

ISMC 2022
17th International Strategic Management Conference**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL
CONTRACT BREACHES AND ORGANIZATIONAL SILENCE**Orhan Balıkçı (a)*, Özlem Yaşar Uğurlu (b)
*Corresponding author(a) Kilis 7 Aralık University, Kilis, Turkey, orhanbalikci@hotmail.com
(b) Gaziantep University, Gaziantep, Turkey, yasar@gantep.edu.tr**Abstract**

This study aims to reveal the connection between psychological contract breaches and organizational silence. A psychological contract is much more comprehensive than a written contract. Therefore, its impact on an organization is much higher. One of the consequences of this effect is organizational silence. Three hundred health workers working in a state hospital in Turkey participated in the research. Data was gathered using the survey method. The perceived psychological contract breaches scale has one dimension and nine items. The organizational silence scale has three dimensions and 15 items. Structural equation modelling was used to examine the relationships between variables. This analysis was made using the AMOS 25. SPSS software that was used for other analyses in the research. The dimensions are acquiescent silence, defensive silence, and prosocial silence. The results shows that perceived psychological contract breaches positively related to organizational silence. In terms of subdimensions, the results stated that the perceived psychological contract breaches have a positive effect on acquiescent and defensive silence but have no effect on prosocial silence.

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Keywords: Hospital, organizational silence, psychological contract

1. Introduction

Today, advances in human rights, generational differences in the working population, and changes in expectations of subordinate-superior relations cause both parties to not reach the expected satisfaction by only fulfilling their obligations in the written contract. The expectations between the two parties thus exceed the written contract and are far from being a clear and concrete. Subordinates whose expectations are not met reflect this situation to their superiors as a response in different forms. These forms can exist in that cannot be limited, such as low performance, low motivation, and low job satisfaction. From the point of view of superiors, this undesirable situation is a waste of money and time, which means that the expectations of the superiors are not met. In this case, the superiors will be far from meeting the expectations of their employees and this will become a continuous vicious cycle.

The voice and silence of the employees have gained importance today, as it is known that the attitudes and actions of subordinates towards an organization directly affect the performance of the organization. The reactions of subordinates in negative situations may be of a vocal nature, but these reactions are not always out loud. Subordinates can also express these reactions silently. When a subordinate sees a problem or improvement, s/he can react by not communicating to his/her superiors, s/he can minimize communication with his/her superiors, and/or not do more than what is asked of him/her. These reactions can be referred to as general organizational silence.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether there are relations between organizational silence and psychological contracts breaches. In the research, after the literature review on psychological contract and organizational silence is provided, the sample will be described and the results of the structural equation analysis of the sample will be outlined.

2. Problem Statement

2.1. Psychological Contract

The first uses of the term psychological contract were by Argyris, Levinson, Price, Munden, and Mandl in the early 1960s, Solley in 1962, and Schein in 1965 (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Contracts are the basis of the relationship between two parties, such as the employer and the employee (Rousseau & Parks, 1992). Change in organizations is taking deeper roots, so classical written contracts between individuals and their organizations are not sufficient and their validity is decreasing. (Sims, 1994). Farnsworth stated that the psychological contract is a group of written and/or oral promises between the parties within the reciprocity relationship (As cited in Robinson, 1995). The Turkish Language Association has defined the concept of a contract as the declaration that the intentions between two or more parties are mutual and are in accordance with each other and can lead to legal consequences (TDK, 2011).

The thoughts and perceptions in the psychological contract are related to the promises and expectations between the parties. Individuals or organizations who are parties to the contract think both parties have made promises and concur on the same contract conditions. The contract parties think that both parties interpret and accept the contract in the same way (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994).

Several different definitions made by researchers examining this concept are available in the literature, and each researcher has reflected his or her own point of view. The promises made by both the employer and the employee in a psychological contract are both explicit and tacit. It is defined as the convictions about the employment relationship between them (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998). Chris Argyris coined the phrase "psychological contract" at the beginning. Argyris researched the relations between workers and foremen and used this term for these relations (Taylor & Tekleab, 2004). Schein also defined a psychological contract as the interaction between two parties that includes psychological dynamics (Taylor & Tekleab, 2004). Levinson's description, which describes a mutual collection of unwritten expectations between the individual and his or her organization, is akin to Schein's description (Guest, 1998). Kotter (1973), on the other hand, defines it as follows: a psychological contract is the unclear promises between the individual and the organization that the individual expects. Rousseau stated that a psychological contract is the belief of the individual about the mutual exchange between the person at the centre of the contract and the other party. The main point here is that promises are made, and a price is offered in return for these promises (Rousseau, 1989).

