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Relationship between political discrimination and dissent behaviour displayed by teachers

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The aim of this study is to find out whether there is a significant relationship between perceived political discrimination and dissent behaviour displayed by primary school teachers. This study was designed with correlational research method and survey technique was used to collect data. Primary school teachers working in Tuzla, Istanbul constitute the research population of the study. 362 teachers willing to answer the scales participated in the study. The data were collected through the Political Discrimination Scale for Teachers developed by Keskinliç-Kara and Büyüköksüz (2013) and Dissent Behaviours Scale developed by Özdemir (2013). The results have shown that the level of discrimination in administrative issues perceived by teacher is "high" and the level of discrimination in social relations "medium". The level of political discrimination perceived by teachers does not significantly differ by gender, age, seniority or duration of employment at the institution. It has been found that there is a significant positive relationship between the administrative discrimination sub-dimension of political discrimination and the latent dissent sub-dimension of organizational dissent and that discrimination in administrative issues is a low predictor of latent dissent.

Key words: Discrimination, political discrimination, organizational dissent.

INTRODUCTION

Discrimination is one of the most important problems faced by employees within the organization (Demir, 2011) and a phenomenon arising from prejudices, as a result of different treatment of employees who have the same knowledge, skills and performance (Clain and Leppel, 2001; Cüceloğlu, 2000; Elliot, 1997). The International Labour Organization (ILO) (1958) defines discrimination as "any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin". Different treatment of employees may confront us in different forms such as disregarding suitability and fairness in recruitment, career

planning, job descriptions, remuneration, rewards and penalties, the use of personnel rights, and the determination of the burden of work, and sometimes it can also take the form of giving some people more rights and privileges (Ataöv, 1996; Gül, 2006; Çetin and Özdemirci, 2013).

In the literature on discrimination, two types of discrimination are mentioned: direct and indirect. Direct discrimination means that an individual, a group or a section of society articulatedly receives unequal treatment due to language, religion, gender, political opinion, race or similar differences. Indirect discrimination refers

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to behaviour that is difficult to notice, that manifests itself through indirect forms of expression or that, although sometimes not apparently creating any problematic situation, exposes individuals or groups to discrimination in terms of its results. For this reason, direct discrimination is easier to distinguish than indirect discrimination (Doyle, 2007; Reingold and Merikle, 1988).

Although discrimination is prohibited by national and international laws and is not considered by people to be right, we face various types and forms of discrimination in organizations - gender, age, disability, race, political - (Reskin and Padavic, 2002; Baybora, 2006; Sarayönlü, 2003). National and international studies indicate that gender is the most common ground of discrimination (Asif et al., 2011). Gender discrimination is unfair behaviour applied to a person because of his/her gender (Patterson and Walcutt, 2013). There are a large number of studies on gender discrimination at work in Türkiye (Gönel et al., 2012; Özbek-Baştuğ and Çelik, 2011; Parlaktuna, 2010, Akın, 2007; İpek and Yazar, 2010; Dedeoğlu, 2009). After gender discrimination, another area of discrimination is racial discrimination. In addition to this, discrimination against the elderly, the disabled, and homosexuals is also among the extensively studied subjects. While there is a small number of studies in our country concerning political discrimination at work, another type of discrimination (Yeşiltaş et al., 2012), no study has been found concerning such discrimination in educational organizations. This may be because political discrimination is not focused on any particular group (Çetin and Özdemirci, 2013) and is prohibited by the Civil Servants Law numbered 657.

Political discrimination means unfair behaviour and attitudes faced by individuals at work as a result of their political opinions. According to ILO (2006), political discrimination is discrimination against people's opinions, including their political party membership and political, socio-political and moral attitudes. In certain cases, political discrimination may confront us in the form of granting privileges and more rights to individuals who have the same political opinion. The employees to be most affected by political discrimination in educational organizations are teachers. Discrimination to be suffered by teachers will cause their performance to fall and this will directly have a negative impact on the student and the quality of education. In addition, schools are organizations with considerable influence on society and on the individuals who constitute it. This makes it essential for all employees from the principal down to the teacher to behave in the framework of ethical principles because the behaviour that is justified by managers and teachers at school is quite likely to be justified one day in society, too (Strike, 2007).

