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The Relationship between Organizational Trust and Job Satisfaction: A Meta-Analysis Study

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between organizational trust and job satisfaction using the method of meta-analysis based on correlational studies in the literature. To achieve this goal, 33 studies from the literature that met the specified criteria were included in the study. The studies included in the meta-analysis consisted only of studies conducted in Turkey to ensure cultural subjectivity. The results of the funnel plot, Egger's linear regression test, and Begg and Mazumdar's rank correlation test indicate that there is no publication bias in the studies. The correlation coefficients of the studies were used in determining the effect size of the research. In accordance with this, the overall effect size of the study is high. It was also found that the studies included in the meta-analysis were heterogeneous. It was found that the reasons for the consequent heterogeneity were the COVID-19 pandemic process and workplace variables. As a result of the research, the COVID-19 pandemic process was found to negatively affect the relationship between employees' perceptions of organizational trust and job satisfaction levels. In the analyses based on the study fields in which the research was conducted, it was found that the relationship between the perception of organizational trust of employees working in educational institutions and their job satisfaction is at a lower level than employees working in other fields of the study. As a result of the study, it is suggested that organizational trust affects the development of positive organizational behaviors. Accordingly, administrators who want to develop positive organizational behaviors should primarily strive to promote employees' perceptions of organizational trust. Based on the finding that the COVID-19 pandemic affects the relationship between organizational trust and job satisfaction, it was suggested that it would be beneficial to take facilitative measures to regulate organizational life in order to normalize the new business life after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Organizational trust, job satisfaction, job satisfaction, meta-analysis

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Introduction

Organizations wishing to be successful should take measures to eliminate the negative factors that may affect the performance of their employees and to increase their motivation. Arguably, employees' perceptions and levels of commitment towards their organizations are the most important determinants of achieving organizational goals. The most important one of these perceptions toward the organization is the concept of trust. As many studies in the literature demonstrate (Altaş and Kuzu, 2013; Büte, 2011; Turhan, Köprülü, and Helvacı, 2018; Yorulmaz and Karabacak, 2020), employees' feelings of trust towards their organizations and their performance are closely related. According to Lewicki, McAllister, and Bies (1998), the relationship between the concept of trust and employee performance is especially important in comparing the success of competing organizations. In other words, organizations seeking to increase their power of competition should have employees who trust each other (Demircan and Ceylan, 2003; Memduhoğlu and Zengin, 2011). As stated by Mishra and Morrissey (1990), this environment of trust provides advantages to organizations for the development of positive processes like an advanced communication network, openness, deconfliction, emotional unity, belief in success, and openness to criticism. In addition, the trust built in the organizational environment represents the employees' acting in good faith, being honest with each other, and believing that their colleagues will not cheat on them even if an opportunity appears. For this reason, in organizations with intense communication processes, the sense of trust constitutes the focus of organizational interaction (Cummings and Bromiley, 1996). On the other hand, the concept of trust represents a wider framework that is not to be restricted only to employee relationships. An important impact on the formation of organizational trust is based on the interaction between employees and administrators. According to Kim and Mauborgne (1993), one of the factors that constitute trust in an organization is employees' faith in their administrators. Therefore, it can be argued that there is a very close relationship between employees' feelings of trust towards themselves, their administrators, and their colleagues and achieving the organizational goals (Asunakutlu, 2002). Reason for this is that in an organizational environment with a high perception of organizational trust, helpfulness among employees increases, and thus organizational effectiveness is achieved by improving the efficacy of individuals (Robbins and Judge, 2013).

Many studies find that collective action increases and employee performance increase in organizations where employees have high levels of trust (Bryk and Schneider, 1996; Kahveci and Demirtaş, 2014; Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000; Tschannen-Moran, 2001). On the other hand, a high level of employee trust in the organization reduces the risk of conflict within the organization (Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999). This is because when employees' trust in the organization increases, their belief that the commitments made by other members will also be fulfilled increases (Gilberg and Tang, 1998). Therefore, it can be said that creating a trusting environment in organizations is the most important factor in developing positive organizational behaviors such as employee's performance (Büte, 2011), satisfaction (Kotaoğlu, 2019), motivation (Akpolat and Oğuz, 2022), and job satisfaction (İşcan and Sayın, 2010).

