

## **UNDERSTANDING DISSENT OF POLICE OFFICERS ON INTERNET FORUMS: CASE OF MEMURLAR.NET**

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### **Abstract**

This article analyzed the primary themes of organizational dissent of police officers displayed on the forum pages of the web sites and individual, relational, and organizational determinants of dissent. In addition, it discussed the role of anonymity and its effect in dissent strategies displayed in online forums. The findings suggest that organizational problems, legal regulations and manager's approaches were the main themes of police officers' dissent in this particular online forum. In terms of determinants of dissent, holding non-managerial position, low quality relationships between superiors and subordinates, and strict hierarchical structure were found to be the main determinants of organizational dissent on the online forums. The anonymous nature of postings certainly provided an opportunity to express dissent with reduced fear of retribution or termination. However, anonymity also raised the question of validity of postings, the identity of participants and decreases the impact of postings.

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**Keywords:** Police Officers, Internet Forums, Dissent

### **Introduction**

Today, with the variety of new communication technologies available, organizational members have more opportunities to express and share their ideas, knowledge, concerns, and problems than ever before (Scott and Rains, 2005). These technologies, mainly Internet, provide new channels and new forms of communication. Online discussion forums are certain forms of web application serving to bring people to discuss a distinct topic. It is possible to find out forums for a huge number of different topics, including politics (political parties, NGOs), hobbies (technology, video games), problems (illness), fans (teams, TV shows) and so forth.

Similarly, it is possible to see a variety of online forums serving employees of a private or governmental organization or members of an occupation. These online forums bring people together from the same occupation or organization to share and express their ideas, knowledge, concerns, and problems dealing with broadly occupation or organization. 'Memurlar.net' is one of the most popular web sites in Turkey, which provides information as to legal regulations, job opportunities, and daily news which are valuable especially for officers. In addition, this web site enables officers from different governmental organizations to take part in online discussions on the forum pages and allows them to publicly and anonymously express their ideas, concerns and problems about their occupations or organizations.

This article attempts to shed light on contradictory opinions and disagreements of police officers displayed on the forum pages of this web site. In fact, online forums, emails, chats and other virtual tools have already become the focus of a great deal of scholarly activity to understand the culture, norms, and values of organizations and their consequences in terms of consensus and conflict (Williams and Cothrel, 2000). Although there are a variety of works focused on the different concepts and literature to explain employees' voice, scholarly interest in the conflict, disagreement or contradictory opinions of employees are represented mostly in the literature of dissent in organizations. "Dissent is a particular form of employee voice that involves the expression of disagreement or contradictory opinions about organizational practices and policies" (Kassing, 2002: 189). In this respect, the postings that involve dissent are taken into account for the analysis of web site to understand the problems of Turkish National Police members faced and the role of online forums in terms of expressing their dissent.

The analysis of dissent in these kinds of websites is significant for several reasons. Firstly, bureaucratic, hierarchical structure and policy of governmental organizations in Turkey may prevent organizational members from expressing their dissent inside the organization without fear of retribution or termination. Especially, members of military and police organizations find it more risky to express their dissent about organizational problems and other job related issues to their superiors and public. Moreover, the governmental organizations in Turkey generally do not provide any online space for discussions or expressions of concerns or opinions on their official web sites or even on their Intranets which are not publicly accessible. Consequently, government employees choose to remain silent in organizational settings rather than express their concerns. Within the lack of this opportunity, 'memurlar.net' provides a space for online discussion for police officers on a

variety of job related issues. It enables a wide variety of police officers from different ranks and regions to overcome barriers, connect with each other, make sense of their work environments, and disclose their dissent (Gossett and Kilker, 2006). In this respect, these online forums have the potential to pose a threat to organizations; whereas they certainly present a great deal of data for scholars to analyze the organization and get the voice of employees from different levels and ranks who have not this opportunity otherwise. In addition, the postings in these kinds of forums are particularly important for scholars to find out what might be hindered or hindering by the executives of an organization who tend to reflect a positive image of the organization. Lastly, these online forums may not be the best interest of the organizations, but the analysis of these forums at least might serve to monitor, respond, alleviate or eliminate given problems for the organizations. Within this context, the first interest of this article is to analyze online forum pages of this particular website regarding police and find out common themes of dissent of police officers.

