

Geliş Tarihi:

08.09.2020

Kabul Tarihi:

03.09.2021

Yayımlanma Tarihi:

20.12.2021

Kaynakça Gösterimi: Akdemir, A. (2021). Love your job discourse and its affective influence on contemporary job market. *İstanbul Ticaret Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 20(42), 1102-1121. doi:10.46928/iticusbe.789004

LOVE YOUR JOB DISCOURSE AND ITS AFFECTIVE INFLUENCE ON CONTEMPORARY JOB MARKET

Research

Ayşegül Akdemir 

Sorumlu Yazar (Correspondence)

Bahçeşehir Üniversitesi

aysegul.akdemir@eas.bau.edu.tr

Ayşegül Akdemir sosyoloji lisans eğitimini Boğaziçi Üniversitesi'nde tamamlamış olup yine sosyoloji alanında doktorasını ise Essex Üniversitesi'nden almıştır. Bahçeşehir Üniversitesi'nde öğretim üyesi olan Akdemir, kimlik, toplumsal cinsiyet ve duygusal emek alanında çalışmalarına devam etmektedir.

Ayşegül Akdemir has completed her BA studies in Sociology at Boğaziçi University and her PhD in Sociology at the University of Essex. She currently works at Bahçeşehir University and her research concentrates on identity, gender and emotional labour.

LOVE YOUR JOB DISCOURSE AND ITS AFFECTIVE INFLUENCE ON THE CONTEMPORARY JOB MARKET

Ayşegül Akdemir
aysegul.akdemir@eas.bau.edu.tr

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to critically examine the use of the discourse of loving the job in social media and work life.

Method: The study is based on social media analysis and semi-structured interviews with service industry employees.

Findings: The results reveal that discourses associated with intimate feelings are largely internalized by workers and that loving work emerges as the norm even for those workers who actively dislike their jobs. While the contemporary labor market is characterized by insecurity, high turnover and individuality, emotions about the intimate aspects of social life are used to motivate employees for higher productivity while hiding power relations in the workplace in the face of growing social inequalities.

Originality: This study, which brings together different methods, shows that today's working life is increasingly insecure on the one hand, and on the other hand, it is based on the manipulation of emotions rather than material rewards. It contributes to the visibility of the emotional turn approach in sociology.

Keywords: Sociology of Emotions, Emotional Labour, Work and Employment, Social Media

JEL Classification: D91, F66

İŞİNİ SEV SÖYLEMİNİN GÜNÜMÜZ İŞ YAŞAMINDAKİ DUYGUSAL ETKİLERİ

ÖZET

Amaç: Bu çalışma, işini sevme söyleminin sosyal medyada ve iş yaşamında kullanımını eleştirel olarak incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Yöntem: Çalışma, sosyal medya analizine ve hizmet sektörü çalışanlarıyla yapılan yarı-yapılandırılmış mülakatlara dayanmaktadır.

Bulgular: Sonuçlar, samimi duygularla ilişkili söylemlerin büyük ölçüde işçiler tarafından içselleştirildiğini ve işi sevmenin, işlerinden aktif olarak hoşlanmayan çalışanlar için bile bir norm olarak ortaya çıktığını göstermektedir. Çağdaş iş piyasası güvencesizlik, yüksek işgücü devri ve bireysellik ile karakterize edilirken, sosyal yaşamın mahrem yönlerine ilişkin duygular, işyerinde artan eşitsizlikler karşısında işyerinde güç ilişkilerini gizlerken çalışanları daha yüksek üretkenlik için motive etmek amacıyla kullanılmaktadır.

Özgünlük: Farklı yöntemleri bir araya getiren bu çalışma günümüzde çalışma yaşamının bir yandan giderek güvencesizleşirken diğer yandan da maddi ödülleri değil duyguların manipülasyonunu temel aldığını göstermekte ve sosyolojideki duygusal dönüş (*emotional turn*) yaklaşımının görünürlüğüne katkıda bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Duygular Sosyolojisi, Duygusal Emek, İş ve Çalışma, Sosyal Medya

JEL Sınıflandırması: D91, F66

INTRODUCTION

In order to explain the different orders of power relations, Zizek (Big Think 2015) uses the example of two situations in which a child is supposed to visit his grandmother. In the first case, the old-fashioned father tells the child to visit his grandmother whether the child likes it or not, while in the second case a post-modern, non-authoritarian father tells the child to visit the grandmother only if the child wishes to do so. Zizek argues that the second order, despite its tone of freedom, is much compelling because it not only tells the child to visit the grandmother but also tells the child how to feel about it. The current relations of work are also complicated by emotions, making the power relations less visible under the guise of discourses such as ‘love your job’. The post-modern workers not only have to work hard, but also they have to love the process.

This article aims to question how the discourse of love your job affects the way workers feel and act in the contemporary job market. By conducting a multimodel analysis of social media entries and qualitative interviews I have found that this is a prevalent discourse that frames our thinking about careers. By conducting qualitative interviews with call centre workers as an illustrative case of contemporary job market, I aimed to see how workers deal with emotions in a field which is characterised as being routine, difficult and causing burnout due to constant talking/listening and intense human interaction. Although being a call centre agent is described as routine and stressful, there is an effort to enjoy the job and even those who actively dislike their jobs argue that loving the job is important. The main contribution to the field is to analyse a taken for granted discourse critically and demonstrate that emotions can be manipulated to hide power relations in the workplace.

In the 20th century technological developments did not bring substantial advantages to routine jobs and the integration of information and communication technologies did not shorten the average work day of the modern worker. On the contrary the average working week consists of 40-50 hours, it did not drop to 15 hours as Keynes had once predicted (Graeber 2013). In addition, several unpaid hours are devoted to work such as long commutes in big cities, making oneself presentable for the work (aesthetic labour in frontline jobs) and working after hours in creative jobs. Moreover technology is being used in order to monitor both the quantifiable (hours and output) and unquantifiable (emotional labour, relations with the customers) aspects of workers’ productivity.

As paid employment seized to provide a safety net (life-long jobs, retirement in good conditions, job security, being able to sustain a family with one wage etc.), a new mantra began to dominate the realm of work: love your job! Emotions, especially those with connotations about intimacy, family and romantic love, were used instrumentally to hide the structural inequalities and the anxieties that surround the contemporary employment patterns. As the satisfaction from the objective conditions of work diminish, the modern worker needs to find new motivations such as love for the job, which is their individual responsibility. In addition, individualisation is the underlying message in contemporary

career advice. People are responsible for their own happiness which makes solidarity impossible and fosters a work ethic and norm of constant happiness (Weeks 2017).

This study, by reviewing the social media posts and using a case study of service sector workers, aims to question the role of emotions in how the contemporary worker relates to work. After a review of literature on emotions and work, I present my findings on the media analysis and qualitative interviews and provide a discussion of these findings in the light of the literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

'Love your job' discourse has been popularised by the media and self-help literature. With the prevalence of precarious jobs in service sector under the neoliberal regime (Lewis et al 2015), such jobs took over in the global North, increasing the importance of soft skills and emotional management. As globalisation brought certain opportunities, it also brought several risks and threats for the developing countries, especially increasing the wealth gap within countries (Çelikel Danişoğlu 2004). Work, that could have been one aspect of our lives, has become almost ontological, defining the self and taking over all aspects of life (Fleming 2015). Ironically longer working hours did not necessarily bring more abundance for the worker (Fleming 2015); as ILO report shows employment could lift people out of poverty, but only if the job provides adequate earnings, security and safe working environments (Gammarano, 2019).

Moreover new communication technologies enable the workers to be constantly available for work even after official work hours and this constitutes one of the defining features of contemporary work life (Gephart 2002). This state of uninterrupted connection may be perceived positively by more ambitious members of the workforce yet generally it contributes to work-life conflict (Boswell and Olson-Buchanan 2007; Diaz et al 2012).

As work took over a significant portion of our lives, it became imperative that we maintain a positive relationship with work. Modern human resources also see the link between the worker's productivity and their contentment with the job but not necessarily satisfaction with the conditions of work. As Işıklı (2019) argues, the ideology of loving the job that has been developed by the human resources and management departments carries the message that the loyalty-satisfaction relationship in the workplace belongs to the past, whereas the self realisation-performance relationship belongs to today. This discourse emphasises the significance of personal development while capital is rendered invisible. This internal focus is also connected to the very high labour turnover in many service sector jobs in which it is a sensible strategy not to get too attached to a certain workplace. Thus loyalty and long-term commitment to the workplace has been replaced by the joy of self-realisation, which is an individualistic endeavour.

Emotions at work, long neglected in social sciences, have a huge impact on our 'rational' institutions, systems and economic activities. As Lutz (1986) pointed out Western philosophical tradition is

dichotomous; associating thought with rationality and emotion with irrationality. This dichotomy also extends to gender and associated men with rationality and women with irrationality, deeming the claims of the latter less valuable in public discourse. Weeks (2017) questioned the role of emotions in the gendered division of labour and argued that the mystification of romantic love and family relations has served to hide its economic aspects, particularly rendering domestic labour unpaid and invisible. She argued that the use of emotions when referring to jobs, especially using the vocabulary of romantic and intimate love, serves to make class hierarchies and oppression invisible. In a similar manner, Sara Ahmed (2010, p. 573) also pointed to the happy housewife figure of 1960's USA that erased the signs of labour and justified the gendered forms of labour "as expressions of a collective wish and desire".

The most common use of emotions in the contemporary job market is the case of emotional labour, particularly in frontline jobs where it is crucial to provide a service with a smile. Developed by Hochschild (1983), emotional labour refers to labour that "requires one to induce or suppress feelings in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others". It is conceptualised as a good that is exchanged in the market, causing the workers to experience alienation from the work process and from themselves (Hochschild 1983; Brook 2009, 2011). Since alienation is negatively correlated with the workers' sense of belonging to an organisation (Demirel 2009), it can become detrimental for the workers and the workplaces. Service sector workers often find themselves displaying emotions that contradict with how they feel at a given time (emotional dissonance) which leads to burnout (Yetim & Erigüç 2019), stress (Lewig and Dollard 2003) and decreases their satisfaction (Özkan, 2013). In addition, empirical studies show that performing emotional labour purely for economic reasons causes burnout (Bolton and Boyd, 2003; Erickson and Ritter, 2001).

The use of emotions is not only about eliciting certain emotions in the customer but also about an overall engagement with the job. Weeks (2017, p. 40) questions the concept of romantic love and approaches work and employment critically, arguing that "under heteropatriarchal capitalism, the ideology of romantic love born of the separate spheres, an idealized and feminized model of love, is being harnessed, not only to continue to assign domestic work to women, but to recruit all waged workers into a more intimate relationship with waged work". The use of family metaphors in the new organisational culture also serve the processes of regulation, discipline and control of the employees, colonising their everyday lives through the displacement of organisational values and behaviours with former practices and especially with affective experiences (Casey 1999).

The affective associations of the 'love your job' discourse also function to justify lower wages in certain fields such as care work, in which altruism is constructed to be more important than material gain. However, despite this construction of altruism and working for low income, workers' day to day experiences at work, especially autonomy and work-life balance affect how they feel about their jobs (Chesters and Baxter 2011; Foster 2013).

Generational aspects have also been discussed in the literature on the attitudes towards work. Debate about post-work and the loss of work's centrality on younger generations' lives highlight the different and new dynamics for the millennials. While the post WW2 generation and the boomers valued work as a central aspect of their lives, the millennials display more individualistic traits than the previous generations and they value work-life balance and leisure time (Foster 2013; Twenge 2010). A study on white collar workers in Turkey also demonstrated that attitudes towards entertainment at work have direct effect on turnover intention and that particularly members of Generation Y value having fun and interpersonal relations at work (Pekdemir et. al. 2018). It is becoming more and more difficult to have a coherent identity in an ever shifting labour market where old values and virtues of commitment and loyalty to a workplace are replaced by individuality, competition and flexibility (Sennett 1998). The discourse of loving one's job comes into the picture in this context in which individuals lack long-term career opportunities and are responsible for their own happiness.

METHODOLOGY

A multimodel analysis of the discourse of emotions regarding work life has been conducted for this study. First, in order to find out about the prevalence of the 'love your job' discourse, I analysed two major social media platforms Twitter and LinkedIn. I extracted Twitter data from MaxQDA, a digital data analysis tool, which was available for one week, from the dates 27.03.2021 to 03.04.2021. I searched the relevant posts with the following keywords in Turkish language: love your job, work life, working conditions (*işini sev, iş hayatı, çalışma yaşamı, çalışma koşulları*). Since I could find only 2 tweets that include the phrase 'love your job' in Turkish, I also extended the search to English keywords for this particular phrase. The number of tweets in each section is presented below.

Figure 1. Twitter Data

Keywords:	# of tweets:	Min & max. #of likes:	Min. & max. # of retweets:
İşini sev (love your job)	2	1-8	0
Love your job (Eng.)	466	0-5760	0-945
İş hayatı (work life)	266	0-550	0-55
Çalışma yaşamı (work life)	16	0-25	0-12

Çalışma koşulları (working conditions)	447	0-156	0-52
---	-----	-------	------

Since LinkedIn data cannot be extracted from MaxQDA, I searched the keywords as hashtags to find related posts. Using the same keywords in Turkish I found the following number of posts:

Figure 2. LinkedIn Data

Keywords:	# of posts:	Min & max. #of likes:	Min. & max. # of comments:
İşini sev (Love your job)	53	1-38	0-6
İş hayatı (work life)	157	1-1056	0-47
Çalışma yaşamı (work life)	19	1-21	0-2
Çalışma koşulları (working conditions)	15	1-96	0-58

In addition I interviewed call centre workers as an illustrative case of contemporary service sector which involves high levels of human interaction and emotional labour. The data is based on 16 semi-structured interviews with 10 female and 6 male call centre workers, reflecting the gender distribution in the sector. The research participants were found through snowball sampling and their ages ranged between 21 and 42, with a mean of 29,6, again reflecting the concentration of young workers in this line of work.

The interviews were conducted in several locations in Istanbul including coffee shops, one university campus, one municipality building and two call centre offices. The interviews covered various topics such as the nature of call centre work, the research participants' experiences of emotional labour and their orientation to their work and ranged between 19 and 70 minutes. The interview material has been recorded, transcribed and interpreted with discourse analysis.

FINDINGS

Social Media Analysis

The social media analysis focused on the posts about work life and related emotions. The content of the study is composed of Twitter and LinkedIn as two major platforms where users discuss, protest or present their experiences and opinions. While Twitter is a medium of free expression of different sentiments leading to protests and campaigns, LinkedIn focuses on professional posts and mostly aim self-promotion.