A psychological contract is the exchange agreement between the person and the organization, and this agreement represents personal expectations that are shaped by the organization (Rousseau 1995, cited in Bekaroğlu, 2011). According to another definition, it is the perceptions that the parties of the business relationship, i.e., the individual and the organization, have about the promises and obligations that they make between them (Guest & Conway, 2002). The harmony between the individual and the organization is the basis of the psychological contract. The gaps in the written agreement are filled by real-life expectations and the psychological contract. Therefore, the psychological contract may affect the subordinate-superior relationship more than the written contract.

2.1.1. Psychological Contract Violation and Breach

The psychological contract consists of beliefs and promises based on the relationship between the parties of the contract. If these beliefs are broken by one of the parties, the other party perceives a belief or promise as broken, the broken party reacts implicitly or openly. The magnitude of this reaction depends on the degree of faith being broken and on the extent to which promises are not kept. Broken promises cause anger in the employee and the trust between the two parties is shaken (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). What is important at this point is what promises the employee makes to his employer and what promises he receives in return for these promises (Rousseau, 1989). Concluding that the contract has not been complied with is highly subjective. It is necessary to know which situations are violated in the mind of the person, which promises are not fulfilled, and that the person considers it a violation. In some cases, the violation is caused by the non-fulfilment of a promise, while in other cases, the individual may still consider it a violation even though the promise is fulfilled, mainly because the promises made are not sufficiently clear (Robinson & Morrison, 2000).

Several scholars have worked to fully conceptualize psychological contract breach, but it still remains unclear. Robinson and Rousseau (1994) stated that when one of the parties of the contract perceives that the other party did not keep its promise it can be called a violation (p. 247). According to Rousseau (1989), breach of contract is defined as the failure of the enterprise in providing an expected

response to the employee in return for the benefit s/he provides to the enterprise. Violation is defined as a concept far beyond the perception of non-compliance.

It is a process based on mental accounting in the individual's mind of the promises made and what s/he receives in return for these promises, which is a result of the emotional state that emerges as a result of accounting (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Unfulfilled promises can anger subordinates and destroy trust between the parties of the contract. Therefore, violations of the promises, the distribution of justice, and the provision of desired outcomes can cause problems in the perception of equality (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994) How the violation is perceived in the mind of the individual depends on the distinction between the actual violation and the perceived violation (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). The interpretation process in the mind of the individual balances the link between the perceived violation and the actual violation. Thanks to this process, the individual considers the reasons for the violation and verifies his organization's written contractual agreement with the social contract (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Morrison and Robinson (1997) developed a model detailing the perceiving process.

In this model, the perceived violation is called a mental accounting period, which includes comparing the balance between what promise was made to the employee and its fulfillment. Perceived violation can be defined as the mental state of the employee when he/she faces breach of the contract. According to this model, there are two reasons why the situation is perceived as a violation: the first is renunciation, and the second is inconsistency. The model based all violation perceptions on these two reasons (Morrison & Robinson, 1997).

Renunciation can be explained as the failure of the employee or employer in complying with their promises due to some inadequacies or unwillingness (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Factors such as environmental reasons or the structure of the organization may lead to a broken promise or one of the parties no longer wanting to fulfill their promise.

Inconsistency is explained as the employee and/or employer attributing different meanings to mutual promises. The parties understand different meanings from the promises made between them (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). However, the contract parties are unaware of this situation and think that they both fulfill the promise without knowing that they give different meanings to the same promise, while one of the parties perceives this situation as the promise not being fulfilled. Conflict may occur during the first in-person meeting and/or at later stages (Robinson & Morrison, 2000). At this point, communication plays an important role in reducing the possibility of ascribing different meanings to the promises between the contract parties (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994).

2.2. Organizational Silence

The definition of the concept of organizational silence in business literature was first introduced by Morrison and Milliken (2000) who did not define the collective level of silence of employees with this concept. Pinder and Harlos (2011) defined this concept as follows: It is the verbal or nonverbal hiding of the ideas of the employees about the conditions in the organization from the individuals who can change the conditions in the organization. The silence of the employees is the individual level of this silence. Organizational silence, on the other hand, is the state of silence that has become massive within the

organization. In the business literature, silence has been examined as three different types; acquiescent silence, defensive silence, and prosocial silence.