**Research Question 1:** What are the primary themes of dissent of the police officers on this online discussion forum?

Another interest of this article is to understand the determinants leading dissent of police officers in these kinds of forums. By identifying determinants that influence police officers' dissent, we may better comprehend the problems of the Turkish National Police. Kassing (1997, 1998) suggested three factors namely, individual, relational, and organizational that influence which dissent strategy an employee will decide to use. These variables include the types and quality of relationships (mostly superior-subordinate relationships), perceptions of openness to employee input, employees' levels of perceived influence within organizations, how tolerant employees perceive their respective organizations, organizational culture, and individual characteristics (Hegstrom 1990). In fact, the analysis of a Web site may not provide a complete evidence of each determinant, but at least the content of the postings presents some cues for individual, relational and organizational determinants of dissent. The limitations are addressed in details in the method section. Considering these limitations, the second research question is;

**Research Question 2:** What are the individual, relational and organizational influences that lead to dissent of police officers on this online discussion forum?

Although the police officers use a nickname to log in and take advantage of anonymity to express dissent, there are some postings that involve some cues of identity and status of police officers. The analysis of the design of the communication in the online forums, anonymity and identity cues provided by police officers are essential to understand the role of

forums as new channels of organizational dissent. In this respect, the last interest of this study is to examine the degree of identifiability of officers in the postings, the identity and status cues provided by them and how they influence dissent strategies they use. Related to this discussion, two questions are examined:

**Research Question 3a:** What is the degree of anonymity in postings and to what extent are identity and status cues provided?

**Research Question 3b:** How does this affect forum members' dissent strategies and themes?

## **Literature Review**

### **Dissent**

Kassing (2001, 2002) argues that employees have three primary options when faced with organizational problems. The first option is to remain silent and hope for improvements to take place (Gossett and Kilker, 2006). Second, they can decide to leave the organization. The third alternative for these employees is to voice their concerns to others in order to initiate a remedial change (Kassing, 2001). However, leaving the organization is not the best option for the majority of employees especially in some countries like Turkey. Especially, being a member of governmental organization that provides job guarantee until retirement is very valuable. Therefore, it is more likely for members of a governmental organization in Turkey either to voice their concerns or to remain silent.

At this point, the body of research on dissent provides valuable insights to understand why some employees choose to voice their concerns, determinants of it, the different strategies used for this purpose and what the implication of this for organizations is. Based on employee's strategies for expressing dissent, Kassing (1997: 22) suggested three various types of dissent: *Articulated dissent*, *latent dissent*, and *displaced dissent*. Articulated dissent refers to expressing dissent openly and clearly within an organization to individuals who can produce and influence organizational adjustment. Latent dissent occurs when employees choice to express their concerns and problems to ineffectual individuals across the organization. Lastly, displaced dissent involves the expression of dissent to external audiences like friends, family members, and other people outside of one's organization (Kassing and Dicioccio, 2004).

