Life Satisfaction and Organizational Cynicism: How Teachers are affected

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Abstract

Life satisfaction seems to be playing a vital role in the background as we go about our lives today in this day and age, no matter what we may do for a living. We sometimes think all about what we have experienced so far throughout our life as a whole and draw some conclusions. Teachers are however, the focal points for almost every government, community or society to date. Teaching, however, is more complex and intriguing than it is thought to be by the outsiders. Negative attitudes, lack of belief and alienation from the workplace, regarded as 'organizational cynicism' overall, are most significantvariables in this context. This study examines the relationship between life satisfaction and organizational cynicism in schools. It is designed as a quantitative research and analyzes data gathered from a sample of 198 teachers working in the southeastern part of Turkey. 'The Satisfaction with Life Scale' and 'Organizational Cynicism Scale' was utilized to gather data. The study focuses on teachers' overall level of life satisfaction and organizational cynicism. Additionally, since correlational relationships were investigated, the results of the respondents indicated a negative correlation. Behavioural cynicism appears to be the most effective subscale on life satisfaction level of teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

Educational organizations are prominent and vital in any country because of the fact that they are

effective in shaping and directing the future of societies. They are formally organized,

administered and audited by governments. These organizations have a significant potential, in

terms of human, social and financial capital to influence the future. Governments seem to be

recently realizing the potential power of educational organizations as a catalyst (Moretti, 2016)

to provide functional instruments to support human development of their citizens. Educational organizations are also contexts for sustainable development, as international authorities declare its significance. As UNECE (2012) defines: "Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) promotes sustainable thinking and acting. It enables children and adults to make decisions and at the same time understand how those decisions affect future generations and the life of others."In other words, ESD opens a broader context in which all individuals should be aware of their potential and the other people around as well. It proposes a mutual life [Learning to live together] with others in the same context.

Education for Sustainable Development presents us with new methodologies, strategies, directions and implications while emphasizing a modern atmosphere of teaching and learning (Dannenberg and Grapentin, 2016:7). This approach encompasses certain competencies or qualifications for individuals to thrive, flourish and live sustainably in their social contexts. Since it aims to broaden horizons to enrich the well-being and life quality of the individuals, it is inclusive in nature and strives to enable all individuals to experience and exercise all their rights equally within all domains of life. It additionally highlights the quality of education, the qualifications of teachers, role of school administrators and even the role of learners.Governments focus on educational organizations for sustainable development; they all strive to provide support, investment and opportunities for schools, training centers, local authorities and non-governmental organizations, in order to train teachers to realize their potential and to thrive and discover future perspectives.

The Brundtland Report, commonly referred to in order to understand the term 'sustainability', conceptualizes sustainability as "…the capability to maintain at least the actual level of well-being for future generations and for the present generation's future […] without compromising

the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland, 1987, §27, p. 16)."

Although the report often and specifically focuses on natural resources – environment relationship, the social organizations and the economy stand as supporting elements for sustainability. In this context, organizational satisfaction comes to the foreground when life satisfaction of individuals is sought. If individuals are suffering from a lack / or short of job satisfaction in their workplace or organizations, toxicity appears and threatens sustainability, or well-being of future generations, in so many words. Organizational cynicism is one of those toxic factors to be lowered or controlled in order to ensure a sustainable organization. In the case of educational organizations, this issue is of paramount importance since education is an institution that formulates and nurtures the future generations, providing them new perspectives, behavior sets and knowledge.

Teachers are focal points for almost every government, community or society as they are the main agents to make the educational system or curriculumachieve their objectives in a wider sense (Pathil and Joshi, 2018). They expend energy, spend long hours planning for the courses, strive to create good rapport with their learners, use strategies to assess or guide teaching process, collaborate and coordinate with their colleagues as well as the administrators in the workplace. Performing different roles bring a lot of workload thattriggers attitudes, beliefs, moods or emotions, directly or indirectly. Since emotions are greatly influential on and relevant to the behaviours, they may drive the workforce accordingly towards the organizational objectives or emotions may hinder employees from being active, functional parts in organizations.