One of the most important factors in achieving organizational goals depends on the job satisfaction of employees (Yousef, 1998). Pursuant to the historical development processes, management theories have determined the factors that enable employees to be satisfied at work in different ways. Under classical management theory, employees' job satisfaction can only be achieved through monetary rewards. The neoclassical theory of management emphasizes the

importance of quality work and social rewards for job satisfaction. On the other hand, the modern theory of management argues that people's expectations and what they get from work are crucial for job satisfaction (Bateman and Snell, 2016). Therefore, according to the most contemporary researchers, job satisfaction is the emotional reaction of employees to their jobs (Dikmen, 1995). As a result of this emotional response, a number of positive managerial and behavioral outcomes occur in organizations (Sevimli and İşcan, 2005). Employees who are satisfied with their jobs have positive feelings about their jobs, they feel pleasure, and think they are in a happy working environment (Başaran, 2008; Cranny, Smith, and Stone, 1992; Robbins, 2005). Determining the level of organizational trust allows conclusions to be drawn about employees' job satisfaction (Zeffane and Connell, 2003), and administrators of organizations which have productive and satisfied employees try to build greater trust (Reina and Reina, 2006). In this context, arguably the concepts of organizational trust and job satisfaction contribute to the development of organizations through a reciprocal relationship. Based on this point of view, a meta-analysis study exploring the relationship between organizational trust and job satisfaction is considered important in order to gather many studies from the literature and reach a common conclusion. Furthermore, the fact that no meta-analysis in the literature gathers studies investigating the relationship between organizational trust and job satisfaction in Turkey is considered important for the study's originality. In this context, the study aims to investigate, through meta-analysis, the relationship between organizational trust and job satisfaction. Within this general objective, an in-depth analysis is sought by determining criteria such as the COVID-19 pandemic process, which affects organizational life as it does all areas of human life and the differentiation of employees' business fields.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to rapid and profound changes in organizational processes. For example, production was halted in many companies, and educational processes in schools were conducted distantly. Therefore, the process of the COVID-19 pandemic was predicted to have affected the relationships between variables. In addition, another variable to examine the relationship between organizational trust and employees' job satisfaction was identified by holding separate educational organizations, whose output is human and where intense interpersonal relationships are experienced, from organizations in other work sectors, including manufacturing and services. In line with the above objectives, the study sought answers to the following questions:

- What is the overall effect size of the relationship between organizational trust and job satisfaction?
- Does the relationship between organizational trust and job satisfaction differ significantly by the pandemic process?
- Does the relationship between organizational trust and job satisfaction differ significantly by the field of the study?

Method

Research Model

This study used the meta-analysis method to investigate the relationship between organizational trust and job satisfaction. Meta-analysis means the combination of analyses or a 'meta' analysis. Statistically, 'meta-analysis' is the analysis conducted to reach a general conclusion by combining the results of many different studies (Dinçer, 2022). According to Wolf (1986), 'meta-analysis' is a statistical process in which the results of several separate studies are combined and reinterpreted. Glass (1976) defines this process as 'analysis of analyses.'

Study Group-Universe/Sample

Data for the study were obtained by searching for the keywords “organizational trust,” “job satisfaction,” and “occupational satisfaction” in the databases of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) National Theses Center, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate. In addition, studies with a qualitative research design were excluded from the search. The following criteria were established to determine which studies should be included in the study:

- The presence of a correlation coefficient expressing the relationship between organizational trust and job satisfaction in the study
- The study should be published in the last 25 years
- Indication of the study field from which the study data originate
- Inclusion of the study sample in the population of Turkey
- The study should be an article, a master’s thesis, or a doctoral dissertation

The PRISMA flow diagram describing the study selection process in accordance with these criteria is shown in Figure 1 (Liberati et al., 2009):

