

A Study of Organizational Solidarity in Public Schools in Shiraz by Emphasizing on Social-emotional and Structural-instrumental Dimensions

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Abstract

Objective: The aim of this study was to evaluate organizational solidarity in public schools in Shiraz (Iran) in relation to the environment.

Method: The present study is an applied research in terms of the design and is a descriptive-survey study in terms of the method. The study statistical population included all primary and secondary public-school teachers of Shiraz of which 369 people were selected by random-stratified sampling method and based on Cochran's formula. Research instrument a short-form of the organizational solidarity scale (Torkzadeh, Taghizadeh and Moharrar, 2012), which were distributed and collected between research sample after calculating their reliability and validity.

Results: The results of the study showed that the degree of organizational solidarity in both social-emotional and structural-instrumental dimensions in elementary schools is at a desirable level. Also, the findings indicated that there is no significant difference between the different dimensions of organizational solidarity in elementary schools but there is a significant difference between the various dimensions of organizational solidarity in secondary schools ($p < 0.002$). So that comparison of means showed that structural-instrumental solidarity is significantly higher than social-emotional solidarity. In addition, the results of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) showed that there is a significant difference between social-emotional solidarity and structural-instrumental solidarity in elementary and secondary schools ($p < 0.01$).

Conclusion: Elementary schools experience more social-emotional solidarity.

Key words: organizational solidarity, public schools, social-emotional, structural-instrumental

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Introduction

Fast environmental changes can pose a serious threat to the existence of many organizations. New media, information technology, globally consuming cultures and emergence of new standards are positive environmental changes in today's organizations. In the meanwhile, to create adaptability (changing oneself, others and the environment) schools, like other social entities, need to cooperate and align to respond to the environmental requirements and guarantee their survival and show their effectiveness. The components and activities of the organization should also communicate significantly so that a strong and efficient system is formed in order to fulfill the utility and function of the organization in a society. This condition is called solidarity (Torkzadeh, Nekoomand & Harati, 2013). In fact, it is generally accepted that an organization's internal solidarity and integrity is essential to achieve compatibility with external environment (Li & Zhang, 2010). Solidarity is a tool by which each company seeks for the harmony of people to undertake organizational duties (Abbasi, 2014). Therefore, researchers believe that solidarity is a merit in an organization playing a key role in the dynamism of an organization, people and the groups within the organization (Harun & Mahmood, 2012).

As one of the most important elements of success (Wickens, 1995; Itzkovich & Heilbrunn, 2016; Nekooei Moghadam, Behzadi, & Keshavarz, 2012), organizational solidarity refers to the adjustment of people's, groups' (Koudenburg et al., 2015) and organizational departments' dependence to each other (Koster, Sanders, & Van Emmerik, 2004). In organizational literature, solidarity is known as the preserver of entity of the organization, leading to structural and functional abilities and helping the organization to progress (Lee, 2004). In fact, an organization will provide the conditions to fulfill the goals and organizational duties by establishing a sense of belonging to the organization and improving the sense of cooperation and responsibility among people and in this way, it can lead to meet one of their most important duties, that is accountability to an organization's external and internal requirements (Torkzadeh & Abdsharifi, 2016). Generally, organizational solidarity involves social-emotional and structural- instrumental aspects (Seyed Javadin, 2007; Banting, Johnston, Kymlicka & Soroka, 2011) and one of its most important usage is to empower the organization to respond to environmental factors. In one sense, solidarity in an organization results in sharing common ideas, values, insights, and interests (Ribiere, 2001). Members' function gradually develops and the organization paves the way in response to the environment (Rezaeian, 2004).

On the other hand, in organizations with high level of solidarity, there is similarity in members' tastes and insights and interactions occur in a friendly atmosphere (Honarmandrad, 2015). In this condition, employees help the collective interests in two ways, that is through their role and its extra function; acting within a role means doing the required tasks and responsibilities and the role's extra behavior refers to inessential function and behavior (Koster, Sanders, & Van Emmerik, 2002). So, solidarity in an organization reveals citizenship behaviors, which are beyond the specified behaviors and stops the intraorganizational conflicts. This can have positive results for each organization and improve efficiency (Wendt et al., 2009; Itzkovich, & Heilbrunn, 2016). So, organizational solidarity plays a role in the dynamism of an organization, people and the groups within the organization (Harun & Mahmood, 2012).

