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DO HYBRID MANAGERS IN ACADEMIA EXPERIENCE BUSINESS BLINDNESS?

Abstract

When considering the densities and workloads of academic staff, those considered as hybrid managers in management positions in addition to their fundamental duties, they confront business blindness in both individual (managerial blindness) and organizational (silo syndrome) contexts. The study aims to explain whether academic staff working as hybrid managers in academia experience business blindness in an individual and organizational context. In this context, the conceptual framework of business blindness was created by considering individual (managerial blindness) and organizational (silo syndrome) aspects. We had interviews with the academic staff, with structured questionnaires on business blindness, to support this conceptual framework. The precautions required to be taken to prevent business blindness are discussed in an individual and organizational context. Precautions necessary to take in the individual context are supposed to be fall in love with change, open for inspection, have good relations with the environment, attach importance to the thoughts and ideas of the employees, and avoid excessive prescriptiveness. The measures to be taken in the organizational context are to have a participatory management approach, if there is a conflict in the organization, it should be eliminated and the purpose, mission, and vision of the organization should be adopted by the employees. In academia, it is thought that hybrid managers face more business blindness than other managers. In conclusion, the creation of a good team to share the workload of the managers in academic units and the open communication channels will prevent business

blindness. Thus, academic staff who are hybrid managers will prevent them from moving away from and breaking up with their professional identities.

Keywords: Managerial Blindness, Silo Syndrome, Business Blindness, Hybrid Management, Management in Academia.

AKADEMİDE HİBRİT YÖNETİCİLER İŞLETME KÖRLÜĞÜ YAŞIYORLAR MI?

Öz

Asli görevine ek olarak yöneticilik görevinde bulunan hibrit yönetici olarak kabul edilen akademisyenler, yoğunlukları ve iş yükleri göz önüne alındığında hem bireysel (yönetici körlüğü) hem de örgütsel (silo sendromu) bağlamda işletme körlüğü ile karşı karşıya kalmaktadırlar. Çalışmanın amacı; akademide hibrit yönetici olarak görev yapan akademisyenlerin bireysel ve örgütsel bağlamda işletme körlüğü yaşayıp yaşamadıklarının açıklanmasıdır. Bu kapsamda işletme körlüğü, bireysel (yönetici körlüğü) ve örgütsel (silo sendromu) ele alınarak kavramsal çerçevesi oluşturulmuştur. Oluşturulan bu kavramsal çerçeveye destek olması adına hibrit yönetici olarak kabul edilen idari görevi olan akademisyenlerle işletme körlüğü üzerine yapılandırılmış soru formları yardımıyla görüşmeler yapılmıştır. İşletme körlüğünü engellemek için alınması gereken önlemler bireysel ve örgütsel bağlamda ele alınmıştır. Bireysel bağlamda alınması gereken önlemler; değişime açık olunmalı, denetime açık olunmalı, çevre ile iyi ilişkilerin olması, çalışanların düşüncelerine ve fikirlerine önem verilmeli ve aşırı kuralcılıktan uzak durulmalıdır. Örgütsel bağlamda alınması gereken önlemler ise; katılımcı yönetim anlayışına sahip olunması, organizasyonda çatışma oluşturacak durum varsa ortadan kaldırılmalı ve kurumun amaç, misyon ve vizyonunun çalışanlarca benimsenmesi sağlanmalıdır. Akademide hibrit yöneticilerin diğer yöneticilere nispeten daha fazla işletme körlüğü (yönetici körlüğü ve silo sendromu) ile karşı karşıya kaldıkları düşünülmektedir. Sonuç olarak akademik birimlerde yöneticilerin iş yükünü paylaşacak iyi bir ekibin oluşturulması ve iletişim kanallarının açık olması işletme körlüğünü engelleyecektir. Böylece hibrit yöneticilik yapan akademisyenlerin mesleki kimliklerinden uzaklaşmaları ve kopmaları engellemiş olacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Yönetici Körlüğü, Silo Sendromu, İşletme Körlüğü, Hibrit Yöneticilik, Akademide Yönetim.