### **Determinants of Dissent Strategies**

The decision process of dissent strategies has been studied mostly in the light of individual, relational, and organizational variables that exist within organizations (Sprague and Ruud, 1988). In terms of individual influences, scholars associated

management positions, work experience, organizational commitment, and perceptions of personal influence within the organizations with expressions of dissent (Kassing and Dicioccio, 2004). In addition, individual characteristics like self-esteem, locus of control, aggressive communication traits are found to be associated with the choice of dissent (Premeaux and Bedeian, 2003). Relational influences are mainly associated with the employee's perception of the quality of relations with the organization, specifically superior-subordinate relations. The employees that perceive their relationship with their supervisor as low-quality will select dissent as they feel that there is no room to voice their opinions in the organization (Kassing, 2000). Organizational influences concern values, norms, basically culture of an organization (Kassing, 1997). Perlow (2003: 10) states that organizations placing "high value on being polite and avoiding confrontation" can cause employees to be uncomfortable expressing their differences. In addition, an organization that limits the opportunities for employees to voice their opinion, demonstrates contradictory expectations, and "gives the perception that openness is not favored, will lead to employees to select dissent strategies" (Kassing and Avtgis, 1999: 102). In addition to these three categories, some scholars emphasized the role of contextual factors to understand the type of dissent selected by employees (Kassing, 2000).

All these previous research exploring individual, relational, and organizational influences on employees' dissent strategy selection has not suggested specific category of expressing dissent via different channels of communication. Rather they focused on whom and where (outside or inside the organization) you express dissent. In spite of the fact that the scholars have not offered another category for expressing dissent on online forums or other web applications, it seems that the expression of dissent on online forums is an extension of displaced dissent. Expression of dissent on web sites is comparable to displaced dissent in terms of safety. Differently, employees don't express dissent to a particular person in their family or friends, but in a publicly available online forum.

Considering displaced dissent, Kassing and Dicioccio (2002: 114) suggested that "displaced dissent would result when employees felt vulnerable about being perceived as adversarial and experiencing retaliation for expressing dissent within their organizations". Under these circumstances, displaced dissent provides relatively a safe channel for expressing one's contradictory opinions about workplace policies and practices. This is more appropriate for employees holding non-management positions and possessing less work experience as they are less likely to develop high levels of organizational commitment. These employees

are also more likely to perceive that they don't exercise personal influence within their organizations (Kassing and Dicioccio, 2002). In this way, it increases senses of powerlessness and preferences for avoiding conflict and leads to express dissent to external sources (Sprague and Ruud, 1988).

### **Dissent and Anonymity**

Anonymity certainly plays an important role in an employee's decision to voice or not. Given the risks that may accompany openly expressing one's views in a web site, anonymity is assured in most of the forums. A large body of research focused on anonymity to understand its influence in message production, credibility, honesty, appropriateness and so forth. Although anonymous organizational communication has certain advantages, some scholars questioned whether it is more valid due to possible inaccuracy, bias, and self-serving information (Ghorpade, 2000).

In this article, we don't intend to focus deeply on the literature of anonymity, but as an important component of online communities including online forums, it should be taken into account when analyzing a web site which permits officers to publicly and anonymously voice their dissent with reduced fear of retribution or termination (Scott and Rains, 2005). At the same time, the possibility of inaccuracy, honesty and bias in the postings should be considered as suggested in the literature.

### **Methodology**

**Research Setting:** 'Memurlar.net' (memurlar means public servants in Turkish) is in existence since 2001, September. It has been ranked within most popular 50 web sites in Turkey although it specifically targets officers. It receives nearly one hundred thousand hits in every month. Twenty-five percent of the visitors go to forum pages of the web site (Traffic Ranking, 2007). It is possible to suggest many reasons for its popularity such as lack of competition and existence for a long time. However, the main reason seems to be the target audiences of the web site who are over two million government officers, such as teachers, police officers, engineers, soldiers, bureau officers in different ministries. This is the location designated to provide essential information for government officers and bring all to the discussion of organizational happenings, events and disagreements. In addition, it provides valuable information for any person who plans to apply for a job position in a government agency. The exam schedule of government positions, regulations, forum pages of employees from different government agencies make this web site a possible destination for public servants. This article focused on postings on the forum pages created for police officers.

