

Managing Emotions in the Workplace: It's Mediating Effect on the Relationship between Organizational Trust and Occupational Stress

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the mediating effect of emotion management on the relationship between organizational trust and occupational stress. Since managing emotions in the workplace is a complex issue, this study also aimed to offer an insight into the emotion management of employees. Data were obtained using a survey method from a sample of 167 academics working in different universities in Istanbul. A series of regression analyses was conducted to test the mediating effect of emotion management. It was determined that the ability to manage emotions in the workplace partially mediate the relationship between organizational trust and occupational stress. The results of the study show that managing emotions in the workplace can affect the stress levels of employees. High levels of organizational trust can promote emotion management in the workplace, which in turn can contribute to reducing work-related stress.

Keywords: emotion management, organizational trust, occupational stress

1. Introduction

In recent years, managers have tried to identify areas that elicit advantages to their organizations so that they can keep ahead of their competitors. Organizational Trust is one of the most important factors in organizational efficiency. Shoorman et al. (2007) stated that people process information about others in terms of cognitive components; they decide how much risk to take with others, and that forms the basis of trust in a working environment. Besides cognitive components, trust also involves emotion. According to Jones and George (1998), emotions provide information about how people experience trust. Individuals who face continuous change in today's working environment have to spend much of their time pushing themselves to the limit, regardless of the type of work in which they are engaged (Ornek 2006). Individuals have a desire to control their emotions while trying to deal with stress-causing events (Lazarus & Folkman 1984). According to Ashforth and Humphrey (1995), emotions are an inseparable part of organizational life, so the emotional status of employees demands consideration.

In recent years, emotional intelligence, which is used to examine organizational efficiency and success, is a concept that has been seen as being closely related to individuals' cognitive and affective properties (Guney, 2000). Although many explanations exist in the literature, emotional intelligence in its simplest aspect can be defined as the mental usage of emotions, and it includes individual awareness, the ability to manage emotions, self-motivation, and developing effective communication skills (Weisinger, 1998). In order to manage emotions, individuals should be aware of the emotions that are experienced in a particular situation. Emotional awareness is the degree to which emotions are consciously recognized by the individual and to which he could become aware of his own emotions. (Craig, 2004; Damasio, 1994; Lambie & Marcel, 2002). Emotion management is one of the dimensions of emotional intelligence, and it is considered that employees have to manage their emotions effectively in order to display appropriate emotions in the workplace. One of the factors that can influence expression of emotions is sociability which pertains to cooperation and forming connections with others (Brambilla et al., 2011). It is thought that sociability can help to share one's emotions with others.

Stress is a complex concept that can affect an individual's behavior, their relation with others, and the individual's work efficiency (Tinaz, 2005). Stress can be defined as the emotional and physical reaction of the individual toward threatening factors in the surroundings (Simsek et al., 2005). Generally, stress is the pushing of an individual's psychological or physiological limits, and Occupational Stress is the form of stress that

comprises work-related factors (Telman & Unsal, 2004). Stress-causing work conditions create pressure and difficulty for employees and create anxiety (Baltas & Baltas, 2002). From an organizational viewpoint, stress causes a decrease in attention to work, especially tasks demanding mental skill (Sabuncuoglu & Tuz, 2005), an increase in work accidents, an increase in absenteeism, and an increase in employee turnover rate (Williams & Cooper, 2002). Stress has negative effects on human relations, such as creating a lack of trust in people, a tendency to blame others, and protective behavior (Braham, 1998). In working life, when the psychological and physical limits of the individual are pushed—in other words, when the stress factor emerges—it is believed that the individual will have greater difficulty in perceiving the positive efforts of others; this militates against an efficient work environment. High levels of trust promote interpersonal cooperation in an organization (McAllister, 1995). Organizational Trust is a fundamental factor for an organization to survive in today's competitive environment and it reflects the perceptions of an employee related to the support provided by the organization (Mishra & Morrissey, 1990). It is considered that Organizational Trust gives employees the opportunity to manage their emotions effectively so that they experience less stress at work.