With regard to what was mentioned above and the importance of organizational solidarity in school's efficiency and success to achieve their educational and organizational desirability and its role in developing the ability to respond environmentally and secure the sustainable development of schools, in this study, we tried to evaluate the organizational solidarity of public schools in Shiraz according to their teachers' point of view. It is to be noted that many studies have been done in the field, as solidarity is the core of organizational activities (Lee, 2004) and preserver of organizational entity (Forooghi Asl, 2002). However, as far as the authors investigated, there was no comparative comprehensive research investigating the amount of organizational solidarity in public schools with emphasis on social-emotional and structural- instrumental aspects. The findings will help the educational authorities to provide the necessary conditions for organizational solidarity and the required steps to achieve it. It also helps them to undertake the necessary actions to fulfill the

organizational solidarity of schools. This can lead to development of effectiveness of teachers', students' and staff's personal and organizational function and ultimately, schools' higher effectiveness and accountability. To do this, the following study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Are the primary and secondary schools in Shiraz in good condition with regard to solidarity?
2. Is there a significant difference in different aspects of organizational solidarity in primary and secondary schools?
3. Is there a significant difference between different aspects of organizational solidarity of the schools studied?

Literature review

Organizational solidarity is one of the most important variables of an organization which is defined in many ways. So, different studies have interpreted it differently (Singh, Power & Chuong, 2011; Chiochio & Essiembre, 2009). In Leites, Pereira, Rius, Salas and Vigorito's view (2017), solidarity is the mutual cooperation and responsibility among the members which can lead to the fulfilment of common goals and denotes the extent to which substructures of an organization are interrelated (Rahman Seresht, Ramerd & Golvani, 2011). In other words, solidarity shows the similar and harmonious actions of groups in the organization (Einwohner et al., 2016). Therefore, when all people show their solidarity to achieve a collective goal, it can be said that they collaborate and solidarity is at higher level of collaboration (Seyed Javadin, 2007).

Organizational solidarity means the unitedness and cohesiveness of people, groups and organizational departments in joining each other to gain their common goals. Here, not only the interests and insights converge and align, but flexibility rises and conflicts minimizes (Fazayeli & Shamshiri, 2013). Therefore, organizational solidarity is a social feature, emphasizing on a bigger aim and denoting the interaction among different entities (Koenig, 2011). Accordingly, people behave based on the specified values and reasonable behavioral and logical principles which are related to all members and show less resistance against their group's decisions and goals (Gelfand, Lim & Raver, 2004). Hence, organizations looking for success should be able to develop solidarity procedures so that they can improve their organization's efficiency. In fact, the organization's success depends on integrity, solidarity and high efficiency (Fazayeli & Shamshiri, 2013). The results of the conducted studies show that researchers have proposed social-emotional and structural- instrumental aspects as for their systematic solidarity structure. These aspects include features which can improve the relationships between members of a system or present some guidelines for the members to accomplish their duties and responsibilities.

Social-emotional solidarity establishes a common sense of identity among members of group and society as a result of systems of common value (Wallace & Wolf, 2006). In this case, common beliefs are shared and positive feelings are created among the members of group and society (Woosnam, Shafer, Scott & Timothy, 2015). In other words, integrity of people and groups and their ability to resist negative effects and external threats are called social-emotional solidarity (Taghizade, 2012), which guarantees that different people, entities, organizations in different levels should reach mental commonness (similar mental models) and be able to work together (Heydari Sareban, 2015). In Koudenburg's view (2014), this solidarity can be a bottom-up process in which a sense of identity is common among all each and every member of the group. This solidarity can be considered by different measures, including their trust, assistance, and collaboration and their sense of belonging to the group. It can be promoted by common interests, an optimal external image, efficient division of labor, people's link to get to the target, feeling of happiness and satisfaction from collaboration and cooperation (Taghi zade, 2012).

