

# THE MODERATING ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL ON THE RELATION OF PERSON-JOB FIT TO WORK ENGAGEMENT: A RESEARCH ON PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYEES\*

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## Abstract

In this study, it was aimed to investigate the association between person-job fit and work engagement by taking into consideration the moderating role of psychological capital. The data was collected by applying a survey to the employees who are working in private sector in Istanbul to accurately evaluate the levels of psychological capital, person-job fit and work commitment characteristics of them. Moreover, demographic characteristics such as age, gender, marital status, tenure, education level, and total work experience were considered. The sample of this research was composed of 209 employees. According to research findings, it has been found that person- job fit increases work engagement and psychological capital could not play a moderator role in this relationship. However, psychological capital influences positively work engagement and person-job fit separately.

**Keywords:** Psychological Capital, Positive Psychology, Person-Job Fit, Work Engagement



## KİŞİ-İŞ UYUMUNUN İŞE ADANMIŞLIK ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİNDE PSİKOLOJİK SERMAYENİN DÜZENLEYİCİ ROLÜ: ÖZEL SEKTÖR ÇALIŞANLARI ÜZERİNDE BİR ARAŞTIRMA

### Öz

Bu çalışma, kişi-iş uyumunun işe adanmışlık üzerindeki rolünü, psikolojik sermayenin düzenleyici değişken olarak etkisi ile birlikte araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışanların psikolojik sermaye, kişi-iş uyumu ve işe adanmışlık seviyelerini doğru belirlemek amacıyla İstanbul'da özel sektör çalışanlarına anketler uygulanarak veri toplanmıştır. Buna ilaveten, cinsiyet, kıdem, yaş, medeni hal, eğitim seviyesi, toplam iş deneyimi gibi demografik değişkenler de göz önünde bulundurulmuştur. 209 çalışan bu araştırmanın örneklem grubunu oluşturmaktadır. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre kişi-iş uyumunun işe adanmışlığı arttırdığı ve psikolojik sermayenin bu ilişkide düzenleyici değişken görevi oynamadığı bulunmuştur. Ancak, psikolojik

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sermaye işe adanmışlığı ve kişi-iş uyumu üzerinde ayrı olarak pozitif olarak etkileri bulunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Psikolojik Sermaye, Pozitif Psikoloji, Kişi-İş Uyumu, İşe Adanmışlık



## Introduction

Considering today's growing and competitive economic conditions, human capital became a remarkable asset for organizations because organizations need a human capital to continue their activities and keep their sustainability a competitive market. Also, human capital as a resource is not easy to copy by rivals. Therefore, companies are now committed to investing in human resources by provide on-going development. So, they care the employee's strength. From this point, focusing on the strong sides of employees allows to consider positive organizational behavior and more frequently psychological capital (PsyCap) in the most recent period. PsyCap focuses on the strong capacities of employees. As these positive capacities of employees influence work-related results positively, it's an important term for both organizations and individuals. "It is possible to measure, improve and manage these kinds of capacities efficiently" (Luthans, 2002, p.59). It enables to obtain a strong workforce which is important for organizations to achieve their desired results. Having a positive capabilities are the main focus of PsyCap; self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience; to achieve positive work-related results.

Another variable in this study is work engagement which refers to a higher level of energy and motivation, involvement and identification within a job. (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). But, this term cares how employees enthusiastically do their tasks. So, it is required to employ people who are dynamic, dedicated and fully concentrated in work considering to its positive results.

The last variable is the person-job fit. It is not easy to find the right profiles for a specific job role, educate them regarding the norms of the companies. Considering person-job fit has a positive effect on organizations' goals like performance, satisfaction, low turnover, it's important variable for organizational behavior filed.

The aim of the study is to evaluate the moderating effect of PsyCap on the relation of person-job fit to work engagement. Meanwhile, work engagement is considered within its dimensions, vigor, dedication and absorption to understand how person-fit concept affect all of these three dimensions and how PsyCap moderate this relation. The advantage of this information is to support organizations for human- resource methods development and achieve success, sustainability in the competitive business environment.