For today's working conditions, it is very important to examine models that can be helpful in reducing employee's stress. In the present study, it is hypothesized that Organizational Trust is related to Occupational Stress through the ability to manage emotions in the workplace. It is expected that because of its power to establish a positive environment, Organizational Trust will have a positive effect on emotion management. Emotion management is a helpful instrument for employees to deal with the stressful events they face. In this context, it is expected that emotion management will have a positive effect on coping with stress. Figure 1 provides the hypothesized model for the study.



Figure 1. Hypothesized model of occupational stress

Notes: (+), positive relationship; (-), negative relationship.

The hypotheses of the study were conducted as follows:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Organizational Trust is positively related to Emotion Management.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Emotion Management is negatively related to Occupational Stress.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Emotion Management mediates the relationship between Organizational Trust and Occupational Stress.

2. Method

The participants were 167 academics (95 women, 72 men) working in nine different universities in Istanbul. Of the subjects, 43.1% worked in science and technology; 56.9% worked in the social sciences. In terms of age, 24% of the subjects were 20–29 years, 38.9% 30–39 years, 14.4% 40–49 years, 13.8% 50–59 years, and 9% 60 years and over. In terms of work experience at their respective universities, 20.4% of the subjects had worked less than 1 year, 37.1% 1–3 years, 19.2% 4–6 years, 15.6% 7–9 years, and 7.8% over 10 years.

I appointed two senior psychology students with high academic grades for the Organizational Behavior course to help in conducting the survey. For this purpose, they visited nine universities randomly selected among the universities in Istanbul. Of 200 academics approached, 167 completed the questionnaire on a convenience basis; the return rate was thus 84%.

For measuring Organizational Trust, the Organizational Trust Scale ($\alpha = 0.95$) developed by Boru et al. (2007) was used. The 36-item scale was developed in Turkish and comprises 10 factors (Islamoglu et al., 2007): Honesty and fairness; having a positive character; exerting a calm and reasonable disposition; paying attention to hiring and orientation procedures; eliciting employee dependence; financial stability; showing concern for others and being respectful; giving objective performance ratings; showing consideration for employees' needs; and securing long-term employment. Together, these factors accounted for 63.80% of the total variance. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for the 36-item Organizational Trust Scale was 0.96. The Occupational Stress Scale, developed by House and Rizzo (1972), was used for measuring Occupational Stress. This scale consists of seven items that measure employees' perceptions of pressure and frustrations stemming from their work. According to various studies, the Cronbach's alpha values of the scale ranges between 0.71 and 0.89 (Netemeyer et al., 1990; Cropanzo et al., 1997; Grandney & Cropanzano, 1998). The Occupational Stress Scale was translated into Turkish ($\alpha = 0.84$).

by Efeoglu (2006). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for the Occupational Stress Scale was 0.83.

For the present study, a questionnaire was developed in order to measure emotion-management skills of the subjects. The questionnaire, which includes five sub-dimensions of emotion management as defined by Yaylaci (2006), consists of 10 items. According to Yaylaci (2006), the sub-dimensions of emotion management are self-control, self-consciousness, communication, social skills, and empathy (Yaylaci, 2006). The definitions of those five sub-dimensions were taken into consideration when preparing the questionnaire. For each sub-dimension two items were written and four of them were prepared as reverse items. A Varimax-rotated factor analysis was conducted: it revealed two factors that together accounted for 57.03% of the total variance. The item "In the workplace, I easily realize the effects of my colleagues' behavior on me, and I know the cause of my emotions" was removed from the analysis since its factor loading referred to a theoretical complexity. The item "In a work-related situation, I don't need to explain my emotions to other people" was also removed from the analysis since it had a factor loading under .50 (Costello & Osborne, 2005). The first factor consisted of four items, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient for that factor was .74. The second factor comprised four items, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient for that was .73 (Table 1). The factors and items were analyzed and it was determined that the items under the first factor were more likely to relate to sociability and the items under the second factor were more likely to relate to emotional awareness of employees. Therefore the first factor was defined as "sociability" and the second factor as "emotional awareness".

Table 1. Varimax-rotated factor loadings for managing emotions in the workplace

	Loading	Variance explained	α
1. Sociability			
I like to help my colleagues develop their skills at work.	.766	29.53 %	.74
Even if I understand the emotions of a colleague,			
I have difficulties telling that person about it. (RI)*	.743		
When something happens that affects my relationship with a colleague, I want to share my thoughts and emotions with that colleague.	.722		
I like to display my capabilities at work.	.644		
2. Emotional Awareness			
Even if I feel myself under pressure in the workplace,		27.50 %	.73
I can focus on what I have to do.	.874		
When I encounter difficulties at work, I lose clarity of thought. (RI)*	.781		
In the workplace, there are times when I do not realize the effect my behavior has on the people around me. (RI)*	.603		
When a colleague experiences any issues at work,		Total variance explained	57.03 %
I can easily understand that colleague's emotions.	.532		
(Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy)	.794	Bartlett's test of sphericity	App.chi-square
			373.820
			Df. 28
			Sig. .000

Note: *(RI) Reverse item.

3. Results

In the first step of the analysis, the relationship among Organizational Trust, Emotion Management in the Workplace, and Occupational Stress were investigated. Table 2 indicates the means, standard deviations, and correlations among the study variables.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations among the study variables (n=167)

	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1. O.T. ^a	119.19	30.63	1	0.26**	-0.46**
2. E.M.W. ^b	32.61	5.32	0.26**	1	-0.34**
3.O.S. ^d	16.62	5.23	-0.46**	-0.34**	1

Notes: ^a Organizational Trust. ^b Emotion Management in the Workplace. ^c Occupational Stress. ** $p < 0.01$.

According to Baron and Kenny (1986), the following conditions are needed to prove a mediation effect between dependent and independent variables. First, the independent variable must influence the mediator significantly. Second, the independent variable must significantly influence the dependent variable. Third, the mediator must significantly influence the dependent variable. If all these conditions are fulfilled, the effect of the independent variable decreases when the mediator enters the last step. If the independent variable becomes insignificant when the mediator accedes to the equation, there is a full mediating effect.

The effect of Organizational Trust on Emotion Management in the Workplace was first tested using a regression analysis (Table 3). It was revealed that Organizational Trust has a positive effect on Emotion Management in the Workplace ($\beta = 0.307, p < 0.01$). Thus H1 was supported.

Table 3. Regression analysis for the effect of organizational trust on emotion management in the workplace (n=167)

Emotion Management in the Workplace		
	β	t
Organizational Trust	0.307	4.142**
F	17.158	
R	0.307	
R ²	0.094	
Adjusted R ²	0.089	

Note: ** $p < 0.01$.

The effect of Organizational Trust on Occupational Stress was then tested with a regression analysis (Table 4). It was revealed that Organizational Trust has a significant effect on Occupational Stress ($\beta = -0.459, p < 0.01$).

Table 4. Regression analysis for the effect of organizational trust on occupational stress (n=167)

Occupational Stress		
	β	t
Organizational Trust	-0.459	6.635**
F	44.022	
R	0.459	
R ²	0.211	
Adjusted R ²	0.206	

Note: ** $p < 0.01$.

Third, the effect of Emotion Management in the Workplace on Occupational Stress was tested using a regression analysis (Table 5). It was revealed that Emotion Management in the Workplace has a negative effect on Occupational Stress ($\beta = -0.387, p < 0.01$). Thus H2 was supported.

Table 5. Regression analysis for the effect of emotion management in the workplace on occupational stress (n=167)

Occupational Stress		
	β	t
Emotion Management in the Workplace	-0.387	-5.388**
F	29.028	
R	0.387	
R ²	0.150	
Adjusted R ²	0.144	

Note: ** $p < 0.01$.

To test the mediating effect of Emotion Management in the Workplace on the relationship between Organizational Trust and Occupational Stress, in the last step, Organizational Trust and Emotion Management in the Workplace were together entered into the analysis (Table 6). The effect of Organizational Trust decreased when Emotion Management in the Workplace was entered into the equation ($\beta = -0.376, p < 0.01$). The result of multiple regression analysis indicated that Emotion Management in the Workplace partially mediated the

relationship between Organizational Trust and Occupational Stress. Thus H3 was partially supported.