2.2.1. Acquiescent Silence

Silence cannot be defined as the active discommunication of employees with their colleagues at work, so just being quiet cannot be defined as silence. While the concept of silence was clarified, a limiting framework was made in the form of the employee who has feelings and thoughts about his job, choosing not to reveal these feelings and thoughts to his stakeholders in the workplace (Dyne et al., 2003).

2.2.2. Defensive Silence

Defensive silence is defined as deliberate neglect in business literature (Pinder & Harlos, 2001). The employee hides his/her feelings and thoughts about the job to protect him/herself from surrounding threats. It is a proactive and conscious choice compared to acquiescent silence. While accepting that silence is considered as a passive behavior, defensive silence is based on the employee refraining from receiving negative reactions from his/her colleagues. For this reason, employees evaluate all risks and alternatives before making a behavioral choice (Dyne et al., 2003).

2.3. Prosocial Silence

Prosocial silence is defined as deliberate neglect in business literature (Pinder & Harlos, 2001). The employee hides his feelings and thoughts about the job in order to protect himself from the threats around him. It is a proactive and conscious choice compared to acquiescent silence. While accepting silence is considered as a passive behavior, defensive silence is based on the employee's refrain from receiving negative reactions from his colleagues. For this reason, employees evaluate all risks and alternatives before making a behavioral choice (Dyne et al., 2003).

2.4. The Relation Between Psychological Contract Breach and Organizational Silence

In the literature, some similar studies exist that evaluate the relationship between the variables of this study. Some of these studies are mentioned below.

Bari et al. (2020) researched the mediator role of psychological contract breach evaluating the relationship between knowledge-hiding behaviors and employees' silence. This study contained the data gathered from 389 employees. The result showed that psychological contract breach plays a mediator role in the relationship between knowledge-hiding behaviors and employees' silence.

Morsch et al. (2020) conducted a study with 259 participants. The study revealed that acquiescent silence plays a mediator role in the negative relationship between psychological contract breach and employee well-being. The negative relationship between psychological contract breach and acquiescent silence was also found to be negatively mediated by abusive supervision, which was revealed to be a strengthening moderator.

Kang et al. (2014) investigated the relationship between abusive supervision and organizational silence in hotels. The result stated that the hotel employees' contract violation had positive effects on organizational silence.

Rai and Agarwal (2018) researched the mediating role of psychological contract violation on the effects of workplace bullying on employee silence. 835 Indian managers were involved in the study. The findings stated that psychological contract violation mediated the bullying-silence relationship.

Suazo et al. (2005) suggested that there is a positive relationship with intention to leave and a negative relationship with organizational commitment, work performance, and helpful behaviors.

Psychological contract breaches lead to reduced trust (Robinson, 1996). Another study says they cause lower job satisfaction (Tekleab et al., 2005), and also bad moods (Conway & Briner, 2002), increased turnover (Aykan, 2014) and decreased job performance (Robinson & Morrison, 1995).

Our research variables contain unfavourable thoughts. Recent articles have revealed negative sides of psychological contract violations on employees' behaviors. This study concentrated on how organizational silence is affected by perceived psychological contract breaches based on these findings. Related studies were examined extensively, and no study could be found that directly revealed the relationship between these two variables.

3. Research Model and Hypotheses

To test this relationship between the psychological contract breaches and organizational silence, these hypotheses were created based on the model of study:

H1: Organizational silence behaviors are statistically significantly positively impacted by perceived psychological contract breaches.

H1a: Acquiescent silence behaviors are statistically significantly positively impacted by perceived psychological contract breaches.

H1b: Defensive silence behaviors are statistically significantly positively impacted by perceived psychological contract breaches.

H1c: Prosocial silence behaviors are statistically significantly positively impacted by perceived psychological contract breaches.

You can find the model of the research in Figure 1.

