

**ICLTIBM 2019****9<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Leadership, Technology, Innovation and Business  
Management: Leadership, Innovation, Media and Communication****ORGANIZATIONAL DISSENT, ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE  
AND COMMUNICATION: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

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**Abstract**

Employee voice behavior has been the subject of many research due to its proactive solutions and contributions to processes and practices in the organization as well as its positive effects on employee behavior. As one of the forms of voice behavior, the concept of organizational dissent also has attracted the attention of scholars in recent years, especially due to providing the opportunities of sharing the employees' dissatisfaction and the problematic issues in the organization. With this regard, the aim of this study is to investigate the effect organizational culture and organizational communication on organizational dissent. In this context, it is argued that high-quality communication and organizational culture allowing employees to share their ideas leads them to freely express controversial issues through the dissent. Especially strong relationship between supervisors and subordinates facilitates the articulated dissent. Besides, in terms of organizational culture, adaptability based organizational culture will utilize from organizational dissent to keep up with rapid changes in the organizational environment. Involvement based culture also supports employees for dissent expression as a result of given importance to employee empowerment, interaction within the organization and increasing the efficiency of the decision-making process. Finally, this model proposal is expected to be beneficial for researchers and practitioners.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, today's organizations need to find creative and permanent solutions to their problems in order to survive in the rapidly changing business world. Particularly, the effectiveness of communication channels within the organization and offering a working environment in which employees can share their ideas, opinions and suggestions enable organizations to produce effective solutions to problems, to improve processes and activities within the organization. This participative work environment also provides “a win-win solution to a central organizational problem—how to satisfy workers’ needs while simultaneously achieving organizational objectives” (Strauss, 2006, p. 778). On the other hand, Morrison and Milliken (2000) revealed that, in case of employees withhold their ideas and concerns about organizational processes, practices and problems, organizations will be less effective decision making, less effective organizational process and poor in error detection whereas employees feel less motivation, less satisfaction, higher stress, and higher turnover intention. With this regard, the open communication channels and paying attention to employee voice overemphasized the field in management literature.

In addition to the positive and contractive feedback, employees also share their ideas about dissatisfaction and the problematic issues are also factors improving the organizations. In this context, organizational dissent, which is one of the forms of employee voice, is an important concept because of its effect on the employee outcomes such as turnover intention (Kassing et al., 2012) Dissent expression as an indicator of work engagement and intention to leave), organizational identification (Kassing, 2000b), employee satisfaction and commitment (Kassing, 1998).

However, it is not as easy for employees to share their opinions criticizing and dissenting their institutions as sharing constructive and developing ideas. Employees may not express their dissenting opinions because of that they will be punished or ignored when they share the problematic issues about the organization (Graham, 1986). In this context, the culture within the organization should be participatory and supportive enough to allow employees to share contradictory issues. In this vein, democratic and participative climate within the organizations also contributes to facilitate the employees’ sharing of contradictory ideas about organizations, determine the problems that arise within the organization and to prevent the potential results of these problems (Kassing & Armstrong, 2002). In light of these arguments, the aim of this study is to investigate the effects of organizational culture and organization communication on the organizational dissent through the proposed research model.

## 2. Problem Statement

The ability of employees to share their dissenting opinions produce effective solutions and improve processes and activities within the organization. However, in order for employees to share these ideas, appropriate communication policies and organizational culture must be exist within the organization. Yet, employees may be afraid of being punished by the organizations when they share these ideas. In this context, this study aims to contribute literature by discussing how organizational communication and culture should be, the possible effect of culture and communication on the employees’ dissent behaviour.

### **3. Research Questions**

This study aims to provide answers to the following research questions:

- 3.1. What is the relationship between organizational culture and organizational dissent?
- 3.2. What is the relationship between organizational communication and organizational dissent?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The aim of this study is to comprehensively investigate the effects of organizational culture and organization communication on the organizational dissent through the proposed research model. This model allows organizations to understand the role of communication and culture on the employees' dissent behavior.

### **5. Research Methods**

This research develops a conceptual framework to identify the link among organizational culture, organizational dissent and organizational communication. In this regard, firstly, content and scope of organizational dissent was assessed. Then the links between organizational culture and organizational dissent and organizational communication and organizational dissent was discussed.

#### **5.1. Organizational Dissent**

Organizational dissent is “a particular form of employee voice that involves the expression of disagreement or contradictory opinions about organizational practices and policies” (Kassing, 2002, p. 189) and one of the forms of employee voice including disagreement, dissatisfaction and contradictory views about organizational issues (Kassing, 1997). In the context of organizational dissent, employees share dissatisfaction with three different groups, including colleagues, managers, and people outside of the organization such as families and close friends (Kassing, 1997). In fact, sharing with each group forms the basis of three types of dissent.

