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**Mediating Effect of Intrinsic Motivation and Demographic Effects on the Relationship Between Psychological Empowerment and Organizational Cynicism: Insurance Sector Example**

*Psikolojik Güçlendirme ile Örgütsel Sinizm Arasındaki İlişkide İçsel Motivasyonun Aracılık Etkisi ve Demografik Etkiler: Sigortacılık Sektörü Örneği*

**ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study is to examine the mediating effect of intrinsic motivation on the relationship between psychological empowerment and employees' organizational cynicism in the insurance sector. In this context, a survey consisting of verified scales was administered to insurance employees operating in the Central Anatolia region. Out of the 412 valid surveys obtained, it was found that data from 2 surveys did not show normal distribution and were filled out in a manner that affected the other 410 surveys. Following the removal of these 2 unhealthy data points, 410 surveys were included in the analysis. Regression analysis, t-test, and ANOVA tests were utilized in the study. When examining the mediating effect, it was determined that intrinsic motivation did not mediate the effect of psychological empowerment on organizational cynicism ( $p=0.231$ ). There was a statistically significant difference in intrinsic motivation based on gender ( $p=0.025$ ). It was found that the average intrinsic motivation of males (Mean=4.04) was higher than that of females. According to the research findings, organizational cynicism also differed significantly by gender ( $p=0.038$ ), with males having a higher average score compared to females (Mean=2.35). This indicates that males are more prone to organizational cynicism. The study found that intrinsic motivation did not significantly vary by marital status, whereas organizational cynicism varied significantly by marital status ( $p=0.037$ ). It was observed that married individuals were more affected by organizational cynicism (Mean=2.36). Lastly, there were no statistically significant differences in intrinsic motivation or organizational cynicism based on educational level ( $p=0.102$  &  $p=0.629$ ).

**Keywords:** Insurance employees, intrinsic motivation, psychological empowerment, organizational cynicism, mediation effect.

**ÖZ**

Bu çalışmanın amacı sigorta sektöründeki çalışanlar üzerinden psikolojik güçlendirme ile çalışanların örgütsel sinizmleri arasında içsel motivasyonun aracılık etkisini incelemektir. Bu kapsamda İç Anadolu bölgesinde faaliyet gösteren sigorta çalışanlarına hazır ölçeklerden oluşan anket uygulanmıştır. Elde edilen 412 geçerli anketin 2 tanesindeki veriler normal dağılım göstermeyip diğer 410 veriyi etkileyecek nitelikte doldurulmuş olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Araştırma kapsamında sağlıksız 2 verinin çıkarılması ile 410 anket sürece dahil edilmiştir. Araştırma kapsamında regresyon analizi, t-testi ve ANNOVA testlerinden faydalanılmıştır. Aracılık etkisi incelendiğinde psikolojik güçlendirme ile örgütsel sinizm üzerine etkisinde içsel motivasyonun aracılık etkisinin bulunmadığı belirlenmiştir ( $p=0,231$ ). Cinsiyete göre içsel motivasyonun istatistiki açıdan anlamlı şekilde farklılaştığı görülmektedir ( $p=0,025$ ). Erkeklerin içsel motivasyon ortalamalarının (Mean=4,04) kadınların ortalamasından daha yüksek olduğu görülmektedir. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre; örgütsel sinizmin de cinsiyete göre istatistiki açıdan anlamlı şekilde farklılaştığı ( $p=0,38$ ), erkeklerin kadınlara göre daha fazla ortalamaya sahip oldukları görülmektedir (Mean=2,35). Bu durum erkeklerin örgütsel sinizme daha yakın olduklarını göstermektedir. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre içsel motivasyon medeni duruma göre anlamlı şekilde farklılaşmazken örgütsel sinizmin medeni duruma göre istatistiki açıdan anlamlı şekilde farklılaştığı belirlenmiştir ( $p=0,037$ ). Araştırma sonucuna göre örgütsel sinizmden evli olanların daha çok etkilendiği görülmektedir (Mean=2,36). Son olarak eğitim düzeylerine göre gerek içsel motivasyonda gerekse de örgütsel sinizmde istatistiki olarak anlamlı bir fark bulunmamaktadır ( $p=0,102$  &  $p=0,629$ ).

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sigortacılık çalışanları, içsel motivasyon, psikolojik güçlendirme, örgütsel sinizm, aracılık etkisi.