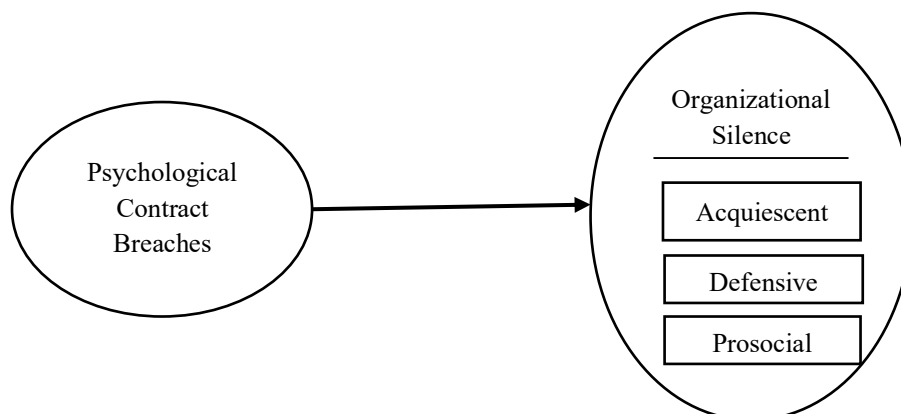


Figure 1. The model of the research

4. Purpose of the Research

The aim of this research is to make clear whether perceived psychological contract breaches influence organizational silence. In addition, the relationship between perceived psychological contract breaches and acquiescent silence, defensive silence, prosocial silence, which are subdimension of organizational silence, will be examined. Based on the results, advice and recommendations will be provided.

5. Research Method

The survey method was used to gather data. In the first part of the survey, demographic items were included.

The perceived psychological contract breach and violation scale was located in the second part of the form. which was created by Robinson and Morrison (2000). The scale has one dimension. Turkish translation of the scale was adopted from Çetinkaya (2014) and Erdoğan (2015) also used the same versio. The scale has nine items on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being completely agree.

The organizational silence scale was included in the third part. The scale was created by Dyne et al. (2003). In the scale, there are three subdimensions, named as acquiescent silence, defensive silence, and prosocial silence. It includes 15 items on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being completely agree. Turkish translate of the scale was adopted by Oruç (2015).

300 people participated in the study. Data collected from the participants of the study were analyzed using the SPSS 22 and AMOS software programs. Before starting the analysis, reverse-coded items were rearranged. To reveal relationship between the variables, structural equation modelling was used. Validity and reliability were ensured before testing the hypotheses.

5.1. Sample of the Research

The data was collected in 2017 and at that time ethics committee approval was not required for the work. A state hospital's staff of doctors and nurses received the study survey. The state hospital employed 314 nurses and medical professionals in total. The return rate was 95%. That's a total of 300 responses. The sample's demographic characteristics was shown in Table 1.

Most participants were between 18 and 25 years of age. 39% of these participants were females and 61% were males. 49% (n=147) of the participants were between 18 and 25 years of age and 29% (n=89) were between 26 and 35 years of age. 23% (n=71) of the participants were high school graduates and 77% (n=229) had a bachelor's degree. 62% of participants had between 0 and 5 years of experience in the health sector.

Table 1. The Sample's Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Characteristics	Number of Participants (n)	(%)	Demographic Characteristics	Number of Participants (n)	(%)
Sex			Marital Status		
Male	117	61	Married	143	47
Female	183	39	Single	157	53
Total	300	100	Total	300	100
Age			Education		
18-25	147	49	Primary school	6	2
26-35	89	29	Middle school	2	0,7
36-45	53	17	High school	63	21
46-55	11	3	Undergraduate	220	73
			Graduate	9	3
Total	300	100	Total	300	100
Experience In the Health Sector			Experience In the Hospital		
0-5	187	62	0-5	233	77
6-10	56	18	6-10	31	10
11-15	24	8	11-15	16	5
16+	33	11	16+	20	6
Total	300	100	Total	300	100
			Experience In that Title		
			Title	195	65
			0-5	55	18
			6-10	15	5
			11-15	35	11
			16+		
Total	300	100	Total	300	100

5.2. Methodology

5.2.1. Validity and Reliability of the Scales

Confirmatory factor analysis was applied for each scale using the AMOS software program. The model fits of the scales are given in the following tables.

There is only one factor in the perceived psychological contract breaches scale, and for this reason, all items were under a single factor. According to Gürbüz & Şahin (2018), “The factor loading for each item should be larger than or equal to 0,50”. After the first factor analysis, the 4th item was removed as its factor loading was under 0,50. The total variance of the factors was found to be 50,931%.

The last factor analyses, Cronbach’s Alfa was found to be 0,875. It shows that our data has sufficient reliability.

It can be seen factor analysis of perceived psychological contract breaches in Table 2.

Table 2. Factor Analysis of Perceived Psychological Contract Breaches

Items	Factor Loadings	Eigenvalues	% of Total Variance	Cronbach's Alfa
		4,584	50,931	0,875
Item 1 (reversed)	0,667			
Item 2 (reversed)	0,738			
Item 3(reversed)	0,693			
Item 5	0,646			
Item 6	0,752			
Item 7	0,724			
Item 8	0,714			
Item 9	0,842			

The organizational silence scale contains three subdimensions. Acquiescent, defensive, and prosocial are the three subdimensions of the organizational silence scale. Acquiescent silence is comprised of the first five questions, defensive silence is comprised of the following five items and then prosocial silence is comprised of the last five items.