The analysis shows that first and foremost the ‘love your job’ discourse is not prevalent in Turkish. Searching Twitter with the keywords (love your job) revealed only 2 posts in Turkish as opposed to 466 posts in English. Although the study aims to focus on the Turkish context, English tweets were also included to the analysis due to lack of sufficient results with Turkish key words. In Turkish there were only 2 tweets – one was supportive of the discourse while the other was critical of harsh working conditions. Among the 466 posts in English that contained the phrase ‘love your job’, 136 were irrelevant while the remaining 273 were reinforcing/supporting the discourse and 57 were sarcastic or critical. The supporting statements of the discourse reinforce the idea that loving the job is an important aspect of our relationship with the work we do. Such posts also perpetuate the idea that loving the job eases the difficulties and makes it possible for people to work extra hours. A typical example of such posts is the following: “When you love your job, you ever work a day in your life.” Such opinions assume that emotional attachment to work reduces its difficulties and makes the labour relations invisible and irrelevant.

While the discourse of loving the job has been supported and reinforced throughout the tweets, there were also several other posts that used the phrase in a sarcastic or critical tone such as this: “We need to stop telling and encouraging young people to work for free. It’s not okay. It doesn’t matter how much you love your job. An entry level position is supposed to train you on the job while getting paid.” These posts with a critical or ironic tone argue that regardless of one’s feelings about a job, there is labour involved which needs to be recognised as paid labour.

While the keywords ‘love your job’ did not yield sufficient results in Turkish tweets, the users’ emotional orientation to work could be detected. Using the key words ‘working conditions (*çalışma koşulları*)’ and ‘work life (*çalışma yaşamı, iş hayatı*)’, I have analysed how these posts deal with users’ emotions and if they promote the discourse of loving the job by coding the relevant phrases. While these tweets were either political campaigns or were directly addressed to relevant authorities, they mentioned non-material aspects of work-life such as conditions to increase workers’ happiness and protection from stress-inducing problems such as sexism and other forms of discrimination. These tweets mainly focus on the issues of difficulties in work life (especially now related to Covid19), unemployment as a chronic

problem and the demands to be appointed to public sector. These tweets reflect the more immediate structural problems of the country's labour market.

Below is the frequency and percentage of the coded segments of tweets with the keywords of working conditions and work life.

Figure 3. Codes of twitter posts

Code	Frequency	Percentage
Complaints about conditions	12	54,55
Demands or suggestions for better conditions	3	13,64
Loving the job	2	9,09
Work-life balance	2	9,09
anger	1	4,55
unhappiness	1	4,55
boredom	1	4,55

Complaints constituted the majority of the entries in this section. They include tweets that call for uniting against slavery (as a metaphor for contemporary work life) and raising concerns over the lack of safety for people who have to go to work during the pandemic. There is little direct reference to emotions in these posts and the ones they do are mainly negative emotions addressing the difficulties of work.

Linkedin, on the other hand, is a platform where the users engage in self-promotion and raise a less critical voice about the difficulties in the job market due to the platform's main aim of appealing to potential employers. In this platform the posts related to work life focus on ameliorating the working conditions and reinforce the discourse of loving one's job. The frequency and percentage of coded segments reveal that the main focus is demands and suggestions for creating a better working environment for the workers. Posts in this platform include demands and suggestions on improving the quality of work life, promoting female workers' rights such as childcare and breastfeeding facilities and equal pay for equal work. A larger portion of these posts reinforce the discourse of loving the job, articulating the positive sides of loving the job and finding motivations other than material rewards. Finally, work-life balance appears as an important aspect of work life in the Linkedin posts, especially in comparison to the more favorable conditions that are available in Europe.

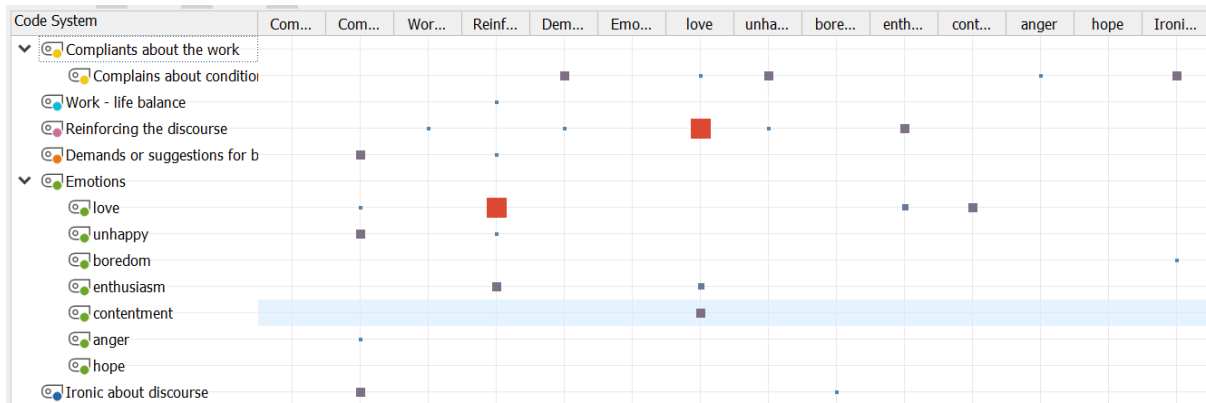
Figure 4. Codes of LinkedIn posts

Code	Frequency	Percentage
Demands or suggestions for better conditions	8	25,81
Reinforcing the l.y.j. discourse	7	22,58
Work-life balance	5	16,13
Loving the job	4	12,90
Complaints about conditions	3	9,68
Enthusiasm	1	3,23
Unhappiness	1	3,23
Ironic about the discourse	1	3,23
Boredom	1	3,23