Articulated dissent, as one of these forms of organizational dissent, refers to expressing opposing views to the members of the organization as supervisors and managers that may have a power within the organization. Articulated dissent is made directly to management and occurs when employees feel that they will be perceived not as retaliation but as a constructive (Kassing, 1997).

Latent dissent mainly occurs in the case of that employees feel the lack of channels and environment for sharing their opposing ideas and refers to sharing these ideas with colleagues (Kassing, 2000b). Generally, higher risk of retaliation and perceived as an adversarial within the organization lead employees to share contradictory and problematic issues with the ineffective member of organizations such as co-workers (Kassing, 1998).

Displaced dissent is sharing problematic and negative organizational issues with people outside of the organizations such as family members and close friends. Employees dissent these people because of decreasing the risk of adversarial and retaliation (Kassing, 1997). Displaced dissent also corresponds to

the neglect and exit side of the Exit-Voice-Loyalty Model. Employees neglect because of sharing dissent with the external audiences instead of effective members of the organization and not having the idea of sharing controversial issues with them and this situation also shows the employees' think of psychological exit (Kassing, 1997).

Besides, there are some factors that determine the employees sharing their opposing views. For example, employees having an internal locus of control tend to express dissent to their managers whereas employees having an external locus of control share their opposing views with the colleagues (Kassing & Avtgis, 2001). Besides, employees having more freedom of speech choose the articulated dissent (Kassing, 2000b) and employees in non-management status share these ideas and issues with their co-workers (Kassing & Armstrong, 2002). Having a high-quality relationship with their managers leads employees to articulated dissent (Kassing, 2000a).

Kassing (1997) proposed a model for explaining the process of organizational dissent including “(a) triggering agents, (b) strategy selection influences, (c) strategy selection, and (d) expressing dissent. According to this model, triggering agents leads employees to share their contradictory opinions” (p. 322). Kassing and Armstrong (2002) revealed that fairness and rights of the employees, organizational changes within the organizational activities, decision making process, inefficiency in the work practices and processes, roles and responsibilities within the organization, use and distribution of the organizational resources, unethical decisions and activities, performance evaluation processes and critical things for employees' self or colleagues trigger the dissent (Kassing & Armstrong, 2002).

After the triggering events, employees select the strategies for expressing dissent and make this selection based on individual, relational, and organizational influences (Kassing, 1997). Individual influences include individual factors such as employees' values and behaviors that are decisive in their dissent strategies and refer to “predispositions and expectations people import from outside their respective organizations, as well as how they behave within the organization” (Kassing, 1997, p. 324). Relational influences involve “the types and quality of relationships people maintain within the organization;” and organizational influences refer to “how people relate to and perceive organizations” (Kassing, 1997, p. 324). These influences predictor of the communication way in sharing dissent messages (Goodboy, 2011). Besides, individual, relational, and organizational influences also affect the strategy selection of employees. Especially relational and organizational influences provide cues about how sharing dissent will be perceived within the organization. The possibility that employees' ideas shared in the context of dissent is perceived as constructive feedback or as adversarial by the organization affects employees' choice of strategy. Finally, employees express dissent as articulated, latent and displaced dissent (Kassing, 1997).

## **5.2. Organizational Culture and Organizational Dissent**

Extending formation of the organizational goals, strategies, and policies; integration of employees around the organizational goals and practicability of determined strategies with frame for the managers, organizational culture is the vital concept for the effectiveness of the organizations in a highly competitive business environment. Defined as:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems that have worked well enough to be considered valid and is passed on to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 1992, p. 18).

Organizational culture is composed of shared values, norms, artifacts and behaviors (Homburg & Pflesser, 2000).

A variety of researches (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Hofstede et al., 2010) underscored organizational culture and enlarged different classification model with aim of illuminating the organizational culture concept. In this study, Denison's organizational culture model has been predicated on the revision of organizational culture because of fast and easy implementation, designing within the business environment, practicability to all business level, using business professional languages, being a behavioral-based and linking culture with organizational outcomes (Denison & Neale, 1996). Denison's organizational culture model measures four traits and twelve sub-factor with a 60 item scale on the basis of two major dimensions which are flexibility- stability and external- internal focus. These two dimensions constitute four traits as involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission.

Adaptability is the ability of firms to keep up with changes in the organizational environment thanks to the organizational activities and strengths. Organizations having a higher ability to adapt the environmental changes perceive and respond quickly to the environmental expectations. At the same time, these organizations have the ability to learn from their failures, anticipation of the changes being occurred in the future and realize the needs of customers in advance. In brief, adaptability consists of creating a chance, customer focus and organizational learning sub-factors.