The result of the factor analysis and reliability of the scale is given in Table 3. The loadings of all the items in the scale were greater than 0,50, which means that they have sufficient loadings. In this way, no question was removed from the scale. The eigenvalues, percentage of explained variance, and Cronbach's alpha were examined for each subdimension.

Table 3. Factor Analysis of Organizational Silence

Items	Factor Loadings	Eigenvalues	% of Explained Variance	Cronbach's Alfa
Acquiescent Silence (F1)		2,918	58,361	0,816
Item 1	0,676			
Item 2	0,771			
Item 3	0,689			
Item 4	0,605			
Item 5	0,618			
Defensive Silence (F2)		3,391	67,816	0,880
Item 6	0,754			
Item 7	0,847			
Item 8	0,695			
Item 9	0,765			
Item 10	0,785			
Prosocial Silence (F3)		3,256	65,126	0,863
Item 11	0,725			
Item 12	0,750			
Item 13	0,762			
Item 14	0,841			
Item 15	0,830			

Cronbach's Alfa of the organizational silence scale was 0,890. Regarding the subdimensions, F1's Cronbach's Alfa was 0,816; F2's Cronbach's Alfa was 0,880 and F3's Cronbach's Alfa was 0,863. The data are suitable for analysis, as approved by these values.

Table 4. Skewness and Kurtosis of The Scales

Scale	Skewness	Kurtosis
Perceived Psychological Contract Breaches	0,499	0,741
Organizational Silence	0,003	-0,024

Skewness and Kurtosis values should be within -1 and 1 (Hair et al., 2014). All Skewness and Kurtosis values were inside this range, which means the data have a normal distribution. The values can be seen in Table 4.

AVE was measured and is shown in Table 5. AVE values should be greater than 0,50, and the CR values should be higher than the AVE values and greater than 0,70 (Hair et al., 2014). The results show that the data have discriminant validity.

Table 5. AVE and CR Values of The Data

	AVE	CR
Perceived Psychological Contract Breaches	0,524	0,897
Acquiescent Silence	0,540	0,761
Defensive Silence	0,594	0,746
Prosocial Silence	0,612	0,755

The model fit values are shown in Table 6. The values show that the fit values of the model were within the required range. According to Karagöz (2019, p. 790), it is recommended that the values should be within the range of $\Delta\chi^2 \leq 3$; $0,85 \leq \text{GFI}$; $0,90 \leq \text{CFI}$; $0,90 \leq \text{NFI}$; $0,85 \leq \text{AGFI}$; and $\text{RMSEA} \leq 0,80$. These values show that this model is suitable for analysis with structural equation modelling.

Table 6. Model fit values of confirmatory factor analysis

	$\Delta\chi^2$	p	df	$\Delta\chi^2/\text{df}$	RMSEA	CFI	NFI	GFI	AGFI
Values	478,99	0,000	215	2,228	0,064	0,927	0,90	0,899	0,91
Fitness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

6. Findings

The standardized regression values of the relations between the variables in the research model are given in Table 7. Figure 2 shows how perceived psychological contract breaches affect organizational silence.

Table 7. Results About Relations Between the Variables

Relation Between the Variables		Standardized regression values	p	
Organizational Silence	<---	Psychological Contract Breaches	0,999	***
Acquiescent Silence	<---	Psychological Contract Breaches	0,331	***
Defensive Silence	<---	Psychological Contract Breaches	0,328	***
Prosocial Silence	<---	Psychological Contract Breaches	0,527	-

* $p \leq 0.01$

The standardized regression values of the relations between the variables in the research model are given in Table 7. Significance levels (p values) were observed to be less than 0.05 in all relationships except one. In this case,

“H1: Organizational silence behaviors are statistically significantly positively impacted by perceived psychological contract breaches” is supported.

“H1a: Acquiescent silence behaviors are statistically significantly positively impacted by perceived psychological contract breaches” is supported.

“H1b: Defensive silence behaviors are statistically significantly positively impacted by perceived psychological contract breaches” is supported; and

“H1c: Prosocial silence behaviors are statistically significantly positively impacted by perceived psychological contract breaches” is not supported.

