

Teachers' Person-Organization Fit and Turnover Intentions: The Role of Psychological Well-Being

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of teachers' P-O fit levels on their turnover intentions and the role of psychological well-being in this relationship. Data collected from 507 teachers, through the scales measuring teachers' P-O fit, well-being and intent to leave the teaching profession and intent to move to another school, was analyzed in a 3-step regression model. The analysis showed that teachers' P-O perceptions had a direct and significant effect on their intent to move to another school and intent to leave the profession. Both of these effects were partially mediated by their well-being levels.

Keywords: intent to leave, intent to move, P-O fit, teachers, well-being

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Introduction

Person-environment fit, as one of the basic needs of all people, is the congruence between individuals' interests, values, needs and self-cognitions and the qualities of the environment (Edwards et al., 1998). As a component of person-environment fit, person-organization (P-O) fit might be defined as one of the basic needs of employees, and fit or misfit has significant effects on various organizational and employee outcomes. A large volume of published studies examining the role of P-O fit shows that employees with higher P-O fit levels perform better at work, display higher organizational commitment, present organizational citizenship behaviors more and have higher levels of job satisfaction. On the contrary, the employees with lower P-O fit levels display a number of negative work attitudes, are more prone to leave their organizations, and the possibility of an actual turnover is higher for them (Abdalla et al., 2018; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Verquer et al., 2003; Wei, 2015; Westerman & Cry, 2004).

One of the worst organizational consequences of P-O misfit is the employee turnover, since employee turnover leads to consequences that might affect the survival of the organizations. These consequences are, but not limited to the cost of employee selection and recruitment (Pfeffer, 1998), the lost time and efficiency during the socialization of newcomers (Davies, 2001 cited in Chew & Chan, 2008), the missed work opportunities and bad customer relations (Clarke, 2001).

The fit between the person and his/her organization is an important predictor of not only organizational outcomes but of employees' work and non-work related behaviors, as well. According to Holland's Theory of Career Choice (1985), individuals are happier and more successful when their personalities fit the work environment. Several lines of evidence suggest that the misfit between an employee and work environment results in higher work stress (Bocchino et al., 2003), depression (Caplan et al., 1985), anxiety and burnout (Lachterman & Meir, 2004) and a decline in the ability of focusing physical and mental efforts to work (Merecz & Andysz, 2012). As Lambert (1990) asserts in his spillover hypothesis, work experiences can influence the feelings, attitudes and behaviors in non-work contexts, or the non-work experiences can influence work functions, vice versa. That is, the experiences in a life domain are transferred in the other domains either in feelings, thoughts, attitudes or behaviors. Within the frames of these theoretical assumptions, a number of studies have begun to examine the effect of work life experiences on the non-work life of employees. And as for P-O fit, it might be argued that P-O fit influences psychological well-being, and psychological well-being might play a role in the relationship between the fit perceptions and turnover intentions.

The fit between teachers and schools has critical importance, because teachers are one of the most important in-school variables in student success (Kane & Staiger, 2008) and the fit between teachers and schools has the potential of being a strong predictor of teacher turnover. In the teaching profession turnover can be classified in two manners. The first one is leaving the current school and moving to another school, and the teachers with this behavior are called "movers". The second manner is leaving the profession altogether, and the teachers with this behavior are called "leavers" (Grogan & Youngs, 2011). Although it might be underestimated as a minor problem in the developing countries where the unemployment rates are high and the teaching profession is regarded as comparatively a stable and secure job,

teacher turnover rates are high (Miller & Youngs, 2021). For instance, in Turkey, which is a developing country, in the 2018-2019 academic year 15% of public school teachers switch their schools. There is not any statistical data about leavers, though (Özge-Sağbaşı, 2020). Previous studies showed that one of the strongest predictors of actual turnover was turnover intention. Along with being a strong predictor of turnover, turnover intention might have destructive effects as the employees won't perform as efficiently as the ones who want to keep on working at their current organization. That is why, although it doesn't end in an actual turnover, it is crucial to examine the intentions to do so.

Compared to the other organizations, there is a relatively small body of literature that is concerned with P-O fit in education organizations, and there is even less number of studies on the effect of teachers' P-O fit on their turnover intentions (Demirkasimoğlu, 2012; Grogan & Youngs, 2011; Miller & Jason, 2021; Narayanan & Sekar, 2009). However, it is very critical to identify the variables such as P-O fit that might contribute to their turnover, as “continuity” is one of the basic principles to attain success goals. Besides, explaining how teachers' P-O fit spills over the psychological domain, specifically over psychological well-being and how well being influences the relationship between P-O fit and intent to leave the teaching profession or moving to another school will provide a great contribution in organizational psychology literature by understanding the effect of P-O fit on employee psychology in general, and defining the relationships in educational settings.

