

**T.R.**  
**GEBZE TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY**  
**INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED HUMAN  
RESOURCE SYSTEM STRENGTH AND  
JOB ENGAGEMENT**

**Melih Şükrü ECERTAŞ**  
**DOCTORAL DISSERTATION**  
**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS**  
**ADMINISTRATION**

**GEBZE**  
**2022**

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**GEBZE**  
**2022**

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## ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı algılanan insan kaynakları yönetim sistem gücü ile iş tutkunluğu arasındaki ilişkiyi psikolojik güvenlik ve işte gelişim konseptlerinin aracı rolü üzerinden analiz etmektir. Ayrıca, işte gelişim ve iş tutkunluğu ilişkisinde algılanan örgüt desteğinin düzenleyici rolü de test edilmiştir. İstanbul’da üç ay boyunca farklı sektörlerden 545 beyaz yakalı çalışandan veriler toplanmıştır. Bulgular insan kaynakları yönetim sistem gücü ile iş tutkunluğu arasındaki ilişkideki psikolojik güvenlik kavramının aracı rolünü tamamen desteklerken işte gelişim kavramının aracı rolünü kısmen desteklemişlerdir. Tezde bulguların teorik ve yönetsel çıktıları, araştırmanın sınırları ile birlikte tartışılmıştır. Gelecek araştırmalar için yapılan öneriler örgütsel davranış biliminin ilgili alanlarını aydınlatacak olup hem akademisyenler hem de yöneticiler için pratik fikirler verecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi Sistem Gücü, İş’te Gelişim, Psikolojik Güvenlik, İşe Tutkunluk, Algılanan Örgütsel Destek

## ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the relationship between perceived HRM system strength and job engagement through the mediating role of thriving at work and psychological safety. Moreover, we also examined the moderating role of perceived organizational support in the relationship between thriving at work and job engagement. The data was collected from 545 white-collar employees from different industries over three months in Turkey, İstanbul. Findings indicate that mediating role of psychological safety in the relationship between HRM system strength and Job Engagement is fully supported. In addition to these, the mediating role of thriving at work in the relationship between HRM system strength and Job engagement is partially supported. Theoretical and managerial implications of this study are discussed with limitations. Suggestions of future research will enlighten the related area of organizational behavior and bring practical ideas for both academicians and practitioners in the field.

**Keywords:** Human Resources Management System Strength, Thriving at Work, Psychological Safety, Perceived Organizational Support, Job Engagement

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| Abbreviations | Description                        |
|---------------|------------------------------------|
| HRM           | : Human Resources Management       |
| HR            | : Human Resources                  |
| POS.          | : Perceived Organizational Support |
| R & D         | : Research and Development         |
| IT            | : Information Technology           |
| SEM           | : Structural Equation Modeling     |
| AMOS          | : Analysis of Momentum Structures  |
| AVE           | : Average Variance Extraction      |
| CFA           | : Confirmatory Factor Analysis     |
| CR            | : Composite Reliability            |
| PNFI          | : Parsimony Normed Fit Index       |
| VIF           | : Variation Inflation Factor       |
| S. Dev.       | : Standard Deviation               |

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The impact of HR practices on company performance is one of the most popular fields of study in management and organization research. Human resources practices, that we can call High-performance work practices", such as comprehensive recruitment and selection procedures, bounty and bonus incentives, performance management systems, employee loyalty and participation, continuous training and development increase the motivation, competencies, and performance of employees and enhance their contribution to the company while giving rise to the tendency of employees who do not perform well to quit the company (Jones and Wright, 1992). Ultimately, all these indicate that the company has improved its overall performance. In his research on the relationship between high-performance work practices and company performance, Huselid (1995) proved the negative relationship between productivity and financial performance, especially with the employee turnover. In other words, it has been shown that the above-mentioned high-performance work practices reduce the employee turnover rate, which in turn positively affects the productivity of the company, and ultimately, its financial results. Many similar studies have found a positive relationship between human resource management and performance (Arthur, 1994; Guest and Hoque, 1994; MacDuffie, 1995; Snell and Youndt, 1995; Boon et al., 2005).

While studies on human resources practices that bring high performance are increasing day by day, they have become fully used and highly beneficial in the business world. Instead of focusing on the "contents" suggested by different HR practices, in 2004, Bowen and Ostoff drew attention to the "process" of how these contents are explained and applied to employees. In our opinion, this was a very fundamental break in the field of management and organization, because Bowen and Ostroff suggested a paradigm shift. No matter how different, innovative, impressive, and interesting work practices you want, if you cannot convey them to your employees correctly, there is a process going backwards, not forward, in their minds. Many organizations think that they have an effective performance management system, but if employees talk about the incomprehensibility of this practice, the truth is that it is not applied to everyone. It is extremely important to pay attention to the methods of

conveying these practices to employees, while focusing on new innovative human resources practices to increase company performance.

