

# Chapter 8

## ALEXITHYMIA IN ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

Ayşe GÖKÇEN KAPUSUZ<sup>1</sup>

The aim of this chapter is to conceptually emphasize the concept of alexithymia which is mostly emphasized in the field of psychology and medicine. It is also aimed to analyze the concept by focusing on the relations with organizational behavior concepts.

### INTRODUCTION

Alexithymia is a concept which involves the personality traits in difficulty of expression of feelings, difficulty to distinguish the sensations, lack of describing emotions and self-expression (Ünal, 2004). It is thought that this fact is generally developed by the effects of caregivers and connection style to someone to be able to defend and avoid to danger (Nemiah, 2000) in childhood. This contextual relationship between the child and caregivers is one of the most important step of child's social mental development and personality formation. As Dereboy (1990) emphasized that alexithymia can be seen not only in psychosomatic illnesses, but also psychiatric disorders and medical illnesses.

Researches for years showed that alexithymia can be seen in different personality traits such as introversion, mental deterioration, lack of self-confidence and self-expression, neuroticism, emotional dysregulation (Bach, De Zwaan, Ackard, Nutzinger & Mitchell, 1994) and depression as well. Taylor (2000) noted that negative behaviors, inappropriate affectivity related to the consideration and personality are seen in alexithymic characters.

The concept of alexithymia is generally addressed in the field of psychology and medicine as mentioned above. There is no research focused on alexithymia in the field of management and especially in organizational behavior. This is a pending research gap to be filled. From this point of view, the concept and relationship should be analyzed conceptually first and then explained under the appropriate theory as well. It is easy to say that this topic is also related to the personality traits, feelings, interpersonal skills, conflicts and relationship, communication, ability of

---

<sup>1</sup> Asst. Prof. Dr., Selcuk University, Beysehri Ali Akkanat Faculty of Tourism  
aysegokcenkapusuz@gmail.com

employee are ensured. As a result, employees' behaviors are positively regulated in line with corporate goals and organizational activities are successfully carried out as well (Karcioğlu, Timuroğlu & Çınar, 2009; Kılıç, et al., 2016).

Organizational communication process ensures the formation and survival of the organization and connects individuals in an organization. Functions and activities of the organization are performed by providing good communication system and necessary coordination. Therefore, realizing the effect of attachment on communication skills in organizations is important in choosing the right person for the right job. As Kılıç, et al. (2016) emphasized that department of Human Resources may hold an interview about the attachment and attachment styles with individuals in the process of recruiting for jobs that require effective and intensive communication skills. In order to be informed about the attachment styles of individuals, contact person or department can also conduct different surveys and prefer individuals with a secure attachment style accordingly.

This conceptual study theoretically contribute to the organizational behavior literature by emphasizing and focusing on the relevant topic "alexithymia". Because researches showed that alexithymia is mostly emphasized in the field of psychology and medicine. It is important to notice that the topic can also be related to the personality traits, feelings, interpersonal skills, conflicts and relationship, communication, ability of self-expression in organizational behavior concept. On the other hand, all these conceptually mentioned concepts will also practically contribute to the related literature when established relationship with other related topics in organizational behavior.

There was a real limit about finding sources and researches in current literature. From this point of view, just conceptually focusing on the concept can be thought as another limit of this study. It can be said that this conceptual study with all mentioned limits and emphasized points will also expand new horizons to future researchers. Studies in the future which are done by supporting and pursued with practical and experimental examples from the organizational behavior concepts will practically contribute to the literature. Besides all these conceptually emphasized concept of alexithymia, practically-supoorted studies will help to understand the concept very well and to raise awareness.

## **REFERENCES**

- Arslan, H., Ünal, M., Aslan, O., Gürkan, S.B. & Alparslan, Z.N. (1996). Pratisyen Hekimlerde Tükenme Düzeyleri. *Düşünen Adam: Psikiyatri ve Nörolojik Bilimler Dergisi*, 9: 48-52.
- Bach, M., De Zwaan, M., Ackard, D., Nutzinger, D.O. & Mitchell, J.E. (1994) Alexithymia: Relationship to personality disorders. *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 35: 239-243.
- Bagby, R.M., Parker, J.D.A. & Taylor, G.J. (1994). The Twenty-item Toronto Alexithymia Scale: I.

