

## AN INVESTIGATION OF TURKISH EMPLOYEE' S JOB DISSATISFACTION RESPONSES: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

For managers and supervisors, it is very important to know how employees respond to job dissatisfaction. Through the help of such knowledge, these managers and supervisors will be able to diagnose the employee job dissatisfaction, that might exist in the work place, and then take the necessary precautions in a timely manner. Research has shown that employee job dissatisfaction responses can be classified under four major headings. They are: (1) *Exit*- Leaving the organization; (2) *Voice*- Actively and constructively attempting to improve conditions; (3) *Loyalty*- Passively but optimistically waiting for conditions to improve, and (4) *Neglect*- not paying attention to the work or engaging in lax and disgraceful behaviors. The more managers and supervisors are aware of the nature and the type of these responses, the greater that they will gain control over these behaviors. How employees respond to job dissatisfaction is a relatively new phenomenon, and has been studied satisfactorily in the western cultures. In Turkey, however, scholars have not paid much attention –if any at all- to this phenomenon. Thus, in this study, an attempt has been made to explore the job dissatisfaction responses of Turkish employees, and the likely implications of these responses have been discussed.

### Introduction

In organizations, employees may experience, various kinds of problems and difficulties. Some may have problems with their supervisors or co-workers. Others may dislike their jobs, or get frustrated by the job related issues that are either problematic or not fulfilling. Some others, on the other hand, may be negatively affected by the insufficient physical conditions existing in the workplace. In any case, it is expected that managers or supervisors would identify, and then fix these problems as quickly as possible. If they fail to do so, these problems will persist and eventually turn into potential sources of dissatisfaction for the employees.

When dissatisfied, employees may display various reactions. For instance, they may come to work late (Adler & Golan, 1981), show less interest in their job (Angel & Perry, 1981), try to change the job within the organization (Todor, 1980) or consider quitting (Dalton et al., 1981). Some employees, however, may choose to voice their dissatisfaction. They either file grievances or talk to their supervisors about their problems (Freeman & Medof, 1984). Some other employees, despite their dissatisfaction, may remain silent and choose not to engage in any of these behaviors

(Hirschman, 1970). They continue to support organization hoping that the problems would go away.

Earlier research in this domain rarely included more than one variable, usually absenteeism and turnover, as behavioral responses to job dissatisfaction (Porter & Steers, 1973; Steers, 1977) and, they were rather individual and isolated behaviors (Farrell, 1983). The main criticism of these dependent variables was that they have not been defined in sufficiently broad terms. As Rosse and Hulin (1985) stated researchers inclined to examine surface variables rather than behavioral patterns or syndromes representing broader theoretical constructs. It is only recently that, researchers have come to view job turnover and job transfer as specific examples of a more general theoretical construct.

As Lynn (1992) pointed out, focusing on more general patterns or syndromes of behavior could be more valuable for the following reasons: (1) We may be able to predict dissatisfaction behaviors better if we take a broader perspective or, (2) Our ability to manage responses to dissatisfaction within organizations will increase if we take a broader focus.

Up to date, research has been concentrated on developing a typology which captures the diversity of responses and at the same time, identifies the similarities and differences between those responses. As Rusbult and Zembrodt (1982) stated, without such a typology it will be difficult to develop a comprehensive theoretical understanding of the dissatisfaction process.

The first major theoretical construct developed to organize and relate these behaviors has been “withdrawal models” (Adler & Golan, 1981; Beehr & Gupta, 1978; Mowday et al., 1984). These models account for the behavior that places physical or psychological distance between the employee and aversive work environment (Rosse & Hulin, 1985). Withdrawal behaviors in general, are known to include turnover, absenteeism, lateness, intentions to resign and the like (Lynn, 1992).

Recognition of the wide range of options or possible responses to job dissatisfaction can be credited in part to Albert Hirschman (1970). In his discussion of responses to decline in firms, organizations, and states, Hirschman proposed a typology of responses to dissatisfaction and outlined three general categories of reaction to deteriorating satisfaction: (1) *Exit* - leaving the organization; (2) *Voice* - actively and constructively attempting to improve conditions; (3) *Loyalty* - passively but optimistically waiting for conditions to improve. Later, Farrell (1983) suggested a fourth possible reaction “Neglect” which was not included in Hirschman’s typology. He defined this reaction as an individual choice to remain within the organization without any interest or trust in the subsequent recovery of the situation. In his opinion, employees may engage in lax and disgraceful behaviors or activities as neglectful reactions.

