The effect of the meaningfulness of work on job satisfaction, job stress and intention to leave

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Abstract

The meaningfulness of work is defined as the importance of the purposes of work in people's view of life and attitudes. There are studies about the meaningfulness of work that describe not only its significant and positive contributions to the meaningfulness of people's lives, but also as taking pleasure in work, which has a variety of cognitive, emotional, behavioral and economic benefits. The meaningfulness of work defined as the importance of the purposes of work in people's view of life and attitudes can be connected with variables in the field of organizational behavior. The purpose of this study is to determine the effects and correlations among job satisfaction and intention to leave with a path analysis to be carried out as part of a research model for these variables. It is intended to contribute the literature by analyzing the effects and correlations among the variables with a structural equation model and to obtain data about employee behavior in organizational life. The universe of the study is comprised of employees of an insurance business in Istanbul. This study will use the following data collection tools: the "Work and Meaning Inventory" by Steger, Frazier,Oishi & Kaler (2012), the "Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire" developed by Weis and adapted to Turkish by Oran (1989), the "Intention to Leave Scale" by Wayne, Shore and Linden (1997) and "Perceived Stress Scale" developed by Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelste (1983) and adopted to Turkish by Bilge, Ögce, Genc & Oran (2007).

Keywords: meaningfulness of work, job satisfaction, intention to leave, job stress.

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1. Introduction

Humans spend nearly one thirds of the day at work and it has an important place in human life. As people spend more time at workplaces they start to see their jobs as the focal point in providing meaning and identity for their lives (Hoar, 2004; Holbeche & Springett, 2004). Although the meaning of work does not have a widely-accepted definition, Baumeister and Vohs (2002) stated that the core of the meaning was the "bond", and depended on positive outputs both for the individual and for the organization.

However, demographic changes, globalization and technological developments have influenced the perceptions and behaviours of the employees on their jobs in the last two decades. In this sense, Rosso at al. (2010) conducted study and reported that the meaning of work concept, which is used by researchers, must be handled again, because the previous definitions that defined the meaning may not be suitable today with all the changes in the field.

The meaning of work has a critical place in human life since it may affect the meaning of life for an individual. Defining the reasons that affect the meaning of work may have important contributions in increasing the meaningfulness of life. The meaning of work may be defined as the positive and important contribution of the job to the meaning of life for individuals, and also as the satisfaction that a parson receives from his/her job (Rosso, Dekas & Wrzesniewski, 2010). According to another definition, the meaning of work is how much influence the purpose of individuals for working has in the viewpoint and attitudes of an individual for life (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). When the meaningfulness of work is increased in individuals, various cognitive, emotional, behavioral and economic benefits may be obtained (Ardichvili, 2009; Steger, Dik & Duffy, 2012). Here, the real factor that increases the interest in meaning is the hypothesis that personal and organizational outcomes are related with the perception of meaning (Rosso vd., 2010). In addition, considerable increases will be possible in job performances, efficiencies, values, proficiency feelings, organizational trust and organizational devotion levels of the employees (Ayers, 2008; Long & Mills, 2010; Yaman, 2007).

Job satisfaction, in general, is the positive or negative attitudes of a person towards his/her job. In this context, positive spiritual status about one's job will reveal job satisfaction, and negative attitudes towards one's job will reveal job dissatisfaction (Erdogan, 1999). The significant relation of job satisfaction with the motivation and performances of the employees has increased the interest of organizations in this concept.

Stress is a state in one's emotions, thinking processes or physical conditions threatening the strength of an individual to cope with his/her environment (Davis, 1982). The stress experienced at workplace by employees is defined as the job stress, and the stress levels vary according to the individuals, qualities of their jobs, and the factors outside their jobs.

The intention for leaving one's job is the thought of an individual about leaving the job in a near future (Mobley, 1982) and is the most important sign for leaving the job behaviour (Yıldız, et al., 2013). Leaving the job does not only mean leaving the job physically for an individual. The individual leaving his/her job also takes away his/her experiences and knowledge. The cost of making another employee acquire the same knowledge and experience for an organization is high (Met & Sarioglan, 2010). For this reason, the satisfaction and devotion of the employees who are experienced must be ensured, the intention for leaving the job must be prevented, and it must be ensured that these employees continue in the job. These are extremely important factors for efficiency and productivity of an organization (Poyraz & Kama, 2008).

2. Aim of Study

Based on the idea claiming that the level of meaning of work, which shows how much the purposes of employees in their jobs are important for life, might be related with some variables that are considered in the field of organizational behaviour. This study has the purpose of examining the level of meaning of work of individuals, the relation between the job satisfactions, work stress, and intention for leaving the job; the effects of these factors within a research model in which all the variables are included with a road analysis.

3. Method and Scale

The universe of the study is comprised of employees of an insurance business in Istanbul. This study will use the following data collection tools: the "Work and Meaning Inventory" by Steger et al. (2012), the "Job Satisfaction Questionnaire" developed by Brayfield and Harold (1951), the "Intention to Leave Scale" by Wayne, Shore and Linden (1997) and "Perceived Stress Scale" developed by Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelste (1983) and adopted to Turkish by Bilge et al. (2007). The explanatory factor analysis method has been used to examine the structural validity of the scales. In order to measure the reliability of the scales, the "Cronbach Alpha", which is the internal consistency coefficient, was used. When the points of the factors in the scales were calculated, the values of the items in the factor were added, and were divided by the number of the items (arithmetic average) to obtain the factor points. As well as the average and standard deviation values, the Pearson Correlation Analysis was also used to examine the univariate relations among the scales. In order to test the model, a scale model has been formed and the Structural Equation Model results have been examined. The estimation of the structural equation model has been made with Generalized Least Square estimation.

4. Findings

The questions of the questionnaire were sent to 380 sector employees, and 239 questionnaires were returned after they were completed. 38 of these 239 questionnaires excluded from the study due to missing parts, and 201 questionnaires were used in the study. 20 of the participants of the questionnaires (10,0%) were between 21-25 years of age; 89 (44,3%) were between 26-30; 58 (28,9%) were between 31-35; 34 (16,9%) were over 36. 108 (53,7%) were female; 93 (46,3%) were male. 16 (8,0%) were high school graduates; 138 (68,7%) were undergraduates; 42 (20,9%) were post graduate students; and 5 (2,5%) doctorate degree. 95 (47,3%) were married; 106 (52,7%) were single; and 69 (34,3%) had children.

The durations of working in their current workplaces were as follows; 140 (69,7%) between 0-5 years; 51 (25,4%) between 6-12 years; 6 (3,0%) between 13-20 years; 4 (2,0%) 20 and more years. According to their total working years, the distribution was as follows; 83 (41,3%) between 0-5 years, 77 (38,3%) 6-12 years, 33 (16,4%) 13-20 years, 8 (4,0%) 20 and over.

Table 1. Factor structure

Factor	İtem	Factor Loading	Total Variance	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO
Perceived Job Stress	1. I had problems in an event I was not expecting	0.676	39.625	0.777	0.799
	2. I could not control important events.	0.685			
	3. I felt stressed.	0.718			
	7. The events out of my control made me angry.	0.406			
	8. I had difficulties I could not cope with.	0.638			
	4. I trusted in myself on solving personal problems.	0.540			
	5. Everything was all right in my life.	0.637			
	6. I controlled my anger in my life.	0.679			
Job Satisfaction	1. I feel satisfied in my current job.	0.847	60.66	0.825	0.807
	2. Recently, I am more enthusiastic in my job.	0.834			
	3. Every day at work seems as if it were endless.	0.413			
	4. I really enjoy my work.	0.879			
	5. I am not satisfied with my job.	0.823			
Intention to Leave	1. I want to work in this workplace in following years, too.	0.856	68.32	0.883	0.834
	2. I am thinking of working in another workplace in the following years.	0.853			
	3. I do not want to leave this workplace in the following 5 years.	0.817			
	4. I am looking whether I have the possibility of finding a job in other places.	0.755			
	5. I frequently think of leaving my job.	0.848			
Work and Meaning Inventory	1. I have found a meaningful career.	0.469	50.60	0.888	0.897
	2. I view my work as contributing to my personal growth.	0.776			
	3. My work really makes no difference to the world.	0.638			
	4. I understand how my work contributes to my life's meaning.	0.636			
	5. I have a good sense of what makes my job meaningful.	0.864			
	6.I know my work makes a positive difference in the world.	0.614			
	7. My work helps me better understand myself.	0.735			
	8. I have discovered work that has a satisfying purpose.	0.837			
	9. My work helps me make sense of the world around me.	0.753			
	10.The work I do serves a greater purpose.	0.704			