Person-Organization Fit

As a component of person-environment fit, P-O fit is the congruence between people and organizations (Kristof-Brown, 1996). Kristof- Brown (1996) argues that the congruence emerges when (1) one party meets the needs of the other, (2) both parties have similar fundamental characteristics, or (3) both occur. However, there is not a common understanding on which aspect this congruence should be. For example, Chatman (1991) conceptualizes P-O fit as the value and norm congruence between the employees and organizations. In the Attraction-Selection-Attrition model, Schneider, Goldstein and Smith (1995) focus on the goal congruence. Although it has been conceptualized in different ways as fitting in organizational culture, work climate, or common preferences of systems and structures (Kristof, 1996), congruence of values and goals has been the most applied fit conceptualization in the P-O fit studies (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Piasentin & Chapman, 2006).

Value congruence has taken much attention in the P-O fit research because values provide the basis for self-identity and have strong influence on attitudes, opinions and behaviors (Chatman, 1991; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Piasentin & Chapman, 2006; Verquer et al., 2003). Research shows that higher value congruence between person and organization leads to higher fits (Abdalla et al., 2017). In the ASA model, which puts goal congruence in the center of P-O fit, it is argued that when personal goals are congruent with organizational goals, employees feel more control over their work, spend more of their personal efforts for the acts that serve organizational benefit, and for them the possibility of violating organizational norms is lower (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). On the contrary, the incongruence between the goals creates an uncertainty about the expectations from the employees, and it increases the probability of inducing the employees to the acts that serve

their personal interest (Kristof-Brown & Stevens, 2001).

P-O fit research shows that it is related to various work attitudes and behaviors (Chen et al., 2016). In their meta-analysis Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) found that high P-O fit increases candidates' attraction to the organization, organizations' probability to make a job offer, organizations' intent to hire, and candidates' acceptance of the offer. There are relationships between high P-O fit levels and higher job satisfaction (Chen et al., 2016; Westerman & Cyr, 2004), higher commitment (Westerman & Cyr, 2004), higher work efficiency and higher work performance (Farooquia & Nagendrab, 2014), higher levels of organizational citizenship behaviors (Wei, 2013), and lower work stress (Mostafa, 2016).

The research on turnover intentions shows that P-O fit has a strong negative effect on turnover intentions (Jin et al., 2018; Tak, 2011; Wang et al., 2011). Lauer and Kristof-Brown (2001) argue that the reason for this strong negative effect is that a good level of fit means employee needs and organization's expectations from the employees are met to a large extent. As a result of this mutual consent, employees are more committed to their organizations and have less reason to leave the organization.

Turnover Intention

One of the possible outcomes of P-O misfit is turnover intention, which is defined as employee's subjective prediction of the possibility of leaving the organization in the near future (Mowday et al., 1982), or a subjective possibility of changing an employee's job in a certain period of time (Sousa-Poza & Henneberger, 2002). The existing body of research on employee turnover suggests that (e.g. Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Verquer et al., 2003) the most prominent predictor of actual turnover is turnover intention. Although turnover intention does not always end in a real act of turnover, it is related to job search behavior and bad service delivery which have the potential of harming the organizational efficiency (Takawira et al., 2014). Employee retention has critical importance for organizational success (Barrick & Zimmerman, 2005), because the random loss of employees disrupts work continuity, increases costs, and decreases efficiency and morale of the stayers (Cardy & Lengnick-Hall, 2011). That is why organizations put a great effort in hiring the employees who have high performance and low possibility of leaving the organization (Astakhova, 2016). Identifying the antecedents of turnover intentions make it easier for the organizations to specify if the potential candidates make effective contributions to the organization and have high commitment (Bretz & Judge, 1994). Those intending to leave the organization will have less meaningful contributions to the organization compared to the ones intending to stay (Christian & Ellis, 2014).

Generally, empirical studies agree that P-O fit strongly predicts employees' intent to stay (Abdalla et al, 2018; Chatman, 1991; Chew & Chan, 2008; Dechawatanapaisal, 2020; Lauer & Kristof-Brown, 2001). On the other hand, Arthur, Bell et al. (2006) observed that P-O fit might not always be a consistent predictor of employee behaviors, and Farzaneh et al. (2014) points the importance of identifying mediating variables that influence employee behaviors. Previous research in P-O fit and turnover intentions has established that psychological climate (Hassan et al., 2012), employee followership and job satisfaction (Jin et al., 2018) organizational commitment (Wheeler et al., 2007), person-group fit and person-job fit

(Abdalla et al., 2018) have mediating or moderating effect on the relationship between P-O fit and turnover intentions.

Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being is individuals' subjective evaluations in the critical domains of human existence as positive relationships, a sense of self-efficacy, having a meaning and an aim in life. Individuals with high evaluations of themselves in those critical life domains experience high psychological well-being (Diener et al., 2010). Positive psychology concepts such as employee well-being have been attracting considerable interest in organizational psychology research because it has been understood that a psychologically healthy workforce works more efficiently and is less prone to leave the organization (Wright & Huang, 2012). Despite a surge of interest in the psychological effects of work life (Gilbreath & Benson, 2004; Padmasiri & Kailasapathy), P-O fit studies have focused on efficiency, service quality, job satisfaction and commitment, and other possible outcomes of fit or misfit have been largely disregarded (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006). A limited number of studies on the dimensions of person-environment fit demonstrated that an optimal fit is a vital element for employees to maintain a healthy life, improve work skills and preserve life quality (Enwereuzor, 2020; Merecz & Andysz, 2012). Lambert's (1990) spillover hypothesis offers an explanatory approach to the impact of fit on employees' well-being. According to the hypothesis one's functions in a certain life domain (e.g. attitudes, feelings, and behaviors) are transferred to other functions, and functions in a domain are influenced by the functions and experiences in the other domains (e.g. work). It can thus be suggested that the fit between employees and organizations has an influence on their psychological well-being, and psychological well-being in turn influences work related cognitions including turnover intention.

Teacher Studies

Human capital is the fundamental power of the organizations (Wellman & Frank, 2001) and employing a sufficient number of qualified workers provides a critical competitive advantage for the organizations (Rynes & Barber, 1990 cited in Grogan & Youngs, 2011). Similarly, in educational settings, the accumulating data from the studies on the added-value of teachers demonstrates that teachers are the most important in-school factor in students' achievement gains (e.g. Hanushek et al., 2005; Kane & Staiger, 2008). But, every year, quite a substantial number of teachers' moves to other schools (Özge-Sağbaşı, 2020) and even leaves the profession (Miller & Youngs, 2021) creating instructional, financial and organizational costs both for the students and the schools (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Simon & Moore-Johnson, 2015). High rates of leaver or mover teachers result in a break in relational continuity which is instrumental in developing the professional principles, and the norms for students' behavior and parent involvement (Simon & Moore-Johnson, 2015). According to Ronfeldt et al. (2013) this kind of relational continuity and norm development have meaningful relations with students' achievement gains.

It has been noticed that most studies in the field of teacher employment and retention have largely focused on economic perspectives as labor market or supply-demand relations (Grogan & Youngs, 2011). That is why; there is a relative paucity of empirical research investigating the effects of schools' organizational and social structures or teachers'

interaction with these structures (Baker-Doyle, 2010). Apart from the limited number of studies exploring teacher-group fit and retention decisions (Pogodzinski et al., 2013; Miller & Youngs, 2021), the possible effects of person environment fit have been explored in very few teacher turnover studies (Grogan & Youngs, 2011).

Turkish Context

Divine traits have always been ascribed to the teaching profession in Turkey (Gönülaçar, 2016). Both religious and nationalist themes – such as referring to the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as “head teacher”- put the teaching profession to a respectable status. In line with religious and nationalist references, studies on teaching profession or occupational reputation show that a huge amount of teachers (almost 80%) voluntarily choose the occupation since it has state guaranteed job security, a prestigious social status and family-supportive fringe benefits (TEDMEM, 2014). Although not paid well, in a country with high unemployment rates, teaching can be an attractive career choice because of the social rights and secures it provides. On the other hand, despite the benefits, the reputation attributed to the teaching profession melts away year by year. The teaching profession ranking the 4., following medical doctor, university professor and judge in 2014 study about occupational reputation lost its position to the 14. rank in the repetition of the same study in 2019 (Sunar et al. 2015; 2020).

Apart from its socio-economic status, the administration of the education system in Turkey influences the panorama of the teaching occupation. The Turkish Educational System has a centralized administrative structure, this is why instead of school based recruitment, teacher appointments are made by the Ministry of National Education through a central system. The strict regulations shaped by the national legislations limit teachers’ moving freely among the schools, cities or regions, or returning to profession after resignation. For instance, according to the current legislation a newly appointed teacher cannot move to other school regions for at least four years (meb.gov.tr). To sum up, although the teaching profession doesn’t have a prestigious social and economic status as much as it does in the past, it is still respected and preferred because of its side benefits. Strict regulations can make the entrance, relocations or resignations quite difficult. So, it would be sound to interpret the findings of this study in this context.

The Present Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of teachers’ P-O fit levels on their turnover intentions presenting itself as either intent to leave the profession or move to another school and the role of psychological well-being in this relationship. This study aims to contribute to this growing area of research in two ways, one of which is exploring the effect of P-O fit on teachers’ intentions of either leaving the profession or moving to another school, which will extend our knowledge on fit theories. As explained above P-O fit has been the subject of a limited number of studies in educational organizations and most of these studies have ignored the effect of fit on teacher turnover. Furthermore, a search of the literature revealed that studies about the effect of P-O fit on psychological well-being and how psychological well-being contributes to the relationship between P-O fit and turnover intentions are limited. Therefore, this study makes a major contribution to research on P-O fit and turnover intentions by exploring the spillover of P-O fit on psychological well-being, which will extend our knowledge on spillover hypothesis.