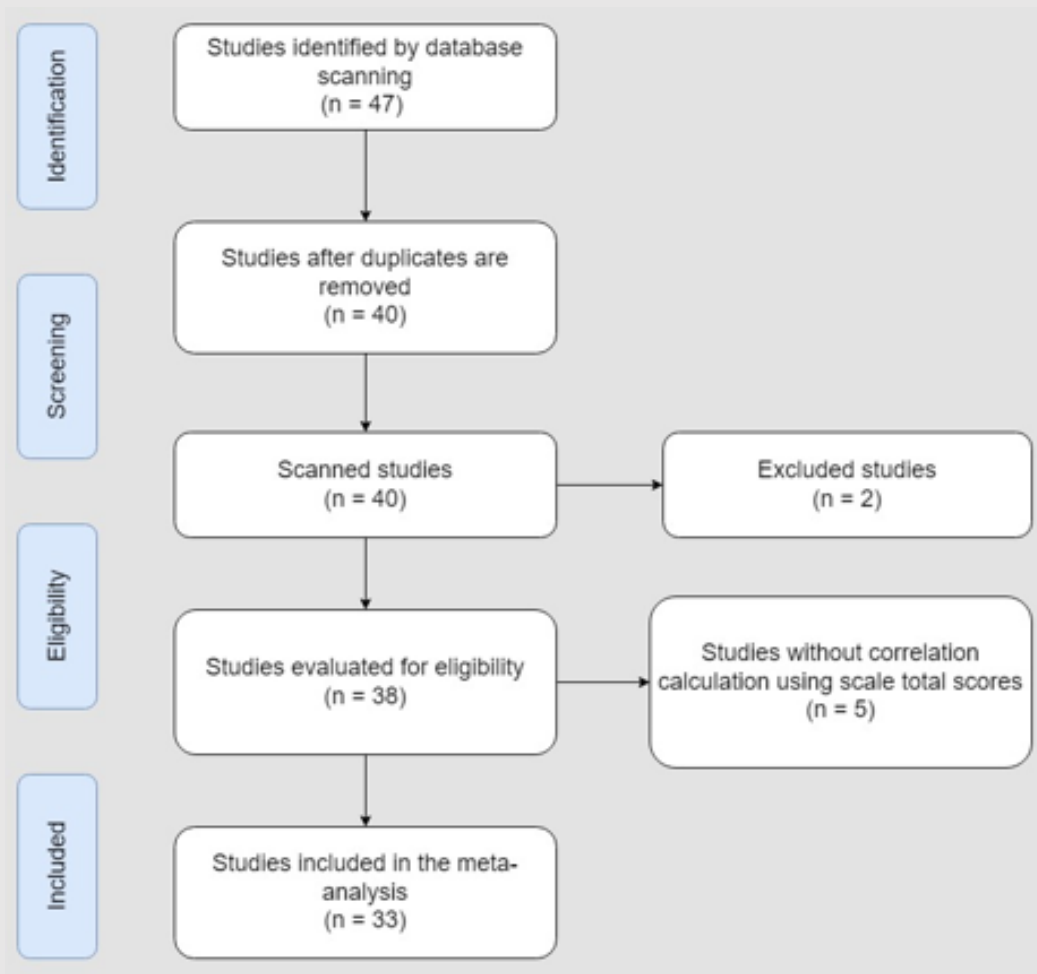


Figure 1. Study selection diagram

As a result of the research conducted under established criteria, it was determined that 33 studies could be included in the meta-analysis study (Appendix 1).

Data Analysis

Firstly, a coding form was created for the analysis of the 33 studies included in the meta-analysis. Statistical data on the publication years of the studies, the study fields in which the studies were conducted, and the correlation results were entered into this form. The fields of study were divided into two categories: "education" and "other." The publication years of the studies were divided into two groups: before and after 2020, the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, and the cause of the greatest change in the world order in recent history. In addition, correlation coefficients were used to calculate the effect sizes of the studies. According to Cohen (1988), the criteria that can be used in studies that use correlation in calculating effect size were classified as low ($=0.10$), medium (between $=0.30$ and 0.50), and high ($=0.50$). To ensure the reliability of the resulting effect sizes, the publication bias of the studies included in the study was examined. The results of the funnel plot, the Egger's linear regression test ($p > 0.05$), and the Begg and Mazumdar's rank correlation test ($p > 0.05$) were examined for publication bias.