**Data Collection:** The overall purpose of this article was to be able to provide a detailed description of the police officers dissent about Turkish National Police in a particular online forum. The analysis of the postings was conducted for this purpose. In the analysis process, quantitative and qualitative content analyses were used. Quantitative content analysis was used to count and categorize primary themes of dissent and the extent of anonymity in the postings. Qualitative content analysis was used to manifest the postings which are related to individual, relational and organizational influences of dissent and the cues provided about identity and status.

The content of the postings provided valuable information regarding individual, relational and organizational influences of dissent. Normally, 'memurlar.net' is designed to protect the identities of its participants. Unless a participant revealed the information, it is impossible to know his or her sex, age, location, or organizational status. Fortunately, references to organizational status and years of experience were available among the members of the forum. Therefore, the postings which included this information were used to find out the extent of anonymity in the postings and compare identity and status cues to make inferences about individual reasons for dissent. In a similar vein, content analysis of each contradictory posting was used to get information for the relational and organizational influences of the dissent.

Due to the high number of postings since 2001, to get a manageable scope of this analysis, only the postings from January 1, 2011, to November 1, 2011 were included in the sample. This resulted in 342 different discussion headings and 3888 individual postings, including stories about police on TV, death and injuries of police, legal regulations and opinions on it, comparison of police with other agencies, and so on. However, only discussion headings which can be classified under dissent were taken in to the sample of the study which resulted in 42 different discussion headings and 3 main and 8 subcategories of the primary themes of dissent, with a combined total of 949 individual postings from 330 different site participants.

**Data Analysis:** The data obtained from the postings were used for analysis. In the content analysis of data, the unit of analysis was individual postings. After reviewing the data, a coding scheme for analyzing the web site postings was developed. The postings were categorized to signify the most important themes of dissent. Quotations from officers were used to support the categories. The list of the primary themes of displaced was reorganized in the process of coding. This reorganization process resulted in 3 main and 8 subcategories.

**Limitations:** Certain limitations of the study should be kept in mind when interpreting the results. Firstly, postings in this particular online forum were used to illustrate specifically the primary themes of dissent. There were some other themes on the forum which aim to inform officers on a specific regulation, job opportunity rather than disagreement or contradictory opinions. These were not included into sample.

Another limitation was our exclusive reliance on postings on the web site. This reliance raises questions about the accuracy of participants' perceptions, identities, reliability, credibility and their motivation. It is possible to join forum pages as if a member of police organizations. Even if it is a member of police organization, possibility of exaggeration and manipulation of some information and disagreements by officers in the websites is plausible. However, the purpose of this study was collecting information about possible signs of police officers' problems at Turkish National Police rather than providing a strong claim on real problems. So, even though using postings can be viewed as one of the weaknesses or limitations of this study, the analysis of the postings is appropriate for the general purpose of this study.

The analysis of a particular online forum limited the conclusions in terms generalizability. There are some other web sites which provide space to officers for online discussions. Because of the popularity and the high number of postings, this particular website was analyzed. In this regard, generalization across different online forums regarding police was not a goal of this study. Therefore, this study aimed to get rich and deep understanding of a specific online forum rather than generalizing knowledge for all police forums.

## Results

**Primary Themes of Dissent:** Through the classification of themes in the forum pages, it is possible to see central themes of dissent. As can be seen from the following Table-1, three main distinct themes of dissent were presented on the online forum. The largest of those was complaints about managers and police organization. Other sizable category included complaints about legal regulations.

**Table-1** Main Categories of Dissent

Main Categories of Dissent		
Complaints about organization	Complaints about legal regulations	Complaints about managers

Dissent themes that fit into 'organizational category' involved complaining about working overtime without payment, extra duties (i.e., soccer, concert), political pressure, favoritisms and bribery, lack of coordination with other agencies, conflict with other



agencies, logic of specific organizational policies and the promotion system. There were many more postings and hit on the discussion topics related to the promotion system. In general, constables graduated from universities complained about lack of opportunity for being a manager and logic of requirements of promotion by comparing themselves with police academy graduates. It is possible to illustrate each subcategory by a huge number of postings. The following table illustrated dissent themes that fit into organizational category and examples of it.

