



### INVESTIGATION OF FACTORS DETERMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING IN THE WORKPLACE AND OPTIMISM

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**Abstract:** In this study, factors that predict optimism and subjective well-being in the workplace were investigated. For this purpose, the role of self-transcendence and behavioral inhibition system, which is seen as variable, was tried to be determined. This study was conducted on 287 academic staff who were working at a foundation university. The harmonized state of the optimism, subjective well-being scale for the workplace, mission oriented and relationship oriented leadership, behavioral inhibition system, self-transcendence and perceived supervisor support scales have been applied to academics that are easily reached by sampling method and results were examined. The data has been analyzed through SPSS and AMOS programs. The study found that an individual's optimism increases his or her happiness at work, but this effect becomes significant when relationship oriented behaviour seen from the manager enters the model. In addition, perceived concrete manager support has been seen to have a direct positive meaningful effect on happiness at work. However it was found that individuals with high self-transcendence had less fears of wrongdoing. On the other hand, while the optimistic employee's workplace happiness was also high, there was a significant decrease in workplace happiness due to the anxiety that arose as the employee's avoidance of wrongdoing behaviour increased.

**Keywords:** Optimism, Subjective Well-being, Leadership Style, Self-Transcendence, Behavioral Inhibition.

## 1. Introduction

Optimism and happiness are considered to be the strengths of most cultures. But in our own culture in recent years, there has been a dramatic rise in psychological challenges that point to unhappiness. Unemployment, livelihood difficulties, hopelessness and failure of Education have been reported as the causes of suicides in Turkey (Harmanci, 2015, pp. 8). Similarly, there is an increase in problems such as inner resignation, work stress, exhaustion and mobbing in the business world. These results and statistical values show the importance of optimism and happiness.

In the perspective of expectation-value theories, optimism is considered to be a positive reflection of a person's expectations at a minimum level (Scheier and Carver, 2018, pp. 1083). Therefore optimism refers to a positive attitude in all the events one encounters and an expectation that good things will happen to him or her (Goleman, 2009, pp. 128; Gillham and Reivich, 2004, pp. 147). Optimists are happy individuals who can easily resist the challenges they face in life, who can evaluate themselves objectively, who can communicate and conduct healthy (Kutlu et al., 2007, pp. 2). The positive outlook of the optimist will reduce the friction between himself and his surroundings, thus enabling him to lead a happier and more peaceful life (Kasatura, 1998, pp. 153). This positive outlook that will be maintained in business life will bring with it the happiness of the workplace.

Today, people spend about a third of their lives at work. Therefore, work life has an important role in the life of a person to meet their psycho-social needs. In this context, if people have hopes of being happy in their lives today, it can be said that it is clear that they should be happy at work. Of course, just working a job can't make a person happy. However, if one is unhappy at work, it is difficult to achieve happiness for the rest of one's life (Gavin and Mason, 2004, pp. 381). In this context, a person who is able to find the opportunities he wants at work and meet his needs will be satisfied and will be at peace psychologically (Eren, 2017, pp. 241).

When academic studies on workplace happiness are examined, it has been seen that the concept is referred to as job satisfaction, emotional commitment, dedication to work, kindness in many studies (Fisher, 2010, pp. 385). According to the recognition made by Lyubomirsky et al., happiness is often referred to as the emergence of positive effects (2005, pp. 803). In other words, workplace happiness means the person to be successful in business life and to be satisfied with his

work (Merida Lopez et al., 2019, pp. 59; Baker and Demerouti, 2017, pp. 275). People who are happy at work are generally energetic and dynamic individuals who enjoy what they do, who are also proud of what they do, who have a constant desire to learn and develop, who can motivate themselves with ease to work (Keser, 2018, pp. 47). Happy people have good relationships with their colleagues and managers at work (Pryce-Jones, 2011, pp. 2-3). It is necessary to examine individual factors in order to increase the happiness of employees in workplaces. At this point, having optimistic loads with a positive outlook on the challenges of work life will contribute to one's level of happiness at work. At the same time, it will make a person feel good to realize that he or she is supported by his or her surroundings at every stage of his or her life. In this context, it is also important that the person feels supported by his / her manager at work. Perceived executive support covers employees' feelings about their managers who value themselves and the work they do (Eisenberger et al., 2002, pp. 565). Employees who feel supported by their managers and organizations will remain more committed to the organization. However, employees whose job satisfaction increases will increase their workplace happiness and their likelihood of resigning will decrease (Gordon et al., 2019, pp. 83; Li et al., 2017, pp. 194).