Most of the studies in the organizational behavior literature have focused on the antecedents of PsyCap or the positive results such as job performance, satisfaction, commitment or the link with work engagement or person-job fit separately. There are a small number of researches studying on the moderator role of PsyCap. In order to fill gaps in the literature, the aim of the study is to evaluate the moderating effect of PsyCap on person-job fit and work engagement relationship by considering employees in the private sector. The advantage of this knowledge is to support organizations for human-resource interventions which enable the development of employees' psychological resources through

applicable training programs. Hence, the result of the research could be used to plan effective training to develop psychological skills, increase the level of work engagement and person-job fit. As a result, organizations will have a chance to be more successful in the competitive business environment.

## **A. WORK ENGAGEMENT**

Work engagement is an important concept which considers employees' well-being and it has recently received considerable attention. According to Kahn (1990) who is the first theoretician, work engagement refers people who are engaged within physically, cognitively and emotionally find an energy to finalize their work and they find their work meaningful, safe and available. Maslach and Leiter (1997) identified work engagement as a high level of energy for job, involvement enthusiastically and strong identification with it to attain goals. Schaufeli et al. (2002) defined this term as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. From these definitions, it's clear that work engagement has an important contribution for organizations because they need energetic, dedicated and engaged employees to achieve their goals. Work engagement consists of these three components. Vigor means eagerness for work; dedication refers a strong involvement; absorption is characterized by having a high concentration and having difficulties to disconnect oneself from work. From this point, these three components of work engagement draw a hard-working employee profile and there are positive results on organizational level such as performance, low turnover intention, organizational commitment. Considering, having engaged employees is a competitive advantage in business world, this term is important for organizations and individuals.

There are different themes which seem similar or opposite of work engagement. First theme is burnout. According to Maslach and Leiter (1997), "burnout is the opposite of engagement and named burnout as a lack of engagement with the job". From this definition, burnout refers to total lack of energy, involvement and high concentration in the workplace. So, the main characteristics of burnout are "exhaustion (lack of energy), cynicism (a negative attitude towards his/her own work)".

Another concept is workaholism. But work engagement doesn't mean workaholism. Workaholics spend most of their time in office to perform their tasks and they are hardworking and obsessed within their work. It's not easy to detract their attention from work. There is not any enthusiasm or willingness during their performance. Instead of this, there is an exaggeration which impacts negatively the happiness, the interpersonal and social skills of employees (Bakker, Demerouti & Burke, 2009). However, work engagement refers to high energy, efficacy is coming from the willingness of workers.

On the other hand, job embeddedness refers to the work-oriented positive state of mind as work engagement. But, work engagement is about the nature of work, but the other one is about the organization and the individual's work position (Halbesleben & Wheler, 2008).

Job involvement and work engagement are considered as similar forms but they are different from each other in terms of well-being dimension. Because, there is a relation between work engagement and individual's well-being, but job involvement is not any relation with it.

## **B. PERSON-JOB FIT**

Person-job fit (P-J fit) is placed in this study as a third variable. As it's mentioned above, human capital is important asset for organizations. Therefore, the relationship between an employee and job is significant for the organizations sustainability and individual's health. Person-job fit is the predictive factor of well-being, (Bui, Zeng & Higgs, 2017). Employees should satisfy while they're performing their tasks in order to keep their well-being. From this point, it may conclude that recruitment process is crucial since it focuses to find right candidates for the correspondent role. So, the needs or the skills of an employee should be matched with the requirements of a job reciprocally in order obtain suitable profile. So, the focus of this fit concept comes from the harmony between a human and tasks in terms of skills, abilities, needs and job requirements. Kristof-Brown et al (2005) described P-J fit as "the relationship between a person's characteristics and those of the job or tasks which are performed at work" (p. 284). Brkich et al (2002) defined person-job fit as the degree to which an individual's preferences, knowledge, activities, skills, needs, and values match the job requirements. Edwards (1991) identify this term as a matching between an employee's personality, capacities and job needs. According to Edwards (1991), there are two other concepts of P-J fit which are based on Demands-Abilities fit (D-A fit) and needs-supplies fit (N-S fit). The fit between job related demands and the capabilities of an employee is known as D-A. If this matching occurs between needs of an employee and the offered job attributes then it is known as N-S fit. This fit concept has some consequences for organizations like performance, well-being, satisfaction, organizational commitment and resignation intention turnover (Edwards, 1991; Saks & Ashforth, 1997, 2002).

