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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Research on the Role of Self-Efficacy in the Effect of Workplace Envy on Intention to Quit*

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the mediating role of self-efficacy (SE) on the relationship between workplace envy and intention to quit. We expect that feelings of envy will be among the factors affecting the intention to quit that are frequently discussed in Organizational Behavior (OB) literature. In addition, to the best of our knowledge, the effects of SE on the relationship between envy and intention to leave have not been examined in the literature. In this study, we aim to fill the gap in the literature by revealing the possible effects of SE from a behavioral perspective.

We conducted a survey of the academics of ten universities, randomly selected from five different geographical regions of Turkey. A total of 237 academics working at both state and foundation universities participated in the study. The SmartPLS package program, which is a multi-level structural equation modeling (SEM) application, was used in the analysis of the data. As a result of the analyses, we find that self-efficacy partially mediates the relationship between workplace envy and intention to quit. We expect that the results of the study will help researchers and managers who are interested in the subject to understand and manage the effects of workplace envy.

Keywords

Workplace envy, Self-efficacy, Intention to quit, Academic staff

Introduction

Today, the intention of employees to quit is closely related to many factors. According to a study conducted on 3,578 academics across Turkey, it was found that those working at foundation universities had a higher intention to quit their jobs than their colleagues working at state universities (Doğan et al., 2020: 352). These results are similar to those reported by Taşkın and Yıldız (2020: 27) regarding the annual report of a foundation university operating in Istanbul in which the employee turnover rate of its academic staff is 30.13%, whereas the turnover rate of its administrative staff is 14.3%. Similarly, HESA (Higher Education Statis-

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tics Agency) (2022) data reveals that the average employee turnover rate of 162 university academic staff in England in the 2019-2020 academic year was 16.16%. Moreover, many other studies (e.g. Günalan and Ceylan, 2014; Erdil and Muceldili, 2014; Doğan and Vecchio, 2001; Vecchio, 2000) show that workplace envy affects the intention to quit positively.

Academics may consider quitting their jobs for various reasons, especially in universities, where hierarchy is considered to be strict; the more unpleasant emotions experienced in the workplace are suppressed, the more employees think about quitting their jobs (Côté and Morgan, 2002). Therefore, one of the ways to continue working in such work environments, where hierarchical order is high and emotions are suppressed, is to control emotions. Although management of emotions is of such vital importance, management of emotions in particular was relatively ignored in organizational theory until the 1990s because rationality and performance issues were more prominent (Günalan, 2019: 324). On the other hand, since the mid-1990s, neuroscientists have revealed that emotions effectively weigh our options and shape our decisions, and those emotions underlie even our most rational-seeming ideas (Watt Smith, 2018: 101). One of these hidden emotions is envy. The concept of envy is rooted in the desire to be superior. We constantly compare ourselves with people we find close or equal to us (Adrianson and Ramdhani, 2014: 2). These social comparisons can be upwards or downwards. Envy is an emotion arising from upward comparisons (Wu and Srite, 2021: 2).

In business life, which covers a large part of our lives, we can sometimes see our colleagues as our friends and sometimes as our competitors, which allows us to approach workplaces with a mixture of competition and solidarity. While our managers encourage us to collaborate and share, we may soon find ourselves being compared to our colleagues (Watt Smith, 2020: 125). Since only a limited number of employees have achieved promotions and rewards, there is a competitive business environment among employees (Eslami and Arshadi, 2016). Therefore, employees are constantly competing for limited organizational resources and rewards, such as wage increases, training opportunities, promotions, and office space (Sun et al., 2021: 3). Unlike most other sector workers, the visibility of the work of academics, and the fact that this visibility has become more and more transparent with different technological possibilities, allows social comparison and paves the way for feelings of jealousy.

Some individuals who target jealousy at work may feel more confident and prouder of their abilities or feel energized to work harder. However, others feel more anxious, cannot focus on their work, and may even consider quitting their job (Lee et al., 2018: 182). At this point, the role of individuals' self-efficacy (SE) levels can be considered important. It has been observed that academics with high SE have similarities in strengths and weaknesses despite being in different fields of expertise (Hemmings et al., 2012). They can cope with difficult situations in the business environment more efficiently (Stenmark et al., 2021) and can contribute to the implicit knowledge sharing behaviors within higher education institutions

(Rahman et al., 2018). Determining the SE levels of academics in the relationship between feelings of workplace envy and intention to quit will benefit the experts working in the fields of organizational behavior and human resources in the effective management of the qualified workforce.

Although a huge body of studies regarding envy in the workplace has been conducted on Western employees, there are very few studies about this feeling in Turkish ones. Therefore, the lack of systematic information on the subject draws attention (Lee et al., 2018: 182). Within this scope, the purpose of this research is to determine the role of SE in the effect of workplace envy felt among academics on their intention to quit. In this study, which is based on Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory, the interrelationships between workplace envy, SE, and intention to quit are examined both theoretically and empirically. Then empirical results are explained and the study's limitations are discussed by presenting suggestions for future studies.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Workplace Envy

Jealousy is a versatile concept that has been the subject of research from different perspectives, such as philosophy, theology, sociology, psychology, economics, marketing, and management (Cohen-Charash and Larson, 2016: 1). The terms envy and jealousy are often used interchangeably, but there is a philosophical consensus that they are different emotions. Envy is about something that a person does not have, but wants to have. On the other hand, jealousy is about protecting something one already has from others who are or are thought to be trying to get it (Ricci and Scafarto, 2005: 24). Envy is between two people. The envious person wants something that belongs to someone else and does not want the other person to have that thing. The object of envy can be anything someone else has, such as success or popularity. The concept of jealousy concerns three people (Pines, 2003: 24). Unlike envy, which means wanting something that is not ours, jealousy is the fear of losing someone or losing someone's love to someone else (Watt Smith, 2018: 148).

While malicious envy is generally regarded as representing the socially unacceptable, dark side of jealousy, benign envy is constructive (Yusainy et al., 2018: 204). While benign envy enables the envious person to develop productive strategies to improve him/herself, malicious envy is associated with aggressive and destructive efforts to extinguish the success of the envied person (Navarro-Carrillo et al., 2017: 220). When people feel benign envy, they view their superiors through relatively positive lenses. They desire to gain their advantage and intend to put more effort into improving themselves by imitating their success. However, when they feel malicious envy, they become hostile towards those they deem superior and tend to harm the superior's position (Crusius and Lange, 2021: 4).

From the etymological point of view, it is seen that there are two different words to express the feeling of jealousy in many languages. For example, the Dutch have the words “*beneijden*” and “*afgunst*.” In German, the words “*beneiden*” and “*missgönnen*” are parallel to this. The first word expresses benign envy, while the second word denotes malicious envy. The most explicit expression of this etymological difference is envy in Russian: “*white*” and “*black*” (Lange and Crusius, 2015: 285). In a similar vein, the words “*gıpta*” and “*haset*” are used in Turkish. One of the reasons these terms are used interchangeably is because jealousy contains a piece of envy. The other reason is that since envy has a more negative meaning than jealousy, what is meant to be expressed with the word envy is described in the spoken language with the more socially acceptable word of jealousy, which is softer in the spoken language (Gülen, 2006: 91).

Likewise, Toohey argued that (2016: 146-147) jealousy is also common among academics. Academics often adopt a particular subject for individual research and personally identify with their interests. When they reach a specific title or status, instead of helping the young academics who follow them, they may become jealous and try to maintain their position. In addition, expressing jealousy in the business environment may be socially unacceptable or perceived as selfish (Günerergin, 2017: 37).

Long-distance runners who experience benign envy of their rivals set more challenging goals and run faster. Similarly, employees who experience benign envy of their colleagues increase their work efforts (Van de Ven, 2005: 348). For instance, Hilal’s (2021) research on doctors argues that physicians with high SE can resist envy and tend to see situations in which they are compared negatively as learning and development opportunities. In addition, Çelebi et al. (2021) found that gender did not have a significant effect on workplace envy and that professors felt more envious compared to research assistants.

Some academics struggle for years to complete their doctoral education. In contrast, others complete this process in a shorter time and with less effort, which may cause them to become the target of jealous feelings (Reyna, 2021: 358). For instance, Utz and Muscannel (2018) examined the research-gate profiles of academics and showed that seeing the success of others triggers one’s jealousy. In another study, jealous academics are perceived by their colleagues as having low self-esteem, greedy, unfair, pessimistic, immature, selfish, complex, and lacking in personal empathy (Kiral and Ödemiş-Keleş, 2019). Accordingly:

H1: Workplace envy effects self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy (SE)

SE is a concept discussed in different fields, such as sports, medicine, health, media, psychology, and international relations (Erseven, 2016: 69). SE, defined as an individual’s

perception of their ability to fulfill their task, is an essential component of social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). SE refers to an individual's self-belief or confidence in his or her ability to take action by determining the motivation, cognitive resources, and ways required to successfully carry out a particular task (Stajkovic and Luthans, 1998: 66). Individuals' levels of SE affect the way they approach new jobs, goals, and challenges. Individuals with high SE are more likely to perform complex tasks and persevere in the face of difficulties. In contrast, individuals with low SE tend to refrain from engaging in tough situations (Stenmark et al., 2021: 301).

SE is a determinant of self-perception and is also an essential element of intrinsic motivation (Wang et al., 2015: 752). In addition to the fact that SE directly affects performance, SE can also mediate other factors such as motivation to influence performance (Hemmings et al., 2012: 294). Demographic and contextual factors, such as the educational environment and various career opportunities or stages, also affect performance, and, as a result, the satisfaction individuals gain from their professional lives (Ismayilova and Kalsen, 2019: 56). Employees with low SE are more likely to believe that their efforts will not be successful (Jafri, 2020: 9). It has been determined that employees with high SE tend to show high performance at work and persevere in the face of setbacks (Tai et al., 2012: 115).

It has been observed that research assistants, especially in the early stages of their careers, tend to make social comparisons above the average and mostly compare with colleagues who are above their level (Aydoğan et al., 2017: 27). Although many studies argue that academics have high SE regardless of title, department, or gender (Uysal, 2013; Başarer and Başarer, 2019), the SE of research assistants was found to be moderate (Gün and Büyükgöze, 2015). According to another study, the SE of single, younger, lower-level employees in terms of working time and total work experience was lower than the average (Büyükebeşe et al., 2018). However, in other studies, it has been found that teachers with high SE have less intention to quit (Pfitzner-Eden, 2016; De Neve and Devos, 2017). Accordingly:

H2: Self-efficacy affects intention to quit.

Intention to Quit

From an organizational point of view, turnover intention means that a well-trained and expert employee leaves the job, and the time spent and all the costs incurred for his training are wasted. Quitting a job leads to the loss of intellectual capital, which is very important from an institutional point of view. Moreover, organizations have to face the orientation and training costs caused by rehiring. In addition, for the individuals who continue to work, high turnover causes many negative feelings and attitudes such as the sadness of losing their colleagues. Furthermore, the remaining employees also experience anxiety arising from the uncertainty of the relationship they try to build with the new employees (Demirbaş and Hasit, 2016: 141).

Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are the most critical factors affecting employees' intention to quit (Firth, Mellor, Moore and Loquet, 2004: 179). Other factors that affect the intention to quit the job can be divided into three groups: age and education (demographic factors) are in the first group, organizational commitment and job satisfaction of employees (individual determinants) are in the second group, and the working environment of the organization, co-worker relations, and wages (organizational determinants) are in the third group (Albaqami, 2016: 51-52).

Personal reasons that lead employees to quit include moving, starting a family, illness, retirement, or resuming school. Other reasons include low wages, lack of benefits, imbalances between performance and rewards, lack of confidence in the organization's vision, unethical behavior, distrust of the leader, poor relationships in the workplace, and poor communication. (Hana and Lucie, 2011: 89-90).

The high turnover rate of academics can be attributed to various reasons, such as unfair promotion policies, non-competitive reward systems, and lack of adequate research funding. In addition, they are more likely to quit their current positions due to the lack of a robust performance management system and unfair remuneration policies (Fahmi and Mohamed, 2020: 2).

Whereas it was seen that academics at a university in Ethiopia considered leaving their jobs due to a bad working environment (in terms of insufficient wages and lack of facilities such as internet, offices, chairs, and toilets) (Yimer et al., 2017), academics at African University considered quitting due to the rigid management style, the lack of career development incentives, the unfair distribution of awards and resources, or the unfairness of the performance evaluation system (Bigirimana et al., 2016: 97). In another study, Özdemir and Erdem (2020) observed that there was jealousy among lecturers for reasons such as academic promotion, not wanting their colleagues to be promoted, and not being able to obtain a title or staff. In those cases, it was determined that jealous people are quite unhappy and restless. These people experience a decrease in their performance and productivity and may even do something as negative as quitting their jobs. Accordingly:

H3: Workplace envy affects intention to quit.

Based on the research results mentioned above, we observe a gap in the extant literature regarding the mediation mechanism of SE on the relationship between workplace envy and turnover. Accordingly:

H4: Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between workplace envy on intention to quit.

Methodology

The aim of this study was to examine the mediator role of SE on the relationship between workplace envy and intention to quit. The mediation model created according to Barron and Kenny’s (1986) procedure is shown in Figure 1.

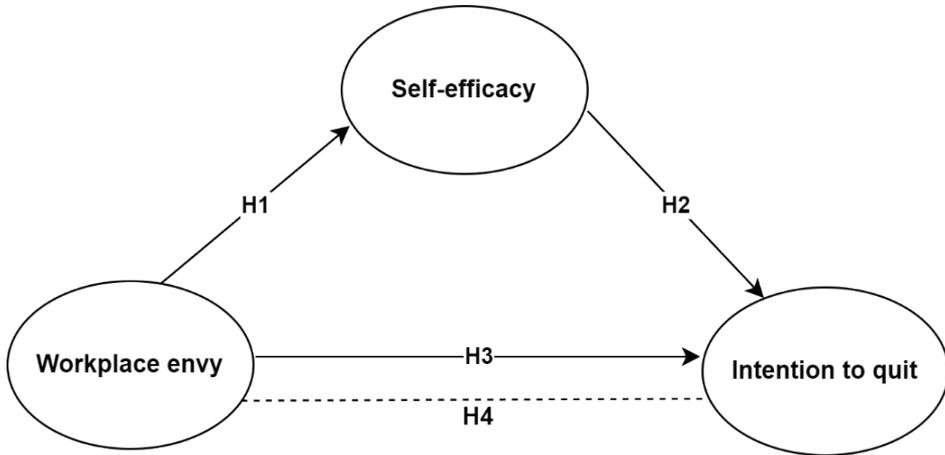


Figure 1. Conceptual model.

Sampling

For this study, ethical permission was obtained from Yıldız Technical University Ethics Committee (dated 07.03.2021 and numbered E.2103070018). Informed consent was obtained from the participants before the questionnaire was filled in, and all participants declared that they participated in the questionnaire voluntarily. Ten Turkish universities with similar employee numbers and sizes were randomly selected, without distinguishing between public and foundation universities. The online survey form was sent to 1,310 lecturers from ten universities randomly selected via e-mail between 18.01.2021 and 31.01.2021. The e-mail addresses of the lecturers were obtained through the database found at <https://akademik.yok.gov.tr/AkademikArama/>, and only those who could be reached at corporate e-mail address extensions with “*edu.tr*” were included. The research includes the pilot study data to understand the effects of the feelings of jealousy experienced by academicians on their intention to leave. A total of 237 questionnaires were returned. Informed consent was obtained from the participants before the questionnaire was filled in, and all participants declared that they participated in the questionnaire voluntarily. The participants were also given sufficient information about who carried out the research and about the aims of the research. A control question (“*If you are reading this question, please tick two.*”) was added to the survey questions. Responses from participants who mismarked the control question were excluded from the analysis.

When the demographic characteristics of the 237 academics participating in the study are examined, the majority of them were male (51.9%), between the ages of 25-35, married (64.1%), lecturers (29.5%) with less than three years of experience (45.9%), and working at public universities (76.4%). More than half of them did not have any administrative duties (55.3%) or SCI-SSCI or equivalent publications (46%). The top three departments with the highest participation were Vocational School (17.7%), Faculty of Engineering (11.4%), and Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences (10.8%), respectively.

