Organizational Cynicism and School Administrators' Strategies to Cope with Teachers' Cynicism

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Abstract

The concept of cynicism and its theoretical foundations, the factors that reveal cynicism, the effects of cynicism, and the strategies that school administrators should implement against teachers who experience cynicism are discussed in this study. The study is a review. Cynicism is the insecure, dissatisfied negative feelings that individuals experience towards their job, organization and environment. It encompasses a pessimistic, cynical and indifferent attitude towards the organization. Among the organizational factors that cause employees in organizations to experience organizational cynicism; Political behaviors in organizations, perceptions of organizational injustice, and a sense of lacking support in the organization are the main ones. Among the effects of organizational cynicism, a decrease in organizational performance, an increase in absenteeism, burnout, reluctance to engage in proactive activities, reluctance, a lack of communication and respect with the environment, and decreased trust in the organization and management can be counted. There may also be teachers who experience cynicism in the school organization. It may be important for school administrators to identify teachers who experience cynicism and to use appropriate strategies for them in reducing cynicism. These strategies include creating a sense of belonging, acting ethically, and trying to increase organizational commitment.

Keywords: Cynicism, organizational cynicism, teacher, school administrator, strategy.

Introduction

It is a known fact that the pandemic has affected the whole world. Because the concept of work and life in people is different. It can be said that the economic crisis experienced after the pandemic causes pressure and stress on individuals both in social life, business life and organizational life, and this is experienced by everyone. However, it has been observed that sometimes people experience situations such as pessimism, indifference, cynical and destructive critical attitudes, withdrawal, and a decrease in belief in the organization and life. This situation points to the concept of cynicism.

Cynicism in the Dictionary of Turkish Language Association (2023), Antisthenes's doctrine, which argues that the people can achieve virtue and happiness by himself, by getting rid of all needs without being attached to any value, is referred to as "Kinism". There are two understandings of the origin of the name cynicism. According to an understanding, this name is derived from the name of "Kynosarges Gymnasion" where the school was founded. It is derived from "Kyon" the Greek word, meaning dog. These people, who do not obey any social rules, go around in a messy disguise, and despise civilization (Hançerlioğlu, 1970). Cynicism is based on a philosophical understanding called "Cynics" dating back to 450 BC and is known for its most famous representative, Diogenes of Sinop. (Branham, 1994). Cynicism is a state of discontent and distrust, along with negative emotions such as indifference and disrespect towards others (Brandes, 1997).

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Organizational cynicism is a complex cognitive, behavioral, and affective attitude against organizations (Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003; Steinmüller, 2014). Organizational cynicism against one's organization; a belief that the organization lacks honesty, negative influence against one's organization, and a tendency to demean and critical behavior towards the organization consistent with one's own beliefs (Dean, et al., 1998). In this study, first of all, the concept of cynicism and its theoretical foundations were examined, then the factors that formed cynicism, the effects of cynicism, and finally the strategies of school administrators to cope with organizational cynicism were explained.

Cynicism and Its Theoretical Foundations

Cynicism; negative behaviors hidden in the principles of honesty, sincerity, and justice. It is an attitude characterized by criticism, ridicule, indifference, despair, and disappointment. It is also related to attitudes of contempt, disgust, disrespect, and distrust towards others (Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Brandes, 1997; Dean, et al., 1998). The first study on this concept was done on police officers and Niederhoffer (1967) was the first researcher to do research on organizational cynicism (Hickman, 2008).

When the theoretical foundations of cynicism are examined, it is seen that it is based on several theories. First of all, it can be said that it is based on Vroom's (1964) Expectation Theory. According to this theory, the individual should believe that they will win some rewards as a result of the efforts and the works; the individual should desire the rewards that will be given to their as a result of his success, in other words, the rewards; it should have a meaning and value for them, and the individual should believe that they can achieve the expected success (Eren, 2004).