It has been found that individuals who think they suffer discrimination at the institution where they work have lower levels of professional satisfaction and organizational commitment and loyalty than individuals who think

they do not suffer discrimination. In addition, individuals who suffer discrimination have a high level of professional exhaustion, slow career advancement and low morale, that they take less initiative and that they do not work at full performance (Gallinsky et al., 1993; Leasher and Miller, 2012; Demir, 2011; Esty et al., 1995). Differential treatment of individuals who are in equal status not only can reduce their productivity in every respect and weaken the sustainability of the organization but also, from the ethical point of view, is at variance with the criteria of justice (Fritzschke, 1997; Yamak and Topbaş, 2004; Demirel, 2011).

Organizational dissent

Dissent in organizations is a form of communication that enables feedback concerning employees' dissatisfaction, unethical practices, and practices such as innovation, change and development (Kassing, 2011). With their climate, organizations can turn this form of communication to their advantage or disadvantage. Dissent is one of the basic factors to create a democratic, effective and efficient organization (Shahinpoor and Matt, 2007). What is acceptable and desirable in organizational terms is to turn dissent to an advantage in a manner that will ensure the dynamism and creativity of the organization. However, in order to obtain such an advantage, employees need to share with management the situations and practices they oppose (Kassing, 1997, 1998).

Kassing (1998) states that employees follow three ways to show their opposing behaviour. These are articulated dissent where the issue that the employee is uneasy about and wants to be put right is clearly and constructively expressed to managers; latent dissent that arises where employees are unable to communicate their views to managers and, as a result, share the matters they oppose with other employees who feel and think as they do; and, finally, whistle blowing that arises where employees share the issue they oppose not with managers and other employees within the organization but with persons outside it.

Schools are dynamic structures where knowledge is generated, and they are also the main organizations where different ideas, and criticisms, need to be found most. In schools, teachers need a democratic climate where they can express themselves to show the difference between what is and what ought to be, to state their expectations, and to speak out about incorrect practices. Democratic environments where matters opposed by the employee can be discussed with managers have organizational benefits such as correct decision-making, the emergence of a diversity of ideas, and having a healthy communication environment (Durak, 2013) and individual benefits such as increased motivation to work, high morale (Aydın, 2000), increased self-respect and increased commitment to and

confidence in the organization (Durak, 2013).

Dissent is the basic indicator of democracy in organizations and an important factor in bringing out organizational problems, shortcomings and mistakes (Kassing, 2002). It is also an important variable for the organization to develop and rest on ethical foundations (Shahinpoor and Matt, 2007). There may be different reasons for dissent by employees, which may be listed as unacceptable behaviour towards employees, organizational change, injustice in the distribution of resources, the incompetence of managers, unethical behaviour, conflicts, and inability to participate in decision-making (Kassing and Armstrong, 2002) and discrimination against employees (Akbaba and Taydaş, 2011).

In the light of these assessments, there is a need for surveys concerning political discrimination perceived by teachers and relating such discrimination to different variables. In this context, it may be considered that there is a relationship between political discrimination perceived and dissent behaviour displayed by teachers. Organizational dissent and political discrimination are among the new subjects dealt with by the discipline of organizational behaviour, and an examination of the literature shows that there are a limited number of studies on organizational dissent. Concerning political discrimination in educational institutions, on the other hand, no studies at all have been encountered. It is believed that the results of this survey will eliminate a gap in the literature.

The primary objective of the present study is to find out whether there is a significant relationship between perceived political discrimination and dissent behaviour displayed by primary school teachers. With this aim, answers have been sought to the following questions:

1. What is the level of political discrimination perceived by teachers? Does the level of political discrimination perceived by teachers significantly differ by gender, age, seniority, or duration of work at the school?

2. Is there a significant relationship between political discrimination perceived and dissent behaviour displayed by teachers?

METHODOLOGY

This study is designed with correlational research method. Correlational research models aim at identifying the existence and/or degree of concomitant variation between two or more variables (Karasar, 2009).