Organizational solidarity is a sense of togetherness and develops because of the mutual dependence of the members to each other (Seyed Javadin, 2007). In fact, structural solidarity is any kind of organizational orientation, sequences and processes to advance the goals of the system (Torkzadeh, 2009). In other words, structural solidarity refers to the amount of people's correlation and cooperation to work on the duties specified by the organization (Harun & Mahmood, 2012). This

solidarity leads to public cooperation and the sense of togetherness strengthens in the organization (Banting et al., 2011). In order to create structural- instrumental solidarity, the goals of the group should be totally clear, there should be division of labor, groups and people should be linked together and their cooperation should be supported. In this way, as a behavioral system, structural solidarity is established and promotes by using unique structure and procedures. This variable consists of three fundamental aspects, that is strategic orientation, organizational plan (Cummings & Worley, 2014) and cultural background (Torkzadeh, 2009).

Strategic orientation: in fact, it refers to principles which affect the activities and strategies of an organization and is used to create appropriate behaviors which lead to better function (Kheiri and Roshani, 2013). Actually, in today's organizational environment, competitiveness and constant changes create a complicated atmosphere for the organizations. In this condition, strategy is used as a useful tool and shows the way for the organization (Rahimnia & Sadeghian, 2011). So, a strategic orientation is in line with both internal and external environmental conditions and following it can lead to people's and departments' solidarity and conformity (Torkzadeh, 2009).

Organizational plan: it refers to the method of creating and changing the structure in order to achieve the organizational goals which lead to strategic orientation (Robins, 2015). To do this, four factors are mentioned (Torkzadeh & Nekoomand, 2014; Torkzadeh, 2009):

- The special system of setting the background: general support and guidance of attempts related to developing the strategies;
- Structuring system: division of labor, cooperation, and coordination of systems, units, people and their activities (direct, indirect) is in line with their organizational goals.
- System of acquisition and knowledge management: in order to evaluate the activities and the following results, organized learning from experiences, codification, production and distribution of the local knowledge are formed.
- Human resources system: it involves efficient systems for selection, recruitment, training, improvement, evaluation and reward in line with the strategy.

Cultural background: in order to create and enhance the appropriate cultural background as a guide for perceptions, thoughts and proceedings, fundamental hypotheses, values and common norms should be formed by means of appropriate use of scientific methods and tools and positional facilities (Torkzadeh, 2009).

Concerning the research studies conducted in this field and by emphasizing on social-emotional and structural- instrumental aspects, these points can be mentioned:

In investigating the relationship between group solidarity and organizational performance, Harun and Mahmood's findings (2012) reveal that the amount of solidarity has a positive and significant relationship with organizational performance. Moreover, both types of solidarity, that is structural and social, predict the performance and making wise decisions to improve solidarity can have positive effects on the performance of organizations. Also, structural solidarity will have more effect on improving the efficiency.

Chang et al.'s findings (2006), investigating the relationship between organizational solidarity and organizational performance showed that structural solidarity can predict the performance in personal level, while social solidarity predicts the availability of the system. Social solidarity predicted the performance of work groups. Group solidarity predicted the performance.

In their study, Chaw and Bruce (1999) found that high levels of structural solidarity have a relationship with behavioral leadership style and democratic style, while high levels of social solidarity have a relationship with democratic leadership, social support, and positive feedback. In a study, Torkzadeh and Abdsharifi (2016) predicted the readiness for organizational changes based on a bank employees' perceptions of organizational structures with the role of mediation of organizational solidarity. According to the findings, both aspects of organizational solidarity helps to achieve organizational changes in this bank. In fact, organizational solidarity significantly predicts the organizational changes.

In a study named "predicting the work motivational potential of employees by organizational solidarity: studying Civil Organization of Shiraz Municipality", Keshavarz (2015) found that there is a positive and significant relationship between aspects of organizational solidarity and aspects of work motivational potential (variety of job skills, job identity, job importance, independence, feedback). Another result was that social-emotional solidarity is a significant and positive predictor of work motivational potential stemming from independence. But this solidarity is not a significant predictor of variety of job skills, job identity, job importance, and feedback. Also, instrumental solidarity is a positive and significant predictor of job importance. But it is not a significant predictor of variety of job skills, job identity, independence, feedback.

