




A Study of Organizational Silence from the Viewpoint of Female Students in Male-Dominated Classrooms

Örgütsel Sessizlik Kavramına Erkek Egemen Sınıflardaki Kız Öğrenciler Açısından Bir Bakış

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Abstract

Organizational silence behavior is one of the problems frequently experienced by women working in male-dominated workplaces. Women working in such workplaces prefer to remain silent about the problems that they face or the issues that concern the organization in general for various reasons. The aim of this study is to determine whether the same behavior is experienced by female students in male-dominated classrooms. The study was conducted with 102 students in a male-dominated university. On the evaluation of the survey, it is seen that female students showed behaviors similar to those of male students in all three sub-dimensions of organizational silence, and they were able to express the problems they experienced or observed without worrying about damaging the image of the class, being labeled as troublemakers, or being excluded from the class. It is thought that this study will have a positive contribution to the literature researching not only the relations between female and male students in the classroom but also different aspects of organizational silence. Future research may focus on investigating whether the differences in the behaviors of male and female employees in workplace or their reactions to events are also experienced by male and female students in the educational environment, comparing the behaviors of male and female students in male-dominated classrooms, and identifying differences between generations in this regard.

Keywords: Female students, male-dominated, organizational silence, classroom

Paper Type: Research

Öz

Örgütsel sessizlik davranışı, erkek egemen işyerlerinde çalışan kadınların sıklıkla yaşadığı sorunlardan biridir. Bu tür işyerlerinde çalışan kadınlar çeşitli nedenlerle karşılaştıkları sorunlar veya örgütün genelini ilgilendiren konularda sessiz kalmayı tercih etmektedirler. Bu araştırmanın amacı, aynı davranışın erkek egemen sınıflardaki kız öğrenciler tarafından da yaşanıp yaşanmadığını belirlemektir. Araştırma erkek egemen bir üniversitede 102 öğrenci ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın sonucunda, kız öğrencilerin örgütsel sessizliğin üç alt boyutunda da erkek öğrencilere yakın davranış gösterdikleri, yaşadıkları ya da gözlemledikleri sorunları sınıfın imajına zarar verme, sorun çıkaran biri olarak etiketlenme ya da sınıftan dışlanma gibi kaygılara kapılmadan dile getirebildikleri tespit edilmiştir. Bu çalışmanın hem erkek egemen bir sınıf ortamında kız ve erkek öğrenciler arasındaki ilişkilerin incelenmesine hem de örgütsel sessizliğin farklı boyutlarını araştıran literatüre olumlu katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir. Gelecekteki araştırmalar, işyerlerinde kadın ve erkek çalışanların davranışları ya da yaşanan olaylara verdikleri tepki farklılıklarının eğitim ortamında da kız ve erkek öğrenciler arasında yaşanıp yaşanmadığını araştırmaya, erkek egemen sınıflarda kadın ve erkeklerin davranışlarının karşılaştırılmasına ve bu konuda kuşaklar arasındaki farkların tespit edilmesine odaklanabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kız öğrenciler, erkek egemen, örgütsel sessizlik, sınıf

Makale Türü: Araştırma

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Introduction

Ever since women started working outside the house, they have faced some hardships because this was the beginning of a change in their roles in society, which meant they could assume the roles of men in addition to the ones given to them by nature. This situation caused unease among men, which was triggered by women working outside their houses, and the unease doubled when they started to work in male-dominated jobs. Meanwhile, women have faced a lot of reactions, most of which are caused by the bias against them, and they have responded to these reactions in several ways, ranging from active ones such as the creation of women's solidarity movements, networking, and organizing activities to make their voices heard, to some passive ones such as being patient, keeping silent, and enduring as much as they can. Of these, keeping silent for various reasons in the face of problems is called "organizational silence". This research aims to see if organizational silence, which is a common reaction of women in male-dominated workplaces in the face of problems (Mahrukh, Ayaz and Liaqat, 2019, p.164; Reyes, 2015, p. 901) is also a common reaction of female students in male-dominated classrooms.

Organizational silence is withholding information about potential problems or issues by employees in an organization or industry (Morrison and Miliken, 2000, p. 710). It is a potentially dangerous impediment to organizational change and development and is likely to pose a significant obstacle to the development of truly pluralistic organizations (Morrison and Miliken, 2000, p. 712).

In an organization, there are some dynamics that give rise to organizational silence. They are top management team characteristics, organizational and environmental characteristics, factors affecting employee interaction, implicit managerial belief, organizational structures and policies, managers' fear of negative feedback, and demographic dissimilarities (Bagheri, Zarei and Aeen, 2012, p. 50). Besides, top managers' fear of receiving negative feedback, especially from subordinates, is also an important factor that creates a climate of silence (Morrison and Miliken, 2000, p. 714).