Involvement emphasizes empowerment, team orientation, and capability development as a critical success factor for today's businesses. Organizational culture providing the ability to take responsibilities about their works, an opportunity of teamwork facilitating the interaction of workforce and increasing the efficiency of the decision-making process, improving the skills of employees through work-related training has accompanied competitive advantage for the organizations.

Consistency refers to the existence of values and systems adopting by the organizational members. Internalized values and successful organizational systems derive the coordination and integration and so overcome an unpredicted situation and changes or risks in the external environment without affecting the ordinary activities of the firms. To fulfil the conditions necessary for the consistency organizations should create values representing the all characteristics attached importance, have an agreement especially in the solution of contradictory and critical issues and have coordination and integration among different business units without considering organizational boundaries. In conclusion core values, agreement, coordination, and integration are sub-factors clarifying the consistency (Denison et al., 2006).

Mission refers to the development of vision, long term goals, and strategic plans and provides directions and bases to organizations and employees in their organizational activities. Having strong and internalized mission facilitate to reach long term goals with the role of guidelines for current activities. Mission traits embrace strategic direction, vision, goal, and objectives (Akdoğan & Oflazer, 2008).

Besides organizational structure and climate, organizational culture is the determinant of dissent behavior. Having an organizational culture encouraging the dialogue, dissent and open communication

about contradictory or unethical activities, norms and policies have been considered as a significant point for the success of the organizational decision-making process (Gottlieb & Sanzgiri, 1996). Culture provides basis for employees about the degree of tolerance their organizations for dissent behavior. As long as the tolerance level of the organizations is high to dissent, employees tend to share their dissent messages with managers referring to articulated dissent (Kassing, 1998; Kassing, 2000a). Latent dissent behavior has been occurred nominately in organizational culture ruling out the employees' input (Kassing, 2008).

Factors related to organizational culture are the predictor of the dissent. Empowered employees especially in expressing their opinions incline to show more articulated dissent while empowered employees through enlarging the scope of their jobs and tasks show a tendency of more displaced dissent (Kassing, 1997). On the other hand, organizational dissent may occur with a higher level of involvement due to confronted with too much organizational subjects and circumstances (Kassing, 1997). Fairness in the organizational activities also has an impact on the way of the dissent behavior (Goodboy et al., 2008). Thus consistent with previous findings, we suppose that:

P1: There is a significant relationship between organizational culture and organizational dissent

### **5.3. Organizational Communication and Organizational Dissent**

Organizational communication is defined as “the degree to which information is transmitted among the members of an organization” (Price, 1997, p. 349). In this regard, communication types encountered within the organization can be categorized as formal (vertical, horizontal and crosswise/diagonal communication) and informal communication (Dubrin, 1997). Of all these communication types, formal communication indicates official interaction in internal and external business environments on the basis of rules and procedures while informal communication is information sharing among informal groups inside of the organization without organizational regulation. This type of communication has been classified into vertical, horizontal and crosswise communication. Briefly, vertical communication is the information flow between superiors and subordinates while horizontal communication refers to the transmission of information among people in the same managerial level of the organizations and crosswise communication refers to interaction among persons in different levels of the organization who has no responsibility of reporting directly (Price, 1997).

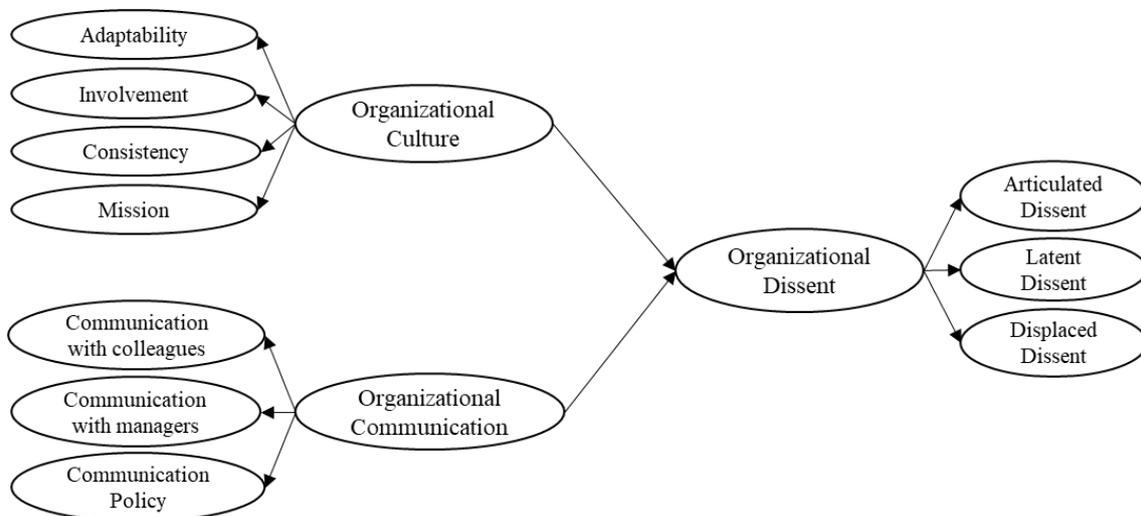
By virtues of, effective coordination among departments, providing information necessary for the decision-making process and facilitating the emanation of these decisions with employees; organizational communication puts forward a critical way of achieving organizational goals. Therefore, organizations should consider cultural differences and feedbacks of the employees, develop mutual communication flow, coincide in terms of activities and the communication messages, use direct and positive wording and constructive communication climate for effective communication (Bolarinwa & Olorunfemi, 2009; Dubrin, 1997). In brief, organizational communication has accentuated the transmission of information among different departments and members of the organizations for organizational success through participative decision-making process and transparency accompanied by interaction and coordination in the organizations.