Results

Analyses conducted as part of the research examined the results of publication bias and then the heterogeneity test. Meta-analysis studies which examine the results of publication bias of the studies included in the research to determine if the effect sizes are statistically reliable and valid. This is because a high degree of publication bias in a study can affect the average effect size and cause it to reach a higher statistical value than it should. In the most general sense, publication bias is defined as the tendency to publish positive and statistically significant studies over negative and statistically insignificant studies (Borenstein et al., 2013). In other words, publication bias is defined as the tendency to present statistically significant results compared to insignificant and null results (Petiti, 2000). The first outcome examined in relation to the publication bias of the studies included in the study is the funnel plot in Figure 2.

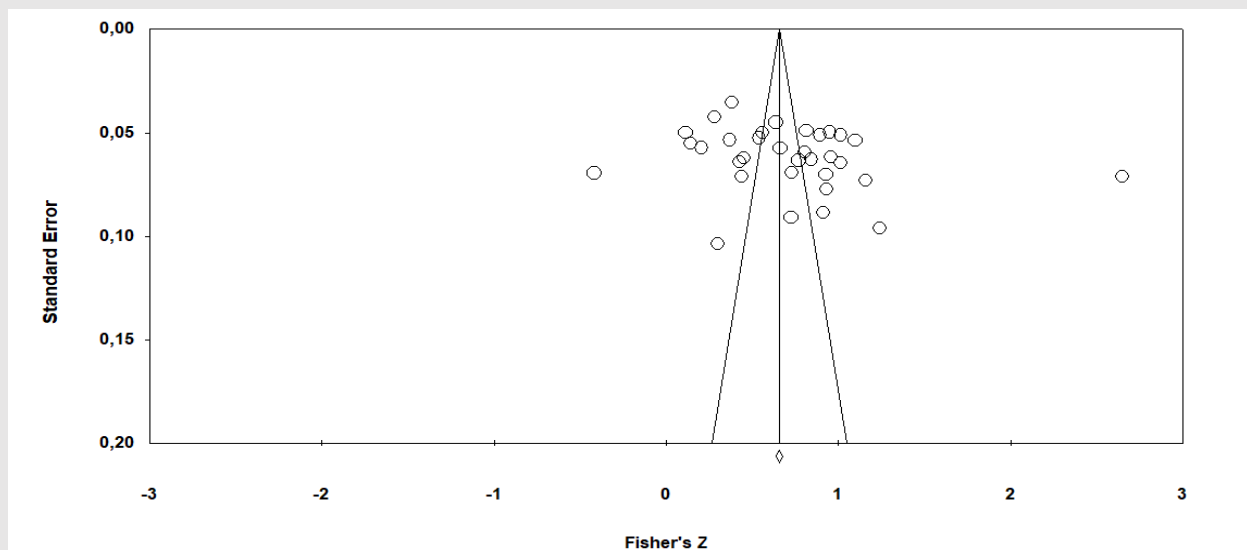


Figure 2. Funnel plot

The circle symbols in funnel plots should have a symmetrical appearance (Sterne, Becker, and Egger, 2005). In other words, the distribution of circle symbols should not have an asymmetrical appearance caused by clustering on one side (Cooper, Hedges, and Valentin, 2009). Accordingly, it can be said that the funnel plot in Figure 2 indicates that there is no publication bias in the study. Another finding related to publication bias is that the results of the Egger's linear regression test ($p = 0.10927$, $p > 0.05$) and the Begg and Mazumdar's rank correlation test ($p = 0.20389$, $p > 0.05$) were not significant, which are further indicators of the absence of publication bias. After determining that there was no publication bias in the studies included in the study, the heterogeneity test results of the study were examined.

