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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK FRIENDSHIP AND INTENTION TO LEAVE: A LATENT PROFILE ANALYSIS*

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to reveal whether the intention to leave changes according to the characteristics of the relationships established with close friends in the workplace with a person-centered approach. For this purpose, latent profiles were established by ensuring that workplace friendship is affected by the intention to leave and job satisfaction. This article presents an example of a three-stage study using implicit profile analysis with 433 data obtained from private sector employees. The analysis uncovered four latent profiles. The Partially Autonomous Very Strong Bond profile has the highest job satisfaction and the lowest intention to leave. If the level of trustworthiness, competency, job satisfaction is higher and the intention to leave is lower. The Integrated Very Strong Bond profile is the profile with the highest intention to leave. In cases where caring personal relationships and socio-cultural similarity are high, lower job satisfaction and the higher intention to leave have been observed.

Keywords: *Workplace friendship, Latent profile, Intention to leave, Job satisfaction.*

İŞ ARKADAŞLIĞI İLE İŞTEN AYRILMA NİYETİ ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİ: BİR ÖRTÜK PROFİL ANALİZİ

Öz

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, kişi merkezli bir yaklaşımla iş yerinde yakın arkadaşlarla kurulan ilişkilerin özelliklerine göre işten ayrılma niyetinin değişip değişmediğini ortaya koymaktır. Bu amaçla işyeri arkadaşlığının işten ayrılma niyeti ve iş doyumundan etkilenmesi sağlanarak örtük profiller oluşturulmuştur. Bu makale, özel sektör çalışanlarından elde edilen 433 veri ile örtük profil analizi kullanan üç aşamalı bir çalışma örneği sunmaktadır. Analizler sonucunda dört örtük profil ortaya çıkmıştır. İş yerindeki en yakın arkadaşla bütünleşmiş çok güçlü bağları olan, yani iş dışında da yoğun birlikte olan ve kültürel olarak da güçlü bir uyumluluğu bulunan çalışanların işten ayrılma eğilimleri daha yüksek, iş tatminleri daha düşük olmaktadır. İş yerindeki en yakın arkadaşla kısmen özerk güçlü bağları bulunan, yani iş yeri arkadaşına güven duyan, onu yetkin bulan, onun kullandığına inanan, iş dışında çok da samimi olmayan ve kültürel olarak da uyumu yüksek olmayan çalışanların iş tatmini daha yüksek olmakta, işten ayrılma eğilimi daha düşük olmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: *İşyeri arkadaşlığı, Örtük profil, İşten ayrılma niyeti, İş tatmini.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Suppose we can understand how close friends at work become closer due to the dimensions of friendship. Can we predict the processes and behaviors of employees influencing each other in the organization in line with this information? The importance of informal social interactions within the organization in forming the organizational culture, which is defined as a management tool, is known. The Hawthorne Studies (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939) and subsequent studies (Riordan and Griffeth, 1995; Berman *et al.*, 2002; Sias *et al.*, 2003) to date emphasize the effects of informal relationships among workplace friends on organizational culture, individual and organizational outcomes in the organizational behavior literature. Studies have shown that informal relationships in the workplace, most of which often result in friendship, are related to many organizational outputs such as organizational performance, job performance, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and intention to leave (Nielsen *et al.*, 2000; Morrison, 2004). Furthermore, having a close friend in the workplace is strongly associated with business outcomes such as profitability, inventory control, and employee retention (Clifton, 2022). These facts necessitate understanding the development and processes of close friendship relations at work. Albeit workplace friendships are workplace relationships involving mutual trust, mutual respect, and common interests or values, workplace friendships should be addressed differently from business relationships. Both concepts emerge within the social environment of the organization. Nonetheless, business relationships are formed through the organization of job by necessity and within the workflow, whereas workplace friendships are relations formed through voluntary interactions (Kanbur, 2015).

Studies conducted on the intention to leave a job have shown that factors diminishing job satisfaction such as unfavourable working conditions and unequal distribution of wages force employees to decide to leave their positions (Regts and Molleman, 2013). One of the main factors affecting job satisfaction and revealing employees' intention to leave is workplace friendship (Riordan and Griffeth, 1995; Omolawal and Okewole, 2018). The majority of the task within an organization is accomplished through friendships, connections, and informal communications (Krackhardt and Stern, 1988). Once we are able to comprehend the methods of how workplace friendships improve and what aspects of the relationship among such friends cause them to improve, we can effectively use this information to understand the intention to leave and therefore, prove business efficiency. Based on this idea, the research question for this study is:

RQ: Does employees' intention to leave their jobs differ depending on the qualities of their relationships with close friends in the workplace?

To answer the research question, we employ an individual-centered methodology called latent profile analysis (LPA) to uncover latent profiles that exist due to the influence of workplace friendships within the organization. The fact that friendship is shaped according to the cultural characteristics of each society (Adams and Victoria, 2003) has led us to utilize scale developed in Turkish literature to unveil latent profiles regarding quality of the relationships established with the workplace friend. For this reason, the research was designed within the framework of the sub-dimensions of the Workplace Friendship Scale developed by Omuris (2019). In this study, we have constructed a three-step analysis system to reveal the latent profiles in the context of job satisfaction and intention to leave. Firstly, we uncovered latent profiles by considering the dimensions of close friendship at work, job satisfaction, and intention to leave. In the second stage, we made a prediction by using the dimensions of workplace friendship quality and defining the obtained profiles from the first stage through discriminant analysis. We investigated the extent to which the dimensions of workplace friendship quality could predict the actual profiles. In the third stage, we examined how the intention to quit the job changed based solely on the profiles predicted using the dimensions of workplace friendship.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Workplace Friendship

Workplace friendship is a multidimensional and, thus, complex phenomenon. Academicians agree that it is difficult to provide an exact definition of friendship (Yager, 2003). The concept of friendship involves relationships related to interpersonal connections, and emotional attachments rather than solely related to the workplace

context (Berman *et al.*, 2002). Voluntary friendship includes interactions of help, sincerity, and individual's social identities (Fehr, 1996). It includes individual choices that emerge and develop through voluntary and mutual personal interactions that cannot be forcibly imposed on individuals (Rawlins, 1992). Voluntary friendship is an informal, voluntary, and multifaced interpersonal relationship that includes emotional connections and deep interactions extending beyond professional roles (Wang *et al.*, 2022). Multifaceted interpersonal relationships refer to the existence of two or more different types of relationships coexisting within a specific dyadic interaction (Gould, 1991). Workplace friendship, which implies the psychological connection or closeness among employees in the workplace, is built upon mutual trust, loyalty, commitment, shared interests, common cultural values, and the exchange of knowledge among colleagues in the workplace (Huang, 2016; Omuris, 2019).

