Organizational Conflict and Psychological Well-Being Relationship: The Moderating Effect of Workplace Ostracism

Örgütsel Çatışma ve Psikolojik İyi Oluş İlişkisi: İş Yerinde Dışlanmanın Düzenleyici Etkisi

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between organizational conflict and the psychological well-being of employees and to test the moderating role of workplace ostracism in this process. We distributed the questionnaires to 811 individuals working in the public and private sectors in Turkey through simple random sampling. 425 persons participated in the questionnaires. We didn't assess 16 questionnaires because the participants didn't respond from start to finish. Thus, we evaluated 409 questionnaires and tested them according to the purpose of the research. We used the IBM SPSS v26, Lisrel 10.20 programs, and Process Macro v3.3 plug-ins for data analysis. According to the results of the analysis, we can see that organizational conflict and ostracism in the workplace have a negative impact on psychological well-being. We have also proven that workplace ostracism moderates the relationship between organizational conflict and psychological well-being. In the conclusion section of the study, we have compiled the results of the analysis and compared them with other findings in the literature. In the literature review, we noted that the moderating role of workplace ostracism in the relationship between organizational conflict and psychological well-being has never been studied. This study, therefore closes an important gap in the literature on organizational behavior.

Keywords: Workplace ostracism, organizational conflict, psychological well-being

Paper Type: Research

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, örgütsel çatışma ile çalışanların psikolojik iyi oluşu arasındaki ilişkiyi belirlemek ve bu süreçte işyerinde dışlanmanın düzenleyici rolünü test etmektir. Anketler, Türkiye'de kamu ve özel sektörde çalışan 811 kişiye basit tesadüfi örnekleme yoluyla dağıtılmıştır. Anketlere 425 kişi katılmıştır. 16 anket değerlendirilmemiştir çünkü katılımcılar anketleri tam doldurmamışlardır. Böylece 409 anket değerlendirilmiş ve araştırmanın amacına göre test edilmiştir. Veri analizi için IBM SPSS v26, Lisrel 10.20 programları ve Process Macro v3.3 eklentileri kullanılmıştır. Analiz sonuçlarına göre, işyerinde örgütsel çatışma ve dışlanmanın psikolojik iyi oluş üzerinde olumsuz bir etkisinin olduğu görülmüştür. Ayrıca, işyerinde dışlanmanın örgütsel çatışma ve psikolojik iyi oluş arasındaki ilişkiyi düzenlediği de kanıtlanmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuç bölümünde analiz sonuçlarını derlenmiştir ve literatürdeki diğer bulgularla karşılaştırılmıştır. Literatür taramasında, örgütsel çatışma ve psikolojik iyi oluş arasındaki ilişkide işyerinde dışlanmanın düzenleyici rolünün hiç çalışılmadığı tespit edilmiştir. Dolayısıyla bu çalışma, örgütsel davranışla ilgili literatürdeki önemli bir boşluğu kapatmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dışlanma, örgütsel çatışma, psikolojik iyi oluş

Makale Türü: Araştırma

Introduction

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The natural consequence of cohabitation is that people sometimes have conflicts, disagreements, and conflicts of ideas (Üngüren, 2008). It is against creation that everyone believes in the same way, and it is also true for organizations. It is inevitable to experience conflicts resulting from differences among individuals, especially in globalized and highly competitive organizations. (Sims, 2002).

Conflicts in organizations can affect almost everything at an organizational level. Because conflict is a kind of tension that prevents the satisfaction of the physiological and socio-psychological needs (Eren, 2000). This means that conflicts within the organization affect more or less all formations such as employees, departments, operations and, decision-making processes.

While disagreements within the organization help to find the best one, they can sometimes lead to organizational conflict. In this regard, when organizational conflict is well managed (constructive conflict), offers competitive advantages to organizations such as more skilled decision-making, encouraging participation in decisions, and group cohesion (Henry, 2008). When organizational conflict is not well managed (destructive conflict), it causes situations such as poor communication, anger, fear, hatred, and weak engagement within the organization (Kırımlı, 2018).