**Table-2** Subcategories and Example of Dissent

<b>Organizational Category</b>	<b>Example</b>
Working hours and conditions	To report the working overtime
Lack of coordination	Criticism about lack of coordination among office of the public prosecutor, other agencies and police
Favoritisms and political pressure	To report political pressure and practices of favoritism on different issues
Promotion system	Lack of opportunity of promotion for constables

If we look at the postings more deeply, there were two discussion topics in this category of dissent: “Working conditions should be revised” and “What are the biggest problems of police organization”. Under these headings, one officer commented on working conditions as follows: “Why do we have to wait from morning till night for a concert without getting any money? They earn money, but we work for them. They should have arranged their security”. Another officer mentioned about promotion system: “Without arranging promotion system fairly for constables who graduated from university, the problems will not be solved”. In another posting, an officer addressed the favoritism and political pressure as follows: “I don’t think that favoritism and political pressure are going to be abolished in this organization. A call from a politician changes everything”.

The next subcategory is about ‘legal regulations’. It was asserted in general that new legal regulations enacted in the process of EU limited the police rights, increased crime rates, and protected the right of the accused rather than the victim. For instance, a posting criticized the content of laws by saying: “The laws numbered 3201 and 2559 don’t provide systematic and a healthy definition of task, responsibilities and rights of police officers which lead to the rule of man rather than the rule of law. Managers take advantage of this system to guarantee their position in the organization”. Another officer stated its concerns regarding a law enhancing police rights as follows: “I don’t think that this law will be implemented as we are

in the accession process of the EU. The EU will not let us implement it even if it is accepted by government”. Table-3 demonstrated complaints about legal regulations and examples.

**Table-3** Subcategories and Example of Dissent

<b>Legal Regulations Category</b>	<b>Example</b>
Legal regulations, especially criminal procedure law, enacted in the process of EU	To criticize legal regulations which limit the rights of police and victims
Legal regulations on police task and responsibilities	To criticize the regulations and flexible interpretations of regulations and ask for revision to improve police working conditions in regulations

The discussion topics that fit into ‘manager category’ included complains about manager’s attitudes, behaviors, and unethical and disrespectful manner of commands. It is possible to find examples of postings criticizing the manners of managers while asking subordinates to do a task. In some postings, the task itself is questioned in terms of its appropriateness. Subordinates voice their concerns about the content of the some tasks they are assigned by questioning its appropriateness for police. A discussion topic entitled, “That’s enough” reflects the gap in perception between managers and constables on this issue. In a posting under this heading, a constable criticized the manner of managers in general, “*Managers do not care constables even if they are university even doctorate graduates. This occupation is for managers rather than constables*”. In addition, another discussion topic entitled, “Are police officers waiter?” reflects complains about inappropriate tasks that low level police officers are asked to do. “I have just started my career in police organization as a constable. A twenty two years old sergeant wants forty years old constable to bring tea. Is this constable’s duty? We are only responsible for doing what law necessities; we do not have to obey their unethical orders”. The following table shows the main topics of discussion and examples of it.

**Table- 4** Subcategories and Example of Dissent

<b>Managers Category</b>	<b>Example</b>
Superior-subordinate relations	To criticize the attitudes, and behaviors of managers
Chain of command	To report unethical and disrespectful manner of commands

It is possible to give a huge number of examples to support each category and subcategories. The ones selected here represent main frames used by police officers to criticize organizational policy and practices, managers and legal regulations. In terms of

research question 1, the findings suggest that organizational problems, legal regulations and manager's approaches are the main themes of police officers' dissent which is expressed in this particular online forum.