Life satisfaction is a very common term, usually regarded as a cognitive part of subjective well-being. It denotes overall judgments the individuals make regarding their lives (Diener, Suh,

Lucas and Smith, 1999:277; Pavot&Diener, 1993). In any organization, employees or even administrators and managers reflect on their life satisfaction (Myers and Diener, 1995:10), compare current position to what they had expected, reflect on their standards of performance and evaluate, judge performances by their own benchmarks (Diener, 1984; Petričková&Zusková, 2017) and determine their future behaviours, added effort and collaboration in their organizations.All domains and contexts are interrelated and affect overall judgment about the life. This leads us to a lively and vital reality: Life satisfaction includes all domains, both in and outside the organizations, and it is very rarely independent of other factors.

One's higher level of satisfaction in one or two domains, e.g. marriage, job, or relationships, does not necessarily prove to become a higher level of life satisfaction (Dagli&Baysal, 2017). Work is an intricate part of our modern life today, we spend almost one-third of our life at work (Warr, 2011). We have relationships with our colleagues, managers, executive managers, customers and suppliers. Within an organization, we program ourselves to meet some standards in line with our organizational goals. Life satisfaction level, in this case, appears to be one of meeting the criteria that inevitably affects the efficacy and efficiency of the organization. Happy and satisfied employees tend to be more active, eager, positive and productive within their organizations (Umme, 1999) and perform better when compared with less satisfied and cynical counterparts. Higher life satisfaction will result in better input and data for better organizations. In order to actualize national educational objectives and goals, governments and/or local authorities are required to support well-being, working conditions, social status and opportunities for self-improvement for teachers to provide better quality life conditions in general.

Current Literature presents research papers focusing on teachers' life satisfaction levels in educational organizational in diverse and/or various systems (Dagli&Baysal, 2017; Demirel,

2014; Olčar, Rijavec, & Golub, 2019; Petričková&Zusková, 2017; Shym&Korb, 2016; YukselSahin&Saridemir, 2017; Akyurek, Senol&Lesinger, 2018). Research focuses on teachers' life satisfaction and leadership style (YukselSahin&Saridemir, 2017), life goals and flow of work (Olčar, Rijavec, & Golub, 2019), job satisfaction (Avşaroğlu, Deniz&Kahraman, 2005), psychological capital level (Akyurek, Senol, &Lesinger, 2018), self-efficacy (Telef, 2011); subjective well-being (Campos, González, &Jacott, 2018), burnout (Aydemir, Diken, Yıkmış, Aksoy, &Özokçu, 2015; Çelik&Üsütner, 2018; David &Quintao, 2012; Soba, Babayiğit&Demir, 2017), conflicts at work (Erdamar&Demirel, 2016; Türker&Çelik, 2019), and stress (Hamama, Ronen, Shachar, & Rosenbaum, 2013). Findings indicate a negative correlation between conflicts, burnout, and stress and life satisfaction. That seems understandable that life satisfaction is adversely influenced by negative elements and factors to be taken into consideration while reflecting upon one's life overall. Job satisfaction is a significant domain of psychological capital, flow, and well-being that seems to be positively related to higher levels of life satisfaction. This study strives to examine and present more findings regarding how teachers' life satisfaction is affected by organizational cynicism.

It can be assumed that organizational activities and procedures are followed by all employees holding responsibilities at various levels. This is because of the nature of organizations that are comprised of and run by a lot of people. Interactions and dialogues within organizations always trigger comparisons and judgements regarding any process or procedure in the workplace. Recalling the dynamic nature of the educational organizations (Korkut& Aslan, 2016; Levent&Keser, 2016:2012), it is indisputablethat interactions with other people are very crucial and a focal point in schools. Interactions always make teachers aliveto their emotions and their emotional influenceaffects the quality of their contributions to the organizational life.