Population and sample

700 teachers employed in the primary schools in Tuzla, Istanbul constitute the research population of the study. Because the research population was accessible, no sample was taken. The teachers were given information concerning the aim of the study, and data were collected from those teachers who were willing to answer the scales. Of the scales distributed, 362 returned but 346

were evaluated because 16 of the scales that returned were invalid for reasons due to marking. The 346 teachers represent 49.42% of the population. According to Balcı (1999), quoting from Anderson, this sampling rate with a 5% margin of error was considered suitable.

Out of 346 teachers 27.5% of them are men and 72.5%, women. 37.9% of the participants are in the age interval of 21 to 30; 43.9% in the age interval of 31 to 40; 16.2% in the age interval of 41 to 50; and 2% in the age interval of 51 and above. 36.1% of the participants have 1 to 5 years professional experience; 28.9% 6 to 10 years; 15% 11 to 15 years; 12.7% 16 to 20 years; and 7.2% 21 years or more. When the durations of work of the participants at the institution are examined, it is found that 76.6% have 1 to 5 years institution experience; 13.6% 6 to 10 years; 4.9% 11 to 15 years; 4.6% 16 to 20 years; and 0.3% 21 years or more. In terms of the level of education, 85.3% of the participants have a bachelor's degree; 12.7%, a postgraduate degree; and 2%, an associate degree.

Instruments

Two scales were used as the data collection instrument. The Political Discrimination Scale for Teachers (PDST) developed by Keskinç-Kara and Büyüköksüz (2013) was used to determine the level of political discrimination perceived by teachers. The PDST is a 5 point Likert scale consisting of 28 items and of 2 dimensions including Discrimination in Social Relations and Discrimination in Administrative Issues. The whole of the scale has a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .97 while the Cronbach Alpha coefficients for the sub-dimensions of the PDST are .98 and .84 for discrimination in social relations and discrimination in administrative issues, respectively.

The Dissent Behaviour Sub-Scale (ODSS), a sub-scale of the Organisational Dissent Scale developed by Özdemir (2013), was used to determine dissent behaviour displayed by teachers. The ODSS is a 17 item self-report scale designed to measure dissent behaviours displayed by teachers on a 5 point Likert scale. The ODSS consists of 3 dimensions and the Cronbach Alpha coefficients for the sub-dimensions of the scale are .87 for whistle blowing, .86 for articulated dissent and .88 for latent dissent.

Analysis of the data

Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage and arithmetic mean were used in the analysis of the data. The significance of the comparisons made between demographic variables was tested by t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Correlation and regression analysis was employed to determine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

FINDINGS

As shown in Table 1, the average points for each sub-dimension of the PDST have been divided by the number of items and turned into an average between 1 and 5 to make them comparable with each other. As a result, it has been found that the level of Discrimination in Administrative Issues perceived by teachers is "high" (\bar{X} =3.46) while the level of Discrimination in Social Relations is "medium" (\bar{X} =2.48). Based on the total points of the PDST, it has been noted that the level of political discrimination perceived by teachers is "medium" (\bar{X} =3.29).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics concerning political discrimination perceived by teachers and its sub-dimensions.

Variables	n	K	Min. Point	Max. Point	\bar{X}	\bar{X}/K	Ss
Discrimination in Administrative Issues	346	23	23.00	115.00	79.70	3.46	22.52
Discrimination in Social Relations	346	5	5.00	25.00	12.42	2.48	4.89
Political Discrimination Total	346	28	34.00	140.00	92.13	3.29	24.11

Table 2. Results of the t-test between the level of political discrimination perceived by teachers and the gender variable.

Dimensions	Gender	n	\bar{x}	Ss	Sd	t	P
Discrimination in Administrative Issues	Female	251	79.94	22.19	344	.317	.752
	Male	95	79.08	23.48			
Discrimination in Social Relations	Female	251	12.40	4.74	344	-.132	.895
	Male	95	12.48	5.29			
Political Discrimination Total	Female	251	92.35	23.61	344	.269	.788
	Male	95	91.56	25.51			

When Table 2 is examined, it is noted that the level of political discrimination perceived by teachers does not significantly differ according to the independent variable of gender [$t(344)=.269$; $p>.05$]. When the level of political discrimination perceived by teachers is examined according to the sub-dimensions of the scale, it is found that the level of discrimination in administrative issues perceived by teachers [$t(344)=.317$; $p>.05$] and discrimination in social relations [$t(344)=-.132$; $p>.05$] does not differ by the gender variable, either.