The social media analysis reveals that the deep structural problems in the Turkish labour market (long hours of work, low payment¹ and Covid19-related difficulties) have been reflected on to the social media posts. While the discourse of loving the job seems as an important wish in order to bring more fulfilment to the workers' lives, this is either taken ironically or to a minimal level. An emerging issue is the demands for work-life balance which focuses on both the material and non-material aspects of work in order to have more balance. Emotion names such as love, enthusiasm and hate appear seldom however we can grasp from the context that emotions have a role and social media users demand more than only better material conditions. In the context of Turkish labour market, the material conditions appear as urgent issues to be handled. Finally the code relations below reveal the strongest links between certain codes: loving the job and the reinforcement of love your job discourse; being unhappy and complaints about working conditions; being ironic/critical about the discourse and complaining about working conditions; enthusiasm about work and reinforcing the love your job discourse.

¹ 40% of the workforce in Turkey is earning minimum wage which amounts to 346 USD as of April 2021. (<https://www.dw.com/tr/disk-t%C3%BCrkiye-asgari-%C3%BCcretliler-toplumuna-d%C3%B6n%C3%BCC5%9F%C3%BCyor/a-55844537>)

Figure 5. Code Relations



Case Study: Call Centre Workers

In this study I also use data from an empirical research on emotional labour among call centre workers in Istanbul to grasp the effects of emotions about work in context. Call centres today present a very vivid example of service sector jobs characterised by the significance of managing emotions, high labour turnover and predominance of a young workforce. This study revealed that emotions are significant not only when manipulating them during the interactions with the customers (emotional labour) but also in terms of the employees’ self-motivation towards the job and the workplace. Most of the research participants’ motivation for working in a call centre is to gain some money and experience until they find a more fulfilling job; some participants actively disliked the job and could not imagine themselves working in their current job in the future. Consequently it was important to find the motivation to continue working through some strategies such as building friendships and trying to enjoy the work. Among the 16 research participants, 6 actually enjoyed their work while the rest either disliked their jobs or tolerated it as a temporary phase.

Contradicting messages are communicated to the call centre employees regarding the emotions at work. On the one hand they are expected ‘not to take things personally’ and ‘leave their emotions aside’ when confronted with difficult customers. On the other hand they are supposed to give a highly personalised service by performing emotional labour through actively using their voices on the phone. As Hochschild (1983, 5) argued “emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself”. While it is encouraged to display positive emotions genuinely through a lively, polite and happy voice, they are discouraged from taking things personally in their conversations with angry and rude customers. There is a selective approach towards the workers’ feelings; they are supposed to be excellent at generating positive feelings in other people yet not be demotivated by the negative aspects of their work.

The research participants reported that they achieve successful management of emotions with experience, however personality traits and whether the person enjoys the work or not influence their performance. They argue that some people are better suited for the job. For instance an experienced

research participant who is currently working as a team leader, argued that working in call centres is not for everyone:

“Some people’s psychology is less resistant to stress so they can become more emotional or reflect their (negative) emotions to the customers. This ends up with losing a customer and the person (agent) getting stressed out. It is already difficult to work in call centres. It is even more difficult for such a person to do this job in my opinion. You need to put aside your emotions.” (Int 12, F)

The employee’s character and attitude towards work largely determine their reaction to a given situation. Putting aside one’s own emotions is as a strategy against rude and difficult customers. One participant who expressed her contentment with her job argued that people either love or hate working in a call centre:

“Before this, I studied ceramics, I worked in that field. Later when I started here, it was my first experience in call centres. I have been here for six years now. Once you get hung up on this you either love it very much or you don’t like it at all. There is such a thing with the call centres.” (Int 15, F)

The research participants agreed that the essential qualities of an ideal call centre agent are patience, communication skills and loving the job. Over half of the participants stated they dislike their job and find it unsuitable for their level of education or personality, yet the importance of loving the job is emphasised frequently in the interviews. Even those research participants who disliked their jobs emphasised the importance of loving the job to be able to keep working in this field.

Love for the job is a dominant discourse and a paid job is constructed as something that employees ideally enjoy and do out of enjoyment and not just material gains. As modern worker spends over one third of their day at work, enjoying the work is crucial for their wellbeing. However an overemphasis of the discourse of ‘loving the job’ bears the risk of shifting the focus from the material conditions of work such as wages, working hours and social benefits to their individual emotional engagement with the work and it becomes a matter of how one personally relates to and copes with the job demands. Interestingly only one research participant mentioned the importance of raising awareness on the workers’ rights and labour unions and a few discussed the need to improve the working conditions such as extending the break times and working shorter shifts. The rest of the participants discussed the challenges of the job individually.

