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Development Of Organizational Blindness Scale

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Abstract

The concept of organizational blindness, which has entered the management literature as a new concept in recent years; perceptible in the internal and external environment under normal conditions; risks, opportunities, threats, problems and changes; It is the situation where it cannot be perceived with the effect of factors such as taking it for granted, adaptation, routine, exposure to too many stimuli and focusing on an area, and individual and organizationalfactors (culture, leadership type, sector structure, etc.). In this context, the aim of this study is to develop a new measurement tool that measures the concept of organizational blindness. Within the scope of the study, exploratory research design was used to develop scale. In this context, an item pool was created with the conceptual expressions obtained from the existing literature search, and then expert opinion, language and scope validity were applied. After these stages, field research was carried out and a survey was conducted with 271 people working in the health sector with simple random sampling technique and data were obtained. The obtained data were subjected to construct validity and reliability analyzes in the SPSS program and the results were reached. As a result of the research, a valid and reliable organizational blindness scale consisting of 4 dimensions and 17 Likert expressions named "Far Blindness, Near Blindness, Intentional (conscious) Blindness and Wrong Vision" was developed.

Örgütsel Körlük Ölçeğinin Geliştirilmesi

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Örgütsel Körlük, Uzağı Görememek, Yakını Görememek, Yanlış Görmek, kasıtlı körlük

Özet

Son yıllarda yeni bir kavram olarak yönetim literatürüne giren örgütsel körlük kavramı; normal koşullarda iç ve dış çevrede algılanabilen; risk, fırsat, tehdit, problem ve değişimlerin; kanıksama, uyum sağlama, rutinlik, fazla uyarana maruz kalma ve bir alana odaklanma gibi unsurlar ile bireysel ve örgütsel faktörlerin (kültür, liderlik türü, sektör yapısı vb.) etkisi ile algılanamaması durumudur. Örgütlerin çevresindeki değişimleri doğru algılayıp hayatta kalabilmeleri ve sürdürülebilir rekabet avantajı sağlamalarında kilit bir role sahip olan örgütsel körlük olgusunun ölçümünün bilimsel yöntemlerle yapılması gerekmektedir. Bu kapsamda bu çalışmanın amacı örgütsel körlük kavramını ölçen yeni bir ölçme aracı geliştirmektir. Çalışma kapsamında ölçek geliştirebilmek için keşfedici araştırma deseni kullanılmıştır. Bu kapsamda mevcut literatür araştırmasından elde edilen kavramsal ifadeler ile madde havuzu oluşturulmuş olup, ardından uzman görüşü, dil ve kapsam geçerliliğine başvurulmuştur. Bu aşamalardan sonra ise saha araştırması yapılarak sağlık sektöründe çalışan 271 kişi ile basit tesadüfi örneklem tekniğine ile anket yapılmış ve veriler elde edilmiştir. Elde edilen veriler SPSS programında yapı geçerliliği ve güvenilirlik analizlerine tabi tutularak sonuçlara ulaşılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda "uzağı görememek, yakını görememek, kasıtlı görmemek ve yanlış görmek" adlarında 4 boyutlu ve 17 likert ifadeden oluşan geçerli ve güvenilir örgütsel körlük ölçeği geliştirilmiştir.

1.INTRODUCTION

Under normal conditions, it can be perceived in the internal and external environment; risks, opportunities, threats, problems and changes; Organizational Blindness is defined as the inability to perceive it with the effect of factors such as taking it for granted, adaptation, routine, exposure to excessive stimuli and focusing on one area, and individual and organizational factors (culture, leadership type, sector structure, etc.) (Seymen, Kılıç and Kinter, 2016).

Organizations operate in a dynamic, competitive, and ever-changing environment. Therefore, it is crucial for organizations to accurately and effectively analyze their past, present, and future internal and external environments and determine their strategies in order to survive and achieve sustainable competitive advantage. Organizations experiencing "blindness" may face numerous detrimental processes in financial or other activities because they cannot accurately analyze their environments. In this context, it is of utmost importance to examine in detail the concept of organizational blindness, which is a significant issue for organizations, and to identify its dimensions.