**Results for Determinants of Dissent:** As already mentioned, the analysis of postings quantitatively and qualitatively provides cues for the individual, relational, and organizational determinants of dissent. Based on the cues provided by officers regarding their identity and status, it is possible to suggest that holding a non-management position is primary individual factor that leads to dissent in this web site. As seen in Table-5, the number of police officers holding-non management position (constables) is much higher than number of managers in the online forum. Examination of all 949 postings revealed that 88 of the 330 participants made direct reference to their organizational status and 66 of them were constables.

**Table- 5** Organizational Status of Officers

<b>Organizational Status</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
Constables	66
Managers	22

The more reliable source of evidence to understand individual factors emerges when you make the analysis of the content of postings. Although it was not the case for all postings, the general trend was that the constables expressed dissent for organizational problems or managerial behaviors while managers responded to constables to support either the reason behind managers' attitudes or reasons for organizational problems. For instance, in order to respond the critics of constables regarding policies and practices, a manager stated that: "You don't have any responsibility. You only do what you are asked to do. If you had the responsibility, you would understand what it means". Another manager responded to heavy critics against managers by saying: "All these postings exceed the limits of free speech. They are insulting to us. If you have problems and you are sincere, you should express your problems in different platforms in a manner that is appropriate to our occupation". Another manager suggested ignoring these postings: "This is a big organization and there are thousands of constables. If we look at the ones here who are insulting their managers, it is just a few people. We should not take them into account".

As suggested by Kassing (1997, 1998), the officers holding non-management position perceive less opportunity to influence the system which lead them to express dissent outside the organization. This was evident in some postings displayed on these forum pages. For instance, one officer posted to the forum, asking, "Whom do you complain a manager? Do you complain it to another manager? That manager probably would not use the patrol car for

its personal works, if he/she had not seen it from a manager.” Another constable gave a reason why constables use this platform to express their dissent instead of expressing it in the organization: “Firstly, change the feudal structure and bring democracy, then constables will express everything to your face.”

As understood from the postings, holding management or non-management positions change both content and the extent of expression of dissent in this particular online forum. Related to organizational status, officers holding non-management position perceives less opportunity to influence the system. This perception of officers makes it more likely to use displaced dissent strategies. However, the analysis of postings doesn't provide any cues of individual characteristics like self-esteem, locus of control, aggressive communication traits which should be addressed by using a different methodology.

Related to relational factors in the second question, it seems obvious that the low quality of relations among constables and managers was another factor for expressing dissent on this online forum. In addition to the examples given in the main themes of dissent, it is possible to show examples of perception of subordinates (constables) that there is no room to voice their opinions in the organization because of managers' attitudes. One officer posted to the site: “I went into this occupation with great hopes, but the manner of managers has changed my mind and my work expectations. They think that they know everything and never ask our feedback. Right now, I just wait to finish my work time and go home”. Another constable addressed identity problems in the organization: “I have spent twenty years in this organization. Twenty years old sergeant calls me with my name. Is it difficult to call Mr.? I respect to his rank, but waiting respect to my age as well”. The identity conflict is evident in the content of the postings. This is partially a function of age differences between managers and constables. A person who graduated from the Police Academy as a sergeant at the age of 21 becomes manager of a constable regardless of his/her age and years of experience in the organization. In a culture where age matters in terms of respect leads to identity conflict in work settings and affects the quality of relationships. Within this context, the managers seem not to open feedback and constables are not willing to express their dissent in organizational settings due to perception of ineffectiveness.

Lastly, organizational factors seem to cause increases in the expression of dissent in this online forum. Officers used this channel to get their voice heard by the authorities. The hierarchical structure, norms and values constructed in the police organization put communication barriers between officers and top managers. As illustrated by a constable, an easy transaction might become a problem. “In my opinion, the hierarchical structure is a big

problem in this organization. You are not allowed to talk directly with a manager. For instance, if you need permission for a day, you ask it to your sergeant and your sergeant asks it to his captain. The captain makes a decision without seeing you. This is just an example”. In addition, it is possible to see some discussion headings like “to the managers”, “to the police commissioners” which are used to get their voices heard by the authorities. As understood from the postings, the norms, culture, and structure of the organization constrained the officers to express their concerns to upper management in organizational settings directly which leads to expression of dissent in this particular online forum.