In this study, the predictors of optimism and subjective well-being in the workplace were investigated. For this purpose, the role of self-transcendence and behavioral inhibition system, which are seen as variable, was attempted to be determined. In addition to these variables, different variables supported by the literature to explain optimism are also included in the model. In order to make the study clear, it is useful to refer to these variables.

### **1.1. Leadership Style**

In addition to their financial and physical resources, intellectual capital is also important for businesses to maintain their assets in an environment that is constantly changing and developing, to adapt to this environment, to gain competitive advantage and to reach their organizational goals (Ozdevecioglu and Kanigur, 2009, pp. 54). This situation can only be achieved by directing the employees under the structure of organizations correctly and effectively. For this, leaders are needed.

As it is known, leadership refers to the process of directing and mobilizing employees so that the organization can achieve its goals (Tengilimoglu and Yigit, 2005, pp. 378). In this context, leaders can take the power of guidance from their authority as well as from their leadership behavior

(Ozmen, 2019, pp. 253). Northouse (2004) proposed a new model of leadership based on leadership research. The proposed model consists of two dimensions: task oriented and relationship oriented. Task-oriented leadership style is considered as shaping and structuring employees' roles and duties separately (Eren, 2013, pp. 446). On the other hand, relationship-oriented leadership style reflects situations such as mutual trust, respect for employees' thoughts, value them, building good relationships and dealing with their emotions (Giray and Gungor, 2015, pp. 14).

In fact, organizations do not have a leadership style that applies to every situation. Instead, the styles of leaders are expected to be in line with the cultural codes and geography of their communities. However, the behavior of the leader towards the employee is seen as an important factor in achieving organizational goals. Whether the leader's behaviors are task oriented or relationship oriented also differentiates the effect on the employees' perspectives. Therefore, taking into account the leading situational variables; he/she should demonstrate the most appropriate behavioral orientation that increases motivation, job satisfaction and job performance. In this context, the effect of leadership style on employee's happiness and optimism at work is inevitable.

## 1.2. Self-Transcendence

Transcendence is a comprehensive subject that goes into the fields of religion, psychology and philosophy. The concept of self-transcendence has been treated as a dynamic process involving spiritual growth in multidisciplinary research conducted in this context (Baker, 2019, pp. 39). Self-transcendence is the attainment of a state of cognitive maturity by providing awareness of harmony with one's environment rather than himself (Reed, 2008, pp. 107). In other words, self-transcendence means that an individual can extend his or her personal boundaries and devote himself or herself to others or to any work, cause, or other activity (Reed, 2008, pp. 111). Self-transcendence, which is the ability of man to transcend his own inner limits, to understand reality outside his own, it gives the individual new perspectives, makes his or her life more meaningful, and brings a quest for Prosperity (Haugan and Innstrand, 2012, pp. 2). So selfishness allows him to overcome concerns such as ego.

Self-transcendence, which maintains the integrity between all dimensions of the individual's existence and brings awareness to the individual, is accepted as an important resource contributing

to the well-being of the individual (Coward and Reed, 1996). In addition, it is emphasized that self-transcendence is related to depression, death anxiety, life satisfaction and fragility, as well as psychological well-being (Saricam, 2015, pp. 27). In this context, self-transcendence will be an important factor in this research, which tries to reveal the effect of optimism on workplace happiness.

### **1.3. Behavioral Inhibition System**

In psychology, one of the most accepted theories in the context of biological models is the personality theory put forward by Gray. With this theory, Gray suggests that there is a system that controls behaviour (Gray, 1982). With the contributions of Eysenck, personality theories related to the individual differences created by personality traits in brain functions were proposed (Matthews and Gilliland, 1999). On the basis of these theories, it is stated that short-term feelings and behaviours lead to longer-term feelings and behaviours. In this context, it was emphasized that personality dimensions such as anxiety and impulsivity are related to individual differences in the study of motivational system in the brain. This system is called behavioral inhibition system. In short, behavioral inhibition system regulates avoidance behaviour against environmental stimuli (Serrano Ibanez et al., 2019, pp. 2; Sisman, 2012, pp. 2; Gray, 1987). In other words, it can be said that there is an inherited tendency to prevent or stop behavior.