Farrell (1983) further proposed that these four types of reactions could be regarded as reflecting two underlying dimensions; active versus passive and constructive versus destructive (for the organization) reactions. His multidimensional scaling study of responses to job dissatisfaction showed that, voice is active and constructive, exit is active and destructive, loyalty is passive and somewhat destructive, and neglect is passive and destructive reaction. Voice and loyalty are constructive responses, because individuals attempt to revive or maintain satisfactory employment conditions whereas, exit and neglect are more destructive responses, because they worsen the employee-organization relationship. Exit and voice, on the other hand, are considered active mechanisms, because with this type of reaction employees attempt to deal with dissatisfaction whereas, loyalty and neglect are more passive reactions because employees either ignore the problem or refuse to deal with it.

The first comprehensive study toward an integrative model of responses to job dissatisfaction was carried out by Rusbult et al. (1988). They outlined and tested a new theory of job dissatisfaction responses that included multiple predictor variables and a comprehensive typology of the range of available responses. In a more recent study, Lynn (1992) developed a typology of employees' behavioral responses to dissatisfaction. Her typology revealed four categories of responses: "retreat," escaping from dissatisfaction; "voice," attempting to change the dissatisfaction; "silence," doing nothing; and "destruction," venting or retaliation through destructive activities. Retreat behaviors, however, later divided into two factors: "retreat" temporarily escaping from dissatisfaction and "exit" permanently escaping by leaving the organization.

In this study, an attempt has been made to explore the job dissatisfaction responses of Turkish employees and thereby test the applicability of Farrell's (1983) adaptation of Hirschman's (1970) theory of exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect for Turkish workers.

### **Job Dissatisfaction Responses: Exit, Voice, Loyalty, Neglect (EVLN)**

Rusbult et al., (1988) outlined and tested a new theory intended to serve as an integrative model of responses to job dissatisfaction. The theory includes multiple predictor variables and a comprehensive typology of the range of available responses, and aims to explain the job dissatisfaction phenomenon in a broader and more abstract level. The typology is based on Hirschman's (1970) discussion of responses to organizational decline and Rusbult's model of responses to dissatisfaction in close relationships (Rusbult, Zembrodt, & Gunn, 1982). The typology includes four response categories: Exit, Voice, Loyalty, and Neglect. And, the following is a brief description of each of these categories.

**Exit**

The theory of exit, voice, loyalty and neglect suggests four major possible options as responses to dissatisfaction. The first response is exit. Exit is equivalent to voluntary separation or turnover from the job. Members may either leave the job and the firm or, as Todor (1980) has noted, seek a transfer within the same organization as a means of leaving the dissatisfying job. Individuals who are trying to get away from an undesirable work situation, may search the opportunities first, within the current organization, and then look beyond to other organizations. Research supported employee movement within as well as across organizations in turnover research. For example, Todor (1980) found evidence that workers transfer to other jobs to get away from an undesirable work situation. He also found that, individuals who did transfer or who requested transfer were less satisfied and had a greater intention to quit than the employees who had remained on the same job and not requested a transfer. Examples of other exit-type behaviors include searching for a different job, accepting another job if offered, or excessively thinking about quitting.

**Voice**

Hirschman also contributed to employee's organizational behavior by identifying a political response to job dissatisfaction: the "Voice option" is defined "as any attempt at all to change rather than to escape from an objectionable state of affairs" (1970, p.30). Voice usually involves appeals to higher authorities either inside or outside of the managerial hierarchy, but it also may involve other actions and protests.

Freeman & Medof's (1984) exit-voice model suggested that formal grievance procedures can be used as voice mechanisms by organizational members. Employees who have some type of conflict or complaint might voice their problems through a grievance procedure. According to Freeman & Medof (1984), the opportunity to express complaints through a grievance procedure will lead to an improvement in working conditions as well as an increase in productivity and will prevent employees from leaving the organization. Moreover, Olson-Buchanan's (1996) study also showed that employees who had access to the grievance system and who actually used the grievance system to voice their dissatisfaction were less willing to exit the organization than those who did not have access to a grievance system.