### C. PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL

There are many explanations about psychological capital (PsyCap) in the current literature. According to Luthans, PsyCap is a positive psychological state of development an individual. The characteristics of PsyCap are having a self-confidence (self-efficacy) or sufficient effort to deal with challenges a succeed at the end, having a positive mind (optimism) for the future and current success; being diligent towards goals, and using paths to achieve goals (hope) if necessary; and having a capacity to recover (resiliency) or bounce back to succeed (Luthans, 2002a, b; Luthans et al., 2007).

Another definition is made by Youssef and Luthans (2004). According to them, PsyCap moves beyond who you are and considers who you are becoming. So, it is the conversion from the current self to the further self. In order to become the perfect possible self is required for developing the current actual self. PsyCap is a positive and developmental state of an employee and it's measurable, have a positive contribution to work related outcomes, it's a state like instead of trait like and it opens to development by certain training programs. PsyCap is characterized by some components like self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resiliency. Self- efficacy refers the positive belief or confidence to put required effort to succeed for specific tasks (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007). Optimism is defined as a favorable attitude related to succeeding now and in the future. (Carver and Scheier, 2002). Hope is defined as a positive motivational state by Snyder et al (1991). It is composed of the following two components: agency (will-power and energy to achieve goals); pathways (way-power to meet goals). (Snyder et al., 1996). Resiliency is related to positive adaptation during an important "adversity or risk conditions" (Masten & Reed, 2002, p. 75). It refers a capability to bounce back from adverse events,

uncertainty or extremely positive events as well.

PsyCap is taken into account as a high order construct in this study (Avey *et al.*, 2011). It is considered that as a higher-order core construct has a greater effect on organizational outcome such as a job satisfaction, job performance, favorable work attitudes, organizational citizenship behavior.

#### **D. HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

Firstly, it's hypothesized that person-job fit is positively related to work engagement. When individuals fit with their job, they feel more meaningfulness and become more engaged and perform their tasks better. There're some theories which support that person-job fit is a strong predictor of work engagement over time. Both Self-determination theory (Deci, Ryan & Williams, 1996) and JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker *et al.*, 2014); Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 2002) are three theories which can be showed as the reference of this relationship. Self-determination suggests individuals who are fitted with their job in accordance with autonomy, competence, and relatedness will have a higher level of work engagement (Hakanen *et al.*, 2006).

JD-R model defines a balance between job demands and job resources. According to Conservation of Resources theory, it's important to gain, protect, build resources to overcome any kind of adverse cases. So, fit is important resource. Once this fit is built, employees will be strong, energetic, motivated and ready to spend their energy, enthusiasm for their work. Another support is from "build and broaden theory". This theory is proposed by Barbara Fredrickson. According to Fredrickson, 1998 "Broaden-and-build theory is notable for drawing explicit attention to the positive and showing that insights result when we do something more than simply look at the absence of the negative." This theory states that experiencing frequently positive emotions allow broaden employees' attention. So, positive feelings nourish us and allow us to build 'resources'. From this point, it's understood that positive emotions widen individuals' attention, awareness and the way of thinking. Those broadened approaches allow them to build their resources. First hypothesis of the study is stated as follows:

H<sub>1a</sub>: Employees in organizations with higher person-job fit will have a higher level of vigor.

H<sub>1b</sub>: Employees in organizations with higher person-job fit will have a higher level of dedication.

H<sub>1c</sub>: Employees in organizations with a higher level of person-job fit will have a higher level of absorption.

Second hypothesis of the study is the moderator role of PsyCap on the relationship between person-job fit to work engagement. Since there is not any specific study which highlight the moderating role of PsyCap on the interaction between person-job fit to work engagement, the result of this hypothesis will fill in the gap in the literature. However, there are some researches which are performed to show PsyCap's moderator influence on such variables. For example, Fang (2008) stated that PsyCap acted a moderating role in the relationship between tax complexity, satisfaction, and performance. According to Xanthopoulou *et al.* (2007), "employees who have sufficient job resources will remain engaged in their work". Xanthopoulou *et al.* (2007) extended his argument and suggested that personal resources have a moderating role on the relationship between job resources and work engagement.