Seymen and colleagues (2016), who introduced the concept of organizational blindness into Turkish literature and developed a measurement tool, considered organizational blindness as four-dimensional under the headings of "sectoral, organizational, individual, and level of job routine." However, subsequent studies on the same subject and a more in-depth review of the literature revealed that the dimensions in the scale developed by Seymen and colleagues (2016) actually identified the factors causing organizational blindness. Furthermore, it was found that sufficient significance and relationship levels were not reached in the validity (confirmatory factor analysis) analyses in researches on organizational blindness conducted in other sectors (Akbulut, 2024; Aydın, 2019; Gültekin, 2019).

Therefore, there is a need to develop a new scale that will measure organizational blindness comprehensively and more effectively. In this context, this study aims to redevelop the organizational blindness scale and identify its new dimensions.

2.CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Concept of Organizational Blindness: Blindness, a medical term, is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO, 1994) as having visual acuity less than 3/60 or loss of visual field despite the best possible correction in the better eye. In the Turkish language structure, the term blindness literally means "visual impairment" and metaphorically refers to "not being able to see the truth, unable to perform its function, memory blindness (dull knife, etc.), being blocked (blind well, blind intestine), etc." (TDK, 2024).

Blindness, known as an anatomical barrier specific to living organisms with consequences such as inability to see and perceive, has been metaphorically adapted to organizations. This is because in management literature, organizations are considered dynamic, living, and social structures that interact with their internal and external environments and are guided by groups of individuals, in accordance with the open system approach (Katz and Kahn, 1966; Yalçınkaya, 2002). In this context, both internal dysfunctions and the blurring in the visions of those who manage the organization will inevitably affect the organizations. As a result, organizations will gradually become blind to the opportunities, threats, innovations, and risks brought about by changes in their internal and external environments.

Organizational blindness, conceptualized by Seymen et al. (2016) in its initial form in management sciences, is defined as the inability to perceive risks, opportunities, threats, problems, and changes in the internal and external environment, under the influence of individual and organizational factors (such as culture, type of leadership, sector structure, etc.), despite being perceivable under normal conditions, due to factors such as habituation, adaptation, routine, exposure to excessive stimuli, and focus on a specific area.

Since its emergence in 2016, conceptual and empirical studies on organizational blindness have continued to be conducted. Based on these studies, the relevant definition can be updated as follows: Organizational blindness is

the state of not being seen, noticed, or perceived due to factors such as habituation, adaptation, routine, exposure to too little or too much stimuli, focusing on a specific area, structural and functional problems in the organization's information sources, management style, organizational culture, and a deliberate desire not to see, in the face of risks, opportunities, threats, problems, and changes in the organization's internal and external environments.

Causes of Organizational Blindness: Studies on organizational blindness have identified four main reasons underlying organizational blindness as "personality type, level of routine in the job performed, organizational, and sector structure" (Seymen et al., 2016; Cationo, 2013). These will be discussed below.

Individual Factors: Studies have indicated that individuals' demographic characteristics (such as education, age, work experience, etc.), personality types, and socio-psychological states have an impact on organizational blindness (Catino, 2013). Research in this area has shown that education and learning reduce blindness (Aydın, 2019), and relationships have been found between education level and organizational blindness (Kavurgacı, 2020). Continuous learning, researching current information, and being curious about learning are reasons why individuals with higher education levels are less likely to experience blindness, as their perceptions remain open. Additionally, age (Kavurgacı, 2020) and work experience (Seymen et al., 2016) have been found to affect the level of organizational blindness. Older individuals tend to experience more blindness compared to younger ones (Gürçay, 2019), as the perception and learning willingness of younger and newly employed individuals are typically higher than those of older individuals. Furthermore, in a study, married employees were found to experience more blindness in three sub-dimensions compared to single individuals (Yavuz, 2020). Another factor thought to be associated with blindness is personality. This is because open-minded and extroverted individuals, who interact with more people and have a greater desire to learn, are less likely to experience blindness, whereas individuals with high levels of neuroticism or agreeableness may experience more blindness due to their tendency towards introversion. Additionally, employees experiencing burnout and low motivation are likely to experience blindness. A study has concluded that burnout affects blindness (Yavuz, 2020).