Destructive conflicts in organizations have a negative impact on the psychological well-being of employees, particularly in the long run (De Dreu *et al.*, 2004). Psychological well-being is one of the most basic and important concepts in positive psychology, which includes people's efforts to establish a happier and more functional life throughout their lives (Zümbül, 2019). In this regard, psychological well-being is an important tool in ensuring that employees better reflect their functionality by increasing their healthy and positive potential (Ryff, 1989).

Destructive conflicts in organizations affect almost every component related to employees negatively. One of these is workplace ostracism (Quade *et al.*, 2017). Ostracism was a tool used in Ancient Greece to punish individuals who acted improperly (Basso, 1972). Nowadays, it occurs as a result of the employees not being accepted by other people or groups in organizations and it makes it difficult to reach organizational goals.

In the first part of the study, we have discussed the concepts of conflict in organizations, psychological well-being, and ostracism. In the analysis section, we have examined the relations of these concepts with each other and their effects on each other. In the literature, there is no moderating impact analysis in which these three concepts are used together. With this aspect, this study aims to bring a unique perspective to science.

1. Conceptual Framework

1.1. Organizational Conflict

Conflict is the totality of emotional structure and behavior that occurs when a person is exposed to negative behaviors by the other person (s) and the person reacts to this situation (Aslan, 2004). Organizational conflict is a disagreement between two or more people/groups in an organization for various reasons. These disagreements may confuse organizational activities and/or stop these activities (Koçel, 1999). According to Webster (2003), conflicts within the organization arise in cases of differences of interest and inability to achieve individual goals.

Although organizational conflict contains negativities, suppressing it and accepting it as an undesirable phenomenon causes an impediment to organizational creativity (Sur, 2009). In such cases, what needs to be done is to resolve the conflict healthily by reconciling the parties and increasing the efficiency of the organization (Morrison, 2008).

While the conflict in organizations was seen as an undesirable situation in the classical and neoclassical periods and should be eliminated as soon as possible, this perspective has changed in the modern management approach. Since the modern management approach is based

on an open system, it is accepted that conflicts take place in organizations naturally. It is also considered that factors such as change, creativity, and efficiency will be negatively affected in organizations where there is no conflict. This situation is as dangerous as the constant and intense existence of conflicts within the organization. In both conditions, it is difficult for the organization to reach its goals (Koçel, 1999).

Conflicts in organizations are divided into two as destructive conflict and constructive conflict. The positive/negative effects of the mentioned conflict types on organizations and employees are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The consequences of organizational conflict

Destructive Conflict	Constructive Conflict
• Reduces energy and synergy in the organization	• Increases organizational vitality
• Negatively affects the health of the employees	• Improves creativity and innovation capabilities in organizations
• Causes wasting of the resources	• Facilitates organizational change
• Creates a negative atmosphere within the organization by increasing aggressive behavior	• Allows issues to be discussed openly
• Decreases organizational capacity and productivity	• Increases organizational commitment and performance
• Causes the emergence of uniform thought and behavior patterns in employees	• Allows new ideas to emerge
• Causes an increase in selfishness within the organization	• Promotes personality formation in employees

1.2. Psychological Well-Being

The happiness feelings of individuals in daily life show subjective well-being, and this concept is formed as a result of one's life assessment. This assessment includes cognitive factors that depend on each other (Telef, 2013).

Well-being has a wide spectrum, referred to by terms such as happiness, quality of life, life satisfaction in many studies in the literature. Essentially, well-being is a complex and multifaceted concept and it is divided into *subjective well-being and psychological well-being* (Telef *et al*., 2013). Subjective well-being is the individual's cognitive evaluations about her/his life as a result of his self-evaluation; psychological well-being refers to self-actualization and fully functioning. (Zümbül, 2019).

According to the psychological well-being theory, this concept has six dimensions. These are self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, independence, environmental control, life purpose, and personal development (Ryff, 1989). According to Roothman *et al*. (2003), psychological well-being is affected by physical, emotional, cognitive, social, personal, and spiritual factors.

Studies in the literature show that there is a positive relationship between psychological well-being and employees' happiness and values (Bulut and Dilmaç, 2018) and a negative relationship between psychological well-being and workplace ostracism (Yakut and Yakut, 2018).

