

An Evaluation of the Impact of Organizational Silence and Organizational Socialization on Teacher Development

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Abstract; This study investigates the effects of organizational silence and organizational socialization on teacher development in secondary schools affiliated with the national education system. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with ten teachers working at five different schools during the Spring term of the 2024–2025 academic year. The findings reveal that organizational silence hinders innovation and collaboration, whereas organizational socialization fosters trust, communication, and professional development. The study also provides various recommendations regarding school management and educational policy.

Keywords: Organizational silence; organizational socialization; teacher development; qualitative research

INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions are not merely domains for the production and transmission of knowledge; they are also complex social systems in which organizational relationships, power structures, and cultural norms are formed and negotiated (Poekert, 2022). In this context, teacher professional development is not solely shaped by individual effort and pedagogical experience but is also deeply influenced by organizational structures, administrative interactions, and social dynamics (Klar et al., 2020).

Teachers' development is directly linked to social learning processes and the interactive environments within the organization. Informal learning practices—such as peer-to-peer knowledge sharing, collaborative problem-solving, and social

participation—play a decisive role in the formation of teacher identity (Kyndt et al., 2022). However, the effectiveness of these processes is closely related to individuals' ability to express their thoughts freely and to experience psychological safety within the organization. At this point, the concepts of organizational silence and organizational socialization provide a critical framework for understanding the quality of interpersonal interactions in the workplace. Organizational silence, defined as the intentional withholding of ideas, opinions, or concerns, represents a significant barrier to innovation, particularly in educational settings (Zhou & George, 2018). In schools, this silence can directly hinder teacher participation, the generation of novel ideas, and professional development (Jiang et al., 2020). Conversely, organizational socialization positively influences teachers' adaptation to institutional culture, their relationships with colleagues, and their professional motivation (Hobson & Maxwell, 2020). This process is especially vital for novice teachers in terms of job retention and occupational commitment (Vangrieken et al., 2023). Open communication, mutual trust, and supportive leadership within the institution are among the key factors that facilitate socialization and reduce organizational silence (Gkorezis et al., 2019). This study aims to analyze the impact of teachers' experiences with organizational silence and socialization on their professional development. By drawing on qualitative data, it seeks to provide insights into how a more inclusive and learning-centered organizational climate can be cultivated in educational institutions.

Problem Statement

Teachers, as one of the core components of educational systems, play a vital role in the academic and social success of students through their personal and professional development. Therefore, understanding the organizational factors that influence teacher development is crucial for enhancing institutional effectiveness. In this context, the concepts of organizational silence and organizational socialization are closely associated with the processes of professional growth in teaching. Organizational silence refers to situations in which employees refrain from expressing their thoughts, opinions, or emotions related to the organization due to various reasons (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Çakıcı, 2007). In educational settings, teachers' reluctance to voice their concerns can negatively impact both individual growth and institutional learning (Yaman & Ruhi, 2011). Particularly in schools characterized by rigid hierarchical structures, fear of reprisal or negative consequences when providing critical feedback to administrators may lead teachers to adopt silence as a coping strategy (Eroğlu, 2011). On the other hand, organizational socialization encompasses the knowledge, skills, and attitudes individuals acquire during the process of adapting to an institution and its culture (Taşçı, 2006). This process is significant not only for newly inducted teachers but also for experienced educators in terms of remaining open to professional innovations. In schools where socialization levels are high, teacher interaction increases, experience-sharing becomes more prevalent, and professional

development is actively supported (Kaya & Selvitopu, 2013).

A review of the existing literature reveals that studies simultaneously examining both organizational silence and socialization remain limited. Yet, these two constructs are inherently interrelated and collectively influence teacher development in various ways. Institutions with strong socialization practices can foster the psychological safety necessary for open expression, whereas environments dominated by silence may weaken these processes and hinder professional growth.

Purpose of The Study

The primary aim of this study is to examine how the levels of organizational silence and organizational socialization influence teacher development. Specifically, the study seeks to uncover the supportive or inhibiting roles that teachers' perceptions of these phenomena play in their professional development processes.

Research Question

How do secondary school teachers affiliated with the national education system perceive organizational silence and socialization, and how do these perceptions affect their professional development?

Sub-Questions

What are the levels and causes of organizational silence among teachers?

How does organizational silence affect teachers' commitment to innovation and pedagogical practices?

In what ways does organizational silence impact professional development?

How do social skills influence perceptions of organizational silence?

To what extent does socialization contribute to professional development?

How do organizational silence and socialization affect motivation and job satisfaction?