Scales

A questionnaire consisting of 31 items was directed to the participants, and 8 of these questions were designed to reveal their demographic characteristics. Each item in the questionnaire was evaluated with a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from “*strongly disagree*” to “*strongly agree*.” Neutral scores were not included, and all answers were collected anonymously. The scales used in the question form are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Sources of the Measures Used in the Research

Name of the measure	Source
Benign and Malicious Envy Scale (BeMaS)	Lange & Crusius (2015)
General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE)	Schwarzer & Jerusalem (1992)
Intention to Quit	Mobley, Horner & Hollingsworth (1978)

Data Analysis

When evaluating the study’s data, the SPSS package program was used for descriptive statistics and exploratory factor analysis. The Smart PLS-SEM program was used to determine the validity and reliability of the scales with confirmatory factor analysis. Partial least squares (PLS) is a variance-based structural equation modeling (SEM) technique widely applied in social sciences (Henseler et al., 2016). To test the research model, composite reliability, discriminant validity-divergent validity, and convergent validity were evaluated.

Results

The factor loadings, Cronbach’s alpha values, composite reliability, and mean-variance values of the latent variables are shown in Table 4. Indicators 1, 3, 4, and 5 belonging to the BEMAS scale were excluded from the analysis since their factor loadings didn’t meet the threshold level. Table 2 shows the Cronbach’s alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and rho_A values for the model proposed in this study. We see that the reliability values of the Malicious Envy scale, which is only one of the subscales of the BEMAS scale, are below 0.70. There are various arguments in the literature about which criterion values AVE and CR values should be. According to Psaila and Roland (2007), an

AVE value above 0.40 and a CR value above 0.70 indicate convergent validity. According to another view, AVE values greater than 0.50 show that the relevant model is valid (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). The Cronbach’s alpha values of the scales used in the study ranged from 0.678 to 0.925. Lyberg et al. (1997) also consider that the Cronbach’s alpha value above 0.60 in the Partial Least Square (PLS) method is sufficient to ensure reliability. Therefore, we conclude that our scales are valid and reliable.

Table 2
Reliability and Validity

Latent Variables	Cronbach’s α	CR	-AVE	rho_A
Benign envy	0.735	0.824	0.541	4.430
Malicious envy	0.678	0.790	0.667	0.801
Intention to quit	0.829	0.891	0.733	0.947
Self-efficacy	0.925	0.935	0.594	0.946

The values related to the factor loads obtained as a result of the analyses are presented in Table 3. It is seen that the factor loads of the three scales used vary from 0.585 to 0.996.

Table 3
Factors Loadings

	Benign envy	Malicious envy	Self-efficacy	Intention to quit
Bemas7	0.996			
Bemas9	0.585			
Bemas2		0.813		
Bemas6		0.753		
Bemas8		0.691		
Bemas10		0.677		
Selfefficacy1			0.794	
Selfefficacy2			0.828	
Selfefficacy3			0.561	
Selfefficacy4			0.753	
Selfefficacy5			0.744	
Selfefficacy6			0.803	
Selfefficacy7			0.810	
Selfefficacy8			0.804	
Selfefficacy9			0.831	
Selfefficacy10			0.742	
Quit1				0.910
Quit2				0.764
Quit3				0.887

Discriminant validity analysis was performed to evaluate how the tested structure differs from other structures. To ensure discriminant validity of latent variables, divergence value obtained from the square root of the AVE should be greater than the other values in the same rows and columns, and it also exceeds 0.70 (Fornell and Larcker, 2007). Both Fornell-Larcker Criterion (1981) and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values were examined to en-

sure discriminant validity. We found that there was no value of 0.90 and above in the HTMT ratios of the variables (Table 4). Therefore, it is possible to say that the variables in the model are not similar to each other, and discriminant validity is ensured.

Table 4
Fornell-Larcker Criteria and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

		Benign envy	Malicious envy	Intention to quit	Self-efficacy
Fornell-Larcker Criteria	Benign envy	0.817			
	Malicious envy	0.252	0.735		
	Intention to quit	-0,068	0.178	0.856	
	Self-efficacy	0.043	-0.230	-0.264	0.771
		Benign envy	Malicious envy	Intention to quit	Self-efficacy
HTMT	Benign envy				
	Malicious envy	0.397			
	Intention to quit	0.070	0.193		
	Self-efficacy	0.074	0.236	0.248	

For the path suggested between any two variables in the SmartPLS program to have a meaningful value, the “t” value must be greater than 1.96 (Dülgeroğlu and Başol, 2017). Table 5 shows that all of the t values of the proposed hypotheses are higher than 1.96.

