteria*, *different facilities/resources to support academics*, *comprehensive reward systems*, *objective promotion process*, *official supervision operations*, *collegial discussion bodies* and *self-assessment tools*.

Organizational climate in universities has strong associations with organizational communication, owing to the reflection of the quality of communication in interactions among staff, quick access to top management, providing feedback about institutional operations and participating in decision-making. In addition, organizational communication is a powerful predictor for faculty's organizational climate perceptions. Based on these results, it can be claimed that organizational climate is a broader concept which includes the positiveness of interpersonal relations among staff and the functionality of information gathering/spreading systems, insomuch that organizational communication should be accepted as a dimension of organizational climate in universities (Alipour, 2011; Arabacı, 2011; Balcı-Bucak, 2002; Kılınç-Ergülen, 2011; Mullins, 2007). Accordingly, various policies and practices such as *organizing official research centers by partnership of different departments*, *giving priority for cooperative studies in fund options*, *rewarding co-authorship by honoring certifications*, *appreciation columns in institutional newsletters for faculty's scholarly achievements*, *arranging free-chat activities for emotional sharing* and *organizing collegial meetings to discuss ongoing processes freely* can be applied in universities to maintain collegial work environment features. Moreover, different communications channels like *online recommendation delivery system about institutional practices*, *free attendance meeting related to institutional policies*, *opinion indication and voting platforms on institutional web domains for involving decision-making processes*, *regular staff well-being surveys both in department and institutional level*, *online message system to reach top level administrators* and *academic discussion forums on intranet systems* might be operated to generate more participative atmosphere in universities.

Moreover, the researchers readily admit that it requires further study, conducted by using various research methods in different sample groups, to explore the influence of academics' personal/professional characteristics on their perceptions about the quality of communication in their institutions. It is also possible to ask how different institutional specifications of universities effect academics' organizational climate perceptions. It is the researchers' next task to address these questions.

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