

From Self-Evaluation to Work Engagement: The Roles of Job Crafting and Work Meaningfulness

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Abstract

Core self-evaluation has a pivotal role in employee attitudes and behaviors and has attracted ample attention from researchers in management literature. Based on Job Demand-Resource Theory, this study aims to examine the effect of core self-evaluation on work engagement, considering the mediating roles of job crafting and work meaningfulness. Data was collected from 386 participants working in various sectors through an online survey method and analyzed via AMOS 21 and PROCESS macro for SPSS. The results showed that (1) core self-evaluation positively relates to work engagement; (2) job crafting mediates the relationship between core self-evaluation and work engagement; (3) work meaningfulness mediates the relationship between core self-evaluation and work engagement; and (4) job crafting and work meaningfulness serially mediate the impact of core self-evaluation on work engagement. The current study makes contributions to management literature by holistically examining the relationships among core self-evaluation, job crafting, work meaningfulness, and work engagement.

Keywords: Core self-evaluation, work engagement, job crafting, work meaningfulness

Jel Classification: M1, M12, M19

Benlik Değerlendirmesinden İşe Tutkunluğa: İş Biçimlendirme ve İş Anlamlılığının Rolü

Özet

Temel benlik değerlendirmesi, çalışanların tutum ve davranışlarında çok önemli bir role sahiptir ve yönetim literatüründe araştırmacıların büyük ilgisini çekmiştir. İş Talepleri – Kaynaklar Teorisine dayanarak bu çalışma, temel benlik değerlendirmesinin işe tutkunluk üzerindeki etkisini ve bu ilişkide iş biçimlendirme ile iş anlamlılığının aracılık rollerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma kapsamında toplanan veriler, çeşitli sektörlerde çalışan 386 katılımcıdan elde edilmiş ve AMOS 21 programı ve SPSS PROCESS makrosu kullanılarak analizi edilmiştir. Bulgular, (1) temel benlik değerlendirmesinin işe tutkunlukla pozitif ilişkili olduğunu; (2) iş biçimlendirmenin, temel benlik değerlendirmesi ve işe tutkunluk arasındaki ilişkiye aracılık ettiğini; (3) iş anlamlılığının, temel benlik değerlendirmesi ve işe tutkunluk arasındaki ilişkiye aracılık ettiğini; ve (4) iş biçimlendirme ve işin anlamlılığının, temel benlik değerlendirmesinin işe tutkunluk üzerindeki etkisine seri olarak aracılık ettiğini göstermiştir. Bu çalışma, temel benlik

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1. Introduction

Today, with the development of technology, people have begun to question their own values and experience anxiety about the future. This negatively affects employees' commitment to their jobs and the level at which they find their jobs meaningful. In the business world, individuals' commitment to their jobs, motivation, and performance are shaped not only by external rewards, but also by individual personality traits and internal psychological factors (Bono and Judge, 2003). In particular, employees' passion for their jobs stands out as a critical factor in terms of organizational efficiency and individual happiness (Ozturk et al., 2021).

Recent studies have shown that individuals' core self-evaluations significantly impact their attitudes and behaviors in their work lives (Khan and Jin, 2024; Wang and Ding, 2024). In this context, core self-evaluation (CSE) is an important personality trait that expresses an individual's general perception of their own worth, competence, and sense of control (Judge et al., 2003). This study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the psychological processes in work life by examining the effect of core self-evaluation on work engagement.

The primary objective of this research is to identify the individual factors that influence employees' commitment and motivation in the context of increasing competition and evolving working conditions in the business world. Work engagement is related to individuals finding their work meaningful (Schaufeli et al., 2002). However, it is known that not all individuals show the same level of work engagement (Wang and Ding, 2024). Understanding the reasons behind these differences is essential for organizations to develop strategies to increase work engagement. In this context, understanding the impact of individuals' basic self-evaluation levels on work engagement is a crucial topic that can significantly contribute to existing literature.

This study examines the impact of core self-evaluation on work engagement, while also considering mediating variables such as job crafting and work meaningfulness. The literature has shown that individuals with high CSE experience greater job satisfaction (Wang and Ding, 2024), cope more effectively with stress (Zhang and Liu, 2021), and exhibit more proactive behavior at work (Nwanzu and Babalola, 2024). However, there are limited studies in the literature on the mechanisms shaping the work engagement. This study aims to provide a new perspective to the literature by explaining the effect of core self-evaluation on work engagement and also investigating the role of job crafting and work meaningfulness. In line with this purpose, this study aims to present important findings that will contribute to academic literature and the business world.

2. Literature Review

Today's rapid advances in technology are causing people to question their values and feel anxious about the future, negatively impacting their commitment and sense of work meaningfulness. In the business world, individuals' commitment, motivation and performance are shaped not only by external rewards but also by personal traits and internal psychological factors (Bono and Judge, 2003). In particular, employees' passion for their work is vital for organizational productivity and personal happiness (Ozturk et al., 2021). In this context, CSE is a key personality trait that reflects a person's overall view of their own worth, abilities and sense of control (Judge et al., 2003). Recent studies showed that individuals' CSE greatly influences their attitudes and behaviors at work (Wang and Ding, 2024).

2.1. Core Self-evaluation

Core self-evaluation (CSE) is a personality scale that provides information about an individual's tendency to make a general positive evaluation of their own worth, competence, and abilities (Judge et al., 2003). An individual with high CSE will be well-adjusted, confident, positive, and effective, and will have a strong belief in their abilities (Judge et al., 1998). Core self-evaluation consists of four basic concepts: self-efficacy, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability or low neuroticism (Judge et al., 1998). Self-esteem is the extent to which an individual regards himself/herself as valuable and essential and accepts him/herself with respect (Judge et al., 2003). Generalized self-efficacy refers to an individual's positive evaluation of their ability to cope with different tasks and situations and their self-confidence in achieving their goals (Judge et al., 1998). Locus of control refers to the belief held by individuals that the outcomes of their actions are due to internal factors, such as effort and ability, or external factors, such as luck and fate. In the context of core self-evaluation, it refers to the internal locus of control, which is the belief that individuals can affect the results with their own effort, abilities, and actions (Bono and Judge, 2003). On the other hand, emotional stability refers to the tendency to be unaffected by common negative emotions such as anxiety and depression and to feel calm and secure (Judge et al., 1998).

3. Hypotheses Development

Within the context of the current study, as shown in Figure 1, we investigated the impact of CSE on employees' work engagement, considering the mediating roles of job crafting and work meaningfulness.

3.1. Core Self-Evaluation and Work Engagement

Work engagement is a positive psychological state consisting of the dimensions of vitality, dedication and focus, where the employee is absorbed in his/her work and loses track of time (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Past studies showed that personality traits are one of the essential factors affecting work engagement. One of these factors is CSE, which consists of personal characteristics related to employees' self-efficacy, self-esteem, internal locus of control and emotional stability, and has an impact on positive behaviors in business life (Bono and Judge, 2003). In this regard,

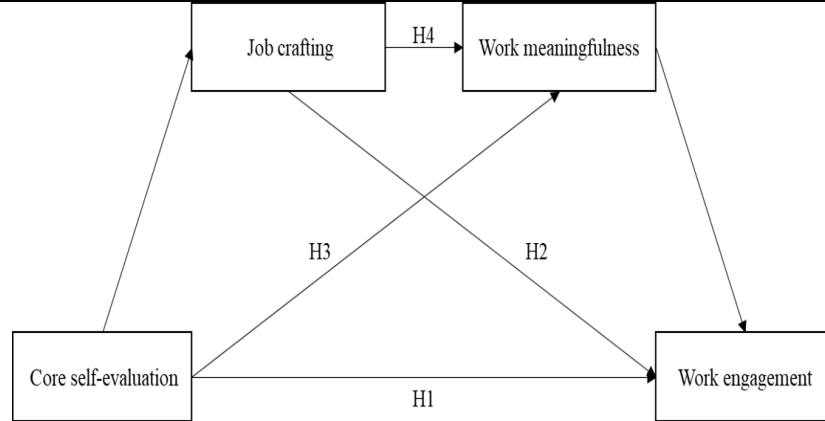


Figure 1. Research Model

Tims and Akkermans (2017) stated that core self-evaluation is a factor that increases employees' work engagement. Specifically, employees first form perceptions about their work environment, then take action to make it more meaningful and engaging, which in turn heightens their commitment and passion for their work. Tisu et al. (2020) also revealed that individuals with high CSE strengthened their work engagement. Similarly, Okorie et al. (2023) showed that individuals with high CSE increase their work engagement through factors that provide job satisfaction, such as career adaptability and job embeddedness. As a result, employees with high core self-evaluation perceive their jobs more positively because they can cope with their jobs more effectively due to their high self-efficacy and thus exhibit greater work engagement (Ma et al., 2022). Therefore:

H1: Core self-evaluation is positively related to work engagement.

3.2. CSE, Job Crafting and Work Engagement

The Job-Demand Resource Model proposes that job and personal resources elevate employees' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by enabling goal achievement, fostering employees' growth and development, and thus cultivating desirable employee outcomes (Sweetman and Luthans, 2010).

Employees having high core self-evaluation, as one of these personal resources, tend to have positive evaluations and strong beliefs in their own worth, competence, capabilities, and abilities (Judge et al., 2003). Employees with high CSE also seek and implement changes in their jobs, viewing challenging tasks as opportunities to demonstrate their abilities (Kim and Beehr, 2020). Concordantly, employees with high CSE are more likely to engage in job crafting behaviors (Tims and Akkermans, 2017).

Besides, job crafting enhances work engagement by increasing job resources, challenging job demands and decreasing hindering demands (Tims and Akkermans, 2017). Kim and Tak (2015) showed that employees' desire to reshape their jobs consciously increases their level of work engagement. Alkhraishi and Yesiltas (2024) showed that employees who shape their work environments through job crafting tend to experience higher work engagement. Similarly, Violinda et al.

(2023) stated that job crafting helps employees to give meaning to their work, increasing their work engagement.

Based on these arguments, we propose that employees with high core self-evaluation have a high tendency towards job crafting and, as a result, exhibit high levels of work engagement. Thus:

H2: Job crafting mediates the link between core self-evaluation and work engagement.

3.3. CSE, Work Meaningfulness and Work Engagement

CSE allow employees to have a strong belief in themselves and their own abilities, which increases the meaning attributed to work (Nair, 2020). Wang and Xu (2019) revealed that high CSE lead to higher work meaningfulness. Zhang et al. (2020) also showed that core self-evaluation enables individuals to derive more meaning from their work.

On the other hand, employees with high work meaning develop a passion for their jobs by experiencing high job satisfaction (Violinda et al., 2023). Silva et al. (2023) stated that work meaning has positive effects on work engagement. In addition, Panda et al. (2022) found that employees who find their work meaningful have high levels of work engagement.

Consequently, we propose that employees with high CSE attribute more meaning to their work and therefore, employees attributing meaning to their work tend to feel high work engagement. In other words, CSE positively affects work engagement by increasing the meaning employees attribute to their work. Accordingly, it is hypothesized that:

H3: Work meaningfulness mediates the link between core self-evaluation and work engagement.

3.4. Serial Mediating Role of Job Crafting and Work Meaningfulness

CSE, which includes employees' positive self-evaluations, is a personality trait that affects their perceptions and behaviors in business life (Judge et al., 2003). Individuals with high CSE levels tend to have strong self-belief in their own worth and competence, improve their skills and view challenging tasks as opportunities for making their jobs more productive and meaningful (Judge et al., 2003). Hence, High CSE leads employees to engage in job crafting behaviors (Tims and Akkermans, 2017).

Employees who exhibit job crafting behaviour also increase their job satisfaction and give more meaning to their work by ensuring that their work aligns with their personal values (Kim and Park, 2024). Tims and Akkermans (2017) revealed that employees attach more importance and meaning to their work.

On the other hand, work meaningfulness is related to employees' feelings that their work is essential, valuable, and compatible with their goals, skills, and capabilities (Rosso et al., 2010). In other words, employees attributing high meaning to their work are more engaged with their jobs (Tisu et al., 2020).

As a result, we propose that job crafting and work meaningfulness have a serial mediation effect on the relationship between CSE and work engagement. Specifically, CSE leads employees to work engagement by experiencing high job crafting and work meaningfulness. Therefore:

H4: Job crafting and work meaningfulness serially mediate the impact of core self-evaluation on work engagement.

4. Research Method

Multi-item scales from prior studies were used to investigate the aforementioned hypotheses. 5-point Likert scales ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ (1) to ‘strongly agree’ (5) were used to measure the constructs of the current study. Regarding data collection, the online survey method was used for the current study.

4.1. Measures

Core self-evaluation was measured with a 12-item scale developed by Judge et al. (2003). Sample items are “I am confident I get the success I deserve in life” and “Sometimes I feel depressed”.

Job crafting was measured with a 15-item scale developed by Slemp et al. (2013). Sample items are “Introduce new approaches to improve your work” and “Make an effort to get to know people well at work”.

Work meaningfulness was measured with the 6-item scale developed by May et al. (2004). Sample items are “My job activities are personally meaningful to me” and “My job activities are significant to me”.

Work engagement was measured with the 9-item scale developed by Schaufeli et al. (2006). Sample items are “At my work, I feel bursting with energy” and “I am immersed in my work”.

4.2. Sampling

The data for this study were collected using the online survey platform (Survey.com). The purpose of the research was explained to the participants, and it was stated that the data would be kept confidential and used only for scientific purposes. The link to the survey was sent to the participants. The study sample consisted of 386 people working in different sectors. In the sample, male respondents were the majority (66.6%), and most respondents were in the age group 25-34 (36%) and 45-54 (22%). Besides that, 37.3% of participants held a bachelor’s degree. The respondents were working in a variety of sectors, such as manufacturing (6.7%) and education (24.4%). Finally, most respondents had 1 to 5 years of work experience in their current organization (33.2%).

5. Analysis and Results

To test the validity of the measurements, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed with the AMOS 21 package program. Reliability of scales was measured through composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach’s alpha values. Regression analysis was performed with the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 6), employing 95% confidence intervals for hypothesis testing and 5000 samples (Hayes, 2013).

5.1. Measure Validity and Reliability

Confirmatory Factor Analysis was used to assess the validity of the scales used in the current study. After eliminating problematic items with low factor loadings (2 items from the core self-evaluation, 3 items from the job crafting, and 1 item from the work engagement) a step-by-step procedure, the measurement model provided a good fit ($\chi^2_{(582)}=1551.77$, CFI=0.91, IFI=0.92, TLI=0.91, $\chi^2/df=2.67$, RMSEA=0.07).

Table 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Constructs	Factor Loadings	CR	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha
Core self-evaluation		0.91	0.51	0.91
CSE12	0.76			
CSE11	0.62			
CSE10	0.67			
CSE9	0.77			
CSE8	0.77			
CSE7	0.77			
CSE6	0.80			
CSE5	0.75			
CSE3	0.62			
CSE1	0.54			
Work Meaningfulness		0.96	0.78	0.96
MEAN1	0.87			
MEAN2	0.86			
MEAN3	0.87			
MEAN4	0.88			
MEAN5	0.93			
MEAN6	0.89			
Job Crafting		0.93	0.81	0.92
Task Crafting		0.81	0.51	0.81
TASK1	0.77			
TASK3	0.71			
TASK4	0.68			
TASK5	0.70			
Cognitive Crafting		0.94	0.84	0.88
COG1	0.76			
COG2	0.76			
COG3	0.79			
COG4	0.79			
COG5	0.77			
Relational Crafting		0.79	0.56	0.79
REL1	0.70			
REL4	0.79			
REL5	0.75			

Work Engagement		0.93	0.63	0.94
DEDIC3	0.83			
DEDIC2	0.82			
DEDIC1	0.86			
ABSORP3	0.74			
ABSORP2	0.71			
VIGOR3	0.74			
VIGOR2	0.83			
VIGOR1	0.82			

Table 1 shows the factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and AVE values of the study's variables. For each variable, factor loadings were all above 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010); average variances extracted (AVE) exceeded the cutoff rate of 0.50; and CR and Cronbach's alpha values were well beyond the cutoff value (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), thereby supporting convergent validity.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity

Variables		1	2	3	4
CSE	1	(0.71)			
Work meaningfulness	2	0.71**	(0.88)		
Job crafting	3	0.77**	0.85**	(0.90)	
Work engagement	4	0.68**	0.80**	0.78**	(0.80)
Mean		0.92	4.17	4.01	3.95
S. dev.		0.73	0.86	0.71	0.85