INTRODUCTION

Employees experiencing business blindness are generally over-prescriptive and not open for change and inspection. It can also be said that these organizations do not have visions and goals, and even if they have any, these visions and goals are not adopted by the employees. This can cause silo syndrome in organizations. As a natural consequence of the silo syndrome, coordination cannot be established in areas where it is required, and disconnection occurs between the system and subsystems that make up the organization. This disconnection also causes troubles in the task and information flow within the organization. Considering their workloads and diversities, it is a common situation that academic staff who call themselves

hybrid managers with managerial duties in addition to their actual profession, experience business blindness.

The business blindness concept was discussed in the literature in terms of doctors, who are generally considered to be hybrid managers in hospitals. It is crucial to discuss business blindness, generally faced in academia, among academic staff who have managerial duties. This study aims to discuss the business blindness of academic staff working as hybrid managers in academia in an individual and organizational context.

In this study, we compiled and discussed the concept of business blindness in academia. The business blindness concept was discussed within the individual (managerial blindness) and organizational (silo syndrome) context. In a public university, the opinions of fifteen managers (such as dean, vice dean, principal, vice principal, department head) who have managerial duties in different units and levels in addition to the academicianship were obtained, and the study was tried to be supported by field research (by interviewing with structured questionnaires).

BUSINESS BLIDNESS

Business blindness should generally be evaluated as a process that starts with the adaption of individuals who have been managers for a long time to business processes. It reveals that managers with business blindness cannot see the opportunities and threats to be brought by the changes and developments of the market in the operation they manage. It brings along the situation of being unable to offer solutions to even the common problems encountered in the organization. It negatively affects the decision-making processes within the operation and prevents quick and correct judgments given.

The concept of business blindness has been discussed within the individual (managerial blindness) and organizational (silo syndrome) context. In Figure 1, the conceptual framework of business blindness is given.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Business blindness

Business Blindness in the Individual Context: Managerial Blindness

The state of “unable to see, hear, or perceive” which is known to be specific to living things, is adapted to organizations and is called business blindness. Although the concept of blindness at large is used as being unable to see objects, it is also used figuratively in the meanings of being unable to see the truth, being unable to fulfill its function, being closed (Aytemiz Seymen et al., 2016: p. 214).

It is called business blindness when someone looking from outside the organization can easily see that there are some improper and deficient practices in the organization, but the

people inside the organization cannot see these faults and deficiencies because of workload and the ongoing habits they have applied for years (Akça, 2013: p. 7). It refers to an undesirable and adverse condition that usually causes disruptions in the workflow without being aware of it (Tarhan Mengi and Özgül, 2018: p. 126).

The factors that cause business blindness (managerial blindness) in the individual context are as follows (Dös, 2013: pp. 152-154):

- Being close to change,
- Being close to inspection,
- Being under the assumption of doing the job very well,
- Weakness in environmental relations,
- Being close to the ideas and thoughts of the employees,
- Being extremely status quo supporter/Extremely prescriptive

The issues related to the concept of business blindness have been tried to be revealed with the field research conducted to reveal the conceptual framework. One of the primary purposes of the study, the subject of whether hybrid managers in academia experience managerial blindness in the individual context and silo syndrome in the organizational context, compared to other managers, was tried to be explained by supporting the field research. Participants related to the concept of managerial blindness created based on the statements of the participants mentioned the issues of rotation and lack of training in management, professional dissatisfaction, heavy workload/responsibility, silo syndrome, dissatisfaction of those managed, being close to development/change, and routine/fixed management order. The participants mentioned the issue of rotation and lack of training in management quite intensely. Most of them stated that they did not take a management course during their education life. They expressed that this situation adversely influences their management processes.

Another issue frequently mentioned in the concept of managerial blindness is job dissatisfaction. The participants stated that the pressure due to the heavy workload/responsibility and the disagreements with the superiors and subordinates negatively affect their satisfaction with their position. Regarding the subject, the participants with the code K12 and K15 conspicuously clarified the subject matter:

“I am not satisfied in any way. It is about my personal opinions about management. I work with a very nice Dean. I learn a lot from him about management. However, I have the feeling that management is a huge responsibility, and there is a possibility of wrongdoing. For this reason, I am not satisfied with being a manager at all. Because being a manager means ensuring justice, enforcing the rules, who can do that? I try so hard to do it, which makes me tired. Instead of taking care of my profession, I have to deal with management.” (K12)

“It is possible to say that my current working conditions have become more difficult, but increased communication with my colleagues. This will further increase the sense of responsibility.” (K13).