**Results for Anonymity:** In the light of the findings given in the previous sections, it is obvious that anonymity certainly plays an important role in an employee’s decision to voice. The content of the postings shows that especially low level officers see anonymity on this online forum an opportunity to express their dissent with reduced fear of retribution or termination. They used it effectively to make their voices heard, and resist status qua. However, managers in different ranks find anonymity on this online forum less appropriate for several reasons. Firstly, they find the content of the postings not appropriate for this occupation. As stated by one manager: “These postings contain insults. This public available forum is not an appropriate place to discuss these issues with such a language. Behave incompatible with the values of this occupation”. Secondly, they assert that some participants are not real police officers. They accused of some participants being provocateur. In this way, they target the credibility of their identity. In fact, it is reasonable to question the validity of anonymous messages considering the possibility of inaccuracy, honesty and bias in the postings. The problem of credibility in anonymous messages affected the strategies used by officers. As already given, they provide the cues of identity and status. As shown in Table-5, 88 out of 330 participants, 66 constables and 22 managers, stated their status in the postings. In other postings, the content of the postings provided strong cues of their rank. In a similar vein, some participants provided information about their age, years of experience, and sex. Considering the context of the cues provided by participants, it is reasonable to suggest that they use it to show their position in the discussion, increase their credibility in terms of identity, and make their argument stronger. Lastly, anonymity has been used as a new form of resistance by police officers. They find it as a method for dealing with unsatisfying work conditions, managers, and regulations and organizing collective action to resist some of the policies and practices. It is common among participants to initiate campaigns to send email or mail to a certain organization or manager for their wrongdoings. In a similar vein, some officers ask for information about legal regulations for inappropriate practices. As understood

from the discussion, anonymity provides new opportunities for officer to express their dissent in such a strict bureaucratic and hierarchical structure.

### **Discussion**

The online forums give officers a chance to share information, solicit opinion on work-related topics and express criticism and complaints in a whole new way. The analysis of this online forum illustrated that police officers mainly used this virtual space to express the problems they faced within the Turkish National Police. The officers used this online forum to engage in dissent and resistance efforts instead of remaining silent. The problems can be classified under three primary dissent categories: organizational, legal, and managerial. The analysis of dissent in each category showed that the actual or perceived impractical and ineffectual organizational practices and policies, officers' workplace needs and desire, and officer dissatisfaction in work settings were the main topics of dissent. All these dissents provide a valuable source of knowledge for leaders, managers, constables and even public. It contributes the change of traditional norms, culture of police organization which was drawn mainly from hard bureaucratic, hierarchical structure. It helps with the problems of police become publicly available which enforce leaders take action to change it.

As suggested in the results, holding a non-managerial position seems to be main individual determinant of dissent in the Turkish National Police. Due to strict hierarchical structure and culture, it is hard especially for constables have access to a wide range of mechanisms and upper managers for expressing their dissent. Managers share a police academy background and culture of brotherhood which makes the hierarchical structure more transparent and open among them. Therefore; managers, whether mid-level or higher, is more likely to access high levels of the hierarchy in which dissent is more permissible (Kassing and Armstrong, 2001; Sprague and Ruud, 1988; Westin, 1986). Therefore, managers might have much influence or a perception of influence than constables, thus decrease their willingness to express dissent on these forums. In a similar vein, managers, even if mid-level, have more opportunity to get a promotion which can lead them to develop high levels of organizational commitment which decreases expression of dissent outside the organization (Kassing and Avtgis, 1999). Consequently, it is not surprising that constables express more dissent than managers do on this web site.