** $p < .01$; Values along the diagonal are the square root of AVE.

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics and correlations among all variables in the study. Regarding discriminant validity, the squared root of AVE for each construct was greater than the correlations between the constructs, suggesting discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

5.2. Hypothesis Testing

According to the analysis results, core self-evaluation affects work engagement ($\beta=0.79$, $p < 0.001$; $CI[0.70, 0.81]$), supporting H1. In addition, the mediating role of job crafting in the relationship between CSE and work engagement was examined in the current study. According to the results, core self-evaluation positively affects job crafting ($\beta=0.75$, $p < 0.001$; $CI[0.69, 0.81]$) and job crafting positively affects work engagement ($\beta=0.94$, $p < 0.001$; $CI[0.86, 1.01]$). Job crafting mediates the relationship between CSE and work engagement ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$; $CI[0.13, 0.40]$). This result supports hypothesis H2.

Similarly, the mediating role of work meaningfulness in the relationship between core self-evaluation and work engagement was examined. According to the results, core self-evaluation positively affects work meaningfulness ($\beta=0.84$, $p < 0.001$; $CI[0.76, 0.92]$). Work meaningfulness positively affects work engagement ($\beta=0.79$, $p < 0.001$; $CI[0.73, 0.85]$). Work meaningfulness mediates the relationship between

CSE and work engagement ($\beta=0.08$, $p<0.001$; CI[0.03, 0.15]). This result supports hypothesis H3.

Table 3. Results of Sequential Mediating Analysis

Effects and hypotheses	β	95% CI	
		LL	UL
<i>Direct effects</i>			
CSE $\rightarrow$ Job crafting	0.75**	0.69	0.81
Job crafting $\rightarrow$ Work Engagement	0.94**	0.86	1.01
Work meaningfulness $\rightarrow$ Work Engagement	0.79**	0.73	0.85
<i>Mediating effects</i>			
CSE $\rightarrow$ Job crafting $\rightarrow$ Work engagement	0.26**	0.13	0.40
CSE $\rightarrow$ Work meaningfulness $\rightarrow$ Work engagement	0.08**	0.03	0.15
<i>Sequential mediating effects</i>			
CSE $\rightarrow$ Job crafting $\rightarrow$ Work meaningfulness $\rightarrow$ Work engagement	0.31**	0.21	0.44

** $p<.001$ CI=Confidence interval LL=Lower limit UL=Upper limit

Finally, the serial mediation roles of job crafting and meaningfulness in the relationship between core self-evaluation and work engagement were examined. According to the results, job crafting mediates the relationship between core self-evaluation and work engagement ($\beta=0.26$, $p<0.001$; CI[0.13, 0.40]). Work meaningfulness mediates the relationship between core self-evaluation and work engagement ($\beta=0.08$, $p<0.001$; CI[0.03, 0.15]). Consequently, it was found that job crafting and meaningfulness serially mediated the relationship between core self-evaluation and work engagement ($\beta=0.31$, $p<0.001$; CI [0.21, 0.44]). This result supports hypothesis H4.

6. Discussion and Implications

This study was conducted to examine the relationship between core self-evaluation and work engagement, considering the mediating roles of job crafting and work meaningfulness.

First, the current study showed that core self-evaluation is positively related to work engagement. Past studies revealed that individuals with core self-evaluation showed higher work engagement (Tims and Akkermans, 2017; Tisu et al., 2020). Similarly, Okorie et al. (2023) showed that individuals with high CSE increase their work engagement by providing higher job satisfaction, career adaptability and job embeddedness.

Second, the current study sheds light on the mediating role of job crafting in the relationship between CSE and work engagement. Particularly, employees with high CSE tend to shape their jobs more, which increases their work engagement. Kim and Tak (2015) showed that employees' desire to reshape their jobs consciously increases their work engagement. Also, Alkhraishi and Yesiltas (2024) found that employees who shape their work environment through job crafting have higher work engagement. Similarly, Köksal and Şenel (2022) revealed that job crafting

leads individuals to adapt to their work, which subsequently increases their work engagement levels. Ugwu et al. (2023) stated that self-efficacy, a component of core self-evaluation, positively affects work engagement through job crafting behaviors. This current study empirically showed that job crafting mediates the relationship between core self-evaluation and work engagement.

Third, the present study highlighted that work meaningfulness mediates the relationship between CSE and work engagement. Specifically, employees with high job meaning develop a passion for their jobs by being more satisfied with their jobs (Violinda et al., 2023). Silva et al. (2023) stated that job meaning has positive effects on work engagement. In addition, Panda et al. (2022) found that employees who find their jobs meaningful have high levels of work engagement. Meng et al. (2022) showed that job meaning has a direct effect on work engagement in their study. Consistent with existing literature, we revealed that employees with high CSE find their work more meaningful, and this increases their work engagement.

This study also leveraged the literature by empirically demonstrating the serial mediating role of job crafting and work meaningfulness in the relationship between CSE and work engagement. Notably, employees with high CSE shaped their jobs more, which led them to find their roles more meaningful and, in turn, increased their work engagement. People with high CSE levels tend to have strong self-belief, improve their skills and view challenging tasks as opportunities. This leads to job crafting behaviors, which increases work meaningfulness. Employees attributing high meaning to their work due to being essential, valuable and compatible with their goals, skills and capabilities, and hence have higher work engagement.

Regarding managerial implications, the research results show that managers should develop various strategies to increase employees' work engagement levels. They can also create programs to strengthen employees' basic self-evaluations. Training that supports factors such as self-esteem, self-sufficiency, and emotional stability can increase employees' work engagement. In addition, since supporting and positively motivating employees will increase their self-confidence, it is necessary to be constructive when giving feedback. Managers' self-improvement in feedback can increase their employees' CSEs and enable them to utilize their potential better. Managers can create flexible work environments that allow employees to tailor their work to align with their own values and goals. Employees may be more likely to take initiative and engage in work-shaping behaviors in flexible work environments where they can express themselves. Environments and practices that encourage job crafting can help employees become more committed to their work.

Managers can also develop projects that align with organizational values and mission by ensuring employees adopt these values, making their work more meaningful. Employees who adopt the values and mission of the organization may tend to find their work more meaningful while serving the organization. In addition, managers should explain the meaning and importance of the tasks they assign to their subordinates, which will motivate employees to perform their jobs more effectively. Managers should constantly remind employees about the impact of their

work on the overall goal and provide clear answers to the question "why is it important?".

It may be beneficial for managers to select employees by considering their core self-evaluations. Among two candidates at similar levels, the person with a high core self-evaluation and a positive self-evaluation may perform better in their future jobs. Employees with high CSE are more likely to exhibit job crafting behaviors, perceive their jobs as meaningful, and thus be more passionate about their roles. Their passion for their jobs will ensure that their performance is high. Managers should provide employees with opportunities to modify their job roles and redefine their tasks in accordance with their own skills and interests. Environments that help employees to develop suggestions regarding work processes should be created, and these suggestions should be evaluated and implemented. Horizontal organizational communication should be encouraged rather than vertical hierarchies, and employees should be encouraged to establish relationships that support each other's jobs.

6.1. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study also has some limitations. Specifically, the current study was conducted as a cross-sectional study. Since people's emotional state will change over time, the reliability of the findings decreases. In this context, if a longitudinal study is conducted to examine the changes over time, the hypotheses can be tested more accurately. It is recommended that a longitudinal design be used in future studies to explore the causal relationships between the variables more clearly. The research sample was created with the snowball sampling method, and the participants are from various sectors. Similar studies conducted in different sectors or occupational groups in the future will allow for the examination of specific areas. The study was conducted on a sample of 386 people working in various sectors in Türkiye. Therefore, the generalizability of the findings to employees in other countries may be limited. It is recommended that these relationships be tested in different cultural contexts and with larger samples in future studies.

The data used in the study were obtained based on the participants' self-reports. This situation brings with it the risk of common method bias, which is frequently encountered, especially in data collected with the self-report method. Although the validity and reliability analyses of the scales were conducted, it should be noted that factors such as participants' prejudices and changes in their moods over time may have affected the data. Finally, the variables included in the research model consist only of the individual level. However, a variable such as work engagement is often shaped not only by individual factors but also by organizational factors. Therefore, it would be helpful to include organizational-level variables (organizational support, leadership style, organizational culture, etc.) in future studies.

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