The individual dimensions of workplace friendship, specific to Turkish culture and forming the fundamental basis of the study, include trustworthiness, competence, having someone's back, value-life interest similarity, and socio-cultural similarity and caring personal relationships (Omuris, 2019).

The most vital dimension that creates close friendship bonds in the workplace is *trustworthiness*. When referring to trustworthiness, it implies accuracy, honesty, and the ability to maintain confidentiality. Employees prefer to choose coworkers as friends who feel comfortable to share work-related information in the workplace (Ömüriş, 2014). Within the context of social identity theory, friendship relations in the workplace provide an environment that allows individuals to feel secure make people feel safe. This environment is perceived as a source of information that individuals cannot acquire when they are alone (Sias and Cahill, 1998). According to the social exchange theory (Emerson, 1976), as relationships between co-workers develop and strengthen over time, the level of mutual commitment, trust, and loyalty among co-workers increases. As a result, exchange norms develop between the parties. These exchange norms require reciprocity from them (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). When an employee forms a friendship with other co-workers or supports them in developing strong friendships among themselves, employees feel secure in the workplace. The second important dimension of close friendships at work is job *competence*. Employees tend to establish friendship with individuals who possess job competence, have acquired professional skills, and contribute to their personal development. The contribution of workplace friends who possess job competence is essential in fulfilling employees' desire to learn new things, perform their job to the best of their abilities, and advance their careers (Ömüriş, 2014). Competent employees can be characterized by their diversity in terms of skills, qualifications, experience, knowledge, intelligence, character, energy, or the ability to learn and develop within the organization (Ulrich, 2008). Individuals tend to compare themselves to others in terms of emotions, thoughts, or abilities and form friendships by establishing closeness with those who are like themselves as much as possible (Devito, 2012). Social exchange theory (Emerson, 1976) also emphasizes that individuals have a need and tendency to establish relationships with others that increase their beneficial outcomes and decrease their detrimental outcomes.

The third dimension playing an effective role in forming workplace friendship in forming workplace friendships is *having someone's back*. This term emerges from a form of supportive behavior aimed at solidarity, involving the protection of someone who shares similar characteristics, compensation for their mistakes, and taking their side against others (Berkman, 2010; Omuris, 2019). The act of "having someone's back", especially supporting each other against managers or other employees, is accepted as an indicator of friendship (Ömüriş, 2014). Moreover, having someone's back an adopted behaviour in societies with feminine and collectivist cultural characteristics like Turkey (Hofstede, 2001; Berkman, 2010).

Another primary individual factor affecting the formation of friendships is *similarity*. It has two dimensions: value-life interests and socio-cultural similarity. Socio-demographic factors determine the neighborhoods people live in, the schools they attend during adolescence, and the institutions they work in (Omuris, 2019). Employees establish friendships with individuals who come from similar subcultural backgrounds, family structures, and upbringing styles, and share common values and attitudes. Similarity is one of the essential elements that attract two individuals to each other and plays a crucial role in the formation of friendships (Lincoln and Miller, 1979). According to the attractiveness of similarity theory, people are attracted to similar nationalities, races, abilities, physical characteristics, intelligence, and attitudes. Friendships tend to form among individuals who are like each other, share similar values, have similar personality, work closely together, are of the same age, and belong to the

same gender (Yager, 2003). According to Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory, people feel comfortable with people who share similar feelings and thoughts with them.

The last dimension of workplace friendship in Turkish culture is caring personal relationships. Socialization inside and outside the workplace and closeness, which expresses a spiritual resemblance between two people, characterizes a relationship that points to the personal space between two friends (Ömüriş, 2014). Conditioning theory refers to the fact that individuals are influenced by those who support their values and beliefs. This theory explains that the value of sharing the same opinion with someone, as it makes a person feel approved and rewarded, engenders the communication with that person more attractive (Byrne and Clore, 1970). Therefore, spending time in and out of the workplace improves the exchange of ideas.

2.2. The relationship between workplace friendship, job satisfaction, and intention to leave

Intention to leave refers to an employee's intentional and conscious desire to terminate the employment relationship with the organization (Tett and Meyer, 1993; Shaw *et al.*, 1998). While positive attitudes such as satisfaction increase the likelihood of an employee staying in the organization, negative attitudes such as dissatisfaction may increase an employee's intention to leave the job (Mobley *et al.*, 1979). The decision of an employee to leave the institution he works for causes a great cost for that institution (Wright and Bonett, 2007). This cost includes the loss of company-specific human capital, the cost of change (material and moral loss due to personnel change), and the recruitment and training costs of new employees (Siebert and Zubanov, 2009). Years of research on turnover intention have shown that factors that increase employee dissatisfaction, such as poor working conditions and unfair salary distribution, force employees to quit their job (Martin, 1979; Price and Mueller, 1981; Regts and Molleman, 2013). Job satisfaction, which is an important determinant of intention to leave (Rageb *et al.*, 2013), expresses employees' satisfaction with their jobs or their perceptions of different aspects of their jobs (Agho *et al.*, 1993). There is a negative relationship between job satisfaction and intention to leave (Porter and Streer, 1973; Locke, 1976; Çankır and Arıkan, 2019). Satisfaction is viewed as an emotive response to work appraisal. This assessment is thought to be a result of views of various characteristics of the profession in relation to individual values (Locke, 1976). In the context of these individual values, employees' perceptions of many issues such as wages, role ambiguity and role clarity, work intensity, promotion, employee benefits, employee empowerment and work conditions reveal job satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Kirkman, 1997).