- Item selection and cross-validation of the factor structure. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 38: 23-32.
- Bagby, R.M., Taylor, G.J., Parker, J.D.A. & Dickens, S.E. (2006). The Development of the Toronto Structured Interview for Alexithymia: Item selection, factor structure, reliability and concurrent validity. *Psychother Psychosom*, 75: 25–39.
- Batıgün, A.D. & Büyüksahin, A. (2008). Aleksitimi: Psikolojik belirtiler ve bağlanma stilleri. *Klinik Psikiyatri*, 11: 105-114.
- Besharat, M.A. (2010). Relationship of Alexithymia With Coping Styles and Interpersonal Problems. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 5: 614-618.
- Bowlby, J. (1969-1982). Attachment and Loss: Vol. 1. Attachment. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Chen, J., Xu, T., Jing, J. & Chan, R.C.K. (2011). Alexithymia and Emotional Regulation: A cluster analytical approach. *BMC Psychiatry*, 11(33): 1-6.
- Çelikel, F.Ç. & Saatçioğlu, Ö. (2002). Marmara Depreminden Sonra Gelişen Posttravmatik Stres Bozukluğunda Aleksitimik Özellikler. *Anadolu Tıp Dergisi*, 4: 20-23.
- Dereboy, İ.F. (1990). Aleksitimi: Bir gözden geçirme. *Türk Psikiyatri Dergisi*, 1: 157.
- Erözkan, A. (2007). Üniversite Öğrencilerinin İletişim Becerilerini Etkileyen Faktörler. *Marmara Üniversitesi Açık Arşiv Sistemi*, 59-72.
- Granqvist, P. (2020): Attachment, Culture, and Gene-culture Co-evolution: Expanding the evolutionary toolbox of attachment theory. *Attachment & Human Development*, 1-25. DOI:10.1080/14616734.2019.1709086
- Gucht, V. (2003). Stability of Neuroticism and Alexithymia in Somatization. *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 44: 466-471.
- Guttman, H. & Laporte, L. (2002). Alexithymia, Empathy, and Psychological Symptoms in a Family Context. *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 43(6): 448-455.
- Haviland, M.G., Warren, W.L. & Riggs, M.L. (2000). An Observer Scale to Measure Alexithymia. *Psychosomatics*, 41(5): 385-392.
- Joukamaa, M., Kokkonen, P., Veijola, J., Laksy, K., Karvonen, J. T., Jokelainen, J. & Jarvelin, M. R. (2003). Social Situation of Expectant Mothers and Alexithymia 31 Years Later in Their Offspring: A prospective study. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 65: 307–312.
- Karcioğlu, F., Timuroğlu, M. K. & Çınar, O. (2009). Örgütsel İletişim ve İş Tatmini İlişkisi-Bir Uygulama. *Yönetim*, 20(63): 59-76.
- Kılıç, T. & Kümbetlioğlu, M. (2016). Bağlanma Stillерinin İletişim Becerilerine Etkisini Araştırma. *Ç.Ü. Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 25(3): 381-396.
- Koçak, R. (2002). Aleksitimi: Kuramsal çerçeve tedavi yaklaşımları ve ilgili araştırmalar. *Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi Dergisi*, 35(1-2): 183-212.
- Kraemer, S., Loader, P. (1995). Passing through life: Alexithymia and attachment disorders. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 39: 937-941.
- Krystal, H. (1979). Alexithymia and Psychotherapy. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 33(1): 17-31.
- Laible, D. (2007). Attachment with Parents and Peers in Late Adolescence: Links with emotional competence and social behavior. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 43(5): 1185-1197.
- Lesser, I.M. (1981). A Review of the Alexithymia Concept. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 43(6): 531-543.
- Levant, R.F. (1992). Toward the Reconstruction of Masculinity. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 5(3-4): 379-402.
- Motan, İ. & Gençöz, T. (2007). Aleksitimi Boyutlarının Depresyon ve Anksiyete Belirtileri ile İlişkileri. *Türk Psikiyatri Dergisi*, 18(4): 333-343.
- Nemiah, J.C. (2000). A Psychodynamic View of Psychosomatic Medicine. *Psychosom Med*, 62: 299-303.
- Özdemir, N., Güreş, A. & Güreş, Ş. (2011). Oryantring Sporcularında Aleksitimi ve Yalnızlık Düzeyinin Çeşitli Değişkenler Açısından İncelenmesi. *Atatürk Üniversitesi Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Bilimleri Dergisi*, 13(3): 27-34.
- Parker, J.D.A., Bagby, R.M., Taylor, G.K. (1993). Factorial Validity of the 20 Item Toronto Alexithy-