The "HR System Strength" approach, which was developed based on Kelley's attribution theory and Mischel's strong situation, deals with how employees associate human resources practices in their minds and how strong an organizational climate they create (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). Three main factors make the organizational climate strong in the minds of the employees, which they refer to as work practices;

The first one is "distinctiveness", which means human resources practices are visible, understandable, reasonable, and directly related to employees. If employees find human resources practices clear, distinctive, and comprehensive, they can understand what the company expects from them and can work more focused on their targets.

The second is "consistency", that is, the practices of the human resources system with the same principles, regardless of time and agenda, by aligning it with a great consistency within the organization.

The third is "consensus", which means all company managers treat all employees fairly in a similar framework.

As can be seen, the principles of "distinctiveness", "consistency", and "consensus" refer to the impact of all HR practices on organizational culture, rather than the detailed benefit of any human resources practice. If these three features are highly accepted by the employees, we can say that the human resources of that company are strong and healthy.

Studies have found a positive relationship between these three features of the HR system and employee behaviors (Frenkel et al., 2011). In the study of Li et al., (2011) it has been proven that distinctiveness and consensus concepts have a positive relationship with "work satisfaction" and "vigor" and a negative relationship with "intention to leave". This shows us that when employees find their HR practices distinct and fair, they are more satisfied with their works, they go to their jobs with

vigor, and they do not intent to leave their jobs. Based on this study, we expect a positive relationship between employee engagement and the strength of the HRM system.

Although the concepts of job engagement and job satisfaction are close to each other, there are significant differences between them. Job satisfaction is the state of being emotionally satisfied with the work done and the results of the work (Locke, 1969). Job engagement, on the other hand, is a situation where they go beyond satisfying and engage themselves in their work physically, emotionally, and cognitively (Kahn, 1990). The latter was approached in more depth and redefined as a positive, satisfying, work-related state of mind characterized by vitality, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2001). While the concept of satisfaction is satisfaction-oriented, the concept of engagement, on the other hand, focuses on energy, vitality, excitement, and engagement along with satisfaction. In their study, Warr and Inceoglu (2012) explain the concepts of satisfaction and engagement through the difference in activation or arousal level.

A new adventure awaits after Kahn (1990) uses the concept of Engagement. It comes up with different usages such as Personal Engagement (Kahn, 1990; Krug, 2008 Banks 2012) – Employee Engagement (Saks, 2006; Macey and Schneider, 2008; Anitha 2014) – Work Engagement (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2007; Bakker and Demerouti, 2008) – Emotional Engagement (Greene et al., 2001; Heath, 2009), and Job Engagement (Crawford et al., 2010; Inceoglu and Warr, 2011).

Kahn (1990), as the person who first addressed the concept of engagement, defines "engagement" as the simultaneous exercise and expression of a person's "preferred self" in task behaviors that support their whole physical, cognitive, and emotional, and active performance, their connections with work and others, and their personal presence. According to Kahn, who takes Goffman's role theory as a basis, the three psychological conditions of engagement are the concepts of meaningfulness, safety, and availability. The person asks himself/herself these three questions subconsciously while working: How does it mean to me to do this job? How safe is it? And, how available am I for this job? If the answers given to these questions satisfy the person, the prerequisites of engagement are fulfilled. The complexity, clarity,

variety, creativity, and autonomy of the job of the employee are important features for meaningfulness. Safety is the feeling of being comfortable and safe while doing the job without feeling any fear. Psychological availability is that the person is physically and emotionally available. In 1992, Kahn states that a person must be physically, emotionally, and cognitively at work to feel full and with all of his/her being at work. He explains the 4 basic dimensions of psychological being as attentiveness, connection, integration, and focus.

Two of the antecedents of engagement in research are perceived organizational support and psychological safety (Saks, 2006; Chhetri, 2017). Perceived Organizational Support (POS) is the employee's perception of the extent to which their company values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). POS has been found to have significant results in employee performance and well-being (Stamper and Johlke, 2003; Edmondson et al., 2009; Miao, 2011).

Employees with a high perception of organizational support have a positive and safe future expectation regarding the possible contributions and mistakes of the company. This results in employees being less afraid of negative consequences for their status and career, and ultimately engaging themselves fully in their job roles (Edmondson, 1999). Psychological safety is the ability to demonstrate and use oneself without fear of negative consequences for one's self-image, status, or career (Kahn, 1990). Studies have shown that there is a direct relationship between psychological safety and trust and learning in the organization (Cook et al., 2004). When the concept of learning in the organization is considered together with the concept of "thriving at work", we will have the opportunity to analyze another important premise for engagement. The concept of thriving at work has been explained as the situation that occurs when the employee experiences the feelings of vitality and learning simultaneously (Dutton et al., 2005).