Vahdani, Moharram Zadeh, Aghaei and Hossein Pour (2012) found that coaches of student teams mostly use educational and training leadership style and rarely make use of democratic style. In addition, the results showed that social support, training and education, and positive feedback have a positive and significant relationship with structural solidarity and social solidarity.

Method

As the aim of this study was to evaluate organizational solidarity in public schools in Shiraz, the present study is an applied research in terms of the design and is a descriptive-survey study in terms of the method because it was a field study and the data were collected in schools. In order to analyze the data, sample t-test was used to evaluate the organizational solidarity of primary and secondary schools and dependent t-test was used to compare the mean of organizational solidarity in public schools. Also, in order to compare the mean of organizational solidarity in primary and secondary schools, MANOVA was used. The study statistical population included all primary (3958 people) and secondary (5350 people) public school teachers of Shiraz in the school year 2017-18, 369 of whom were selected by random-stratified sampling method (according to their grade) and based on Cochran's formula. Table 1 shows the participants divided by their grade.

Table 1. sample size and percentage

No.	grades	Sample size	Percent
1	Primary	157	42.5
2	Middle school	126	23.3
3	High school	86	34.2
4	Total	369	100

To collect data, the summarized figure of organizational solidarity scale (Torkzadeh, Taghizadeh and Moharrar, 2012) was used. This figure contained 18 items and included both instrumental and social-emotional subscales. To answer the questions, Likert five-point scale was used. To assess the validity of the scale by the item analysis of the correlation coefficient between items, each item was compared to the total score of the correspondent scale and the results of the highest and lowest correlation coefficient are mentioned in Table 2. In order to calculate reliability, Cronbach Alpha was used. The coefficients of Cronbach Alpha resulted from the used tools are optimal with respect to the number of items of each aspect.

Table 2. validity and reliability of the summarized figure of organizational solidarity scale

Subscale	Correlation coefficient range	Sig.	Reliability
Social-emotional	0.65-0.75	0.001	0.85
Instrumental	0.62-0.78	0.001	0.89
Total score	0.59-0.75	0.001	0.93

Findings

In this section, the collected data were analyzed using inferential statistics. Following that, the research questions were analyzed.

1. Organizational solidarity in schools

In order to establish the organizational solidarity in schools, sample t-test was used. According to table 3, the results showed that the mean of social-emotional and structural-instrumental aspects were higher than the average (4.06 and 4.03 respectively) and due to the resulted t in the freedom level (156), there was a significant difference between means of these aspects and the mean of average level (0.001). Also, organizational solidarity (4.05) in primary schools in Shiraz was higher than the optimal level and due to the resulted t in the freedom level (156), there was not a significant difference between these aspects and the optimal level. According the results, it can be said that as the teachers of primary schools in Shiraz mentioned, organizational solidarity in schools was higher than the average and in an optimal level.

According to table 3, the results of the test showed that the mean of emotional-social (3.91) and instrumental (3.97) aspects of secondary schools were higher than the average and due to the resulted t in the freedom level (211), there was a significant difference between means of these aspects and the mean of average level (0.001). Also, the amount of organizational solidarity (3.94) was higher than the optimal level in secondary schools of Shiraz and due to the resulted t in the freedom level (211), there was not a significant difference between means of these aspects and the mean of optimal level. Based on the results, it can be argued that as the teachers of primary schools in Shiraz mentioned, organizational solidarity in schools was higher than the average and in an optimal level.

Table 3. Comparing the mean of aspects organizational solidarity in primary and secondary schools with the average level ($Q = 3$) and optimal level ($Q = 4$).

