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THE MEDIATING ROLE OF INTRINSIC MOTIVATION IN THE EFFECT OF CAREER SATISFACTION ON TASK PERFORMANCE

Nilay KARASAKAL¹  Lütfi SÜRÜCÜ²  Mustafa BEKMEZCİ³ 

ABSTRACT

In today's rapidly changing world, one of the ways for organizations to remain competitive and survive is to ensure the career satisfaction of their employees, adopt policies that enhance this satisfaction, and implement measures that boost their intrinsic motivation, thereby positively influencing their task performance. In this context, the career and motivation policies adopted by business managers play a crucial role. Managers who aim to lead their organizations into the future are expected to support employees by planning their careers and developing strategies to enhance their intrinsic motivation. When employees achieve career satisfaction, their intrinsic motivation increases, which, in turn, positively impacts their task performance. The aim of this study is to investigate the mediating role of intrinsic motivation in the effect of career satisfaction on task performance. Data were collected from 307 employees working in textile factories in Istanbul. The validity and reliability of the scales were assessed. A correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationships between variables, and the Process Macro was used to test the research hypotheses. The analysis results demonstrate that career satisfaction significantly and positively influences task performance, and intrinsic motivation serves as a mediator in this relationship. The findings of this study not only contribute to the existing literature but also provide practical insights for researchers and practitioners.

Keywords: Career Satisfaction, Task Performance, Intrinsic Motivation

JEL Codes: M10, M12

¹ Asst.Prof.Dr., Kocaeli University, Kandira Vocational High School, Department of Administration and Organization, nkaleli78@hotmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0002-4665-8700.

² Assoc.Prof.Dr., Word Peace University, Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences, Department of Business Administration, lutfi.surucu@wpu.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0002-6286-4184.

³ Prof.Dr., National Defense University, War Academy, Defense Studies, mbekmezci@kho.msu.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0002-1206-690X.

1. INTRODUCTION

Employees' commitment to their jobs and their performance depends on many factors. One of these is the degree to which employees are satisfied with their jobs. Career satisfaction encompasses the positive feelings, thoughts, and evaluations individuals experience in relation to their jobs. When employees are satisfied with their jobs, they tend to be more committed, more motivated, and perform better. However, career satisfaction is not the only factor that increases performance. One of the factors that affect task performance is motivation. Motivation comes from the individual's enjoyment of the work he/she do and the satisfaction he/she get from completing the task. This is defined as intrinsic motivation. This motivation comes from within individuals rather than from external rewards. Intrinsic motivation is directly related to career satisfaction. When employees enjoy their work, believe in the meaningfulness of their tasks, and have opportunities to develop their skills, their intrinsic motivation increases. This, in turn, leads employees to put more effort into performing their tasks, become more engaged with their work, and derive greater satisfaction from it. Intrinsic motivation has a positive impact on employees' task performance. Intrinsically motivated employees tend to exert more effort in their work, find more creative solutions, and deliver higher-quality results. Additionally, intrinsically motivated employees demonstrate greater commitment to their jobs and are less likely to leave their positions. This study aims to examine the mediating role of intrinsic motivation in the effect of career satisfaction on task performance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Career Satisfaction

When individuals step into professional life, they can meet various needs such as advancing in social ladders, gaining power and prestige, advancing in their professions and achieving success. Career satisfaction begins when these achievements are achieved (Kayıarslan & Ekemen: 2024). There are different definitions of career satisfaction in the literature. According to Judge et al. (1995), career satisfaction is defined as 'the level of satisfaction an individual feels towards their career'. Career satisfaction is also defined as 'the satisfaction individuals receive from both internal and external aspects of their careers, such as promotion opportunities, salary and development opportunities' (Karakavak: 2024). In this context, career satisfaction refers to the sense of satisfaction individuals experience in achieving their personal career goals (Yüksel: 2005). Career satisfaction is considered a basic indicator in evaluating the individual's general professional field from a long-term perspective, considering the individual's experiences and achievements. It can also be expressed as the evaluation of the experiences a person has accumulated over time and the progress, he/she has made in his/her career (Hagmaier et al.: 2018).