In light of the theoretical arguments and empirical data, we hypothesized that teachers' P-O fit perceptions would have an effect on teachers' intention to move to other schools and to leave the profession.

H1. Teachers' P-O fit perceptions predict their intent to move to another school.

H2. Teachers' P-O fit perceptions predict their intent to leave the teaching profession.

Based on the theoretical and empirical literature on organizational psychology which has long been arguing that the effects of P-O have a considerable effect on worker psychological status and psychological status effects work related cognitions, we hypothesized that teachers' psychological well-being would mediate the relationships between P-O fit and turnover intentions either as intent to move to another school or to leave the profession.

H3. Teachers' psychological well-being mediates the relationship between P-O fit and intent to move to another school, such that this relationship is weaker when psychological well-being is high than when it is low.

H4. Teachers' psychological well-being mediates the relationship between P-O fit and intent to leave the teaching profession, such that this relationship is weaker when psychological well-being is high than when it is low.

In the hypothesis tests, teachers' age, gender, home-school distance, and students' socioeconomic status (SES) were controlled. Now that, in teacher mobility studies, it was observed that teachers tend to work at the schools close their homes (Cannata, 2010), experienced teachers are more prone to leave the schools with low student SES profiles and move to the schools with higher SES profiles (Boyd et al., 2005; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004), teachers' age has effect on their mobility such that both older and younger teachers bear a higher possibility of leaving the teaching profession (Guarino et al., 2006) and female teachers have a higher probability of leaving the profession than male teachers (Borman, & Dowling, 2008; Guarino et al., 2006). Two models within the frame of the hypothesis and control variables of the current study were developed as seen in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Figure 1.
Hypothesized model 1

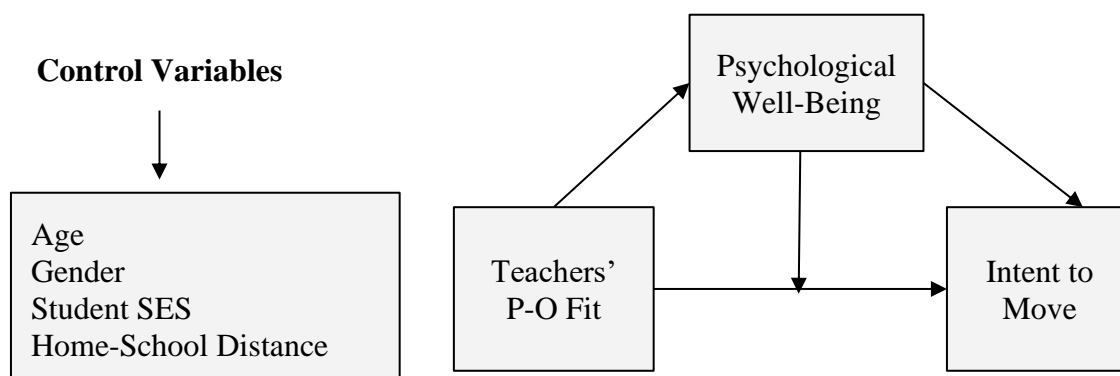
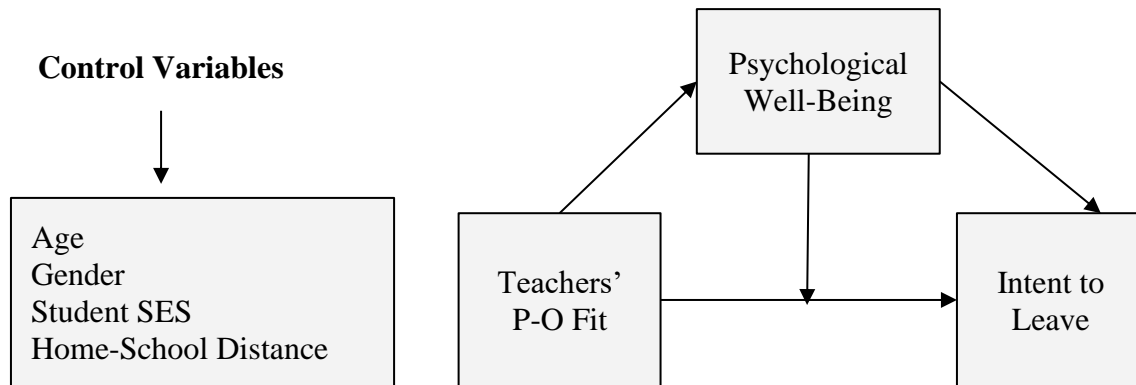


Figure 2.
Hypothesized model 2



Method

Design

This study aiming to identify the relations among teachers' organization fit, intent to move/leave adopted causal research design in quantitative research designs. According to Oppewal (2010) causal research aims to investigate causal relationships and therefore always involves one or more independent variables (or hypothesized causes) and their relationships with one or multiple dependent variables. In this study teachers' organization fit was identified as independent variable and intent to move/leave were identified as dependent variables, and psychological well-being was a mediating variable.

Participants and Procedure

A total of 513 pre-school, elementary, secondary and high school teachers working in public schools in a city center in the Central Anatolia Region in Turkey in the academic year of 2020-2021 volunteered to participate in the study. The scales of the study were sent online to the teachers, and after deleting 6 cases with incomplete response sets, there were 507 teacher participants (259 females and 248 males) who were 41,5 years old and had 17,8 years of teaching experience on average. At the time of the data collection, 282 participant teachers were working in a high school, 92 participant teachers were working in a secondary school, 118 participant teachers were working in an elementary school, and 18 participants were working in a preschool. A majority of the participants (250 teachers) were teaching in a general academic school, 100 teachers were teaching in a vocational and technical high school, and the rest were teaching in co-ed schools - which have vocational and technical education and general academic education classes in one school premises - and schools for gifted students.

Measures

The online form sent to the teachers included five parts. The first part was composed of items about teachers' personal details in addition to items about students' SES and home-school

distance. The other four parts were respectively “Teachers’ P-O Fit Scale”, “Psychological Well-Being Scale”, “Teachers’ Intent to Leave Scale”, and “Teachers’ Intent to Move Scale”.

Teachers’ P-O Fit Scale

The four items composing the teacher-school dimension of “Teachers’ Person-Environment Fit Scale” developed by Demirkasimoğlu (2012) were used in this study to measure teachers’ fit perceptions about their schools. Teachers’ P-O Fit Scale is a 5-point Likert scale, responses for which range from “strongly disagree (1 point)” to “strongly agree (5 points)”. All the items are in affirmative sentence structure and the total score ranges from 4 to 20 points. Sample items are: “My personal goals and values are similar to the current schools’ goals and values (no.1)”; “I embrace the majority of the policy in practice at my current school (no.4)”. The scale aims to measure both value and goal congruence between teachers and schools. The internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s α) was 0.93.

Psychological Well-Being Scale

Psychological Well-Being Scale developed with the aim of measuring socio-psychological well-being by Diener et al. (2010) was adapted to Turkish culture by Telef (2013). The scale has eight items and is a 5-point Likert scale, responses for which range from “strongly disagree (1 point)” to “strongly agree (5 points)”. All the items are in affirmative sentence structure and the total score ranges from 8 to 40 points. High scorers are more likely to lead a psychologically resourceful and strong life. Sample items are: “I lead a purposeful and meaningful life (n.1), “I am a good person and live a good life” (n.8). The internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s α) was 0.88.

Teachers’ Intent to Leave and Teachers’ Intent to Move Scales

In this study teachers’ turnover intentions were measured in accordance with the classification by Grogan and Youngs (2011) who classified teacher mobility either as “leavers” or “movers”. In order to measure teachers’ intent to leave the teaching profession or move to another school, “Teachers Intent to Leave Scale” and “Teachers’ Intent to Move Scale” developed by Vekeman et al. (2017) were applied. The scales were adapted to Turkish culture by Coşkun et al. (2021). There are three items in each scale and they are 5-point Likert scales, responses for which range from “strongly disagree (1 point)” to “strongly agree (5 points)”. In both scales, all the items are in affirmative sentence structure and the total score ranges from 3 to 15 points. Sample items are: “As soon as it is possible, I will leave the teaching profession” (Intent to leave n.1) and “I think a lot about leaving my current school” (Intent to move n.2). The internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s α) was 0.89 for Teachers’ Intent to Leave Scale and 0.95 for Teachers’ Intent to Move Scale (Coşkun et al., 2021).

Data Analysis

In order to investigate the effect of teachers’ P-O fit on their intent to leave and intent to move, and the mediating role of psychological well-being in this relationship, two models were applied.

Model 1. The mediating effect of psychological well-being in the relationship between teachers’ P-O fit perceptions and intent to move

Model 2. The mediating effect of psychological well-being in the relationship between teachers' P-O fit perceptions and intent to leave

The mediating effect of psychological well-being in the relationship between teachers' P-O fit perceptions and intent to move/intent to leave was tested through Baron and Kenny's (1986) 3- step regression model. Baron and Kenny (1986) argue that in order to test a mediating effect of a variable three conditions are to be met:

- (1) There has to be a significant relationship between the predictor/ independent variable and the mediating variable (path a).
- (2) There has to be a significant relationship between the mediating variable and the outcome/dependent variable (path b).
- (3) The relationship between the predictor/independent variable and the outcome/dependent variable has to become insignificant or the significance level has to decrease when the mediating variable is included in the model (path c).