**Loyalty**

The third category suggested by Hirschman (1970) is loyalty. When faced with dissatisfying situations in the organization, some members may choose neither exit nor voice; rather they stick with the firm for a period of time before reacting to the problem. They "suffer in silence, confident that things will soon get better" (Hirschman, 1970, p.38). However, Hirschman notes that most loyalist behaviors retain an enormous dose of reasoned calculation; "an individual member can remain loyal, without being

influential himself but hardly without the expectation that someone will act or something will happen to improve matters” (1970, pp. 78-79)

Loyal behaviors could be an indication of organizational commitment (Buchanan, 1974). A committed employee, therefore, is expected to have strong belief in and acceptance of organizational goals and values. He or she also displays willingness to exert considerable effort for the organization, and strong desire to maintain membership in the organization (Mowday et al., 1982).

Loyalty, in general, refers to actions that are marked by passive acceptance of the status quo regarding work-related matters. Examples of loyalty-type behaviors are; a willingness to offer verbal support for organizational policies without any willingness to engage in efforts to change policies with which one may disagree, relying on the passage of time to solve work-related problems without any employee intervention, or offering support to the organization by wearing institution logos, school colors, etc. (Martin, 1991).

### **Neglect**

The fourth type of response that a dissatisfied employee can exhibit is called neglect. Despite his or her dissatisfaction an employee can remain in the organization. But, in order to get even with the organization he or she either reduces his or her contribution (Withey and Cooper, 1989) or engages in retaliatory actions against the organization. In other words, dissatisfaction with one’s job may result in loose and disregarding behavior. Hirschman (1970) did not explicitly address this possibility, but two subsequent studies (Kolarska & Aldrich, 1980; Rusbult, Zembrodt & Gunn, 1982) have identified this option. In a consumer application of this theory stressing dissatisfaction with products, the fourth response was customer silence and inaction (Kolarska & Aldrich, 1980). In a study of romantic involvements, generally inattentive behavior, such as lack of caring and staying away, was termed neglect (Rusbult et al, 1982). In an organizational context, however, Farrell, (1983) described neglect as inattentive and disregarding behavior.

Examples of neglect type behaviors are: devoting less time to required job duties, (Adler & Golan, 1981; Angle & Perry, 1981; Farrel & Robb, 1980; Hammer, Landau & Stern, 1981) loss of motivation to perform required job duties, a general apathy regarding the quality of work (Petty and Bruning, 1980).etc.

### **Method**

#### **Sample**

In order to reveal the job dissatisfaction responses of Turkish employees a cross-sectional survey study was conducted. Data were collected from 250 employees

within 10 organizations across 5 different sectors. The sample was withdrawn from organizations located in Adana, the fourth largest city in Turkey.

The participants' occupations were ranged from secretary, or telephone operator to the specialists who work in the various departments of the organizations. A close to equal distribution of men (54 %) and women (46%) participated in the study. Respondents age ranged from 21 to 60 with the average age being 32. Just over half of the sample was married (60%). Education level varied, 31% had high school education and 54.5 % had a bachelors degree. Average length of tenure within the firm was 6.62 years and average tenure in the current job was 5.12 years. Income level also varied, such as 21% had an income between 75-125 million TL, 14.4% had an income level between 126-150 million TL and so on.

### **Measures**

The measures of the four EVLN (Exit, Voice, Loyalty, Neglect) reactions were basically adopted from those used in previous research (Rusbult et al., 1988; Lynn, 1992; Wuebker-Malice, 1992). The results of the previous research, and the factor analysis of the reactions indicated their validity (Farrell, 1983; Lynn, 1992). Items have been chosen from a large pool of dissatisfaction behaviors. During the translation process of these items some behavior descriptions have been modified to ensure that they were clear, consistent with one another and not compounded. In the end, 19 behavior descriptions have been chosen to represent the scales to measure responses to dissatisfaction. Responses to dissatisfaction were measured and analyzed at the individual employee level. To assess these variables, respondents were provided with the list of 19 behaviors reflecting the different responses to dissatisfaction. Respondents were asked to indicate, using a 1 to 5 scale, to what extent they had engaged in each behavior in the past year when they experienced job dissatisfaction. All respondents used response options from "have never engaged in this action (1)" to "have engaged in this action frequently (5)".

**Neglect** included the items:

Called in sick; Took lengthy coffee or lunch breaks; Left work early; Showed up late; Spent less time working; Engaged in activities that are not work related.

**Exit** was measured by the items:

Talked to co-workers about quitting; Spent some time looking for another job; Looked into transferring from my assigned job to an alternative job; Talked to someone in the organization about changing jobs.

**Voice** was measured by the following items:

Discussed dissatisfaction with a superior; Attempted to change the situation; Asked co-workers for advice about what to do; Tried to solve the problems by suggesting changes.