1.3. Workplace Ostracism

Human is a social entity that wants to communicate with other people, to be valued and accepted by them and to belong to a certain group (Leary, 2005). When these conditions are not met, people feel unhappy feelings such as rejection, ignoring, being excluded from the group, and feel ostracism (Abaslı and Özdemir, 2019).

Workplace ostracism is an issue that has been intensively researched especially since the 1970s and should be focused on in terms of organizational behavior. Workplace ostracism occurs depending on the social relations, perceptions, and behaviors between employees, colleagues, and managers. (Rong *et al*., 2013).

Ostracism in organizations is the exclusion, ignoring (Williams, 1997), neglecting, and isolation of the employee (s) by the other employee (s), mostly without explanation (Ferris *et al*., 2008). As a result of this situation, individuals lose their self-esteem, do not feel belonging to the organization, and avoid displaying positive attitudes and behaviors (Foster, 2012).

When we examine previous studies we can see that workplace ostracism reduces the desire to take part in decisions made within the organization. It also leads to difficulties in integrating with the organization (Halis and Demirel, 2016) and negatively affect employees' perceptions of belonging, self-esteem, security, and existence (Wolf *et al*.,2014).

1.4. Hypotheses

**H1:** Organizational conflict affects psychological well-being negatively

H2: Workplace ostracism affects psychological well-being negatively

H3: Workplace ostracism moderates the relationship between organizational conflict and psychological well-being

2. Methodology

The primary purpose of this study is to determine the effect of organizational conflict on psychological well-being and the moderating role of workplace ostracism in the relationship between these two variables. The conformity report of the ethics committee for this study was obtained from the Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee of Adıyaman University on 03.02.2021 with the decision number 55. We used quantitative research methods to reveal these relationships. We used a questionnaire technique to collect data. While analyzing the data, first of all we made validity and reliability analyzes were. We used hierarchical regression analysis to test the hypotheses. We used IBM SPSS v26, Lisrel 10.20 programs, and Process Macro v3.3 plugin to analyze the data. The model established to be tested in the research is given in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research model
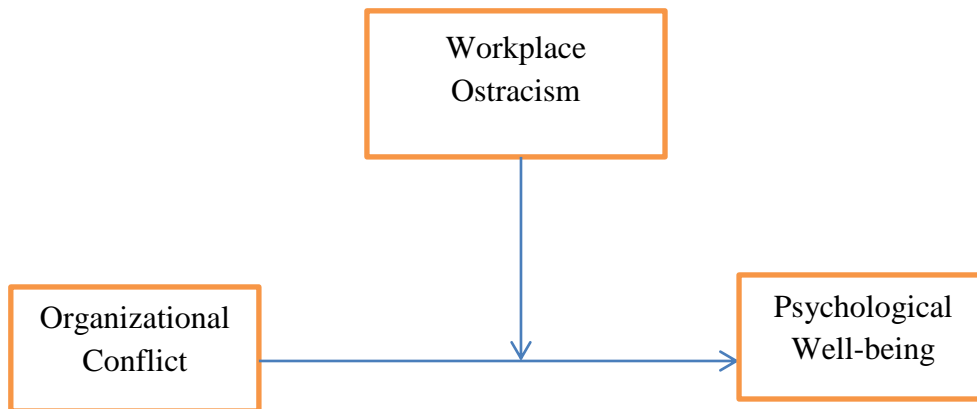
2.1. Participants and Measurement Tools

The main mass of the study comprises service sector employees (education, accommodation and food services, social services, administrative and support services, finance, insurance, information and communication, other service activities) operating in Ankara. Since it is not possible to reach the entire population, we applied sampling technique. We adopted the simple random sampling method as the sampling method. According to 2018 data of İŞKUR, the number of service sector employees in Ankara is 137,781. According to Cohen *et al.* (2002), the sample size is 384 with a 5% margin of error.

We prepared an online survey form to collect data for the study. Then, we conveyed the questionnaire to service sector employees via social media platforms. Thus, we delivered surveys to 811 service sector employees in the sample, but 425 of the participants took part in the survey. The rate is 52.40%. We didn't evaluate 16 questionnaires because participants didn't answer them thoroughly or they answered with the same option, and they constituted an outlier according to the Mahalanobis test. Thus, we evaluated 409 questionnaires and subjected them to tests in line with the purpose of the research. Also, this number is larger than 384, so we assume that the sample size is enough.