Super (1957) defined career satisfaction as the application of any innovation arising in one's job or changes in responsibilities. Holland (1985), on the other hand, defined it in terms of individuals' abilities and experiences, while İşcan and Sayın (2010) described it as the positive emotional state achieved by analyzing one's work and professional experiences. According to Avcı and Turunç (2012), career satisfaction is the evaluation of accumulated experiences by the individual. Additionally, the sense of satisfaction that emerges from employees' feelings, thoughts, and behaviors toward their jobs, work environments, and colleagues is also referred to as 'career satisfaction' (Karakulle: 2020).

According to Coetzee and Bester (2019), career satisfaction is a concept related to an individual's perception of his/her achievements. According to İşcan & Timuroğlu (2007), career satisfaction is a feeling that can only be perceived by the individual himself/herself. Individuals' feeling of being successful has a positive effect on the sense of career satisfaction that individuals have obtained from their careers (Çetinel et al.: 2009). In terms of individual and business interests, it is important to increase the career satisfaction of individuals (Demirdelen & Ulama: 2013). Career management will support the fulfillment of individual needs and the satisfaction of the individual with his/her career. Individuals who are satisfied with their careers work happily and show higher productivity (Peluchette: 1993). When individuals experience career satisfaction, their commitment to their organizations increases and turnover rates decrease (Weng et al.: 2010).

Career satisfaction is not the same as job satisfaction. The primary distinction between these two concepts is that career satisfaction is related to the individual's emotions, while job satisfaction measures the degree of influence of the work (Lounsbury et al.: 2008). Moreover, career satisfaction reflects the individual's satisfaction with the career level he/she has reached, while job satisfaction indicates the level of satisfaction, he/she has with his/her current job (Vatansever: 2008). Factors such as promotion and income can contribute significantly to an individual's career satisfaction. Opkara (2002) defines the factors affecting career satisfaction as the nature of the job, career opportunities, interpersonal relationships, management style in the workplace, and compensation. Similarly, Nguyen et al. (2003) classify these factors as career opportunities, salary, job security, and work environment. According to Çiftçi (2012), individuals' social backgrounds affect their career choices, and their social status has a significant impact on their careers.

2.2. Task Performance

Task performance is one of the fundamental components in delivering high-quality services within organizations. Career satisfaction can be considered a key determinant of task performance. Task performance in organizations can be defined as employees directly implementing certain parts of technological processes or indirectly providing the necessary materials or services, thereby contributing to the technical core of the

organization (Borman & Motowidlo: 1997). Task performance is influenced by an individual's knowledge, skills, job suitability, work habits, and personality traits (Motowidlo, Borman & Schmit: 1997). Additionally, it is affected by attributes such as interpersonal and administrative competence, personal effort, job knowledge, leadership, compliance with authority, and effective communication (Viswesvaran & Ones: 2008). Moreover, technical proficiency and personal discipline have also been identified as influential factors (Borman & Motowidlo: 1997).

Beyond these characteristics, another significant factor influencing employees' task performance is the technical protective equipment they use and whether this equipment is ergonomically designed. Studies in literature have also addressed this topic. In their article, Betgül and Ünal (2024) highlighted the impact of protective equipment on task performance.

Task performance can also be considered as the ability of employees to successfully fulfill their tasks within organizations. In other words, it refers to an employee's ability to carry out the duties and responsibilities outlined in their job description. Task performance is a critical component for organizations to sustain themselves and achieve growth (Arslan & Şahin: 2024).

2.3. Intrinsic Motivation

Before defining the concept of intrinsic motivation, it is necessary to define the concept of motivation. Motivation is when individuals take action by determining the direction, prioritization and strength of their actions under the influence of internal and external impulses (Bozgüney, Çimen: 2023). Intrinsic motivation is defined by Tuncer (2021) as self-motivation. Şimşek and Eroğlu (2013) defined intrinsic motivation as the inner desire of individuals to achieve a certain goal and make an effort, the power that directs their behaviors towards goals, and all voluntary desires for the goal.

Vallerand and Ratelle (2002) defined intrinsic motivation in three ways: intrinsic motivation to know, to accomplish things and to experience stimulation (Arı: 2023):

- Intrinsic motivation to know: An individual with this motivation enjoys learning, researching and understanding new things.
- Intrinsic motivation to accomplish things: The individual strives to self-actualize, develops his/her creative skills, and takes pleasure in success.
- Intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation: The individual is fed by the action taken and the stimulating emotions that the action causes.

According to Arı (2023), the understanding of success, which is fed by intrinsic motivation, is based on the individual performance of the person depending on the goal he/she sets himself/herself. Based on this sentence, it can be said that there may be a relationship

between intrinsic motivation and task performance. Below, research that support this thesis are presented under the titles of relationships between variables.

2.4. Relationship Between Variables

Before examining the relationships between the variables, it will be necessary to identify the problems of the research. These problems are listed below:

1. Is there a relationship between career satisfaction and task performance?
2. Is there a relationship between career satisfaction and intrinsic motivation?
3. Is there a relationship between intrinsic motivation and task performance?
4. Does intrinsic motivation play a mediating role in the effect of career satisfaction on task performance?

Based on these questions, the hypotheses of the research will be formulated.

2.4.1. Career Satisfaction and Task Performance

Career satisfaction and task performance are two important constructs that are in a mutual relationship and mutually contribute to each other. A person with high career satisfaction generally has high task performance. Likewise, high task performance can result in high career satisfaction (Ulu, Kasnik: 2024). There are a limited number of studies in literature examining the effect of career satisfaction on task performance. Judge and Bono (2001) found a significant and positive relationship between career satisfaction and task performance. According to Alptekin et al. (2022), career satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on task performance, and Dubbelt et al. (2019) revealed that a career with resource-seeking behaviors positively affects task performance, while demand-reduction behavior negatively affects task performance. Khan et al. (2014) found that promotion has a positive effect on task performance. Based on the findings of this research, it can be said that career satisfaction has a positive effect on task performance.

2.4.2. Intrinsic Motivation and Task Performance

Ryan and Deci (2000) found that students with high intrinsic motivation perceived the learning content more constructively and were more determined to achieve the learning goal. Good et al. (2022) found that there is a significant relationship between intrinsic motivation and task performance and that this relationship is more significant than extrinsic motivation.

2.4.3. Career Satisfaction and Intrinsic Motivation

According to a study by Chan and Yuen (2023) conducted on engineers in Hong Kong, intrinsic motivation has a positive impact on career satisfaction and serves as a

foundation for career aspirations and career continuity. In a study by Heimerl et al. (2020), the factors affecting career satisfaction of employees working in a hotel in the Alpine region were identified as positive relationships with managers, opportunities for personal development, job commitment, salary, job descriptions, work environment, and infrastructure provided to employees. These factors are actually elements that human resources management uses to increase motivation and job commitment within an organization. Therefore, it becomes a natural outcome for a highly motivated individual to achieve career satisfaction. A study by Rezaen et al. (2012) supports this approach. In their research conducted on banking sector employees in Jordan, they found a positive relationship between human resources practices and career satisfaction. Actions that increase motivation and boost employees' intrinsic motivation will lead to career satisfaction.

Another study examining the relationship between human resources practices and career satisfaction was conducted by Yean and Yahya (2013). According to the findings of their research, a relationship was found between human resources practices and career satisfaction. In a study by Aburumman et al. (2020), it was also revealed that career management practices, a human resources practice aimed at increasing motivation, are associated with career satisfaction.

Any practice aimed at increasing intrinsic motivation will positively affect an individual's career satisfaction. In fact, if we think about the opposite, an individual who has achieved career satisfaction will also experience an increase in intrinsic motivation. In businesses, career opportunities, the career goals set for individuals, and helping employees achieve these goals will increase employee motivation.

A review of the literature reveals that there are studies exploring the relationship between career satisfaction and task performance, as well as the relationship between intrinsic motivation and career satisfaction. However, no research has been found regarding the mediating role of intrinsic motivation in the effect of career satisfaction on task performance. Therefore, it is clear that this study will make significant contributions to the literature.

As a result, career opportunities and career goals set for individuals will increase employee motivation.

The hypotheses and research model based on the theory and empirical research are presented in Figure 1.

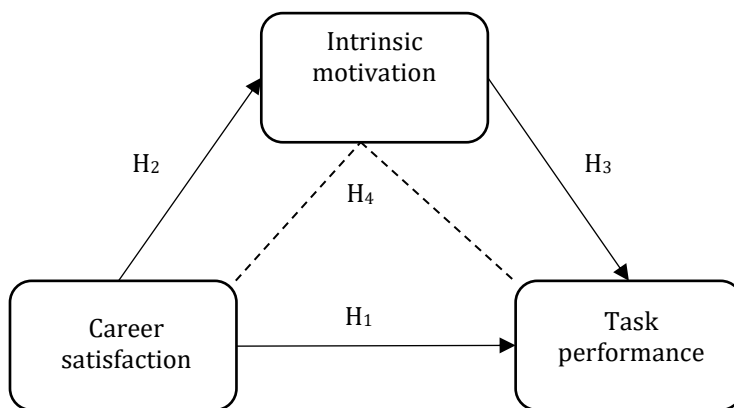


Figure 1. Research Model

H₁: Career satisfaction positively and significantly affects task performance.

H₂: Career satisfaction positively and significantly affects intrinsic motivation.

H₃: Intrinsic motivation positively and significantly affects task performance.

H₄: Intrinsic motivation has a mediating role in the effect of career satisfaction on task performance.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Data and Sample

The sample of the research consists of textile factory employees in Istanbul. First of all, the necessary ethical permissions were obtained from the European Leadership University / TRNC (ALU-ETK-2024-09). Afterwards, the managers of the factories were interviewed, and permission was requested for data collection. Participants were informed about the research before the survey and were informed that their responses would remain confidential. The questionnaire was administered to the volunteers among the participants determined by convenience sampling method. At the beginning of the study, the participants were asked questions about their demographic information, and then the statements related to the variables (career satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, task performance) were included. At the end of the 9-day study, 307 participants were reached. 199 of the participants were male and 108 were female. 202 participants were married and 105 were single. 121 participants had less than 5 years of work experience, 101 participants had between 6 and 10 years of work experience and 85 participants had more than 11 years of work experience.

3.2. Scales

There are five constructs in the current study. All measurement items were developed and tested for reliability in the past years (Li JianNan, & Yuan BoCong: 2017). The statements of the constructs, which are frequently used in recent studies, were rated from 1 to 7 (1= Strongly disagree, 7= Strongly agree). All constructs are based on the participant’s self-reporting/evaluation.

Career Satisfaction: The scale developed by Martins et al. (2002) was used. Sample statements from the scale are “in general, I am satisfied with my present jobs” and “I am fell that my progress toward promotion is satisfactory”.

Intrinsic Motivation: The scale developed by Gagne et al. (2010) was used. Sample statements from the scale are “I have chosen this job because I enjoy it very much” and “I have chosen this job because I have fun doing it”.

Task Performance: The scale developed by Williams and Anderson (1991) was used. Sample statements from the scale are “I carry out the tasks that the Hotel expects from my job” and “I undertake the tasks that my job formally demands of me”.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Principal Component Analysis

Before analyzing the research hypotheses, the validity and reliability of the scales used in the study were examined. To assess the reliability of the scales, internal consistency reliability and composite reliability (CR) were calculated. For validity, convergent validity and discriminant validity were evaluated. Internal consistency was assessed using the Cronbach’s Alpha (α) and CR coefficient. Convergent validity was examined through CR and average variance extracted (AVE) values, as well as factor loadings. Discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the square root of AVE values with correlation coefficients. The analysis results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Validity and Reliability of the Scales

Statements	Factor Loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach’s Alpha
<i>Career Satisfaction</i>		0.502	0.750	0.752
In general, I am satisfy with my career status,	0.768			
In general, I am satisfy with my present jobs,	0.617			
I am feel that my progress toward promotion is satisfactory.	0.732			
<i>Intrinsic Motivation</i>		0.551	0.784	0.780
I have chosen this job... because I enjoy it very much	0.725			

for the moments of pleasure that it brings me	0.648			
because I have fun doing it	0.841			
Task Performance		0.586	0.809	0.810
I fulfill the responsibilities specified in my job position	0.819			
I undertake the tasks that my job formally demands of me	0.758			
I carry out the tasks that expects from my job	0.715			

High factor loadings (>0.6) indicate that the items have the capability to represent the associated construct (Sürücü, Yıkılmaz, & Maslakçı: 2024). The AVE values for all constructs exceed 0.50, and the CR values are greater than 0.70. Additionally, all CR values are higher than the corresponding AVE values. These findings demonstrate that the constructs possess convergent validity (Byrne: 2010; Sürücü, Şeşen, & Maslakçı: 2023).

In Table 2, the values in parentheses represent the square root of the AVE values. If the square root of AVE is greater than the correlation values, it indicates discriminant validity (Sürücü, Şeşen, & Maslakçı: 2023). The findings in Table 2 confirm the discriminant validity of the constructs.