Table 1. Heterogeneity test results

df	Q value	I ²	p
32	1883.555	98.301	.000

Depending on the results of the heterogeneity test in Table 1, the p-value is statistically significant. According to Şen and Yıldırım (2020), the Cochran Q statistic expresses the significant heterogeneous distribution of the effect size values of the studies involved in the meta-analysis, while the I² value is a statistical method that can be tested as a complement to the Q statistic. Accordingly, it can be said that the distribution of the effect size is heterogeneous, as the Q value is significantly larger than the value of about 45,000 ($Q = 1883.555$), which corresponds to 32 degrees of freedom in the chi-square table. The fact that the I² value, another value that can be used to determine heterogeneity, is 98.301 is another result that indicates that the study is heterogeneous. In the ongoing statistical studies, the random effects model in Table 2 was used to determine the effect size of the study. According to Field and Gillett (2010), using the random effects model is a more appropriate approach for psychology-based studies.

Table 2. Effect size of the study

Effect Size	Standard Error	95% Confidence Interval		p
		Lower Limit	Upper Limit	
0.611	.055	0.507	0.698	.000

Examination of Table 2 shows that the effect size of the study is 0.611 and is significant. While the lower limit of the effect size at the 95% confidence interval was 0.507, the upper limit was found to be 0.698. Given these statistical values, it can be said that there is a high degree of positive relationship between organizational trust and employees' job satisfaction (Sen and Yldrm, 2020). To determine the distribution of the study around the mean effect size, the forest plot in Figure 3 was examined.

