



Meaning and humility at work in the equation of religious orientation and materialistic personality*

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ABSTRACT

An important aspect of human life involves engaging directly or indirectly with work-related processes. Work plays a significant role in self-awareness and in living with a defined purpose. Given its importance, the aim was to understand how religious orientation and materialistic personality traits influence employees' perceptions of the meaning at work (MOW). Additionally, the study explores the impact of the MOW on humility behavior in the workplace. A quantitative approach was adopted, with data collected through surveys from 445 employees in the Çankaya district of Ankara. Data were collected using convenience sampling, and exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, as well as structural equation modeling, were conducted. Results show that religious orientation and materialistic personality traits (excluding nongenerosity) are key factors in explaining the MOW. Both intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations have a similar impact on the MOW. Materialistic traits, such as envy, negatively influence the MOW, whereas preservation has a positive effect. Moreover, finding meaning in the workplace has been found to foster humility. These findings are significant for companies aiming to cultivate a prosocial organizational climate.

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Dini yönelim ve materyalist kişilik denkleminde işte anlam ve tevazu

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ÖZ

İnsan ömrünün mühim bir kısmı direkt ya da dolaylı olarak “iş” ile alakalı bir sürece temas ederek geçmektedir. Bu minvalde yapılan iş bireyin kendini tanıma ve belirli bir gaye doğrultusunda hayatını idame ettirme sürecinde önemli bir role sahiptir. Bahsi geçen rolün önemine istinaden araştırmada çalışanların işin anlamına yönelik algılarında dini yönelimin ve materyalist kişilik özelliklerinin etkisinin anlaşılması amaçlanmıştır. Ayrıca işte kazanılan anlamın işte tevazu davranışına sebep olma durumu irdelenmektedir. Araştırmada nicel yöntem tercih edilmiş, veriler anketler aracılığıyla toplanmış ve Ankara ili Çankaya ilçesinde çalışan 445 çalışandan elde edilmiştir. Veriler kolayda örnekleme yöntemiyle toplanmış olup, keşfedici ve doğrulayıcı faktör analizinin yanı sıra yapısal eşitlik analizleri yapılmıştır. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre dini yönelim ve materyalist kişilik özellikleri (cimrilik hariç) işte anlamı açıklayan önemli değişkenlerdir. İçsel ve dışsal dini yönelim benzer düzeyde işte anlamı etkilemektedir. Materyalist bir özellik olan imrenme işte anlamı olumsuz yönde etkilerken muhafaza etme olumlu yönde etkilemektedir. Bununla birlikte işte anlam kazanmanın işyerinde tevazu davranışını pekiştirdiği iddiası da teyit edilmiştir. Elde edilen sonuçlar örgüt iklimini prososyal bir yapıya büründürmek isteyen şirketler açısından önem arz etmektedir.

1. Introduction

Harvard University's longitudinal study, spanning 85 years, suggests that success alone does not bring satisfaction; rather, satisfaction stems from attributing meaning or significance to one's work (Liebergall, 2023). Amid successive global crises, individuals are questioning the value of their current jobs and feeling compelled to pursue work that holds genuine significance. Consequently, many are opting to leave their current positions in search of more meaningful employment opportunities (Buckingham, 2022). How we position and give meaning to our work is a problem that affects how we perceive it (Steger, 2016).

The unique characteristics of the job (Arvey, Bouchard Jr, Segal and Abraham, 1989), the degree of centrality of the job in life (Dubin, 1956), and our individual values (Ros, Schwartz and Surkiss, 1999) influence the meaning we attribute to work. Values represent beliefs and principles that guide our attitudes and behaviors. They serve as standards for determining the appropriateness, morality, virtuousness, and effectiveness of our actions (Tekin, 2019). Values, acquired and developed by individuals and societies, are deeply ingrained attitudes and beliefs that consistently influence people's behavior across various situations (Turan and Aktan, 2008).

In the history of philosophical thought, an ongoing struggle exists between concepts rooted in idealism and materialism (Aydeniz, 2010). While religions often direct individuals towards an ultimate power and will, emphasizing life's meaning in accordance with religious principles, materialist thought posits that the world operates solely on physical laws and human existence is grounded in material contexts and their interactions (Smart, 1963). This study aims to investigate the importance that employees assign to their work, taking into account their religious orientation and materialistic personality traits, within the framework of these two fundamental philosophical perspectives.

Another aim of the research is to investigate whether the sense of meaning at work fosters humility behavior within the organization. Various studies have indicated that meaning at work positively influences employees' levels of psychological well-being (Keleş, 2017), job satisfaction

(Kanyılmaz Polat, 2022), work integration processes (Karataş and Özdemir, 2022), and their inclination to demonstrate organizational citizenship behavior (İmalı and Kaya, 2022). The research also delved into the impact of meaning at work, as a factor that fosters positive organizational outcomes, on altruistic humility behavior.