The reliability of the constructs was assessed using Cronbach’s Alpha and CR values. Values of 0.7 or higher indicate that the constructs are reliable (Sürücü & Maslakçı: 2020). As shown in Table 1, these values are above 0.7, confirming that all constructs in the study are reliable (Hair et al.: 2010; Sürücü & Maslakçı: 2020).

The results of the correlation analysis conducted to determine the relationships between variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlation Analysis

Variables	Mean	S.d.	1	2	3
Career Satisfaction	4.04	0.68	(0.709)		
Intrinsic Motivation	4.85	0.55	0.377**	(0.742)	
Task Performance	6.05	0.37	0.355**	0.401**	(0.765)

** p<0.05

The correlation analysis revealed that career satisfaction has a positive correlation with intrinsic motivation ($r= 0.377$, $p<0.05$) and task performance ($r= 0.355$, $p<0.05$). Additionally, intrinsic motivation is positively correlated with task performance ($r= 0.401$, $p<0.05$).

4.2. Hypothesis Tests

The hypotheses were tested using the Process Macro (Model 4). The results of the analyses, conducted with 5,000 bootstrapped samples at a 95% confidence interval, are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Direct-Indirect Effects

		β	SE	95% CI LLCI ULCI	Hypothesis
H ₁	CS → TP	0.299	0.027	0.227 – 0.401	Approved
H ₂	CS → IM	0.323	0.029	0.291 – 0.469	Approved
H ₃	IM → TP	0.359	0.035	0.343 – 0.512	Approved
<i>Direct Effect</i>					
H ₄	CS → IM → GP	0.139	0.011	0.103 – 0.194	Approved

CS: Career Satisfaction, IM: Intrinsic Motivation, TP: Task Performance

The analysis results indicated that career satisfaction positively affects intrinsic motivation ($\beta = 0.323$, $SE = 0.029$, $p < 0.05$, 95% CI = [0.291, 0.469]) and task performance ($\beta = 0.359$, $SE = 0.035$, $p < 0.05$, 95% CI = [0.343, 0.512]). Moreover, the effect of intrinsic motivation on task performance was also found to be positive and significant ($\beta = 0.299$, $SE = 0.027$, $p < 0.05$, 95% CI = [0.227, 0.401]).

It was further determined that career satisfaction has a significant and positive effect on task performance through the mediating role of intrinsic motivation (indirect effect) ($\beta = 0.139$, $SE = 0.011$, $p < 0.05$, 95% CI = [0.103, 0.194]). Based on these findings, all research hypotheses were supported.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The emotional state employees achieve through their confidence in accomplishing their goals and demonstrating success psychologically empowers them and leads to career satisfaction. This influence, in turn, positively impacts employees' performance in their roles. The effect of work responsibilities, including career-related responsibilities, on intrinsic motivation will ultimately affect job performance or task performance. Therefore, defining employees' roles clearly and assigning tasks in line with these role definitions are crucial.

Managers can increase intrinsic motivation and career satisfaction by being clear and precise in job descriptions, offering opportunities for employee development, rewarding employees, and adopting management approaches that enhance employee participation. This can lead to an increase in task performance, greater job commitment, and a decrease in turnover rates, thereby ensuring workplace harmony. Therefore, it is important for managers to establish the right career and motivation policies for their employees and implement strategies that will enhance employee satisfaction.

This research has demonstrated that career satisfaction and task performance are closely related, and intrinsic motivation is a significant factor that enhances both career satisfaction and task performance. As evident from the above analyses, all hypotheses were accepted.

Organizations can enhance intrinsic motivation and career satisfaction by granting autonomy to employees, emphasizing the meaningfulness of work, providing development opportunities, implementing recognition and reward programs, and fostering employee engagement. These efforts can lead to higher task performance, greater employee commitment, and lower turnover rates.

There are also certain limitations to this study. The research's primary limitations are that it is not longitudinal, and it was limited to a certain geographic area. To enhance the model's validity, it would be beneficial to extend the research to other nations and cultures, as this could yield diverse results. The restricted nature of the sample limits generalizability of the findings. For this reason, conducting research in other sectors and evaluating the data obtained at different times may lead to different outcomes. This study might provide different findings if it were conducted on individuals who work in different sectors and at different levels of supervision.

COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARD

Conflict of Interests: There is no conflict of interest between the authors or any third-party individuals or institutions.

Ethics Committee Approval: This research has been approved by the ethics committee of European Leadership University Research Ethic Committee.

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