Table 6. Multiple regression analysis for the effects of organizational trust and emotion management in the workplace on occupational stress (n=167)

	Occupational Stress	
	β	t
Organizational Trust	-0.376	-5.385**
Emotion Management in the Workplace	-0.272	-3.893**
F		31.477
R		0.527
R2		0.277
Adjusted R2		0.269

Note:** $p < 0.01$.

4. Discussion

In this study, it was revealed that Organizational Trust has a significant effect on Managing Emotions in the Workplace, which in turn affect the level of Occupational Stress. In other words, the ability of Managing Emotions in the Workplace partially mediates the relationship between Organizational Trust and Occupational Stress.

Organizational Trust reduces opportunism and promotes cooperation (Nooteboom, 1996), which helps create a peaceful environment in the workplace. There is a positive relationship between Organizational Trust and the development of cooperation within an organization (La Porta et al., 1997). Employees can manage their emotions more easily in a workplace in which cooperation operates. According to Hurst (1984), a high level of Organizational Trust exerts positive effects on the quality of problem-solving and decision-making skills of employees. Advanced problem-solving skills make it easier for employees to manage their emotions in problematic situations. Becker et al. (1996) stated that Organizational Trust increases employee motivation, which in turn creates a positive effect on performance. Cook and Wall (1980) suggested that a high level of trust in organizations is related to organizational loyalty and job satisfaction. It is thought that loyalty and job satisfaction elicit a positive atmosphere, which provides the opportunity to share thoughts and emotions honestly in the workplace. It is believed that a comfortable working atmosphere allows employees to engage in managing their emotions more easily in the workplace.

Employees usually have to handle many issues throughout the working day, so they may not have time to consider how to manage their emotions to be more effective in the workplace. However, emotion management, which signifies understanding a situation and handling it effectively (Weisinger, 1998) frees employees and allows them to develop in their own fields. When coping with emotions appropriately in work-related situations, employees are able to view problems under different perspectives (Yu, 2000). The ability to manage emotions simply facilitates the ability to clarify issues and helps solve problems, thereby reducing stress in the workplace. In the present study it was also revealed that sociability and emotional awareness were two important dimensions of emotion management in the workplace. Sociability leads to openness to new ideas and commitment to colleagues (Goffee & Jones, 1998) which can make the employees harmonize easier with the work environment. Being aware of the emotions of others and of his own can help the individual to cope with the issues experienced in the workplace.

Stress is a situation of tension that threatens the ability of individuals to deal with their surroundings in terms of their thought processes or physical conditions (Davis 1984). Occupational Stress is one of the most important health-risk factors for employees in developed and developing countries (Rehman et al., 2012). In organizations, it is considered that supporting individuals dealing with negative emotions is more effective in the long term than preventing those individuals from living with their emotions. If no time and opportunity are given to employees to cope with their emotional problems, those employees cannot adapt to changes in the organization, and this will have a negative effect not only on the individual but on the whole organization (Barutçugil, 2004). Handling emotional problems and stress demands the development of skills for managing emotions. Managing emotions properly is also a way of coping with daily issues, e.g., difficulties in the workplace. Emotion management gives a person the opportunity to stay calm and adapt easily to different circumstances (Salopek, 1998).

The results of this study add to previous research linking Emotion Management in the Workplace with Organizational Trust and Occupational Stress. Further research is needed to understand how employees manage

their emotions in the workplace and investigate the relations among emotion management, stress and trust thoroughly. Illumination of these relations can assist subordinates and superiors in creating a more stress-free and positive work environment.

There are some limitations of this study. Some gender differences may exist in emotion management. Women in general have a greater tendency than men for emotional engagement (Fujita et al., 1991). In future studies, gender differences in managing emotions in the workplace need to be examined in terms of their effects on the relationship between Organizational Trust and Occupational Stress.

In the present sample, 92.2% of the respondents had less than 10 years' work experience. Employees who have worked in an organization over 10 years could have different perspectives, which could affect their sense of security, stress level, and also emotions experienced in the workplace. Another limitation is the uniformity of the work setting in which the survey was conducted. For greater generalization of the results, similar studies should be done in work settings other than academia.

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