Table 5
Results of Hypothesis Testing

		Path coefficients (β)	t-values	P values	Result
H1	Malicious envy → Self-efficacy (direct effect)	-0.258	4.211	0.000***	Supported
H2	Self-efficacy → Intention to quit (direct effect)	-0.227	3.133	0.002***	Supported
H3	Malicious envy → Intention to quit (direct effect)	0.150	2.743	0.041*	Supported
H4	Malicious envy → Intention to quit (indirect effect)	0.058	2,273	0.006*	Partially supported

β: Path coefficients *p<.05, **p<.10, ***p<.001

The effect of malicious envy on SE (β= -0.258), p<0.01) was negative and statistically significant, supporting H1. The impact of SE on the intention to quit (β= -0.227), p<0.05) was negative and statistically significant, supporting H2. The effect of malicious envy on intention to quit (β= -0.150), p<0.05) was positive and statistically significant, supporting H3. The indirect effect of malicious envy on intention to quit (β= 0.058), p<0.05) was positive and statistically significant, partially supporting, H4.

Conclusion and Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine the mediator role of SE on the relationship between workplace envy and intention to quit. As a result of the research, a positive and significant relationship was found between workplace envy and the intention to quit. In other words, feelings of envy in the workplace push individuals to quit their jobs, but individuals with high SE change this result. This finding is in line with similar research results in the literature (Günalan and Ceylan, 2014; Pfitzner-Eden, 2016; De Neve and Devos, 2017).

It is a challenge to change one's emotions, yet it is possible to control or change the behaviors caused by those emotions (Navaro, 2011: 29). Workplace envy, an emotion that is difficult to control due to its complex structure, also affects academics. However, academics with high SE can better tolerate malicious envy, which represents the destructive aspect of jealousy. They prefer to persevere in their studies rather than leave the work environment. This result is akin to some studies in the literature (e.g., Stenmark et al., 2021; Tai et al., 2012).

The majority of the academics who participated in this research are employed at public universities (76.4%). Considering that the performance criteria, institutional incentives, and shared organizational culture applied in foundation universities differ from public universities, the results obtained in the research mainly reflect the academics employed at public universities. The literature review for studies on workplace envy conducted in Turkey reveals that there are quite a few and more qualitative studies (Kıral and Ödemiş-Keleş, 2019; Özdemir, 2018; Günerergerin, 2017). As one of the limited number of studies (Çelebi et al., 2021, Aydın Küçük, 2019; Günalan, and Ceylan, 2014) that try to measure workplace envy with quantitative methods, this study contributes to the expansion of the existing literature.

As a result, jealousy is a secretly forbidden emotion among people, often rejected and hidden in shame and reluctance. Individuals do not like to talk about their feelings of jealousy, referring to incomplete, biased, or unreliable sources (Annoni et al., 2016: 484). The fact that jealousy is widely considered a kind of social taboo in the workplace complicates the work of researchers interested in the subject. It causes the suppression, prevention, or normalization of feelings of inferiority associated with jealousy (Elçi et al., 2021: 210). In this context, we expect this study to make an essential contribution to the organizational behavior literature for understanding and managing feelings of jealousy in the workplace.

Kwiatkowska et al. (2020) revealed that the average scores obtained from BEMAS are higher in countries with individualistic cultures, such as Germany and America. On the contrary, they are lower in countries with collectivist cultures, such as Poland and Russia. Therefore, it can be suggested that future studies should be conducted using a mixed-method research design in different cultures and sectors.

Limitations

As McGrath (2011) stated, it is difficult to measure jealousy's acceptance in the organizational context with direct expressions. Participants may adjust their answers in accordance with their subjective experiences and may give socially acceptable responses instead of genuine responses. In this context, the first limitation of this study is social desirability bias. The second is the small sample size of the study. The last limitation of the study is that the data was collected through an online survey. As Akbulut (2015: 135) states, virtual platforms in online surveys give people the opportunity to hide their real identities. They can lead to different results in research due to reasons such as individual differences.

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