The participants acknowledged that this is not a very likeable line of work. They used phrases such as “nobody does this job by loving it” (Int 6, M). One participant who started working as a call centre agent and is currently a team leader explained the difficulties of implementing a 5.5-days-week as such:

“We tried it for some time. It was unproductive. Because people don’t work here happily, I mean the agents, this would make them even more unhappy. This is why we don’t work on the weekends.” (Int 8, F)

Regardless of how the workers feel about working at call centres, they embrace the discourse of the importance of loving one's job. One research participant, who was studying for her MA degree at the time of the interview was extremely unhappy about working at a call centre and believed she was overqualified for the job. When I asked her about how she would have organised the trainings for the new workers, she began with explaining the importance of loving the job:

“First it is important to love the job. I entered the job without loving it and it was not related to my education. I started reluctantly. But this was a big factor for me. I worked there but without loving it, all right you manage it somehow, but how successful can you become? After some time you say ‘it's enough’” (Int 1, F)

Only after elaborating on loving or disliking the job, this participant talked about substantial difficulties of her workplace such as the insufficiency of break times and that too few people work in a rather busy department. Loving the job discourse becomes so dominant that it pushes the structural conditions to a secondary position and implies that when they love the job they can put up with difficulties. A similar pattern is observed in another research participant who reports loving her job very much; she states that she was happy in her previous job despite the challenging conditions:

“It was busier, there was a group of 250 people, 15 teams and each team had a leader. More busy and aggressive. It was challenging yet it was one of the firms in which I was the busiest and most productive and also happiest. I was busier but happier because the motivation was provided much better.”

With such a focus on the emotions, the material aspects of the job are swept under the carpet. Liking the job becomes such a dominant discourse that it may hinder the workers' capacity to question the other factors such as low wages and long working hours that make it difficult to enjoy the job.

Even for those participants who actively disliked the job, the social environment in the workplace is a very important factor that supports them emotionally. For instance the research participants were referring to their coworkers as their friends; indeed the role of friendship was important to make the workplace more likeable. They use certain strategies such as multitasking as an essential skill to socialise and have fun at work. The research participant mentioned above explained how she and her coworkers spent time at work:

“A: How did you deal with difficult situations? What kind of strategies...

S: We could go online. Me and my friends. Or we could listen to music to distract our minds, we could watch a movie when the phone didn't ring. We tried to distract ourselves, otherwise it is not manageable. Or we could read a book.

A: How is it possible to watch a movie? It would be interrupted every 2 minutes.

S: We could even make coffee (laughing). When I first started working there, I was surprised because they can (do these) and answer your queries all at the same time.” (Int 1, F)

The managers understand that creating an enjoyable physical space is crucial to motivate the workers for higher productivity. A positive work environment is encouraged by the managers and team leaders. During data collection I had the opportunity to observe three work places: two of them were large cosy offices with extra quiet space to socialise, the other one was a smaller office. Especially small and boutique call centres, who serve the upper segment clients, make sure to increase the employees' motivation. They include kitchens or cafeterias to socialise, even one had a place to play video games in the break times to create a cosy atmosphere.

The home-like details in the work spaces also match with the 'we are a family' discourse. This is an older discourse that reflects paternalistic relationships between the employer and the employee and it existed before the neoliberal turn, yet it appeals to the emotions of the employees in a similar way as the 'love your job discourse' and emphasises the intimate aspects of work life. By using home, family and intimacy discourse, the managers aim to motivate the workers and this may also be internalised by some employees. During the interviews it has been repeatedly mentioned that the research participants find a family environment among their colleagues. They reported the personal relationships ease the difficulties of the job. An agent reported:

"Both our manager and team leader are very good-hearted people. This is the biggest reason I stayed in this job. I am in an environment which I really like. I have been working for eight years and for the first time in this job, I come to work happily" (Int 13, M).

Such intimacy discourse does not apply in the same way to all individuals. Although it is largely internalised, there are also cracks through which people criticise such discourse. One agent who is also active in the labour unions expressed his criticism:

"Well actually all companies use this family discourse. Companies try to create a unity in order to mitigate class conflict. Their slogan is 'we are a family'. This family has responsibilities. Such a family concept is very common, especially in the sales department there are team responsibilities." (Int 11, M)

In opposition to such intimacy and emotions is the growing automation in routine jobs. Working in a job which is gradually taken over by technology and artificial intelligence (AI), makes people consider their contribution to the work. Since such technologies are becoming more prevalent in this field, I also raised questions about the participants' feelings about AI. Having emotions emerges as both the strong side of humans (to give a better and more personalised service) and their weakness when negative emotions are too difficult to manage. Research participants contrasted their personal skills in emotional labour with the capacity of AI to do simple tasks. The research participants describe themselves as opposed to artificial intelligence as having emotions, recognising emotions and being able to work with emotions. These make them both different than and (for the time being) superior to robots yet also vulnerable in stressful situations. The research participants agree that AI can accomplish some basic

tasks but more complicated issues such as sales, convincing people and complex problem solving require human intelligence and that robots may not be as competent as humans even in the near future.