Although psychological safety directly results in job engagement, as seen in research, when practical business life is considered, the concept of organizational support is a matter of existence for engagement. In other words, if there is organizational support, engagement can be mentioned and its relationship with other

concepts can be examined. However, engagement analysis will not be reasonable if there is no organizational support.

Based on the above context, while examining the relationship between HRM system strength and Job Engagement in our research, we will position the thriving at work and psychological safety constructs as the mediator and the perceived organizational support concept as the moderator.

## **1.1 The Contribution of the Thesis**

The concepts of "engagement", "thriving", "psychological safety" and "organizational support" are frequently used in organizational behavior literature.

In fact, when similar concepts are considered, we can say that we are dealing with the most popular concepts in the literature. In the following literature research, we will discuss these concepts in detail, while we will touch on their basic theories and also examine their relationship with similar concepts.

However, the concept of "HRM system strength" has not found a wide place in the literature as much as the others. Especially in Turkey, where the thesis was written, we have not come across any study in this area. There is no field study on this subject for Turkish companies. First of all, our thesis will be one of the first thesis written and one of the first research in the field of "HRM system strength" in Turkey.

While the relationship between the concept of HRM system strength and many other concepts has been examined, its relationship with the concept of Job Engagement has been discussed for the first time. Likewise, the concepts of Thriving and Psychological Safety in the relationship between HRM system strength and Job Engagement were discussed for the first time and examined with the effect of the moderator in this relationship.

When we look at the literature from a job engagement perspective, we use the concepts of thriving and psychological safety together for the first time as the predecessors of job engagement.

Finally, the concept of "perceived organizational support" was used as a moderator for the first time in the relationship between thriving and job engagement and contributed to the literature in this sense.

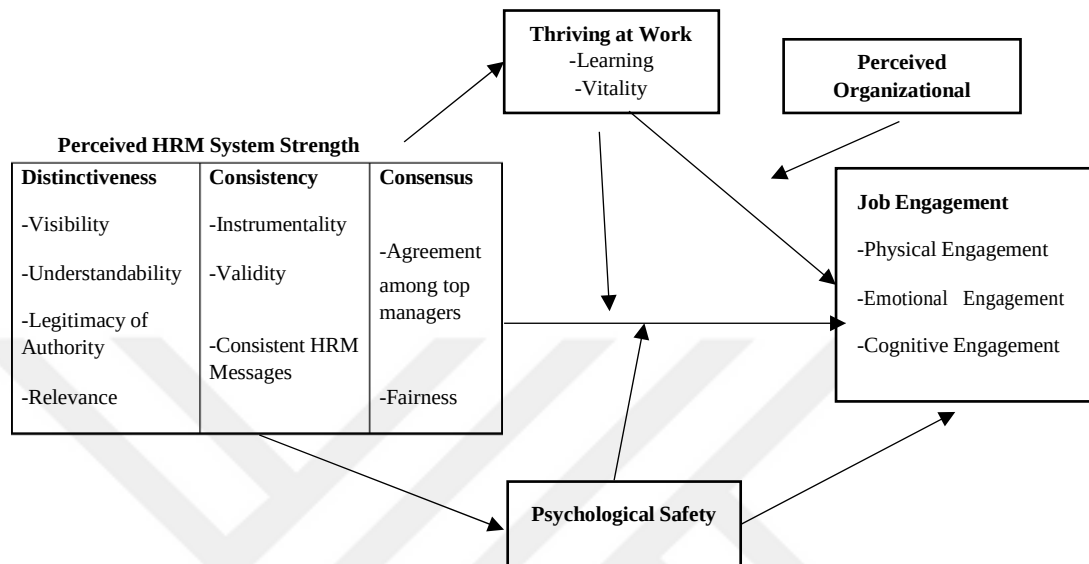


Figure 1-1 Research Model of Our Thesis

## 1.2 The Content Flow of the Thesis

We started our thesis with a broad and inclusive introduction, in which we briefly explained all the concepts and outlined the contribution of our model to the literature.

Literature research has started by briefly explaining the history and development of personnel administration and human resources management, which are the c of our basic concept, "HR System strength". Then, we explained the HRM "content" approach led by "high performance working systems" and the "process" approach pioneered by Bowen and Ostroff, and we tried to analyze how they complement each other.