Table 3 showed there is no significant different between the levels of political discrimination perceived by teachers and the participants' age ($p>.05$). However, the age group where the perception concerning the sub-dimension of discrimination in administrative issues is the highest 41 to 50 while the participants in the age group of 51 and above represent the age group where the perception concerning the sub-dimension of discrimination in social relations is the highest.

When Table 4 is examined, it is concluded that there is no significant differentiation between the levels of political discrimination perceived by teachers and the seniority variable ($p>.05$).

When Table 5 is examined, it is concluded that there is no significant different between the levels of political discrimination perceived by teachers and the variable of seniority at the school ($p>.05$).

Table 6 includes the results of the correlation analysis showing the relationship between dissent behaviour and the PDST sub-dimensions of discrimination in social relations and discrimination in administrative issues. The results indicate that there is a positive and significant relationship at a low level ($r=.266$, $p<0.01$) between the sub-dimension of political discrimination in administrative

issues and the dissent behaviour of latent dissent. No significant relationship has been found between political discrimination in administrative issues, on one hand, and articulated dissent and whistle blowing, the other sub-dimensions of dissent behaviour, on the other. Likewise, no significant relationship has been found between the social discrimination sub-dimension of political discrimination, on one hand, and the latent dissent, articulated dissent and whistle blowing sub-dimensions of dissent behaviour, on the other.

The results of the linear regression analysis performed in order to determine the effect of perceived discrimination in administrative issues on latent dissent are presented in Table 7. It has been found that discrimination in administrative issues has an effect, even if small, on latent dissent [$R^2 = 0.023$]. It may be said that discrimination in administrative issues is a predictor of latent dissent ($F=4.728$, $p<0.05$) and predicts a small part of the variance such as 2.5%.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the relationship between political discrimination perceived and dissent behaviour displayed by teachers. Because no previous research was encountered concerning the level of political discrimination perceived by teachers, it has also been investigated whether political discrimination significantly differs by age, gender, level of education, seniority, and duration of work at the institution. Results suggested that teachers working in primary schools have a "high" level of perceived discrimination in administrative issues, one of the sub-dimensions of political discrimination, and a

Table 3. Results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) between the level of political discrimination perceived by teachers and the age variable.

Sub-dimensions	Groups	\bar{x}	sd	Source of Variation	Ss	sd	Ms	F	p
Discrimination in Administrative Issues	21-30	77.19	25.11						
	31-40	79.86	20.79	Between Groups	2361.486	3	787.162		
	41-50	84.92	19.42					1.559	.199
	51 and above	79.42	27.69	Within Groups	172660.031	342	504.854		
	Total	79.70	22.52	Total	175021.517	345			
Discrimination in Social Relations	21-30	12.01	4.44						
	31-40	12.56	5.03	Between Groups	153.971	3	51.324		
	41-50	12.48	4.91					2.166	.092
	51 and above	16.71	8.01	Within Groups	8104.722	342	23.698		
	Total	12.42	4.89	Total	8258.694	345			
Discrimination Total	21-30	89.21	26.17						
	31-40	92.52	22.79	Between Groups	2812.295	3	937.432		
	41-50	97.41	21.15					1.61	.184
	51 and above	96.14	30.90	Within Groups	197840.321	342	578.480		
	Total	92.13	24.11	Total	200652.616	345			

Table 4. Results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) between the level of political discrimination perceived by teachers and the seniority.

