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Prediction of Academic Staffs' Organizational Silence through their Power Distance Perceptions

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Abstract

This research aimed to determine the role of power distance perceptions of academic staff working in faculties of education on their organizational silence. The population of the study consisted of 8,978 academic staff working at education faculties of universities in seven geographical regions of Turkey during the 2016-2017 academic year. Simple random sampling technique was employed in the study. The data of the study were collected through online questionnaires. The “Organizational Power Distance Scale” and “Organizational Silence Scale” were used as the data collection instruments in the research. Within the scope of this study, Organizational Silence Scale were adapted to Turkish language. The analyses were conducted with 481 eligible returned questionnaires. According to the regression analysis results, the dimensions of power distance perceptions of academic staff as a whole gave a medium positive and significant relationship with acquiescent silence and defensive silence, with a low positive and significant relationship with prosocial silence. Acceptance of power, instrumental use of power, and acquiescence of power were seen to be predictors of acquiescent silence and defensive silence, whereas only acceptance of power was found to be a significant predictor of prosocial silence. Academic staffs' justification of power had no significant effect on their organizational silence. The power distance perceptions of the academic staff explained 24.4% of the total variance of their acquiescent silence, 35% of their defensive silence, and 2.3% of their prosocial silence.

Keywords: academic staff, education, organizational silence, power distance.



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Introduction

Organizations aim to maintain their existence and activities under ever-changing conditions since their formation. It could be asserted that continuity of existence and success of an organization is much more associated with the culture created in the organization than the established rules and regulations. Organizational culture can be said to comprise all detailed processes from the staff's decisions to their performances, with the influence of preexisting values and those established by the staff themselves. Organizational culture can be viewed as a factor that hosts different values and beliefs and is closely associated with the decision making and application mechanisms of the organization. Organizational culture is expected to be the source for an environment where staff can freely express their creativity, knowledge, views, and opinions. However, it is also possible that organizational culture can cause the degeneration of a steady and sound operation and in which the staff no longer have a desire to express their knowledge, views and opinions. Such degeneration would create the conditions in which staff hold back with their suggestions and criticism; instead preferring to maintain their silence. Considerations such as why staff maintain their silence, which factors are determinant in the emergence of the silence culture and the reduction of these factors are important for an organization in the context of an organization's social and intellectual capital. Determination of the elements that affect organizational silence, especially within higher education institutions, is crucial in terms of the continuity of universities' global and contemporary development. In this regard, it is assumed that one of the elements that affects organizational silence in higher education institutions, which has an international characteristic, is related to power distance, which is one of the cultural dimensions suggested by Hofstede (1994). Based on this, the purpose of the current study is to predict organizational silence of academic staff through their power distance perceptions.

Organizational Silence

The term silence is generally described as the absence of sound, or muteness (TDK, 2013). However, the term organizational silence is defined as staff avoiding any verbal or written statement about their behavioral, cognitive or emotional assessments for their own organizational conditions to people who have the power to change or correct such circumstances (Pinder & Harlos, 2001). Staff withholding their knowledge, thoughts, and suggestions about issues related to the organization also refers to organizational silence (Tülübaş & Celep, 2014, p. 281). It is the circumstance in which staff maintain their silence in order to feel safe instead of stating opinions or information that could benefit others (Morrison & Milliken, 2003, p. 1353). Organizational silence is a collective act and can lead to an organizational silence climate over time. In this respect, it could be asserted that staff withhold information that could benefit the organization and do not react to any circumstance in the organization when organizational silence is a matter of discussion.

Effective decision making and communication processes in organizations could be ensured through sharing information, questions, and suggestion within the organization; therefore, the silence of staff within an organization is viewed as a problem. In this regard, organizational silence can pose consequences both for the staff and the organization. In the case of organizational silence, the staff may feel themselves ineffective and worthless. The behavior of the staff to remain silent may hinder the correction of wrong decisions or may

also hamper the emergence of new ideas that are necessary for development. From the individual standpoint, organizational silence can cause staff stress, unhappiness and their alienation to the organization; yet, from the organizational standpoint, organizational silence can be seen as a dangerous barrier to organizational change and development (Kutanis & Çetinel, 2014, p. 164; Morrison & Milliken, 2000, pp. 707-720).

Despite organizational silence seeming like a conscious and deliberate act, there are reasons that can push staff toward this condition. These can be reasons such as organizational regulations, job related anxiety of the staff, anxiety due to appearing to be a mischief-maker, isolation, lost opportunity for a promotion, and concern for the breakdown of relations (Çakıcı, 2008, p. 130; Kutanis & Çetinel, 2014, p. 163; Morrison & Milliken, 2003, p. 1353; Özgan & Külekçi, 2012, p. 39; Pinder & Harlos, 2001, p. 345; Tülübaş & Celep, 2014, p. 290; Yaman & Ruçlar, 2014, p. 38). Furthermore, organizational silence might stem from the hesitation of staff to come up with unfavorable ideas, normative and social constraints within groups, the fear of facing negative feedback from administrators and their bias towards the staff (Morrison & Milliken, 2000, p. 707, 2003, p. 1353). As seen, organizational silence might be asserted to be affected by many different individual or organizational factors. Yet, the characteristic of organizational silence is assumed to be reflected by the status quo and attitude of administrators. In accordance with this assumption, it could be suggested that power and power distance might be important variables in the prediction of organizational silence.

Power and Power Distance

Power is one of the important topics of communal and organizational life. Power is defined as the method of a person to get other people to do what they want them to do, if necessary by force (Weber, 1986). Power is expressed as the ability to make other people work if required (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977), to leave an impression in the natural environment and on individuals (Gong, 2006), to affect behavior, change process, handle opposition and the ability to control people by making them act in that way (Pfeffer, 1992), a person's ability to influence others (Rollinson & Broadfield, 2002), being able to do and achieve things (Horner, 1997), and the social status between administrator and personnel (Scott, 2001). Power is either a capacity or a potential (Altinkurt & Yılmaz, 2012a). Power shapes the lives of individuals and guides them. Power also shapes viewpoints of individuals toward organizational justice (Hoşgörür & Yorulmaz, 2016). Thereby, power could be specified as a phenomenon whose traces can be seen in all individual and organizational relations.

On the other hand, power distance refers to an individual's acceptance level of unequal distribution of power due to factors such as status, wealth, appearance, age, and prestige (Hofstede, 1994, p. 28). Power distance is the complement of the symbolic hints showing how equal power distribution is perceived by the members of an organization, and their tendency to feel and think of behavioral tendencies about the issue (Akyürek, 2001, p. 7). Power distance is related to how organizational members behave while fulfilling the orders of their administrators. Power distance can be classified as either high or low. People who have a high-level power distance apply their administrators' orders without question (Yaman & Irmak, 2010). In an organization where the level of power distance is high, subordinates are ready to fulfill the orders, yet are punished or are deprived of awards by their administrators. However, in an organization where the level of power distance is low,

administrators and subordinates regard each other as equals and believe that only their roles in the hierarchical system are not equal and that those roles may change. In such organizations there is no important difference in terms of salaries or the qualifications of staff (Çelik, 2007, p. 39). In other words, it can be said that while those people who have a low power distance perception believe in the equal distribution of power, those who think it is normal to distribute power unequally have a high level of power distance perception (Hatch, 1997, p. 207). People with low power distance do not care about privileges like role, status, and appellation; whereas people with high power distance welcome the privileges and superiorities of administrators (Uslu & Ardiç, 2013, p. 317). In this regard, organizations which try to decrease differences caused by power represent a low power distance culture, and organizations which institutionalize power represent a high power distance culture (Terzi, 2004, p. 68).