“It is due to delays in doing works or not being able to understand something to be done or finding it ridiculous. I often find what my subordinates find ridiculous, but I am unable to do anything because I cannot change the requests or perspectives of my superiors. It greatly

reduces my satisfaction with my management. The most challenging thing for me in management is that my senior managers act without thinking, demand irrational things, want us to choose the hard way to do an easy job, constantly ask me to do any work to be done, and therefore see me as a soft touch, etc.” (K15)

It was seen that most of the participant statements in the concept of managerial blindness are related to each other. The participant with the code K15, who talked about the dissatisfaction of those managed, also expressed his job dissatisfaction and being closed to development/change with the following statements:

“You continue to make requests of the senior management that you find meaningless, you cannot explain yourself to the senior manager in this respect, and in fact, everyone tries to despise that logical thinking child in you, and you become of secondary importance even if you are a manager. In such cases, you do not try to talk to anyone after a certain period, since you are not minded. In such cases, even if your subordinates love you very much, even if they feel sorry for you in this regard and wish the best for you, they begin to think that you are more of a puppet than a manager, and they begin not to see you as a manager. In this respect, I believe that an administrator should not unintentionally oppress the people under him by politely correcting his superior when appropriate.” (K15)

On the other hand, two participants talked about the concept of managerial blindness and finally the routine/fixed management order. The participants stated that they missed some crucial points with the routinization of the work. Therefore, they could not look at it from a new perspective, and, as a result, they experienced managerial blindness. The statement of the participant coded K4 on the subject is as follows:

“Yes, I think I generally experience managerial blindness. Routine work can sometimes cause ignorance of our managerial weaknesses. Since the other managers, you work with impose their management understanding on you based on their experience, and you keep up with the current routine, many managerial deficiencies are overlooked. You cannot develop new approaches because you have to depend on another manager. The inability to act independently and routinized work often cause managerial blindness.” (K4)

Business Blindness in the Organizational Context: Silo Syndrome

The structures which are cylindrical in shape and used for preservation and storage of agricultural products are called silos (Laf Sözlük, Access Date: 01.10.2020). Silos are structures that disconnect agricultural products with the external environment. When this situation arises between the departments of the organization, it is called the silo syndrome.

It is a concept that means that a department has problems in communicating with other departments in the organization, almost building a wall and preventing communication between departments (Altınay et al., 2012: p. 16).

The factors that cause business blindness (silo syndrome) in the organizational context are as follows (Döş, 2013: pp. 152-154):

- Autocratic management,
- Organizational conflict,

- Lack of organizational vision and objective,

When considering the factors that cause business blindness (silo syndrome) in the organizational context, the precautions required to be taken against managerial blindness can be listed as follows:

- Participatory management,
- To eliminate situations that will create organizational conflict,
- To make sure that the employees understand and adopt the purpose, target, mission, and vision of the organization.

Coordination and communication required by coordination underlie the performance of organizations. Although coordination and communication are so crucial, many organization struggles with the inability to connect the subsystems they have designed to make certain contributions to each other. Organizational, spatial, and social boundaries prevent the flow of information to fully benefit from capacities. Large organizations must move from managing silos to managing systems (Serrat, 2010: p. 712). It can be stated that large-scale enterprises face silo syndrome relatively more than small-scale enterprises. There will be situations to cope with the silos that will emerge within the organization together with the institutionalization of the large-scale enterprise. Because the silo syndrome can interrupt the communication between the units and negatively affect the workflow processes. It can cause delays in the work required to be done in these organizations.