Model 4 developed by Preacher and Hayes (2008) through SPSS Macro and PROCESS Macro were employed in the data analysis. The effect of the mediating variable is evaluated on the basis of the significance level of the relationship between predictor/independent variable and the outcome/dependent variable when the mediating variable is introduced in the model. If the relationship between the predictor/independent and the outcome/dependent variable reduces when the mediating variable is introduced, there is a "partial mediation"; if the relationship becomes insignificant, there is a "complete mediation".

In the assessment of the statistical significance of the mediating effect of psychological well-being on the relationships between teachers' P-O fit perceptions and intent to move to another school and intent to leave the teaching profession, Bootstrap method suggested by Preacher and Hayes (2008) was used. After the calculations for the significance of the mediating effect, the significance level is supposed to be different from zero in the confidence interval. That zero value is not within the confidence interval indicates that the indirect effect is significantly different from zero (Narlı, 2019).

In the data analysis process, the correlations between the variables were calculated with Pearson product moment correlation coefficient formula, after correlation calculations the mediating effects of psychological well-being were calculated in each model.

Results

As indicated before, the correlations between the variables of the Model 1 were tested using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient formula. The results of the correlational analysis for teachers' P-O fit perceptions, psychological well-being and intent to move to another school are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
Correlations between teachers’ intent to move, P-O fit, and psychological well-being

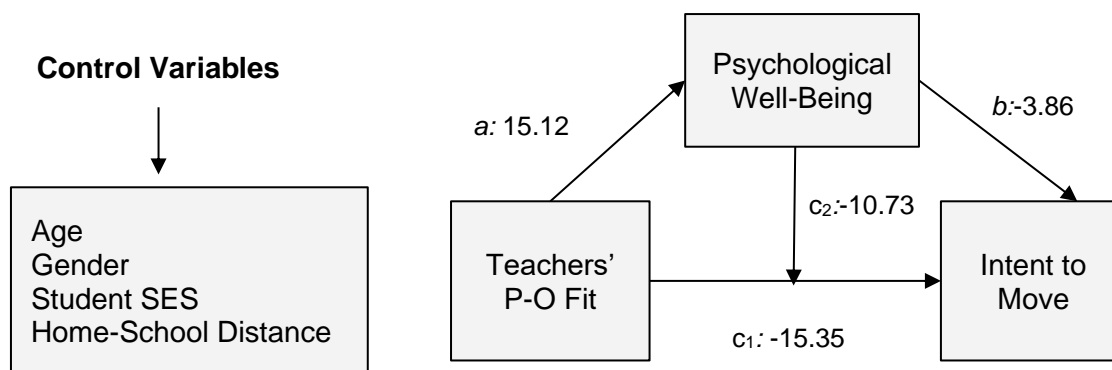
| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|-----------------------------|---|--------|--------|
| 1. Intent to move | - | -.59** | -.43** |
| 2. P-O fit | | - | .54** |
| 3. Psychological well-being | | | - |

** $p < .01$

As can be seen from the Table 1, there was a negative, moderate, and significant relationship between teachers’ intent to move and P-O fit perceptions; there was a negative, moderate, and significant relationship between teachers’ intent to move and psychological well-being; there was a positive, moderate, and significant relationship between teachers’ P-O fit perceptions and psychological well-being levels.

The findings about the effect of teachers’ psychological well-being on the relationship between their P-O fit perceptions and intent to move to another school is shown in Figure 3. In this analysis teachers’ age, gender, home-school distance, and student SES were controlled.

Figure 3.
The mediating effect of psychological well-being on the relationship between teachers’ P-O fit and intent to leave



As shown in Figure 3, teachers’ P-O perceptions had a direct and significant effect on their intent to move to another school (c_1) ($\beta = -.56$; $t = -15.35$; $p < .01$), supporting H1. P-O fit perceptions had a significant effect on psychological well-being (a), too ($\beta = .58$; $t = 15.12$; $p < .01$). And, psychological well-being had a significant effect on the outcome variable intent to move to another school (b) ($\beta = -.16$; $t = -3.86$; $p < .01$).

When the mediating variable psychological well-being was introduced in the model, the relationship between teachers’ P-O fit perceptions and intent to move to another school remained significant (c_2) but the significance level decreased ($\beta = -.47$; $t = -10.73$; $p < .01$). Thus,

it was evaluated that psychological well-being was a partial mediator in the relationship between P-O fit and intent to move.

