

Full Length Research Paper

An investigation of teachers' loneliness in the workplace in terms of human values they possess

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The purpose of this study is to investigate teachers' loneliness in the workplace in terms of human values they possess. The research is of the relational survey model. Teachers' perception of human values forms the independent variables of the research model. The level of teachers' loneliness in the workplace, on the other hand, constitutes the dependent variables of the research model. The study group of the present research consists of 472 primary education teachers working in the Konya Province of Turkey in 2009 who were selected using the random cluster sampling method. Of the teachers who constituted the sample, 242 were male and 230 were female. Schwartz' Values Inventory was used to measure teachers' preferences of human values and Loneliness in the Workplace Scale was used to measure their loneliness in the workplace. The results of the study indicate that there is a negative correlation between teachers' preferences of human values and the emotional deprivation and social companionship dimensions of loneliness in the workplace. Likewise, teachers' preferences of values account for variability in the emotional deprivation and social companionship dimensions of loneliness.

Key words: Human values, teacher, loneliness in the workplace.

INTRODUCTION

Problems caused by transformational transition periods have led people to depression: Disintegration of old and traditional values in almost all fields of the social structure and failure to replace these disintegrating values with new values can be suggested as the fundamental reason for this depression (Köktaş, 1998). Values are important for life because the thing that constitutes society, which is composed of humans coming together, is their collective feelings and beliefs. Values that are shared are extremely important in the formation and development of societies (Kızılçelik, 1994). Social changes that were experienced in transformation from an agricultural society into an industrial society and then into an information society almost led to the collapse of an understanding of ethics based on traditions and religion. Traditional values of ethics have been replaced by an understanding of ethics based on attaining success no matter what it costs and ignore values such as conscience, honesty, trust and virtue (Şen, 1998).

One has the right to choose in the process of expression all of their actions. Having to employ certain

criteria in this very process of choosing, one expresses their actions by making a specific judgment through certain values. Although many discussions have been made and studies have been conducted on the concept of value from scientific and philosophical points of view, no consensus has been reached as to what values involve. It has been argued in certain periods that values bear subjective qualities and that the concept of value is not based on objective grounds. Many of the theoreticians have attempted to explain values by relating them to various concepts. The fact that the concept of value has made its way into different disciplines renders definition of this concept very difficult (Dilmaç and Ekşi, 2007). Values are defined as generalised moral principles or beliefs that are believed by a majority of people who make up a group or society to be correct and necessary for ensuring and continuing the functioning and survival of people and which reflect their emotions, ideas, goals and interests (Kızılçelik and Erjem, 1992).

Values are frequently used criteria in determining achievements of employees. Shared values are significant

determiners for an understanding of organisational characteristics and organisational identity (Çelik, 2000). Values are thought to be directly effective on employees' behaviour in the workplace, because shared values are also reflected on personal relationships. For example, it is observed that individuals with similar values have good relations with one another. The fact, that these relations are good, removes unfavourable factors in the process of communication and increases job satisfaction (Erkmen and Şencan 1994). Studies conducted in this regard have revealed that personal values are important for the behaviour of individuals (Vandenbergh and Peiró, 1999).

Studies conducted in the field of behavioral sciences indicate that generally individuals attract those that have similar values to theirs and use similarity attraction paradigm (Adkins, Ravlin and Meglino, 1996).

It is quite difficult to understand and evaluate individuals' problems without information about their values due to the influence of values on individuals' behaviour and attitude. Therefore, it is possible to predict behaviour and attitudes of individuals, groups and cultures by obtaining information about their values (Basaran, 1992). The state of mutual harmony among employees' personality, values, goals and attitudes in the context of individual-organisation harmony is defined as integrative (supplementary) harmony (Taşdan, 2008). One of the variables that the values individuals possess influence can be the feeling of loneliness and the feeling of loneliness in the workplace.

Loneliness is a situation where people feel that they are not understood and therefore feel alone. In a general sense, loneliness is a psychological state created by loose relationships between individuals and insufficient social interaction (Ernst and Cacioppo, 1999). Loneliness can be defined as a state where harmony with the environment is upset, individuals feel alone and not understood, and disharmony and unhappiness prevail (Geçtan, 1999). Loneliness arises as a result of the fact that individuals perceive other individuals around as sources of threat, feel extremely worried and detach themselves from other people mostly due to barriers between individuals and lack of communication (Yalom, 1999). Effects of feelings of loneliness on individuals and its reflections on the environment may influence certain features that arise from the interaction between employees and organisation (Yılmaz, 2008). Loneliness is not a state that individuals prefer when they want to be alone. However, loneliness creates an unfavourable state involving a low level of social relationships and feelings of high levels of stress (Hawkley, Burleson, Berntson and Cacioppo, 2003). Environmental, social and psychological factors may influence loneliness (Levin and Stokas, 1986).