Although silence has been categorized in several ways, the one made by Dyne, Ang and Botero (2003, p. 1365) has been widely adopted. According to this, organizational silence is conceptualized as a multi-dimensional construct and it is classified into three categories: acquiescent silence, defensive silence, and prosocial silence.

Acquiescent silence refers to the deliberate withholding of information on work related issues (Dyne et al., 2003, p. 1367). When employees do not get the reaction they expect from managers to the information they share, they think that sharing information does not cause any change and therefore unnecessary. This perception leads employees to acquiescent silence behaviour. It has been determined that this situation prevents therealization of innovations in the workplace (Argyris and Schon, 1978), affect organizational change effort (Morrison and Miliken, 2000, p. 715), and harm job satisfaction and organizational commitment of the employees (Morrison and Miliken, 2000, p. 716; Vakola and Bouradas, 2005, p. 444).

Defensive silence occurs when individuals hide their opinions and information because they are afraid or want to protect themselves. This can be said to be proactive silence (Dyne et al., 2003, p. 1367). Individuals prefer not to speak if they believe that if they share their information, they may be penalized, be considered as troublemakers or lose their jobs. Thus, they think that they will avoid the negative consequences of speaking up and adopt defensive silence behavior.

Pro-social silence refers to the withholding of work-related ideas, information, or opinions to benefit other people or the organization, based on altruism or cooperative motives (Dyne et al., 2003, p. 1367, Knoll and Van Dick, 2013, p. 352). This means that individuals who adopt pro-social silence behavior withhold some information to protect the reputation of the

organization, to prevent damage to the corporate image, and to be useful to the organization (Dyne et al., 2003, p. 1367). In addition, they may not speak up for fear of breaking ties with their colleagues and losing the social network (Miliken, Morrison and Hewlin, 2003, p. 1455; Rosenthal, 1996). They tolerate difficulties in the organization by declining to complain about inconveniences (Dedahanov, Kim and Rhee, 2015, p. 485).

1. Literature Review

Women have had to struggle with problems arising from their gender since the first day they entered the world of work. Years have passed by, radical changes have occurred in work life, but the problems women face have not ended. According to the ILO (International Labor Organization) Report (2020), women face discrimination in the workplace because employers may prefer male employees because they can work longer hours, are more resilient, and do not have to leave their jobs for reasons such as pregnancy and childcare. Another area where women are discriminated against is in salaries, with one study revealing that the gender pay gap in Türkiye is 15,6%. A report in 2022 showed that one of the most common complaints of women in work is the obstacles that prevent them from reaching top management positions (McKinsey, 2022).

It is also found that women do not benefit sufficiently from educational opportunities and are therefore not preferred in employment or can only work in jobs that do not require much education, whereas as their level of education increases, they are able to reach higher positions in their workplaces. Research shows that women experience sexual harassment, sometimes verbally and sometimes physically, as a result of being seen as sexual objects, and that young people and single or widowed women are more likely to experience sexual harassment. Women also report psychological pressure from both male and female coworkers, and that they face behaviors such as being ignored for their achievements, being humiliated, being insulted, etc. (Aksöz and Durkal, 2021, p.146; Umutlu and Öztürk, 2020, p.299; Vural, Barut, Kızıltan and Kulaksız, 2015).

Women struggle against all these challenges and react in different ways. One of these reactions is organizational silence behavior. Research proved that women experienced more organizational silence compared to men (Ateş and Önder, 2018, p. 796; Erigüç, Özer, Turaç and Songur, 2014, p. 150; Kutanis and Çetinel, 2014, p. 153). This may be because of males using authoritative language, which makes females feel reluctant to share their thoughts openly for fear of being rejected at the workplace. Another reason they may choose to remain silent is that they are often mocked when they speak in some societies; as a result, they choose to remain silent (Makrukh, Ayaz and Liakat, 2019, p. 165). In addition to these findings, Baştuğ, Pala, Yılmaz, Duyan and Günel (2016, p. 130) conducted research to see if sports employees keep silent depending on a gender basis and found that female sports employees keep silent more. Çınar, Karcıoğlu and Alioğulları (2013, p. 319) compared the two genders from the viewpoint of organizational silence and found that women are more silent compared with men in organizations. They suggested that this could be because of Turkish cultural characteristics that expect women to remain silent instead of expressing their opinions.