A participant who has 20 years of experience argued that AI is inevitable and that progress may not be stopped however she would rather live in a world as we know it:

“Artificial intelligence is a serious process, so people see it as a threat and fear that it will take over etc. I don’t know if we ever see those times but because it is newly entering our lives. I think these models should exist, we shouldn’t stay behind, we should be open to new developments. It is a threatful system, in a place where emotions die, I personally don’t want to live in such a brand new world. I prefer to be in a place where there are emotions and there is labour.” (Int 12, F)

The managers are also aware of the increasing role of AI in the production and service processes and use the rhetoric of robots vs humans to demand higher performance from the workers. This comparison to a tool that has lesser abilities comes off as an insult to the workers and decrease their motivation even further. One research participant explains this:

“There are discussions on whether it can replace the working class or not. Just like in other things, workforce may be replaced by automation. This is said to the workers very often, ‘we place something that says the same things instead of you and do not have to pay wages. This is said very often.

A: By whom?

P: The company. Generally they say that. You can see that in the basis of the whole company: ‘if you are going to produce with this quality, we can have robots working for us and they can do the same’ is said very often.”

As the above quote reveals, the workers must not only provide a service but also elevate the customers’ position, something that AI cannot accomplish yet. Loving the job and having a connection to the job on an intimate level would enhance the performance and help the workers have an advantage in their combat against the machines, however such comparison itself is also a factor to reduce workers’ motivation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research aimed to answer the question: how are workers in the contemporary job market affected by the discourse of ‘love your job’? Analysing both social media posts and qualitative interview materials, I have revealed that the discourse of loving one’s job is an essential instrument of motivating contemporary workers, yet this discourse is not taken at face value and is subjected to criticism as well. The research participants used the discourse mostly positively, reproducing its social meaning through associating the attitudes towards the job with intimate aspects of family life such love, enjoyment, leisure time and fun (Weeks 2017).

Loving the job and the idea of belonging to a family help the maintenance of people in the sector. The family metaphor is highly internalised by both the employers and the employees; the former legitimates the power inequality and make the exploitation of emotional labour invisible; the latter holds onto this discourse as a solidarity mechanism under stressful working conditions. Family is a social construct in which women's labour is rendered invisible and exploited therefore the analogy between family and workplace is not a coincidence.

The social media data contains more diverse and at times critical opinions, which may be due to the nature of these platforms that allow people to raise their voices. Within the criticism towards contemporary work life, work-life balance emerges as an important wish regarding the contemporary work life, which is in line with the findings of Foster (2013) and Twenge (2010) who argued that millennials value work-life balance and leisure time.

It is crucial to see that the discourse of loving the job works amid the structural conditions of today's job market such as unemployment, lack of job security, individualisation and hyper-technology which blur the line between work and non-work. As working conditions change and unions become weaker, the workforce faces the challenges of neoliberalism as separate individuals, whereby emotions about work, social relations in the workplace and having a good time become important tools to give meaning to life. In a precarious social environment, people deal with these changes in the absence of unions or similar organisations therefore the new mottos about loving the job, enthusiasm, self-improvement and fulfillment appeal to the affective experiences of workers. The personalised emotions and doctrine of love for the job thus replace the structural elements of security and satisfaction which belong to a previous era.

The particular conditions of the Turkish labour market should also be kept in mind to make sense of the interview material. Long working hours and tiresome commutes in a large city such as Istanbul means that the worker has to spend a large amount of time in the job and job-related tasks which place paid employment to the centre of life. While the average working hours per week is 36.82 in OECD countries, the average worker in Turkey spends 46.98 hours per week (Average Working Hours 2020). Work is also central for secondary socialisation therefore making friends at work or having a pleasant social environment becomes important for the workers. This triggers a contradictory situation; on the one hand we are encouraged to connect to it through intimate emotions such as love, on the other hand we are further consumed by it. These factors make the 'love your job' discourse attractive not only to the employers but also to the employees and goes unchallenged.

The 'love your job' discourse is largely taken for granted. Even when the individual does not like their job, the firm belief that one is supposed to love their job to be happy remains intact. Critical attitudes seen both in the social media analysis and in the interview material show that there are also cracks in

the discourse and that loving the job is not a possibility for all; this may be challenged by the workers in times of crises and that regardless of love for the job, the material conditions matter.