## Introduction

Factors such as our country being located in an earthquake zone, agricultural producers being exposed to agricultural disasters from time to time, and the increase in luxury consumption (houses, cars, etc.) are among the factors that push the insurance sector to expand. There have been recent increases in the number of personnel working in the insurance sector. This situation requires studies on the organizational behavior of employees working in the insurance sector. The organizational satisfaction of trained human resources is reflected in both the social and family lives of employees. Psychological empowerment, which is considered positive organizational behavior, is an important factor in providing competitive advantage to organizations. (According to Luthans et al. (2004), psychological capital receives less attention than other types of capital such as human and social capital, and research supports its development and management in organizations to increase organizational efficiency, productivity and the successful implementation of organizational change. Both insurance in the literature Although there are few organizational behavior studies conducted specifically for the sector, factors such as creating a perspective on the growing sector from this perspective were the main factors that pushed this study.

### 1. Literature Review

In his study, Semerci (2020) found a negative significant relationship between employees' psychological capital and organizational cynicism. However, although limited, studies have also been found showing positive relationships between psychological empowerment and organizational cynicism in terms of sub-dimensions. As a result of their study on academics, Bayram and Ergan (2018) determined a positive significant relationship between the autonomy and impact sub-dimensions of psychological empowerment and the emotional and behavioral dimensions of organizational cynicism. In his study by Kuzu (2023); He did not find a significant relationship between the "competence" and "impact" sub-dimensions of psychological empowerment and the "behavioral" dimension of cynicism, but found a positive, not negative, relationship between the "competence" dimension of empowerment and the "cognitive and emotional dimensions" of organizational cynicism. As a result of his research with employees at Menoufia University Hospital, Nafei (2015) found a positive significant relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational cynicism.

When the studies in the literature were examined, it was seen that there were limited studies on the relationship between psychological empowerment and intrinsic interest in motivation. Zhang and Bartol (2010) found in their study that strengthening leadership positively affects psychological empowerment, which in turn affects both intrinsic motivation and creative process participation. Hahm (2018) in his study; determined that members' psychological empowerment is directly related to both intrinsic motivation and autonomy, which are prerequisites for creativity. When studies on the relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational cynicism were examined, it was found that there were generally negative relationships between psychological empowerment and organizational cynicism. Worker et al. (2013) developed a sample of 140 employees working in hospitals in their study. According to the research results, they determined that personnel empowerment reduced the level of organizational disappointment ( $r=-0.40$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). The regression analysis revealed that employee empowerment explained 16% of organizational disappointment, and therefore other organizational dynamics and variables were needed to explain cynicism. DanaeeFard et al. (2018) show that organizational cynicism leads to a decrease in public service motivation, and

employees' negative perception of organizational policy negatively regulates the relationship between organizational cynicism and public service motivation. Altınöz et al., (2011); Doğaç, (2017); Şahin et al., (2019) also stated in their study that men's cynicism averages are higher than women's cynicism averages. Gezer, (2018); Uyar, (2018); Kartal, (2018); Tokgöz and Yılmaz, (2008); Şahin et al., (2019) did not find a significant difference between education levels and education levels in their study.

## 2. Material Method

The material of this study consists of data obtained from employees in insurance agencies operating in the Central Anatolian provinces selected by simple random sampling. In order to achieve the purpose of the surveys, they were selected by Simple Random Sampling Method. Field studies were carried out in 2020. Regarding this study, ethics committee permission was obtained with the decision of Kırşehir Ahi Evran University Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Board dated 04.03.2021 and numbered 2021/1.

The organizational cynicism scale, consisting of 3 dimensions and 13 items developed by Brandes, Dharwadkar and Dean (1999), was used to determine the cynicism behaviors of employees. Regarding psychological empowerment, the PEI developed by Spreitzer (1995) was used in the study, and 12 questions in total were asked, 3 questions for each dimension of the 4 dimensions expected to be explained. In measuring the intrinsic interest in creativity; Tierney et al. Intrinsic motivation scores for creativity were obtained using the scale developed by (1999) (Yuan and Woodman, 2010).

The method of the research is a quantitative research design and the data obtained was obtained by simple random sampling. SPSS statistical package program was used to test the research hypotheses. Within the scope of the research, answers are sought to the following questions.

H1: Do employees' intrinsic motivation, organizational cynicism and psychological empowerment differ according to gender?

H2: Do employees' intrinsic motivation, organizational cynicism and psychological empowerment differ according to their marital status?

H3: Do employees' intrinsic motivation, organizational cynicism and psychological empowerment differ according to their education level?

H4: Does intrinsic motivation have a mediating effect on the relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational cynicism?

## 3. Findings

In this section, demographic findings related to the study and findings regarding the hypothesis results are presented together.

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of participants

Gender	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Male	272	66,3
Female	138	33,7
Age	Seniority	
Ort=33,70	Avarage = 7 years	

Marital Status	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Single	144	35,1
Married	266	64,9

When examining the demographic characteristics of insurance employees, it was observed that 66.3% (272 individuals) are male. The average age of the employees is 33 years, which falls into the young to middle-aged category. In terms of tenure, the average length of employment is 7 years.

**Table 2.** Reliability analysis results for the scales

Intirinsic Motivation		Organizational Cynicism		Psychological Empowerment	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,817	5	,947	13	,873	12

Reliability analysis was conducted for the ready-made scales used in this study. The Cronbach's Alpha values were determined as follows: 0.817 for intrinsic motivation, 0.947 for organizational cynicism, and 0.873 for psychological empowerment. These values indicate that the scales are reliable (Cronbach, 1951; Dawson, 2004; Kılıç, 2016). According to Kılıç (2016), a reliability coefficient higher than 0.9 may suggest that the scale could contain redundant items. The Cronbach's Alpha value for organizational cynicism in this study also exceeded 0.90. This finding is supported by Özdemir and Yazıcı (2021), who noted that some items related to organizational cynicism were eliminated in their study.

The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient is widely used to determine the reliability of scales measuring psychological traits. Developed by Cronbach in 1951, the alpha coefficient method is appropriate for scales that are scored in ordered (ordinal) formats such as 1-3, 1-4, 1-5, rather than dichotomous (true-false) formats. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is a weighted standard deviation of the mean, found by taking the ratio of the sum of the variances of k items to the total variance. There can be a single  $\alpha$  value for each item or an average  $\alpha$  value for all items on the scale. The  $\alpha$  value obtained for all items reflects the overall reliability of the questionnaire, with a general acceptance that this value should be 0.7 or higher (Cronbach, 1951; Dawson, 2004; Kılıç, 2016).

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics results for variables

Model	1	2	3	Average	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
<b>Variables</b>							
<b>Psychological Empowerment</b>	1			4,2033	,72581	-1,130	2,889

<b>Organizational Cynicism</b>	-,078	1	2,2849	1,03910	,806	-,217
<b>Intrinsic Motivation</b>	,517	-,067	1	4,0202	,78927	-1,228
						1,745

According to the literature, skewness and kurtosis values within the range of -3.0 to +3.0 indicate that the data are normally distributed (Jondeau & Rockinger, 2003). The skewness and kurtosis values for the surveys examining psychological empowerment, organizational cynicism, and intrinsic motivation were within the range of +2.0 to -2.0. Therefore, the data in this study were normally distributed, and parametric tests were applied.

**Table 4.** Group Statistics by Gender

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>
<b>Intrinsic Motivation</b>	Male	272	4,04
	Female	138	3,99
<b>Organizational Cynicism</b>	Male	272	2,35
	Female	138	2,17

**Table 5.** Levene's Test for Equality of Variances (Gender)

	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig.(2-tailed)</b>
<b>Intrinsic Motivation</b>	5,064	,025			
<b>Organizational Cynicism</b>	4,331	,038	,712	321,077	,477
			1,766	306,670	,078

In this context, gender is the independent variable, while intrinsic motivation and organizational cynicism are the dependent variables. When the data in Tables 4 and 5 are considered together, it is observed that intrinsic motivation does not significantly differ by gender ( $p=0.477$ ). In other words, the intrinsic motivation levels of female and male participants are not different from each other. Similarly, the data from both tables show that organizational cynicism does not significantly differ by gender either ( $p=0.078$ ). This indicates that the levels of organizational cynicism are similar between male and female participants. Based on these results, Hypothesis H1 is rejected.

**Table 6.** Group Statistics by Married Status

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>
<b>Intrinsic Motivation</b>	Married	266	4,03
	Single	144	4,02
<b>Organizational Cynicism</b>	Married	266	2,36
	Single	144	2,15

**Table 7.** Levene's Test for Equality of Variances (Married Status)

	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig.(2-tailed)</b>
<b>Intirinsic Motivation</b>	0,079	,779	,096	415	,924
<b>Organizational Cynicism</b>	6,035	,014	2,089	330,214	,037

Tables 6 and 7 show the results of t-tests where intrinsic motivation and organizational cynicism are the dependent variables, and marital status is the independent variable. According to the research findings, intrinsic motivation does not significantly differ by marital status ( $p=0.924$ ). However, organizational cynicism does significantly differ by marital status ( $p=0.037$ ). The results indicate that married individuals are more affected by organizational cynicism (Mean=2.36). Based on these findings, Hypothesis H2 is partially accepted.