Secondly, it is based on the Attribution Theory, by Weiner (1985), the reasons for an individual's success or failure depend on a number of factors. These are perceived effort, luck, and job difficulty. Individuals have feelings and attributions such as hope, anger, sympathy in the face of events. Adverse events cause the individual to blame the organization and adopt an attitude toward it. Eventually it is normal for the individual to follow a cynical attitude towards his organization (Eaton, 2000; James, 2005).

Thirdly, it is based on the Social Change Theory, by Blau (1964), the intertwining of the employee-organization relationship is a change of mutual support. When employees enter their organizations, they enter into a social exchange agreement. That is, people will try to achieve the goals of their organizations and work; it will provide them with the necessary conditions in the organization and eventually reward the employees. As a result of this exchange, a relationship of social change emerges (Baldwin, 1978).

Factors Revealing Organizational Cynicism

Political behaviors in organizations, perceptions of organizational injustice, feeling unsupported, mobbing, and type of power used shuch asmany variables by the manager in the organization can cause he organizational cynicism (Toytok & L. Uçar, 2018; Toytok & A. Uçar, 2018). These factors are described below.

Political Behaviors in Organizations. Political behaviors include individual and group movements, business behaviors, decision making, distribution of resources, etc. in organizations. It affects the functioning of organizational activities. Political activities in organizations to a kind of rule-based games (Kacmar & Baron, 1999). According to James (2005), treason, using excess resources, monetary affairs, applying private services, etc. There are so many negative things. According to Cropanzano, et al. (1997), they state that the perception of organizational policy does not reflect positively on employees and weakens relations among employees. Employees' thinking about political perceptions brings individuals to the level of cynicism (Gezeroğlu & Akyavuz, 2021).

Organizational Injustice Perceptions. Employees in organizations are likely to experience emotions such as anger and irritability (Efeoğlu & İplik, 2011) when they feel that the management is biased and unfair in organizational decisions. Individuals who perceive injustice in the organization become skeptical, disappointed and all these negative feelings lead the individual to negative feelings (Hoy & Tarter, 2004).

Feeling Unsupported in the Organization. The fact that employees in an organization do not perceive that they are supported, and that there is a lack of trust, causes negative feelings (Akın, 2015; Tayfun & Çatır, 2014). In fact, organizational cynicism leads employees to negativism, pessimism, sarcasm, critical attitudes, negative beliefs and hurtful behaviors (Özler, et al., 2010; Özler & Atalay, 2011).

Effects of Organizational Cynicism

When organizational cynicism is examined, its negative effects on organizations; decrease in organizational commitment, job dissatisfaction (Leung, et al., 2010; Turner & Valentine, 2001; Türköz, et al., 2013), increase in organizational distrust, non-compliance with rules, increase in negative attitudes, decrease in motivation (Polatcan, 2012; Stavrova & Ehlebracht, 2016), increase in dismissal rates, organizational downsizing, turnover rates, suspicion of the organization, and work alienation (Sağır & Oğuz, 2012), decrease in organizational performance, increase in absenteeism, increase in burnout, increase in organizational. It also leads to increase in humiliation, lack of communication and respect and low morale (Kalagan, 2009).

There are also consequences such as increased distrust and contempt for the organization, alienation, distanced behavior, and weakening of organizational relations (Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003). Eren (2004) states that individuals with psychological dissatisfaction engage in aggressive behaviors. Situations such as self-confidence, letting go, hopelessness and discouragement can be seen. Dissatisfied employees run away from work and seek ways to quit their job as much as possible and escape to another job (Özkalp & Kırel, 2001).

Job dissatisfaction of the individual directly affects the job and organization. It is also a situation that reduces the organizational control of managers (Firoozi, et al., 2016). As in other organizations, cynicism can be experienced in the school organization together with the situations mentioned above. This attitude can be prevented by school administrators managing the school organization using various strategies.
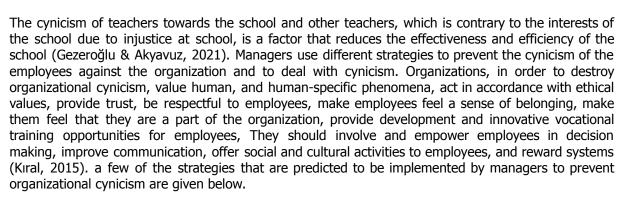
School Administrators' Strategies for Coping with Organizational Cynicism

It is necessary for schools, which are educational organizations, to work in collaboration and harmony in order to be effective and productive, to realize the aims of education. This is related to the quality of relations within the school (Kıral, 2015). Managers have a big duty in creating trust among personnel (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Strong relationships with trust in schools; It constitutes the basis of development in the school (Hoy & Tarter, 2004).