One of the factors affecting job satisfaction of employees and revealing their intention to leave is workplace friendship (Riordan & Griffeth, 1995; Nielsen *et al.*, 2000; Feeley *et al.*, 2008; Omolawale Okewole; 2018; Akila and Priyadarshini, 2018). In cultures where trust and helping behavior towards colleagues (Yu-Ping *et al.*, 2020) occur, the employee's intention to leave decreases (Akila and Priyadarshini, 2018). Ömüriş (2019) found that the reliability and competence dimensions of workplace friendship were negatively related to the intention to leave. Workplace friendship is effective in establishing good relations among group members. It is an essential social resource in making the job more attractive and fostering employees willing to stay in the group (Nielsen *et al.*, 2000). Researchers have revealed that friendship is positively associated with happiness (Demir *et al.*, 2012) and well-being (Hartup and Stevens, 1999). Since good relations among employees increase positive emotions such as happiness and well-being, workplace friendship is an excellent tool to reduce an employee's intention to leave (Greco *et al.*, 2015). In addition, strong friendships increase trust between individuals (Leana and Van Buren, 1999). Bordia *et al.* (2004) found that a high-quality relationship that includes trust reduces employees' intention to leave. Trust is also negatively related to the intention to leave (Mulki *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, it can be said that positive workplace friendship reduces employees' intention to leave. Workplace friendship improves employee integration, organizational belonging (Greco *et al.*, 2015), and organizational commitment (Rawlins and Jerome, 1994). Employees with high commitment do not prefer to leave the organization (Wasti, 2003). Employees who lack social interaction will develop absenteeism, low work motivation, and quitting behaviour due to increased frustration, anxiety, and neuroticism (Berman *et al.*, 2002).

3.METHOD

3.1. Sample

The sample was selected from the employees of enterprises operating in the private sector in Antalya. A total of 433 usable questionnaires were obtained from the 500 questionnaires distributed. 55.7 percent of the participants were married, and 44.3 percent were single. Approximately 51.5 percent were female, and 48.5 percent were male. The duration of friendship with their close workplace friend of 49.5 percent of the participants is 1-5 years. Approximately 62.4 percent of the participants' close workplace friends were married, and 37.6 percent were single. 55.2 percent of the participants' close workplace friends were female, and 44.4 percent were male.

3.2. Measures

In the research, a secondary analysis was carried out using the data from writers (2018)'s study. A scale consisting of 48 items and six dimensions (trustworthiness, competence, having someone's back, value-life interest similarity, socio-cultural similarity, and caring personal relationships) developed by Ömüriş (2014) was used to determine workplace friendship, which is the independent variable of the research. Sample items: "They never misuses my goodwill," "I trust their work-related knowledge," "To protect me, they ignore my work-related mistakes," and "We spend time together outside of working hours (going to the cinema, eating out, having a drink, etc.)." Goodness of fit values of the scale were calculated. CMIN/DF:1,949; AGFI: 0.87; GFI:0.899; CFI;0.94; NFI:0.885; RMSEA: 0.047; p:0.00 was found. CMIN/DF, CFI, RMSEA, AGFI, GFI, NFI and p values show that the model is within acceptable limits (Tanaka and Huba, 1985; Hu and Bentler, 1999; Meydan and Şeşen, 2011; Hooper et al., 2008).

The scale form developed by Brayfield and Rothe (1951) and adapted to Turkish by Bilgin (1995) was used to measure job satisfaction. This scale consists of 5 items, and two items are reverse scored. Sample items are "I feel fairly satisfied with my present job" and "I find real enjoyment in my work." Goodness of fit values of the scale were calculated. CMIN/DF:3,63; CFI;0.987; NFI:0.95; RMSEA: 0.078; p:0.012 was found. CMIN/DF, CFI, RMSEA, NFI and p values show that the model is within acceptable limits.

To measure the intention to leave, Cammann *et al.* (1983) and adapted to Turkish by Gürbüz and Bekmezci (2012) a three-item and one-dimensional scale was used. A sample item is "I often think about quitting this job." At least three indicators are required for single factor models. When three indicators are employed, the one-factor solution is just-identified and no goodness-of-fit assessment is performed; nevertheless, the magnitude of the factor loads can still be used to evaluate this model. The model is over-defined when four or more indicators are utilized, and goodness of fit can be used (Brown, 2006). For this reason, the factor loads of the scale were calculated and it was found that the values were appropriate. The Cronbach's alpha reliability results of the scales are presented in Table I.

3.3. Analysis and procedure

The analysis consists of three steps. In the first step, latent profiles were revealed by considering the dimensions measuring close workplace friendship, job satisfaction, and intention to leave work together. In this step, the dimensions of close workplace friendship interacted with job satisfaction and intention to leave, which are firmly related, and the participants were separated into profiles. As a result of LPA, latent profiles were revealed, and these profiles were added to the data set as a new variable. In the second step, the dimensions of job satisfaction and intention to leave were removed. Estimation was made by teaching profiles with discriminant analysis using only close workplace friendship dimensions. At this step, where the bootstrap method is used, an answer was sought to how close workplace friendship dimensions can predict real profiles. In the third step, only the dimensions of close workplace friendship and how the intention to leave changed according to the estimated profiles were examined. The similarities and differences in the intention to leave the job were revealed in the implicit profiles that emerged in the first step and the predicted profiles in the second step.

Analyses were conducted with the R v.4.2.0 (R Core Team, 2022) program using the RStudio v2022.02.3.492 (RStudio Team, 2022) interface. mclust v5.4.9 package (Fraley and Raftery, 2002; Fraley *et al.*, 2012; Scrucca *et al.*, 2016) was used for LPA, basic libraries, and psych v2.2.5 package (Revelle, 2022) was used for other analyses. Graphic plots were made with the ggplot2 v3.3.6 package (Wickham, 2016).

For the EM (expectation-maximization) initial algorithm in LPA, all parameters (variance-covariance) were released, and scaled SVD (single value decomposition) based MBHAC (model-based hierarchical aggregate clustering) method was used (Scrucca *et al.*, 2016). While creating the estimation parameters in discriminant analysis, a single profile structure was taught to the relevant profile by releasing all parameters (variance-covariance) based on the EDDA (Eigenvalue Decomposition Discriminant Analysis) method (Bensmail and Celeux, 1996), which assumes that the density of each profile can be explained with a single Gaussian component.

4. RESULT

4.1. Preliminary analysis

Descriptive statistics for all variables used in the study and correlation findings between variables are given in Table I. In addition, reliability findings regarding the dimensions are given in the diagonal of Table I.

Table 1: Reliability of dimensions, basic statistics, and correlation findings

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
<i>Trustworthiness (1)</i>	(0.87)							
<i>Competence (2)</i>	0.74**	(0.88)						
<i>Having someone's back (3)</i>	0.56**	0.58**	(0.82)					
<i>Value-life interest similarity (4)</i>	0.43**	0.38**	0.50**	(0.87)				
<i>Caring personal relationships (5)</i>	0.32**	0.32**	0.40**	0.64**	(0.74)			
<i>Socio-cultural similarity (6)</i>	0.26**	0.25**	0.32**	0.56**	0.53**	(0.78)		
<i>Job satisfaction (7)</i>	0.32**	0.30**	0.19**	0.14**	0.10*	0.13**	(0.72)	
<i>Intention to leave (8)</i>	-0.21**	-0.18**	-0.07	0.01	0.08	0.06	-0.56**	(0.74)
<i>Mean</i>	4.34	4.26	4.16	3.99	3.86	3.78	3.83	2.56
<i>Standard deviation</i>	0.56	0.60	0.66	0.77	0.83	0.99	0.80	1.16

**p<0.01 *p<0.05
 Note: The values on the diagonal are the Cronbach Alpha reliability findings for the dimensions.

The first three dimensions of the quality of close friendship at work (trustworthiness, competence, having someone's back) have strong relationships among themselves, and the other three dimensions (value-life interest similarity, socio-cultural similarity, caring personal relationships) have strong relationships with each other ($r>0.50$, $p<0.01$). The scale gives the impression that it carries two basic structures under itself. The exception is the relationship between value-life interest similarity and having someone's back ($r=0.50$, $p<0.01$). Another strong relationship is between job satisfaction and intention to leave ($r=0.56$, $p<0.01$). On the other hand, there are weak bonds between the dimensions of close friendship at work and job satisfaction. ($r_{maks}=0.32$, $p<0.01$; $r_{min}=0.1$, $p<0.05$). The relationship between intent to leave and trustworthiness ($r=-0.21$, $p<0.01$) and competence ($r=-0.18$, $p<0.01$) is fragile.

When the interdimensional relations are analyzed separately in this way, close workplace friendship will not have much relation with the intention to leave. However, close workplace friendship dimensions can interact and create different relationships. LPA can reveal implicit profiles and provide a holistic view by examining the relationships of all variables simultaneously in n-dimensional space. This study aimed to monitor how the intention to leave changes according to the nature of the relationship with a workplace friend. For this reason, while revealing the profiles of close workplace friendships, the variable of intention to leave was added, and it was aimed to reveal the profiles by being affected by this variable. In order to strengthen the separation in the analysis, job satisfaction, which has a strong relationship with the intention to leave and can act together, is also included in the analysis.

4.2. Analysis 1: Establishment of latent profiles

To determine the number of latent profiles and model structure, 14 different models, up to 9 clusters, were first compared with the BIC and ICL compliance information criteria. The study of Scrucca *et al.* (2016) can be examined for detailed information about the models. After comparing 126 models, BIC suggested four profiles in the VVE (variable volume, variable shape, equal orientation) model as the best choice ICL, on the other hand, recommended five profiles in the VEE (variable volume, equal shape, equal orientation) model as the best option. When the 5-profile structure suggested by ICL is examined, the weight of 2 profiles is below 1%. It is recommended that structures where the number of people in each profile falls below 25 should only be preferred with a reasonable explanation (Lubke and Neale, 2006).

For this reason, the 5-profile structure was not taken into account. The distributions in the 4-profile structure seem appropriate, but the entropy finding of the VVE model is 0.789. Although this level of entropy could be accepted (Jung and Wickrama, 2008), some researchers say it should not be below 0.8 (Clark and Muthén, 2009). Therefore, the entropy findings of other models in 4 profiles were examined in order to reveal whether there was a better model. In the VII (variable volume) model, which is a simpler model, the entropy is 0.852. The profile findings suggested by this model, which offers a stable structure, are also interpretable. As the model becomes more complex, more appropriate explanations can be provided for the data, but as the number of parameters released increases, the error increases and may adversely affect the estimation power (Vermunt and Magidson, 2002). For 8 variables and 4 profiles, the VVE model has 95 free parameters, while the VII model has 36. Therefore, it was decided to choose the VII model with 4 profiles in terms of both the higher entropy finding and the model's simplicity. In the VII model, variances between profiles are allowed to change, and covariances are assumed to be zero.

BIC = 7558, ICL = 7645, AIC = 7375, entropy = 0.852, APPA = (0.950; 0.924; 0.902; 0.859) in the 4-profile structure. Entropy and APPA findings are all over 0.8, which can be interpreted as a very stable result (Clark and Muthen, 2009; Jung and Wickrama, 2008). In addition, bootstrap LRT (LRTS = 220.7; $p < 0.001$) and Lo-Mendell-Rubin LRT (LMR = 209.3; $p < 0.001$) support that the 4-profile structure is more suitable than the 3-profile structure.

The data projection into the subspace was calculated using Scrucca's (2010) dimension reduction method. As a result of the dimension reduction method based on the profile averages, 98.3% of the data is explained with two dimensions (Dir1 and Dir2). How the participants act according to these two dimensions is visualized in Figure 1.

