

CHAPTER V

THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG WORK ENGAGEMENT, WORK ALIENATION, AND INTENTION TO LEAVE: A STUDY ON BANKING SECTOR

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1.Introduction

Factors such as productivity, growth, efficiency, and productivity are quite crucial for companies. In the classical management approach, it is seen that profit-seeking companies tend to focus on factors other than the human factor. With the abandonment of the classical management approach in the 1930s, the human factor has become an important element for organizations. As of today, the organizational environment is becoming even more complex. The product, technology, marketing, and competitive strategies of companies change over time to cope with rapidly changing business and competitive conditions. The most important factor that would lead them to organizational goals maintains its importance as the “human element”. Nonetheless, the “positive psychology” movement is becoming increasingly important in the field of organizational behavior (Abdullah, 2009: 23; Güler, 2008: 199). Positive psychology (Luthans et al., 2006: 25), which focuses on the right thing and means to improve it, provides essential contributions to the organization and the employee (Karacaoğlu and İnce, 2013: 142). Positively oriented studies, which are increasing day by day in the field of organizational behavior, indicate that focusing on strengths provides more effective and productive results (Luthans, 2002: 695; Met, 2010: 889). So much so that understanding human behavior in the workplace and eliminating negative attitudes is very crucial to gain a competitive advantage and to maintain sustainability. Positive thoughts of the employees towards the organization increase their commitment to the

company and their organizational performance while mitigating negative organizational behaviors.

One of the leading issues of positive psychology is the work engagement of employees. Engagement plays an important role in achieving organizational goals. Otherwise, it is expected that work alienation would increase and intention to leave would emerge. So much so that employees who do not feel any commitment to their jobs and lack the desired job conditions would experience work alienation such as meaninglessness and powerlessness over time. The intensification of these feelings towards the job and the organization leads to intention to leave, and employees would seek new jobs.

Based on these basic theoretical assumptions, the study aims to reveal the causal relationship patterns among work engagement, work alienation, and intention to leave. First, the theoretical framework related to these three concepts is presented. The emergence of three concepts, their theoretical foundations, antecedents, and results are discussed. In recent studies, the acceleration of negative organizational behavior phenomena on bankers draws attention. The highly competitive banking sector is among the service sectors with intensive emotional labor. It is thought that determining the status of the issues mentioned for these and similar reasons in the relevant sector would make an important contribution and the field study is conducted with the participation of bank employees. Consequently, the correlation and regression analyses are performed and possible relationship patterns among the variables are determined. In the conclusion section, the obtained findings are discussed and some suggestions for the relevant academic field and practitioners are presented.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Work Engagement

The phenomenon called work engagement was first coined by Kahn in 1990. Kahn defined engagement as the contribution of organization members to their work performance. In engagement, an individual expresses and employs himself/herself physically, cognitively, and emotionally committed to his/her job. Employees with work engagement tend to work with more effort of their own will than others. In the case of disengagement, employees' personal selves are separated from their job roles. In other words, disengagement reduces the performance of individuals and causes them to defend themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally (Kahn, 1990: 694).

There is still no consensus about the Turkish version of the phenomenon referred to as "engagement" in the English literature. In this study, the concept expressed as work engagement has been conceptualized

by different authors as “Indulging in work”, “Devotion to work”, “Being attracted to work”, “Engagement”, “Passion for work” and “Commitment to work” (Öner, 2008; Ardiç and Polatçı, 2009; Kaya, 2018; Bal, 2008; Dalay, 2007; Güneşer, 2007; Koçel, 2017; Metiner, 2019; Bostancı and Ekiyor, 2015).

Work engagement is associated with several established structures in organizational psychology such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, or job involvement. However, according to Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001), work engagement is a completely different phenomenon from these concepts. Organizational commitment is related to the individual’s attitude towards the organization. In this context, the focus of organizational commitment is the organization, whereas the focus in work engagement is the work itself. Job satisfaction refers to an individual’s satisfaction with his/her job. So much so that the employee provides a sense of satisfaction by meeting the needs of the institution or the job with his work. On the other hand, job involvement is quite similar to the dedication dimension of the phenomenon of work engagement, but it does not include energy and effectiveness dimensions. According to all these concepts in the field of organizational psychology, the phenomenon of work engagement has a more comprehensive and complex perspective about the individual’s relationship with his/her job (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001: 416).

