# The Relation between Organizational Silence and Personality Characteristics: A Study on Thermal Hotels

## Fulya Mısırdalı Yangil[1], Elif Tuba Beydilli[2]

[1](Altıntas Vocational School, Dumlupınar University, Kutahya, Turkey)
[2](Kutahya Vocational School of Social Sciences, Dumlupınar University, Kutahya, Turkey)

**ABSTRACT:** *Organizational silence is defined as a form of behavior in which employees unwilling to speak up about organizational issues and concerns. Personality characteristics of employees is an impact on the behavior they exhibit silence. This situation emphasizes on the importance of individual differences in organizational silence. In organizations the work environment where employee can easily express views, ideas and suggestions, brings with positive results at the organizational level and individual besides this, organizational silence environment is considered to be an major obstacle to organizational and individual change and development. Therefore, the formation of organizational silence environment constitutes an undesirable situation by organizations. Thus, determination of the personality characteristics of employees is regarded important in terms of understanding of organizational silence behavior. With this research, it is aimed to determine the relations between the personality characteristics and organizational silence dimensions of individuals working in the hotel business operating in the tourism sector, in five-factor personality. For this purpose, the employees working in thermal hotels that are located in Kütahya region have been selected. As a result of the analyses conducted, in the organizational silence and the Big Five Personality traits of employees, the averages are close to each other and the highest average belongs to ProSocial silence and extroversion.*

*Keywords: Organizational Silence, Personality Characteristics, Five Factors Personality Model*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Currently, both the efficiency and development of organizations mainly depend on the manpower and human resources they have [1]. Especially in labor-intensive businesses such as tourism, manpower has a significant effect on organizational success. The organizational success of both employees and managers demonstrating high motivation and performance depends on the effective communication mechanism achieved in the business [2]. Employees have creative ideas, knowledge, and opinions about the development of the business and business mechanisms. Sometimes employees share their ideas, knowledge, and opinions but sometimes they choose silence and hide their ideas, knowledge, and opinions [3]. When employees with various beliefs, virtues and experiences keep their mind to themselves, organizations lack the chance to get advantages of individual differences they already possess [4]. This situation eventually leads to organizational silence and affects the business success in a negative manner [5], [1].

The silence behavior of employees is conceptualized as a multi-dimensional structure both at the individual level [6] and at the organizational level [4], [3]. According to Pinder & Harlos (2001), the silence of employees is defined as the intentional avoidance of individual employees of sharing their behavioral, cognitive and emotional true expressions about the organization with the individuals who has the power and ability to make changes and generate solutions[6]. According to Morrison & Milliken (2000), organizational silence as a collective issue is employees' withholding their thoughts and concerns about organizational problems [4]. Organizational silence is a result of employees' rejection to convey the discomforting information to the management [7]. According to Morrison & Milliken (2000) "silence in the organizations can develop silence climate and the silence climate affects the organization in many aspects such as organizational structures/policies (e.g., centralization of decision-making and lack of formal upward feedback mechanisms), managerial practices (e.g., tendency to reject or respond negatively to dissent or negative feedback and lack of informal solicitation of negative feedback), and degree of demographic dissimilarity between employees and top managers (e.g., differences in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, and age)" [8]. Employees working in organizations with organizational silence climate tend to avoid expressing their opinions as they believe that their thoughts and opinions are invaluable to the organization or as they are afraid of negative reactions. In addition to this, employees may adopt three different types of silence depending on the organizational structure. These types of silence are grouped as "acquiescent silence", "defensive silence", "ProSocial silence" [3].

Acquiescent silence is based on submission and avoidance of expressing related opinions, information, and ideas. Employees that exhibit acquiescent silence behavior tend to let go the current situation and are reluctant to make an effort to talk, be involved or change the current situation. Acquiescent silence is a

conscious passive behavior. When employees believe that they cannot make the difference, they do not concern about contributing ideas or proactive suggestions [3].

Defensive silence is the employees' avoidance of expressing their ideas, opinions or knowledge depending on the fear and tendency to protect themselves. Defensive silence is a conscious and proactive behavior in order to protect oneself against external danger and threats. Defensive silence is more proactive than acquiescent silence. A conscious decision to keep ideas, knowledge, and opinions about the best personal strategy, which includes a conscious evaluation of alternatives, is followed. Defensive silence includes hiding the information due to the fear related to personal risks of expressing the information and opinions. Defensive silence also includes hiding personal failures as a way of protecting oneself [3].