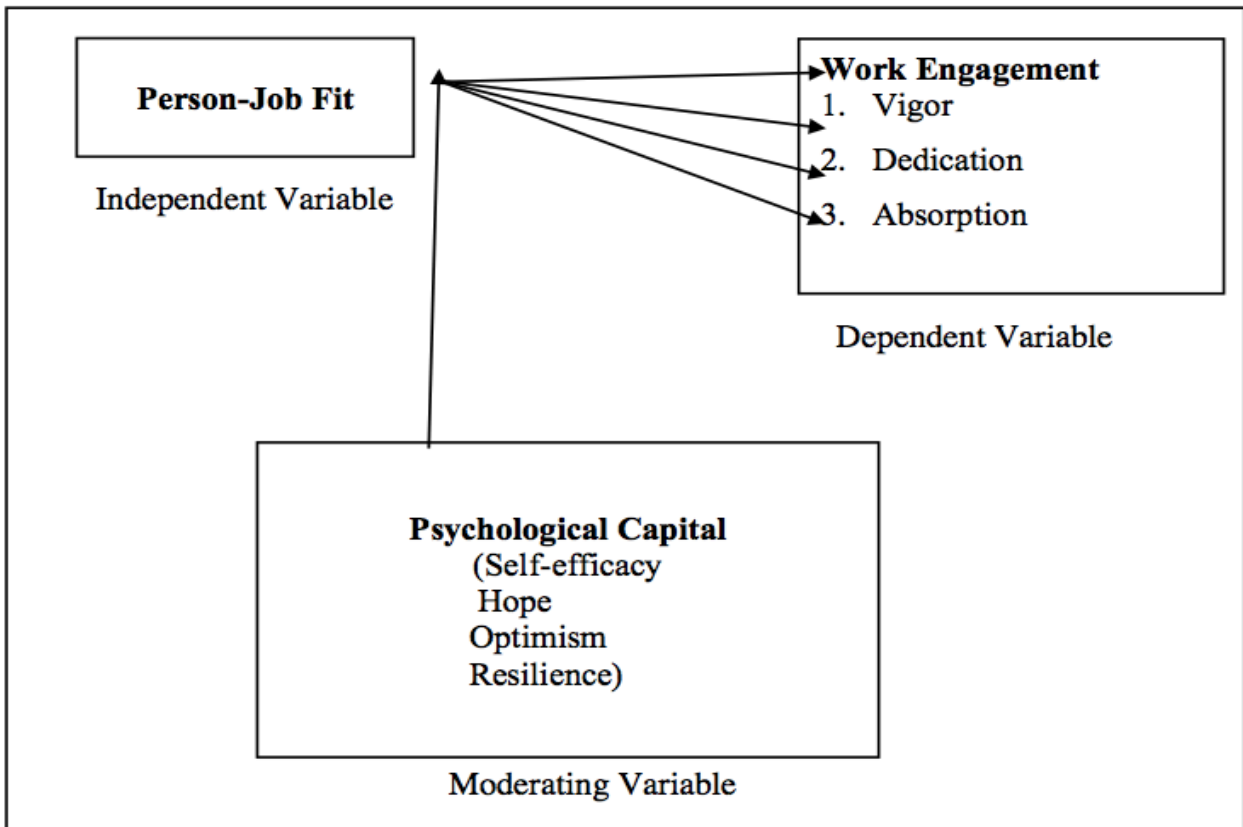
Second hypothesis of the study is stated as follows:

H<sub>2a</sub>: The relationship between person-job fit and vigor is moderated by PsyCap.

H<sub>2b</sub>: The relationship between person-job fit and dedication is moderated by PsyCap.

H<sub>2c</sub>: The relationship between person-job fit and absorption is moderated by PsyCap.

**Figure 1.** The proposed research model



## E. METHOD

### 1. Sample and Procedure

The sample of the study consists of 209 white-collar, full-time, private sector employees. Convenience sampling method is applied once survey is conducted. 65.6% of the employees are women and 34.4% are men. While 55.5% of the employees were singles, 41.6% of them were married.

### 2. Measures

#### a. Psychological Capital Scale

The scale consists of 24 items which is developed by Luthans, Avolio, et al (2007). PsyCap scale has been adapted to Turkish. (Erkuş & Afacan Fındıklı, 2010; Çetin & Basım, 2012; Erkmén & Esen, 2013).

Six-level Likert-type is used and participants responded to the psychological capital through a six- scale ranging from "I definitely agree" to "I definitely do not agree". Reliability, validity analysis for the sample was conducted in SPSS. PsyCap Cronbach's alpha range from 0.850 to 0.892. Accordingly, this scale is highly reliable. According to the results for confirmatory analysis, RMSEA= 0.068, CFI=0.098 and NFI=0,96. It shows that our data have a good fit and our model is statistically significant and valid.