Sub-dimensions	Groups	\bar{x}	sd	Source of Variation	Ss	sd	Ms	F	p
Discrimination in Administrative Issues	1-5	77.72	25.18						
	6-10	80.09	21.81	Between Groups	2361.486	3	787.162		
	11-15	77.80	20.24					1.559	.199
	16-20	84.63	18.98	Within Groups	172660.031	342	504.854		
	21 and above	83.36	21.15	Total	175021.517	345			
	Total	79.70	22.52						
Discrimination in Social Relations	1-5	12.27	4.65						
	6-10	12.49	4.73	Between Groups	153.971	3	51.324		
	11-15	11.84	5.02					2.166	.092
	16-20	12.86	5.12	Within Groups	8104.722	342	23.698		
	21 and above	13.40	6.06	Total	8258.694	345			
Discrimination Total	Total	12.42	4.89						
	1-5	90.00	26.60						
	6-10	92.58	23.73	Between Groups	2812.295	3	937.432		
	11-15	89.65	21.36					1.61	.184
	16-20	97.50	19.79	Within Groups	197840.321	342	578.480		
Discrimination Total	21 and above	96.76	24.37	Total	00652.616	345			
	Total	92.13	24.11						

Table 5. Results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) between the level of political discrimination perceived by teachers and the variable of seniority at the institution.

Sub- dimensions	Groups	\bar{x}	sd	Source of variation	Ss	sd	Ms	F	p
Discrimination in Administrative Issues	1-5	78.23	23.44						
	6-10	84.46	18.09	Between Groups	2981.237	4	745.309		
	11-15	84.58	19.29					1.477	.209
	16-20	83.18	19.93	Within Groups	172040.280	341	504.517		
	21 and above	107.00							
	Total	79.70	22.52	Total	175021.517	345			
Discrimination in Social Relations	1-5	12.24	4.76						
	6-10	12.38	5.01	Between Groups	132.907	4	33.227		
	11-15	13.58	5.19					1.394	.235
	16-20	13.75	5.99	Within Groups	8125.786	341	23.829		
	21 and above	21.00							
	Total	12.42	4.89	Total	8258.694	345			
Discrimination Total	1-5	90.48	24.80						
	6-10	96.85	20.27	Between Groups	4041.046	4	1010.262		
	11-15	98.17	21.57					1.752	.138
	16-20	96.93	22.79	Within Groups	196611.569	341	576.574		
	21 and above	128.00							
	Total	92.13	24.11	Total	200652.616	345			

Table 6. Results of the correlation analysis of the relationship between political discrimination perceived and dissental behaviour displayed by teachers.

Variation	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Latent Dissent	1					
2. Whistleblowing	-.093	1				
3. Articulated Dissent	-.003	.377*	1			
4. Disc. in Social Relations	.013	-.024	-.042	1		
5. Disc. in Administrative Issues	.266*	-.072	-.007	.228*	1	
6. Discrimination Total	.251*	-.015	-.015	.416*	.980*	1

p<.05.

Table 7. Results of the regression analysis concerning the prediction of latent dissent.

	B	t	p	R ²	F	p
Regression Coefficient	15.302	11.833	0.000			
Latent Dissent	.151	2.174	0.031	0.023	4.728	0.031

p<.05.

“medium” level of perceived discrimination in social relations. This may be interpreted as meaning that school managers are not fair and ethical in their practices. Failing to accord equal treatment to equal individuals and carrying out discriminatory practices in educational

institutions is a matter that needs to be investigated from the point of values such as fairness and ethics (Fritzsche, 1997; Yamak and Topbaş, 2004; Demirel, 2011). Political discrimination is an important organizational problem that affects the professional satisfaction of teachers, their

commitment, their psychological condition and their levels of devotion, performance and exhaustion (Hopkins, 1980; Gallinsky et al., 1993; Leasher and Miller, 2012; Demir, 2011; Esty et al., 1995). Teachers who think that they suffer political discrimination may be likely to display dissent behaviour from a democratic point of view. A survey conducted by Akbaba and Taydaş (2011) has identified discrimination as one of the causes of organizational dissent but also found that there is a low positive relationship between the administrative discrimination sub-dimension of political discrimination and the latent dissent sub-dimension of organizational dissent and that discrimination in administrative affairs is a low predictor of latent dissent. In this case, one may speak of organizational silence in education organizations and of democracy, and this may be the subject of other studies.

The lack of research concerning political discrimination in Türkiye is notable. In future studies, researchers may work on issues such as the effects of political discrimination, ways of coping with discrimination, and measures to prevent political discrimination in organizations.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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