This study makes three primary contributions: (1) it examines the significance attributed to work by simultaneously considering religious orientation and materialistic personality traits, (2) it is among the first to explore the relationship between meaning at work and organizational humility behavior, and (3) it offers an original contribution to the emerging literature on meaningful work within the Turkish context. Understanding how the meaning of work is shaped during a period of shifting societal value judgments is of strategic importance for organizational human resource practices. Also, examining religious orientation and materialistic values within the Turkish cultural context is expected to offer alternative perspectives to the predominantly Western-centered findings. The shared findings are instrumental in advocating for the establishment of a prosocial organizational framework and promoting altruistic behaviors within the workplace.

2. Literature review

2.1. Religious orientation

It is difficult to express the concept of religion with a single definition that is universally accepted and encompasses every religion (Önder and Bulut, 2013). However, it can be said that the common thread among the meanings of the terms chosen by each religious culture to express the concept of religion is "way, belief, custom, bond, servitude" (Tümer, 2024). The concept of religion involves phenomena such as defining the sacred, experiencing fear and love towards the Creator, displaying sincere devotion and belief, and adopting a servant's attitude towards the Creator (Tümer, 1987).

Religious orientation refers to the manner in which an individual practices or lives out their beliefs and values (Cırhinlioğlu, 2006). The factors that influence people's beliefs and motivate them to act depend on their religious orientation (Erdoğan, 2015). Allport (1963) categorized religious orientation into two main categories: intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation.

Allport (1963) suggests that intrinsic religious orientation is more therapeutic and protective compared to extrinsic religious orientation. For individuals with an extrinsic religious orientation, religion may be seen as a mundane habit or an occasional ritual, something to be turned to only when personal relief is needed. Such individuals may use religion to enhance their social status, bolster their self-confidence, increase their income, acquire friends, power, and connections. They tend to instrumentalize religion for personal gain and are more likely to exhibit prejudice compared to those with an intrinsic religious orientation. The extrinsic type, in theological terms, turns towards God without moving away from the self (Allport, 1963; Harlak and Eskin, 2018; İkis and Kuşat, 2021).

Individuals with an intrinsic religious orientation derive their primary motivation in life from religion. They internalize all their religious beliefs and values, such as humility, compassion, tolerance, respect, and love for one's neighbor. In a life where religion is internalized, there is little room for negative emotions and behaviors such as contempt, disdain, and hatred (Allport and Ross, 1967). Religion serves as the most significant value system that provides meaning to life. A person shapes their life and even their daily routines according to religious principles. The influence of religion permeates every aspect of life (Cırhinlioğlu, 2010). Those with an intrinsic religious orientation generally exhibit higher scores of psychological well-being compared to those with an extrinsic religious orientation (Maltby and Day, 2000).

2.2. Materialist personality

Materialism is a perspective on existence or reality which posits that only matter exists or is real. According to this view, matter is the fundamental and essential constituent element of the universe, and it is the sole cause of mental entities, processes, or events (Akgün, 2014).

With the onset of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, materialism transitioned from being solely a philosophical concept to a stance that advocated for the tangible and objective aspects of

life (worldly goods and pleasures), while diminishing the importance of abstract and spiritual elements (such as eternal life and religion) (Shrum and Rustagi, 2018). In the 20th century, materialism evolved to be conceptualized as a trait or value influencing our pursuit of meaning and happiness, thereby shaping the goals and methods we employ (Wong, Chugani, Shrum and Gunz, 2011). Materialism is regarded as part of individuals' attitudes, representing a set of characteristics that mirror their values (Kilbourne Grünhagen and Foley, 2005).

According to Richins and Dawson (1992), materialism serves as a guiding value influencing individuals' behaviors and preferences across various situations. Belk (1985) defines materialism as the meaning individuals attribute to worldly possessions. At its highest levels, materialism entails possessions occupying a central role in one's life and being perceived as the primary source of both satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Materialism is characterized as a set of core beliefs regarding the importance of material possessions in an individual's life (Karabati and Cemalcilar, 2010). These beliefs are reflected in the extent to which material possessions serve as the primary determinant of an individual's contentment or discontentment with their life (Rindfleisch, Burroughs, and Denton, 1997).

Belk (1984) assessed materialism through the lens of personality traits and defined it as "the meaning an individual places on worldly possessions." Belk (1985) further examines materialistic personality traits across three sub-dimensions: "possession," "nongenerosity," and "envy." Later, a fourth dimension, "preservation," was added to these three dimensions, creating a four-dimensional structure (Ger and Belk, 1996). Below are brief explanations of the dimensions of materialistic personality traits, a key variable in this research (Belk, 1985, pp. 267-268; Ger and Belk, 1996, p. 64):

Nongenerosity: This encompasses individuals' reluctance to share their material possessions, experiences, knowledge, or positions. Moreover, such individuals tend to oppose charitable actions like lending and donations.

Envy: This involves feelings of displeasure and ill will towards another person's possessions, happiness, success, reputation, or position. Envy is characterized by a strong desire for others' possessions, whether material or experiential. Materialistic individuals often experience anger towards those who possess the things they desire and may feel a sense of humiliation as a result.