**Loyalty** was measured by:

Waited patiently for the situation to improve; Quietly did my job and let the higher ups make the decisions; Stuck with my assigned job and hoped the problem disappeared; Remained silent hoping the problem would go away; Carried on as though I was not satisfied.

### **Reliability of measures**

In order to assess the reliability of measures, the questionnaire was pre-tested on a sample of 50 white collar employees who were employed in different organizations. Reliability coefficients (Coefficient alpha) were calculated for measures designed to assess tendencies toward exit, voice, loyalty and neglect. To assess the dimensionality of the measures, following steps have been applied. First, the correlation of each item with the dimension to which it was hypothesized to belong was computed. These item-to-total correlations were, then, examined to determine whether these correlations are significant and conceptually meaningful. Any item that did not have a statistically significant higher correlation with the dimension to which it was hypothesized to belong was eliminated from analysis. For the construct of job dissatisfaction responses, two of the original 6 items were eliminated from the “neglect” dimension, leaving the 17 of the original 19 items. The internal homogeneity of the items belonging to each dimension was examined through coefficient alpha. Coefficient alphas for each dimension in exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect construct are displayed below. The internal homogeneity of the items belonging to each dimension seems to be reasonably high which allows us to go ahead and apply the instrument in our survey.

**Table 1**  
**Reliability Coefficients of Dimensions**

<b>Job dissatisfaction responses</b>	<b>Number of items</b>	<b>Coefficient alpha</b>
Exit	4	.8269
Voice	4	.7092
Loyalty	5	.7354
Neglect	4	.6339

### **Results**

Just stuck with my own job	,659				
Acted as if not dissatisfied	,616				
Waited for improvements	,492				
Engaged in activities not work related		,833			
Took lengthy breaks		,575			
Showed up late		,510			
Spent less time working		,351			
Looked for other job			,777		
Talked to others that he will quit			,742		
Looked into transferring				,829	
Talked about changing jobs				,783	
Offered suggestions					,719
Tried to change conditions					,512
Talked to superior about it					,423
Asked coworkers for advice					,390
<b>Eigenvalues</b>	<b>3.46</b>	<b>3.17</b>	<b>1.53</b>	<b>1.36</b>	<b>1.01</b>
<b>Explained % Variance</b>	<b>20.34</b>	<b>18.34</b>	<b>8.99</b>	<b>8.02</b>	<b>5.94</b>

As mentioned earlier, five factors emerged when the individuals responses were factor analyzed. The literature review, however, had suggested that four major categories of dissatisfaction responses should emerge when these items were used in a factor analysis. Therefore, the items were factor analyzed again with a forced four factor solution. The resulting factor structure was not as meaningful as the previous five factor solution. That is why, former five factor solution was retained. These five factors accounted for 61.9 % of variance in the responses to dissatisfaction. These factors appeared to represent the responses of voice, loyalty, neglect, and exit (exit is represented by two factors). Based on the criteria stated by Hair et al. (1995) factor loadings of “.35” and above are considered significant (with a sample size of 250).

The first factor, loyalty, had an eigenvalue of 3.46 and accounted for 20.34% of the variation explained. Five items which loaded on this factor represented doing nothing about the dissatisfaction, such as waiting for the problem to resolve itself, waiting for others to take care of the problem, acting as if not dissatisfied and saying nothing to others about the problem. These behaviors might also be interpreted as the sign of loyalty toward organization.

The second factor, labeled neglect, had an eigenvalue of 3.17 and explained 18.34% of the total variance. Four items which loaded on this factor included behaviors

like taking lengthy coffee and lunch breaks, coming to work late, spending less time working, and engaging in activities that are not work related, all of which implies an attitude that manifests itself in the form of escaping from the dissatisfaction.

The third and fourth factor, together, represented exit type of behaviors. Through these behaviors individuals attempted to escape from the dissatisfaction permanently. The two items which loaded on the third factor included behaviors, such as talking to coworkers about quitting, and spending time looking for another job. The remaining two items loaded on the fourth factor included behaviors like looking into transferring to another job and talking to someone in the organization about changing jobs. The third and fourth factors had eigenvalues of 1.53 and 1.36, and explained 8.99 % and 8.02 % of the total variance respectively.

Finally, the fifth factor, voice had an eigenvalue of 1.01 and accounted 5.94 % of the variance explained. Four items which loaded on this factor represented forms of attempting to change the dissatisfying situation, such as “discussed my dissatisfaction with a superior” and “asked someone for changes to be made.”