Organizational Factors: Organizational factors contributing to blindness are approached as follows: organizational culture, organizational vision, organizational climate, level of organizational learning, management and capital structure, leadership model, hierarchical structure, business processes, physical and psychological boundaries between units, team spirit, and collective consciousness within the organization (Levinthal and March, 1993; Gürçay, 2019). For example, the less communication there is between units and stakeholders in an organization, and the more rigid, disciplined, and resistant to change its design is, the higher the level of susceptibility to organizational blindness (Serrat, 2010; Döş, 2013). Moreover, the culture within the organization can create a breeding ground for blindness. For instance, a high-power-distance culture in an organization will inhibit individuals from being critical and thinking differently, leading to a loss of opportunities for innovation and development, ultimately resulting in blindness among employees.

The silos (invisible barriers) that may develop among units over time due to differences in vision, purpose, and tasks within the organization are another significant factor contributing to organizational blindness (Altınay, Mercan, Yaşar, Sert, 2012). Additionally, a study conducted in the tourism sector has concluded that organizational silence and learning habits within the organization have an impact on organizational blindness (Aydın, 2019).

Sectoral Factors: Industry-related factors also play a significant role in organizational blindness. These factors encompass the type of industry (private-public), the level of competition within the sector, the prevailing work culture, as well as the relationships with other organizations and the environment. Additionally, the dynamic or stagnant nature of the industry is relevant (Seymen et al., 2016).

For instance, organizations operating in dynamic and competitive sectors such as computer software constantly need to analyze their environment to sustain their operations, thus reducing their susceptibility to blindness. Conversely, organizations in traditional and stagnant sectors like agriculture may become blinded over time due to the limited changes in their environment.

A study highlighted the phenomenon of "cultural color blindness," where some organizations fail to accurately perceive other sectors due to cultural mismatches (Demir, 2008). Similarly, another study found that employees in the healthcare sector exhibited a higher level of blindness compared to those in the energy sector (Seymen et al., 2016). This difference was attributed to the higher levels of burnout among healthcare workers and the comparatively higher technological innovation and global exposure in the energy sector.

Degree of Routineness of the Work: Individuals who are exposed to the same stimuli for extended periods gradually become desensitized and adapt, leading to a dulling effect (Gülşen, 2019). Similarly, employees in organizations characterized by stagnation, limited interaction, and long-term engagement in repetitive tasks may fail to perceive problems, risks, and opportunities. Even if they do notice them, they may hesitate to disrupt the routine by addressing them (Altınay et al., 2012). Limited research suggests that routine contributes to blindness, while job rotations decrease organizational blindness (Gülşen, 2019; Kayıkçı et al., 2015).

In this regard, dynamic job roles that allow for career advancement, foster openness to innovation, encourage continuous interaction with the environment, and facilitate job rotation are less likely to result in blindness. Conversely, routine and closed-off roles tend to increase blindness. For example, a stock manager in a pharmaceutical company's warehouse, who works in isolation, will likely experience different levels of organizational blindness compared to a field sales representative who constantly interacts with various regions and individuals. A study found that employees working in hospital clinics exhibited higher levels of blindness compared to those working in outpatient clinics, possibly due to the nature of shift work and intense schedules (Yavuz, 2020). Additionally, outpatient clinics' dynamic structure, job processes, and increased interaction with external stakeholders may contribute to this difference.