Loneliness in the workplace is different from other concepts of loneliness. Loneliness in the workplace expresses a state of being left alone arising from social

environment, isolating and being on one's own. Loneliness, on the other hand, arises from individual characteristics (Wright et al, 2006). Individuals lead their lives within the framework of relationships that they establish with people in their social circles. Relationships established with people from different positions and statuses such as relatives, friends and family have positive and negative effects. Cohen (2004) pointed out the positive influence of social relationships on individuals' health and emphasised the significance of patterns of relationship in the social sphere on our physical health and well-being. On the other hand, Cacioppo, Hawkley, Crawford, Ernst, Burleson, Kowalewski, Malarkey, Van Cauter and Bernston, (2002) stated that social isolation and loneliness are predictors of social relations in our lives. Kafetsios (2002) maintained that loneliness arising from social environment results from a lack of social interaction network or not being a member of a group where common interests and activities are shared and can be solved by accessing a satisfactory social network (Weiss, 1973). Loneliness is a peculiar emotional state stemming from social relationships. Generally, loneliness arises from a lack of social interaction (Chadsey, 1992). Loneliness in the workplace, on the other hand, is an emotional state originating from the fact that relationships in the workplace are not sufficiently good (Wright et al., 2006). According to Gumbert and Boyd (1984), loneliness in the workplace negatively affects the state of psychological well-being. Also, loneliness affects job performance negatively. Social support and doing the work alone affect loneliness in the workplace more. This effect is more than the lack of social activity. The relationships among people in the workplace are more connected with loneliness than factors such as organisational citizenship and team work. İş yerine ki yalnızlık iş yerine kaliteli ilişkiler kaynaklanan açığa sebep olabilir (Wright et al., 2006).

Loneliness of individuals in the workplace may be affected by values. Individuals' preferences concerning values may help us understand their characteristics in other areas. Therefore, values may influence individuals' loneliness in the workplace. The purpose of the present study also concerns this. The purpose of the study is to investigate teachers' loneliness in their business life in terms of human values that they possess. Answers were sought to the following questions for this purpose.

1. Is there a significant correlation between the power, achievement, stimulation, hedonism, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity and security dimensions of teachers' preferred human values and the social companionship and emotional deprivation dimensions of loneliness in the workplace?
2. Do the power, achievement, stimulation, hedonism, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity and security dimensions of teachers' preferred human values significantly account for the variability in

the social companionship and emotional deprivation dimensions of loneliness in the workplace?

METHODOLOGY

The research model, its population and sample, its data collection tools and the statistical methods used in the evaluation of the collected data are presented in this section.

Research model

This study is of the relational survey model. There are two fundamental variables in the research model, namely dependent and independent variables. Teachers' perceptions of human values constitute the independent variable of study. Teachers' levels of loneliness in the workplace, on the other hand, constitute the dependent variables of the research. The study investigates the existence of significant relationship between teachers' value perceptions and their loneliness in the workplace.

Research population

Primary education teachers who worked in Konya in the year 2009 constitute the research population. The number of primary education teachers working in Konya in 2009 was 5311. Since primary education teachers exhibit similar characteristics, the random sampling method was used. A total of 472 primary education teachers selected through the random sampling method from this population constituted the study group of the research. Of the teachers who formed the sample, 242 were male and 230 were female.

Data collection tools

Schwartz Values Inventory (SVI)

Schwartz Values Inventory (SVI) was used to measure teachers' preferences of human values. Schwartz Values Inventory (SVI) is composed of 57 values. After the subjects read those 57 values and the explanations provided in brackets, they evaluated each of them on a scale ranging from 1 (it is against my principles) to 7 (it is extremely important) in terms of their importance as principles that guide their lives. These fifty seven values were grouped into 10 sub-dimensions. These sub-dimensions are listed as power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-control, universality, charity, traditionalism, harmony and security. The reliability coefficients for the value dimensions were calculated in the study conducted by Kuşdil and Kağıtçıbaşı (2000). The reliability coefficients for the value dimensions range between 0.51 and 0.77.

Loneliness in the Workplace Scale

Loneliness in the workplace scale was developed by Wright (2006). It was adapted to Turkish by Doğan (2007) and its validity and reliability were tested. The scale consists of two dimensions. The first 9 items constitute the "Emotional deprivation" sub-dimension, whereas the last 7 items constitute the "Social companionship" sub-dimension. The reliability coefficient for the whole of the scale (Cronbach alpha) is .91, whereas it is .87 for the emotional deprivation sub-dimension and .83 for the social companionship sub-dimension. The scores that can be received from the whole scale vary between 16 and 80 and higher scores point to increasing loneliness in the workplace.

Analysis of the data

Whether there is a significant relationship between teachers' values and their levels of loneliness in the workplace was tested using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient Technique. The level by which teachers' values significantly account for their loneliness in the workplace was tested using the multiple regression technique. The level of significance in data analysis is usually taken to be 0.05 in educational studies (Balci, 2004). Therefore, the level of significance adopted in this study is also 0.05.

RESULTS

This section includes the findings and comments reached as a result of the statistical analyses done regarding sub-problems of the study. Whether there was a significant relationship between teachers' human values and their levels of loneliness in the workplace was tested using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient Technique and the results were given in Table 1.

As will be understood from the Table 1, a significant and negative relationship was found between the emotional deprivation and social companionship dimensions of teachers' loneliness in the workplace and the achievement, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, hedonism and security dimensions of teachers' human values. No significant relationship was found between the power dimension of human values and the emotional deprivation and social companionship dimensions of loneliness in the workplace.

The degree to which teachers' preferences of human values predict variability in the emotional deprivation sub-dimension of loneliness in the workplace was tested through regression analysis and the results were given in Table 2.

Teachers' human values account for 2.2% of the variability in the emotional deprivation dimension of teachers' loneliness in the workplace. Viewed from this perspective, teachers' human values significantly predict the emotional deprivation dimension of loneliness in the workplace. When the effects of scores that teachers received from the sub-dimensions of human values scale are examined separately, it is observed that they do not significantly predict the variability in the emotional deprivation dimension of loneliness in the workplace.

Table 3 shows the degree to which teachers' preferred human values predict the variability in the social companionship dimension of loneliness in the workplace. 7.5% of the variability in the social companionship dimension of teachers' loneliness in the workplace is accounted for by teachers' human values. Thus, teachers' human values significantly predict the social companionship dimension of loneliness in the workplace. When the effects of scores that teachers received from the sub-dimensions of human values scale are examined separately, it is observed that the stimulation and tradition dimensions of human values significantly predict the variability in the emotional deprivation sub-dimension of loneliness in the

Table 1. Correlation between teachers' preferred values and loneliness in the workplace.

Human value dimension	Loneliness in the workplace	
	Emotional deprivation	Social companionship
Power	0.032	-0.062
Achievement	-0.105*	-0.232*
Hedonism	-0.056	-0.189*
Stimulation	-0.104*	-0.210*
Self-direction	-0.134*	-0.256*
Universalism	-0.147*	-0.246*
Benevolence	-0.168*	-0.242*
Tradition	-0.095*	-0.130*
Conformity	-0.138*	-0.220*
Security	-0.149*	-0.236*

*P < 0.05.

Table 2. The degree to which teachers' preferred values account for the emotional deprivation dimension of loneliness in the workplace.

Variable	R	R ²	F	p	Dimension of human value	t	p
Human value	0.207	0.022	2.059	0.026*	Power	1.733	0.084
					Achievement	0.204	0.839
					Hedonism	0.611	0.542
					Stimulation	-1.496	0.135
					Self-direction	0.193	0.847
					Universalism	0.074	0.941
					Benevolence	-1.457	0.146
					Tradition	0.764	0.445
					Conformity	-0.308	0.758
					Security	-0.575	0.566

Dependent variable: Emotional deprivation Sub-dimension of Loneliness in the workplace. *P < 0.05.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

When the results of the study were examined, a negative and significant relationship was found between the emotional deprivation dimension of teachers' loneliness in the workplace and the achievement, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity and security dimensions of teachers' human values. No relationship was found between the hedonism and power dimensions of human values and emotional deprivation. At the same time, teachers' human values significantly accounted for the loneliness in the emotional deprivation dimension of teachers' loneliness in the workplace.