The behavioral inhibition system, also referred to as passive avoidance, is the emotional-cognitive response given in situations of high probability of failure, especially in anxiety (Rawlings, 2014; Wilson, Barret and Gray, 1989). It is also defined as the penal system because it regulates the behavior of avoiding the possibility of a penalty. The primary objective of the behavioral inhibition system is to prevent behaviors that lead to the suspension or loss of rewards or are expected to lead to punishment (Sisman, 2012, pp. 3; Smiths and Boeck, 2007, pp. 48). In this context, it can cause negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, sadness and frustration as it creates more sensitivity. These negative emotions will also affect the level of happiness.

## **2. Methodology**

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the factors that predict optimism and subjective well-being in the workplace. For this purpose, the role of self-transcendence and behavioral inhibition system, which are seen as variable, was attempted to be determined. This section

provides information about the sample of the research, the measurement tools used and the models and hypotheses of the research.

The universe of the study consists of academic staff. In order to represent the universe of the research, academicians working in a foundation university were selected as samples. 287 academicians were included in the study.

There are several arguments for the size of the sample for data analysis. Some researchers agree that the perfect sample size should be 10 times the number of items (Nunnally, 1978; Bryman and Cramer, 1999). Guilford (1954) stated that the sample size should be at least 200; MacCallum et al., (2001) stated that the scale must be at least 4 times the number of substances. Therefore, the sample size of 287 is an appropriate sample size based on the total scale statements we used in our research. The data showed normal distribution in the normality test.

## **2.1. Measurement Tools**

The survey method was used as a data collection technique and 6 different scales consisting of a total of 63 statements were used. The scales were used in accordance with the original, and the optimism scale, the subjective well-being scale harmonized for the workplace, the task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership scale, the self-transcendence scale, the behavioral inhibition system scale, and the perceived administrator support scale were used.

### **2.1.1. Optimism Scale**

The optimism scale was developed by Caliskan and Uzunkol in 2018. This 9-item scale is built in the 5-item Likert style (not at all appropriate-completely appropriate).

### **2.1.2. Subjective Well-being Scale**

The subjective well-being Scale, which measures subjective well-being and, in other words, happiness in the workplace, was developed in 2006 by the WHO Collaborating Center for Mental Health, Frederiksberg General Hospital Psychiatric Research Unit and harmonized in the workplace context. This 5-item scale was created in the 6-item Likert style (always-never).

### **2.1.3. Leadership Style Scale**

This scale, which is intended to measure employees perceptions of whether their managers are task-oriented and relationship-oriented, was developed by Northouse in 2004. The Turkish adaptation was made by Giray and Gungor in 2015. The scale, which consists of 2 dimensions and 20-items, including task-oriented and relationship-oriented, is built in a 5-point Likert style (absolutely agree-absolutely disagree).

### **2.1.4. Self-Transcendence Scale**

Self Transcendence Scale was developed by Reed in 1991. The Turkish adaptation was made by Saricam in 2015. Meaning of Life Scale and Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale were used for compliance validity. The scale, which consists of 15 items, was constructed in 4-point Likert style (nothing - too much).

### **2.1.5. Behavioral Inhibition System Scale**

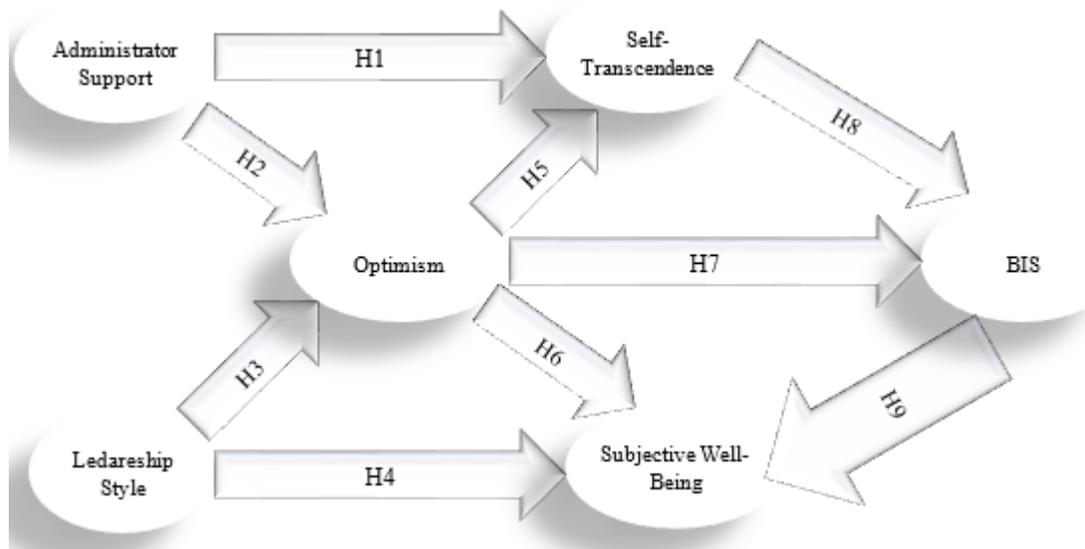
The Behavioral Inhibition System Scale was developed by Carver and White in 1994. It has been translated into many languages due to its ability to be completed in a very short time compared to other personality tests. The Turkish version of the scale was adapted by Sisman in 2012. The 7-item scale was constructed in a 4-point Likert style (fully agree - never agree). All questions except points 1 and 6 are calculated by reversing.