The dominance of organizational trust in the school has a positive effect on teachers' professional effectiveness and success (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). The teachers' disbelief in the decisions taken in the organization, the work and procedures done at the school, their lack of confidence at the school, and the view that the administrators do not reflect their real characters' reveal cynicism, which is a negative attitude towards the organization (Helvacı & Çetin, 2012).

Due to organizational cynicism; (1) Person may feel that striving and making attempts to improve his/her school is not considered important by other staff. (2) Person may stop making suggestions to improve his/her school. (3) Person may think that the suggestions to improve the quality of his school are not taken seriously. (4) Person may think that his efforts to improve their school are not known by anyone. (5) It may feel that all teachers are not doing their best to improve the school they work at. (6) It may be thought that as a result of the activities carried out, everyone is not treated fairly and therefore, an undeserving person or behavior will be respected. (7) Person may not believe that the activities at school will get better. (8) Person may not be hopeful about the future of their school (Kalagan & Güzeller, 2010).

Teachers' attitudes towards school and school management is an important factor in the effective functioning of schools (Sağır & Oğuz, 2012). The fact that teachers have negative feelings towards the school and exhibit humiliating and critical behaviors towards the school determines the teachers' perceptions of organizational cynicism. One of the most important sources of conflicts and unrest within the organization is the perception of injustice, which is an important factor in the development of cynical attitudes towards the organization (Kalagan & Güzeller, 2010).

The cynicism of teachers towards the school and other teachers, which is contrary to the interests of the school due to injustice at school, is a factor that reduces the effectiveness and efficiency of the school (Gezeroğlu & Akyavuz, 2021). Managers use different strategies to prevent the cynicism of the employees against the organization and to deal with cynicism. Organizations, in order to destroy organizational cynicism, value human, and human-specific phenomena, act in accordance with ethical values, provide trust, be respectful to employees, make employees feel a sense of belonging, make them feel that they are a part of the organization, provide development and innovative vocational training opportunities for employees, They should involve and empower employees in decision making, improve communication, offer social and cultural activities to employees, and reward systems (Kıral, 2015). a few of the strategies that are predicted to be implemented by managers to prevent organizational cynicism are given below.

Creating a Feeling of Belonging. The sense of belonging means that the employee has a place in the organization and is accepted by other members (Blau, 2001). If the employee has a positive attitude and perceptions towards the job, the degree of belonging is high, and if he has a negative attitude, the degree of belonging is low. Dissatisfied employees often seek opportunities to change jobs or organizations, actively avoiding their current work (Güler, et al., 2020; Vatansever & Ardıç, 2022). The individual with a high degree of belonging lives more peacefully, happily, and without stress. This reflects positively on works (Karayağız, 2018). The sense of belonging that individuals experience affects the work they do and their relationships with other individuals. Managers have the main responsibilities about this sense. The fact that managers have a positive attitude and relationship towards their employees, valuing them, the sense of belonging of the employee can increase; therefore, it allows the success of the employee to increase in his job (Erdoğan, 2006).

Behaving Ethically. Ethical principles are important in guiding the behavior of the employees, guiding them, and determining the good-bad, right-wrong distinction according to universal principles, not according to the individual (Aydın, 2002). The ethical leadership behaviors exhibited by the managers (Doğan & Uğurlu, 2014) increase the trust of the employees in their organizations (Katıtaş, et al., 2022). In addition, managers should create an ethical climate in their organizations. Decisions taken in accordance with ethics increase organizational productivity (Arslan & Gül, 2022).