Do these effects differ based on gender, tenure, and school type?

Significance of The Study

This study provides important insights into how organizational dynamics influence teacher development. From a theoretical perspective, it aims to fill a unique gap in the educational leadership literature by exploring the intersection of organizational silence and organizational socialization—an area that has been relatively underexplored. For practitioners, the findings offer valuable guidance for school leaders seeking to foster open communication, promote professional growth, and enhance motivation within educational institutions.

Limitations

This research is limited to ten teachers working in five public secondary schools affiliated with the national education system. Data were collected during the Spring term of the 2024–2025 academic year. Therefore, the generalizability of the findings is constrained.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational silence, a term introduced by Morrison and Milliken (2000), refers to the collective phenomenon where employees withhold their opinions and

concerns, often due to fear of negative consequences. In educational settings, this silence may arise from hierarchical structures, administrative practices, or cultural norms that discourage open expression. Recent research has linked organizational silence with reduced innovation, psychological stress, and professional stagnation (Demirtaş & Aksoy, 2022).

In parallel, social interaction within institutions serves as a critical factor in mitigating silence. Vygotskian theories underscore the role of social dialogue in cognitive and emotional development, especially among educators who thrive in collaborative environments. Teachers' motivation, job satisfaction, and performance have all been associated with the frequency and quality of interpersonal relationships within schools (Karaca & Eren, 2021).

The interplay between silence and social interaction has gained traction in recent literature. Yıldız (2023) found that weak social bonds often lead to increased silence, which in turn decreases professional motivation and impedes classroom effectiveness. Meanwhile, studies on teacher communication suggest that inclusive and participatory leadership styles encourage open dialogue and reduce organizational inertia (Çalık & Kurt, 2023).

Moreover, research in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus remains limited. This study addresses that gap by examining how secondary school teachers experience and interpret silence and social interaction in their professional environments.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore how organizational silence and social interaction manifest in the daily experiences of public secondary school teachers. A phenomenological approach was adopted to obtain in-depth data based on participants' lived experiences and perceptions. This methodology enabled a focused examination of how institutional factors influencing silence are experienced at the individual level.

Participants

The study sample consisted of 20 volunteer teachers working in public secondary schools located in various regions of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Participants were selected using criterion sampling, ensuring representation across different subject areas and varying years of teaching experience. This method aimed to achieve meaningful diversity in accordance with predetermined criteria.

Data Collection Tools

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. An interview form developed by the researchers was used to guide the conversation. The form included open-ended questions on teachers' communication behaviors, perceptions of silence, social interaction experiences, and the impact of these factors on their professional performance.

Data Collection Process

Interviews were conducted face-to-face and each session lasted approximately 20–30 minutes. Interviews were recorded with participant consent and later transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis was employed to interpret the transcribed data. Responses were categorized under themes based on frequency and commonality. Data coding and thematic development were conducted manually by two independent researchers to ensure consistency and validity. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutions, and participant confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process.

RESULTS

Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants

Variable	n	%
Gender		
Female	9	90.0
Male	1	10.0
Graduate Education		
None	7	70.0
Master's Degree	1	10.0
Ongoing Doctorate	1	10.0
Doctorate	1	10.0
Age Range		
20–29	2	20.0
30–39	7	70.0
40–49	1	10.0
50–59	0	0.0
Years of Service		
0–4 years	6	60.0
5–9 years	2	20.0
10–14 years	1	10.0
15–19 years	0	0.0
20–24 years	1	10.0
25+ years	0	0.0
Institution		
Lapta Yavuzlar High School	2	20.0
Polatpaşa High School	2	20.0
Güzelyurt Kurtuluş High School	2	20.0
Cengiz Topel Vocational School	1	10.0
Hala Sultan Theological College	1	10.0
Sedat Simavi Vocational School	1	10.0

Lefke Gazi High School	1	10.0
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The majority of participants were female (90%) and predominantly in the 30–39 age group. Most had less than five years of teaching experience, and graduate-level qualifications were limited. Participants were evenly distributed across seven different schools.

Table 2. Themes Related to Organizational Silence

Themes	(n)	(%)
Hopelessness towards administration	6	60
Anxiety of visibility among new teachers	4	40
Professional pressure and inability to express	5	50
Silence in the face of injustice	3	30
Process of understanding the issue	2	20

Participants expressed that their silence often stemmed from feelings of hopelessness about school leadership and fear of standing out, especially among newer teachers. Professional stress and perceived injustices were also significant contributors.