In the first part of the questionnaire that was created to collect data for the study, we asked participants demographic questions. When we examine the demographic characteristics of the participants we can see that 138 of them are female (33.7%) and 271 of them are male (66.3%). According to the education level of the participants; 18 of them were primary education (4.4%), 247 were high school (60.4%), 102 were undergraduate (24.9%) graduates, and 6 (1.5%) were graduate. While the average age of the participants is 32.49, it has been determined that they have been working in their current workplaces for 3.1 years.

In the second part of the questionnaire we included the expressions of the organizational conflict scale which is the independent variable of the study. The scale developed by Spector and Jex (1998) was adapted to Turkish by Aytaç and Başol (2018). The sample items of this scale comprising four statements and one dimension are: "How often do you have arguments with people at work?" and "How often do people at work do unpleasant things to you?"

In the third part of the questionnaire we included the expressions of the psychological well-being scale which is the dependent variable of the research. Diener *et al.* (2009) developed the scale and Telef (2013) adapted it to Turkish. The scale comprises 8 items. The scale with items such as "My social relationships are supportive and satisfying" and "I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others" is one-dimensional.

We included the workplace ostracism scale which is the moderating variable in the last part of the questionnaire. Ferris *et al.* (2008) developed this scale and it comprises 13 items and one dimension. The scale has items such as "When I enter common areas, other employees leave the environment" and "My communication with employees is limited".

2.2. Validity and Reliability Analysis

We examined normality distributions of variables before validity and reliability analysis. We checked the skewness and kurtosis of the averaged variables to test the normality. We consider that the distribution is normal since the values do not exceed the limits of +1.5 and -1.5 (Tabachnick *et al.*, 2019). Then we checked whether there was a multiple connection problem. Since VIF values obtained by linear regression analysis between variables are well below the value of 5, which is widely accepted in the literature, we've observed that there is no multicollinearity problem (Craney and Surles, 2002).

We performed factor analysis to test the construct validity and reliability of the scales. In this context, we carried out KMO and Bartlett tests to test the suitability of the scales for factor analysis. We found that the KMO value of the scales was 889, while the Bartlett value

was $\chi^2 = 4654,659$ (300); p =, 000 <0.05. According to these results, we determined that the scales were suitable for factor analysis (Tavşancıl, 2002). As a result of the EFA, we determined that the scales showed a distribution by the originals.

Fornell and Larcker (1981) argue that scales should meet compliance and discriminative validity criteria to ensure their validity and reliability. Accordingly, scales must meet some conditions to have good fit values (Hair, 2014). These conditions are:

- Factor loadings should be more than 0.50 threshold (Fornell and Larcker, 1981),
- The average variance (AVE) inferred with their own structure in items should be greater than the unexplained variance (AVE> 0.50) (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988),
- Factor composite reliability (CR) should be greater than or equal to 0.60.

With the help of the Lisrel 10.20 program, we established a measurement model to test the compatibility and discriminant validity criteria. We've determined that the established model has good fit values (Hu and Bentler, 1999) (χ^2 / df = 2.725; RMSEA = 0.065; NFI = 0.884; TLI = 0.910; CFI = 0.922). In the measurement model, we determined that the factor load of the 11, 12, and 13 items of the psychological well-being scale was well below the 0.50 threshold, so we excluded the items from the scale. The values obtained as a result of the validity and reliability analysis of the scales are given in Table 1.

Table 2. Validity and reliability analysis results

Items	Factor Load	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Organizational Conflict Scale		0,757	0,855	0,598
OC1	0,810			
OC2	0,706			
OC3	0,840			
OC4	0,729			
Psychological Well-being Scale		0,898	0,912	0,566
PWB1	0,788			
PWB2	0,749			
PWB3	0,770			
PWB4	0,731			
PWB5	0,809			
PWB6	0,725			
PWB7	0,718			
PWB8	0,722			
Workplace Ostracism Scale		0,888	0,911	0,512
WO1	0,661			
WO2	0,634			
WO3	0,795			
WO4	0,449			
WO5	0,839			
WO6	0,741			
WO7	0,582			
WO8	0,798			
WO9	0,819			
WO10	0,743			