### **2.1.6. Perceived Administrator Support Scale**

Perceived Administrator Support Scale was developed by Aydın Goktepe and Berber in 2016. The scale, which consists of two dimensions, concrete and abstract, and 7 items, was formed in a 5-point Likert style (fully agree - totally disagree).

## **2.2. Model and Hypothesis**

Six different variables were used in the research model: optimism, happiness, leadership style, self-transcendence, behavioral inhibition system and perceived administrator support. In this context, the effect of optimism on happiness and the factors determining this effect were investigated. The research model is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Research Model**

The hypotheses created according to the proposed model are given below:

**H1:** Administrator support positively affects self-transcendence.

**H2:** Administrator support positively affects optimism.

**H3:** Leadership style positively affects optimism.

**H4:** Leadership style positively affects subjective well-being.

**H5:** Optimism affects self-transcendence positively.

**H6:** Optimism affects subjective well-being positively.

**H7:** Optimism negatively affects the behavioral inhibition system.

**H8:** Self-transcendence negatively affects the behavioral inhibition system.

**H9:** Behavioral inhibition system negatively affects subjective well-being.

### 3. Findings

The data obtained in the study were analyzed with SPSS 22.0 and Amos 6.0. In the analysis, reliability analysis, confirmatory factor analysis and descriptive statistics were used for the scales used respectively. Then, the path analysis of the model established with the structural equation model was performed and the hypotheses of the study were tested. In the research, extreme data

were examined and it was found that there was no extreme value in the data set. In addition, the skewness and kurtosis values of the subscales of the scales used in the model varied between -1 and +1.

When the factor analysis of the scales used in the study was performed, it was found that the sample measurement value adequacy (KMO) was 0.887 and the Barlett Test was significant at 0,000 degrees. In addition, the explained variance was found to be 51%. A KMO value of 0.887 means that the sample size is excellent for factor analysis. According to Buyukozturk (2002: 407), the KMO value above 0.8 indicates that the sample size is perfect for analysis. The means and reliability values of the variables included in the model are shown in Table 1.

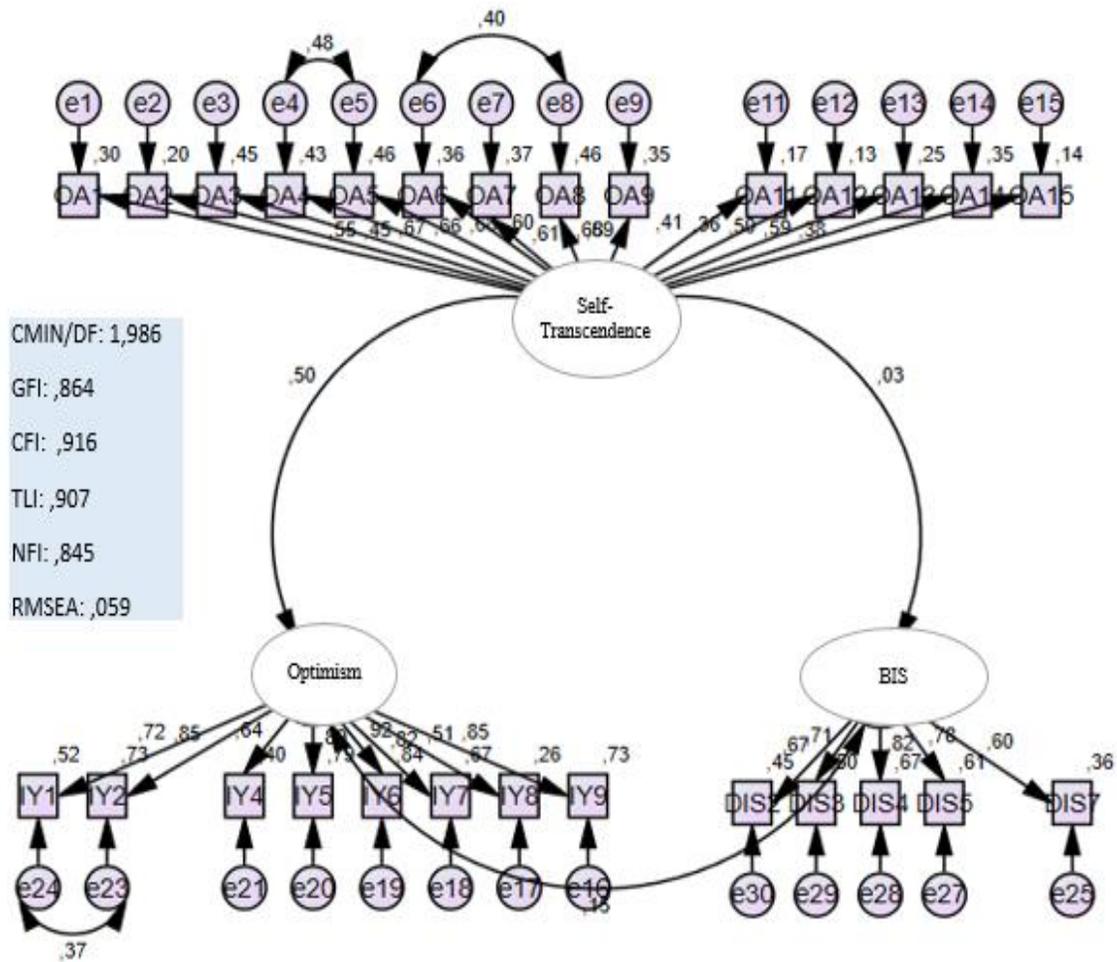
**Table 1:** Means and Reliability of Variables

Variables	Mean	Number of Items	A
1. Relationship Oriented Leadership	3,60	10	,95
2. Task Oriented Leadership	3,50	8	,93
3. Perceived Concrete Administrator Support	3,47	4	,90
4. Subjective Well-Being	3,74	4	,84
5. Optimism	4,67	9	,90
6. Self-Transcendence	3,43	15	,84
7. Behavioral Inhibition System	2,19	7	,74

When looking at the values in Table 1, it is understood that the reliability values of all the scales used are among the acceptable values. Based on these values, the Relationship-Oriented Leadership Scale reliability coefficient of 0.95, Task-Oriented Leadership Scale reliability coefficient of 0.93, Perceived Administrative Support of the scale of the concrete sub-dimension of reliability coefficient of 0,90, Subjective Well-Being Scale Reliability coefficient of 0,84, Optimism Scale reliability coefficient 0,9, Self-Transcendence Scale reliability coefficient scale reliability coefficient of 0,84, and the Behavioral Inhibition System is 0.74 percent. The variance described was found to be 51%.

The results of validating factor analysis with the Amos program for the scales, each of which is sufficiently reliable, are given in Figure 2.

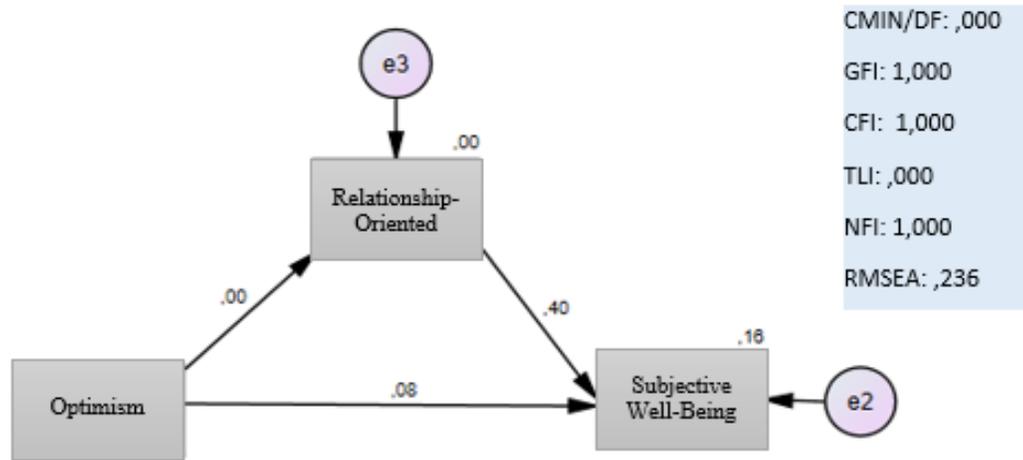
**Figure 2:** Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Goodness of Fit Values