Power Distance and Organizational Silence

Looking at the relationship between power distance and organizational silence, it might be foreseen that the staff's acceptance level of power distribution in the organization affects their silence behaviors. Staff attitude and communication with the administration may be determined by power distance. For instance, staff with a high power distance perception may not openly express their opinion to their administrators. In such cases, staff understand that they cannot criticize their administrators due to their administrators' hierarchical power and think that the administrators are right in all circumstances (Çakıcı, 2007, pp. 155-156). In other words, people with high power distance perception fulfill orders given to them without question. They obey orders as they believe that the administrators have more power than themselves due to the simple reason that administrators are at a higher level in the organizational hierarchy (Deniz, 2013, p. 15). As an uneasy working environment can negatively affect the individual, an unhealthy organizational culture may emerge in which negative perceptions and attitudes spread.

On the other hand, individuals can communicate easily in higher education institutions where a low power distance is present. They can express their ideas easily and can freely criticize each other (Erdoğan, Yaman, Şentürk, & Kalyoncu, 2008, p. 116). It can be said that when staff feel at ease at work, it contributes to the organizational culture, and a healthier and more efficient working environment will ensue. In this sense, it might be assumed that power distance has an important role in organization silence in terms of staff expressing their opinions openly, coming up with suggestions and criticizing decisions made.

Relation of Power Distance and Organizational Silence within Higher Education

Nowadays, the tendencies within higher education are centering on topics such as global autonomy, accountability, efficiency, governance, university-industry-society cooperation, research and development, and standardization. These criteria have become prerequisite for higher education institutions to maintain their international existence. In order to achieve these prerequisites, it is necessary for higher education institutions to establish an effective organizational culture, and to seek and collect feedback and information from the staff. To put it in a different way, rather than using some technical norms as was done in the past, fulfilling these criteria can be made possible through culture, coordination, and communication, which are some of the most important returns of the twenty-first century. In this regard, the positive perceptions and attitudes of academic staff,

who are the important stakeholders of higher education institutions, play an active role in the continuity of those organizations.

It could be said that the power distance perceptions and organizational silence behaviors of academic staff provides important implications for higher education institutions. These institutions produce information, are constantly evolving, and are the final juncture of the educational system; accountable for various duties such as education, scientific research, publication, and consultancy. It is believed to be essential to determine phenomena like power distance and organizational silence, and to optimize such behaviors within higher education institutions which are expected to be academically and scientifically autonomous.

As in other organizations, lower power distance perceptions of academic staff refer to an easier communication environment. Moreover, it can also be presumed that academic staff will be able to express their ideas readily and to be open to criticism. In lower power distance environments, how individuals react to events within the organization can be displayed as a sign that the phenomenon of organizational silence is not present (Kulualp, 2016, p. 746). In other words, it can be assumed that in higher education institutions where organizational silence is not common, ways of critical thinking and relaxed, open communication channels will be employed more frequently. On the other hand, higher power distance environments within higher education institutions may lead to miscommunication, ambiguity, and insecurity. This may result in a compromise between autonomy and development. When education faculties in which teachers are trained are considered exclusively, the unequal distribution of power distance and silence might negatively affect the behaviors of faculty academic staff and might lead pre-service teachers, who see the academic staff as role models, to avoid handling issues from a critical point of view. In this regard, analyzing such organizational structures in terms of power distance and silence might be beneficial to the contribution of necessary precautions.

In the literature related to power distance, studies were found on the relationships between power distance and communication (Akyürek, 2001), distributive justice (Begley, Lee, Fang, & Jianfeng, 2002), procedural justice (Begley et al., 2002; Kirkman, Chen, Farh, Chen, & Lowe, 2009; Loi, Long, & Chanka, 2012), success (Altay, 2004), leadership style (Akyol, 2009), organizational trust (Uslu & Ardiç, 2013), and organizational citizenship behavior (Bedürk & Ertürk, 2015). In addition, some studies were designed in order to examine the relationships between organizational silence and mobbing (Kalay, Oğrak, & Nişancı, 2014), organizational culture (Yaman & Ruçlar, 2014), and burnout (Kahya, 2015). There were also studies on power distance (Erden, 2012; Halo, 2015) and organizational silence (Durak, 2014; Özgan & Külekçi, 2012; Tülübaş & Celep, 2014; Yaman & Ruçlar, 2014) conducted in higher education institutions. However, to the researcher's knowledge, no studies could be found in the literature which deal with the relationship between power distance and organizational silence within higher education institutions. As to this relationship between power distance and organizational silence, it is expected that the power distance perceptions of academic staff predict their organizational silence. It is foreseen that higher power distance perceptions may lead to a higher organizational silence in academic staff. In this regard, the main purpose of the current study is to determine the effect of power distance perceptions of academic staff on their organizational silence. In

accordance with this purpose, the following research questions form the base of this research study:

- How are the power distance perceptions of academic staff?
- Do the power distance perceptions of academic staff differ significantly according to gender, marital status, academic title, or seniority variables?
- How is the organizational silence of academic staff?
- Does the organizational silence of academic staff differ significantly according to gender, marital status, academic title, or seniority variables?
- To what extent do the power distance perceptions of academic staff predict their organizational silence?

Methodology

Research Design

This study was designed using the survey model. The research attempts to describe the current relationship between the power distance perceptions of academic staff and their organizational silence.

Sampling Procedures

The population of the study consisted of 8,978 academic staff working at education faculties of universities in seven geographical regions of Turkey during the 2016-2017 academic year. In the identification of the sample, a simple random sampling technique was employed. The sample size to represent the population was calculated as 368 for a 95% confidence level. The data of the study were collected through online questionnaires. The questionnaires were created using Google Forms and were sent to the e-mail addresses of academic staff working at education faculties in Turkey.

Participant Characteristics

Completed questionnaires were collected from a total of 499 participant academics. Analyses were then conducted with 481 eligible questionnaires. Of the academic staff who participated in the study, 49.3% (n = 237) are female and 50.7% (n = 244) are male. 70.5% (n = 339) of the participants were married and 29.5% (n = 142) were single. 6.7% (n = 32) of the participants were Professors, 15.6% (n = 75) were Associate Professors, 29.5% (n = 142) were Assistant Professors, 34.9% (n = 168) were Research Assistants, and 13.3% (n = 64) were Lecturers. The participants' seniority ranged from 1 to 42 years. 44.9% (n = 216) of the participants had 9 years or less seniority, 25.5% (n = 123) had 10 to 19 years of seniority, and 29.5% (n = 142) of the participant had 20 years or more seniority.