**Table 8.** Descriptive Statistics (Education Status)

	<b>Education Status</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>
<b>Intirinsic Motivation</b>	Primary education	6	4,33
	High school	60	3,84
	Associate degree	185	4,01
	Licence	152	4,10
	Postgraduate	7	3,77
<b>Organizational Cynicism</b>	Primary education	6	2,40
	High school	60	2,36
	Associate degree	185	2,34
	Licence	152	2,16
	Postgraduate	7	2,51

**Table 9.** One Way ANOVA (Education Status)

	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Intirinsic Motivation</b>	7,865	7	1,124	1,724	,102
	269,101	413	,652		
	276,966	420			
<b>Organizational Cynicism</b>	5,871	7	,839	,751	,629
	462,504	413	1,117		
	468,375	420			

Upon examining the data in Tables 8 and 9, where education level is the independent variable and intrinsic motivation and organizational cynicism are the dependent variables, there is no statistically significant difference in either intrinsic motivation or organizational cynicism according to education level ( $p=0.102$  &  $p=0.629$ ). Based on these results, Hypothesis H3 is rejected.

**Table 10.** Result of regression analysis for mediation effect

Variables	Beta	t	Sig.	r	r <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig.F
<b>Constant</b>	2,833	8,755	,000				
<b>Psychological empowerment</b>	-,083	-1,020	,308				
<b>Intrinsic Motivation</b>	-,049	-,653	,514				
				<b>,084</b>	<b>,007</b>	<b>1,472</b>	<b>,231</b>

Table 10 examines whether intrinsic motivation has a mediating effect in the potential relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational cynicism. The analysis revealed that intrinsic motivation does not have a mediating effect on the relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational cynicism ( $p=0.231$ ). Based on this result, Hypothesis H4 is rejected.

According to the conditions proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986) based on classical regression analysis, in mediation models, the dependent variable must be predicted by the independent variable. The mediator is predicted by the independent variable and takes on the role of the dependent variable. The dependent variable is predicted through the mediator, which is explained by the independent variable. When the mediator effect is controlled, there is a significant reduction in the relationship between the dependent and independent variables, or the relationship becomes statistically insignificant (Yılmaz & Dalbudak, 2018).

### Conclusion

According to the results of the study, the analysis of the mediating effect revealed that intrinsic motivation does not mediate the effect of psychological empowerment on organizational cynicism ( $p=0.231$ ). There is no statistically significant difference in intrinsic motivation based on gender ( $p=0.477$ ). The average levels of intrinsic motivation for men and women are similar. Additionally, organizational cynicism does not significantly differ by gender ( $p=0.078$ ), with the cynicism levels of men and women showing similarity. However, previous studies by Altınöz et al. (2011), Doğaç (2017), and Şahin et al. (2019) have reported that men have higher levels of cynicism compared to women.

The study results show that while intrinsic motivation does not significantly differ by marital status, organizational cynicism does ( $p=0.037$ ). Married individuals are more affected by organizational cynicism (Mean=2.36). Finally, there is no statistically significant difference in intrinsic motivation or organizational cynicism based on education levels ( $p=0.102$  &  $p=0.629$ ). This finding is consistent with the literature, as Gezer (2018), Uyar (2018), Kartal (2018), Tokgöz and Yılmaz (2008), and Şahin et al. (2019) also found no significant differences in education levels.

The results indicate that men and married individuals are more affected by organizational cynicism. Moreover, men have higher average levels of intrinsic motivation compared to women. These results may be influenced by the statistical differences due to the majority of male participants in the insurance sector sample, which could introduce method biases. It is also noted that men have higher intrinsic motivation for creativity compared to women. Given the expectation that increasing employees' intrinsic motivation will reduce cynicism, it is crucial for organizational managers to focus on enhancing intrinsic motivation among all employees. Recommendations include developing a corporate culture that increases job commitment and organizational loyalty, providing environments where employees can motivate themselves, and offering in-service training. This study has time constraints, and updating the data or conducting research with different sectors or a larger sample may yield different results.

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