Preservation: This pertains to the act of preserving events, experiences, and memories in material form. The aim is to materialize, safeguard, and conserve objects laden with memories.

2.3. Meaning at work

The word meaning is defined as "What is understood from a word, a behavior or a phenomenon, and the thought or meaning that they remind" (TDK, 21.02.2023). What is comprehended from the process or how it is interpreted becomes more significant than the process itself and those involved in it. While meaning significantly impacts individuals in living consistently and healthily, meaningfulness is defined as the extent to which a person contributes to society or themselves in line with their existential purpose rather than obtaining something materially (Altunok, 2021; Göçen, 2019).

In the business context, meaning encompasses the alignment between the job's requirements and an individual's beliefs, behaviors, and value judgments (Spreitzer, 1995). The meaning and value attributed to work vary among individuals due to shifting norms, values, and beliefs throughout economic development over time (Özkalp, 2003). Work's meanings and roles serve to fulfill psychological and sociological needs alongside physical necessities of life. Consequently, the meaning and breadth of work have gained increased importance for both individuals and their families (Kapız, 2001).

Various researchers have proposed different conceptualizations of the meaning of work. Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012) introduced a 7-dimensional model, Steger, Dik, and Duffy (2012) proposed a 3-dimensional model, Lee (2015) presented a 4-dimensional model, Bendassolli, Borges-Andrade, Alves, and Torres (2015) proposed a 6-dimensional model, and Göçen and Terzi (2019) proposed a 6-dimensional model as well. In this research, two dimensions from Göçen and Terzi's (2019) model were utilized, which are outlined briefly below.

Meaning at Work: This dimension encompasses gaining self-awareness through one's work, aligning with personal goals and aspirations, deriving spiritual fulfillment from work, and making substantial contributions to personal growth. It also plays a significant role in fostering self-awareness.

Humility at Work: Humility entails being modest, unpretentious, and gracious (Poyraz and Cilveoğlu, 2020, p. 129). In the context of work, humility involves not seeking praise or recognition for one's skills and abilities, prioritizing the needs of others, and viewing one's actions as a service to society.

Individuals' value systems, particularly religious orientation and materialistic tendencies, serve as critical frameworks through which they interpret life events and define their purpose (Fletcher, 2004; Burroughs and Rindfleisch, 2002). Given that work constitutes a significant domain where individuals pursue existential fulfillment (Steger and Dik, 2010), it is reasonable to expect that these overarching value systems also influence how meaning is attributed to work. Religious beliefs often encourage viewing work as a calling or service to a higher purpose, thereby promoting deeper work engagement and meaning (Davidson and Caddell, 1994; David and Iliescu, 2020). Conversely, materialistic orientations, which emphasize personal gain and possessions, may hinder the perception of work as a meaningful endeavor (Unanue et al., 2017). Furthermore, previous research has shown that the experience of meaning at work fosters prosocial behaviors such as humility, as individuals who find their work meaningful are more likely to demonstrate respect, modesty, and altruism toward others (Davis et al., 2011; Göçen and Terzi, 2019). Therefore, examining how religious orientation and materialistic personality traits influence meaning at work, and how meaning at work subsequently impacts humility behavior, is critical for understanding the psychological and social dynamics that contribute to the development of a prosocial organizational climate, particularly in societies undergoing shifts in value orientations.

2.4. Theoretical hypothesis constructs

One of the greatest tragedies of modern humanity is being employed in a work environment devoid of soul or spirituality. Consequently, individuals have begun to search for the meaning of their lives, particularly the meaning of work (Baykal, 2018).

Religion's commands and prohibitions are closely related to the social sphere. It provides a framework that defines values, customs, and attitudes, shapes social conduct, and renders the meaning of life and work comprehensible and explicable. Discrepancies in adherence to religious values not only guide life choices but also influence preferences and interactions with others (Akto, 2014; Bozyiğit, 2019; Fam, Waller and Erdogan, 2004; Tiltay, 2010). Individual religious beliefs advocated and manifested in work environments can imbue meaning into work, fostering positive work attitudes (David and Iliescu, 2020). However, even among employees who share the same religion, the meaning they attribute to their work may vary depending on different religious orientations (Seo, Mahudin and Sohn, 2022).

Harpaz (1998) suggests that employees with strong religious beliefs tend to find their jobs more meaningful. Similarly, a study indicates that Muslim employees exhibit greater centrality of work compared to employees of Jewish origin, a difference attributed to the internalization and implementation of religious work values (Sharabi, 2011). Given that individuals generally perceive religious beliefs and experiences as sources of meaning in their lives (Fletcher, 2004), the aim was to assess whether individuals with intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations perceive their work as more meaningful. The hypothesis was formulated accordingly:

H1: Religious orientation affects the meaning at work.

While many individuals center their lives around the possessions they have acquired or desire, for those who are more content, these possessions are viewed as tools necessary for sustaining their lives (Yüceldoğan, 2010). When materialistic values clash with other values, individuals must redefine the significance of their values in order to cope with the resulting tensions (Burroughs and Rindfleisch, 2002).