ProSocial silence, on the other hand, is hiding ideas, knowledge, and opinions on the business in the favor of other people or organization. It is mainly based on thinking of others and cooperation. In contrast with defensive silence, in ProSocial silence, employees act with the concern about other employee/employees instead of the fear of negative personal outcomes that may occur due to talking [3].

These three types of silence [3] in which employees consciously withhold their ideas, knowledge, and opinions on the subject are a behavioral choice [9] having an impact on organizational change, development [4] and performance. Along with the effect of many factors related to the organization such as organizational structure and managerial practices on silence behavior [10], there is the effect of the employee input such as personal traits as well [11]. Because, under the same conditions, some individuals prefer to remain silent [12] when others prefer to share their ideas, thoughts, and opinions. This variation can be accepted as an indicator of the fact that the personality traits of employees are associated with silence behavior. In the literature, studies on the variety of personality traits demonstrate that the Big Five Personality model is very useful for understanding and classification of personality traits [13], and therefore, it is frequently used in many studies [14], [15]. This situation suggests that the personality is composed of five independent dimensions and these dimensions provide a significant and meaningful classification for studying personal differences [16]. The Big Five is composed of extraversion, emotional stability, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience [17], [18] which are enjoying increasing acceptance and popularity among personality psychologists [15]. According to Barrick & Mount (1991), these five factors are expressed as follows: extraversion, which is associated with being sociable, gregarious, assertive, talkative, and active; emotional stability, which is associated with being anxious, depressed, angry, embarrassed, emotional, worried, and insecure; agreeableness, which is associated with this being courteous, flexible, trusting, good-natured, cooperative, forgiving, soft-hearted, and tolerant; conscientiousness, which is associated with being careful, responsible and organized; openness to experience, which is associated with being imaginative, cultured, curious, original, broad-minded, intelligent, and artistically sensitive [17].

Upon examining explanations on personality traits, it is seen that they are focused on individuals' relationships with others and healthy communication skills [12]. Within this scope, personality traits of employees working in an organization affect their silence levels. In the study of Şimşek & Aktaş (2014), they expressed that personality traits may be determinative in silence behavior and people with different personality traits may exhibit different silence behaviors. According to this study, introverted individuals exhibit acquiescent and defensive silence more often while extroverted ones tend to exhibit ProSocial silence behavior. ProSocial silence corresponds to more positive personality traits than acquiescent and defensive silence. Introversion vs. extroversion is the most important personality trait that interacts with silence behavior and reflects the individual's way of communication.

As seen above, there is a limited number of studies on how different personality traits affect different types of silence to be adopted by employees in organizations. Accordingly, in order to prevent the silence climate in the organization and avoid possible negative outcomes, the identification of the personality traits of employees gains importance. From this point of view, which type of organizational silence behavior is adopted by individuals with personality traits presented in the Big Five Personality Factors Model will be determined in this study.

## II.     METHODOLOGY

**Significance and Purpose of the Study**

Along with the modern management understanding, the articulation of ideas, information, and concerns about the organization by employees has a great importance for organizational development and sustainability. In this aspect, organizational silence occurs to have a significant place in the organizational behavior discipline. Organizational silence, especially in labor-intensive businesses, largely affects the contribution of the individual to the organization. In this interaction process, it is essential to determine the causes of silence and to take related organizational precautions. This study has a great importance for the identification of which organizational silence type is adopted by individuals with which personality traits by determining the personality profiles of individuals. In this context, the purpose of this study is to determine the relation between

the Big Five Personality traits of individuals working in hotel establishments in the tourism sector and organizational silence dimensions.

**Limitations of the Study**
Only the employees of thermal hotels in Kütahya province are included in this study. Thus, the results of the study are evaluated by considering related hotels. For the generalization of the results of this study, research must be conducted on a larger sampling.

**Sampling and Data Collection Tools**
The sampling of the study consists of 110 randomly selected individuals working in thermal hotels in Kütahya between December 2015 and January 2016. The data have been collected by surveys. The "Organizational Silence Scale" developed by Dyne, Soon and Botero (2003) was used in the determination of organizational silence. In order to identify the personality traits, the International Personality Inventory (IPI) composed of 50 statements developed within the scope of the International Personality Inventory Item Pool (IPIP) project by Goldberg (1999) was used. The survey was designed as three sections. In the first section, there are 6 demographic questions produced in the nominal scale (gender, age, department, working period, working period in the sector and educational level). The second section includes 15 questions in the ordinal scale and the third section includes 50 ordinal scale questions developed by Likert-type scale.