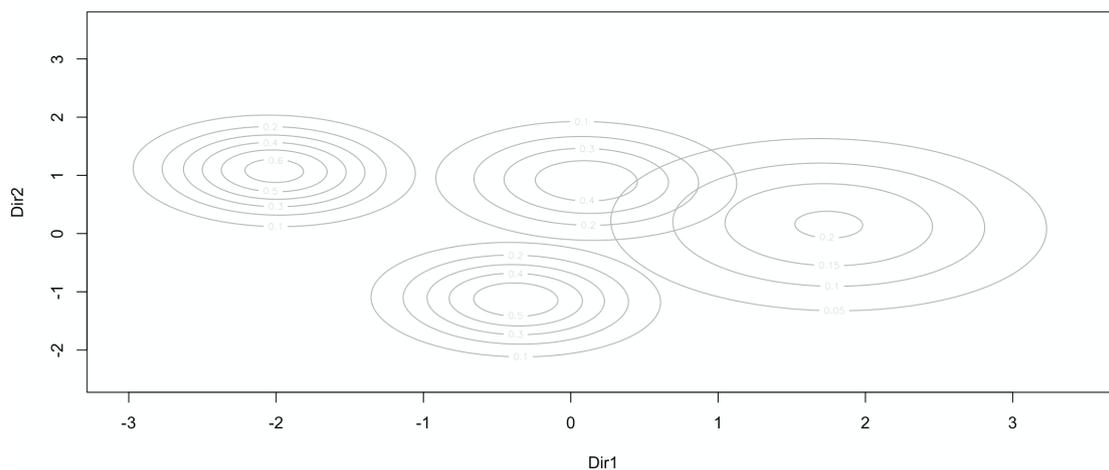


Figure 1: Distributions in reduced dimensions

It is observed in Figure 1 that the separation between profiles is quite distinct. Although Profile-2A (APPA = 0.902) and Profile-2B (APPA = 0.889) showed relatively lower mean probability assignment than other profiles, it should be noted that these profiles were also relatively stable.

The mean of the dimensions according to the profiles resulting from LPA and the standard errors calculated by the bootstrap technique is presented in Table II. Since people are assigned sensitively to profiles in LPA, the average calculation is made with probability weights. In the bootstrap technique, the average of each selection made from the data is also made this way, and standard errors are calculated. Therefore, it is necessary to read the means and standard errors presented in Table II in such a manner.

Table 2: LPA findings

		Profile-1A	Profile-1B	Profile-2A	Profile-2B
TOTAL	N	172	49	81	142
	a	0.383	0.112	0.191	0.314
	s	0.032	0.045	0.050	0.048
Trustworthiness	m	4.64	4.62	4.13	4.00
	s	0.03	0.12	0.12	0.10
Competence	m	4.55	4.55	4.01	3.96
	s	0.03	0.12	0.15	0.11
Having someone's back	m	4.50	4.53	3.69	3.89
	s	0.05	0.12	0.12	0.13
Value-life interest similarity	m	4.39	4.57	3.18	3.78
	s	0.06	0.10	0.17	0.13
Caring personal relationships	m	4.15	4.61	2.99	3.75
	s	0.08	0.12	0.16	0.14
Socio-cultural similarity	m	4.28	4.69	2.51	3.61
	s	0.07	0.14	0.19	0.20
Job satisfaction	m	4.39	3.39	3.93	3.26
	s	0.05	0.17	0.17	0.08
Intention to leave	m	1.74	4.33	2.16	3.17
	s	0.07	0.26	0.27	0.12
N: Number of people, a: Profile weight, s: Standard error, m: Mean Not: Standard errors were calculated with the bootstrap technique of weighted likelihood with 999 replications.					

Profile-1A is the most weighted one among the four profiles that emerged. The probability that a person is in Profile-1A is 0.383. Profile-1B comes in second place (a = 0.314). The weight of Profile-2A, which comes in third place, is 0.191 and the weight of Profile-1B, which comes in last place, is 0.112. The reason why the profiles are numbered this way is explained below.

The profiles obtained as a result of LPA were defined as a new variable, and the averages of the dimensions of the participants in each profile were calculated. The obtained findings are graphically visualized in Figure 2. The slight differences in some of the probability mean given in Table I and the solid means given in Figure 2 are related to the mentioned average calculation technique. ANOVA test was used to examine whether there were differences between profiles in each dimension. The difference between subgroups was examined with the Tukey HSD, one of the post hoc tests.