Kahn (1990) examined the work engagement, which he described as a psychological state occurring based on the conditions, in three dimensions: cognitive, physical, and emotional. Based on Kahn’s work, Schaufeli et al. (2002) also developed a work engagement model with three-dimensions. In this study, work engagement is analyzed according to cognitive (vigor), emotional (dedication), and physical (absorption) dimensions. Schaufeli et al. (2002) confirmed Kahn’s model, but since Kahn’s dimensions were highly comprehensive, they named their dimensions with a prominent feature of each dimension which he considered.

The cognitive (vigor) dimension of work engagement refers to the individual’s mental resilience and a high level of energy while working. The individual is willing to work even in the presence of difficulties. The cognitive (vigor) dimension is characterized by persistence. The emotional (dedication) dimension, referring to a sense of meaning that the employee has pertaining to his/her job, is characterized by enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. The individual’s participation to work is essential, not his/her commitment to work. Although this state of participation is defined as the psychological identification of the individual with his/her job, it goes a step further both quantitatively and qualitatively. It has a wider scope reflecting not only a cognitive dimension but also an

emotional dimension. The physical (absorption) dimension, which is the final dimension of work engagement, refers to the individual's complete concentration on his/her job. Time passes quickly for the individual who is deeply indulged in his/her work. It is very difficult for an individual, who does not realize that time passes rapidly while working, to detach himself/herself from work (Schaufeli et al., 2002: 74,75). In this context, the phenomenon of work engagement that can occur in three different dimensions is thought to have a negative impact on employees' intention to leave and work alienation.

2.2. Work Alienation

Kanungo (1979: 131) described the concept of work alienation as a psychological dismissal that occurs when the employee thinks that his/her needs and expectations connected with the organizational structure are not met. According to Kanungo (1983: 120), a negative situation arising in the working conditions of the employee causes alienation and an inefficient workforce. Other organizational factors causing work alienation are organizational structure, management style, ethical climate (Chiaburu, 2014: 25), working conditions, and group characteristics. Among the environmental factors that lead to work alienation, there are many factors such as economic structure, social structure, cultural structure, and legal structure (Şimşek et al., 2006: 546).

According to Seeman (1959: 784), work alienation consists of five different dimensions as powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement. Although these dimensions are correlated under certain conditions, each of them is independent. The powerlessness dimension involves the fact that the employee thinks of the actions taken to achieve his/her goals are ineffective and inadequate (Blauner, 1964: 18), whenever the employee cannot have control over his/her work (Seeman, 1959: 784). The meaninglessness dimension is related to the employee's ability to attribute meaning to his/her work or to an event in which he/she is involved (Arslan, 2016: 32). It expresses the indecision of the employee as to what he/she should believe. In the normlessness dimension of work alienation, the norms and values of society seem meaningless to the employee. Therefore, the employee exhibits unusual behaviors. The fourth dimension, isolation, refers to the detachment of the individual from his/her social environment. Unable to adapt to the social structure, the employee fails to establish effective and meaningful relationships with other individuals (Şimşek et al., 2006: 574). According to self-estrangement, which is the last dimension of work alienation, the employee moves away from his/her own self and does not enjoy his/her daily work (Korman et al., 1981: 344). In this context, the work alienation phenomenon that can occur in three different dimensions may lead to many

negative individual, social and organizational consequences. One of these consequences is thought to be the intention to leave.