We discussed the concept of HRM System Strength in three main frameworks. In the first part, we analyzed the basic theories that make up the approach as organizational climate, attribution theory, covariance model, and situational strength.

In the second part, we discussed the 3 sub-dimensions of the HRM System strength concept and the detailed mechanisms of each. In the last part of this section, we examined the relationship between the HRM System strength concept and some other organizational behavior concepts. In the rest of the literature review, we discussed the concepts of thriving, psychological safety, and organizational support in detail.

In our methodological approach, which is based on the structural equation model sampling, measuring validity/reliability and assessing common method bias and hypothesis testing are also examined respectively. Our scales are accepted in the field of organizational behavior, have received many references, and have been used many times before. Confirmatory factor analysis also confirms the validity and reliability of our scales. We conducted our survey with 545 white-collar people living in Istanbul. In addition, the reliability and validity of our results are highly affirmative, showing us that our data set "fit" for our analysis. Then we tested our hypotheses one by one and of the seven hypotheses, H1, H2, H4, H5, H6 are fully supported, while H3 is partially supported, but H7 is not supported.

Table 1-1 Hypothesis of Our Thesis

| Hypothesis                                                                                                   | Result              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| H1 - Perceived HRM System Strength is positively related to Thriving at Work                                 | Supported           |
| H2 - Thriving at Work is positively related to Job Engagement                                                | Supported           |
| H3 - Thriving at Work mediates the relationship between Perceived HRM System Strength and Job Engagement     | Partially Supported |
| H4 - Perceived HRM System Strength is positively related to Psychological Safety                             | Supported           |
| H5 - Psychological Safety is positively related to the Job Engagement.                                       | Supported           |
| H6 - Psychological Safety mediates the relationship between Perceived HRM System Strength and Job Engagement | Supported           |
| H7 - Perceived Organizational Support moderates the relationship between Thriving at Work and Job Engagement | Not Supported       |

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Historical Development of HRM

Human resource management is the process of developing and implementing strategies for recruiting, training, and retaining people who serve the same common purpose in organizations. However, studies on working people have been handled within the scope of “personnel administration” for many years, and those people have been seen as a cost element that must be managed. After the great depression in America, personnel management appeared as a part of industrial relations in accordance with the development of labor unions and continued in this way until America encountered a strong international competition. After the 70’s, there has been a transition from “personnel administration” to “human resource management” (Mahoney and Deckop, 1986), and human is not a cost element for organizations, but rather an asset that needs to be trained, developed and motivated to carry the organization to its goals. Although Drucker mentioned the concept of "human resource" among the company's other resources in 1954, and Bakke emphasized "human resource" as an important function of management such as marketing, finance, and production in 1958, these efforts in the 50s did not find the necessary response academically (Marciano, 1995). Classical operations like payroll plans were always important, but due to globalization and competitive work environment, Human Resources was becoming more and more popular function that focuses more than only benefits.

Table 2-1 Adopted from Mahoney and Deckop (1986)

| <b>From Personnel Administration</b> | <b>To Human Resource Management</b> |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Administration                       | Management                          |
| Human Relations                      | Organizational Effectiveness        |
| Human Resource Planning              | Strategy                            |
| Labor Relations                      | Governance                          |
| Morale                               | Climate and Culture                 |
| Individual Job                       | Teamwork                            |
| Problem Focus                        | Accountability Focus                |
| Training                             | Development                         |

The table above summarizes the development of human resources management from the beginning of the 20th century to the 1980s in a conceptual sense rather than historical transformation.

Since the early 80s, human resource management has emerged as an important part of the strategic plan of companies (Tichy et al., 1982).

Strategic HR approaches have been studied for the last 40 years and focus on the relationship between organizational performance and human resource management. The most prominent of these approaches is High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) (Becker and Huselid, 1998).



Table 2-1 Categories of HR Practices Comprising HPWS, (Evans and Davis, 2005)

| HR Practice Category          | Description                                                                                                                 | Examples                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Staffing                      | Extensiveness of procedures to evaluate relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities for job fit and organization fit          | Selective screening<br>Assessment of technical and interpersonal skills, attitudes, and/or personality<br>Performance-based promotions       |
| Self-managed teams            | Redistribution of power downward by granting authority and responsibility to team structures                                | Employee participation programs<br>Teams with task and decision-making authority<br>Extensive use of teams throughout the organization       |
| Decentralized decision making | Empowering employees via greater responsibility and access to resources                                                     | Less well-defined tasks<br>Authority to make decisions<br>Employee involvement<br>Participative management                                   |
| Training                      | Extensiveness of formalized programs to develop knowledge, skills, and abilities                                            | Training for current and future skills; including technical and interpersonal<br>Cross Training for both new hires and experienced employees |
| Flexible work assignments     | Opportunities to broaden individual knowledge, skills, and abilities                                                        | Job rotation; rotation across teams<br>Ability to perform +1 job                                                                             |
| Communication                 | Open vertical and horizontal communication channels providing access to information and opportunities to express viewpoints | Access to all levels of operating results<br>Employee suggestion systems<br>Explanation of business strategy                                 |
| Compensation                  | Performance-contingent pay, group-based pay, and above-market pay policies                                                  | Profit/gain sharing<br>Employee ownership<br>Comparatively high level of pay<br>Performance-contingent pay<br>Team-based pay                 |