In the field research performed to reveal the conceptual framework, the participants mentioned the concept of silo syndrome intensively. One of the reasons to state it so much is that the concept of silo syndrome is closely related to the concept of business blindness in the organizational context. In other words, when evaluating the silo syndrome in the organizational context, it is considered as a result of business blindness. Most of the participants stated that they had problems with sub-departments, and most of them did not show the same awareness in terms of rules or duties. They mentioned in the interviews that invisible walls were built between the units and that these walls (silos) disrupted the workflows. The expression of the participant coded K1 regarding silo syndrome is as follows:

“Sometimes the tasks given are not done on time or are done incompletely. There are invisible walls between units and employees where there is a hierarchical relationship. These walls negatively affect business processes. These situations upset people, but as a result of the warnings, colleagues fulfill their duties. The situation of business blindness arises in the lower level as the manager. Invisible walls adversely affect the flow of information and, thus, silo syndrome occurs in the organization.” (K1)

CONCLUSION

To create the conceptual framework, we took the opinions of fifteen managers working in academia on hybrid management and business blindness, and the conceptual framework was tried to be supported by field research. The concept of business blindness is discussed in the contexts of the individual (managerial blindness) and organizational (silo syndrome). We tried to find the answer to the question "whether academic staff who work as managers in addition to their actual profession, defined as hybrid managers, experience business blindness and silo syndrome.

The causes of managerial blindness, in which the concept of business blindness is evaluated in an individual context, are the lack of rotation and training in management, professional dissatisfaction, heavy workload/responsibility, silo syndrome, dissatisfaction of those managed, being close to development and change and routine/fixed management order.

One of the reasons for the silo syndrome, in which the concept of business blindness is evaluated in the organizational context, is the individuals working in sub-departments do not show the same awareness in terms of work and functioning in contexts of task and responsibility. It negatively affects the relations between departments and causes this department to assume a silo-like structure within the organization. It causes problems in the task and workflow of the organization. It is necessary to ensure coordination between the units and remove the conflicts between the employees to eliminate the silo syndrome.

When considering the factors that cause business blindness (managerial blindness) in the individual context and business blindness (silo syndrome) in the organizational context, the precautions to prevent managerial blindness are as follows:

- Management of the organization with a participatory management approach,
- Elimination of situations that will create conflict within the organization,
- Exercising due diligence care to make sure that employees understand and adopt the purpose, target, mission, and vision of the organization correctly,
- Elimination of prejudices of employees about change and being open to change,
- Openness of the organization to internal and external inspection,
- Having strong communication in relations with the environment,
- Exchange of ideas by attaching importance to the opinions and thoughts of the employees,
- Avoiding excessive prescriptiveness.

In the studies in the literature, it is emphasized that doctors, each of whom is considered as a candidate manager, and the necessity of taking courses related to management. Too long managerial periods and lack of rotation at regular intervals remove people from their professional fields and even causes them to leave their profession (Kaya, 2018: p. iii). It has been stated that the doctors in managerial positions oscillated between their professional job identities and their management identities and that some doctors did their management tasks voluntarily, and some of them did not accept this duty voluntarily (Kaya and Kaya, 2019: p. 96). It was similarly expressed by academic staff in the field research conducted to establish the conceptual framework. It has been revealed in the field research that academic staff has difficulties in fulfilling their primary duties while fulfilling them as managers. In other words, they oscillate between the profession of academicianship and management. Moreover, we found that academic staff, who have a very long managerial task duration and are not subject to rotation, break with academia. In addition, we observed in the field research that some academic staff voluntarily accept the duty of management, while some do not do this task so voluntarily.

In conclusion, it is thought that hybrid managers in academia face managerial blindness and silo syndrome relatively more than other managers. Failure in rotation of management positions in the academia at regular intervals, the lack of adequate management training,

communication problems between the lower units and the higher units within the unit, failure of managers to have a good team to share the workload, the workload and busy schedule of the academia, seeing management in academia as temporary and fatigue duty all cause hybrid managers in academia to experience managerial blindness and silo syndrome. It is thought that the hybrid management personnel receiving training on management periodically, having a participatory management style, and subjecting them to rotation at regular intervals will prevent managerial blindness and silo syndrome. The creation of a good team to share the workload of managers in academic units and having open communication channels will prevent managerial blindness and silo syndrome. Thus, academic staff who are hybrid managers will prevent them from moving away from and breaking up with their professional identities.

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