Organizational cynicism emerges at this point as a threat both for sustainability in organizations and for the life satisfaction of individuals. It is frequentlycharacterized as an influx of negative attitudes comprising anger, hopelessness, disappointment, lack of integrity, fairness and harmony, and tendency towards distrustfulness of a person, group, or the organization itself (Andersson, 1996; Dean, Brandes&Dharwadkar, 1998; Sağır&Oğuz, 2012; Helvaci& Cetin, 2012).Helvaci and Cetin (2012) proposes a definition that mostly highlightsopinions of negative perspectives towards others in the organizations. They call cynicism as 'distrust against the intentions of others and belief that respondents do not reflect their real characteristics', a definition which refers to a subtle conscious construct regarding the negative mood. Organizational cynicism literature presents various types and/or dimensions of cynicism, focusing on cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects in general (Korkut& Aslan, 2016). These dimensions are about the lack of integrity and sincerity in organizations (cognitive dimension), emotional backlash resulting in undesirable circumstances in the organization (emotional dimension) and the negative and behavioral actions against the organization (behavioral dimension). As can be inferred from these titles, organizational cynicism requires some background to be apparent; it is not a sudden phenomenon to erupt at once. Subtle, deep and unseen proofs of organizational cynicism are generally related to one's cognition and mindset first. Next comes emotional reactions and cynical employees use their emotions and mimics to indicate they are somewhat 'uncomfortable' with their colleagues, managers, procedures, climate or culture in their organizations. The final stage for organizational cynicism is about disruptive and adverse behaviours that may include criticizing people, hindering the procedures or complaining about what happens within an organization (Dean et al., 1998: 346).

Literature indicates that organizational cynicism appears to be a medium that leads employees towards negativity If an individual perceives high level of organizational cynicism, he/she

☐   starts to believe that he/she is ignored and discounted by other people,

☐   gives up expressing opinion about how to develop the organization,

☐   complains and negatively transfers what actually occurs in the organization to the outsiders,

☐   believes there is no probability to be perceived to 'be a better and efficient organization' in the future.(Korkut, 2019:95).

Organizational cynicism in educational organizations appears to be a popular subject in the literature and there are many research papers, proceedings and theses that support this view. Studies note organizational cynicism as an indicator for adverse reflections and a potential cause of undesired behaviours in the organizations. Studies examine organizational cynicism and organizational silence amidst organizational silence. (SezginNartgün&Kartal, 2013 and SezginNartgün&Kalay, 2014). Organizational opposition(Yıldız, 2013)may create work alienation (Akpolat&Oğuz, 2015 and burnout (Amasralı& Aslan, 2017).

These studies emphasize the negative and toxic nature of organizational cynicism, and highlight the positive correlation with burnout, silence, psychological contract violation and alienation, and propose implications and suggestions to downturn the disruptive results of organizational cynicism. In this context, a high level of organizational criticism may be indirectly interpreted as displaying signs of burnout, low commitment, low citizenship, alienation, loneliness, absenteeism, low job satisfactionand low life satisfaction.

This study contributes to the research base of the existing literature about teachers' life satisfaction and their perception of organizational cynicism in the Turkish context. There are

limited studies (Aslan & Yilmaz, 2013, Yim& Moses, 2016) examining the relationships between teachers' LS, job satisfaction and cynicism. The literature indicates inverse relationships between general cynicism and job satisfaction, organizational cynicism and work-related quality of life (Yasin& Khalid, 2015), providing clues that life satisfaction may also be negatively correlated with organizational cynicism. Organizational cynicism appears to be an adverse channel diminishing the efficiency of employees in organizations. This study aims to provide findings regarding teachers' Life Satisfaction and organizational cynicism, and to provide data for policymakers, local authorities and school administrators.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study, a descriptive research based on overall survey model, strives to explore correlations between life satisfaction and organizational cynicism in teachers' perceptions regarding their workplace culture. It focuses on the analysis of the present condition/s and presents findings specific to a large group of participants. Survey models are appropriate for methodologies which reflect and describes conditions 'as they exist' (Karasar, 2009: 77).

Population and Sample

Teachers working in public and private secondary schools in the central districts of Diyarbakir during 2017 - 2018 schooling year constitute the research population for this study. As the focal point of research is 'the potential correlations between' and comparison of life satisfaction and organizational cynicism regarding teacher's perceptions, both private and state schools are included in the research process.