Within the scope of the study, the average number of employees working in thermal hotels has been calculated to be around 200. According to this, 185 surveys were distributed in accordance with the working hours of employees. After the application, 126 of the surveys were returned as answered but 16 of them were excluded from evaluation as they contained mistakes, were unfinished or had too many unanswered questions. The final evaluation was performed on 110 proper surveys.

**Findings**
The data collected in the study were brought in compliance with the analysis in SPSS 17.0 statistical packaged software. In the analysis of given answers, descriptive statistics were calculated for the purpose of determining organizational silence and personality profiles with demographic properties. In order to show differences between demographical properties of employees and organizational silence and personality profiles, the analysis of variance was applied. To identify the relation between organizational silence and personality profiles, the correlation analysis was conducted.

In the study, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient for 15 questions in the Organizational Silence Scale was calculated as 0.844 and the Cronbach Alpha coefficient for 50 questions in the International Personality Inventory was calculated as 0.840. According to these values found for the questions forming the main frame of the scales and the answers given, the scales used were shown to be highly reliable.

**Table 1.** Organizational Silence Descriptive Statistics

| Organizational Silence | Average |
|---|---|
| Acquiescent silence | 2.34 |
| Defensive silence | 1.97 |
| ProSocial silence | 3.47 |

According to Table 1, the ProSocial silence level among the organizational silence dimensions of employees was shown to be higher than other silence types with the average of 3.47.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics of the Big Five Personality Model

| The Big Five Personality Dimensions | Averaga |
|---|---|
| Extroversion | 3.48 |
| Agreeableness | 3.38 |
| Conscientiousness | 3.29 |
| Emotional stability | 3.16 |
| Openness to experience | 3.25 |

According to Table 2, based on the answers given to the questions forming the Big Five Personality Model, the dimension of extroversion of Kütahya thermal hotel employees is higher than other dimensions with the average of 3.48.

In the study, before conducting the analysis of variance, the normal distribution of organizational silence and the Big Five Personality Model was checked by the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. According to this, it was shown that the data were not distributed normally and nonparametric test techniques were used. In the data analysis, the Mann-Whitney U Test was applied for paired comparison and the Kruskal-Wallis Test was applied for multiple comparisons.

**Table 3.** Table of Gender and Organizational Silence Paired Comparison Results

| | | Acquiescent silence | Defensive silence | ProSocial silence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | P | 0.134 | 0.811 | 0.009 |

**Table 4.** Table of Gender and the Big Five Personality Model Paired Comparison Results

| | | Extroversion | Agreeableness | Conscientiousness | Emotional stability | Openness to experience |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | P | 0.131 | 0.001 | 0.320 | 0.366 | 0.681 |

According to the gender variable, there is a significant difference between the ProSocial silence dimension among the organizational silence dimensions and the dimension of agreeableness among the Big Five Personality model dimensions. It was found out that this difference resulted from the fact that male employees had higher levels than the female ones.

**Table 5.** Table of Organizational Silence Multiple Comparison Results

| | | Acquiescent silence | Defensive silence | ProSocial silence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | Test value | 6.180 | 8.654 | 7.318 |
| | P | 0.103 | 0.034 | 0.062 |
| Department | Test value | 15.640 | 20.784 | 10.304 |
| | P | 0.008 | 0.001 | 0.067 |
| Working Period | Test value | 1.666 | 3.054 | 2.959 |
| | P | 0.645 | 0.383 | 0.398 |
| Working Period in the Sector | Test value | 1.910 | 1.648 | 4.690 |
| | P | 0.513 | 0.648 | 0.196 |
| Educational Level | Test value | 8.285 | 9.751 | 6.974 |
| | P | 0.082 | 0.052 | 0.137 |

According to the age variable of employees, there is a significant difference in the dimension of defensive silence. There is no significant difference in other dimensions. According to the multiple comparison test, this difference results from the difference between 30-39 and 40-49 age groups.

According to the employees' department variable, there is a significant difference between the acquiescent silence and defensive silence dimensions. There is no significant difference in the ProSocial silence dimension. According to the multiple comparison test, the difference in the acquiescent silence dimension results from the difference between the employees working in front office, catering and management and employees working in the technical department. The difference in the defensive silence dimension was shown to result from the difference between the employees working in the front office and employees working in catering, housekeeping, and technical departments.