The significance of the partial mediation effect of psychological well-being was examined on a %95 bootstrap confidence interval of 5000 iterations. The findings showed that the confidence interval was “-.16/-.04”, indicating that the indirect effect of psychological well-being on the relationship between teachers’ P-O fit and intent to move to another school was different from zero and significant. In this frame, H₃ was partially supported.

The results of the correlational analysis for the variables in Model 2; teachers’ P-O fit perceptions, psychological well-being, intent to leave the teaching profession are in Table 2.

Table 2.

Correlations between teachers’ intent to leave the teaching profession, P-O fit and psychological well-being

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|-----------------------------|---|--------|--------|
| 1. Intent to leave | - | -.36** | -.37** |
| 2. P-O fit | | - | .46** |
| 3. Psychological well-being | | | - |

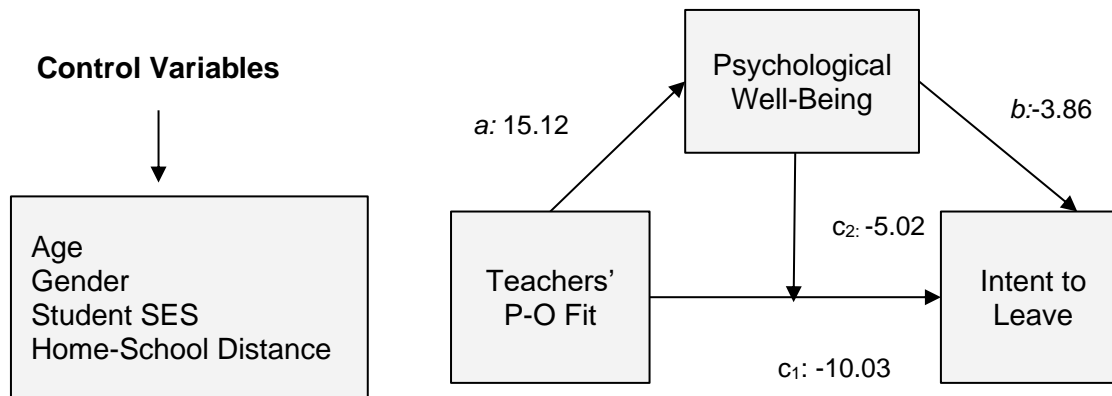
** $p < .01$

As can be seen from the Table 2 there was a negative, moderate, and significant relationship between teachers’ intent to leave and P-O fit perceptions; there was a negative, moderate, and significant relationship between teachers’ intent to leave and psychological well-being; there was a positive, moderate, and significant relationship between teachers’ P-O fit perceptions and psychological well-being levels.

The findings about the effect of teachers’ psychological well-being on the relationship between their P-O fit perceptions and intent to leave the teaching profession is presented in Figure 4. In this analysis teachers’ age, gender, home-school distance, and student SES were controlled.

Figure 4.

The mediating effect of psychological well-being on the relationship between teachers' P-O fit and intent to leave



As shown in Figure 4, teachers' P-O perceptions had a direct and significant effect on their intent to leave the profession (c_1) ($\beta=-.42$; $t=-10.03$; $p<.01$), supporting H₂.

When the mediating variable psychological well-being was introduced in the model, the relationship between teachers' P-O fit perceptions and intent to leave the profession remained significant (c_2) but the significance level decreased ($\beta=-.24$; $t=-5.02$; $p<.01$). So, it was evaluated that psychological well-being was a partial mediator in the relationship between P-O fit and intent to leave.

The significance of the partial mediation effect of psychological well-being was examined on a %95 bootstrap confidence interval of 5000 iterations. The findings showed that the confidence interval was “ $-.22/-.09$ ”, indicating that the indirect effect of psychological well-being on the relationship between teachers' P-O fit and intent to leave the profession was different from zero and significant. In this frame, H₄ was partially supported.

Discussion

This study investigated the relationship between teachers' P-O fit and intent to leave the profession and intent to move to another school, and the effect of psychological well-being on this relationship. Consistent with the first and second hypothesis, it was found that teachers' P-O fit predicted both their intent to leave the profession and intent to move to another school. This result shows empirical evidence supporting that both the principles of the ASA model by Schneider et al. (1995) and the congruence of values model by Chatman (1991) manifest themselves in the education organizations. As Pervin (1989) argued, personal goals and perceptions of the opportunities for goal attainment offered by the situation shapes individuals' behaviors. In this respect, these findings suggest that teachers' fit perceptions resulting from the opportunities for goal attainment offered by the situation influences not only their possible decision to move to another educational organization but also completely quitting the teaching profession. From the point of value congruence perspective, as argued Chatman's value congruence model (1991), teachers' perceptions of misfit between their

personal values and the schools' might lead them to switch their school or even quit the profession.