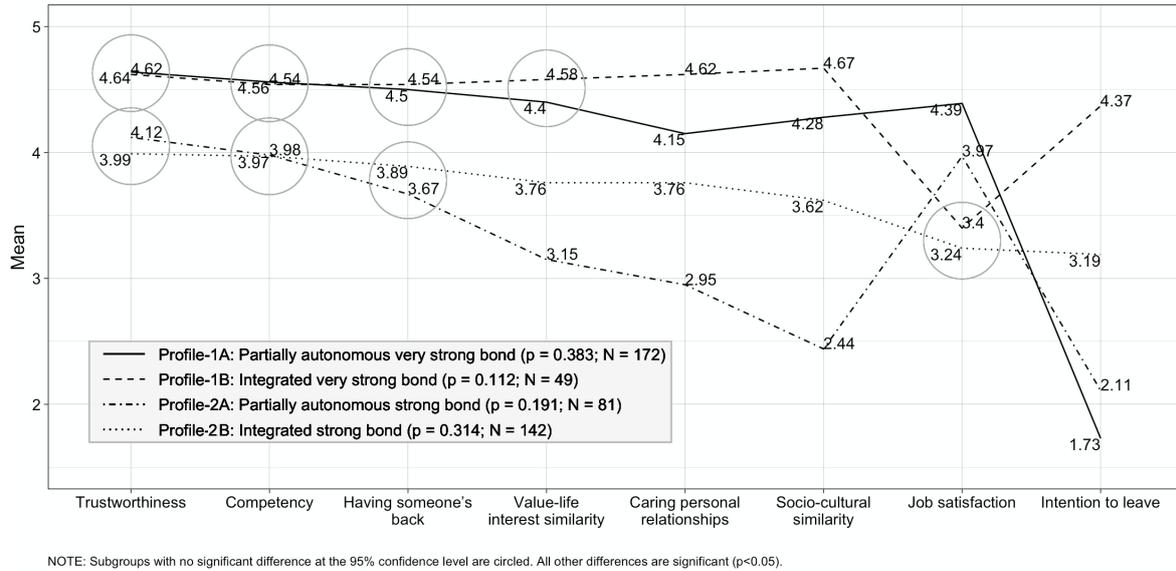


Figure 2: Dimension means according to profiles

When the dimensions in the profiles are examined in Figure 2, the two profiles at the top and the two at the bottom show similar characteristics. In other words, the four profiles appearing in the data set are relatively structurally, repetitive by shifting the means of the two profiles. For this reason, the upper profiles are defined as Profile-1 group (A and B), and the lower profiles as Profile-2 group (A and B). The course of job satisfaction and intention to leave the job of the people in Profile-1A and the people in Profile-2A show similar characteristics. Likewise, the course of job satisfaction and intention to leave the job of the people in Profile-1B and the people in Profile-2B show similar characteristics. Profiles will be explained first, and then the general view will be interpreted in more detail. Profiles are named according to the strength of bilateral bonds (Granovetter, 1973), which argues that the degree of overlap of friendship networks of two individuals varies according to the strength of their direct bond.

Profile-1A

People in this profile find their close workplace friends to be very reliable and very competent. In difficult situations at work, they are very confident that their friends will have their back. The way they evaluate situations with their closest friends is very compatible. In these respects, it shows similar features to those in Profile-1B (p>0.05). The features that differ from those in Profile-1B in their relations with their closest friends are caring personal relationships and socio-cultural similarities. Although their relationships with their closest friends outside of work (caring personal relationships) and cultural similarities are still higher, they are lower than those in Profile-1B (p<0.01). Because of these differences with those in Profile-1B, their relationship with their close friends has been described as a “Partially Autonomous Very Strong Bond.” Among all profiles, it is the profile with the highest job satisfaction and the lowest intention to leave (p<0.01). The probability that a person is in Profile-1A is 0.383.

Profile-1B

People in this profile positively evaluate their close workplace friends in all dimensions. They find the close workplace friend very reliable and very competent. In difficult situations at work, they are very confident that their friends will have their back. The value-life interest and socio-cultural similarity with their workplace friends are very high. They have very close relationships that continue outside of work. The relationships of those in this profile with their close workplace friends are defined as “Integrated Very Strong Bond.” Among all profiles, it is the profile with the highest intention to leave (p<0.01). It shows similar features to Profile-2B regarding job satisfaction (p>0.05). Job satisfaction is lower than those in Profile-1A and Profile-2A (p<0.01). The probability of a person being in Profile-1B is 0.112.

Profile-2A

People in this profile show similar trends in close workplace friendships as those in Profile-1A. However, they have lower means than those in Profile-1A ($p < 0.01$). People in this profile find their close workplace friends reliable and competent. In difficult situations at work, they are confident that their friends will have their back. In these respects, it is similar to Profile-2B ($p > 0.05$). The features that differ from those in Profile-2B in their relations with their close workplace friends are value-life interest similarities, care personal relationships, and sociocultural similarities. Their closeness with their closest friends outside of work and their life-value interest and socio-cultural similarities are lower than those in Profile-2B. ($p < 0.01$). Due to these differences with those in Profile-2B, their relationships with close workplace friends have been described as “Partially Autonomous Strong Bond.” At the same time, their job satisfaction is higher than those in Profile-1B and Profile-2B ($p < 0.01$), and lower than those in Profile-1A ($p < 0.01$). While their intention to leave is lower than those in Profile-1B and Profile-2B ($p < 0.01$), they are slightly higher than those in Profile-1A. ($p < 0.01$). The probability of a person being in Profile-2A is 0.191.

Profile-2B

People in this profile show similar trends in close workplace friendships as those in Profile-1B. They have lower means than those in Profile-1B ($p < 0.01$). They find their close workplace friends reliable and competent. In difficult situations at work, they are confident that their friends will have their back. They have a relatively high value-life interest and socio-cultural similarity with their close colleagues at work. Their close relationship with their workplace friends is still established outside work. The relationships of those in this profile with their close workplace friend were defined as “Integrated Strong Bond.” Their job satisfaction shows similar characteristics with Profile-2B ($p > 0.05$), but their job satisfaction is lower than those in Profile-1A and Profile-2A ($p < 0.01$). At the same time, their intention to leave is not as high as those in Profile-1B ($p < 0.01$); they are higher than those in Profile-1A and Profile-2A ($p < 0.01$). The probability that a person is in Profile-2B is 0.314.

Profile-A’s job satisfaction is higher than Profile-B’s ($p < 0.01$), and their intention to leave is lower ($p < 0.01$). Groups A and B have high levels of trustworthiness, competence, and having someone’s back and do not differ from each other in these aspects. These features are the foundations of a qualified bond in the sense that each attribute to their close workplace friend; these characteristics are given a high level of place. In profiles A and B, there is a difference in caring personal relationships and socio-cultural similarity. While there is no difference in Profile-1 regarding value-life interest similarity, there is a difference in Profile-2. Value-life interest similarity has yet to be interpreted because it needs to present a consistent structure. Caring personal relationships and socio-cultural similarity are similarly differentiated in Profile-1 and Profile-2. The caring personal relationship includes items expressing spending time together outside of work. Socio-cultural similarity measures cultural similarities, such as upbringing and family structure. Due to the difference in these two dimensions between groups A and B, “partially autonomous” concepts were used in groups A and “integrated” in groups B.

4.3. Analysis 2: Estimation Study

These explanations regarding the latent profiles revealed by LPA were thought to be sufficient, and the second analysis step was conducted. The second step, which asks: “Can the employee’s profile be predicted by only measuring close workplace friendships?” seeks an answer. To answer this question, discriminant analysis was used, which tests the agreement between the actual profiles and the estimated profiles. The bootstrap method is considered the most reliable method, which estimates the actual data set by taking the allowed sample from the data set in the size of the data set and averaging it by doing this process many times (Hand, 1997). In the analysis of this research, the results were reported with 1000 bootstraps by smoothing by weighting based on profiles in each sample selection. First, latent profiles were assigned as discrete variables to the data set in which LPA was performed. The data set taught latent profiles as real profiles, using only six dimensions measuring close workplace friendship. Then, in the estimated actual data set, estimation was made with the exact dimensions. This process was repeated 1000 times, and the means were calculated. The confusion matrix of one of the estimation operations is presented in Table III.

Table 3: A sample confusion matrix from 1000 bootstrap estimating processes

		<i>Estimated Profile</i>			
		<i>Profile-1A</i>	<i>Profile-1B</i>	<i>Profile-2A</i>	<i>Profile-2B</i>
<i>Actual Profile</i>	<i>Profile-1A</i>	129	22	0	21
	<i>Profile-1B</i>	26	21	0	2
	<i>Profile-2A</i>	2	0	64	15
	<i>Profile-2B</i>	22	1	7	112
<i>Classification error:</i>		0.267			

The average classification error of 1000 bootstrap results were determined as 0.29. The average of the weighted Kappa statistic is 0.65. This value is interpreted as satisfactory (Altman, 1999; Landis and Koch, 1977). In conclusion, the employee profile can be predicted with an accuracy of 71% by measuring close workplace friendships. Since a satisfactory finding was reached, it was decided to proceed to the final analysis step.

4.4. Analysis 3: Intention to leave in estimated profiles

The main question of this research is “Does the intention to leave change according to the characteristics of the relationships established by the employees with their close workplace friends?” To answer this question, the intention to leave changes in the predicted profiles was examined. While applying 1000 bootstrap, the mean of the intention to leave in the profiles estimated at each step was taken, and the overall mean was calculated. Means and 95% confidence intervals are plotted graphically in Figure 3.

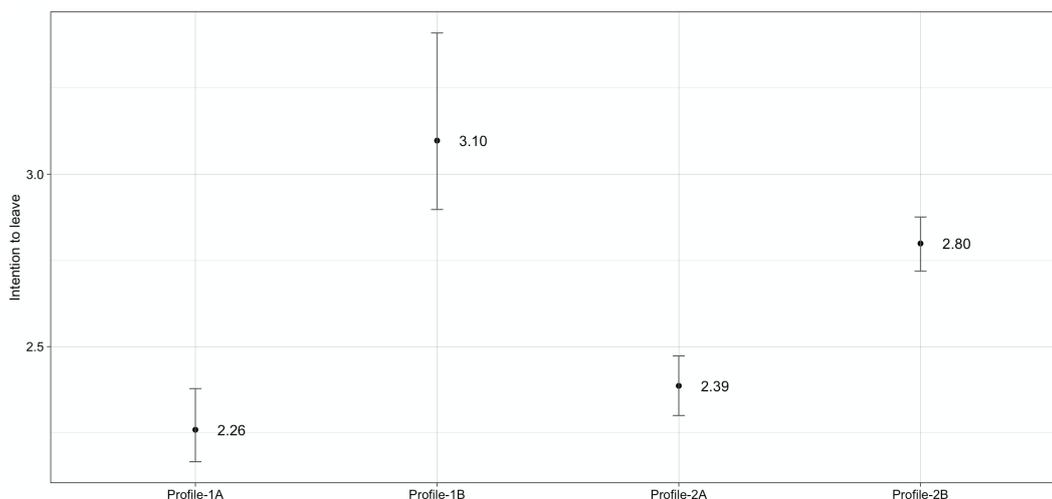


Figure 3. Intentions to leave and 95% confidence intervals in estimated profiles

As a result of the estimation made by using only the dimensions of close friendship in the workplace, the group with the highest intention to leave was Profile-1B (Mean= 3.10 [2.90-3.41]) Profile-2B (Mean = 2.80 [2.72-2.88]), was the second, Profile-2A (Mean = 2.39 [2.30-2.47]) was the third, and Profile-1A (Mean = 2.26 [2.17-2.38]) is the last. The ones given in square brackets are the lower and upper limits at the 95% confidence level. The difference test on how the intention to leave changes according to the profiles was again carried out with 1000 bootstraps. The findings are given in Table IV.

Table 4: Test for difference between intentions to leave in estimated profiles

Tested Profiles	Difference	Lower Limit	Upper Limit	Difference
Profile-1A – Profile-1B	-0.839	-1.129	-0.579	Yes
Profile-1A – Profile-2A	-0.127	-0.266	0.021	No
Profile-1A – Profile-2B	-0.540	-0.682	-0.384	Yes
Profile-1B – Profile-2A	0.712	0.488	1.028	Yes
Profile-1B – Profile-2B	0.299	0.071	0.617	Yes
Profile-2A – Profile-2A	-0.413	-0.549	-0.266	Yes

Note: The lower and upper limits are 95% confidence intervals.

The difference between Profile-1A and Profile-2A is insignificant ($p > 0.05$). All other differences are significant ($p < 0.05$). As a result, according to the latent profiles presented in Figure 2, the same ranking was obtained for intentions to leave. While a significant difference was observed between Profile-1A and Profile-2A in Figure 2, this difference was not observed according to the predicted profiles. There is also some variation in the averages. The mean of turnover intentions in real profiles (implicit profiles obtained in the first step) and profiles estimated only by close workplace friendship dimensions is given in Table V, ranked from largest to smallest.

Table 5: Mean of intention to leave in actual and estimated profiles

	Actual Profile	Estimated Profile
Profile-1B	4.37	3.10
Profile-2B	3.19	2.80
Profile-1A	2.11	2.39
Profile-2A	1.73	2.26

Note: Actual profiles are latent profiles obtained in the first step.