The reliability of the 8 items in the "Perceived Stress Scale" was found to be high with alpha=0.777. At the end of the Barlett test (p=0.000<0.05), it was determined that there was a relation between the variables that were included in the factor analysis, and it was determined with KMO test (KMO=0.799>0,60) that the size of the sampling was sufficient to apply the factor analysis.

The reliability of the 5 items in the "Job Satisfaction Scale" was found to be high with alpha=0.825. At the end of the Barlett test (p=0.000<0.05), it was determined that there was a relation between the variables that were included in the factor analysis, and it was determined with KMO test (KMO=0.807>0,60) that the size of the sampling was sufficient to apply the factor analysis. At the end of the factor analysis, the variables were collected under one single factor whose total explained variance was 60.655%.

The reliability of the 5 items in the "Intention of Leaving the Job Scale" was found to be high with alpha=0.883. At the end of the Barlett test (p=0.000<0.05), it was determined that there was a relation between the variables that were included in the factor analysis, and it was determined with KMO test (KMO=0.834>0,60) that the size of the sampling was sufficient to apply the factor analysis. At the end of the factor analysis, the variables were collected under one single factor whose total explained variance was 68.316 %.

The "Cronbach Alpha" value, which is the internal consistency coefficient, was calculated in order to calculate the reliability of the 10 items in the "Work and Meaning Inventory".

The general reliability of the scale was found to be high with alpha=0.888. At the end of the Barlett test (p=0.000<0.05), it was determined that there was a relation between the variables that were included in the factor analysis, and it was determined with KMO test (KMO=0.897>0,60) that the size of the sampling was sufficient to apply the factor analysis.

At the end of the factor analysis, the variables were collected under one single factor whose total explained variance was 50.604%. It was understood with the Cronbach's Alpha, factor values, and the explained variance values, which were found in relation with each scale, that the scale was a valid and reliable tool.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation Analysis

	n	Mean	SD	Job Stress	Job Satisfaction	Intention to Leave
Work and Meaning Inventory	201	3.68	0.71	-0.082	0.650**	-0.390**
Perceived Job Stress	201	2.57	0.58		-0.177*	0.094
Job Satisfaction	201	3.30	0.88			-0.692**
Intention to Leave	201	2.84	1.00			

*p<0.05   **p<0.01

According to the findings, no statistically significant relations were determined between the meaning of the job and job stress (r=-0,082; p=0,246>0,05). A positive relation at the level of 65,0% was determined between the meaning of work and job satisfaction (r=0,650; p=0,000<0,05). A negative and significant relation was found at the level of 39,0% between the meaning of the work and intention for leaving the job (r=-0,390; p=0,000<0,05). A negative and significant relation was found at the level of 17,7% between the job satisfaction and job stress (r=-0,177; p=0,012<0,05). No statistically significant relation was found between the intention for leaving the job and perceived job stress (r=-0,094; p=0,185>0,05). A negative and significant relation was found at the level of 69,2% between the intention for leaving the job and job satisfaction (r=-0,692; p=0,000<0,05). In this context, as the intention for leaving the job points increase, the job satisfaction points decrease.