With the intensification of competition, employees now became a strategic competitive advantage. Especially, with the measurement of workforce turnover rates together with productivity (Huselid, 1995), the effect of human resources management

on the performance of the company has gained significant importance. Considering the selection of the right people, establishing teams that work well together, delegating authority to managers, performance management systems and motivation studies, human resources management has now become one of the indispensable strategic agendas for all organizations.

## **2.2 HRM Process Approach vs Content Approach**

When HR content is mentioned, what is meant is the understanding of HR applications that help the organization reaching its goals (Boselie et al., 2005). Although there is no clear consensus which HR applications brings higher employee performance than the others, it can be said that many HR applications enable employees to give their companies the highest level of productivity in the happiest state. For example, a business that follows a "selective hiring" policy cannot achieve success by choosing only the best and most competent people. The harmonious work of this competent staff, in other words, "teamwork" has critical importance. The implementation of the "performance measurement system" in the organization does not make any sense on its own, but it contributes to the holistic success of the company with a fair "rewarding" model. Although the continuous training and development of the employees seem very advantageous, if the commitment of the employees is not carried out together with their work, it will not produce positive results.

Guzzo and Noonan (1994) in their study on the unwritten "psychological contract" between the business and the employees mention that mutual expectations and obligations are transferred between the employer and the employee by a complex communication mechanism. In this context, a systematic analysis process is required for employees to clearly understand what the company expects from them.

All of the HR contents mentioned above certainly contribute to the success of the company, but these HR practices alone are not enough. Because, in essence, human resources are a communication wind blowing from employer to employee. If you cannot manage this wind correctly, namely, if you cannot predict what the expectations of the employees are, this communication wind starts to blow in the opposite direction and harms the performance of the company. Bowen and Ostroff emphasized this

communication process while developing their HRM System Strength approach and underlined its significance.

Understanding what the business expects from employees is extremely critical in the mental worlds of employees. While HRM System Strength considers this systematical communication as a “process”, it has emphasized that human resources contents that bring high performance make sense only with successful communication and perception processes.

### **2.3 Human Resources Management System Strength**

The relationship between human resources management and company performance has taken place in the world of academia for many years. (Arthur, 1992; Huselid, 1995). Strategic HR management research often focuses on what contents are useful and delivering results in HR management (Jackson and Jiang, 2014). Although many studies reveal the positive phenomenon in the HRM-performance relationship, there is no clear study on which mechanism is effective in this relationship. (Ferris et al., 1998). However, it has recently been revealed that "process" is very important as well as "content" (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004).

HR system can be defined as a complex communication mechanism between the organization and employees (Guzzo and Noonan, 1994). Every word is valuable in a communication that flows from employers to employees. Employees' ideas about what is expected of them are the result of this complex communication mechanism.

This communication mechanism also indicates through which processes the HR applications are transferred to the employee. Bowen and Ostroff's seminal work in 2004 points to this issue.

In 2004, Bowen and Ostroff emphasized the significance of the "process" of how HR procedures are viewed by employees, as well as the "contents" of this human resources activity. A strong atmosphere is created when employees have a shared vision of what is expected from them and which behaviors are rewarded by the firm. To generate this strong climate, HR policies must be unique, that is, clear,

understandable, and rational, and must be implemented in a fair and consistent manner by all implementing managers in consensus. The authors' "HRM System Strength" approach emphasizes the notions of "strong climate," "distinctiveness," "consistency," and "consensus."

### **2.3.1 Organizational Climate**

The business strategies and human resource policies of an organization should be congruent and linked. As illustrated by Bowen and Ostroff, the human resources policy of an innovation-oriented company should also support the innovation strategy. In addition, the human resource policy of a customer satisfaction-oriented company should also be focused on the services provided to the customers. Indeed, whatever dominating climate exists in the culture of the firm, employees' expectations will be established within the context of that climate. When we view culture as a collection of the company's assumptions and values, we may see it as both a precursor to the human resource system and a mediator of the link between human resources and performance (Denison, 1996). While organizational beliefs and values influence human resource practices, they also shape the norms that govern individual and organizational performance (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004).