Table 3. Organizational Silence Causes and Cultural Indicators

Themes	(n)	(%)
Prejudices and lack of trust	5	50
Perception of seniority-based superiority	4	40
Conflicts caused by administration	3	30
Lack of democracy in institutional culture	4	40
Exclusion and cliques	4	40

Participants identified organizational silence as stemming from distrust, perceived hierarchy based on experience, administrative conflicts, and undemocratic practices. Exclusion within staff groups also contributed to a culture of silence.

Table 4. Effects of Silence on Professional Development

Themes	(n)	(%)
Communication barriers in development processes	6	60
Weakening of innovation and creativity	5	50
Decrease in knowledge and experience sharing	4	40
Loss of professional motivation	3	30
Stagnation in individual growth	2	20

Organizational silence was found to obstruct teacher communication and knowledge sharing, suppressing innovation and professional motivation. The long-term outcome included stagnation in personal development.

Table 5. Contributions of Organizational Socialization to Teacher Development

Themes	(n)	(%)
Enhancing collaboration	6	60
Building trust	5	50
Increasing motivation and belonging	4	40
Promoting knowledge sharing	3	30

Themes	(n)	(%)
Ineffectiveness of forced interaction	2	20

Organizational socialization contributed positively to teacher development by improving collaboration, building interpersonal trust, enhancing motivation and belonging, and encouraging knowledge exchange. However, forced or insincere interactions were seen as ineffective.

Table 6. Communication Barriers within Organizational Structure

Themes	(n)	(%)
Grouping and exclusion	7	70
Gossip	6	60
Judgment and prejudice	4	40
Inefficiency caused by negative interpersonal dynamics	4	40
Lack of a supportive social environment	3	30

Participants reported communication problems arising from group-based exclusion, gossip, judgmental attitudes, and toxic interactions. The absence of a socially safe and inclusive environment was found to further hinder communication.

Table 7. Impact of Social Relationships on Teacher Motivation and Performance

Themes	(n)	(%)
Positive social relations boost teacher motivation	8	80
Negative social interactions reduce teacher productivity	6	60
Direct impact on teacher-student relationships	5	50
Influence on classroom performance	4	40
Contribution of social ties to psychological well-being	3	30

Teachers emphasized that positive social dynamics significantly enhance motivation and classroom effectiveness. Conversely, negative interactions lowered performance and psychological wellness, even affecting student relationships.

Table 8. Psychological Effects of Social Relationships on Teachers

Themes	(n)	(%)
Positive emotional influence of social ties	7	70
Role in increasing productivity	6	60
Strengthening communication with students	5	50
Motivation decline in negative environments	4	40
Reinforcement of belonging	3	30

Positive social relationships enhanced emotional well-being and productivity, while negative environments reduced motivation. Strengthening communication with

students and a sense of belonging were noted as key benefits.

Table 9. Effects of Lack of Social Interaction on Organizational Silence

Themes	(n)	(%)
Lack of social interaction increases organizational silence	8	80
Negative impact on teacher development	7	70
Decreased knowledge sharing due to communication gaps	6	60
Loss of motivation	4	40
Weakened sense of belonging	3	30

Teachers indicated that limited social interaction contributes significantly to organizational silence. This leads to less information exchange, decreased motivation, and a reduced sense of professional belonging.

Table 10. Recommendations for Reducing Organizational Silence

Themes	(n)	(%)
Open communication and trust-building	6	60
Participatory decision-making processes	5	50
Activities promoting social interaction	4	40
Positive reinforcement and motivation	3	30
Transparency and fairness	2	20

Participants suggested fostering open communication, involving teachers in decisions, and promoting fairness and trust to reduce silence in educational settings.

Table 11. Suggestions to Enhance Teacher Development

Themes	(n)	(%)
Collaborative and project-based activities	6	60
Environments for sharing and experience exchange	5	50
Increased opportunities for training and seminars	5	50
Strengthening interaction through social activities	4	40
Strategies to boost internal motivation	3	30

Recommendations for enhancing teacher development included creating sharing platforms, offering more professional development opportunities, and implementing motivation-boosting strategies.

This section presents the thematic findings derived from interviews with secondary school teachers regarding their experiences of organizational silence and social interaction.

Organizational Silence and Teacher Behavior

Teachers reported that organizational silence often results from administrative indifference, fear of repercussions, and exclusion within staff cliques. Most participants indicated that their silence is not due to lack of ideas, but rather due to perceived risks and ineffective communication channels.