Contrary to these findings, Okeke-James, Igbokwe, Anyanwu and Obineme (2020) who conducted research among school teachers and tried to find the relation between gender influence on organizational silence, found no significant relationship between male teachers and female teachers regarding the silence in both open and closed school climates. Ehtiyar and Yanardağ (2008) who conducted research in a chain hotel, found that the silence levels of men and women were almost the same. Likewise, Özdemir and Sarıoğlu (2013) conducted research in the public and private sectors and concluded that organizational silence does not differ according to gender.

As can be seen from the research, studies conducted in different countries at different times and with different groups have yielded different results.

Although organizational silence has been studied from the viewpoint of the female working in male-dominated jobs so far, there hasn't been any research looking into the situation of female students in male-dominated classrooms. However, the same problem may exist for girls in boy-dominated classrooms because the classrooms where the students are educated are social organizations that have their own dynamics, and there is no doubt that the students experience almost all the incidents that are likely to take place in an organization in the classroom (Akınlolu and Haupt, 2019, p. 16; Zhang, 2010, p. 8). Because there are cooperation, inclusion, exclusion, grouping, intimidation, or alienation among the students in the classroom, just like there are among the employees in a company.

Individual personality traits influence individuals' behaviors (Akkaya and Dost, 2021, p. 481). For example, self-esteem is a factor that affects all the students, regardless of gender, and determines their reactions in various situations. Some are outgoing, while others are shy and worry about what others will think of them, so they are always quiet (Susak, 2016, p. 36). In addition to personality traits, the behaviors of people are shaped by their environment and their friends. In schools, all classes, whether they are single-sex, mixed-gender, or gender-dominated, have their own characteristics regarding the relations among the students and their reactions to various situations. Just as each gender has its own traits that contribute positively to the classroom atmosphere, so they may have their own negative features that damage the peaceful atmosphere in the classroom (Bailey and Cervero, 2008, p. 329). Interestingly enough, students, both male and female, in gender-dominated classrooms may feel "intimidated" or "constrained" by a large cohort of the other gender, or they may have the initial feelings of unease. Besides, students in the minority may not be included in the group at the beginning (Thurtle, Hammond and Jennings, 1998, p. 635). Khan, Ahmad and Ahmad (2014, p. 45) found that female students sit in a subdued manner towards one side of the classroom while male students sit all over the classroom exuding confidence.

Younger, Morrington and Williams (2010, p. 330) and Myhill (2013, p. 347) found female students face some hardships in male-dominated classrooms. Male students, who are already dominant in mixed-gender classrooms, become even more oppressive when females are in the minority. For example, they speak more frequently and longer in class discussions and are more likely to blurt out answers without raising their hands or being recognized by the instructor, sometimes even if they are not called on, or do not know as much about the topic as others in the class. On the other hand, Lee and McCabe (2021, pp. 46, 48) found that when female students do speak in class, they are much more likely to be interrupted. They articulate their responses at a lower volume and speak at shorter lengths than men. They are more likely to react to problems in a quieter and less disruptive fashion (Sadker, 2002, p. 84).

Research conducted by Jule (2003, p. 12) found that male students speak 9 times more than female students in a classroom. They try to dominate the girls by using different speaking strategies. They may interrupt everyone, even the teacher, to make their voices heard. They tend to ignore the girls' contributions and comments on the projects they do together. Girls, on the other hand, are inclined to achieve solidarity and consensus in the interaction by giving more minimal responses to support the current speakers or signal interest in the topic and using fewer directives and more attentive expressions to show cooperation (Jule, 2003, p. 12; Kendall and Tannen, 2008, p. 553; Sadker, 2002, p. 84).

In some cultures, if there is masculine dominance in classroom participation and interaction, this may result in female students' lack of confidence in matters relating to expressing themselves effectively in classroom exchanges. It is also observed that female students are hesitant and lack confidence regarding classroom participation in these classes. This may be because of the privileged position of males in society, which makes them dominant and prominent. This discourages female students' classroom interaction and creates problems for their socio-emotional well-being, eventually causing female students to lose their confidence. They don't participate in classroom activities because of their fears of feeling

inadequate in front of others, or even if they do participate, they usually direct their responses to a particular female student in a manner reflecting their lack of confidence (Curtis, 2007; Jones and Myhill, 2004, p. 553).

Sometimes, the main subject of the course, such as in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), creates confidence gaps between girls and boys because girls may believe boys are more competent in these subjects. This lack of confidence can be seen in girls' classroom participation, where they prefer anonymous answers or are less comfortable asking questions in lectures than boys (Alvarao, Cao, and Minnes, 2017, p. 31; Beyer, Rynes, Perrault, Hay, and Haller, 2003, p. 51; Brigham and Lupine, 2021; Rekha, McLure, and Barry, 2021, p. 8).