As for the sampling methods, two sampling methods are used in this paper. Both public and private schools located in the population were clustered first. 'Cluster sampling' method was

used and researcher selected eight schools by considering the neutrality rule. As for the private

secondary schools, all schools were included in the sample and the researcher managed to reach

102 out of the 225 teachers. Table 1 shows the distribution of participants in the sample

regarding variables such as school type, gender, marital status, seniority, teaching branch and

education level.

Table 1. The demographic findings for teachers in the sample

Variables	Level	N	%
School Type	State	96	48,5
	Private	102	51,5
Gender	Female	108	54,5
	Male	90	45,5
Marital Status	Single	65	32,8
	Married	133	67,2
Seniority	1-5 years	52	26,3
	6-10 years	49	24,7
	11-15 years	44	22,2
	16-20 years	37	18,7
	21 years+	16	8,1
Teaching Branch	Classroom Teachers	44	22,2

	Branch teachers	154	77,8
Education Level	Associate degree	15	9,6
	Graduate	160	80,8
	Postgraduate	19	9,6

Data collection

This study utilizes a data collection tool, juxtaposing three parts, demographic variables, Life Satisfaction Scale, and Organizational Cynicism Scale. The first part includes demographic variables regarding school type, gender, marital status, seniority, teaching branch and education level. The second part presented "Organizational Cynicism Scale" (OCS) formerly developed by Brandes (1997) and revised and finalized by Brandes, Dharwadkar and Dean (1999). This scale was adapted to Turkish schools by Kalagan (2009). Kalagan (2009) found out Cronbach Alpha as .931 and variance explained by the factors as 78,674% for the scale in her research. The form has a total of 13 items measuring cognitive [5 items], affective[4 items], and behavioral [4 items] aspects of cynicism in organizational contexts. Brandes et al (1999) calculated Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for subscales as 0.86, 0.80 and 0.78, respectively. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for the subscales were 0.85, 0.86 and 0.78, respectively.

OCS has the three subscales focusing on cognition, affect and behavior. Cognitive items evaluate perceptions which refer to beliefs regarding the integrity, sincerity, and justice in organizations. Affective cynicism mostly reflectsthe negative emotions such as disgust, distress, hatred and anger. Items about the behavioral cynicism reflect 'visible clues and proofs' regarding a high level of organizational cynicism. Such behaviors can be evident in constant complaining,

mocking or demotivating or discouraging other employees from working in the same organization. This form was utilized as data collection tool in many prior studies in different fields and disciplines in Turkey (Altinoz, Cop and Sigindi 2011; AytemizSeymen& Bozkurt, 2018; Caz &Ikizler, 2017; Efilti, Gonen and Ozturk, 2008; Erdost et al., 2007; Guzeller&Kalagan, 2008; Kalagan, 2009; Kalagan and Guzeller, 2010; Kalay and Ograk, 2012; Tokgoz and Yilmaz, 2008; Yıldız, 2013).

The latter part included The Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS), developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin (1985) and later reviewed by Pavot an Diener (1993) as an instrument to measure overall cognitive judgments regarding life satisfaction. Life satisfaction is generally regarded as the judgmental component of the construct of subjective well-being (SWB) (Diener, 1984) and it assesses the respondents' judgements of their life as a whole. The scale is originally a 5-item 7-point Likert-type scale. This widely-used instrument was adapted to Turkish respondents by Dagli and Baysal (2016) as a 5-point scale. Regarding Exploratory Factor Analysis, KMO was found to be 0,869 and the variance explained by one-factor construct was 68,38%. Next was a Confirmatory Factor Analysis, the results indicated proof for a 'confirmed' structure [$\chi2/sd=1,17$; NFI=0,99; NNFI=1,00; CFI=1,00; and SRMR=0,019].

Data were collected by the researchers through visits to schools throughout the school year. Only volunteer participants were administered the form and it took approximately ten minutes for them to finish responding to the items.

FINDINGS and DISCUSSION

This research is an attempt to examine the relationship between life satisfaction and organizational cynicism in schools. Accordingly, a Pearson Correlation Coefficient Analysis was carried out and the findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlations between Life Satisfaction and Organizational Cynicism

	Mean	SD	Correlations				
			LIFESAT	O_CYN	Cog_CYN	Aff_CYN	Beh_CYN
LIFESAT	2,97	0,80	1				
O_CYN	2,46	0,85	-,110	1			
Cog_CYN	2,81	1,10	-,120	,894[**]	1		
Aff_CYN	1,93	1,03	-,031	,731[**]	,443[**]	1	
Beh_CYN	2,54	0,95	-,113	,827[**]	,678[**]	,398[**]	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 indicates negative correlations between both overall organizational cynicism cynicism and the subscales with the life satisfaction level. These relations appear to be insignificant and low for all variables. However, we may infer that cognitive cynicism is more effective towards decreasing life satisfaction level of teachers. As life satisfaction is regarded as the cognitive part of the construct of SWB, this finding seems noncontradictory with the literature. Cognitive cynicism seems to lower with 12% of the variance in life satisfaction level. In other words, teachers' life satisfaction level is influenced by cognitive cynicism almost four times higher than affective cynicism. This finding is in line with the conceptualization that life satisfaction is a cognitive domain under the term 'subjective well-being'. The subscale runner-up to influence life satisfaction perception is behavioural cynicism, and affective cynicism is the least effective variable on teachers' perception of life satisfaction.

Although no distinct research focuses on life satisfaction and organizational cynicism level of teachers, some researches examining job satisfaction and organizational cynicism have depended on teachers' perceptions. Yasin& Khalid (2015) present proofs to indicate that affective, cognitive, and behavioral cynicism negatively affects and lessens control at work, engagement,

general well-being and job satisfaction. Wanous, Reichers& Austin (1994) concluded that organizational cynicism is negatively correlated with commitment and job satisfaction. Employees cynical towards their organizations exhibited less enthusiasm and effort to support the organization, believed less in organizational achievement and reported a low level of quality of life at work. Okçu, Korkmaz and Uçar (2018) and Gün (2016) presented findings regarding job satisfaction level and organizational cynicism from Turkish contexts and reported that there exists a negative significant correlation between variables.

When we focus on organizational cynicism and life satisfaction, most of the findings in the literature remind and signify the negative affect, which generally subsumes a broad range of negative mood states, such as disgust, hatred, sadness, anxiety, hostility, scorn, guilt and fear (Fredrickson, 1998). Fredrickson (1998) purports that "positive emotions broaden the scope of attention, cognition and action, and provide physical, intellectual and social resources for individuals". On the contrary, regarding the negative affect, it can be inferred that negative emotions and mood may function as a hindering factor which shrinks concentration, vision and capacity to focus on possibilities, and lowers the potential to build and/or restore healthy relationships with others in organizations.

Affect, generally regarded as equal to and interchangeable with emotion and feeling in everyday conversation, is defined as a "neurophysiological state consciously accessible as a simple primitive non-reflective feeling most evident in mood and emotion but always available to consciousness" (Russell & Feldman Barrett, 2009: 104). This definition seems to accept that affect is a conscious structure and may support and intersect with emotions. Pleasure, tension, relaxation, energy, sadness or tiredness may exemplify the terms 'affect'. These phenomena present visible clues for the others around. Affective cynicism is related to emotions employers

experience when they think about or spend time in their organizations. The more productive and happier individuals feel less negatively. Thus, it may be inferred that affective cynicism will exhibit somehow 'a subtle deteriorating influence' for life satisfaction and hinder sustainability. Considering the findings presented in Table 2, we can conclude that there is no significant correlation found between affective cynicism and life satisfaction.

Cognitive cynicism, on the contrary, is regarded as a conscientious mental activity and it controls or drives individuals, in almost any domain, at home, at work, during leisure time, and in relationships. It encompasses a collection of understanding through thoughts, senses and experiences. This recollection is very active while assessing one's life satisfaction. Findings in this study reveal the highest negative correlation between cognitive cynicism and life satisfaction. This observation highlights and supports cognitive ability or potential that appears to be a major database for life satisfaction level.