According to the educational level variable of employees, there is a significant difference in the defensive silence dimension. There are no significant differences in other silence dimensions. According to the multiple comparison test, this difference results from the difference between primary education graduates and high school graduates and employees with bachelor's degree.

According to the variables of the employees' working periods at the hotel and their working periods in the sector, there is no significant difference in any of the organizational silence dimensions.

**Table 6.** Table of the BigFive Personality Model Multiple Comparison Results

| | | Extroversion | Agreeableness | Conscientiousness | Emotional stability | Openness to experience |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | Test value | 4.442 | 11.486 | 4.047 | 5.136 | 4.970 |
| | P | 0.218 | 0.009 | 0.256 | 0.162 | 0.174 |
| Department | Test value | 10.181 | 27.523 | 17.825 | 11.400 | 19.500 |
| | P | 0.070 | 0.000 | 0.003 | 0.044 | 0.001 |
| Working Period | Test value | 0.876 | 4.746 | 2.853 | 2.576 | 0.605 |
| | P | 0.831 | 0.191 | 0.415 | 0.462 | 0.895 |
| Working Period in the Sector | Test value | 2.996 | 1.415 | 1.410 | 5.734 | 2.299 |
| | P | 0.392 | 0.702 | 0.703 | 0.125 | 0.513 |
| Educational Level | Test value | 7.481 | 3.891 | 4.736 | 12.879 | 6.980 |
| | P | 0.113 | 0.421 | 0.315 | 0.012 | 0.137 |

According to the employees' age variable, there is a significant difference in the agreeableness dimension. There is no significant difference in any other of the dimensions. According to the multiple comparison test, this difference results from the difference between 20-29 and 30-39 age groups.

According to the department variable of employees, there are no significant differences in the agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness to experience dimensions. Furthermore, there is no significant difference in the extroversion dimension. According to the multiple comparison test, the difference in the agreeableness dimension results from the difference between the catering department and front office, housekeeping, technical, and other departments; the difference in the conscientiousness dimension results from the difference between front office and technical department; the difference in the emotional stability dimension results from the difference between housekeeping and technical department, and the difference in the openness to experience dimension results from the difference between front office and catering and housekeeping departments.

According to the educational level variable of employees, there is a significant difference in the emotional stability dimension. However, there are no significant differences in any other dimensions. According to the multiple comparison test, this difference results from the difference between the employees with bachelor's degree and primary school and high school graduates.

According to the variables of the employees' working periods at the hotel and their working periods in the sector, there are no significant differences in any of the Big Five Personality Model dimensions.

**Table 7.** Results of the Spearman Correlation Analysis Conducted to Determine the Relation Between Organizational Silence and the Big Five Personality Model

| Variables | N | R | P |
|---|---|---|---|
| ProSocial Silence | 110 | -0.314 | 0.001 |
| Emotional stability | | | |
| ProSocial Silence | 110 | -0.308 | 0.001 |
| Openness to experience | | | |

According to Table 7, there was found a negative and medium-level relation between the ProSocial silence dimension and the emotional stability and openness to experience dimensions.

## III. CONCLUSION

As a result of the analyses conducted, in the organizational silence and the Big Five Personality traits of employees, the averages are close to each other and the highest average belongs to ProSocial silence and extroversion. This result supports the study of Şimşek and Aktaş (2014). According to the results of this study, introverted/extroverted personality is identified as the most important personality trait correlated with silence behavior.

As a result of the correlation analysis conducted in order to determine the relation between the organizational silence dimensions and the Big Five Personality Model dimension, it has been shown that there is a negative and medium-level relation between the ProSocial silence dimension and the emotional stability and openness to experience dimensions.

As a result of the analyses of variance conducted to understand whether demographic variables create any difference in organizational silence and personality traits, it has been presented that there is a significant differentiation in the defensive silence dimension according to the age, department and educational level variables, in the ProSocial silence dimension according to the gender variable, and in the acquiescent silence dimension according to the department variable.

On the other hand, in the dimensions of the Big Five Personality Traits, there is a significant differentiation in the agreeableness dimension according to the gender, age, and department variables, in the emotional stability dimension according to the educational level variable, in the conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness to experience dimensions according to the department variable.

In the light of all the results, the assessment of the outcomes of organizational silence with regard to personality traits may support the adoption of different approaches to personnel recruitment, organizational communication and silence by businesses.

**NOTES**

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