In addition, the relational factors seem to influence the expression of dissent on this online forum. The content of the postings demonstrates that constables believe or perceive a great division between them and managers. Therefore; they seek out alternative channels for their dissent rather than use organizational channels. This division is particularly related to

organizational factors in terms of hierarchical structure and discipline mechanisms. The mechanism mainly designed to maintain the chain of command which is believed to be necessary for police organizations operating under dangerous circumstances. However, constables seem to perceive this structure as a mechanism that limits their opportunity to voice their opinion in the organization. As suggested by the postings, managers caused the building of such opinions and concerns with their manners. In addition, lack of promotion opportunity for constables increase the distance between managers and constables. Under these circumstances, constables lack the resources, opportunities or power necessary to engage in dissent within the organization and instead express dissent in other settings such as web sites.

This online forum enabled a wide variety of police officers from different ranks and regions to connect with each other and discuss the problems, concerns and experiences which provide valuable insights to understand the perspective of different officers. At this point, anonymous design of these online forums plays a central role for officers to express dissent for impractical practices and policies of the organization without threatening their membership within the organization (Gossett and Kilker, 2006). As understood from their postings, the official communication channels were thought to be ineffectual and risky in terms of managerial retaliation rather than a productive response. This is particularly important for officers holding non-managerial positions who might normally be rendered silent. This opportunity can also be considered a kind of coping strategy for these officers.

The main problem with this kind of web sites was possible inaccuracy, bias, and self-serving information provided by participants, credibility of the participants and inappropriate language use. However, considering bureaucratic, hierarchical structure of police organization, there is certainly a need for anonymous organizational communication as an important protection mechanism even if it increases the problem of credibility. At the same time, the interactions among officers in this worry-free environment might become as an invaluable source of ideas for doing things better and provide extremely valuable feedback that improves managerial functions that ultimately benefits the organization.

Furthermore, anonymity provides a mechanism to engage in resistance efforts and dealing with unsatisfying work conditions with reduced fear of retribution or termination (Scott and Rains, 2005). Resistance efforts are evident in this online space. Officers use this forum page to organize collective resistance efforts. For instance, initiating legal efforts to solve the problems, organizing campaigns to send email to a certain organization or manager for their wrongdoings are common topics among participants. These acts of resistance should

not be underestimated; any small resistance efforts can foster larger acts of collective resistance.

### **Conclusion**

It is hard to make any inferences on the extent and reality of the problems in the Turkish National Police based on the analysis of this online forum. However, it can be accepted a warning signal for officers' dissatisfaction or organizational decline. Although directing dissent to these online forums is not the best interest of the police organization, receptiveness to dissent allows for corrective feedback to monitor the problems and respond, alleviate or eliminate it. In this sense, leaders of the Turkish National Police should consider these online forums as valuable and unique feedback sources. By engaging these web sites, organizations will be better able to identify any problems and address their members' concerns when these problems or concerns emerge.

Moreover, this website is read by many civilians as well as police officers. The numbers of people who have accessed some discussion topics are more than 15.000. Most of the topics are discussed in a negative way by particularly dissatisfied members. There were also some postings written very inappropriately. Therefore, there is clearly a problem that the TNP needs to deal with. The TNP should consider developing forum pages on its own web site that invite feedback specifically from officers who hold low organizational status. Anonymity should be a component of this system. Although most members may not perceive a need for anonymous organizational communication, providing such channels helps ensure that the voices of potentially less powerful or lower-status groups are heard (Scott and Rains, 2005). This could result in increased levels of upward dissent of potentially less powerful or lower-status groups about a variety of topics (Kassing, 2002). In this way, organizations get the opportunity to learn the concerns and ideas of its members. At the same time, the official forum pages might bring quality and respect to discussions. Therefore, the people who read official forum pages may have a better idea and positive image about the organization. If organizations fail to provide these resources, employees may create their own and this might not be in the organizations' best interest as illustrated in the postings.

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