Consequences of Organizational Blindness: In the management literature, a limited number of studies on organizational blindness have yielded the following results. A study in the construction sector found that organizational climate contributes to organizational blindness, which, in turn, leads to the silo syndrome (Gürçay, 2019). Another study in the field of education concluded that organizational blindness has a negative impact on organizational resilience and sustainability (Gültekin, 2019). On the other hand, organizational blindness has been identified as a barrier to organizational learning (Levinthal and March, 1993). In organizations affected by blindness, employees may experience excessive monotony over time, leading to inefficiency, burnout, and communication breakdowns. A study in this context highlighted the negative effects of organizational blindness, including failure, panic, burnout, inefficiency, and missed opportunities (Kartal, 2018).

Dimensions of Organizational Blindness:

The most recent dimensions of organizational blindness have been theoretically addressed in a book chapter published by Kılıç (2021), one of the authors who introduced the topic to Turkish literature in 2016.

Near Blindness: Some organizations focus on the future, the past, distant environments, or the medium and long term. In such cases, organizations may fail to see developments in their immediate and nearby environments or in the current short term. Additionally, if there are systemic issues in the corporate structure or if communication channels responsible for information flow are not functioning properly, accurate and timely information may not come from the immediate surroundings. As a result, a problem of being unable to see the nearby may arise.

Far Blindness: Some organizations solely focus on their internal and immediate environments or the short term (the near future). On the other hand, due to lack of vision, systemic issues in the corporate structure, or malfunctioning communication channels responsible for information flow, accurate information may not reach the organization from the distant environment. As a result, organizations may experience a problem of being unable to see the distant future, the past, or the distant environment.

Wrong Vision: Some organizations may have communication channels that are not functioning effectively or accurately in managing their relationships with the environment and facilitating the flow of information from the environment. In such cases, the information reaching the organization will come at the wrong time, from the wrong place, from the wrong source, and through the wrong channel. Additionally, the information received will reach the wrong individuals in the wrong manner. As a result, even if the organization obtains information

about the environment, it will be both incorrect and received at the wrong time and in the wrong manner. In a way, like individuals who are color blind and perceive red as green, the organization may experience a color blindness issue by misinterpreting the incoming information.

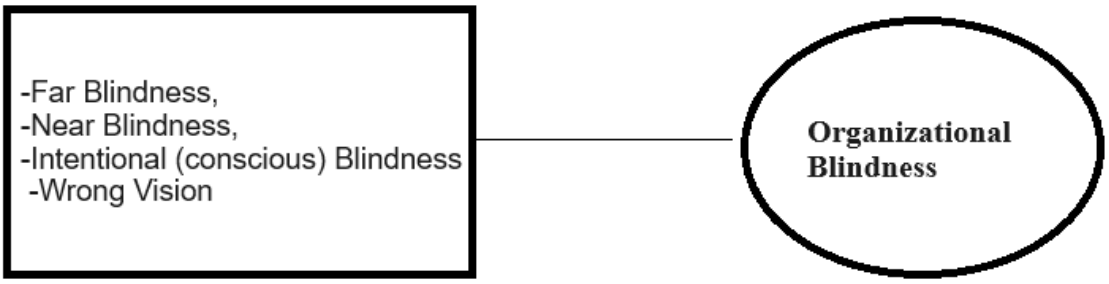
Intentional (Conscious) Blindness: According to psychological science, individuals tend to see things that make them feel good and beneficial, while masking and ignoring things that cause harm, physical and financial dangers, failure, or pain, and develop defense mechanisms (Heffernan, 2011; Fotaki and Hyde, 2014). Intentional blindness is also used as a legal term. Intentional blindness refers to individuals consciously trying to remain irresponsible by keeping themselves in a position where they cannot consciously perceive the facts in order to escape from the responsibility or legal consequences of a wrongful action (Tecer, 2018). The intentional blindness approach developed by individuals in fields like psychology is also likely to manifest in organizations run by people.

Among the fundamental reasons for the tendency of intentional blindness in organizations are fear of conflict, fear of change, fear of losing capital, status, or other powers. Therefore, organizations may choose to ignore certain situations, even if they see them, due to the factors mentioned above.