According to Bredemeier and Toby (1960), materialists replace religion with the pursuit of possessions in structuring their lives and directing their behavior. Since materialism is a lifestyle or

personality trait, these attitudes and behaviors are also reflected in the workplace. Organizations may perceive materialism in employees as an important determinant of productivity and utilize this value to accomplish organizational objectives (Deckop, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2015).

On the contrary, materialistic personality traits have been found to negatively impact the meaning of work (Unanue, Rempel, Gómez and Van den Broeck, 2017), leading to negative work-related outcomes such as job dissatisfaction (Unanue, Oriol, Oyanedel, Rubio and Unanue, 2021), as well as dissatisfaction with rewards and career (Deckop, Jurkiewicz and Giacalone, 2010). Consequently, the aim was to explore the influence of materialistic personality traits on the meaning of work.

H2: Materialistic personality traits affect the meaning at work.

One of the most crucial factors influencing individuals in their existential journey of self-understanding and understanding their surroundings is the concept of work (Steger and Dik, 2010). Studies indicate that individuals who strive to find meaning in life experience satisfaction through finding meaning in their careers (Steger and Dik, 2009). Perceiving work as meaningful yields numerous positive organizational outcomes (Alparslan, Yastioğlu, Taş, Ali and Özmen, 2022).

When people have positive perception about their works, they tend to demonstrate more creative, productive, and committed behaviors in the workplace (Amabile and Kramer, 2012). In this regard, it is believed that the meaningfulness of work will foster the development of various altruistic behaviors in the workplace. Humility stands in contrast to arrogance and entails individuals purifying themselves from attitudes and behaviors that degrade others (Çağrıç, 28.02.2023).

Relationships and interactions with other people come to the fore in the process of gaining meaning (Steger, Frazier, Oishi and Kaler, 2006) and in exhibiting humility (Davis, Hook, Worthington, Van Tongeren, Gartner, Jennings and Emmons, 2011). An individual who searches for meaning or gains meaning will be able to exhibit more modest behavior toward those around him (Davis, McElroy, Choe, Westbrook, DeBlaere, Van Tongeren, Hook, Sandage and Placeres, 2017). Based on the idea that individuals who see their work as meaningful will behave humbly toward their colleagues, the following hypothesis has been developed.

H3: Meaning at work affects humility behavior at work.

A research model representation of dependent and independent variables developed based on the above-mentioned hypotheses is shared in Figure 1 below.

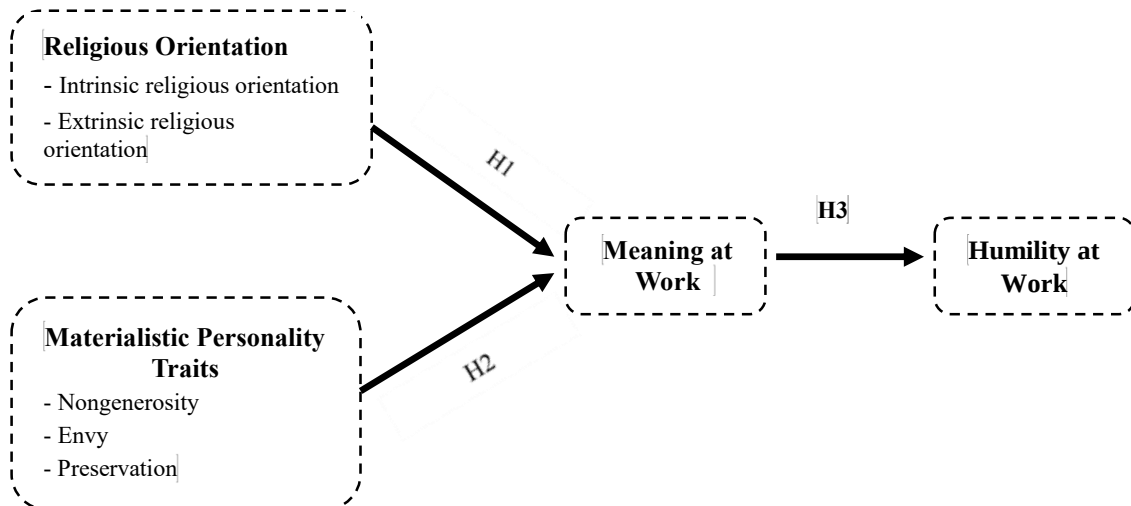


Figure 1. Research model

3. Method

Quantitative method was preferred in the research, and data were collected through surveys. The subheadings cover population-sample, data collection tools, and steps taken within the scope of data analysis. For the research, approval was obtained from the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Düzce University with decision number E-78187535 on 12.03.2021.

3.1. Population

The study population for the research was chosen from the Çankaya district of Ankara province. Due to the inability to conduct a complete count in the study population, the convenience sampling method was employed. Convenience sampling is a fast, economical, and straightforward method for data collection. Research indicates that approximately 90% of studies conducted in Turkey have utilized the convenience sampling method (Haşiloğlu, Baran and Aydın, 2015). The Çankaya district was selected for several reasons. Firstly, according to the latest census data, it is the second district with the highest population, totaling 925,828 residents. Additionally, based on 2020 data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK, 14.06.21), Çankaya ranks first in terms of completed education level among districts. Moreover, Çankaya is often described as the heart of Ankara and serves as the city's business and employment center, housing various central business areas (Şahin, 2019).

Since the number of individuals working in the Çankaya district was unknown, Bartlett, Kotrlik, and Higgins' (2001) formula was applied to calculate the sample size ($n = 384$). In addition, considering the use of convenience sampling in the study, Nunnally's (1978) recommendation regarding sample size was taken into account, and efforts were made to collect a number of surveys at least ten times the number of items. Given that the total number of items was 43, the 445 surveys used in the analysis are deemed sufficient. Research data was collected over a period of 3 months through online surveys. A total of 621 surveys were collected, but 176 surveys were excluded due to participation from different provinces or districts, or participation from individuals who were not employed. As a result, the analysis was conducted on the remaining 445 survey responses.

Among the participants, 52% are women, and approximately 80% hold a bachelor's degree or higher. Half of the participants are single, and their ages range between 26 and 33. The majority (45.6%) have over 10 years of work experience, and an equal percentage work in both the private and public sectors. Furthermore, 68% of the participants indicate that they are working in their desired field.

3.2. Data collection tools

The survey is divided into two sections. The first section comprises multiple-choice questions aimed at gathering demographic information about the participants. The second section contains scale items related to the research variables. Below is the information about the scales used to collect research data.

3.2.1. Religious orientation scale

This scale, developed by Allport and Ross (1967), was employed to assess religious orientation. This scale comprises two subscales, intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity, and includes 20 items. Tiltay and Torlak (2011) adapted the scale into Turkish, confirming its structure with 13 items and 2 sub-dimensions. The internal religious orientation dimension of the scale contains 9 items, while the extrinsic religious orientation dimension has 4 items. The Cronbach's alpha scores for the dimensions were 0.88 and 0.65, respectively.

3.2.2. Materialistic personality scale

The scale developed by Ger and Belk (1996) to measure materialist personality traits was adapted into Turkish by Tiltay and Torlak (2011). While the original scale comprised 4 dimensions (nongenerosity, possessiveness, envy, and preservation) with 21 items, the Turkish version reduced it to 3 dimensions (nongenerosity, envy, and preservation) with 11 items. Cronbach Alpha coefficients for the sub-dimensions were calculated as 0.70, 0.59, and 0.64.

3.2.3. Meaning at the work scale

Göçen and Terzi (2019) developed a 6-dimensional scale with 21 items to assess job perceptions among working individuals. The reliability coefficients for the subscales of the scale range from 0.73 to 0.84. For this study, only the dimensions of meaning at work (0.84) and humility (0.74) were utilized. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis findings for the selected dimensions are presented below.

3.3. Data analysis

Exploratory factor analysis was carried out for the scales initially. In this analysis, thresholds of $KMO \geq 0.60$, $p < 0.05$ for Bartlett's test, 50% for total variance, and factor loading ≥ 0.50 were considered (Gürbüz and Şahin, 2016). Once the factor structure of the variables was established, confirmatory factor analyses were conducted. In confirmatory factor analysis, goodness-of-fit values including χ^2 and its p-value, χ^2/df , CFI, GFI, SRMR, and RMSEA were reported (Gürbüz, 2019; Jackson, Gillaspay Jr, Purc-Stephenson, 2009). Kurtosis and skewness values were examined to assess the normal distribution assumption (Kim, 2013). Internal consistency was assessed using CR and Cronbach Alpha scores, while convergent validity was evaluated using AVE. Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggested that for convergent validity, the AVE value should exceed 0.50, the CR value should surpass 0.70, and the $CR > AVE$ condition should be met. Additionally, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient is expected to be higher than 0.60 (Kartal and Bardakçı, 2018). Discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the measurement model with alternative models and evaluating X^2 differences (Gürbüz, 2019).

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to examine the relationships between variables. Schumacker and Lomax (2004) suggest that SEM is suitable for analyzing complex data structures. The analyses were conducted using the AMOS program due to the Likert-scale nature of the data, SEM's ability to account for measurement error, and the satisfactory quality of the dataset (445 responses). Missing and outlier data were checked, and the assumption of normal distribution was assessed. Data screening procedures were successfully completed. Additionally, multicollinearity among the variables was examined using the variance inflation factor (VIF) values. According to Pardoe (2021), a VIF value exceeding 10 may indicate potential multicollinearity issues, although caution is advised when the value exceeds 4 in various applications.

4. Results

4.1. Exploratory analysis results

First, exploratory factor analyses were performed, and items that disrupted the general structure due to overlapping loads and low factors were removed. Accordingly, 3 items were removed from the religious orientation scale and 1 item was removed from the materialistic personality scale, but no item was removed from the meaning scale. KMO scores of the scales are sufficient (> 0.60), and Bartlett tests are significant ($p < 0.05$). The total variance ratios explained are sufficient ($> 50\%$) due to the presence of more than one-factor loading. Factor loadings of the variables are between 0.56 and 0.88 and are at a sufficient level. Based on this information, it can be stated that the exploratory structures of the scales have been confirmed (Gürbüz and Şahin, 2016).

Table 1

Exploratory factor analyses

Variables	Factor Loadings	KMO	Variance Explained	Eigenvalues	Number of Items
Intrinsic Religious Orientation	0.70 - 0.88	0.897	44.759	4.476	7
Extrinsic Religious Orientation	0.81 - 0.86		24.069	2.407	3
Nongenerosity	0.57 - 0.81		21.732	2.173	4
Preservation	0.72 - 0.81	0.738	18.099	1.810	3
Envy	0.56 - 0.80		17.801	1.780	3
Meaning at Work	0.75 - 0.83		40.064	3.205	5
Humility at Work	0.76 - 0.83	0.776	24.644	1.971	3

After the exploratory structure of the scales was confirmed, correlations between the variables were examined, and scores for convergent validity, composite reliability, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient were evaluated (Table 2). When the relationships between the variables are examined, it is seen that the independent variables internal ($r = 0.17$) and extrinsic religious orientation ($r = 0.19$), and preservation behavior ($r = 0.18$) have low-level and positive significant relationships with meaning at work. It is seen that humility at work and meaning at work ($r = 0.19$) and internal religious orientation ($r = 0.12$) have positive, low-level and significant relationships, while envy behavior ($r = -0.10$) has negative low-level and significant relationships.

However, it can be stated that the internal consistency of the scales is sufficient (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.60$), composite reliability is ensured ($CR > 0.60$), and convergent validity is achieved ($CR > 0.60$ and $CR > AVE$). It is also stated that when the AVE value is lower than 0.50, it can be concluded that the convergent validity of the structure is sufficient, even if more than 50% of the variance is due to error, based on CR alone (Fornell and Larcker, 1981, p. 46; Lam, 2012).

Table 2

Correlation, reliability and convergent validity

Variables	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	CR	AVE
Intrinsic Religious Orientation	4.10	0.93	(0.91)							0.91	0.59
Extrinsic Religious Orientation	1.87	0.94	0.44**	(0.81)						0.82	0.60
Nongenerosity	1.79	0.79	-0.04	0.07	(0.72)					0.72	0.40
Preservation	2.81	0.92	0.01	0.08	0.12**	(0.60)				0.63	0.36
Envy	1.73	0.76	0.02	0.15**	0.43**	0.23**	(0.65)			0.66	0.41
Meaning at Work	3.56	0.95	0.17**	0.19**	0.05	0.18**	-0.04	(0.86)		0.84	0.53
Humility at Work	3.86	0.86	0.12**	0.07	-0.05	0.07	-0.10*	0.19**	(0.73)	0.73	0.49

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, Values in parentheses indicate Cronbach's Alpha scores.

4.2. Measurement model

The measurement model used in the research was tested with CFA using the AMOS 23 program. Using the maximum likelihood method, the support of the predicted structures of the scales with the collected data was analyzed by comparing them with alternative models. The proposed 7-factor model (2-factor religious orientation, 3-factor materialistic personality, and 2-factor meaningful work) was compared with two alternative models using X^2 difference tests. It was determined that the 7-factor model was the model that best fit the data ($X^2 = 885.271$; $p < 0.001$). Based on this information, it can be stated that the scales used in the research have discriminant validity. In addition, after comparing the model with other models, there were serious improvements in the scores obtained after the modifications applied to the 7-factor model (assigning two covariances between error terms) and the final version of the seven-factor model ($X^2 = 679.155$; $p < 0.001$; $X^2/df = 2.077$; $CFI = 0.932$; $GFI = 0.900$; $SRMR = 0.0489$; $RMSEA = 0.049$) can be said to have good fit (Gürbüz and Şahin, 2018; Hu and Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2010).

Table 3

Model comparison for discriminant validity

Models	X^2	p	X^2/df	CFI	GFI	SRMR	RMSEA	Model Comparison	
								ΔX^2	Δdf
1. 7-Factor	885.271	0.000	2.691	0.892	0.875	0.0520	0.062	-	-
2. 3-Factor	1804.886	0.000	5.201	0.717	0.760	0.0896	0.097	2 vs. 1	919,6
3. 1-Factor	3266.761	0.000	9.334	0.434	0.595	0.1418	0.137	3 vs. 1	2381,4

4.3. Structural model

According to the evaluations made on the measurement model, it was determined that the model containing seven variables was the model with the best fit. Based on this, research hypotheses were tested. First of all, the absence of multicollinearity between the variables was confirmed through VIF values ($VIF < 10$) (Pardoe, 2021).

Analysis results revealed that intrinsic ($\beta = 0.17$; $p < 0.05$) and extrinsic religious orientation ($\beta = 0.16$; $p < 0.05$) had positive and significant effects on meaning at work, and (H1) was supported. Among the materialistic personality traits, preservation ($\beta = 0.25$; $p < 0.05$) affects meaning at work positively, while envy affects it negatively ($\beta = -0.28$; $p < 0.05$). The effect of the nongenerosity ($\beta = 0.16$; $p > 0.05$) on meaning at work is not significant. Accordingly, hypothesis (H2) was partially accepted. The claim (H3) that having meaning at work ($\beta = 0.22$; $p < 0.05$) increases humility at work was also supported by the data. According to this information, five independent variables can explain 16% of the change in meaning at work. Meaning at work can explain 5% of the change in humility at work.

Table 4

Hypothesis tests

Parameter Estimates			Standardized β	Unstandardized β	S.E.	t	p	VIF	R ²
MAW	←.....	IRO	0.168	0.209	0.076	2.744	0.006	1.256	
MAW	←.....	ERO	0.161	0.158	0.063	2.501	0.012	1.285	
MAW	←.....	Nongenerosity	0.155	0.190	0.102	1.857	0.063	1.237	0.16
MAW	←.....	Preservation	0.248	0.337	0.093	3.638	0.000	1.060	
MAW	←.....	Envy	-0.283	-0.398	0.136	-2.925	0.003	1.299	
HAW	←.....	MAW	0.223	0.161	0.043	3.729	0.000	1.000	0.05

MAW: Meaning at work, HAW: Humility at work, IRO: Intrinsic religious orientation, ERO: Extrinsic religious orientation

5. Discussion

In the center of the research lies the human who tries to find oneself and meaning in the environment shaped in what is described as modern times, surrounded by technological tools and equipment. Under the dizzying effect of tremendous speed, the need for self-understanding and positioning of the individual, who constantly strives to catch up with something, is increasing day by day.

Based on the quantitative structure of positivist thought, it can be said that a significant portion of human life is spent directly or indirectly in a process related to work or employment. Something that takes up so much time must logically be valuable. The value of something arises from the meaning attributed to it. In other words, values are valuable. After all, they are attributed meaning, because they are seen as meaningful (Tepe, 2009). The promise of modernity is not meaning but freedom: Modernity offers every kind of choice to the individualized subject and thus 'liberates' them, but it also leaves to the individual all responsibility for the meaning of existence and life (Kalin, 2010). Contrary to what is expected from the age of technology or information we are in, modern humans are overwhelmed by existential questions such as 'Who am I, what do I expect, where am I going, what awaits me...' (Albrecht, 1996). As modern humans shape their future, they must bring back their buried values and restructure their personal and social achievements within the framework of standards befitting human dignity (Bahadır, 2002).

The principle that every action we take should be based on meaning, purpose, and wisdom is one of the fundamental principles of the philosophy of creation (Kalin, 2017, p. 5). Religion already plays an important role in the formation of individual and social values in the society we are currently in. However, it can also be said that the Materialist view, which attempts to make sense of existence through material elements, has developed many value judgments in modern society. Therefore, it is

important to determine the particularly significant impact of these two opposing views, based on their respective ideologies, on meaning in the context of work.

In line with the philosophical tension between idealism and materialism, the study's findings reveal that both intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations positively influence employees' perceptions of meaning at work. This result aligns with idealist assumptions, which posit that transcendent values and spiritual beliefs provide a profound source of meaning in human life. Notably, the comparable impact of extrinsic religious orientation was unexpected, suggesting that even instrumental or socially motivated religiosity can fulfill existential needs in contemporary Turkish society, where shifting value judgments may have redefined traditional distinctions between intrinsic and extrinsic belief systems. Moreover, materialistic traits showed a differentiated impact: while envy, consistent with materialist theory, diminished the experience of meaning by fostering social comparison and dissatisfaction, preservation positively influenced meaning at work. This positive association implies that the material act of preserving experiences and memories can paradoxically serve existential functions traditionally attributed to idealist frameworks, indicating a more complex interplay between materialism and meaning in non-Western cultural contexts.

Research findings support the idea that religious orientation is an important variable in explaining the meaning at work. While Davidson and Caddell (1994) argue that religious belief influences individuals' views and attitudes towards their jobs, David and Iliescu (2020) suggest that individual religious beliefs advocated and manifested in the workplace can shape the meaning at work. Intrinsic religious orientation directs individuals towards helping others (Ji, Pendergraft and Perry, 2006) and makes their values and life philosophies more central (Maclean, Walker and Matsuba, 2004). While individuals with intrinsic religious orientation find their main motives in life in religion, those with extrinsic religious orientation are inclined to use religion for their own purposes and benefits (Allport and Ross, 1967). Based on this information, it was prevalent to think that intrinsic religious orientation would be more effective than extrinsic religious orientation in gaining meaning, and that extrinsic religious orientation could even negatively affect meaning. However, the results obtained showed that both orientations have similar levels of and positive effects on the meaning at work. Therefore, it is thought that the change in individual and societal value judgments (Özensel, 2004; Yazıcı, 2016) and the self-centered nature of the consumerist society that views consumption as a privilege (Akkoç, 2019) may have increased the impact of extrinsic religious orientation on the process of making sense of one's work.