Variable	Grade	No.	Average	St.d	Criterion	t	Df	Sig.
Social -emotional	primary	157	4.06	0.61	3	21.79	156	0.001
					4	1.27		0.20
Structural - instrumental					3	22.47		0.001
					4	0.82		0.40
Total					3	23.04		0.001
					4	1.1		0.27
Social -emotional	secondary	212	3.91	0.63	3	21.00	211	0.001
					4	1.97		0.04
Structural - instrumental					3	21.89		0.001
					4	0.66		0.50
Total					3	21.92		0.001
					4	1.34		0.18

2. Comparing different aspects of organizational solidarity in schools

The results of dependent t-test showed that although the structural – instrumental aspect average (3.99) is higher than the social – emotional (3.98) in primary schools, due to the resulted t (1.22) in the freedom level (156), there was not a significant difference between the mean of organizational solidarity aspects in primary schools of Shiraz. Moreover, according to Table 4, the structural – instrumental aspect average (3.97) is higher than the social emotional (3.91) in secondary schools and due to the resulted t (3.13) in the level of freedom (211), there was a significant difference (0.002) between the mean of organizational solidarity in secondary schools. The results are mentioned in Table 4.

Table 4. the results of t-test (dependent) in order to compare the intragroup mean of organizational solidarity aspects

Variable	Grade	No.	Average	St.d	T	Df	Sig.
social -emotional	Primary	157	4.06	0.61	0.90	156	0.37
Structural -instrumental			4.03	0.57			
social -emotional	Secondary	212	3.91	0.63	3.13	211	0.002
Structural -instrumental			3.97	0.64			

3. Comparing different aspects of organizational solidarity in primary and secondary schools

According to table 5, the results of the multivariate analysis of variance showed that there was a significant difference in aspects of organizational solidarity of primary and secondary schools ($P < 0.01$; $F(1, 367) = 4.15$; $\lambda = 0.02$).

Table 5. Comparing different aspects of organizational solidarity in primary and secondary schools

Variable	Grade	No.	Mean	F	Df	Sig.
Social – emotional	primary	157	4.06	4.15	367	0.01
	Secondary	212	3.91			
Structural –instrumental	primary	157	4.03			
	secondary	212	3.97			

According to the Scheffe post hoc test, it was revealed that: the mean of emotional – social aspect is higher in primary schools (4.06) than secondary schools (3.92) and there was a significant difference between the aspects of these two groups. However, there was not a significant difference between the structural – instrumental aspects of primary and secondary schools.

Conclusion and discussion

The results showed that social-emotional and structural- instrumental solidarity is optimal in primary schools. To elaborate, it can be said that in order to fulfil solidarity, principals of primary schools have tried to create an attitude and mental notion among their teachers; they have also shared the common ideas, values, insights, and interests and have set schools' insights in line with teachers' needs. They have made an attempt to create a general belief with regard to importance of solidarity in schools and this has created people's perceptions and is the background of a shared sense of responsibility among primary school teachers. Attention to this issue has provided the required necessities to fulfil the social – emotional aspects in schools. In this way, school principals try to create a sense of cooperation and belonging among teachers which is a very optimal factor in development of this aspect and their behavior. Moreover, by creating a clear and appropriate strategic orientation, an appropriate organizational plan and suitable cultural background, these schools form integrity and a sense of common responsibility (Torkzadeh, Razi & Najafi, 2017). This is the root of structural – instrumental solidarity in schools. In fact, manipulating people's perceptions creates the opportunity to change structural aspect and in structural aspect, providing the background, analyzing, planning, and designing the appropriate strategies to perform and implement in organizations (including schools) are provided (Torkzadeh et al., 2008).

The results also showed that the mean of structural-instrumental aspect in secondary schools was in optimal level, but the mean of social-emotional aspect was not in the optimal level. To further explain this, it should be stated that secondary schools' principals have used specified mechanisms to employ and recruit people and exploited strategies suitable to the environmental conditions which is accepted by the teachers. Based on this, there has been an appropriate division of labor between teachers and other members and based on the accepted procedures, instructions and rules, people try to achieve their common goals. However, the sense of happiness in secondary school teachers caused

by group work was not in the optimal level. The relationships are not based on trust and friendship and there are not many common interests and motivation among the members. Teachers do not tend to be a member of the teams and establish a dynamic and coherent relationship with each other.