On the other hand, organizational dissent is to expressing disagreement, problems about activities, technics or policies easily and provide feedback and basis to improve the perspective of the managers rather than antagonizing to all processes and decisions. At this point, effective communication between employees and managers may diminish the destructive side of dissent behavior.

Attaching particular importance to open communication strategy and opinion of the employees have extricated the articulated dissent behavior especially through strong supervisor-subordinate relationship while displaced dissent behavior has occurred because of avoiding the communication to prevent perception of being opponent and in the event of lower quality relationship (Kassing, 1997; Kassing & Aytgis, 2001; Kassing, 2000a,b). Findings of the study revealed that out-group members generally use email in comparison with the middle-group for transmitting their articulated dissent messages whereas in-group use face-to-face articulated dissent (Turnage & Goodboy, 2016).

By means of communication climate predicating on freedom of speech in workplace employees have enhanced the organizational identification and articulated dissent strategies in terms of being an indicator of the participative decision making and regarding the employees' feedbacks (Kassing, 2000b; Kassing, 2006). On the other hand, of all dimensions of aggressive communication, higher argumentativeness and lower verbal aggressiveness have canalized employees to articulated dissent. In line with the proposed relationships mentioned above, the following proposal are developed:

P2: There is a significant relationship between organizational communication and organizational dissent (Figure 01).



**Figure 1.** Proposed Research Model

## 6. Findings

In the current study, conceptual research model was proposed for investigating the role of organizational culture and communication on the employees' organizational dissent behavior. Based on reviewed literature, present study revealed the importance of opposing ideas for the organizations. In this vein, creating open communication policies, strong communication among managers, colleagues and

employees leads employees to share easily their opposing views. Additionally, participative and supportive culture also facilitate the dissent behavior.

## 7. Conclusion

The traditional organizations, where bottom-up communication is generally closed and contain some obstacles for subordinates to communicate with their managers, have left it to modern institutions that support employees' participation to corporate processes and decisions as well as open communication policy in line with the changes and developments in the business world. Particularly, employees' ideas about problems and mistakes in organizational processes and their dissatisfaction have made it possible for organizations to avoid many problems and act proactively. Most of these organizations are aware of the fact that they need to benefit not only from the performance and productivity of their human capital but also from their ideas and opinions. For this purpose, organizations arrange both their communication policies and organizational culture within the organization in a way that employees can share their ideas freely.

Organizational culture enlightens employees about whether their organizations' tolerance for the employee dissent (Kassing, 2000b). Concordantly, employees who perceive their organization as more tolerant of dissent tend to share their articulated dissent (Kassing, 1998). Additionally, bureaucracy based organizational culture also affects the employees' expression of dissent (King, 1999). With this regard, creating democratic and participative organizational culture creates the perception that organizations give importance to both positive and negative employees' ideas.

Besides, the quality of employees' communication with their managers and colleagues, communication policy allowing employees to share their dissent. Especially, employees who perceive that they have comparatively higher-quality relationships with their supervisors are likely to direct dissent to their supervisors, whereas those who perceive that they have comparatively low-quality relationships with their supervisors' report dissenting more readily to co-workers (Kassing, 2000a). In this vein, sharing the issues that are the subject of dissent with individuals such as managers who can be effective in solving problems and informing the organizations about the situation will facilitate taking corrective and proactive action.

In light of these evaluations, the effect of organizational culture and organizational communication on the organizational dissent has been discussed within the scope of the current study and a conceptual research model has been proposed. Statistical testing of the proposed model is expected to contribute to the literature. Additionally, because of reducing the potential risk of expressing their contradictory ideas, employees working within the organization which has a low tolerance to dissent messages may choose an external communication channel. In this regard, future studies should explore the dissent messages in the social networking site and online communication channel. In addition, it will be useful to examine the effect of employee dissent behavior on employee behaviors such as burnout, deviant behaviors and work alienation especially in case of displaced and latent dissent behavior.

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