Non-generosity, defined as the behavior of not sharing material possessions stemming from material personality traits, did not show an impact on the meaning at work. Preservation behavior, defined as the tendency to accumulate and store items of material value, however, has a significant effect on the meaning at work. The meaning, motivation, and consequences of owning something largely depend on what that thing is, how it is owned, and its relationship with other components of your life (Furby, 1980). Objects play an important role in both understanding ourselves and conveying that understanding to others (Belk, 1988). Additionally, we can use objects in our communication with others and in expressing ourselves (McCracken, 1986). In this regard, preservation behavior, which involves preserving events, experiences, and memories in material form (Ger and Belk, 1996), can provide an opportunity for individuals in search of meaning to better understand themselves and their work environment. Individuals who view their job as a means of acquiring material gains and preserving them may also perceive their work as a significant material acquisition tool.

Envy, another material personality trait, negatively affects meaning at work. While owning and keeping material elements reinforces the meaning at work, the idea that others own these materials reduces the meaning at work. Envy encompasses coveting what others have and often includes resentment towards those who possess coveted objects (Belk, 1984). This notion also signifies dissatisfaction with one's own possessions and share in life (Richins and Dawson, 1992). Envy negatively affects an individual's process of self-understanding (Schroeder and Dugal, 1995). Envy behavior tends to focus more on others and their possessions rather than on oneself. Therefore, individuals who are striving to make sense of themselves and their work, placing the acquisitions of others at the center due to envy behavior, experience impaired or even damaged processes of understanding.

Another significant finding of the research is that the meaning at work increases the likelihood of exhibiting humble behavior towards other individuals in the workplace. While envy is centered around comparing oneself with others and has a damaging nature, humility involves the individual's self-purification from feelings and behaviors that belittle others. The modern individual, presenting oneself as a "subject," claims that entities gain meaning through this "subjective" state (subjectum) (Kalin, 2010, p. 12). However, humility, as an important virtue, inherently entails acting with consideration for others. The English equivalents of the words "modesty" and "humility" are insufficient to reflect the other rich meanings of humility due to their cultural structures (Yücel and Arslantürk, 2019). For example, in a study conducted with a sample from Turkey, one of the ten different meanings expressed for the word humility is stated to be "Being aware of oneself/recognizing oneself" (Büyüksevindik and Işık, 2019). Therefore, when an individual assigns meaning to their work, it also affects their self-awareness and leads to the display of altruistic behaviors.

It is also noteworthy to consider the significant positive relationship between humility behavior and intrinsic religious orientation. Izutsu (1975) defines Islam in this context as relinquishing all forms of arrogance, pride, and self-admiration, and submitting to the will of Allah, demonstrating humility and submission as a servant. He emphasizes that humility holds a central value in Islam (Durak, 2015).

5.1. Managerial implications

In a system where the organization rewards employee success through material incentives (such as plaques, mugs, certificates, etc.), both the employee's preservation needs will be met, and the meaning-making process at work will be supported. Another approach could be to promote collaborative efforts and collective recognition systems, fostering a team-oriented culture to mitigate the adverse effects of envy behavior. Research shows that engaging in prosocial spending makes employees happier and more productive (Norton, 2011). Additionally, it is important to enrich the work environment with opportunities for fulfilling religious obligations and to incorporate such elements into HR plans and programs. Tourish and Tourish (2010) emphasize the importance for organizations and leaders to support employees in expressing themselves more holistically, while Baykal (2018) highlights the necessity of providing employees with opportunities to express themselves spiritually in the workplace. Therefore, individuals who are provided with these opportunities and find meaning in their work will contribute to their colleagues and their organization through altruistic behaviors.

5.2. Future research

Since the research addresses sensitive topics such as religious orientation and materialistic personality traits, studies can be conducted in different samples (rural areas, low education levels, low-income regions) to compare results. Conducting a mixed-pattern research may increase the explanatory power of meaning in work. In the initial stage, identifying the dominant characters shaping meaning at work through qualitative methods with experts, and then supporting these findings with data obtained through quantitative methods, can increase the explanatory power.

This research did not focus solely on a single sector. In future studies, a specific sector can be selected for investigation, or comparisons can be made across multiple sectors. Additionally, using alternative scales (e.g., Ercan, 2009), different aspects of the relationship between religious orientation and meaning at work can be revealed.

Author statement

Research and publication ethics statement

This study has been prepared in accordance with the ethical principles of scientific research and publication.

Approval of the ethics board

Approval was obtained from the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Düzce University with decision number E-78187535 on 12.03.2021.

Author contribution

Faruk Kerem Şentürk: Research idea, research design, methodology, data analysis, review and control.

Deniz Hilal İnan: Research idea, research design, literature review, data collection, data analysis.

Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest arising from the study for the authors or third parties.

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