In the analysis, bindings were made between some items in order to achieve goodness of fit values and 10th item in Self Transcendence variable, 1, 6, 8 and 9th item in Behavioral Inhibition System variable and 3th item in Optimism variable were removed. After the rotations, it was observed that the substances were distributed in accordance with the factors.

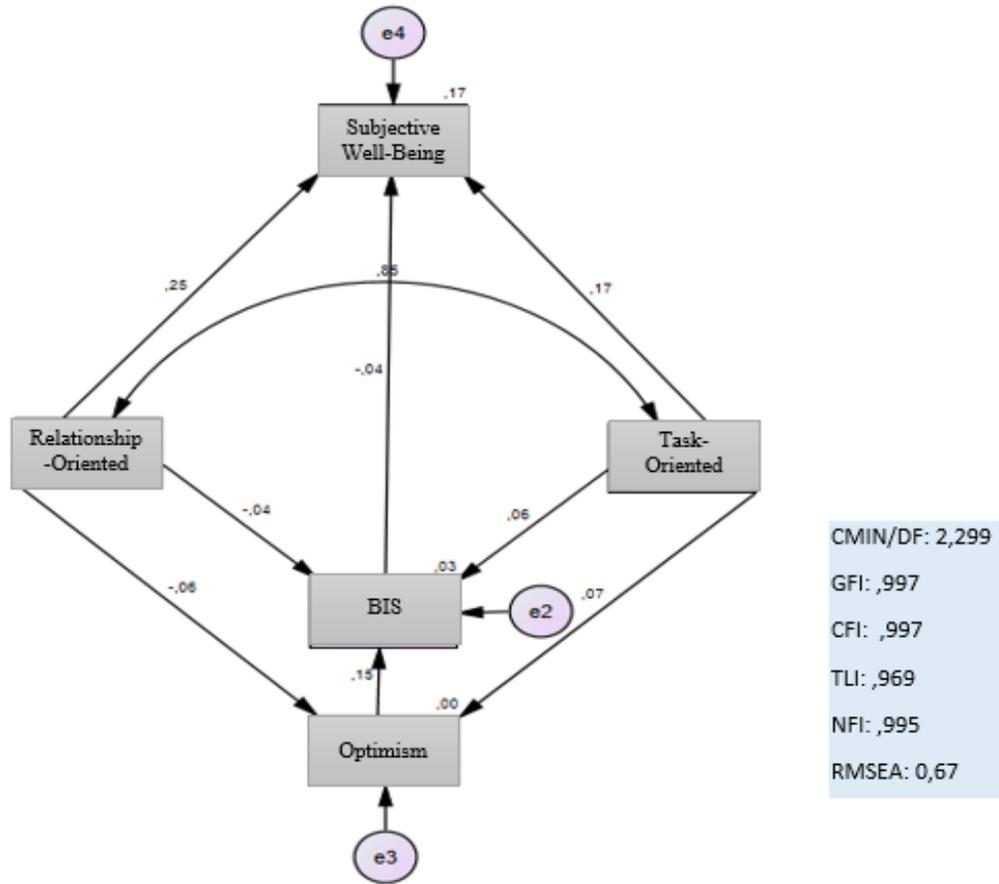
In order to determine the predictive structural relationship between the variables observed within the framework of the structural equation model, path analyzes were conducted and the effects of the variables and the goodness of fit of the models were examined.

In this first road analysis; The results of the structural equality model in which the relationship oriented leadership style affects the level of happiness and optimism of the employee are given in Figure 3.

**Figure 3:** Structural Model 1 and Analysis Results

According to the model results, optimism has a direct effect on happiness, but this effect is not statistically significant. However, after the introduction of the relationship-oriented leadership variable, the effect of optimism on happiness increased and the effect was significant. Therefore, it is seen that relationship oriented leadership style has a mediating role in the effect of one's optimism on happiness in the workplace. In this case, when the person is optimistic, he does not significantly affect his or her happiness in the workplace, but the relationship-oriented leadership style is seen by the manager of the same person; optimism significantly changes happiness in the workplace.