The findings also showed that there was not a significant relationship between different aspects of organizational solidarity in primary schools. This shows that organizational solidarity in primary schools is optimal and means that in secondary schools, organizational solidarity in the two mentioned aspects was systematic, related and interactive. In other words, the solidarity in primary schools showed the togetherness and mental satisfaction of teachers from the team work which was created due to common motivations, common identity, cooperation among teachers, and dynamic and cooperative humanistic relationships. This shows the mechanisms of the school and management to create structural – instrumental solidarity. To do this, it was attempted to consider particular procedures to employ and recruit teachers and other staff and clarify the school aims for all members. All attempts and activities were assessed to improve solidarity in schools.

The results of the study also showed that there was a significant difference between different aspects of solidarity in secondary schools. It can be said that although the principals have tried to explain the school's strategies and goals to teachers clearly and divide the labor effectively, these goals are not in line with teachers' interests and wishes and do not meet their needs. Therefore, in these schools, principal, teachers and other staff do not have a common sense of identity and the relationships are not based on friendship and trust. In fact, although principals try to evaluate the attempts and procedures done to improve the solidarity, they have ignored the dynamic and harmonious relationships between people, which has roots in social – emotional solidarity. It is to be mentioned that as the subject of the study was new, no totally relevant study was found. In this field, Keshavarz's findings (2015) were in line with the mentioned section.

Furthermore, the results showed that there was a significant difference between social – emotional solidarity in primary and secondary school. To explain this finding, solidarity definition should be mentioned; solidarity is the limit to which people of the same group are attracted to each other and share the group's goals. It is clear that secondary school teachers who spend their working time in different schools have a lower cooperation in comparison with those of primary school and have less sense of belonging and friendly atmosphere. As people spend more time together, they develop a stronger friendship bond and there would be a mutual relationship between them and this would turn to their common interest and they would be attracted to each other. In fact, the time that organization members spend with each other is of high importance in the degree and amount of group and organizational solidarity (Robins, 2015; Rezaeian, 2010; Seyed Javadin, 2007). Moreover, group size is another determining factor; the number of teachers in secondary schools is higher than that of primary schools; it should be stated that as the groups enlarge, the solidarity decreases, as they cannot have as much interaction. In large schools, cliques can be formed within groups and this leads to lower total solidarity in schools. It should be said that the achieved result can be because of the teachers' relationships in primary and secondary schools as open, close-knit atmospheres can facilitate the formation of relationships, while the unfriendly strict atmosphere relationships in secondary schools would destroy the friendships. Actually, forming humanistic relationships and cooperation among primary school teachers can create the environment for unity, collaboration and intimacy among teachers, leading to emotional – social solidarity. On the other hand, in the quite strict atmosphere in secondary schools, teachers should pay more attention to their duties and fulfilling their tasks, procedures and instructions and rules. In this condition, the principal pays more attention to build up a structural – instrumental solidarity and is less likely to emphasize on the common interests and features among teachers, friendship atmosphere and relationship and mental satisfaction to do group work, all of which are components of social – emotional solidarity.

In general, according to the findings of this study, in teachers' point of views, instrumental solidarity is of higher importance and school principals and leaders should facilitate negotiation, stimulate teachers to take part in decision-making procedure, solve the conflicts and emphasize on teachers' common interests and features. By creating an atmosphere based on trust and cooperation,

principals and leaders should encourage the group members to cooperate and collaborate and also emphasize on teachers' common interests and features and create the appropriate condition to achieve social – emotional solidarity in their organization (Wendt et al., 2009; Seyed Javadin, 2007). Moreover, in this case, some strategies can create the necessary conditions to cooperate, collaborate and consult among teachers like considering the teachers' and other staffs' needs and requests at the time of codifying organizational goals, creating the feeling that fulfilling their goal is as important as the school goals, emphasizing member's common interests and features to providing the opportunity to fulfil their dreams, setting strategies which are appropriate to interactive environment. In this case, people will be interdependent to achieve the same goal, hence organizational solidarity is more likely to occur in schools.

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