The confirmation of the first and the second hypothesis is in accordance with the findings of empirical studies in this area linking P-O fit with intent to leave (e.g. Abdalla et al., 2018; Ambrose et al., 2008; Chatman, 1991; Chen et al., 2016; Judge & Cable, 1997; Kristof-Brown, 1996; Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001; O'Reilly et al., 1991; Van Vianen et al., 2007; Verquer et al., 2003; Westerman & Cyr, 2004; Yaniv & Farkas, 2005), which implies that teachers don't take work related decisions only on economical basis, and teacher employment approaches shouldn't base their arguments solely on work market and supply-demand models. These findings about the relationship between teachers' P-O fit and intent to leave or move agree with the studies in educational organizations, as well - although there are very few. Grogan and Youngs (2011) observed that with every one-unit increase in the P-O fit perceptions, the odds of switching schools was 27.0% lower and the odds of leaving teaching were 20% lower, even when control variables and other strong factors such as person-job fit were controlled. Similarly, in a study at a higher education institution in India, Narayan and Sekar (2009) found that academic staff's P-O fit perceptions was a strong predictor of their intent to retain at their organizations. Groble and van Rensburg (2019) also confirmed that P-O fit perceptions had a strong negative relationship with turnover intentions in a higher education institution in South Africa. However, they noticed that such a relationship was stronger in X generation employees than Y generation. Vekeman et al. (2017) in their study with teachers in Belgium supported that intent to switch the school or intent to leave the profession was significantly predicted by teachers' perceptions of P-O fit. According to the consistent findings of more than 30 years of studies in a number of different organizations, it can be easily said that P-O fit is one of the most prominent predictors of retention or turnover decisions, and wouldn't be much wrong to conclude that P-O fit is an organizational predictor of turnover intentions across time, sector and even culture.

In addition to providing empirical support for the effect of P-O fit on intent to leave and move, the findings of the study, with respect to the third and fourth hypothesis, demonstrated that teachers' psychological well-being played a role in this effect. Comparison of the findings with those of other studies (e.g. Bellou, 2009; Grobler & Rensburg, 2019) confirms that other variables together with P-O fit might play a significant role in retention or turnover decisions. As discussed in the literature review, the effect of work life on individuals' psychological status has been a theme which attracted the attention of both researchers and practitioners over a long while. In the current study, it was demonstrated that in educational organizations teachers' psychological status might play a role in their work related decisions. This result agrees with Holland's (1985) Theory of Career Choice claiming that when characteristics of individuals match the features of their environment, they are happier and more successful, and it confirms the basic argument of Person-Environment Fit Theory hypothesizes that misfit between a person and his/her environment causes the loss of psychological well-being (Dewe et al., 2012). The findings about the relationship between P-O fit and psychological well-being are also consistent with the empirical literature. DeSouza and Porto (2015) observed that P-O fit had an effect on workplace happiness, and similarly Merecz and Andysz (2012) found that when P-O fit was high, participants' mental health status scores were better, regardless of their somatic health status scores.

The study showed that besides its relationship with P-O fit, psychological well-being significantly mediated the effect of P-O fit on both their intent to leave and move. This mediation effect can be explained by the spillover hypothesis, which asserts that positive or negative experiences are transferred from one role to another (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Confirming the spillover hypothesis and the result of this study, Dewe and Kompier (2008) found that negative psychological variables such as anxiety and depression might lead to dissatisfaction at work, work-family conflict and turnover intention. As a work life variable, teachers' P-O fit has an effect on their psychological health as a non-work life outcome, and this non-work life variable has an effect on work related decisions, vice versa.

Conclusion

The findings of this study provide significant contributions to the person organization fit literature by increasing the number of empirical evidence about the effects of P-O fit in education institutions. Furthermore, the study provides empirical support for a binary outlook at teachers' turnover intentions by testing it in two measures: intent to leave or intent to move. Showing the relationship between works related cognitions and psychological status, the study also contributes to the theories marking the effect of organizational life on individual psychology. Despite these contributions the study has limitations. The first limitation is that the sample of the study was not reflecting a national characteristic; the participants were working in a middle-sized city in Anatolia. Another limitation is that the study model was based on cross-sectional and self-report data which requires some caution in interpretation and generalization of the results.

In further studies, researchers should try to measure teacher perceptions at a national level, and compare the effects of teachers' P-O fit in different school environments. Longitudinal research would be helpful in understanding cause and effect relationships better, and might show if the turnover intentions actually result in real turnover in the teaching profession, or not.

For the practitioners the results of this study suggest that they need to take steps to enhance teachers' P-O fit, through traineeship programs during pre-service education, teacher selection strategies, and socialization strategies applicable in different years of teaching profession. Because lack of fit costs more than the measures needed to be taken for fit. Unfitting teachers are more prone to switch schools or leave the profession and high teacher turnover rates have destructive effects on teaching effectiveness.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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