In the second road analysis; The results of the structural equality model in which the task and relationship oriented leadership style affects the level of optimism, behavioral inhibition system and happiness in the workplace are given in Figure 4.

**Figure 4:** Structural Model 2 and Analysis Results

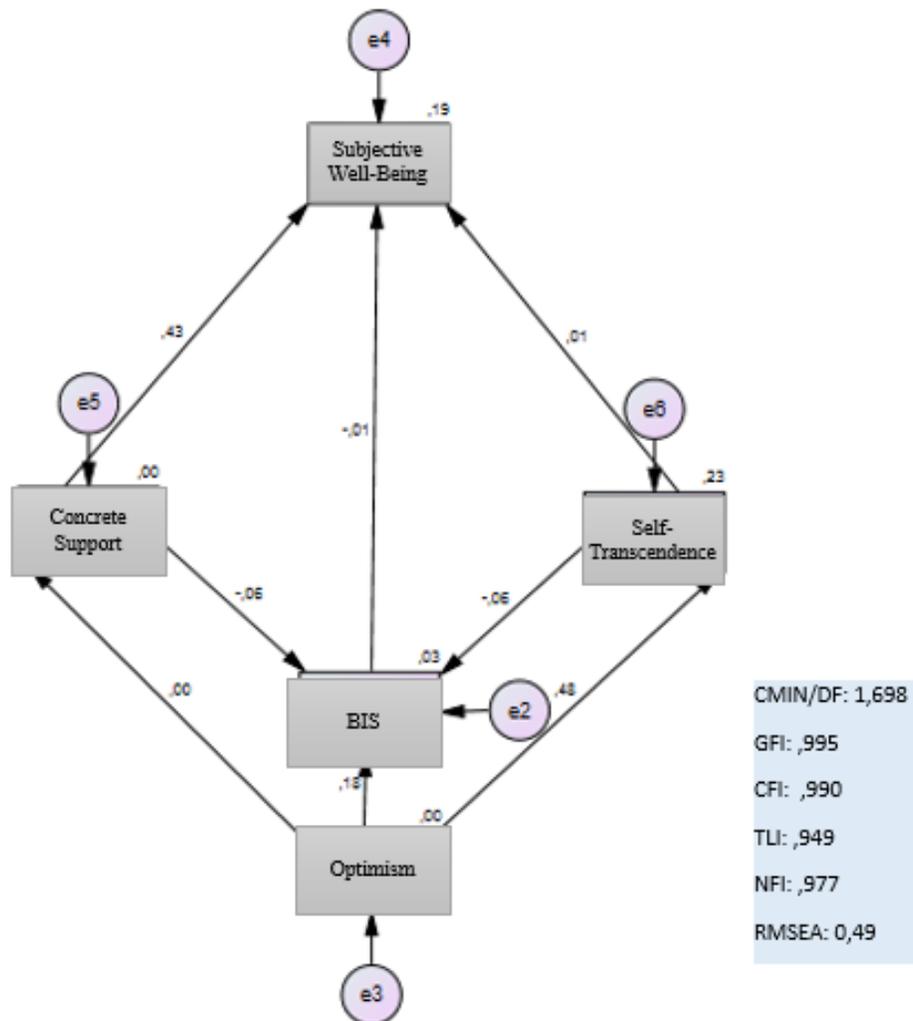
According to model results, relationship-oriented leadership style decreases behavioral inhibition, although not significant; however, task-oriented leadership style behavioral inhibition, in other words, increases one's feelings of excitement and fear, although not statistically significant. Similarly, while relationship-oriented leadership style decreases one's optimism, task-oriented leadership style increases optimism, which decreases behavioral inhibition. Therefore, while a task-oriented leadership style is more beneficial to the optimistic and hypersensitive people in the workplace, a relationship-oriented management approach should be applied to employees who are low optimistic and not very sensitive to environmental stimuli.

In the literature, behavioral inhibition is associated with introversion and neuroticism. In this case, it would be appropriate to approach neurotic, introverted and high-anxiety individuals with a task-oriented leadership style at work. In other words, it will be a better management style for such

employees where the tasks and limits are clearly defined and if the task is not performed, the situation they will encounter becomes clearer.

In the final path analysis, the results of the structural equality model are given in Figure 5, where concrete administrator support is perceived by the employee and the extent to which it affects his or her happiness at work is determined.