When we examine the factor loadings, AVE, CR, and Cronbach's α values of the scales we can see that the scales provide convergent and discriminant validity. Correlation between variables, mean, and standard deviation values of variables are given in Table 2.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics

	Avg.	SD	1	2	3
1. Organizational Conflict	1,549	0,527	0,733		
2. Workplace Ostracism	1,227	0,438	0,424***	0,716	
3. Psychological Well-being	5,837	1,056	-0,377***	-0,197**	0,752

***p<0,001; **p<0,01; Avg. = Average; SD = Standard Deviation; Diagonal Bold Values = √AVE

In the table, the correlations between the mean and standard deviation values of the variables and the variables and the square roots of the AVE values for discriminative validity are given. Since this value exceeded the correlation coefficient between variables, we decided that there was no problem with the scales and we started hypothesis tests.

2.3. Hypothesis Tests

We conducted hierarchical regression analysis to test the structure in the research model (Cohen, West, and Aiken, 2014). Before starting the analysis, we aimed to minimize the multiple connection problems by taking Z scores of the variables (Aiken and West, 1991). Analysis results are given in Table 3.

Table 4. Hierarchical regression analysis results

Variables[a]	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3	
	β	S.h.	β	S.h.	β	S.h.
Fixed	6,821	,154	7,019	,179	7,438	,382
Organizational Conflict (Independent)	-,317***	,094	-,278***	,101	-,385***	,201
Workplace Ostracism (Moderating)			-,108*	,121	-,239*	,282
Organizational Conflict vs. Workplace Ostracism					-,205*	,123
R^2	,101		,111		,114	
ΔR^2	,098		,106		,108	
F	45,522		25,285		17,389	

[a]Dependent Variable = Psychological Well-being

We used hierarchical regression analysis to reveal the relationship between variables. In the first step of the regression analysis, the analysis performed to reveal the effect of organizational conflict on psychological well-being was found to be significant with $R^2 = 10.1\%$ (F (1, 407) = 45.522; p <0.001). The second step in which the moderating variable was also included in the model was found to be significant with $R^2 = 11.1\%$ (F (2, 406) = 25.285; p <0.001). We determined that the last step to which the interaction term was added was significant with $R^2 = 11.4\%$ (F (3, 405) = 17.389; p <0.001).

As a result of the regression analysis, we found out that organizational conflict (β = -,385) and workplace ostracism (β = -,239) had a negative and significant effect on psychological well-being. These results of the study supported the hypotheses "**H1:** Organizational conflict negatively affects psychological well-being" and "**H2:** Workplace ostracism negatively affects psychological well-being". Besides, we've found out that the interaction term (β = -,205) created to determine the moderating role of workplace ostracism in the negative relationship between organizational conflict and psychological well-being has a negative and significant role in the relationship. This finding of the study supported the hypothesis that "**H3:** Workplace ostracism moderates the relationship between organizational conflict and psychological well-being". Conditional relationships of moderating variables were examined with the help of Process Macro v3.3 plug-in developed by Hayes (2017). Relevant values are given in Table 6.

Table 5. Conditional effect of the moderating variable

Workplace ostracism						
Condition	β	S.h	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Low	-,152	,123	-1,238	,217	-,0893	,3929
Middle	-,576	,281	-2,045	,042	-1,130	-,0223
High	-,771	,200	-3,838	,000	-1,165	-,3760

As can be seen from the table, while workplace ostracism is low, it takes a meaningless value. However, when workplace ostracism is middle and high, it has a significant value and its moderating effect also becomes stronger. In other words, as the level of workplace ostracism increases, the negative impact of organizational conflict on psychological well-being also increases. The slope matrix of the moderating effect is given in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Moderation analysis
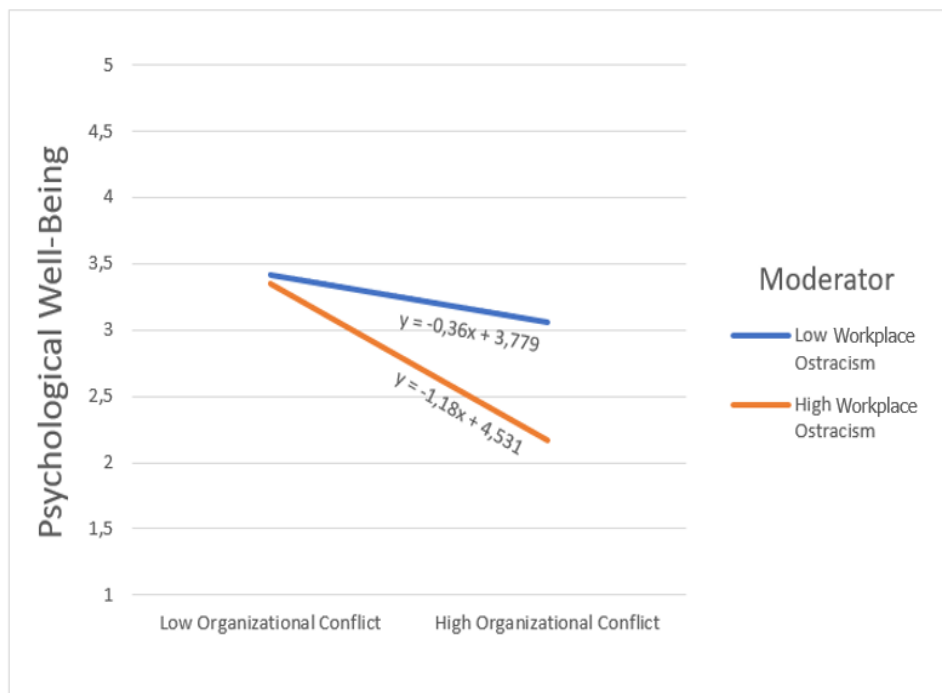
The fact that the lines of the figures are not parallel indicates that there is a moderating effect. Based on the conditional impact analysis, ostracism in the workplace and organizational conflict increase the negative impact on employees' psychological well-being. In other words, we found that when conflict is accompanied by ostracism in the workplace, it intensely reduces psychological well-being.

3. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between organizational conflict and workplace ostracism and psychological well-being. Another objective of this study is to determine whether workplace ostracism plays a moderating role in the relationship between organizational conflict and psychological well-being. Based on the results of the analysis, we found that organizational conflict negatively affects psychological well-being. This finding indicates that conflict in the workplace is destructive rather than constructive. In the literature review, there are studies (Burke and Greenglass, 2001; De Dreu *et al*., 2004; O'Driscoll *et al*., 2004; Hill *et al*., 2016; Rafique *et al*. 2018; Akram and Hussain, 2020) investigating the effects

of organizational conflict and work-family conflict on psychological well-being. These applied studies have shown that work-family conflict (organizational conflict) negatively affects psychological well-being. In other words, work-family conflict reduces people's well-being levels. The less conflict employees experience in the workplace, the healthier they will be psychologicall. These results are also consistent with the results of our study.

The second assumption of the study was that "workplace ostracism negatively affects psychological well-being". The results of the analysis support this assumption as well. In other words, as the workplace ostracism levels of the employees increase their psychological well-being decreases. As a result of this, employees experience negative psychological conditions such as stress, anxiety, and dissatisfaction. These results of our study match up with the results of similar studies (Ferris *et al*, 2008; Bernstein *et al*., 2010; Wu *et al*., 2012; Ferris *et al*, 2015; Zheng *et al*., 2016; Zhang and Shi, 2017:983; Chung, 2018) in the literature. Although different variables were used together with workplace ostracism and psychological well-being in these studies, we can say that these studies have similar findings with our study because workplace ostracism negatively affects the psychological health of employees in every situation.

Finally, this study investigated whether workplace ostracism played a moderating role in the relationship between organizational conflict and psychological well-being. According to the analysis results, we have determined that workplace ostracism moderates the relationship between organizational conflict and psychological well-being. In other words, when there is a conflict with ostracism in the workplace, it decreases employees' psychological well-being. In the literature review, we've realized that the moderating role of workplace ostracism in the relationship between organizational conflict and psychological well-being has never been investigated. Therefore, this study fills a gap in the literature on organizational behavior and makes significant contributions to the literature. It also serves as a guide for scientists who will conduct research on the topic.

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