### **Findings and Implications**

This study attempted to reveal the reactions of Turkish employees when they experience job dissatisfaction in the workplace. The results of the factor analysis suggested that behavioral responses to dissatisfaction can be classified into the meaningful and interpretable patterns. It appears that the underlying motives of these patterns are -as theoretically explained- ignoring the problem, attempting to resolve the problem, escaping from the problem, or engaging in retaliatory actions against the problem. It was also shown that reactions which reflect these motives accounted for a considerable variance in dissatisfaction behaviors. This led us to conclude that employees respond to dissatisfaction in particular ways.

The results of the factor analysis, to a large extent, supported the typology existent in the literature. Factors representing Exit, Voice, Loyalty, and Neglect behaviors emerged. The only problem with the factors was that behaviors, hypothesized to represent exit, separated into two factors rather than one. These two factors (third and fourth factor) appear to represent the same motive with different behaviors. Third factor, labeled “external exit” and the fourth factor labeled “internal exit” represent the same motive -escaping from the dissatisfaction permanently-through distinctly different behaviors. While the third factor manifests itself through quitting the organization, the fourth factor manifests itself through the job transfer within the organization.

Furthermore, the means and frequencies of these factors (Exit, Voice, Loyalty, Neglect) showed that individuals in our sample engaged in exit and neglectful behaviors less than they did in voice and loyal behaviors. It means that people in our sample tend to avoid behaviors which might jeopardize their present job situations, they rather

display loyalty or attempt to fix the situation to solidify their position in the organization.

From theoretical standpoint it was shown that the scale used in this study was successful in measuring the job dissatisfaction responses of employees from another culture (Turkish employees). Extracted variance was sufficient and emerging factors were consistent with the previous research. In sum, this study provided additional support towards the generalizability and legitimacy of the job dissatisfaction response scale in management literature.

### **Conclusion**

The results of this study showed that various number of dissatisfaction behaviors can be explained with fewer and more simplified behavioral patterns. There is no doubt that reducing various number of dissatisfaction responses to a few number of more abstract and broader dimensions will facilitate the development of more parsimonious job dissatisfaction theories. Through the help of such theories, managers will be able to observe broader range of job dissatisfaction behaviors and possibly gain more predictive power over these behaviors.

Some practical benefits can be gained from the outcomes of this study. For instance, the resulting behavioral patterns may guide managers to be able to diagnose job dissatisfaction in the workplace. In organizations, job dissatisfaction manifests itself in different forms. Some of these reactions are very obvious such as complaining, quitting, or absenteeism, lateness etc. Some, however, may not be so obvious. For example, lengthy coffee breaks, production errors, injuries, rumors, and machinery break down may send clear signals that dissatisfaction exist in the workplace. Likewise, the manifestation of silency and loyalty does not necessarily mean that employees are not dissatisfied. They may be dissatisfied but remain to be silent and display no signs of dissatisfaction.

The activities and behaviors that employees engage in as responses to dissatisfying situations can be a route by which management finds about its failures (Hirschman, 1970). A close attention to these expressions of dissatisfaction enable managers to take timely and necessary precautions to prevent further deterioration in the workplace.

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## ÖZET

İşletme çalışanlarının iş tatminsizliklerine ne tür tepkiler gösterdiklerinin bilinmesi yöneticiler açısından son derece önemlidir. Bu sayede yöneticiler, işletme çalışanlarının memnuniyetsizliklerini teşhis edebilme, ve bu memnuniyetsizlikleri giderebilmek için gerekli olan önlemleri zamanında alabilme imkanına kavuşurlar. Yapılan araştırmalar, çalışanların gösterdikleri tepkilerin dört ana başlık altında sınıflandırıldığını göstermiştir. Bunlar: (1) İşten ayrılma (Exit); (2) Sorunları dile getirme (Voice); (3) Aldırmazlık, ya da işe karşı ilgisizlik (Neglect), ve (4) Herşeye rağmen sesiz kalıp sadakat (Loyalty) göstermektir. Batıda bu konuda yapılan tatmin edici çalışmalara karşın, ülkemizde, ilgili konuda yapılan çalışmaların yetersiz kaldığı görülmektedir. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma, ülkemiz işletme çalışanlarının iş tatminsizliklerine gösterdikleri tepkileri keşifsel bir şekilde araştırmayı, ve elde edilen sonuçları pratik ve teorik açıdan tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır.