

A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON ORGANISATION-BASED PSYCHOLOGICAL OWNERSHIP

ÖRGÜTE YÖNELİK PSİKOLOJİK SAHİPLENME OLGUSU ÜZERİNE NİTEL BİR ARAŞTIRMA

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Abstract

Psychological ownership is a phenomenon in which people develop possessive feelings for a specific target without legal ownership. It might be developed toward the organization or job itself in an organizational context. This study aims to understand organization-based psychological ownership in-depth, whether it can be used as a tool to foster desired outcomes, and how employees perceive the concept and their observations at work perceived effects of COVID-19 pandemic on organization based psychological ownership. Findings from in-depth interviews with 10 full-time employees in Turkey include definition, antecedents, and consequences of psychological ownership, possessions at work, perceived changes due to pandemic and management practices. The results show that organization-based psychological ownership can be used as a tool to increase job performance, productivity and foster extra-role behavior in organizations. This study intends to provide insight into Humans Resources and top management practices by listing the encouraging and discouraging factors related to psychological ownership.

Keywords: Psychological ownership, organization-based psychological ownership, organizational behavior

JEL Classification: D23, M10, M12

Öz

Psikolojik sahiplenme, kişilerin yasal sahipliği olmadan belirli bir hedefe yönelik sahiplenme duygusu geliştirmesidir. Örgütsel bağlamda, örgüte veya işin kendisine yönelik olarak geliştirilebilmektedir. Bu çalışma, örgüte yönelik psikolojik sahiplenmeyi derinlemesine anlamayı, örgütlerde istenen sonuçları teşvik etmek için bir araç olarak kullanılıp kullanılmayacağını, çalışanların kavramı nasıl algıladıklarını

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ve işyerindeki gözlemlerini ve COVID-19 pandemisinin örgüte yönelik psikolojik sahiplenme üzerindeki algılanan etkisini anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Türkiye’de 10 tam zamanlı çalışanla yapılan derinlemesine görüşmelerden elde edilen bulgular, psikolojik sahipliğin tanımını, öncülleri ve sonuçları, çalışanların işyerinde sahip olduklarını hissettikleri varlıkları, COVID-19’a bağlı olarak algıladıkları değişiklikleri ve yönetim uygulamalarını içermektedir. Sonuçlar, örgüte yönelik psikolojik sahiplenmenin, örgütlerde iş performansını, üretkenliğini artırmak ve ekstra rol davranışlarını teşvik etmek için bir araç olarak kullanılabilceğini göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, psikolojik sahiplenme ile ilgili teşvik edici ve cesaret kırıcı faktörleri belirleyerek İnsan Kaynakları ve üst yönetim uygulamaları için içgörü sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Psikolojik sahiplenme, örgüte yönelik psikolojik sahiplenme, örgütsel davranış

JEL Sınıflandırılması: D23, M10, M12

1. Introduction

People develop ownership feelings towards tangible and intangible objects that shape their attitudes and behaviors without legal ownership. Pierce, Kostova & Dirks (2001: 229) define psychological ownership as a “state in which individuals feel as though the target of ownership or a piece of it is ‘theirs.’ It has been originally used outside of the organizational settings but applied to the work environment, most notably by the same scholars. Research has recognized that psychological ownership may be an essential phenomenon in an organizational context, and it might be developed toward the organization, the job, a specific project, organizational members, a novel idea, and work tools and equipment (Brown & Robinson, 2011; Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). With other contributing studies (Avey, Avolio, Crossley, & Luthans, 2009; Baer & Brown, 2012; Bernhard & O’Driscoll, 2011; Zhu, Chen, Li, & Zhou, 2013), antecedents, consequences, and managerial applications have been studied to gain a deeper knowledge of psychological ownership and its effects on organizations. However, rapid changes and work-life progress might have affected psychological ownership perspectives over time. Although most of the studies are associated with the positive aspects of psychological ownership, some studies link the concept with the potentially damaging effects such as reluctance to share knowledge, resistance to change, failure to delegate responsibility, defensive behaviors, and rejection of new knowledge (Pickford, Joy, & Roll, 2016).

This study aimed to understand organization-based psychological ownership in detail and extend previous studies in Turkey. Since there are limited qualitative studies of psychological ownership with the Turkish population, the findings of this research will positively contribute to the literature. This study’s key research questions were how employees define psychological ownership, what they perceive as possessions at work – whether they possess their jobs or organizations – and the antecedents and consequences of psychological ownership in Turkey. We also wanted to focus on understanding whether psychological ownership can increase productivity and desired employee behaviors to provide insight to applications at the workplace, especially for Human Resources and top management practices. It would be essential to raise awareness about encouraging and discouraging factors affecting psychological ownership.

2. Literature Review

Van Dyne & Pierce (2004: 439) define psychological ownership as “the psychologically experienced phenomenon in which an employee develops possessive feelings for the target”. The target and possessive feelings may differ according to an employee. Possessive feelings can refer to tangible or intangible objects based on legal ownership or the absence of legal ownership. Van Dyne & Pierce (2004) evaluate psychological ownership as different from other work-related attitudes, emphasizing the “emotional attachment to the organization that transcends the mere cognitive evaluation of the firm.” They discuss its links to attitudes, self-concept, and sense of responsibility. The research on psychological ownership has demonstrated that when people have a sense of ownership for the target, they evaluate it more favorably; make it a part of the extended self (defining as “mine, me, I am” etc.); develop a sense of responsibility that evokes protecting, defending, enhancing their ownership rights also controlling, limiting access by others.

Psychological ownership may be towards tangible targets at work such as desks, computers, parking spaces, and intangible targets such as tasks, ideas, teams, or clients. Bullock (2015) had categorized the targets into nine broad categories such as Personal attributes (e.g., skills, competencies, knowledge, experience); mental processes (e.g., ideas, understandings, beliefs); Material objects (e.g., computers, books, coffee cups, files); people and relationships (e.g., supervisors, subordinates, teams, clients); spaces (e.g., office, parking lot, cubicle); Responsibilities (e.g., job, task, workload, programs); work outcomes (e.g., accomplishments, plans, performance, failures); Actions (e.g., leadership, helping, speaking up) and social systems (e.g., organization, department, division, committee).

It would be beneficial to distinguish between legal ownership and psychological ownership. Besides legal ownership, psychological ownership is “the state where an individual feels as though the target of ownership or a piece of that target is ‘theirs’” and “manifesting in expressions such as my, mine, and our” (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2003). Therefore, legal ownership is upheld explicitly by the legal system, and psychological ownership is conceptualized as a perception by the individual. People can generate psychological ownership without legal ownership, and therefore, it may/may not be supported by legal ownership. A perfect example of this would be soccer fans. Fans have feelings of ownership of their team under all conditions, rejoicing with the team’s success, being sad with the team’s loss. They support their teams and do everything to make their team successful even though they have no legal ownership (Aslan & Ateşoğlu, 2020). Psychological ownership defines not only the object or target, but also the owners themselves, helping them build, affirm, or communicate their identity. Meaning that, individuals may attach expressions of who they are and the degree of their belonging (Pickford et al., 2016; Jami, Kouchaki, & Gino, 2021). Instead of expressing “that is my team,” saying “my team is Fenerbahçe, I am a Fenerbahçe fan” would be a suitable example for this.

Psychological ownership provides the satisfaction of three basic needs: having a sense of belonging, efficacy, and self-identity. A sense of belonging is a basic need related to having a place or home that would provide a context for comfort, pleasure, and security. When individuals develop a sense of belonging, it becomes a part of themselves. When the target becomes a part of self, s/he tends to

invest him or herself into the target. Efficacy is linked to feeling capable in a domain. Possession may enhance this feeling since it causes a sense of control, power, or influence over the target. By experiencing control over the target, individuals may feel that it belongs to them. Possessions impact one's self-identity; perceptions of "mine" or "ours" can express a sense of the self and core values. This is acquired by having an intimate knowledge of the target and self-investment. When an individual has deep knowledge about a target, it becomes a part of the self (Dawkins, Tian, Newman & Martin, 2015; Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004; Zwiars, 2017).

Psychological ownership might be developed toward the organization or job itself. In other words, employees' feelings of possession and psychological connection to the organization are defined as organization-based psychological ownership, or employees' feelings of possession towards their work, role, or project are defined as job-based psychological ownership. Both types of psychological ownership are considered attitudinal rather than an enduring trait of personality (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). Respectively, psychological ownership is context-specific and reflects the current position regarding both the present organization and the current job (Dawkins et al., 2015; Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004).

Many studies have begun to identify motives and experiences that may increase employees' organization-based psychological ownership. It may be influenced by organizational justice (Sieger, Bernhard, & Frey, 2011), autonomy (Mayhew, Ashkanasy, Bramble, & Gardner, 2007), participation in decision-making (Chi & Han, 2008; Han, Chiang, & Chang, 2010; Liu, Wang, Hui, & Lee, 2012), organizational identification (Knapp, Smith, & Sprinkle, 2014), transformational, ethical and transactional leadership styles (Avey et al., 2009; Avey, Wernsing, & Palanski, 2012), benevolent leadership (Zhu et al., 2013), participation in profit-sharing (Chi & Han, 2008), participation in stock ownership (Chiu et al., 2007), less structured work environment (O'Driscoll, Pierce, & Coghlan, 2006) and job control (Peng & Pierce, 2015). Comparatively, less research has examined antecedents of employees' feelings of job-based psychological ownership than organization-based psychological ownership. Main antecedents which predict job-based psychological ownership were identified, such as employee autonomy (Mayhew et al., 2007), job complexity (Brown, Pierce, & Crossley, 2014), transformational and transactional leadership (Bernhard & O'Driscoll, 2011) and employees' spiritual and emotional intelligence (Kaur, Sambasivan, & Kumar, 2013). Pierce, Jussila, & Cummings (2009) also demonstrate that five core job characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) promote job-based psychological ownership. Besides, participative management styles, organizational leaders' stewardship (Pickford et al., 2016), perceived power, perceived organizational support, and relational closeness (Zhang, Liu, Zhang, Xu, & Cheung, 2020) are highlighted as antecedents to psychological ownership in general.

A significant body of research has examined the effects of psychological ownership on employee attitudes and behaviors. Individuals who have organization-based psychological ownership feel they have the right to direct the organization and have a sense of responsibility (Derin, 2018). Van Dyne & Pierce (2004) have found a strong correlation between psychological ownership and work attitudes such as commitment and job satisfaction and behaviors like organizational citizenship behaviors and

organizational performance. O’Driscoll, Pierce, & Coghlan (2006) discuss that organization-based psychological ownership has a more substantial effect on organizational citizenship behaviors than job-based psychological ownership. Research also shows that job-based psychological ownership is related to job satisfaction (He & Pierce, 2015), whereas organization-based psychological ownership is related to affective organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Ozler, Yilmaz, & Ozler, 2008). Studies also support that employee with a high sense of psychological ownership tends to engage in voice behavior, creativity, knowledge-sharing behaviors, helping behavior, and extra-role behaviors (Ramos, Man, Mustafa & Ng, 2014; Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004; Zhu et al., 2013). Results also show that high levels of psychological ownership is linked with low absenteeism and intentions to quit and negative outcomes such as resistance to change, avoidance of teamwork, alienation, and stress exposure (Aslan & Ateşoğlu, 2020).

Due to COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations had to shut down and employees have been forced to remote work or to take time off. There are many studies about remote working or telework and its psychological effects on employees, such as psychological isolation. However, there is a limited number of research in effects of pandemic on psychological ownership. A study has found moderating effect of psychological isolation on the relationship between organization based psychological ownership and organizational citizenship. Results show that high level of organization-based psychological ownership with high level of psychological isolation leads to organizational citizenship behaviour (Bordarie & Grouille, 2022). In addition, in a research focusing on organizational commitment among senior hotel managers during COVID-19 pandemic in Turkey, relationship between psychological ownership and organizational commitment has been studied. It is reported that during pandemic “the managers began to care about their organization as if it were their own family”. Some managers considered their organizations as their family or home. Researchers conclude that this sense of ownership had a contribution to organizational commitment (Ağbay & Akbudak, 2021).

3. Method

In this study, a qualitative research method was conducted to examine employees’ thoughts about the concept of psychological ownership in detail. Phenomenological design, which is one of the qualitative research methods focusing on the essence of human experiences concerning a phenomenon, was preferred to determine the participants’ thoughts about the concept of psychological ownership and their observations in the work environment. In the determination of the people to be interviewed for data collection in the research, convenience sampling was used within the scope of purposive sampling, which recruits participants who are easily accessible and convenient to the researchers. As a data collection tool, in-depth interviews with the study group were conducted by interviewing online. The data collection process was completed through interviews held during September 2021-January 2022. For this study the approval of ethical committee no E-15705228.044.12989 dated 06.10.2021 was taken from the Ethical Committee, Doğuş University.

In order to collect data in this study, a semi-structured interview template was conducted with 10 full-time employees in Istanbul. Before the interviews, questions were developed through a comprehensive literature review on the concept of psychological empowerment. A pilot study lasting 30 minutes was conducted by the researchers with 3 private-sector employees. After this meeting, open-ended questions were tested in their sequence, content, wording, and approximate interview length before the implementation process. To ensure the accuracy of the data, the interviews were continued until data saturation. Data collection was ended when no new information could be collected, and the data became repetitive.

Each interview lasted on average 25-30 minutes, and researchers took steps to ensure the confidentiality of participants and the data collected from them. The average age of the study respondents was 37.3 years old; the average tenure in business life is 12,6 years; the average tenure in their organizations is 6,3 years. Participants of the study group are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographics of Study Group

No	Age	Gender	Marital Status	Education	Total Tenure	Tenure	Industry	Department	Position
1	32	M	Single	P.Graduate	8	5	Tourism/ Hospitality	Management	Board Member
2	33	M	Single	P.Graduate	8,5	7	Banking/Finance	Corporate Banking	Manager
3	41	M	Married	P.Graduate	15	3	IT / Technology	Business Development	Manager
4	36	F	Single	P.Graduate	14	6	Chemicals	Sales	Manager
5	49	M	Single	Graduate	25	10	IT / Technology	Logistics	Deputy General Manager
6	45	M	Single	Graduate	21	4	Food Production	Finance	Deputy General Manager
7	29	F	Married	P.Graduate	4	4	Education	Education	Lecturer
8	34	F	Married	P.Graduate	5	2	Education	Education	Lecturer
9	46	M	Married	Graduate	22	18	Logistics	Management	Supply chain director
10	28	F	Single	Graduate	4	4	Banking	Retail Banking	Bank clerk

Analysis of the qualitative data included the process of identifying, coding, and categorizing the information obtained during data collection. After processing the huge amount of raw information, the data obtained from the study group were transformed into expression patterns using inductive reasoning, and sub-themes were determined to gather these expressions under specific categories. After the interviews were completed, the recordings were transcribed, and the researchers and an expert academician reread the obtained text, and the content analysis was completed.

In order to increase the internal validity of the research, a conceptual framework was created while the interview form was developed. As it is recommended to provide diversity in selecting participants in qualitative studies, we noted that the people in the study group are working in different sectors and are asked to share their personal experiences to make a detailed analysis. After the interview process, the themes and categories determined by the researchers were sent to the study group to confirm. In order to increase the internal reliability of the research, the researcher and two lecturers who are experts in qualitative research coded separately on the data. The answers were compared, and the consistency coefficient was .88. The fact that it was over 80% is important in showing the study's consistency and reliability. The results include each participant's expressions (coded as P1, P2, P3...) reflecting the theme.

4. Results

The data analysis revealed several common issues and factors associated with psychological ownership. As a result of the analysis, five main categories, including some sub-categories, emerged: Definition, possessions at work, antecedents of psychological ownership, consequences of psychological ownership, and management practices.

In order to define psychological ownership, the definition of the concept was shared with participants, and they were asked to list what psychological ownership meant for them. The participants' prominent words were predominantly affective and cognitive psychological ownership measures such as protecting, caring, valuing, feeling like family, feeling pride while talking about the company, organizational commitment, and affective commitment (Table 2).

Table 2: Definition of Psychological Ownership

Category	Themes	Subthemes
1	Affective State	protection caring valuing Affective commitment Feeling like family feeling pride while talking about the company
	Cognitive State	Organizational commitment identification possession

Some of the comments are below:

P6: "Identifying oneself with the legal personality of the company. Being more sensitive, rational, and protecting in matters that are not in the responsibility of oneself. Being more protective, and it might be a bit of a status quo act."

P4: “When I hear the name of my own company, first of all, I feel a sense of belonging. I feel like mine, and I feel like it’s a place that belongs to me.”

P9: “I am proud to be an employee of this company. In any case, I try to promote and own my company.”

P8: “I sense this is my company.”

P10: “I intend to work in this company for many years. I feel so comfortable at work that I feel like I can’t get used to another workplace easily.”

P7: “If a family atmosphere is created within the company, then it will be easier for employees to embrace that place.”

When participants were asked about what they describe as “mine” at work, they stated both tangible and intangible assets as shown (Table 3);

Table 3: Possesions at Work

Category	Themes	Subthemes
2	Possesions at Work	Tangible assets
		Intangible assets
		Desk/Office Furniture
		Objects in the Office
		Formats, Reports, or Templates
		Company car
		Specific Projects
		Office
		Parking Space
		Basketball Court
		Library
		Office Cafeteria
		Decisions
		Strategic Ideas
		Moral Values
		Organizational Power
		The Reputation of the Organization
		The Social Context at Work
		Relationships with Team Members/Coworkers

Some of the comments are below;

P4:”I consider everything the company provides to me as mine.”

P2:”I trust the financial power of the company a lot, and I know that we would not have a problem with that. When I defend my company to the customer, I feel this power in myself.”

P10: “The fact that the company I work for has a certain reputation in the sector makes me happy, and I feel attached to this brand.”

P8: “The library is the place where I feel most comfortable in school. I love spending time there. I spend so much time there that I can say it’s “mine””

To understand the antecedents of psychological ownership, participants were asked about the factors that create psychological ownership. The factors are classified as individual and organizational factors as below (Table 4);

Table 4: Antecedents of Psychological Ownership

Category		Themes	Subthemes
3	Antecedents of PO	Individual factors	Achievement-oriented Personality Perfectionism Perceived Control/Power Self – Congruity Responsibility/Accountability Locus of control
		Organizational factors	Organizational Justice/Accountability Organizational Trust Leadership Style Ethical Values/Culture Morality at Workplace Investment on Employee Organization Structure Freedom/Autonomy Information Accessibility Psychologically Safe Work Environment Peace/Fun/Joy at Work

Some of the comments are below:

P1: “My name is written in LinkedIn; I have to work adequately. That is why I own up to it.”

P2: “You inevitably feel ownership because of the manager title, status, and environmental factors.

P3: “I feel safe at work.”

P4:”I know that the owners of the company will support me no matter what.”

P5: “Increasing quits and hiring new employees actually decrease the number of employees you know. This reduces my feeling of ownership.”

To understand the consequences of psychological ownership, participants were asked about the effects of psychological ownership. Mainly, two themes were identified as consequences named “individual” and “organizational,” as shown below (Table 5).

Table 5: Consequences of Psychological Ownership

Category	Themes	Subthemes
4	Individual consequences	Working Harder Sacrifice from Private Time Searching for Solutions for Other Departments/Units Extra-role Behaviors Job Satisfaction
	Organizational consequences	Organizational Identification Work Engagement Voice Behavior Increase in Productivity Solution-oriented Approach Positive Organizational Climate

Some of the examples are as below:

P2: “There was a branch project. At first, it was with someone else’s, and I used to observe it in general. And contribute, but then in a performance appraisal meeting, my manager said that s/he wanted me to take these two projects and proceed from then on. He said that it had become my project and that I would do it. I said, “But you started this with someone else, I wouldn’t want to jump into their business.”. He said, “No, I’ll talk to them,” and that it became mine. From just commenting on the project to adding my ideas and innovations. Last year, we talked about this, and we will start in 2022 at branches. It was something that had been going on for two years; we are making pilots etc. It is entirely my effort that we have launched the project now. I visited the branches, I explained the projects to employees there about why the project is important, what we are trying to achieve. I went to 7 branches from Maltepe to Zeytinburnu (approximately 30 km) in Istanbul in one day, which is not easy in Istanbul traffic. I left at 7 in the morning. Now I have this project. I spent effort and said that it is mine with all its faults and merits. At that time, my performance had increased twice more in the process. “

P3: “There are such feedbacks from other parties, that is, generally, from the second and third parties about the projects that I own. They say, “when you are doing the work, you do not do it just for the sake of it.” Let’s say there is a meeting that needs to be held routinely once a week, related to a project. I’m not the one who says that “Apart from that meeting, I don’t need to do anything until the next week. If I see it from meeting to meeting, it is enough.”. Some people say that. The meeting could be on Tuesday at 14.00, but on a Thursday or Friday, I meet with the other project members in a different place, at a Starbucks or a cafe to get the work done.”

P9: “When people embrace their companies, everyone focuses on the solution, not just the problems. Otherwise, when we look at the problems separately, the number of challenges can exceed the number of daily tasks. For this reason, people’s ownership of the problems related to the institution as if they are their own problems creates a basis for them to be more solution-oriented.”

To understand the perceived effect of COVID-19 pandemic on psychological ownership, participants were asked whether they felt a change in PO during the pandemic or after lockdown. Their experiences were also asked to understand the factors affecting change in detail.

Two participants whose positions were Deputy General Manager claimed that it remained the same. Responses of other participants who claimed an increase or decrease were examined, factors in increase or decrease in PO during pandemic were listed as below (Table 6).

Table 6: Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic

	<u>Category</u>	<u>Themes</u>	<u>Subthemes</u>
5	Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic	Factors that increase PO	missing the work environment supporting/protecting each other
		Factors that decrease PO	disarrangement in working hours being away from office not working in the office lack of tangible assets (building, desk etc) “out of sight, out of mind” inequity in salaries

Some of the examples are as below:

P1: “A sudden stop of work, disarrangement in working hours and order. Disarrangement reduced my sense of ownership. But then it got better. I didn’t detach myself form work, I came to work. If I didn’t come back to work, my PO would have been fallen down. Out of sight, out of mind. Getting away from work or not working has a decreasing effect.”

P2: “PO toward organization was decreased, PO toward my team was increased. Decrease in PO toward organization is due to lack of building, desk, also unfair salaries, insufficient benefits (insufficient amounts loaded in meal tickets). PO toward my team was increased due to effort to protect each other. “

P3: “It has been increased. I missed work environment “

P4: “It has been decreased at first, our communication was reduced. Then, there was an increase, I felt that they were with me even in the biggest crisis we have faced. “

The management practices that may be used as Human Resources management and top management were asked to participants. The practices are classified as encouraging and discouraging as below (Table 7);

Table 7: Management Practices

Category	Themes	Subthemes
6	Encouraging practices	Providing freedom/autonomy/ initiative Giving more power to mid-level managers Involment in stock shares Transparency in Performance Evaluation Goal setting Information sharing Appreciation/Recognition Organizational Justice “we” or “us” language Personalized gifts Comfort at workplace
	Discouraging practices	Providing representation expenses Gossip/Rumors/Misinformation Discrimination Bureaucracy/Over-formalisation Injustice Strong Hierarchy

The responses are shown below:

P1: “We don’t say ‘I’, we say ‘us’, “we did it together.” We are a team. Our principle is this order, our culture and us, us, us. We do not welcome anyone who says ‘I’ in the department, and it is so important as it encourages ownership.”

P4: “Saying, “I think there is this need in this, what would you do? Handle it, please...” It’s motivational even to say these. “This is your place.” So that sense of freedom is nice, and I think it increases ownership.”

P5: “Saying things like “Let’s go together, we will celebrate it together” makes one start to own that job and say “this is my job and I’m getting rewarded for it.””

P6: “An unbelievable freedom. We can take the initiative. PO increases due to the presence of responsibilities. Thus, we have to act as if we own it because we give account for everything that happens.”

P1: “If your income is not increasing parallel with the profit of the company makes, it reduces the sense of ownership and belonging.”

P2: “Useless paperwork, bureaucracy. It’s 2021; I think, getting permission from the system, permission papers, and bureaucracy are the things that should be removed—for example, printing out the mail. They print the presentation, which is reflected in the meetings held every week. We produce innovative products, but when your friend next to you prints out an e-mail or presentation, you get a little upset; that’s the opposite.”

P10: “If injustice and discriminatory policies are applied among employees, people will stop owning their companies because I think ownership should be mutual.”

5. Discussion

In this research, it is aimed to understand psychological ownership in detail. The responses to the research questions first defined psychological ownership were mainly related to the sense of belonging, possession, and self-identity. They seem to be primarily focused on organization-based psychological ownership. The responses include feeling like family, organizational commitment, an affective commitment which would support the findings of Ozler et al. (2008) that claimed organization-based psychological ownership is related to affective organizational commitment.

The responses for possessions at work were parallel with the previous studies. Both tangible and intangible assets were listed as estimated; however, the list of intangible assets is more significant than tangible assets. One of the exciting responses was “the power of the organization.” Especially financial power of the organization seems to positively impact a participant while communicating with customers. As Pierce et al. (2001:301) stated, connection with the target and knowledge about it creates a way to form a sense of ownership for the employees. Knowing tangible and intangible goals such as projects, processes, and important organizational goals will enable them to see the target better and contribute to the development of a sense of psychological ownership towards these goals.

Antecedents of psychological ownership reported by participants were generally similar to previous research; however, organizational characteristics appear to be more significant than individual characteristics. Providing responsibility, accountability and autonomy were frequent responses. It may be possible to interpret that having responsibility for the job or in a particular area and feeling accountable may provide access to a route to psychological ownership such as control, intimate knowledge, and investment of self. Similarly, autonomy in the job characteristics model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) may promote job-based psychological ownership by supporting Bullock’s (2015) findings. In addition, the expression of “accountability” as both an individual and organizational factor by the participants seems good support for Avey et al.’s (2009) work that stated “accountability” as a new dimension of psychological ownership. Locus of control was another personality characteristic mentioned in the study. According to Kaur et al. (2013), psychological ownership is closely linked with the need to influence the environment and the desire to control events in life, which is defined

as a locus of control. Similarly, as Pierce et al. (2001: 301) stated, there is a positive, significant, and causal relationship between the level of control over the object and ownership of the target object. Perceived control/power was another antecedent for psychological ownership that the study group members mentioned. Apart from previous studies, the effect of social media was mentioned in our interviews, and having a title seen publicly on LinkedIn was stated as an antecedent. In addition to this, psychological ownership as a result of having a manager title and status was shared. However, none of our participants stated titles when it is asked about possessions at work. Corporate titles may be associated with responsibilities or obligations, satisfy efficacy and self-identity, and provide a route to control and invest oneself. Due to remote or hybrid work, employees lack face-to-face social interactions. Social context, other employees, departments, and teams are considered possessions, but lack of interactions may negatively impact psychological ownership. Furthermore, changes in the group (quits, new hires, etc.) may also affect psychological ownership in terms of negatively affecting their morale.

The consequences stated by participants appear to be primarily related to an increase in job performance. Such examples, “working harder, sacrifice from private time, increase in productivity,” can be classified as increasing job performance. As stated in previous studies (Bernhard & O’Driscoll, 2011, Zhu et al., 2013), psychological ownership increases individual performances by providing internal motivation in employees and contributes to organizational performance. Pierce, Rubenfeld, & Morgan (1991) also associated psychological possessiveness with a high level of motivation, including extra role behaviors mentioned in our study. In addition, organizational identification and work engagement were exemplified in responses, and it is found no support for organizational commitment as a consequence. Although researchers have suggested that when employees feel ownership towards their organization, they will be more committed toward the organization (Pierce et al., 2001), the participants in the study group did not focus on this concept. Additionally, it is a valuable contribution that job satisfaction is recognized as a consequence of the psychological ownership that the participants frequently repeat. As previous studies (He & Pierce, 2015; Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004) mentioned, when employees develop psychological ownership towards their job, they create powerful bonds and develop a positive mindset with their organizations. However, surprisingly, some core studies mention the negative consequences of psychological ownership in the literature (Avey et al., 2009; Brown, Lawrence, & Robinson, 2005; Brown et al., 2014), but those who participated in this study did not comment on the negative results.

The effects of COVID-19 pandemic on psychological ownership examined in this study is limited due to number of participants. However, the stimulus of work environment seems to be influential in participants, it can be related to sense of belonging which is a need that psychological ownership provide satisfaction. Responses such as “out of sight, out of mind”, lack of tangible assets, missing the work environments are related to absence of work environment. It can be suggested to enrich employees’ home offices with objects related to office itself. Also, one of the factors that increase psychological ownership is supporting and protecting team members. This factor seems to be parallel with Bordarie & Grouille’s (2022) findings, but in this context, it is needed to assess organizational citizenship behavior in detail.

It is believed that our research gives insights into human resources and managerial practices. Encouraging and discouraging factors should be reviewed by organizations to foster psychological ownership. Using “us” and “we” language, emphasizing togetherness and team are highly recommended in brandings and interpersonal communication. Autonomy, the ability to take initiatives, having freedom were also linked to antecedents of psychological ownership. Therefore, providing employees with more independence and letting them take more initiative will make them feel more engaged in their work roles and own their organizations. At this point, job design interventions may be critical in promoting psychological ownership, which encourages an organizational culture of trust that employees work well in many different ways. Managers’ behavior such as appreciation, asking opinions, and emphasizing personal achievements can also encourage psychological ownership. Also, during crisis like pandemic, behavior that support and protect employees, communication, stimuli of work environment and clear work schedules smay be effective in sustaining psychological ownership. It is necessary to consider the findings of Brown, Pierce, & Crossley (2014) about the effect of psychological ownership on sales. They found that one scale-unit increase in psychological ownership had corresponded with \$13.5 million in sales volumes by salespersons working in a consumer-packaged goods company. It may be a practical example to explain the importance of psychological ownership to managers. In addition, it is found that appreciation/recognition is also a critical thing to encourage psychological ownership, which reminds managers of the importance of motivation in organizations. Increasing the number of positive feedback makes employees feel valued as individuals and responsible for their work. As Ozler et al. (2008) stated, a positive organizational climate is important in developing feelings of ownership. Discouraging practices such as discrimination between employees and creating misinformation will make employees feel undervalued and unfairly treated and diminish their identification with the organization, negatively affecting the organizational climate.

One of the limitations of this research is the number of interviews. Also, interviewees were selected from the private sector; therefore, representation of the population is limited. Secondly, however, the dark side of psychological ownership is discussed in the literature; the results of this study lead to positive outcomes of psychological ownership. None of the participants stated a negative consequence; thus, this research didn’t examine the negative sides of psychological ownership. Questions regarding adverse effects should be added to interview questions. Further investigations on the dark side of psychological ownership might be promising to extend research on the concept. Thirdly, our research is based on interviews conducted at the individual level. There is a need to use experimental design and interventions to observe psychological ownership in-depth at the team level. Especially in collectivist cultures such as Turkey, it is possible to study the nature of collective ownership and its consequences on organizations. Also, a more comprehensive investigation is needed to distinguish between organization-based psychological ownership and job-based psychological ownership because research conducted to date mainly focused on the organizational aspect, which creates a significant gap on the job aspect, especially theoretically. Lastly, a comparison between during and after pandemic should be examined to understand the effects of pandemic and remote working on psychological ownership.

Yazar Katkısı

CONTRIBUTION RATE	EXPLANATION	CONTRIBUTORS
Idea or Notion	Form the research idea or hypothesis	Dilek Işıl原因 Üçök
Literature Review	Review the literature required for the study	Nil Madi Dilek Işıl原因 Üçök
Research Design	Designing method, scale, and pattern for the study	Dilek Işıl原因 Üçök
Data Collecting and Processing	Collecting, organizing, and reporting data	Nil Madi Dilek Işıl原因 Üçök
Discussion and Interpretation	Taking responsibility in evaluating and finalizing the findings	Dilek Işıl原因 Üçök

Conflict of Interests

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