Despite the hardships female students suffer from in male-dominated classrooms, they contribute positively to the classroom atmosphere. Research conducted by Lavy and Schlosser (2006, p. 3) shows that the existence of female students softens the classroom atmosphere. Students who have more female peers report a lower level of classroom violence and disruption and better relationships with other students and teachers. That means a higher proportion of female students leads to a better classroom and learning environment, and thus a higher level of satisfaction with the school. It is confirmed by the observations of the teachers, too. Their comments on boys and girls reveal that they think girls are quieter and are more 'together' socially. Teachers say that boys are more confident, but they are disruptive and can make the class more difficult (Jones and Myhil, 2004, p. 554).

The literature mentioned above indicates that boys' attitudes in the classroom are quite oppressive for girls, which leads to the conclusion that if the classroom is male-dominated, females will face more problems, uneasiness and displeasure. This is very similar to the experience of women in male-dominated workplaces who adapt some defensive strategies to alleviate the harmful effects of being in the same place with a dominant group of the other gender. They react to these hardships in several ways, ranging from quitting their job, losing confidence, behaving like men, building networks, or working more. Sakallı (2021, p. 119) found that one of the reactions adopted by women in man-dominated environments is keeping silent.

Kutaniş and Çetinel (2014, p.169) investigated the impact of gender on silence behavior and found that silence behavior is affected by gender. They also found that the behavior of female teachers is caused by the fact that there are more male administrators at schools, there are some prejudices against women, and society puts pressure on women. Another study conducted with educators by Ateş and Önder (2019, p. 795) found that women experienced more organizational silence than men.

1.1. Hypotheses

As Khan et al. (2014, p. 44) found, female students are interrupted often and their comments and opinions are mostly ignored in male-dominated classrooms, so they may feel that their opinion won't be taken into consideration and speaking up is pointless and unlikely to make a difference. From this point of view, the first hypothesis of this study is this:

H1: Female students display more acquiescent silence in comparison with male students in the classroom.

Sometimes, individuals who are aware that they may be punished, labeled as troublemakers, or fired when they speak about certain issues prefer not to speak up, and this motivation leads employees to protect themselves from the negative consequences of speaking up, resulting in defensive silence (Beheshtifar, Borhani and Morhadam, 2012, p. 281; Wynen, Kleizen, Verhoest, Lægreid and Rolland, 2019, p. 523). One of the aims of this research is to find out if female students in male-dominated classrooms adapt defensive silence to react to these behaviors from male students. That creates the second hypothesis:

H2: Defensive silence is a reaction which female students in male-dominated classrooms adapt to protect themselves from the negative consequences of speaking up.

Generally, female students are quieter, more altruistic, and more cooperative than male students. They are associated with caring behaviors while boys are with aggression (Libretexts, 2021; Carlo, 2014, p. 218). Research has revealed that women tend to keep silent since they want to protect valued relationships in the organization. They may prefer to hide some information that may be harmful, in their opinion, to the relations among the stakeholders in the organization. (Inandı, Gün and Kılıç, 2016, p. 542) This leads us to the third hypothesis:

H3: Female students display pro-social silence because they tend to protect and sustain the nice and quiet climate in the classroom.

The studies conducted in companies show that women experience organizational silence more than men do (Ateş and Önder, 2019, p. 793; Çetinkaya and Koçyiğit, 2021, p. 1023; Kutanis and Çetinel, 2014, p. 153; Makrukh et al., 2019, p. 174.). Taking these findings into consideration, we formulated our fourth hypothesis as follows:

H4: Female students in male-dominated classrooms, just like women in men-dominated workplaces, tend to keep silent more than male students purposefully in the face of significant problems.

2. Methodology

2.1. Materials

In the research, the organizational silence of male and female students was measured by the organizational silence scale developed by Dyne et al. (2003) and adapted into Turkish by Taskiran (2010). Since the scale would be used with students, a change in wording was made and the word 'student' was used instead of 'employee'; the word "classroom" was used instead of the word "organization" in statements so that they would be understood better by the students. Special attention was given not to change the originality of the survey, and the change in wording was checked by language experts in the field to make sure that it wouldn't change the precision and authenticity of the scale.

This scale has three sub-scales. These sub-scales and the number of the items that measure them in the survey are given below.

Acquiescent Silence: Items 1–5. All items have negative verbs.

Defensive Silence: Items 6–10. All items have negative verbs.

Pro-Social Silence: Items 11-15. All items have positive verbs.

2.2. Participants

The questionnaire was given to 103 students from the prep class of a maritime university where the student body consists of mainly male students because it educates students for a male-dominated sector. There are an average of 22 students in each classroom, only 2 or 3 of whom are girls. The questionnaire was responded to by 51 girls, which means almost all the girls in the prep class were engaged in the study. Besides girls, it was given to the boys as well, so that a comparison could be made between their organizational silence behaviors.

Ethics committee approval for this study was received from the Ethics Committee for the Social and Humanities Field, Piri Reis University on February 2, 2022. The reference number for the ethics document is 2022/1.

2.3. Data Analysis

Cronbach's α coefficient was calculated to determine the reliability level of the scales and factors, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients of the organizational silence scale and its sub-dimensions

Organizational Silence and Subdimensions	Cronbach Alpha
Organizational Silence	.857
Acquiescent Silence	.804
Defensive Silence	.890
Pro-Social Silence	.837

According to the table, the α reliability coefficient obtained from the overall scale was calculated as Organizational Silence (.857), Acquiescent Silence (.804), Defensive Silence (.890) and Pro-Social Silence (.837). .70 is accepted as an acceptable value for the scales. In this sense, it is seen that high reliability was obtained for organizational silence and its sub-dimensions.

As stated above, within the scope of the research, 103 people were reached. To test the hypotheses, firstly, missing values and outliers were analyzed to decide which statistical techniques will be used. Since it was observed that there were missing values in the data set, a mean value assignment was made and an outlier analysis was performed. For univariate outliers, the scores of the scales and their sub-dimensions were converted into Z standard scores, and the values outside the range of -3 to +3 were removed from the data set. After the outliers were removed, the data belonging to 1 person in the data set consisting of 103 people was removed from the data set and the analysis continued with the data belonging to 102 people.

To determine which statistical techniques to use to test the hypotheses, the data were first examined to see if they were normally distributed. In order to test the normality of the data, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed, and histogram graphs, skewness, and kurtosis values were analyzed. Normality test results are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Normality test results for the scales

Scale/Size	n	\bar{X}	S	Median	Min	Max	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	P	Skewness	Kurtosis
Organizational Silence	102	41	10.58	40	19	72	.099	.015	.69	.98
Acquiescent Silence	102	11.78	4.58	11	5	25	.102	.011	.76	.31
Defensive Silence	102	10.32	4.85	10	5	25	.144	.000	1.11	1.09
Pro-Social Silence	102	18.91	4.95	20	5	25	.126	.000	-.78	.08

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test revealed that none of the variables' scores were normally distributed ($p < .05$). However, a decision is not made based only on this test result. Skewness and kurtosis values and histogram graphs were also analyzed. According to the skewness and kurtosis values, the scores of organizational silence (skewness = .69 and kurtosis = .98), acquiescent silence skewness = .76 and kurtosis = .31), defensive silence (skewness = 1.11 and kurtosis = 1.09), and pro-social silence (skewness = -.78 and kurtosis = .08) are normally distributed.

In order to determine the level of agreement of the participants with the dimensions, a step calculation was made using the formula [(Last category-First category) /Number of categories]. When the values were substituted in the formula, the value $(5-1) / 5 = 0.80$ was obtained and interpreted as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Evaluation criteria for participants' organizational silence and sub-dimension mean scores

\bar{X}	Result
1.00 – 1.80	Very Low
1.81 – 2.60	Low
2.61 – 3.40	Average
3.41 – 4.20	High
4.21 – 5.00	Very High

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that the mean scores obtained from organizational silence levels and sub-dimensions are graded between very low and very high.

In the analysis of the data, descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum) and unrelated samples t-test were calculated. The IBM SPSS 25 software was used to analyze the data within the scope of the research.

3. Findings

In order to test the hypotheses, first the students' organizational silence levels were examined both in general and regarding sub-dimensions. The results are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Students' levels of organizational silence in general and in sub-dimensions

Scale/Size	n	k	\bar{X}	S	\bar{X}/k	Decision
Organizational Silence	102	15	41	10.58	2.73	Average
Acquiescent Silence	102	5	11.78	4.58	2.36	Low
Defensive Silence	102	5	10.32	4.85	2.06	Low
Pro-Social Silence	102	5	18.91	4.95	3.78	High

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that the participants' organizational silence level in general is medium. In terms of sub-dimensions, it was found that acquiescent silence and defensive silence levels are low, and pro-social silence levels are high. The mean score and standard deviation values on the basis of items related to students' levels of showing organizational silence behavior are given in Table 5.

Table 5. Item-based mean scores and standard deviation values for students' levels of organizational silence behavior

Item	\bar{X}	ss	Result
1. I am reluctant to talk about proposals for change because they are not relevant to me.	2.59	1.20	Low
2. I keep my thoughts to myself as I am a person who adapts to the decisions to be taken.	2.69	1.20	Medium
3. I keep my opinions about solutions to problems to myself.	2.22	1.31	Low
4. I hesitate to express my ideas for self-improvement because I do not believe that it will make a difference in my favor.	2.03	1.19	Low
5. I refrain from expressing my opinions on how things could be done better here because I think they do not concern me.	2.25	1.21	Low
6. I do not put forward or talk about my ideas for change because I am afraid of the reaction of teachers and administrators.	2.12	1.21	Low
7. I keep my information about the classroom to myself because I am afraid of the reaction of teachers and administrators.	1.99	1.17	Low
8. In order to keep my peace in this classroom, I ignore negative situations related to the operations.	2.28	1.18	Low
9. In order to maintain my peace in the classroom, I refrain from expressing my opinions to correct deficiencies.	2.00	1.14	Low
10. I hesitate to develop solutions to problems that arise because I am afraid or afraid of the reaction of teachers and administrators.	1.93	1.12	Low
11. I keep information that should remain confidential to myself based on the ties with the class and my friends with whom I take classes.	3.77	1.26	High
12. I keep private information to myself in order to be useful in this class and to my friends.	3.43	1.37	High
13. I resist pressure from others to disclose information about my class.	3.63	1.33	High
14. I refuse to reveal information that could endanger my classmates and friends.	3.85	1.29	High
15. I keep confidential information about my class and friends in the most appropriate way.	4.22	1.10	Very High

Based on Table 5, it can be stated that items 1–10, except the second item, are at a low level of silence; the second item is at a medium level of silence; items 11–14 are at a high level of silence; and item 15 is at a very high level of silence.

To interpret the data in Table 5 better to test the hypotheses, the comparison of participants' total and sub-dimension levels of organizational silence according to gender was made. To do this, first it was examined whether the scores were normally distributed according to gender, and it was found that organizational silence and sub-dimension scores were normally distributed. An unrelated sample t-test was conducted for organizational silence and its sub-dimensions. The results of the analysis are given in Table 6.

Table 6. Comparison of participants' organizational silence and sub-dimension scores according to gender

Scale/Size	Group	n	\bar{X}	S	t	Sd	p
Organizational Silence	Male	51	41.17	12.61	.157	100	.875
	Female	51	40.84	8.19			
Acquiescent Silence	Male	51	12.34	4.94	1.241	100	.217
	Female	51	11.22	4.16			
Defensive Silence	Male	51	10.84	5.72	1.095	100	.277
	Female	51	9.79	3.77			
Pro-Social Silence	Male	51	17.99	5.51	-1.900	100	.061
	Female	51	19.83	4.18			

An analysis of Table 6 reveals the participants' general organizational silence ($t(100) = .157, p > .05$); and sub-dimensions of acquiescent silence ($t(100) = 1.241, p > .05$), defensive silence ($t(100) = 1.095, p > .05$) and pro-social silence ($t(100) = -1.900, p > .05$) scores do not differ significantly according to gender. In other words, the gender of the participants does not affect their general organizational silence, and sub-dimensions of acquiescent silence, defensive silence, and pro-social silence scores. It can be stated that women and men think similarly on these issues. The item-based comparison by gender is given in Table 7.

Table 7. Comparison of students' mean scores of organizational silence scale items according to gender

Item	Female		Male		p
	\bar{X}	Ss	\bar{X}	ss	
1. I am reluctant to talk about proposals for change because they are not relevant to me.	2.47	1.05	2.71	1.34	.317
2. I keep my thoughts to myself as I am a person who adapts to the decisions to be taken.	2.47	1.21	2.90	1.17	.070
3. I keep my opinions about solutions to problems to myself.	2.00	1.25	2.43	1.35	.096
4. I hesitate to express my ideas for self-improvement because I do not believe that it will make a difference in my favor.	1.98	1.09	2.08	1.29	.679
5. I refrain from expressing my opinions on how things could be done better here because I think they do not concern me.	2.29	1.22	2.22	1.21	.745
6. I do not put forward or talk about my ideas for change because I am afraid of the reaction of teachers and administrators.	2.04	1.10	2.20	1.33	.524
7. I keep my information about the classroom to myself because I am afraid of the reaction of teachers and administrators.	1.86	1.06	2.12	1.28	.275
8. In order to keep my peace in this classroom, I ignore negative situations related to the operations.	2.12	1.07	2.43	1.27	.189
9. In order to maintain my peace in the classroom, I refrain from expressing my opinions to correct deficiencies.	1.96	1.00	2.04	1.26	.729
10. I hesitate to develop solutions to problems that arise because I am afraid of the reaction of teachers and administrators.	1.80	0.98	2.06	1.24	.252
11. I keep information that should remain confidential to myself based on the ties with the class and my friends with whom I take classes.	3.96	1.22	3.59	1.28	.136
12. I keep private information to myself in order to be useful in this class and to my friends.	3.62	1.33	3.24	1.41	.172
13. I resist pressure from others to disclose information about my class.	3.88	1.23	3.39	1.40	.067
14. I refuse to disclose information that may harm my class and friends.	3.90	1.29	3.80	1.30	.702
15. I keep confidential information about my class and friends in the most appropriate way.	4.48	0.78	3.96	1.31	.018

Table 7 shows that the mean scores of the participants for item 15 differ significantly by gender ($p < .05$). For item 15, "I keep confidential information about my class and friends in the most appropriate way," the mean score of female students (= 4.48) is higher than the mean score of male students (= 3.96). For this item, it can be stated that female students' silence is higher than male students' silence. For other items, it is seen that the mean scores of the participants do not differ significantly according to gender ($p > .05$). In other words, the gender of the participants does not affect their silence scores for any item except for item 15. The fact that item 15 is different for female and male students does not affect the overall result in the pro-social subsection to which this item belongs.

According to the data analysis as shown in Table 6, there is not a significant difference between the acquiescent silence levels of female and male students. Therefore, H1 is rejected.

Likewise, there is no significant difference between the defensive silence levels of both genders. So, H2, which hypothesizes that female students in male-dominated classrooms have defensive silence to protect themselves from the negative consequences of speaking up, is rejected.

H3, which proposed that female students display pro-social silence because they tend to protect and sustain the nice and quiet climate in the classroom, is confirmed since they have a high level of pro-social silence. However, the striking thing here is that the pro-social silence of male students is also high, which means male students care for the peaceful atmosphere in the classroom too.

H4 suggested that female students in male-dominated classrooms, just like women in men-dominated workplaces, tend to keep silent more than male students do purposefully in the face of significant problems. The data analysis proved that there is no significant difference between male and female students from an organizational silence viewpoint. Therefore, H4 is rejected.

Discussion

Organizational silence is one of the issues frequently addressed in the literature. Most of the research conducted so far has revealed that women show more organizational silence than men (Al Zoubi and Alkhlaifat, 2021, p. 821; Ateş and Önder, 2018, p. 796; Kutanis and Çetinel, 2014, p. 153). In some studies, it has been observed that women's organizational silence behavior increases in environments where men are present (Pinder and Harlos, 2001). However, some studies have concluded that there is no difference between men and women in terms of organizational silence (Moghaddampour, Nazemipou, Aghaziarati and Bordbar, 2013: 2220; Özdemir and Sarioğlu, 2013: 276).

In this study, the hypotheses were constructed based on the assumption that women show more organizational silence than men in organizations and that this behavior increases in male-dominated environments. Unlike previous studies, the scale which was applied in business domain was administered among students at a university and all statements related to business in the original questionnaire were replaced with statements related to school. The validity and reliability of the modified version of the questionnaire were checked and they were found to be high. The university where the survey was conducted is a maritime university with a majority of male students.

Contrary to the majority of the resources in the literature review, it was found that the organizational silence of female students, even if they are in a male-dominated university is almost the same as male students. Both male and female students have a low level of acquiescent and defensive silence while both parties have a high level of pro-social silence. A significant difference between female and male students was observed only in the last question on pro-social silence, which was "I keep confidential information about my class and friends in the most appropriate way".

There may be several reasons for the fact that organizational silence of both genders is almost the same at school, even if it is male-dominated.

Firstly, this study was administered to students of a school and not to employees of a workplace. Among the reasons why workplace employees show organizational silence behavior are the fear of being fired and not being promoted (Çakıcı, 2007, p. 152; Yeşilaydın, Bayın, Esatoğlu and Yılmaz, 2016, p. 17). However, students do not experience this type of anxiety. There is no such situation as losing a job or not being promoted for a student. This situation may be a reason for students not to exhibit organizational silence behavior.

Secondly, these students belong to Generation Z. Naturally, they have the characteristics of this generation. Singh and Dangmei (2016) describe the members of Gen Z as the most individualistic, self-directed, most demanding, acquisitive, materialistic, and entitled generation so far. They found that Generation Z members expect to be informed, to be allowed to respond, and to have their responses heard and acknowledged. They are also independent (Schwieger and Ladwig, 2019. p. 49), mature, and engaged in professional activities (Dolat, 2018. p. 46). Gaithani, Arora and Sharma (2018, p. 2806) say that Gen Z has an informal, individualistic, and very straight way of communicating. Considering these characteristics of Generation Z, it can be strongly predicted that any concerns they may have will not prevent them from saying what they intend to say. They don't keep their thoughts to themselves or refrain from expressing their thoughts, which is proved by the low levels of acquiescent and defensive silence. Considering the characteristics of Generation Z, it is quite normal to expect this result, and it is reasonable to conclude that female students with these characteristics have the same level of organizational silence as male students.