**b. Work Engagement Scale**

Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) was developed by Schaufeli, Salanova, González- Romá and Bakker (2002). This scale was used to measure work engagement which had the following three dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption. There are 17 items for this scale. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of Person Job Fit scale range from 0.855 to 0.917. Accordingly, this scale is highly reliable. According to the results for confirmatory analysis, RMSEA=0.083, CFI=0.97 and NFI=0.96. It shows that our data have a good fit and our model is statistically significant and valid.

**c. Person-Job Fit Scale**

Person-job fit is developed by Brkich, Jeffs, and Carless (2002). The Global Self-Report Measure of Person-Job Fit consists of 9 questions. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of Person Job Fit scale are 0.914. Accordingly, this scale is highly reliable. According to the results for confirmatory analysis, RMSEA=0.077, CFI=0.97 and NFI=0.95. It shows that our data have a good fit and our model is statistically significant and valid.

**F. FINDINGS**

Correlation Analysis (non-parametric) was used for the evaluation of the correlations between the qualitative variables. A p value of <0.05 was considered to be statistically significant. Positive correlation exists between the below variables. But, there is a strong correlation between PsyCap and vigor compared to others. So, first hypotheses-H1a, H1b, H1c- are accepted.

**Table 1.** Correlation Analysis

		Person Job Fit	Psychological Capital	Vigor	Dedication	Absorption
<b>Person Job Fit</b>	r	1.000				
	p	-				
<b>Psychological Capital</b>	r	0.257	1.000			
	p	<0.001**	-			
<b>Vigor</b>	r	0.216	0.618	1.000		
	p	0.002**	<0.001**	-		
<b>Dedication</b>	r	0.184	0.587	0.697	1.000	0.463
	p	0.008**	<0.001**	<0.001**	-	<0.001**
<b>Absorption</b>	r	0.170	0.406	0.587	0.498	1.000
	p	0.014*	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	-

r: Spearman correlation coefficient      \*p<0.05      \*\*p<0.01

For the hypothesis testing, hierarchical moderator regression model is applied. In table 2, the first block of the model was statistically significant and P-J Fit and PsyCap constituting the block accounted for 41.8% of the variance of Vigor score ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $R^2$ : 0.418). The second block obtained with the addition of interaction was statistically significant. P-J Fit and PsyCap constituting the block and their interaction accounted for 42.3% of the variance of Vigor ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $R^2$ : 0.423). But, the change observed at the level of  $R^2$  between two blocks was not significant. ( $R^2$  change:0.005,  $p$ :0.191). So, PsyCap was significant in both of blocks but the interaction added to the second block was not statistically significant.  $p > 0.005$ . Therefore, there is not any moderator effect. So, H2a is rejected.

**Table 2.** Moderation Effect of PsyCap on the relation of person-job fit to vigor

Variables	First Step			Second Step		
	$\beta$	Std.Beta	p	$\beta$	Std.Beta	p
P-J Fit	0.067	0.067	0.233	0.061	0.061	0.273
PsyCap	0.626	0.626	<0.001**	0.642	0.642	<0.001**
P-J Fit*PsyCap				0.059	0.071	0.191
$R^2$	0.418			0.423		
$R^2$ adj.	0.412			0.414		

Vigor: Dependent Variable

Std.Beta: Standardized beta

\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

The first block of the model was statistically significant. P-J Fit and PsyCap constituting the block accounted for 41.9% of the variance of Dedication ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $R^2$ : 0.419) The second block was statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $R^2$ : 0.421). The change observed at the level of  $R^2$  (0.002) between the two blocks was not found to be statistically significant ( $p$ : 0.328). PsyCap was significant in both of blocks but the interaction added to the second block was not statistically significant.  $p > 0.005$ . Therefore, there is not any moderator effect. H2b is rejected.