2.3. Intention to Leave

It is desired that the employee turnover rate be low in companies. Employee turnover rate, which is considered to be an indicator of the success level of an organization, is crucial for effective and productive employment (Eren, 2014: 276). Companies invest in their employees in order to recruit and improve them later. High employee turnover rates, on the other hand, inflict high costs for companies. The cost of replacing an employee leaving his/her job is almost twice the salary of the employee. Upon examining different sectors, it is seen that the negative impacts of employee turnover rate are equally valid for each sector (DeConinck and Bachmann, 2005: 874). The movements of individuals out of employment that negatively affect organizational activities are a situation that stakeholder owners and managers do not prefer to encounter. It occurs in two different ways, namely, voluntary and involuntary leaves (Cheng and Brown, 1998: 137). The reason for involuntary turnover; in other words, the movement out of employment, is usually related to the weakness of the harmony between the employee and the organization. In this regard, companies act in line with their own corporate culture and strategies (Barutçugil, 2004: 477). What is aimed to be prevented here is the voluntary turnover, in other words, the employees leaving their jobs on their own free will. Many researchers such as those who investigated the employee turnover resulting from voluntary turnover stated intention to leave as the antecedent of the employee turnover (Mobley, 1977; Steers & Mowday, 1981; Hom, Griffeth & Sellaro, 1984). As a result of the research studies, it is very crucial that intention to leave, the most determining factor of the employee turnover rate, is low or does not exist at all.

3. Methodology and Field Study

The research study was carried out within the framework of the correlational survey model, one of the quantitative survey models. The causal relationships among the cases were determined in the correlational survey model. First of all, the levels of the employees' work engagement, work alienation, and intention to leave which can occur in different dimensions, were determined; then, correlation analysis was conducted to identify the relationships among the dimensions; and finally, regression analysis was performed to determine the causal relationship patterns of the three main phenomena with each other.

Research data were collected through the scales designed to measure all three dimensions. The population of the research consisted of white-collar employees working in the banking sector in Antalya / Alanya. In this context, the field study was conducted between January-February 2020.

142 out of 250 questionnaires distributed by convenience sampling method were obtained.

In order to determine the work engagement levels of employees, a three-dimensional scale (Utrecht Work Engagement Scale-UWES) developed by Schaufeli et al. (1981) consisting of 17 items was utilized. This scale, which has been widely used in Turkish studies, was adapted into Turkish by Gündüz, Çapri, and Gökçakan (2013). Sub-dimensions of the scale consist of vigor, dedication, and absorption dimensions stated in the relevant literature.

As a result of the factor analysis performed utilizing the data obtained from the work engagement scale, it was seen that the scale had a three-dimensional structure (Kaiser-Meyer Olkin-KMO = 0.860). Similar to the original scale; the “vigor engagement”, “dedication engagement”, and “absorption engagement” dimensions consisted of 5, 3, and, 5 items, respectively. Four items were excluded from the analysis since their factor loadings were low. The total variance explained is 72.946%. According to the results of the reliability analysis, the Cronbach’s alpha values of the dimensions were within the confidence interval specified for quantitative research: vigor engagement ($\alpha = 0.886$ / explained variance: 26.559%), dedication engagement ($\alpha = 0.852$ / explained variance: 22.437%) and absorption engagement ($\alpha = 0.867$ / explained variance: 23.950%) (Altunışık et al, 2012).

In the study, the work alienation scale, which was developed by Mottaz (1981) and translated into Turkish by Uysaler (2010) and whose validity and reliability study was performed, was utilized in the study. Mottaz’s Work Alienation Scale (WAS), which was used in many studies (Arslan, 2016; Moç & İşcan, 2018), consists of three dimensions. These dimensions are “powerlessness”, “meaninglessness” and “self-estrangement”. There are 7 different statements for each dimension in the scale consisting of a total of twenty-one items.

According to the factor analysis results, a structure consisting of 12 statements and four dimensions was obtained. Four variables with six diagonal values of 0.5 in the anti-image correlation matrix were excluded since they had a distorting impact on the solution (Altunışık et al., 2012: 293). In the factor analysis performed later, 5 statements with low factor loadings were not included in the evaluation. As a result of the analysis, the Kaiser-Mayer Olkin (KMO) test value was calculated as 0.760. This value indicates that the work alienation scale has significant factor dimensions, as it is greater than 0.60 (Büyüköztürk, 2012), which is specified as the lowest value for any scale’s suitability for factor analysis. The total variance explained was 74.254%. According to the results of the reliability analysis, the Cronbach’s alpha values of the dimensions were

seen to be within the confidence interval specified for quantitative studies: powerlessness ($\alpha = 0.729$ / explained variance: 16.685%), meaninglessness ($\alpha = 0.685$ / explained variance: 17.316%), self-estrangement(1) ($\alpha = 0.743$ / explained variance: 16.204%), and self-estrangement (2) ($\alpha = 0.797$ / explained variance: 24.049%) (Altunışık et al., 2012). The statements collected in four dimensions different from the original scale were rearranged in order to maintain the original scale. With this rearrangement, two statements in the dimension of self-estrangement1 (Questions 18 and 20) were included in the dimension of self-estrangement2 (questions 17, 19, and 21) as in the original scale. The Cronbach's alpha value ($\alpha = 0.797$) of the "self-estrangement" dimension generated by combining "self-estrangement1" and "self-estrangement2" dimensions was within the specified confidence interval.

In order to determine the employees' intention to leave, the scale developed by Cammann et al. (1979) consisting of 3 statements was used. Questions measuring the intention to leave were the questions numbered 18-19-20 in the second part of the questionnaire. Question number 18, which had a negative expression in the original scale, was asked in reverse and addressed to the employees with a positive expression. According to the factor analysis results; the factorial structure of the scale had a single factor structure in accordance with its original structure (Kaiser-Mayer Olkin-KMO = 0.783). The total variance explained in the analysis was 59.385%. According to the results of the reliability analysis; it was seen that the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha = 0.765) of the intention to leave was within the confidence interval specified for quantitative studies.

First of all, frequency analysis was carried out to determine the demographic characteristics of the employees participating in the study. According to the results, 52 (42.6%) of the participants were male, whereas 66 (54.1%) were female. 4 participants failed to specify their genders. Upon considering the age range of the employees, there were 26 individuals between the ages of 20-30, 76 between the ages of 31-40, and 10 between the ages of 41-50. 4 participants did not answer about their age ranges. The number of married participants is 70 (57.4%), whereas the number of single participants was 48 (39.3%). Upon considering the education levels, it was seen that there were 4 individuals with a high school degree, 4 with a vocational school diploma, 4 with a master's degree, whereas 96 with an undergraduate degree. In other words, most of the employees (78.7%) were undergraduate graduates. Participants tended to leave this question unresponded the most with a total of 14 individuals. Consequently, it was determined that 14.7% of the employees have been working in the sector for less than five years, whereas 37.7% have been working for 5 to 10 years, and again 37.7% have been working for 10 to

15 years. The rate of those who have been working in the same company for at least 4 years was 31.4%. 4 participants did not specify their duration of work.

Within the framework of these data, it was seen that most of the participants in the study were between the ages of 31-40, undergraduate graduates, and have been working in the banking sector for 5 to 15 years.

4. Findings

Within the scope of the aim of the research study, firstly, the participants' levels of work engagement, work alienation, and intention to leave were determined. According to the analysis results in the table, it was seen that the levels of "vigor engagement" "dedication engagement" "absorption engagement" of the employees participating in the study were quite high. The highest level of engagement belonged to the vigor engagement dimension. On the other hand, in the context of alienation, it was found that employees' levels of powerlessness and self-estrangement were high, and their level of meaningfulness was medium. The same was true for the intention to leave. Within the framework of these findings, it could be said that the engagement level of the bank employees was high, whereas their levels of alienation and intention to leave were moderate.

Dimensions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	Std. Dev.
1. Vigor	1							3.565	.937
2. Dedication	.563**	1						3.366	.850
3. Absorption	.567**	.621**	1					3.324	.817
4. Powerlessness	.486**	-.385**	-.393**	1				2.614	.849
5. Meaninglessness	-.149	-.201*	-.285**	.409**	1			2.501	.694
6. Self-Estrangement	-.110	-.393**	-.342**	.448**	.617**	1		2.745	.786
7. Intention to Leave	-.280**	-.540**	-.250**	.366**	.422**	.551**	1	2.961	.933
**p<0.01 *p<0.05									

According to the correlation analysis results in the same table, it was seen that vigor engagement had positive relationships with both dedication and absorption engagement, whereas a negative relationship with the intention to leave. The relationship of vigor engagement with two work alienation dimensions; namely, meaningfulness and self-estrangement was not statistically significant. There was a positive relationship between

dedication engagement and absorption engagement, whereas dedication engagement had negative relationships with work alienation dimensions and intention to leave. Similarly, there was a negative relationship of absorption engagement with the dimensions of work alienation and intention to leave. There was a positive correlation between all dimensions of work alienation (powerlessness, meaningfulness, and self-estrangement) and the intention to leave. The dimensions of work alienation also had positive correlations among themselves.

Model 1	Intention to Leave							
	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.	r	r²	F/p
Constant	4.524	0.389	-	11.625	0.000	.387	.150	19.049/ 0.000
Work Engagement	-0.486	0.111	-0.387	-4.365	0.000			
Model 2	Work Alienation							
	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.	r	r²	F/p
Constant	3.901	0.266	-	14.664	0.000	0.447	0.200	24.516/ 0.000
Work Engagement	-0.379	0.076	-0.447	-4.951	0.000			
Model 3	Intention to Leave							
	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.	r	r²	F/p
Constant	0.764	0.321	-	2.383	0.000	0.554	0.307	47.781/ 0.000
Work Alienation	0.819	0.118	0.554	6.920	0.000			

Finally, three simple regression analyses were conducted for the purpose of the study. Table 2 presents the regression analysis results. According to the results in the first model, work engagement explained approximately 15% of the intention to leave ($R^2 = 0.150$). It was determined that work engagement had a negative significance at $\beta = -0.387$ and 0.001 significance level in estimating the intention to leave. In the second model, the result of the regression analysis was found to determine the impact of work engagement on work alienation. Work engagement explained 20% of the intention to leave ($R^2 = 0.200$). It was determined to have a negative impact on the estimation of work alienation ($\beta = -0.447 / p = 0.000$). According to the results in the third model, work alienation explained approximately 30% of the intention to leave ($R^2 = 0.307$). According to the standardized beta coefficients, it was determined that work alienation had a positive impact in estimating the intention to leave ($\beta = 0.554 / p = 0.000$).

5. Conclusion

This study was conducted on bank employees to determine the relationship patterns among work engagement, work alienation, and intention to leave. According to the results, employees' level of work engagement was high, and their intention to leave as well as work alienation was moderate. As employees' work engagement levels increase, their levels of work alienation and intention to leave decrease as expected. So much so that when the correlation analysis results were examined, significant relationships among almost all variables were detected. 19 out of 21 correlations were significant ($p < 0.01$ / $p < 0.05$). There was a negative correlation between work engagement dimensions and alienation dimensions as well as the intention to leave.

According to the results of the regression analysis, work engagement had a negative impact on work alienation and intention to leave. As the level of work engagement of the participating banking employees increases, their intention to leave decreases. These results comply with the theoretical assumption, conceptual framework, and empirical research results on the subject (Harter et al., 2002; Richman, 2006; Sonnentag, 2003). In a study conducted on 710 hotel employees in China, a negative relationship was found between work engagement and intention to leave. It is observed that the work pressure of the employees who think they have many valuable resources decreases and the employees have higher ranks of work engagement. Employees with such resources have less intention to leave (Wang et al, 2020). In another study conducted in Turkey, a negative relationship was found between emotional engagement and intention to leave (Erdil and Müceldili, 2014). Engagement may provide human resource practitioners and managers with powerful tools to develop efficient strategies. Work engagement contributes to the improvement of organizations' high performance (Rogers, 2001) positive workplace outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment, productivity, profitability, and low intention to leave (Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009; Geldenhuys et al, 2014).

In future studies, conducting qualitative research as well as quantitative methods may be beneficial in the banking sector, which is a labor-intensive sector. Likewise, in-depth interviews are required to comprehend the social reality of organizational life. It can be investigated the extent to which work engagement is maintained and what other benefits it has for the organization, colleagues, performance, and private life. Individual and organizational factors should be examined in order to eliminate negative attitudes of employees such as work alienation and intention to leave. Examination of research topics from the perspective of manager and leader behaviors may have a positive impact on the literature and business life. It is thought that these questions can be responded by

using quantitative and qualitative research methods concurrently. If companies can attract and retain the best employees as well as motivate their engagement levels, they can gain a very powerful competitive advantage. Companies that seek success and sustainability in the long-run need to develop new approaches to retain high-performing employees with work engagement.

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