Especially the distinction between profile A and B is remarkable. Structurally, the profiles A and B are similar and different from each other. In actual profiles, people in profile B have higher intentions to leave than those in profile A. The same results were obtained in the estimated profiles.

5. DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

By revealing the dimensions of friendship between close workplace friends, we aimed to understand the processes of friendship's effect on their intention to leave. We discovered four latent profiles as a result of our analyses using workplace friendship dimensions, intention to leave, and job satisfaction. These profiles are partly autonomous very strong bonds, integrated very strong bonds, partly autonomous strong bonds, and integrated strong bonds. If the employees have integrated very strong bonds with their close workplace friends, their intention to leave is higher, and their job satisfaction is lower. If they also spend a significant amount of time together outside of work and exhibit strong cultural compatibility, their intention to leave increases. Sias *et al.* (2003) argue that organizational boundaries become blurred as workplace friendships go beyond the friends' professional roles. The reason for these uncertain boundaries is that workplace friendship is a type of multiple interpersonal relationships that require interaction emotionally and instrumentally (Methot *et al.*, 2015). As the friendship deepens, the influence of workplace contextual factors decreases, and the impact of external influences on the organization increases (Sias *et al.*, 2003). Methot *et al.* (2015) stated that multiple co-workers channelize their emotional, physical, and cognitive energies towards non-task-based activities such as maintaining, developing, and improving relationships. Employees with integrated very strong bonds also experience multiple interpersonal relationships. The higher intention to leave compared to other profiles may stem from this reason. In addition, employees with integrated very strong bonds have quite large intersection clusters, most likely because they share the same social and work environments. The reference frame of individuals connected by strong bonds strongly connected people (Allport, 1940) is similar. It can make the individuals in that relationship resemble each other and become uniform (Granovetter, 1973). In addition, negative emotions in the workplace have a stronger impact on attitudes and behaviours compared to positive emotions (Weiss and Cropanzano,

1996). These friends, who experience intense emotional closeness and similarity cause their close colleagues to experience negative emotions as well (Verbeke, 1997). According to the principle of the strength of bilateral ties, employees with solid ties influence each other significantly (Granovetter, 1973).

If there are partially autonomous strong bonds with a close friend at work, that is, employees who trust their close work friend, find them competent, believe that they are taken care of, do not spend much time with them outside of work, and do not feel much cultural harmony, have higher job satisfaction and a lower tendency to leave the job. In organizational cultures where trust and helping behaviour towards colleagues in the workplace are formed, the employee's intention to leave decreases (Akila and Priyadarshini, 2018; Ping *et al.*, 2020). It has been determined that trustworthiness and competence are negatively related to the intention to leave (Omuris, 2019). As the trust among workplace friends increases, the degree of integration of the employees with their work increases (Nielsen *et al.*, 2000; Morrison, 2004). Employees with a higher degree of mental and emotional integration with their job have a lower intention to leave (Berman *et al.*, 2002; Asgharian *et al.*, 2015).

This study has three theoretical contributions on the axis of close workplace friendship and intention to leave. The first is the emergence of four latent profiles of workplace friendship. LPA studies in the field of organizational behaviour mainly consist of personality (O'Neill *et al.*, 2014; Isler *et al.*, 2017), motivation (Zhang and Hirschi, 2021; Valero and Hirschi, 2016), organizational commitment (Straatmann *et al.*, 2018; Kam *et al.*, 2016;), psychological capital (Bouckennooghe *et al.*, 2019), psychological contract (Chambel, 2016), and coping strategies (Cruz and Nagy, 2022). Second, it brings a question to the conclusion that workplace friendship directly reduces the intention to leave without considering the type of workplace friendship. Dotan (2009) stated that the source of close workplace friendship would cause workplace friendship to affect organizational outputs in different ways. For example, some organizations implement a fun and friendship-themed culture development strategy inside and outside the job (Dumas and Sanchez-Burks, 2015). However, in a study examining its effects on the performance of teams of strangers and friends, researchers found that teams of strangers generated more profit than teams of friends (Robbins and Langton, 2006). Our research has also shown that the quality of the friendship relationship affects organizational outcomes differently. The third contribution, by measuring the close workplace friendship of the employees, predicts their profile and intention to leave satisfactorily. If we can understand how to categorize behavioral trends and the motivations that underlie people's behavior, we can more accurately predict people's behavior. LPA is mainly used in research on personality, psychological contracts, and organizational commitment (Yin *et al.*, 2020). LPA can be an effective method to understand better how and why employee behaviors affect organizational functioning and effectiveness and explore the depths of organizational behavior.

Apart from its contribution to the workplace friendship literature, this study offers practical suggestions for managers at the management level. By utilizing the study, managers can understand how the reasons for close workplace friendships an impact on employees' intention have to leave. The study's most significant contribution to the practitioners is that it emphasizes the necessity of considering close friendship relations within the workplace. Especially in human resources management's selection and placement process, the strength of weak links (Granovetter, 1973) reveals its importance again. Therefore, recruitment should be done meticulously with the reference of close friends. In addition, businesses should consider the effect of kinship relations and first-degree relatives in the workplace on employee behavior.

This study has some limitations. The first is that the research was conducted in the context of Turkish culture. The development of friendship relations may vary across different cultural context. The second limitation is that the study utilized a cross-sectional research design which limits its capacity to establish causal relationships between study variables. Another limitation is the use of a quantitative method in the study. Mixed methods could be preferred to understand the reasons behind the trends of the profiles. Additionally, gender variable has not been considered in the formation of profiles. However, it is known that workplace friendship is more strongly associated with job satisfaction and career advancement for men, whereas it is associated with social and emotional support for women. Hence, considering of gender variable is important stage for the formation of profiles. It is recommended to use experimental or longitudinal designs in future studies. Thus, more convincing evidence for causality can be provided. In addition, considering the gender variable in creating a latent profile

is an important step in creating profiles. How gender, ethnicity and organizational culture will affect these relationships should be examined. Finally, consideration of organizational culture can be an advantage as it can play a leading role in the development of workplace friendships.

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