**Figure 5:** Structural Model 3 and Analysis Results

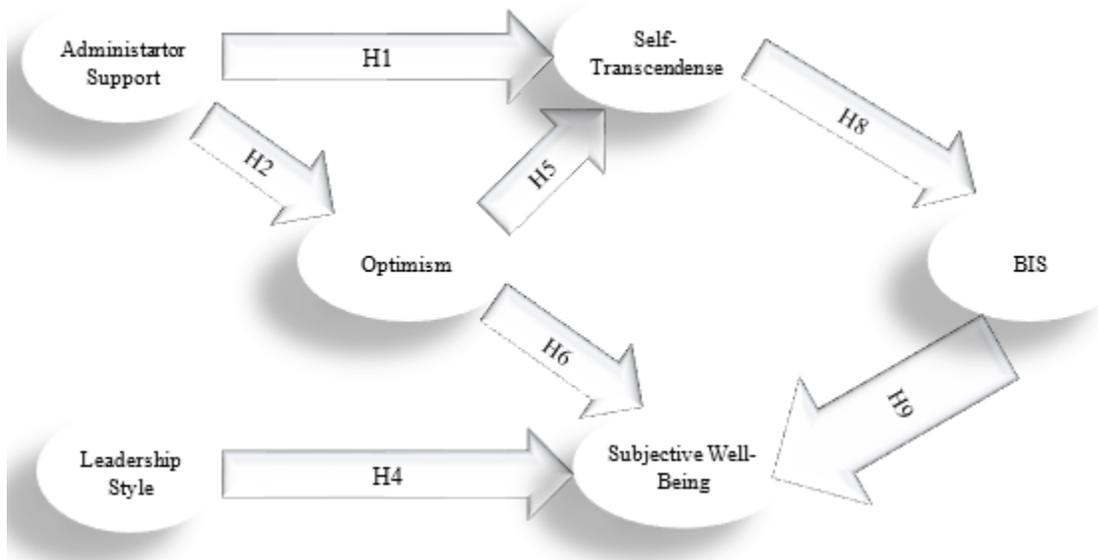


According to the model results, a person's state of optimism significantly increases the level of self-transcendence and concrete administrator support significantly increases the person's workplace happiness. However, as the level of optimism increases, the person's sensitivity to environmental stimuli increases. Therefore, avoidance of the possibility of wrongdoing increases.

This condition causes the person to experience feelings such as anxiety, excitement and fear. In such a case, it may be a precaution for employees to act rationally rather than optimistically at work to avoid these negative consequences.

According to these results, the hypothesis results tested in the model are given in Figure 6.

**Figure 6:** Hypothesis Results Tested



According to the hypothesis results, H1, H2, H4, H5, H6, H8 and H9 were accepted, but H3 and H7 were rejected as positive optimism of leadership style and negative effect of optimism on behavioral inhibition system.

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, the factors that predict optimism were investigated and the effects between variables and the harmony goodness values of the models were analyzed. The study concluded that although optimism and concrete support play an effective role in increasing happiness, the employee's avoidance of making mistakes, in other words, the anxiety caused by the possibility of making mistakes, leads to a decrease in workplace happiness. In addition, relationship-oriented leadership style and perceived concrete administrator support in workplace happiness have a positive effect on employees and reduce behavioral inhibition.

In addition, it should be noted that although optimism has a direct effect on happiness, relationship-oriented leadership style is very effective in increasing the impact of happiness. This means that relationship-oriented leadership is a bridge between optimism and happiness.

Relationship-oriented leadership style reduces the person's behavioral inhibition and optimism; task-oriented leadership style increases the person's optimism and reduces the person's behavioral inhibition, i.e. feelings such as excitement and fear. From this framework, task-oriented leadership is effective in optimistic and hypersensitive employees. Relationship-oriented leadership is also an effective approach in people who are not sensitive to environmental factors and have low optimism.

Finally, the task-oriented leadership style in which people with high Self-Transcendence have little fear of wrongdoing, behavioral inhibition, and optimism increase self-transcendence. Optimism if the level of self-transcendence is concrete executive support, it increases workplace happiness in a meaningful way. As a result of this, anxiety, excitement, and fear may occur in people as a result of increasing the level of optimism increases the sensitivity of the person to environmental stimuli, such as avoiding the possibility of making mistakes. In order to avoid such a situation, it can be considered as a solution for employees to look at events rationally rather than optimistically.

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