Data Collection Instruments

In the study, the "Organizational Power Distance Scale" and "Organizational Silence Scale" were used as data collection instruments. The Organizational Power Distance Scale was developed by Yorulmaz, Çolak, Altinkurt, and Yılmaz (2018). The scale consists of 20 Likert-type items. The items in the scale have a range from "1- Never" to "5- Always." A high score computed from each subscale indicates a high power distance. The scale has four subscales which are "acceptance of power," "instrumental use of power," "justification of power," and "acquiescence of power." The four subscales as a whole explained 56.6% of the total variance. Within the original study, Explanatory Factor Analysis (EFA) results showed

that factor loadings of the scale items ranged from .58 to .82 for acceptance of power, .58 to .70 for instrumental use of power, .62 to .81 for justification of power, and .54 to .77 for acquiescence of power. The goodness of fit indices of the scale resulting from Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were $\chi^2 / df = 2.29$, GFI = .89, AGFI = .86, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .07, CFI = .96, IFI = .96, NFI = .92, NNFI = .95, and PGFI = .69. The item-total correlation values of the scale ranged from .40 to .80. Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficients of the scale were found to be .79 for acceptance of power, .77 for instrumental use of power, .74 for justification of power, and .80 for acquiescence of power. As the sample of this study consisted of academic staff, construct validity of the scale was reconfirmed with CFA. The goodness of fit indices' values resulting from CFA were $\chi^2 / df = 2.34$ ($\chi^2 / df = 378.95 / 162$), GFI = .88, AGFI = .85, RMSEA = .07, RMR = .06, SRMR = .06, CFI = .97, NFI = .96, and NNFI = .97. Also in this study, reliability coefficients of the scales were recalculated. The results showed the Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient as .79 for acceptance of power, .79 for instrumental use of power, .60 for justification of power, and .77 for the acquiescence of power dimension.

Sub-dimensions of the scale were explained as follows (Yorulmaz et al., 2018): Acceptance of power is associated with employees' acceptance of unequal distribution of power in the organization, whereby employees in the lower ranks respect employees in the upper ranks because of their position. Instrumental use of power refers to employees' thinking that they could carry out their works easily by being close to employees in the upper ranks and by acting out when necessary. Justification of power is employees legalizing and rationalizing the unequal distribution of power in the organization, with a belief that the organization has an unequal structure because of its nature. Acquiescence of power is the state of employees adapting to the structure of the organization because of their low belief in changing the administrative applications.

The Employee Silence and Voice Scale was developed by Dyne, Ang, and Botero (2003). The original scale consists of six subscales of five items, which aims to measure the silence and voice of employees. Three subscales regarding the silence of employees were adapted to the Turkish language and culture by the researchers of this study. The adapted scale (Organizational Silence Scale) consists of 15 items in three subscales of five items. During the translation process, firstly, the scale was translated into Turkish by each of the researchers separately. Then, the researchers met and agreed on the suitability of the translations in terms of language, meaning, and culture. In the next process, the scale was re-translated back into Turkish by foreign language experts. It was seen that the scale translated into Turkish was coherent with the original scale. The scale was presented to a group of 15 academic staff to garner their views. After finalizing the scale in accordance with these views, the scale was considered ready for validity and reliability analyses. To assess the structural validity of the scale translated into Turkish, CFA was conducted. As a result of CFA, the χ^2 / df ratio was found to be 1.46 (123.88 / 85). Other goodness of fit indices of the scale calculated by CFA were GFI = .95, AGFI = .93, RMSEA = .04, RMR = .03, SRMR = .04, CFI = .99, NFI = .98, and NNFI = .99. The goodness of fit indices showed that the structure of the scale with three subscales and 15 items were confirmed as in the original scale. Factor loadings of the scale items ranged from .63 to .80 for acquiescent silence, .70 to .90 for defensive silence, and .68 to .89 for the prosocial silence dimension. The items in the scale had a range from "1- Never" to "5- Always." None of the items in the scale are reverse scored.

Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficients were computed as .89 for acquiescent silence, .93 for defensive silence, and .91 for the prosocial silence dimension.

Subscales of the scale are explained as follows (Dyne et al., 2003): Acquiescent silence is about employees' withholding relevant information, opinions, and ideas as a result of acquiescing what is going on. Those with acquiescent silence yield to the current situation and are not willing to take part in activities, to speak up, or to create changes. Defensive silence is employees' withholding necessary information and ideas concerning the organization because of fear and in order to protect themselves. Employees' ideas of protecting themselves depends on their concern about being responsible for the problems that may occur or be revealed. Employees displaying defensive silence behaviors believe that withholding their opinions and ideas is the best strategy and that this will protect them from negative consequences. ProSocial silence is employees' withholding their opinions, information, and ideas about the work in order to benefit other people or the organization. Prosocial silence is an intentional behavior and based on collaboration and sacrifice. Unlike defensive silence, in prosocial silence, employees prefer to remain silent because of their concern for others or the organization.

Data Analysis

In the analysis of the data, descriptive statistics, t-test, and one-way ANOVA were conducted. For significant F values, Sidak post-hoc comparison was used to determine the source of any difference. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine at what level the power distance perceptions of academic staff predicted their organizational silence. Before the regression analysis, the necessity of the analysis was tested by analyzing the extreme values, normality of distribution, and multiple correlations between the variables. To determine extreme values, z-scores and Mahalanobis distance values were analyzed. To determine the normality of the distribution, skewness and kurtosis coefficients were calculated. To determine whether or not there were multiple correlations between variables, tolerance values, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) analysis and unstandardized coefficients of regression were analyzed. When the tolerance values are found to be lower than .10, the value of VIF higher than 10, or the value of B higher than 2, it refers to a problem of multiple correlation (Çokluk, 2010; Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). In the current study, the lowest tolerance value was calculated as .57, and the highest values of VIF and B were calculated as 1.74 and .53 respectively. These results show that there was no multicollinearity problem among the variables.

Results

In this section, the views of the participant academic staff regarding power distance and organizational silence were discussed first, and then, based on the results of multiple regression analyses, it was aimed at determining to what extent the power distance perceptions of the academic staff have on their organizational silence. The first purpose of the study was to determine the power distance perceptions of the academic staff. According to the findings obtained from the application of the Organizational Power Distance Scale, the academic staff gave the highest scores to items in the acquiescence of power dimension ($\bar{x} = 2.73$, $S = .76$). This dimension was followed by acceptance of power ($\bar{x} = 2.60$, $S = .74$), instrumental use of power ($\bar{x} = 2.22$, $S = .81$) and justification of power ($\bar{x} = 1.65$, $S = .62$) dimensions, respectively. The second purpose of the study was to determine whether or not

the power distance perceptions of the academic staff differ significantly according to gender, marital status, academic title, or seniority variables. Based on this purpose, the comparison of power distance perceptions of academic staff in terms of the gender variable are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of power distance perceptions of academic staff in terms of gender

Dimension	Gender	<i>n</i>	\bar{x}	<i>S</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Acceptance of Power	Female	237	2.61	.75	479	.439	.661
	Male	244	2.58	.73			
Instrumental Use of Power	Female	237	2.29	.80	479	1.889	.059
	Male	244	2.15	.81			
Justification of Power	Female	237	1.66	.63	479	.480	.631
	Male	244	1.63	.60			
Acquiescence of Power	Female	237	2.85	.80	479	3.334	.001
	Male	244	2.62	.71			

In terms of the gender variable, the power distance perceptions of the academic staff did not differ according to acceptance of power [$t_{(479)} = .439$; $p > .05$], instrumental use of power [$t_{(479)} = 1.889$; $p > .05$], and justification of power [$t_{(479)} = .480$; $p > .05$] dimensions, but did differ according to acquiescence of power [$t_{(479)} = 3.334$; $p < .05$]. Female academic staff ($\bar{x} = 2.85$, $S = .80$) gave higher scores to the acquiescence of power dimension when compared to males ($\bar{x} = 2.62$, $S = .71$). In all other dimensions in which a significant difference was not found, females gave higher scores to the dimensions of power distance than males. The comparison of power distance perceptions of academic staff in terms of the marital status variable are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison of power distance perceptions of academic staff in terms of marital status

Dimension	Marital Status	<i>n</i>	\bar{x}	<i>S</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Acceptance of Power	Married	339	2.61	.76	479	.533	.595
	Single	142	2.57	.71			
Instrumental Use of Power	Married	339	2.17	.77	479	2.278	.023
	Single	142	2.35	.88			
Justification of Power	Married	339	1.67	.62	479	.968	.334
	Single	142	1.61	.61			
Acquiescence of Power	Married	339	2.71	.75	479	1.186	.236
	Single	142	2.80	.78			

In terms of the marital status variable, the power distance perceptions of the academic staff only differed in the instrumental use of power [$t_{(479)} = 2.278$; $p < .05$] dimension, and did not differ according to acceptance of power [$t_{(479)} = .533$; $p > .05$], justification of power [$t_{(479)} = .968$; $p > .05$], or acquiescence of power [$t_{(479)} = 1.186$; $p > .05$] dimensions. Single academic staff ($\bar{x} = 2.35$, $S = .88$) gave higher scores to the items in the instrumental use of power dimension than their married colleagues ($\bar{x} = 2.17$, $S = .77$). The comparison of power distance perceptions among academic staff in terms of their academic title variable are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparison of power distance perceptions of academic staff in terms of academic title

Dimension	Title	n	\bar{x}	S	df	F	p	Differ.
Acceptance of Power	Professor	32	2.67	.69	4-476	3.693	.006	4-3
	Assoc. Prof.	75	2.53	.77				4-5
	Asst. Prof.	142	2.50	.77				
	Res. Asst.	168	2.76	.73				
	Lecturer	64	2.43	.63				
Instrumental Use of Power	Professor	32	1.94	.67	4-476	7.528	.000	1-4
	Assoc. Prof.	75	2.04	.79				2-4
	Asst. Prof.	142	2.16	.74				3-4
	Res. Asst.	168	2.48	.87				5-4
	Lecturer	64	2.05	.69				
Justification of Power	Professor	32	1.57	.58	4-476	.667	.615	
	Assoc. Prof.	75	1.72	.68				
	Asst. Prof.	142	1.62	.63				
	Res. Asst.	168	1.68	.59				
	Lecturer	64	1.59	.60				
Acquiescence of Power	Professor	32	2.53	.65	4-476	4.578	.001	2-4
	Assoc. Prof.	75	2.62	.81				3-4
	Asst. Prof.	142	2.61	.75				
	Res. Asst.	168	2.92	.75				
	Lecturer	64	2.75	.74				

For the title variable, whilst the power distance perceptions of academic staff did not differ in the justification of power [$F_{(4-476)} = .667$; $p > .05$] dimension, a difference was found according to the acceptance of power [$F_{(4-476)} = 3.693$; $p < .05$], instrumental use of power [$F_{(4-476)} = 7.528$; $p > .05$], and acquiescence of power [$F_{(4-476)} = 4.578$; $p > .05$] dimensions. In terms of the dimension where there was a significant difference, participants with the title of Research Assistant had the highest scores.

The differences are between Research Assistants ($\bar{x} = 2.76$, $S = .73$), and Assistant Professors ($\bar{x} = 2.50$, $S = .77$) and Lecturers ($\bar{x} = 2.43$, $S = .63$) according to acceptance of power; and between Research Assistants ($\bar{x} = 2.48$, $S = .87$) and all other academic staff according to the instrumental use of power dimension; and between Research Assistants ($\bar{x} = 2.92$, $S = .75$), and Assistant Professors ($\bar{x} = 2.61$, $S = .75$) and Associate Professors ($\bar{x} = 2.62$, $S = .81$) according to the acquiescence of power dimension. The comparison of power distance perceptions of the academic staff in terms of seniority variable are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Comparison of power distance perceptions of academic staff in terms of seniority

Dimension	Seniority	n	\bar{x}	S	df	F	p	Differ.
Acceptance of Power	1-9 years	216	2.68	.77	2-478	2.713	.067	
	10-19 years	134	2.57	.78				
	20+ years	131	2.49	.69				
Instrumental Use of Power	1-9 years	216	2.41	.85	2-478	14.588	.000	1-2
	10-19 years	134	2.19	.77				1-3
	20+ years	131	1.94	.68				2-3
Justification of Power	1-9 years	216	1.66	.64	2-478	.077	.926	
	10-19 years	134	1.64	.60				
	20+ years	131	1.64	.60				
Acquiescence of Power	1-9 years	216	2.86	.77	2-478	5.889	.003	1-3
	10-19 years	134	2.68	.76				
	20+ years	131	2.58	.72				

The power distance perceptions of academic staff in terms of seniority variable did not differ according to acceptance of power [$F_{(2-478)} = 2.713$; $p > .05$] and justification of power [$F_{(2-478)} = .077$; $p > .05$] dimensions, but a difference was found according to the instrumental use of power [$F_{(2-478)} = 14.588$; $p < .05$] and acquiescence of power [$F_{(2-478)} = 5.889$; $p < .05$] dimensions. In all dimensions, the lower the seniority, the more the average scores increased. The differences in instrumental use of power dimension were between staff with 9 years or less seniority ($\bar{x} = 2.41$, $S = .85$) and 10 to 19 years of seniority ($\bar{x} = 2.19$, $S = .77$) and 20 years or more seniority ($\bar{x} = 2.92$, $S = .75$); and between the last two seniority groups. Similarly, the differences in acquiescence of power dimension were between staff with 9 years or less ($\bar{x} = 2.86$, $S = .77$) and 20 years or more ($\bar{x} = 2.58$, $S = .72$) seniority.

The third purpose of the study was to determine the organizational silence of academic staff. According to the findings of the Organizational Silence Scale, the academic staff gave the highest scores to the items in the prosocial silence ($\bar{x} = 4.14$, $S = .79$) dimension, which was respectively followed by acquiescent silence ($\bar{x} = 2.17$, $S = .93$) and defensive silence ($\bar{x} = 2.14$, $S = .93$) dimensions.

The fourth purpose of the study was to determine whether the organizational silence of academic staff differed significantly according to gender, marital status, academic title, or seniority variables. Based on this purpose, the comparison of organizational silence of the academic staff in terms of gender variable is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Comparison of organizational silence of academic staff in terms of gender

Dimension	Gender	n	\bar{x}	S	df	t	p
Acquiescent Silence	Female	237	2.18	.88	479	.340	.734
	Male	244	2.15	.98			
Defensive Silence	Female	237	2.18	.88	479	1.046	.296
	Male	244	2.09	.97			
ProSocial Silence	Female	237	4.14	.77	479	.067	.946
	Male	244	4.14	.81			

The organizational silence of academic staff did not differ ($p > .05$) in terms of the gender variable. However, in terms of acquiescent silence, females ($\bar{x} = 2.18$, $S = .88$) showed slightly higher scores than males ($\bar{x} = 2.15$, $S = .98$). Similarly, in terms of defensive silence,

females ($\bar{x} = 2.18$, $S = .88$) had higher scores than males ($\bar{x} = 2.09$, $S = .97$). The comparison of organizational silence of academic staff in terms of the marital status variable is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Comparison of organizational silence of academic staff in terms of marital status

Dimension	Gender	n	\bar{x}	S	df	t	p
Acquiescent Silence	Married	339	2.11	.93	479	2.224	.027
	Single	142	2.31	.93			
Defensive Silence	Married	339	2.07	.93	479	2.558	.011
	Single	142	2.30	.91			
ProSocial Silence	Married	339	4.18	.76	479	1.497	.135
	Single	142	4.06	.86			

The organizational silence of academic staff did not differ in terms of the marital status variable in the acquiescent silence [$t_{(479)} = 2.224$; $p < .05$] and defensive silence [$t_{(479)} = 2.558$; $p < .05$] dimensions. In terms of acquiescent silence, single staff ($\bar{x} = 2.31$, $S = .93$) had higher scores than their married ($\bar{x} = 2.11$, $S = .93$) colleagues. Similarly, in the defensive silence dimension, single staff ($\bar{x} = 2.30$, $S = .91$) had higher scores than their married ($\bar{x} = 2.07$, $S = .93$) colleagues. The comparison of organizational silence of academic staff in terms of the academic title variable is presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Comparison of organizational silence of academic staff in terms of academic title

Dimension	Title	n	\bar{x}	S	df	F	p	Differ.
Acquiescent Silence	Professor	32	1.75	.67	4-476	4.517	.001	1-4
	Assoc. Prof.	75	1.92	.89				
	Asst. Prof.	142	2.14	.92				
	Res. Asst.	168	2.32	.95				
	Lecturer	64	2.31	.97				
Defensive Silence	Professor	32	1.66	.60	4-476	5.638	.000	1-4
	Assoc. Prof.	75	1.92	.94				
	Asst. Prof.	142	2.11	.93				
	Res. Asst.	168	2.36	.92				
	Lecturer	64	2.10	.92				
ProSocial Silence	Professor	32	4.30	.75	4-476	.982	.417	
	Assoc. Prof.	75	4.23	.80				
	Asst. Prof.	142	4.10	.82				
	Res. Asst.	168	4.15	.77				
	Lecturer	64	4.02	.81				

In terms of the title variable, the organizational silence of academic staff did not differ according to the prosocial silence dimension [$F_{(4-476)} = .982$; $p > .05$], but did differ according to the acquiescent silence [$F_{(4-476)} = 4.517$; $p < .05$] and defensive silence [$F_{(4-476)} = 5.638$; $p < .05$] dimensions. These differences, in terms of acquiescent silence, were between Research Assistants ($\bar{x} = 2.32$, $S = .95$) having highest scores, and Associate Professors ($\bar{x} = 1.92$, $S = .89$) and Professors; and between Professors ($\bar{x} = 1.75$, $S = .67$) and Lecturers ($\bar{x} = 2.31$, $S = .97$). Similarly in the defensive silence dimension, the differences were between Research Assistants ($\bar{x} = 2.36$, $S = .92$) having the highest scores, and Associate Professors

($\bar{x} = 1.92$, $S = .94$) and Professors ($\bar{x} = 1.66$, $S = .60$). The comparison of organizational silence of academic staff in terms of seniority variable is presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Comparison of organizational silence of academic staff in terms of seniority

Dimension	Title	n	\bar{x}	S	df	F	p	Differ.
Acquiescent Silence	1-9 years	216	2.28	.96	2-478	3.637	.027	1-3
	10-19 years	134	2.15	.89				
	20+ years	131	2.00	.91				
Defensive Silence	1-9 years	216	2.31	.94	2-478	8.761	.000	1-3
	10-19 years	134	2.11	.91				
	20+ years	131	1.89	.87				
ProSocial Silence	1-9 years	216	4.10	.77	2-478	.552	.576	
	10-19 years	134	4.20	.82				
	20+ years	131	4.15	.81				

The organizational silence of academic staff in terms of the seniority variable differed for the acquiescent silence [$F_{(2-478)} = 3.637$; $p < .05$] and defensive silence [$F_{(2-478)} = 3.637$; $p < .05$] dimensions. These differences, in terms of acquiescent silence, were between staff with 9 years or less seniority ($\bar{x} = 2.28$, $S = .96$) and staff with 20 years or more seniority ($\bar{x} = 2.00$, $S = .91$). Similarly in terms of defensive silence, the differences were between staff with 9 years or less seniority ($\bar{x} = 2.31$, $S = .94$) and staff with 20 years or more seniority ($\bar{x} = 1.89$, $S = .87$).

Presented next are the findings related to the multiple regression analysis regarding to what extent the power distance perceptions of academic staff have a role on their acquiescent silence, defensive silence and prosocial silence as the dimensions of organizational silence.

Table 9. Prediction of acquiescent silence

Variable	B	Standard error	β	t	p	Zero order(r)	Partial r
Constant	1.358	.160	-	8.492	.000	-	-
Acceptance of Power	-.488	.063	-.388	-7.716	.000	-.044	-.333
Instrumental Use of Power	.300	.061	.259	4.932	.000	.283	.221
Justification of Power	.047	.071	.031	.652	.515	.152	.030
Acquiescence of Power	.488	.062	.399	7.869	.000	.373	.339
R = 0.494	R ² = .244	F ₍₄₋₄₇₆₎ = 38.366	p = 0.00				

According to Table 9, the findings of the regression analysis indicate that the acquiescent silence dimension of organizational silence has a medium-level positive relationship with acquiescence of power ($r = .373$), a low-level positive relationship with instrumental use of power ($r = .283$) and justification of power ($r = .152$), and a low-level negative relationship with acceptance of power ($r = -.044$). When the other variables remain constant, acquiescent silence has a medium-level positive relationship with acquiescence of power ($r = .339$), a low-level positive relationship with instrumental use of power ($r = .221$) and justification of power ($r = .030$), and a medium-level negative relationship with acceptance of power ($r = -.333$). The power distance perceptions of the academic staff as a whole have a medium-level positive relationship with acquiescent silence ($r = .494$, $p < .01$).

The order of importance of power distance perceptions of academic staff on the acquiescent silence dimension is as (β); acquiescence of power, acceptance of power, instrumental use of power, and justification of power. The power distance perceptions of the academic staff explain 24.4% of the total variance of the acquiescent silence. According to the findings, the regression equation of the acquiescent silence dimension is as follows: Acquiescent Silence = 1.358 – .488 Acceptance of Power + .300 Instrumental Use of Power + .047 Justification of Power + .488 Acquiescence of Power

Table 10. Prediction of defensive silence

Variable	B	Standard error	β	t	p	Zero order(r)	Partial r
Constant	.802	.147	-	5.451	.000	-	-
Acceptance of Power	-.418	.058	-.335	-7.186	.000	.078	-.313
Instrumental Use of Power	.424	.056	.370	7.577	.000	.434	.328
Justification of Power	.016	.066	.010	.239	.811	.221	.011
Acquiescence of Power	.532	.057	.437	9.308	.000	.488	.392
R = 0.592	R ² = .350	F ₍₄₋₄₇₆₎ = 64.103	p = 0.00				

According to Table 10, the defensive silence dimension of organizational silence has a medium-level positive relationship with instrumental use of power ($r = .434$) and acquiescence of power ($r = .488$), and a low-level positive relationship with justification of power ($r = .221$) and acceptance of power ($r = .078$). When the other variables remain constant, defensive silence has a medium-level positive relationship with instrumental use of power ($r = .328$) and acquiescence of power ($r = .392$), a medium-level negative relationship with acceptance of power ($r = -.313$), and a low-level positive relationship with justification of power ($r = .011$). The power distance perceptions of the academic staff as a whole have a medium-level positive relationship with defensive silence ($r = .592$, $p < .01$). The order of importance of power distance perceptions of academic staff on the defensive silence dimension is as (β); acquiescence of power, instrumental use of power, acceptance of power, and justification of power. The power distance perceptions of the academic staff explain 35% of the total variance of the defensive silence. According to the findings, the regression equation of the defensive silence dimension is as follows: Defensive Silence = .802 – .418 Acceptance of Power + .424 Instrumental Use of Power + .016 Justification of Power + .532 Acquiescence of Power

Table 11. Prediction of prosocial silence

Variables	B	Standard error	β	t	p	Zero order(r)	Partial r
Constant	3.979	.154		25.765	.000	-	-
Acceptance of Power	.200	.061	.188	3.284	.001	.109	.149
Instrumental Use of Power	-.076	.059	-.078	-1.301	.194	-.013	-.060
Justification of Power	-.083	.069	-.065	-1.201	.231	-.023	-.055
Acquiescence of Power	-.017	.060	-.016	-.286	.775	.000	-.013
R = 0.151	R ² = .023	F ₍₄₋₄₇₆₎ = 2.787	p = 0.02				

According to Table 11, the prosocial silence dimension of organizational silence has a low-level positive relationship with acceptance of power ($r = .109$), and a low-level negative relationship with instrumental use of power ($r = -.013$) and justification of power ($r = -.023$).

When the other variables remain constant, prosocial silence has a low-level positive relationship with acceptance of power ($r = .149$), and a low-level negative relationship with instrumental use of power ($r = -.060$), justification of power ($r = -.055$), and acquiescence of power ($r = -.013$). The power distance perceptions of the academic staff as a whole has a low-level positive relationship with defensive silence ($r = .151$, $p < .01$). The order of importance of power distance perceptions of academic staff on the prosocial silence dimension is as (β); acceptance of power, instrumental use of power, justification of power, and acquiescence of power. The power distance perceptions of the academic staff explain 2.3% of the total variance of the prosocial silence. According to the findings, the regression equation of the prosocial silence dimension is as follows: Prosocial Silence = $3.979 + .200$ Acceptance of Power – $.076$ Instrumental Use of Power – $.083$ Justification of Power – $.017$ Acquiescence of Power

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed at predicting the organizational silence of academic staff through their power distance perceptions. In this regard, it was identified whether the power distance perceptions and organizational silence of academic staff differed in terms of gender, marital status, title, and seniority variables. Also investigated was to what extent the power distance perceptions of academic staff played a role on their organizational silence.

The power distance perceptions of academic staff were found to be at a medium level. Studies conducted by Halo (2015), Kahya (2015), and Uslu (2013) also reported power distance perceptions of academic staff at a medium level. Similarly, the studies by Turan, Durceylan, and Şişman (2005) conducted with university administrators, by Deniz (2013) with elementary school teachers, and by Solmazer (2013) with undergraduate students also found a medium level of power distance. According to Hofstede (2001), Turkey has a high power distance in terms of societal acceptance of an unequal distribution of power. Centralization of power, a strong hierarchical structure, and rigid control by administrators are indicators of a high power distance. In this regard, the medium-level power distance perceptions of academic staff refer to a limited action within the organization. The findings of the current study regarding the power distance dimensions also coincide with this condition. The academic staff gave the highest scores to “acquiescence of power” out of power distance perceptions. This dimension was followed by “acceptance of power,” “instrumental use of power,” and “justification of power,” respectively. The giving of relatively higher scores to “acquiescence of power,” and “acceptance of power” by the academic staff might refer to their limited action area in the institution, and might stem from their beliefs regarding the realization of their suggestions for the institution.

The power distance perceptions of the academic staff differed in acquiescence of power dimension but did not differ in the other dimensions in terms of the gender variable. Female academic staff gave higher scores to the acquiescence of power dimension than their male colleagues. In all other dimensions where there was no significant difference, the power distance perceptions of female academics were higher than males. Altinkurt and Yilmaz (2012b) asserted that stereotypes towards females within a patriarchal societal structure are invisible obstacles faced in their work life. In such a society, sexist values toward females are adopted both by females and males (Zel, 2002). In this regard, the relatively higher power distance perceptions of females might stem from the societal gender roles toward women.

Nevertheless, there are studies (Halo, 2015; Uslu, 2013) in the literature which indicate that males' power distance perceptions are relatively higher. Such differences among studies might result from the region where individuals' work or from institutional culture. However, it is thought that there is a need to design further quantitative studies in order to determine the reasons for this finding.

In terms of the marital status variable, the power distance perceptions of the academic staff only differed in the instrumental use of power dimension, and did not differ in the other dimensions. Single academic staff gave higher scores to the instrumental use of power dimension when compared to married academics. This finding might result from single academic staff preferring to pretend to behave warmly in an environment where they perceive the power is distributed unequally. Single academics may feel themselves to be lonelier when compared to their married colleagues, which might be another reason for this finding. According to Baltacı (2011), people might differ in terms of physical traits, intellectual capacities, income status, education level, societal class, family, status, and occupation, even though they think people must have some universal rights. In this regard, the influence of the marital status variable on the power distance perceptions of academic staff might have reasonable ground when considering the aforementioned differences among individuals. On the other hand, the attitudes of academic staff like play-acting and just going along with the system are not considered as positive results when considering the university environment; a place where critical thinking and rational attitudes should be the norm.

According to the title variable, the power distance perceptions of academic staff differed in terms of acceptance of power, instrumental use of power and acquiescence of power, but did not differ in the dimension of justification of power. It is noteworthy that those holding relatively lower-level academic titles indicated higher-level power distance perceptions; with the highest averages in the dimensions belonging to Research Assistants. In this regard, Hofstede (2001) emphasized the importance and respect of descriptive items such as title, status, and position in cultures with a high power distance. Interestingly, in a study conducted by Uslu (2013) with academic staff, those at the level of Research Assistants, Instructors and Lecturers were found to have higher averages than the Professors and Associate Professors. Turan et al. (2005) also found that there were differences between the power distance perceptions of academic staff who held administrative positions, and that Department Heads were more likely to come across unequal distribution of power compared to Deputy Deans. Therefore, in organizations where low power distance is adopted, the tendency of centralization in organizational structure seems weak and the frequency of consultation at lower levels is increasing. However, in organizations with a high power distance, a strong centralized structure is adopted, thus the tendency to consult with lower levels is reduced (Macit, 2010).

When the seniority variable is evaluated, the power distance perceptions of the academic staff did not differ in terms of acceptance of power and justification of power, but did differ in terms of instrumental use of power and acquiescence of power. This difference was between academic staff with 9 years or less seniority and those with 20 years or more seniority in terms of acquiescence of power; between those with 9 years or less seniority and other academic staff in terms of instrumental use of power; and between those with 10 to 19 years of seniority and those with 20 years or more seniority. Also, in the dimensions

where no significant difference was found, higher power distance perceptions of academic staff with relatively lower seniority is notable. When the findings related to title and seniority variables are evaluated together, it can be concluded that academic staff who are at the beginning of their career and who have lower-level titles more naturally come across unequal power distribution within the organization. This circumstance might be attributable to the hierarchic bureaucratic structure of universities, and to the levels of authority that varies according to seniority. With the emergence of modern organizations, the implementation of modern methods in organizations and the technical knowledge of production necessitate the bureaucracy. According to Weber (2014), bureaucracy plays a role as the driving force behind the elements of the organization. As to the authority, it is concerned with the existence of individuals who successfully command others (Weber, 1995). In other words, authority is the power provided over the group, and the phenomenon leading the group to obedience. Thus, it might be asserted that the bureaucratic order in universities operates on the basis of power and authority. In fact, the study by Uslu and Ardiç (2013) also indicated that those with the highest power distances have a seniority of 3-5 years and those with the lowest power distances have 9-11 years of seniority.

The results of the research on the organizational silence of academic staff demonstrate that they are mostly silent in prosocial silence dimension. This dimension is respectively followed by acquiescent silence and defensive silence dimensions. Academic staff withhold their knowledge and ideas in order to protect their institutions or their colleagues. In a similar study, Çiçek-Sağlam and Yüksel (2015) found that school principals gave the highest scores to defensive silence, and that dimension was followed respectively by acquiescent silence and prosocial silence. Unlike the current research, the defensive silence was mostly demonstrated. This variance might stem from differences in the school and university environments. While teachers are silent in order to protect themselves, academicians are showing this attitude to protect their institutions. As to Kahya's (2015) study with academicians, it was stated that the organizational silence of academicians was at a moderate level. In the study, the author found that administrative and organizational reasons were the most given as why the academicians elected to maintain organizational silence, which was then followed respectively by individual and business fears. Likewise, Eroğlu, Adıgüzel, and Öztürk (2011) found that the prosocial silence dimension scored the highest, followed consecutively by acquiescent silence and defensive silence. According to other studies (Çakıcı, 2008; Özgan & Külekçi, 2012), ethical issues, responsibilities, management, performance, working conditions of university staff and their improvement, situations which were perceived as unfair, implementation of decisions made without question, negative decisions made on their behalf, additional workloads, orders from senior authorities, compromise issues with colleagues and situations in which the subject is not relevant, situations where there is no sanction were determined as cases where it was possible to engage in conflict.

The organizational silence of academic staff did not differ significantly for any of the gender variable sub-dimensions. There have been a number of research studies that have agreed and also disagreed with this finding in the literature. In many studies (e.g., Altinkurt, 2014; Bayram, 2010; Durak, 2014; Kalay et al., 2014; Nartgün & Demirer, 2012; Nartgün & Kartal, 2013; Ünlü, Hamedoğlu, & Yaman, 2015; Yaman & Ruçlar, 2014) it can be observed that silence did not differ in terms of the gender variable. Unlike the current study, in some

research (e.g., Çakıcı, 2008; Çiçek-Sağlam & Yüksel, 2015; Kahveci & Demirtaş, 2013; Kutanis & Cetinel, 2014; Tülübaş & Celep, 2014) it was identified that females enacted a higher level of silence than males. Similarly, it is notable that in the current study, females had higher levels of acquiescent silence and defensive silence. The reason for this finding might be that females express their emotions and thoughts less often and have to prefer silence because of their assumed gender roles.

In terms of the marital status variable, it is seen that the silences of the academic staff differed in the dimensions of acquiescent silence and defensive silence. Single academic staff exhibited more acquiescent silence and defensive silence than those who were married. When it is considered that there is no single authoritarian power in families where healthy communication exists, and that this power is shared at the appropriate time and place (Tezel, 2004), the reason behind this finding might be that the family environment raises awareness of individuals in managing power distribution. In addition, staff who are married might feel themselves as stronger and more comfortable while expressing their ideas through their partners' supportive attitudes. Also, being married may contribute to the perception that they are stronger within the organization. Such situations may be due to married instructors being perhaps more vocal than single instructors. In addition, according to Şimşek and Aktaş (2014), personality plays an important role in the silence behaviors of individuals. It is foreseen that individuals who show extroverted and entrepreneurial personality characteristics do not exhibit acquiescent silence behaviors. Similarly, in the behaviors of defensive silence, it is determined that defensive silence attitudes decrease as extroversion increases. With the assumption that individuals who have a healthier marriage are more extroverted, it can be argued that married individuals exhibit silent behaviors less frequently than those who are single. On the other hand, this finding could be associated with single academic staff using power more instrumentally. Hence, it can be regarded as a consistent result with the power distance that individuals who naturally come across the unequal distribution of power and adapt to the system more easily display acquiescent silence.