**Table 3.** Moderation Effect of PsyCap on the relation of person-job fit to dedication

Variables	First Step			Second Step		
	$\beta$	Std.Beta	p	$\beta$	Std.Beta	p
P-J Fit	0.026	0.026	0.637	0.021	0.021	0.705
PsyCap	0.640	0.640	<0.001***	0.652	0.652	<0.001***
P-J Fit*PsyCap				0.044	0.053	0.328
$R^2$	0.419			0.421		
$R^2$ adj.	0.413			0.413		

Dedication: Dependent Variable

Std.Beta: Standardized beta

\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$



The first block of the model was statistically significant. ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $R^2: 0.25$ ). The second block was statistically significant. The interactions accounted for 25.3% of the variance of Absorption ( $p < 0.001$ ). PsyCap was significant both blocks ( $p < 0.001$ ). But the interaction added to the second block was not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, it is not possible to mention a moderator (moderating) effect. H2c is rejected.

**Table 4.** Moderation Effect of PsyCap on the relation of person-job fit to absorption

Variables	First Step			Second Step		
	$\beta$	Std.Beta	p	$\beta$	Std.Beta	p
P-J Fit	0.077	0.077	0.220	0.078	0.078	0.217
PsyCap	0.477	0.477	<0.001***	0.475	0.475	<0.001***
P-J Fit*PsyCap				-0.010	-0.012	0.849
$R^2$	0.253			0.253		
$R^2$ adj.	0.245			0.242		

Absorption: Dependent Variable

Std.Beta: Standardized beta

\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

### Conclusion

The effect of person-job fit on work engagement was studied considering the moderating role of psychological capital through a survey which is applied to 209 white-collar employees. The results are analyzed and the findings are stated by highlighting the similarity and contrariety from the literature.

In the first hypothesis, we estimated that employees with higher person-job fit will have high work engagement. As a result of this analysis, person-job fit has a significant effect on work engagement and its components. This result is consistent with current studies. (Self-determination theory, Deci, Ryan & Williams, 1996; JD-R Model, Bakker & Demerouti, 2007)

The second analysis aimed to show moderating role of PsyCap on the contribution of person-job fit to work engagement. But, a moderating role of PsyCap was not found. However, PsyCap as a higher-order core construct has a direct, positive and significant effect on work engagement. However, this unexpected result is in line with the literature. As a higher-order core construct, PsyCap has a positive impact on work-related outcomes like work engagement (Luthans & Avolio 2014:125- 129; Simons & Buitendach 2013:1). Another non-hypothesized result is a positive interaction between PsyCap and person-job fit. Conservation of Resources theory might be considered as a supporting theory in this interaction. Apart from theory and literature, it'll be useful to highlight managerial implications and theoretical contribution of this study. PsyCap should be considered as a direct, independent variable instead of its moderating role. However, it's different in managerial level. Because, this study shows the importance of human capital factor and its effects on work related goals. Considering today's competitive, challenging and rapidly changing business world, it is important to invest human capital to achieve the long term organizational goals. From this aspect, this study encourages organizations to support their employees' growth, development considering their needs.

This study has some several limitations since it's a cross-sectional study and it's based on self-reported questionnaires with a limited number of participants in Istanbul. Also, there are other potential human psychological strengths beside the above four items such as creativity, forgiveness, humor which have ignored in this study. So, it might be a recommendation for further studies.

### Limitation and Recommendations

Overall, there are some limitations to the study. One of the first limitations is location. Since data is collected in Istanbul, the result of the survey may not fully reflect the entire result of the country. Because there is a difference between east and west side of Turkey in terms of culture, economic and social.

Second limitation is that the survey is conducted to the employees who are just working in private sector. So, it's not known the approach of the other sector employees (i.e.: public sector). As it's stated in Mauno's study (2007) the level of work engagement varies from different sectors. According to the study of Güvenç (2012), public sector employees are more engaged in work rather than employees from the private sector. So, further studies might be applicable to all kind of sectors.

As suggested by Luthans et al (2007), there are some other potential human strengths which may be considered in the research on "positive organizational behavior field", such as creativity, flow, humor, gratitude, forgiveness, and spirituality. It might be given as a third limitation. Future studies can concentrate on these human strengths and how they influence other organizational behaviors.

Finally, this research is about the relationship between person-job fit and work engagement by considering the moderator role of PsyCap. Due to the aim of this research, this study ignores the opposite of work engagement which is burnout. Therefore, it may recommend that further studies may consider the opposite concepts to enrich the finding of the study.

Since the second hypothesis is rejected, further researches can design this research model by considering the mediator role of PsyCap instead of moderator role.



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