Emotions are used by employers, supervisors and employees to achieve higher levels of productivity and an affective bonding with the job, yet these three parties have different motivations in embracing the discourse. Employers make wage labour and exploitation less visible and blur the line between work and non-work with the help of love your job discourse through career advice and mottos by influential business people and entrepreneurs. Supervisors and team leaders use it to motivate the people working under them; especially creating an enjoyable environment at work and make use of the intimacy discourse particularly in routine and stressful jobs. Finally workers find satisfaction in human relations, friendship and a family-like environment by associating work with an intimate emotion such as love. Despite the pervasiveness of these discourses that trigger intimate emotions, these cannot displace the structural inequalities or the challenging aspects of work which will in turn create more ambiguity and confusion (Casey 1999), traces of which are already seen in the cracks and gaps where critical opinions are voiced.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahmed, S. (2010). Killing joy: Feminism and the history of happiness. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 35(3), 571-594.
- Average Working Hours (2020) retrieved on 01.09.2020 at <https://clockify.me/working-hours>.
- Big Think (2015) Slavoy Zizek: Political Correctness is a More Dangerous Form of Totalitarianism. Retrieved on 29.08.2020 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5dNbWGaxWM>
- Bolton, S. C., & Boyd, C. (2003). Trolley dolly or skilled emotion manager? Moving on from Hochschild's Managed Heart. *Work, employment and society*, 17(2), 289-308.
- Boswell, W. R., & Olson-Buchanan, J. B. (2007). The use of communication technologies after hours: The role of work attitudes and work-life conflict. *Journal of Management*, 33(4), 592-610.
- Brook, P. (2009). "In critical defence of 'emotional labour' refuting Bolton's critique of Hochschild's concept." *Work, employment and society* 23, no. 3, 531-548.
- Brook, P. (2011) "Learning the feeling rules: Exploring Hochschild's thesis on the alienating experience of emotional labor." In *Marxism and Education*, pp. 89-116. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
- Casey, C. (1999). "Come, join our family": Discipline and integration in corporate organizational culture. *Human relations*, 52(2), 155-178.
- Çelikel Danişoğlu, A. (2004). Küreselleşmenin gelir eşitsizliği ve yoksulluk üzerindeki etkileri *İstanbul Ticaret Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* (07) p: 35-59.
- Chesters, J., & Baxter, J. (2011). Prisoners of love? Job satisfaction in care work. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 46(1), 49-67.
- Demirel, Y. (2009). Örgütsel bağlılık ve üretkenlik karşıtı davranışlar arasındaki ilişkiye kavramsal yaklaşım *İstanbul Ticaret Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* (15) 115-32.
- Diaz, I., Chiaburu, D. S., Zimmerman, R. D., & Boswell, W. R. (2012). Communication technology: Pros and cons of constant connection to work. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 80(2), 500-508.
- Erickson, R. J., and Ritter, C. (2001). Emotional labor, burnout, and inauthenticity: Does gender matter?. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, pp.146-163.
- Fleming, P. (2015). The mythology of work. *University of Chicago Press Economics Books*.
- Foster, K. (2013). Generation and discourse in working life stories. *The British journal of sociology*, 64(2), 195-215.
- Gammarano, R. (2019) The working poor or how a job is no guarantee of decent living conditions (April 2019) retrieved on 01.09.2020 at <https://ilostat.ilo.org/the-working-poor-or-how-a-job-is-no-guarantee-of-decent-living-conditions/>
- Gephart Jr, R. P. (2002). Introduction to the brave new workplace: Organizational behavior in the electronic age. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, 23(4), 327-344.
- Graeber, D. (2013) On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs: A work Rant. STRIKE. (August)
- Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. Univ of California Press.
- Işıklı, E. (2019). 90 Sonrası "Yaptığın İşi Sev" ideolojisi nasıl norm oldu? (How did the 'Love your job' ideology become the norm after the 90s?) *Labour History Conference*, Turkish History Foundation.
- Lewig KA and Dollard MF (2003) Emotional dissonance, emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction in call centre workers. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 12(4): 366-392.

- Lewis, H., Dwyer, P., Hodkinson, S., & Waite, L. (2015). Hyper-precarious lives: Migrants, work and forced labour in the Global North. *Progress in Human Geography*, 39(5), 580-600.
- Lutz, C. (1986). Emotion, thought, and estrangement: Emotion as a cultural category. *Cultural anthropology*, 1(3), pp.287-309.
- Özkan, G. (2013). Çağrı merkezlerinde duygusal emek ve örgütsel iletişim. *Selçuk Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Akademik Dergisi*, 7(4), pp.64-80.
- Pekdemir, I. M., Yeke, S., & Yaşlıoğlu, M. (2018) An Investigation of Attitudes of Employees From Different Age Groups (Generations) Towards Fun At Work, Experienced Fun At Workplace, Job Satisfaction, and Turnover Intention. *Anadolu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 18(4), 213-230.
- Sennett, R. (1998). *The corrosion of character: The personal consequences of work in the new capitalism*. WW Norton & Company.
- Twenge, J. M. (2010). A review of the empirical evidence on generational differences in work attitudes. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 25(2), 201-210.
- Weeks, K. (2017). Down with love: Feminist critique and the new ideologies of work. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 45(3/4), 37-58.
- Yetim, B., & Erigüç, G. (2019). Sağlık Çalışanlarında Duygusal Emek ile İlgili Yapılan Çalışmalara Yönelik Bir İnceleme. *Anadolu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 19(2), 225-240.