Finally, it is clear that female students studying in a male-dominated school will be exposed to a more challenging environment and will have to deal with more problems than students studying in schools with equal numbers of girls and boys. Female students have already chosen to study at this school, knowing and accepting this situation. The problems they face in a male-dominated school are similar to those they will experience in a male-dominated job. It has been observed that women working in male-dominated jobs exhibit a number of characteristics attributed to men. For example, Lemkau (1983, p. 147) found that women in male dominated jobs have personality differences. They have greater assertiveness and tough-mindedness, which are consisted with the role demands of atypical jobs. According to the study conducted by Wade (2020), such women have characteristics such as aggression, competition and decisiveness. Similarly, Kretschmar (1995, p. 155) found that women face the challenge of adapting their behavior to the "boys' club" while Akingbade (2010, p. 3268) revealed that women are expected to take on male characteristics and interactional styles in order to be competitive in the organisational context. Martin (2013) found that women in male-dominated jobs adopt male-type characteristics to cope with the hardships they are likely to face. Considering these findings, it may be normal for female students with the free spirit of Generation Z to have a similar organizational silence level with boys.

What is striking here is that both genders have a high level of pro-social silence. That means that both genders prefer to remain silent to protect the organization, so they think about the interests of the organization rather than their own interests and may hide some things so as not to harm it. This contradicts the findings of akmak and Arbaş (2020), who contend that women are more likely than men to engage in prosocial silence behavior.

As a result, the study found that the silence levels of male and female students in male-dominated classrooms were almost the same. In other words, no gender-based difference was found between the levels of silence. Although there may be many different reasons for this situation, the most probable ones are discussed above.

Conclusion and Future Studies

Upon the evaluation of the survey, it was found that both the female and male students exhibit the same level of organizational silence in the classroom. Both genders have the highest degree of organizational silence in the prosocial sub-dimension. That means they keep silent when the common interest of the classroom is in danger and they withhold ideas, information, and opinions concerning the classroom so that they can prevent any damage or embarrassment to the people in it.

Both genders have a low degree of silence in the defensive and acquiescent sub-dimensions. That means they don't remain silent because of the fear and worry that they will be harmed if they speak up. If they are aware of the problems, they don't ignore them and they don't act as if everything is fine. They do not hide their thoughts for fear of being disapproved or being harmed. Because they are not students who believe they will be punished, labeled as troublemakers, or expelled from class if they speak or act in opposition to the majority. Since the defensive silence degree of students of both genders is low, it can be inferred that even if they feel such concerns, they feel them very little.

The fact that their acquiescent silence level is low means the students, as Generation Z members, prefer to talk about the issues they don't approve of instead of hiding them for fear of being harmed because they believe something can be done to change the mistakes if they are revealed.

The research shows that the level of organizational silence behavior of female students is not different from that of male students. There may be several reasons for this. One of the reasons may be that they don't face the danger of losing their job or the chance for promotion since they don't work at a company. The reasons that keep the women in these companies from speaking out do not apply to the students. The next reason may be the fact that they are from Generation Z. The members of this generation are not people who prefer not to speak for fear of what others will say. They are quite outspoken. The next reason could be that female students in male-dominated schools are perceived to be more courageous, assertive, and combative than the general female student profile.

Organizational silence is a phenomenon that has been investigated only within the framework of company relations so far. In most of these studies, it was shown that women are more prone to organizational silence behavior compared to men, especially in male-dominated workplaces (Bridges, Wulff and Bambery, 2021; Hall and Gettings, 2020, p. 498). In this research, the aim was to see if organizational silence existed among the female students in male-dominated classrooms. The next research in the field may be about investigating organizational silence comparatively between generations. It may also be studied if behaviors like whistleblowing or burnout, which are common in workplaces, are common in classrooms, too.

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ETİK ve BİLİMSEL İLKELER SORUMLULUK BEYANI

Bu çalışmanın tüm hazırlanma süreçlerinde etik kurallara ve bilimsel atıf gösterme ilkelerine riayet edildiğini yazar(lar) beyan eder. Aksi bir durumun tespiti halinde Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi'nin hiçbir sorumluluğu olmayıp, tüm sorumluluk makale yazarlarına aittir. Yazarlar etik kurul izni gerektiren çalışmalarda, izinle ilgili bilgileri (kurul adı, tarih ve sayı no) yöntem bölümünde ve ayrıca burada belirtmişlerdir.

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