Meta Analysis

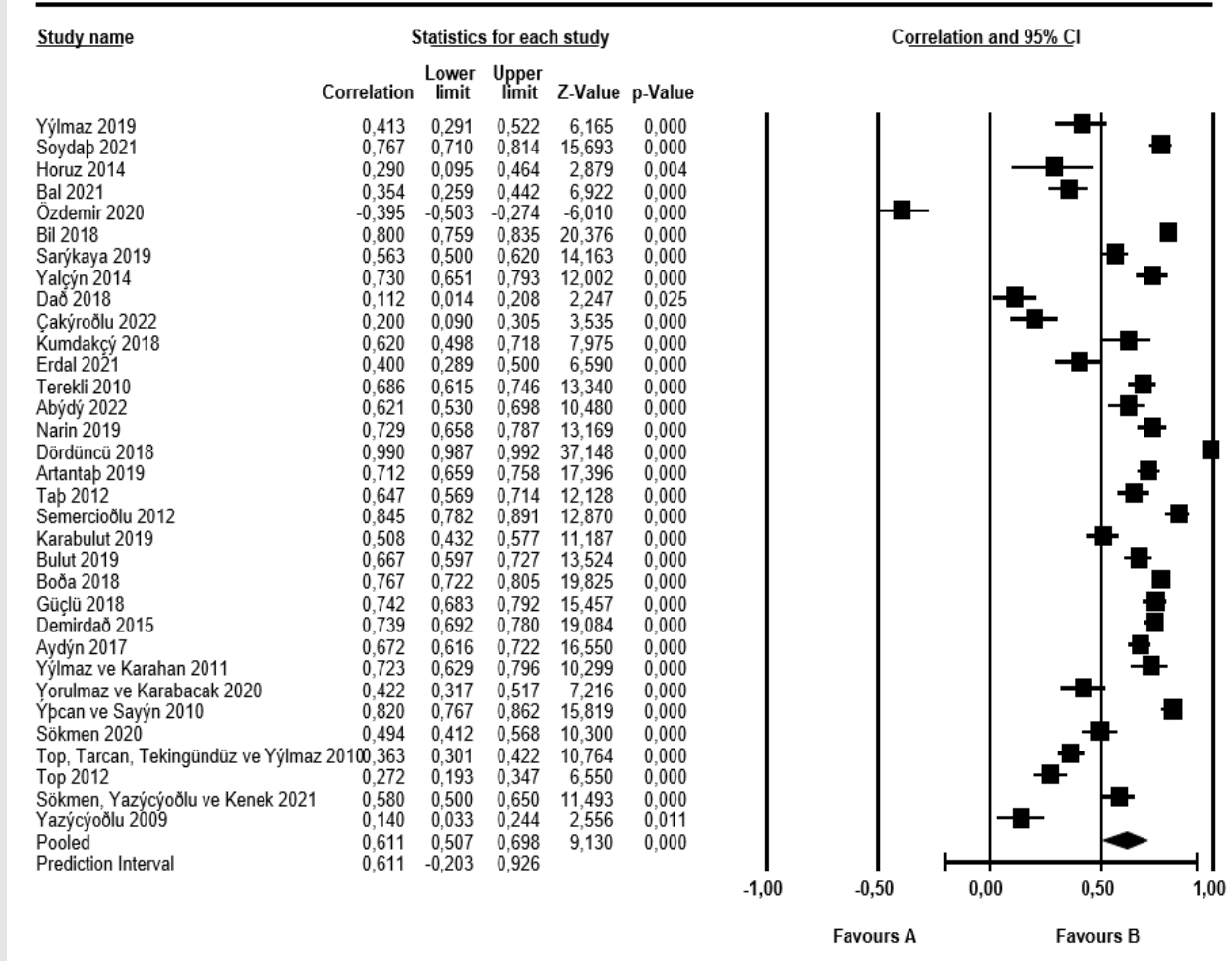


Figure 3. Forest Plot

When the forest plot is examined in Figure 3, it is clear that the diamond symbol at the bottom of the plot expresses the overall effect size of the study. The filled square symbols in the forest plot represent the individual effect size of each study. Accordingly, when the square symbols on the forest plot are examined, it is observed that many studies have effect sizes close to the overall effect size. The study by Dağ (2018) has the lowest effect size among them.

The study examined the variability of the relationships between the variables depending on some factors. Accordingly, the first factor considered was the pandemic process, which has been the most influential situation worldwide in recent times. The analyses conducted to determine the differentiation of the relationship between organizational trust and job satisfaction before and after the pandemic process are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Effect sizes of studies according to pre- and post-pandemic processes

Pandemic Process	Number	Effect Size	95% Confidence Interval		Q _B	p
			Lower Limit	Upper Limit		
Pre-pandemic (Before 2020)	24	0.812	0.629	0.996	5,894	.015
Post-Pandemic (2020 and later)	9	0.442	0.206	0.678		

As can be seen in Table 3, the pandemic process, which has a large global impact, was divided into two groups, namely pre-pandemic and post-pandemic publications from 2020 onward. Analysis shows the effect sizes of the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic studies differ significantly from each other ($p = .015$). Accordingly, the effect size of the pre-pandemic publications was found 0.812, while the effect size of the post-pandemic publications was 0.442. In this case, it can be said that the COVID-19 pandemic process, which involves significant changes in business life, has a significant impact on the relationship between employees' perceptions of trust towards their organizations and their job satisfaction.

Another factor thought to affect the differentiation of relationships between variables in the study is the field of the study. The 33 studies included in the study were divided into two groups: 'education,' where interpersonal relationships are very intense, and 'other,' which includes other business sectors such as health, tourism, and banking. The effect sizes of the groups are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Effect sizes of studies by study field

Study Field	Number	Effect Size	95% Confidence Interval		Q _B	p
			Lower Limit	Upper Limit		
Education	10	0.469	0.190	0.748	4.218	.04
Other	23	0.816	0.637	0.995		

In accordance with table 4, the effect sizes of the studies from the field of education and the studies from the field of 'other' differ significantly ($p = .04$). The effect size of 10 studies from the field of education is 0.469, and the effect size of 23 studies from the field of 'other' is 0.816. Accordingly, it can be said that the fact that employees work in educational institutions or in 'other' fields is a significant variable in the relationship between organizational trust and job satisfaction.

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

The results of the research, which aimed to show the relationship between employees' perception of organizational trust and the level of job satisfaction using the meta-analysis method, revealed that the effect size between organizational trust and employees' job satisfaction was high (Cohen, 1988). Thus, it can be said that there is a high correlation between employees' perceived trust in their organization and their job satisfaction. Accordingly, it can be said that employees' organizational trust levels are an important variable in their job satisfaction. The literature finds that there is a high effect size between the variables of organizational trust and organizational justice, which can be expressed as beneficial organizational behavior for organizations such as job satisfaction, and a medium effect size between organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior (Yorulmaz, Püsküllüoğlu, Çolak and Altınkur, 2021). In this context, it can be said that the perception of organizational trust is a variable that has a significant influence on the emergence of positive organizational behavior.