- mia Scale. *European Journal of Personality*, 7: 221-232.
- Sifneos, P.E. (1996). Alexithymia: Past and present. *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 153(7): 137-142.
- Silverstein, B. (2002). Gender Differences in the Prevalence of Somatic Versus Pure Depression: A replication. *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 159: 1051-1052.
- Simha-Alpern, A. (2007). I Finally Have Words!: Integrating a psychodynamic psychotherapeutic approach with principles of emotional intelligence training in treating trauma survivors. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, 4: 293-313.
- Spitzer, C., Siebel-Jurges, U., Barnow, S., Grabe, H.J. & Freyberger, H.J. (2005). Alexithymia and Interpersonal Problems. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, 74: 240-246.
- Şenkal, İ. & Palabıykoğlu, R. (2015). Çocukluk Çağı Travmaları ve Aleksitimi. *Ufuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 4: 1-17.
- Şirin, H. & İzgar, H. (2013). Üniversite Öğrencilerinin İletişim Becerileri ve Olumsuz Otomatik Düşünceleri Arasındaki İlişki. *İlköğretim Online*, 12(1): 254-266.
- Taylor, G.J., Bagby, R.M. & Parker, J.D. (1991). Alexithymia Construct, a Potential Paradigm for Psychosomatic Medicine. *The Academy of Psychosomatic Medicine*, 32(2): 153-163.
- Taylor, G.J. (2000). Recent Developments İn Alexithymia Theory and Research. *Can J Psychiatry*, 45(2): 134-142.
- Tokmak, İ., Turgut, H. & Öktem, Ş. (2013). Turizm ve Otelcilik Öğrencilerinin Sosyotropik-Otonomik Kişilik Özelliklerinin İletişim Becerilerine Etkisi. *Anatolia: Turizm Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 24(1): 83-95.
- Ünal, G. (2004). Bir Grup Üniversiteli Gençte Çekingenlik, Aleksitimi ve Benlik Saygısının Değerlendirilmesi. *Klinik Psikiyatri*, 7: 215-222.
- Vanheule, S. Verhaeghe, P. & Desmet, M. (2011). In Search of a Framework for the Treatment of Alexithymia. *Psychology and Psychotherapy*, 84: 84-97.
- Wearden, A., Cook, L., Vaughan-Jones, J. (2003) Adult Attachment, Alexithymia, Symptom Reporting, and Health-related Coping. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 55: 341-347.
- Willemsen, R., Roseeuw, D. & Vanderlinden, J. (2008). Alexithymia and Dermatology: The state of the art. *International Journal of Dermatology*, 47: 903-910.
- Wise, R.A. (1988). The Neurobiology of Craving: Implications for the understanding and treatment of addiction. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 97(2), 118-132.
- Yıldız, B. & Güllü, A. (2018). Belirsizliğe Tahammülsüzlük ile Aleksitimi Arasındaki İlişki ve Bazı Sosyo-Demografik Değişkenlere Göre İncelenmesi. *Adnan Menderes Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi*, 9(1): 113-131.