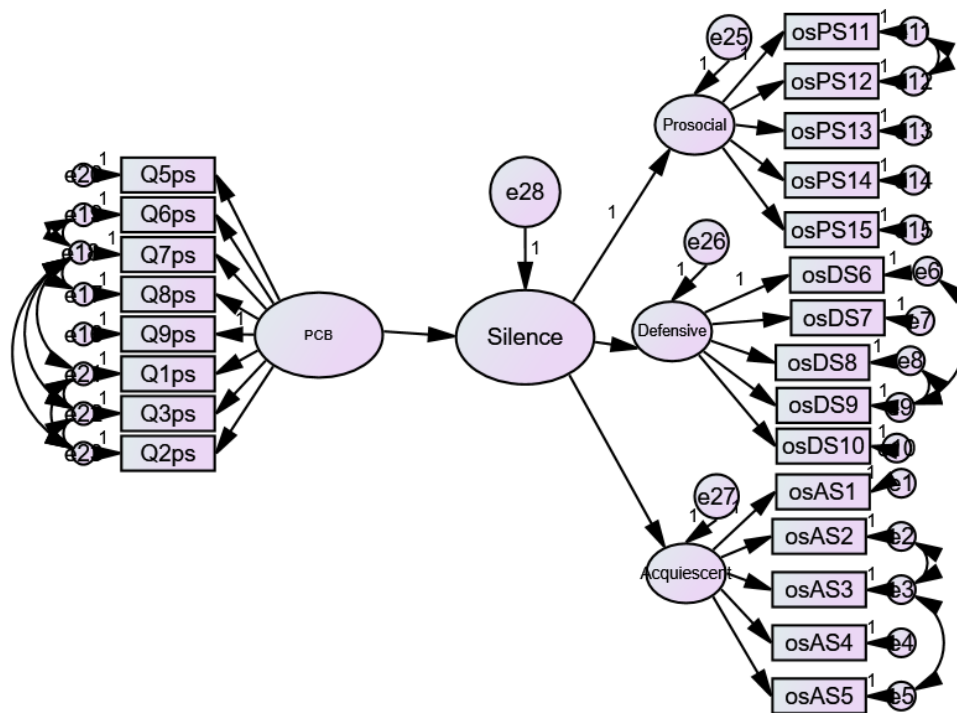


Figure 2. The structural equation model on in the effect between independent and dependent variable

7. Conclusion

Psychological contract breaches and negative emotions arising from its violation cause changes in the behavior of employees in the workplace. Employees may become disinterested in their work, refuse to do their duties, prefer to keep quiet, and even consider quitting.

It was found that perceived psychological contract violations in the examined hospital were statistically related to organizational silence. The results are in line with Boxtel (2011), Bunderson (2001) and Kılınç (2012). In a study conducted by Boxtel (2011) on medical workers, it stated that psychological contract violations increase the intention to leave and decrease job satisfaction in healthcare workers. This finding also supports our study's results. Bunderson (2001) states that medical workers may be more susceptible to occupational and administrative violations than professionals working in industries. Other professionals may not even be aware of these violations. There have not been many studies on hospital staff regarding psychological contract violations, but the studies that were found support this study.

In the view of the result about the unsupported H1c hypothesis, when promises are not fulfilled, individuals prefer not to remain silent in favour of the organization. This result means that they prefer to be silent to protect themselves and to still be of use to the organization. Prosocial silence contains positive feelings towards the organization, which is expected to occur when individuals have good relations with the organization. It would not be correct to describe the silence of individuals who are at odds with their organization as prosocial silence.

The following suggestions are made for managers:

- i. The goals of individuals and organization should be set in parallel.
- ii. Employers should keep promises given during the hiring process, and if they can't, managers should explain why to their staff members.
- iii. Managers should acknowledge that opinions and generalizations are unwarranted in this regard and be conscious that the psychological contract could be subjectively understood and may vary from person to person.

This study has a few limitations, which are listed below:

- i. This study was conducted with only one hospital and so the study cannot be generalized. This study needs to be expanded by other studies conducted in various hospitals.
- ii. This study was only conducted with one "state" hospital. Similar work must be completed in private hospitals in order to compare the outcomes.
- iii. This study is a survey research based on just perspective of the participant. Managers' perspectives weren't looked at. While participants may feel that their promises were fully met, supervisors may view the situation differently.

Suggestions for future studies are as follows:

- i. In order to compare private and public hospitals, the study can be carried out in private ones.
- ii. The study can be carried out in several locations, and the impact of regional and cultural differences on the variables can be explored.
- iii. It is possible to solicit the opinions of managers and make manager-employee comparisons.
- iv. The study can be carried out in several industries, and comparisons between these industries are possible.

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