Another finding of the study is that the relationship between employees' perceived trust in the organization and job satisfaction changed after the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis shows that the pandemic process negatively affected the relationship between employees' perceived trust in the organization and job satisfaction. It was found that the effect size of studies published before the COVID-19 pandemic was high whereas the effect size of studies published after the pandemic was medium. In other words, based on this result, it can be said that factors that weaken the relationship between organizational trust and job satisfaction occurred after the pandemic, which profoundly affected people's lives. The concept of organizational trust, which expresses a general perception for the organization and its administrators (Nyhan and Marlowe, 1997), provides a general framework that influences the organization with its all processes (Fukuyama, 2005). The problems that began with the pandemic COVID-19 also profoundly shook the quality of employees' working lives by affecting their indicators of healthy living (Güven, 2021). According to Morgeson, Mitchell, and Liu (2015), negative and sudden developments can create crisis situations for organizations as they make it difficult for routine processes to function. In this context, it can be said that it is a normal outcome that the relationship between organizational trust (Mishra and Morrissey, 1990), which is an important variable for the development of positive processes such as organizational communication and de-conflict, and the concept of job satisfaction (Luthans, 1995), which has an intense emotional aspect, is negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic process. This is because the COVID-19 pandemic process has inevitably changed the way organizations work, especially organizational relationships (Köroğlu and Semerciöz, 2022).

Another study finding is that the relationship between organizational trust and job satisfaction varies across study fields. Accordingly, the effect size of the relationship between the perception of trust in the organization and the job satisfaction of employees in educational institutions is medium. In contrast, the effect size of the relationship between the perception of trust in the organization and the job satisfaction of employees in study fields other than education is high. From this point of view, it can be said that various factors based on interpersonal communication processes influence the relationship between employees' feelings of trust towards their organizations and their job satisfaction in educational organizations where human relations are intense. According to Güçlü (2017), communication processes have an important impact on the organization's ability to achieve its goals, ensure the flow of information, and manage decision-making processes effectively. Especially when considering the intensive relationship processes of educational organizations with their environment (Gürses, 2006), it can be said that more factors

influence variables in educational organizations than in other organizations. Perhaps, the most obvious difference between other fields and educational organizations is that the input and output of educational organizations are people. In other fields of work, the effort to produce a product is replaced in educational organizations by the training of qualified people. In this respect, the relationships between variables in educational organizations are unique. As Bolat (1996) states, education is a communicative activity, and its healthy implementation depends on the realization of cooperation based on healthy communication.

Consequently, it can be said that organizational trust and employees' job satisfaction are two closely related variables. Accordingly, it can be assumed that people who work in organizations where organizational trust prevails develop a better perception of job satisfaction, which is an important variable for both work and family life. In other words, based on the correlation, it can be predicted that individuals whose job satisfaction improve will also improve their perception of organizational trust. Below are suggestions based on the results of the study:

- With reference to the findings of the study, organizational trust has an important influence on developing positive organizational behaviors. Accordingly, it can be suggested that administrators who want to develop positive organizational behaviors in their organizations should try to improve their employees' perception of organizational trust.
- Another finding of the research is that the pandemic process negatively affects the relationship between organizational trust and job satisfaction. To eliminate this negative effect, personnel support programs developed in accordance with the needs of the employees can be used.
- Based on the study results, the relationship between the organizational trust perception and the job satisfaction of employees working in educational institutions is lower than that of employees in other sectors. It can be said that this situation is due to the intense interpersonal relationships in educational institutions, where the input and output are human, and the communication processes are intense as well. In order to uncover this situation, researchers are advised to conduct qualitative research to deeply investigate the factors that influence job satisfaction and organizational trust in educational institutions.

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