Bowen and Ostroff determined that organizational climate is a more appropriate term for their theory based on organizational culture and organizational climate studies (Denison, 1996; Schneider et al., 2002) since they desired to tackle human resource management system strength from a multidimensional perspective, that is, both at the individual and organizational level.

### **2.3.2 Situational Strength**

Situational strength, theorized by Mischel (1977), is the situation in which potentially desired behaviors vary according to environmental conditions. Mischel's traffic light example is very revealing about the strong and weak states. The red light gives a clear message to people that they need to "stop", no matter what your personality is, you stop at a red light. In the yellow light, there is no clarity about stopping, while the brave people can pass, it is seen that the cautious people mostly

stop. In this example, the red light indicates the strong situation, while the yellow light indicates the weak situation.

Bowen and Ostroff (2004) introduce the impact of the common perception of employees on what is important for the organization, what behavior is expected of them and what is rewarded on the organizational climate in the company. They explain the approach that a strong climate can create a strong HRM system through Mischel's "situational strength". Bowen and Ostroff used Mischel's "situational strength" technique to determine whether the organizational climate is weak or strong. According to this definition, a scenario is considered "strong" if it results in a "conformity" interpretation in the mind of the individual, and "weak" if it results in an "ambiguity" interpretation (Mischel and Peake, 1982). It is believed that organizational culture creates a "strong situation" by directing employees toward unambiguous ideals and goals and uniting minds around common denominators (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004).

### **2.3.3 Attribution Theory**

Attribution theory, one of the important building blocks of social psychology, examines the models people use in their minds when explaining behaviors and events. According to Heider, one of the pioneers of attribution theory, people want to predict how others will behave because they satisfy their need to control the environment while understanding the world in a coherent way. Harold Kelley developed the theory of covariation in 1967, based on Heider's covariation approach. Kelley is concerned with the extent to which a behavior is experienced in different situations. He says we look for consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus when making our causal attributions.

Although the attribution theory was developed in 1967, its reflection in the research world was after the well-cited study of Kelley and Michela in 1980. It is used in many studies in the field of psychology and sociology, as well as in employee psychology studies (Hesketh, 1984; DeJoy, 1994).

Bowen and Ostroff used the covariance model of Kelly's attribution theory while developing the HRM system strength theory. Attribution theory, also known as meaning attribution theory, is concerned with what kind of model people think in the mind when explaining the reasons for their own or others' behavior or situations that they have experienced. Kelly's theory of covariance, developed under the framework of Attribution theories, deals with whether there is a reason while explaining the reason for something in different situations. In other words, for something to be the cause of a behavior, it must happen when that behavior occurs and it should not happen when it does not. Kelley (1973) modelled our causal attributions in 3 frameworks;

1-Is there consistency? In all cases, does the actor of the behavior show the same behavior? Does the cause-and-effect relation related to the cases we experience show similarity beyond time and situation-specific?

2-Is there distinctiveness? Can this behavior be sharp and clearly distinguished by looking at the behavior from the outside? Can the cause-and-effect relationship related to the cases we experience be observed clearly?

3- Is there a consensus? Do other people behave the same in the same situation? Are we the only ones who think that way about the cause-and-effect relationship of the case we experience? Or do people think similarly?

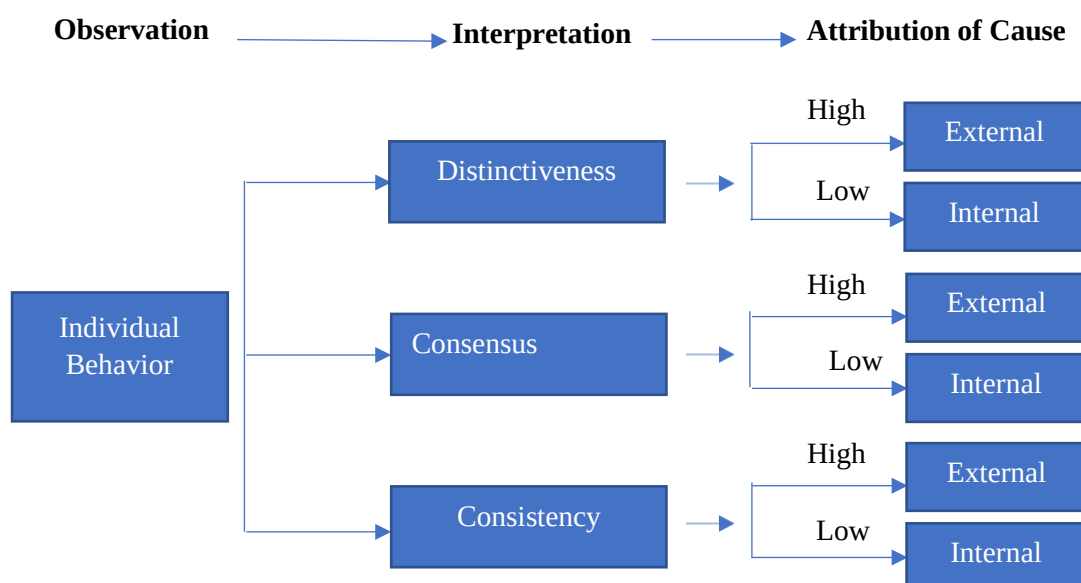


Figure 2-1 Attribution Theory Covariance Model of Kelley

### 2.3.4 Dimensions of HRM System Strength

“The Strength of Human Resources Management System” is concerned with the “agreement” of all employees, how “clear” the behaviors expected from them are expressed by the organization, and how “consistent” the practices are (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). The human resources management system strength concept, which is developed through social impact and attribution theories, is a persuasion process that aims to ensure that employees’ feelings, thoughts and behaviors are within the framework of the benefit of the organization and depends on the distinctiveness of the messages given by the employer to the employees and the consistency of the HR practices. Bowen and Ostroff (2016) examined the studies related to this concept which they developed, and revealed the main difference between this concept and those studied in the literature. At the origin, “HRM System Strength” was an organizational concept, while “Perceived HRM System Strength” was an employee level concept. The framework developed by Bowen and Ostroff as “distinctiveness”, “consistency” and “consensus” will be discussed in detail below with their sub-dimensions.

Table 2-2 Dimensions and Mechanisms of HRM System Strength (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004)

| Dimensions | Distinctiveness         | Consistency     | Consensus                             |
|------------|-------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| Mechanisms | Visibility              | Instrumentality | Agreement among<br>HR decision makers |
|            | Understandability       | Validity        |                                       |
|            | Legitimacy of authority | Consistent      | Fairness                              |
|            | Relevance               | HR messages     |                                       |

1- Distinctiveness; It is the framework that focuses on how much the organization's HR practices attract and arouse the attention of employees. The mechanisms that provide "distinctiveness" in HR practices are as follows;

-Visibility: It means that internal customers can have a clear idea of their HR practices. It is the degree of observability of the applications and messages given by HR. The clearer they have the chance to make observations, the stronger the “situation” will arise (situational strength).

-Understandability: The clarity, intelligibleness and transparency of the messages given by the company to the employees are as critical as the understandability of those messages sent by the employees. It is obvious that complex messages that are familiar to everyone but cannot be understood will do more harm than good. For example of the performance system, it will be difficult to talk about a strength situation if only the managers of the HR and sales departments can solve the setup behind the calculation model of the "sales incentive program".

-Legitimacy of authority: It means that HR practitioners have a legitimate power given by the company. It shows formality in terms of roles, expectations and behavior. It is important to give high status and reliability to the mechanism that implements HR practices.

-Relevance: It refers the level of HR practices are useful, important, and relevant that support the achievement of organizational goals. It is to make people feel how important they are for the goals they need to achieve.

2- Consistency: The consistency of the company in HR practices indicates that the employees feel the cause-and-effect consistency in relation to the expected behaviors. That is, when similar actions are taken, similar results occur in the same way. To give an example from performance management, the fact that employees who achieve their goals see the result of getting a premium when they achieve each goal is an example of consistency in HR practices.

-Instrumentality: Establishes the perception of the cause-effect relationship according to the expected behaviors and the results directly related to them. Instrumentality is the level of ability of employees to direct their behavior to the desired state.

-Validity: Validity is the level of realizing what HR practices actually intended to do. As the HR Department, you lose the perception of credibility when you tell the public about what you will do and do not fulfill them.

-Consistent HR Messages: Consistency is important in terms of persuasiveness in employer - employee communication. It is the case that consistent messages are transmitted continuously.

3- Consensus: It means that there is a consensus among employees on the behaviors what is expected of them and the consensus within the company about the cause-and-effect relationships of the behaviors that the company expected to see in the employees.

-Agreement among HR decision makers: Employees in organizations have social experiences not only with their own managers but also with many managers from different departments in daily practice. The fact that everyone is in consensus on HR practices also helps employees' perception of “consensus”.

-Fairness: It is the perception of the employees about the extent to which they are treated “fairly” in the organization. The perception of fairness is evaluated under three main frameworks; distributive, procedural and interactional.