Trying to Increase Organizational Commitment. Organizational commitment is the individual's identification with the organization (Aslan & Terzi, 2023). Organization members are in constant interaction with each other. Organizational commitment is the willingness of employees to accept and internalize the goals and values of the organization without coercion, in line with the goals and values of the organization, for the organization to be effective and achieve success (Zeynel, 2022). Organizational commitment is handled in three ways; professional commitment; as doing the profession with love and identification with the profession; loyalty to colleagues; It can be classified as the individual's identification with other employees and their commitment to them, and job commitment can be classified as the emotion that the employee feels towards his/her job (Kıral & Suçiçeği, 2017). Managers to create organizational commitment; They must establish a mission and purpose. They should maintain their activities towards their goals, be reliable and honest, be determined, create teams, strengthen communication, and create loyalty by using their influencing and leadership skills (Kıral & Kaçar, 2016).

Used the strategies can change the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of the employee towards the organization. If managers can act the employees' needs, they can increase the works of the employees in organizational activities. It is necessary to ensure that employees can find something of themselves in the organization. In this way, the negative perspectives of the employees towards the organization can change. School administrators can also be positive for the school organization if they apply the strategies listed in order to increase the performance of teachers and reduce cynical behaviors at school.

Conclusion and Discussion

Just as there are employees who have cynicism in different organizations, teachers also tend to live cynicism in educational organizations. Similar to any organization, many factors such as the cultures, families, lifestyles, attitudes, beliefs, interests, values, and personality traits of teachers and school administrators affect their working lives in educational organizations. These can be positive as well as negative. Their attitudes' and behaviors' depends on working conditions and management style; this can reveal cynicism.

The fact that people are successful, productive, unstressful, and happy in their jobs depends on the organizational in which they and their managers work. The positive relations that the employees establish with the school management and their colleagues enable the employees to connect to and identify with their organizations with a sense of belonging. This is not always the case. The negative organizational climate in the school can lead to the alienation of the individual from the organization, to dislike the organization, to adopt a cynical attitude towards the organization, to complain about the organization towards his environment, and finally to want to leave the organization. The knowledge, skills, and experience of the school administration gain importance.

The duty of the management is to ensure the organization's continuity in alignment with its objectives, which is realized by using the human and material resources in the organization in the most efficient way (Bursalıoğlu, 2002, 6). Managers are defined as "to be fair, to be honest, to be impartial, to be responsible, to act in accordance with human rights, to be humanist, to be loyal to their organization, respectful of human rights, to love their staff, dedicated to their work and organization, to be tolerant, to behave secularly, to be frugal. They should also consider ethical principles such as "being a good person, establishing positive human relations, respecting rights and freedoms, giving the right to labor, not obeying illegal orders, giving importance to privacy and confidentiality" (Aydın, 2010). If the managers do not attach importance to ethical principles, they may encounter negative behaviors by the personnel of the organization. Negative actions, inconsistent attitudes, unfairness in their decisions, unethical behaviors of the managers in the workplace undermine the trust of the organizational personnel in the management, and despite these attitudes of the management, the belief of the organizational personnel in the integrity of the organization decreases, and they tend to display negative discourses, critical behaviors, and humiliating attitudes towards the organization. they start (Bommer, et al., 2005).

School administrators should also observe their teachers well, identify teachers who experience cynicism and act accordingly, and should create positive school climate. Teachers who cannot see the support of the administrator and experience cynicism; may not engage in any activities to improve their school, school activities, projects, etc. can avoid working on it. They may feel that their works and efforts are undervalued and neglected, and they may believe that justice is not being served (Kalagan & Güzeller, 2010). If the sense of cynicism increases in teachers, the quality of the activities in the school that the activities will be better, decrease. The efficiency of the teacher who has a cynical attitude at school also decreases (Çetin, et al., 2013).

School administrators detect cynicism in teachers; it is crucial for administrators to make teachers feel valued, to increase teacher productivity, student success, and school development. For this reason, it can be expressed as an important factor in preventing teacher cynicism that school administrators have knowledge about strategies to cope with cynicism and improve themselves in this regard.

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