Jobsatisfactionis another cognitive variant under the umbrella of job satisfaction. Literature on job satisfaction and life satisfaction appears to be in parallel with these findings. As for job satisfaction and life satisfaction levels, research by Avşaroğlu, Deniz&Kahraman (2005) concluded a positive correlation. High job satisfaction appears to be a significant indicator for a high level of life satisfaction. Aydemir, Diken, Yıkmış, Aksoy, &Özokçu (2015), David &Quintao (2012), Çelik&Üstüner (2018) and Soba, Babayiğit & Demir (2017) suggest a high level of life satisfaction will lessen burnout in organizations. Erdamar&Demirel (2016) and Türker&Çelik (2019) found that conflicts in organizations have negative effect on life satisfaction level. Similarly; Hamama, Ronen, Shachar and Rosenbaum (2013) found out a positive link between high stress level and negative affect. As stress gets higher, a negative atmosphere appears throughout the organization.

When employees working in any organization such as schools in this research context, accumulate negative perceptions and build a negative cognitive structure, they are expected to withdraw from any organizational activity, to feel alienated and lonely within organizations (Aslan &Korkut, 2019), that lowers their performance and dismisses commitment towards their colleagues, leaders and the organization itself. It is highly probable that teachers having a high level of cognitive cynicism will fail to adapt to the school context. It seems very hard for them to feel themselves as 'an active and engaged part' within organizations that would inevitably affect the rapport between teachers and students, as well as the collaboration between teachers and the quality of relationships. When we take into consideration that teachers spend about eight hours at school on weekdays, cognitively affective circumstances will inevitably trigger productivity, harmony, wholeness, efficiency and vision, which increases the positive perception of life satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

Individuals pursue jobs for better conditions, better relationships, better opportunities for self-improvement and a happier and healthier life. This seems to be a universal objective for all human beings so we can infer that life satisfaction, in this context, is the ultimate goal on Earth, for both organizations and individuals. However, life satisfaction is vulnerable to many other factors, such as socio-economic variables, the quality of relationships, and the personality of colleagues within organizations, which affect their frame of mind throughout the course of life itself. Life satisfaction appears to be the overall sum of personal judgment intricately correlated with the contextual, psychological, social and financial domains.

Organizations, or work life is where people specifically find themselves treated as 'gears to maintain their effectivity'. It can be regarded as most crucial element/s in today's modern life

cycle in societies. As the share of the organizations increase, the probability of effect increases.

This linear approach indicates that organizational factors should be taken into consideration, as

much literature emphasizes. Organizational cynicism, a negative and adverse belief or attitude

against both the organization and colleagues, deteriorates or diminishes the level of job

satisfaction, triggering the overall life dissatisfaction. Organizational cynicism also appears to be

a detrimental issue and a threat for the productivity, survival, efficiency and sustainability of

organizations. This study provides findings and implications regarding teachers' LS and

organizational cynicism, and provides recommendations and strategies for sustainability for

leaders, managers, policymakers, local authorities and school administrators.

Findings regarding the relationship between life satisfaction and organizational cynicism in

schools accordingly signify that there exists a negative correlation between all variables

considered. Affective cynicism in the findings appears as the least negatively effective subscale.

Negative affect, as a subjective and personal phenomenon, smashes or blocks concentration,

vision and engagement with others in organizations, thus providing symptoms for lower

satisfaction. However, when we focus on behavioral and cognitive cynicism, the negative values

appear to be much higher and significant. Behavioral cynicism and cognitive cynicism are more

effective since they are much more reflected within the organizational contexts. Behaviours may

strongly reflect what is subtle and covered inside while the cognitive structures are more

intricately and subtly correlated in mind.

Findings confirm that the life satisfaction levels of teachers are negatively affected by their

perception of organizational cynicism. This finding in this paper should be effectively considered

and handled by leaders, managers and school administrators if an effective and sustainable

education system is sought by governments. Teachers are expected to have a high level of life

satisfaction to focus on their work, school and learners. In this context, it can be recommended that

☐   a satisfactory and sustainable economic system should be developed for teachers

☐   teacher workload should be less in order to help them focus on action research and self-improvement

☐   school administrators and/or policy makers should be conscientious about what or how they make decisions in their organizations

Future generations are raised upon today's educational system, where teachers seem to be the authentic and genuine gears to provide a fruitful basis for the future. The higher the life satisfaction level teachers have, the more effective and more efficient the education system will be that is ready for the future generations to make use of.

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