Figure 1 Model

Table 3. Goodness of Fit Statistics

Goodness-of-fit indices	Indicative of good fit	Goodness-of-fit results
Chi Square / DF	<3	1.69
RMSEA	<0.08	0.059 (%90 CI= 0.050 - 0.067)
SRMR	<0.08	0.183
AGFI	>0.95	0.76
GFI	>0.90	0.79

Table 4. Model Estimation

			Estimate	S.E.	P	Hypothesis
Job Stress	<---	Meaningfulness Of Work	,013	,087	,878	Reject
Job Satisfaction	<---	Job Stress	-,056	,090	,531	Reject
Job Satisfaction	<---	Meaningfulness Of Work	,962	,134	,000	Accept
Intention to Leave	<---	Job Satisfaction	-,683	,126	,000	Accept
Intention to Leave	<---	Job Stress	,006	,067	,924	Reject
Intention to Leave	<---	Meaningfulness Of Work	,096	,112	,390	Reject

5. Conclusion

The organizational psychology studies that were conducted before the reflections of positive psychology to the workplaces or to the organizations behaviors, focused mainly on negative issues like mobbing, exhaustion, stress at workplace (Bhagat & Allie, 1989; Einarsen, Matthiesen & Skogstad, 1998; Starnaman & Miller, 1992; Tyler, 1998). However, with the positive organizational behaviors concept, this inclination started to change towards positive concepts (Arnold, Turner, Barling, Kelloway & Mc Kee, 2007; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Fredrickson, 2003; Luthans, 2002; Turner, Barling & Zacharatos, 2002). Because, it is considered that eliminating the negative experiences at workplaces requires power and time. Therefore, focusing on positive components at workplaces will provide ease in terms of time and economy. This study has been shaped in the light of meaning of work concept, which is one of the positive variables, and the relation between the meaning of work levels and job

satisfactions, job stress levels and the intentions for leaving the job of the employees who work in insurance sector in Istanbul have been analyzed by using the dataset formed with questionnaire method. When the findings are examined, it is observed that there is a positive relation at a significant level between the meaning of work levels and job satisfaction levels. This finding supports the finding of the studies in the literature reporting that the level of job satisfaction is higher in people who felt that their jobs served a higher purpose (Sparks & Schenk, 2001; Kamdron, 2005).

Another finding of the study is the negative and significant relation between the job satisfaction and the intention for leaving the job. It is understood that the intention for leaving the job levels are lower in people who have high job satisfaction levels in insurance sector. This finding supports the findings of Jones et al., Golden and Jorgensen and Yazicioglu, who reported that lower job satisfaction was a factor that influenced higher intention for leaving the job.

On the other hand, according to the findings of the study, a statistically significant relation was not determined between the finding their jobs meaningful levels and perceived job stress levels and the intention for leaving the job levels of the employees in insurance sector in companies that are active in Istanbul. Similarly, no statistically significant relation was determined between the perceived job stress levels and job satisfaction levels and the intention for leaving the job levels of the insurance sector employees.

This findings is not compatible with the similar studies conducted on meaningfulness of work and perceived job stress (Treadgold, 1997; Allan, Douglass, Duffy & McCarty, 2015). It's been assumed that this situation is caused by the sample used. Furthermore, another study conducted on a larger mass, different sectors and people of different ranks is required in order to compare the results. In this study, sum of the points of the Work and Meaning Inventory and Perceived Stress Scale has been included in the analysis. Sub-dimensions can also be included in different studies.

As it is the case in all field studies, this study has also some limitations. The basic limitation of this study is the field study being limited with the employees who worked in insurance sector in the city of Istanbul. For this reason, the assessments are only valid within Istanbul scale. However, by collecting similar studies that will be conducted at regional and sectoral scale, a general frame may be possible. It will be beneficial if future studies are conducted in different sectors in different professional groups, in different cultures, and in countries with different developmental stages. In addition, other factors that influence the meaning of work except for job satisfaction, perceived job stress and the intention for leaving the job, or the results of meaning of work studies may be taken as the topics of future studies.

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