Role of Social Interaction in Teacher Development

Participants emphasized that strong interpersonal communication supports professional growth, increases motivation, and facilitates knowledge exchange. Lack of social engagement, especially for newly appointed teachers, was found to lead to emotional isolation and a decrease in innovation.

Communication Barriers in School Culture

Themes such as gossip, prejudice, and cliquing were common. These social dynamics not only obstruct communication but also contribute to psychological stress and professional stagnation.

Influence of Social Bonds on Motivation and Performance

Data showed that positive social environments enhance teaching motivation, student relationships, and classroom effectiveness. Teachers with stronger social connections reported greater emotional well-being and job satisfaction.

Recommendations for Reducing Organizational Silence

Teachers proposed increased transparency, team-based activities, and leadership strategies that encourage inclusivity and trust as key measures for reducing silence in school environments.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the phenomenon of organizational silence is consistent with existing literature in educational settings, and that in the national context, the concept is enriched with new dimensions. Teachers' accounts revealed that silence is not associated with passivity or disinterest but is rather a strategic response to systemic barriers, fear of negative feedback, and exclusionary school cultures. This finding aligns with the theory of Morrison and Milliken (2000), which links organizational silence to power imbalances and fear of punishment within institutions. One of the key contributions of this study is the emphasis on the mutual dependence between organizational silence and social interaction. Teachers lacking meaningful interpersonal relationships frequently reported feelings of loneliness and a lack of belonging; this in turn increased their tendency to remain silent. This result corresponds with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural perspective that highlights the role of interaction in cognitive and professional development. Moreover, the study found that administrative behaviors directly influence institutional communication dynamics. In institutions that adopt participatory leadership approaches and foster an inclusive school culture, levels of silence were lower, while professional motivation was higher. This finding parallels the results of Çalık and Kurt (2023), who examined the link between democratic leadership and reduced organizational inertia. The study's implementation within a specific national context provides a unique contribution to the literature by revealing how local school cultures and societal expectations shape communication norms. The reluctance of newly appointed teachers to express themselves may be viewed as a reflection of broader societal hierarchies and a prevailing institutional obedience culture.

Overall, the study demonstrates that leadership, institutional culture, and interpersonal support systems play a critical role in reducing organizational silence and building a vibrant professional learning environment. Future research could explore the long-term effects of communication-based intervention programs, or investigate the quantitative reflections of the themes identified in this study to further contribute to the literature.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that organizational silence and lack of social interaction among teachers have a substantial impact on professional development, communication quality, and emotional well-being in educational institutions. Teachers in TRNC secondary schools often refrain from expressing themselves due to fear of misinterpretation, social exclusion, or institutional inaction. A significant outcome of the research is the identification of strong interpersonal relations and open communication as vital elements that reduce silence and promote collaboration. In environments where dialogue is encouraged, teachers feel more empowered and engaged in both professional and student-centered processes. The research suggests that educational leaders should cultivate a culture of transparency, encourage collegial exchange, and reduce hierarchical barriers. Creating structured platforms for teachers to share their opinions and fostering inclusive social interactions are key to addressing the silent dynamics within schools.

Future Research

This study focused on secondary school teachers' perceptions of organizational silence and socialization, and examined how these two phenomena influence professional development. Future research can enhance the generalizability of findings by including larger sample groups and employing mixed or quantitative methods. Comparative studies involving teachers from different educational levels (e.g., primary, high school, private institutions) may offer deeper insights into how organizational dynamics vary by context. Additionally, incorporating the perspectives of school administrators, educational inspectors, and even parents could contribute to a more multidimensional understanding of organizational silence and socialization. Longitudinal studies are also important for observing changes in organizational behavior over time and for evaluating the long-term effects of these changes on teacher development. Finally, given the increasing role of digital platforms in educational settings, future studies should also explore the nature of social interaction in virtual environments and investigate how digital forms of organizational silence emerge and evolve.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered. First, the research was conducted with only ten teachers working in public secondary schools in five different regions under the Ministry of Education, which limits the generalizability of the findings. As a qualitative case study, the results may not reflect the experiences

of teachers working in different regions or educational levels.

Additionally, the use of semi-structured interviews as the sole data collection tool may have limited the depth of participants' responses due to concerns about social desirability or personal reservations. The absence of longitudinal data prevented an evaluation of the long-term effects of organizational silence and socialization on teacher development.

Lastly, this study was limited to the perspectives of teachers; the views of school leaders and other stakeholders were not included. Therefore, future research is recommended to adopt multi-actor approaches to allow for a more comprehensive understanding of institutional dynamics.

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