Humans are beings who feel an ethical responsibility because they might have performed other actions, but they did not do so, and they deliberately chose the actions that they performed (Özakpınar, 1999). Ethics is an urge that already exists in human nature. Therefore, humans always wish to see ethical behaviour around them. This ethical urge requires that individuals themselves

also exhibit ethical behaviour. This means that what we consider right for ourselves must be right for others, too. Again, this ethical urge begins within individuals themselves but they should be valid for everybody else, too (Handy, 1998). As will be understood from these explanations, individuals are beings that are conscious of their value preferences. At the same time, they are aware that the individuals around them are obliged to behave in harmony with values. Therefore, teachers who prefer human values may be perceived by people around them as individuals who can be interacted with. Teachers who possess human values may engage in more interaction with their environment. Evidently, teachers' having high levels of human values may cause them not to experience emotional deprivation. Other teachers may not want to interact with teachers who do not have human values. Other teachers may not establish a bond with teachers whose human value preferences are low. Teachers' not establishing a bond with teachers who have low human value preferences may lead these

Table 3. The extent to which teachers' preferred values account for the social companionship dimension of loneliness in the workplace.

Variable	R	R ²	F	p	Dimension of human value	t	p
Human values	0.308	0.075	4.817	0.000	Power	0.950	0.343
					Achievement	-0.904	0.367
					Hedonism	-0.417	0.677
					Stimulation	-1.886	0.050*
					Self-direction	-0.932	0.352
					Universalism	-0.448	0.654
					Benevolence	-1.003	0.317
					Tradition	2.611	0.009*
					Conformity	-0.550	0.582
					Security	-0.082	0.935

Dependent variable: Social companionship Sub-Dimension of Loneliness in the workplace. *P<0.05.

teachers to emotional deprivation, because according to Weiss (1973), lack of a close bond to another person may cause emotional deprivation where feelings of anxiety and emptiness may be observed.

The other result of the study is that a significant and negative relationship was found between the social companionship dimension of teachers' loneliness in the workplace and the achievement, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity and security dimensions of teachers' human values. No significant relationship was found between the power dimension of human values and the social companionship dimension of loneliness in the workplace. At the same time, teachers' human values significantly account for the variability in the social companionship dimension of teachers' loneliness in the workplace.

Loneliness arising from social companionship includes shortcomings in social network. It is a kind of loneliness that is observed together with depression and boredom that arise from the lack of social network which encompasses social relationships. In other words, it arises from the lack of social relationships where individuals belong to a group in which they share their common interests and activities (Weiss, 1973). Teachers who do not prefer human values much may be shunned by other teachers, which may push them to loneliness.

Values have a significant place in the examination of organisational behaviour, because values are essential in understanding attitudes, perceptions, personality and motivation (Robbins, 1994). This indicates that social companionship of teachers within the institution may be affected by human values. Social integration, which is defined as the participation of individuals in extensive social relationships, i.e. social network, constitutes a multi-dimensional structure. Individuals who attain social integration experience positive psychological conditions such as feeling themselves valuable and feeling responsibility under the influence of social interaction and pressure that they experience (Cohen, 2004). Therefore,

it can be conceived that teachers who think that they are socially shunned do not prefer human values, either.

Values also explain how some people stay in institutions for a long time but can not adapt to them. For example, an aggressive or audacious staff member may not adjust to the organisation properly in an institution where values of courtesy, respect and conformity predominate (Yaman, 2001). At the same time, it is believed that values are directly influential on employees' behaviour in the workplace. Values that are shared among individuals are reflected in their relationships. It is observed that individuals with similar values establish relationships among themselves. By this way, the common communication system removes unfavourable factors in business relationships such as ambiguity and excess stimulation (Erkmen and Şencan 1994). As can be understood from these explanations, teachers who prefer human values may not suffer from loneliness in the workplace.

An examination of the relevant literature reveals that studies have not been conducted on similar topics, but it can be inferred that findings of some studies are in support of the present study. It was found that there is a strong connection between employees' human values and their being proud of the group of which they are members and their feelings about quitting their jobs (Tyler, Degoey and Smith, 1996; Tyler and Blader, 2000; Lipponen Olkkonen and Myyry, 2004). This finding may support the results of this study.

According to Özensel (2003), values are used to realise the objectives of the organisation, protect employees' rights and attach employees to the organisation. This indicates that teachers with high perceptions of values may not experience feelings of loneliness in the workplace because they are much attached to the organisation. A reverse relationship was found between the organisational climate and loneliness as a result of the studies that have been conducted (Wright, 2005). Given that a strong organisational climate is based on values, it

may be concluded that this result is in support of the findings of the present study.

The following suggestions can be made in so far as the results of the study allow: when it is considered that human values can be improved through education, teachers may be given human values education so that they will not experience feelings of loneliness in the workplace. Efforts can also be made to make human values a part of the school culture.

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