3.METHOD

3.1.**Model of the Research:** In this study, an exploratory model was employed. Based on the review of the existing literature and scale development studies, a theoretical model containing four sub-dimensions of organizational blindness has been developed. This theoretical model, depicted in Figure 1, has been tested using data collected from the field, leading to the valid model of the study presented in the findings section.

Figure-1.Model of the Research



Data Collection Instrument:

No measurement tool measuring the concept of organizational blindness in five dimensions has been found in the relevant literature. Therefore, a new scale development study has been conducted to measure the phenomenon. The scientific research steps taken in this regard are outlined below.

3.3. Scale Development Study: Item Pool: In order to measure the concept of organizational blindness, a literature review was conducted first. It was found that there is only one scale developed by Seymen et al. (2016) that measures organizational blindness in the literature. Upon examination, it was observed that this scale is focused on measuring the factors causing organizational blindness. Therefore, a scale development study aiming to measure the concept of organizational blindness was initiated. Within this scope, a pool of items consisting of 40 keywords related to organizational blindness and its associated constructs (such as silo syndrome, organizational myopia, etc.) was created by examining relevant studies.

Expert Opinion: As a result of the literature review, the 35 key concepts obtained were individually examined and scored by 10 experts who are academics and practitioners in the field of management. Based on the scoring,

8 items receiving less than 70% of the total score were eliminated. Consequently, a 5-point Likert scale consisting of 27 items was obtained for data collection.

Language Validity: The 27 items obtained underwent language and expression checks by two individuals specialized in language grammar, initiating the pilot application process.

3.4. Sampling: The research was conducted on healthcare professionals (medical secretaries, nurses, etc.) working in a public hospital in the city. The research sample was selected using convenience sampling method among voluntary participants. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews and questionnaire forms. A total of 271 employees aged 18 and above, who were literate, were reached during the research. As the literature suggests that the number of expressions in the questionnaire (27 expressions) is suitable for sample adequacy when it is 5-10 times the number of participants, this number was deemed sufficient. During the research process, the consent of the participating employees was obtained in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration (Helsinki Declaration, 1964) before filling out the questionnaire.

4. FINDINGS

The data obtained from the field within the scope of the research underwent reliability and validity tests in the SPSS program. The analysis results are provided below. 4.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis of the Scale: The results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test conducted within the scope of the Exploratory Factor Analysis of the Scale are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 - Results of KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		,869
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1,336E3
	df	136
	Sig.	,000

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's Test
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy: 0.971 Bartlett's Sphericity Test Approximate Chi-Square Value: 1.946E4 Degrees of Freedom: 666 p-value: 0.000
The result of the KMO test, which assesses whether the research sample is sufficient, is 0.97, which is greater than 0.50, indicating that the sample is adequate. On the other hand, the result of the Bartlett's Test for assessing the suitability of the data for factor analysis is (Sig.) 0.000.
The factor loadings of the items and the factors resulting from the factor analysis of the Organizational Blindness scale are provided in
Table 2.

Item Number	**Item Description**	**Rotated Component Matrix[a] Yükü**	**Factor Name**
2	My organization accurately plans for its future	,702	Far Blindness
3	My organization timely perceives future opportunities and threats	,635	
4	My organization acquires information about its distant environment (international, technological developments, etc.) effectively	,723	
7	My organization learns from past experiences	,705	
8	My organization considers past experiences when making significant decisions	,664	

9	My organization learns accurate information from past experiences	,581	
12	My organization accurately interprets short-term (daily-monthly, etc.)	,427	Near Blindness
13	My organization perceives risks and opportunities in the short term (daily-monthly, etc.) accurately	,664	
15	My organization obtains accurate information from its immediate environment	,828	
16	Only positive outcomes are considered in my organization	,685	Intentional Blindness
18	Some negative behaviors in my organization are intentionally ignored	,718	
19	Some failures made by units in my organization are ignored	,792	
20	There is healthy information flow throughout my organization	,597	Wrong Vision
23	Customer and other stakeholders' views are correctly taken into account in my organization	,659	
24	My organization identifies problems and opportunities most accurately	,702	
26	Information obtained in my organization is interpreted correctly	,777	
27	Information coming to my organization is obtained from correct communication channels	,691	

Tablo 2 reveals the factors obtained from the exploratory factor analysis (validity analysis), the percentage of variance explained by the scale, and the factor loadings of the items. Accordingly, it has been determined that the scale, theoretically categorized into five sub-dimensions, consists of four sub-dimensions as a result of field research. The identified dimensions are named below. The total Explained Variance Ratio of the scale (4-dimensional) is 54.935%.

Factor 1 - Far Blindness: This dimension consists of 6 items measuring an organization's inability to see its distant past and future, failure to obtain and learn from healthy information from its distant environment, and inability to perceive opportunities and threats in its distant environment and plan its future accurately. This dimension accounts for 31.58% of the total variance.

Factor 2 – Near Blindness: This dimension comprises 3 items reflecting the organization's inability to see and assess developments, risks, and opportunities in its immediate environment (internal stakeholders, competitors, and industry) and short term. This dimension explains 6.43% of the total variance.

Factor 3 - Intentional (Conscious) Blindness: This dimension comprises 3 items measuring the conscious disregard of some negative and unwanted behavioral and issues in the organization. This dimension explains 7.44% of the total variance.

Factor 4 – Wrong Vision: This dimension consists of 5 items assessing whether there is a healthy flow of information throughout the organization, whether stakeholders' perspectives are accurately considered, whether data and information are correctly analyzed, interpreted, and synthesized, and whether incoming information comes from correct communication channels. This dimension accounts for 9.48% of the total variance.

Table 3, Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,838	17

The reliability analysis conducted on the 17 items obtained from the factor analysis resulted in a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.838, which is greater than the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70. Therefore, the scale is considered reliable.

Table 4 - Correlation Analysis of Sub-Dimensions of Organizational Blindness Scale

Correlations

		Far	Near	Conscious	Wrong
Far	Pearson Correlation	1	,462**	,151*	,586**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,013	,000
	N	270	270	270	270
Near	Pearson Correlation	,462**	1	,108	,475**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,075	,000
	N	270	270	270	270
Conscious	Pearson Correlation	,151*	,108	1	,147*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,013	,075		,016
	N	270	270	270	270
Wrong	Pearson Correlation	,586**	,475**	,147*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,016	
	N	270	270	270	270

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis conducted to determine the relationship between the 4 sub-dimensions of organizational blindness revealed the following:

- There is a positive relationship between the inability to see the future and the dimensions of inability to see the near future, conscious blindness, and misperception.
- There is a positive relationship between the inability to see the near future and the dimensions of inability to see the future and misperception, while there is no relationship with conscious blindness.
- There is a positive relationship between conscious blindness and the dimensions of inability to see the future and conscious blindness, but no relationship with the inability to see the near future.
- There is a positive relationship between misperception and the dimensions of inability to see the future, inability to see the near future, and conscious blindness.

Based on these results, it can be concluded that there are consistent and mutually supportive positive relationships among the sub-dimensions of organizational blindness.

5.RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research revealed that the concept of organizational blindness consists of four sub-dimensions. These dimensions are " Far Blindness, Near Blindness, Intentional Blindness and Wrong Vision." Furthermore, a valid and reliable organizational blindness scale consisting of 17 Likert items was developed as a result of the study.
To enhance the reliability of this developed scale, it is recommended to replicate the study in different sectors, organizations, and cultures. By doing so, a more comprehensive understanding of the applicability and validity of the scale across various organizational contexts can be obtained. Additionally, conducting the scale in diverse organizational settings and cultural backgrounds would provide insights into potential variations in organizational blindness perception.

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