The silence of academic staff did not differ in terms of the title variable, according to prosocial silence, but did differ in the dimensions of acquiescent silence and defensive silence. This difference was found between Professors and Associate Professors; and also between Research Assistants and Professors, and Lecturers in the dimension of acquiescent silence. Besides, this difference was between Professors and Associate Professors, and Research Assistants in the dimension of defensive silence. It is notable that the academic staff having relatively more acquiescent silence and defensive silence are Research Assistants and Lecturers. This finding may be due to staff with relatively low-level titles choosing to remain silent in order to protect themselves and to avoid organizational pressures. Various studies (e.g., Durak, 2014; Tülübaş & Celep, 2014) similar to the current research also identified that Instructors, Research Assistants, and Lecturers are usually more silent than Professors, Associate Professors, and Assistant Professors. Likewise, Bayram (2010) investigated silence at universities and indicated that academicians with the highest-level titles had a lower average related to silent attitudes. The power and authority that the title provides might affect this result. Having high-level job experience can cause academicians to change their attitudes and no longer be silent when deemed necessary.

In terms of the seniority variable, the silences of academic staff differed only in terms of the acquiescent silence and defensive silence dimensions. Academic staff with 9 years or less seniority were found to be more silent in acquiescent silence and defensive silence when compared to those with 20 years or more seniority. Similar to this research, Çiçek-Sağlam and Yüksel (2015) reached a conclusion that teachers with 1 to 5 years and 6 to 10 years of seniority were more silent than teachers who worked in other higher seniority groups in the defensive silence dimension. They also found that teachers having 21 years or more seniority were more silent than teachers with other levels of seniority in terms of prosocial silence. Similarly, Yaman and Ruçlar (2014) found that academic staff who worked for 1-5 years had the highest level of organizational silence in terms of their lack of experience, and that those who worked for 21 years or more had the lowest organizational silence perception. Kahveci and Demirtaş (2013) found in their research that the highest organizational silence perception belonged to those with a seniority of 1 to 5 years in the “environment dimension.” Altınkurt’s (2014) research supports this result. As the years of seniority increase, organizational silence decreases. Individuals who have spent many years in their organizations may be more receptive to their emotions and express their feelings. Contrary to this situation, those with fewer years of seniority may prefer to remain silent with concerns such as exclusion, occupation. Unlike the current study, Tülübaş and Celep (2014) found that older academicians with greater years of seniority were relatively quiet due to their withdrawal. There are also studies (Nartgün & Demirer, 2012; Nartgün & Kartal, 2013) in which organizational silence did not show any significant difference according to the seniority variable.

In the current study, multiple regression analyses were conducted in order to determine at what level the power distance perceptions of academic staff predict their organizational silence. According to the findings obtained, the dimensions of power distance perceptions of academic staff as a whole had a medium positive and significant relationship with acquiescent silence. When the other variables were constant, acquiescent silence had a medium positive relationship with acquiescence of power, a medium negative relationship with acceptance of power, and low positive relationships with instrumental use of power and justification of power. When the t-test results regarding the significance of regression coefficients were examined, acceptance of power, instrumental use of power and acquiescence of power were seen to be predictors of acquiescent silence. Justification of power was not a significant predictor of acquiescent silence. The power distance perceptions of academic staff explained 24.4% of the total variance of acquiescent silence. The increase in acquiescence of power and instrumental use of power for the academic staff and the decrease in their acceptance of power indicated an increase in their acquiescence silence.

According to the regression analysis results regarding defensive silence, the power distance perceptions of the academic staff as a whole had a higher than medium-level of positive and significant relationship with defensive silence. When the other variables were constant, defensive silence had a medium positive relationship with acquiescence of power and instrumental use of power, a medium negative relationship with acceptance of power, and a low negative relationship with justification of power. When the t-test results regarding the significance of regression coefficients were examined, acceptance of power, instrumental use of power and acquiescence of power were seen as significant predictors of defensive silence. Justification of power was not a significant predictor of defensive silence.

The power distance perceptions of the academic staff explained 35% of the total variance of their defensive silence. The increase in acquiescence of power and instrumental use of power of the academic staff and a decrease in their acceptance of power gave rise to an increase in their defensive silence.

According to the regression analysis results regarding prosocial silence, the power distance perceptions of the academic staff as a whole had a low positive and significant relationship with prosocial silence. When the other variables were constant, prosocial silence had a low positive relationship with acceptance of power, and very low negative relationships with instrumental use of power, justification of power, and acquiescence of power. When the t-test results regarding the significance of regression coefficients were examined, only acceptance of power was determined to be a significant predictor of prosocial silence. The power distance perceptions of the academic staff explained 2.3% of the total variance of their prosocial silence. The increase in their acceptance of power referred to an increase in their prosocial silence.

When the results obtained from the regression analysis were evaluated in general, it was seen that the justification of power of the academic staff did not have a significant role on their organizational silence. Nevertheless, the increase in the dimensions of acquiescence of power and the instrumental use of power caused an increase in their organizational silence. In this respect, the instructors may have preferred to remain silent since they may not have thought that they could make a difference by expressing their feelings and thoughts. Another reason for their silence might have been their belief that they could conduct their work more easily within the organization if they enacted silent attitudes. However, it is noteworthy that the increase in their acceptance of power caused a decrease in their acquiescent silence and defensive silence, and an increase in their prosocial silence. This might be due the instructors being aware of the power structure within the organization, hence they perhaps chose to avoid situations that could potentially harm them. However, it is suggested that further quantitative research may determine the causes for this condition.

When the results of the research regarding the demographic variables are examined in general, it can be said that female academics need to be supported in order to express their feelings and thoughts through their participation in decisions. In addition, it may be suggested to organize social activities that would increase sharing and communication, especially for single academicians to express themselves more easily. Besides, research could be conducted to create a more democratic culture at universities in order that staff such as Research Assistants, having a relatively lower level of seniority, could express their feelings and suggestions more easily. According to Çakıcı (2008, p. 119), the silence that causes organizational consequences such as the inability to use employees' intellectual contributions, ignoring problems, avoiding negative feedback, filtering information and being unresponsive to problems can detrimentally endanger the academic culture. In addition, Kahya (2015) pointed out that organizational silence usually arises from the administrative, organizational and individual fears of academic staff. It is therefore recommended that administrators of organizations motivate their employees to clearly express their views on organizational issues and to demonstrate a participatory management approach based on their ideas and suggestions. It should not be forgotten that universities are institutions of science, and are therefore places where the free sharing of

opinions should be considered as fundamental to the fabric of the institution. However, the sharing of information and voices being heard will only occur in cultures where power distance is low.

Notes

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