### **2.3.5 Reflections of HRM System Strength**

A decade later from their original study of HRM system strength, Bowen and Ostroff (2016) reviewed the studies on HRM system strength and they identified a fundamental distinction between their original argument and many other studies in the same literature. Originally, "HRM System Strength" was an organizational-level phenomenon, whereas “Perceived HRM System Strength” was studied at the employee-level. Although there are different conceptualizations and operationalizations, the concept of HRM System Strength is widely accepted construct in the Human resource management body of knowledge.

The relationship between HRM system strength and many concepts has been studied in the literature, now we will discuss them.

Affective commitment is the strong emotional bond of the employee to the organization that he or she is happy to be a part of and identifying himself / herself with it. An interaction between the affective commitment bond and the Human Resources system is an expected case. Sanders et al., (2008) found a positive relationship between distinctiveness and consistency and affective commitment, which are important sub-dimensions of the HRM system. It is understood that the more clearly the HR management reveals the rules and transparently expresses what is expected from the employee, the higher the employees are expected to establish an affective commitment with the organization. (Chen et al., 2007) The recent studies confirm the positive relationship between HRM system strength and affective commitment. (Cafferkey et al., 2018).

Organizational Support: How the organization values its employees' ideas and cares about their contributions is known as organizational support in the literature. (Eisenberger et al., 1986). As HRM system strength reduces the uncertainty within the organization and employees have a consensus about what the organization expects from them, Alfes et al., (2019) hoped to find a relationship between HRM system strength and Organizational support in their study, and eventually they found a positive relationship. However, they identified this relationship linearly, and in our study, it is expected to play a perceived organizational support moderator role.

Performance appraisal quality: Performance management system is one of the indispensable HR practices for an organization. The effective power of the HRM system increases the performance appraisal quality (Bendall et al., 2014).

National cultural value: Since the concept of HRM System Strength is based on a communication flowing from the employer to the employee and since it is a "process" oriented work, the understanding and perception levels of the people are also important to understand this concept. (Li et al., 2011). In this context, Farndale and Sanders (2017) mentioned the difficulty of using HRM System Strength universally with the same expectations, and through Hofstede (1980)'s national cultural value approaches, they suggest that the power distance, performance orientation, uncertainty, avoidance and in-group collectivism dimensions regulate the relationship between HRM system strength and employees' behavioral outputs (moderator effect).

Leadership: Leader-follower relationship is critical in terms of managerial practices within the organization. The high HRM System Strength affects the leader-follower relationships, especially when the studies observe the effect of the paradoxical leadership harmony on the followers, they have observed the concrete regulatory role of HRM System Strength. (Jia et al., 2018).

Organizational Performance Relationship: The studies in the field of Human Resources can be divided into two perspectives as macro and micro. The macro view is the study that aims to understand and develop the company structurally in terms of strategy, structure, culture, and effectiveness at the organizational level. Micro view, on the other hand, aims to understand and improve the employee in terms of motivation, ability, performance, attitude and behavior at the individual level (Ostroff and Bowen, 2000). The authors, who added the HRM system strength concept to the HRM literature in their first study, directly correlated success in HR practices with company performance by using similar sub-dimensions. (Ostroff and Bowen, 2000). In their seminal article published in the “Academy of Management Review” in 2004, Bowen and Ostroff gave great importance to organizational climate when explaining the relationship between HRM system strength and performance. They stated that the organizational climate, in which employees clearly understand what is expected of them, mediates the relationship between HRM system strength and performance.

While explaining the mediating effect of organizational climate on performance, there have been studies in which the strength of the HRM system is used as an antecedent. Especially, Pereira and Gomes (2012) showed positive relationship between HRM system strength and organizational performance in their empirical research on industrial sector.

## **2.4 Engagement**

The concept of engagement appears in many different versions in academia and professional life. We encounter different versions of the Engagement concept, such as Engagement – Employee Engagement – Work Engagement – Job Engagement – Emotional Engagement, etc. Engagement was used for the first time in 1990 by Kahn in the sense of the employee's physical, emotional, and cognitive commitment to work.

Afterwards, it attracted attention both in academia and in the business world. In the world of academia, the concept of engagement is seen mainly as a part of the psychological world of the person, that is, as a micro in the frame of the close emotional relationship established in the minds related to his/her job. On the other hand, the business world approached the issue through organizational work outcomes by looking at the issue from a macro framework. The "State of American Workplace" published by Gallup company every year, mentions the effect of the concept of "engagement" on employees. In their reports in 2013, they mention that more than 70% of the employees are not engaged in their jobs and that the employees who are not engaged have an annual loss of around \$450-500 billion to the US economy (Islam and Noor, 2014). In our thesis, we will relate to the concept of "engagement" to the organizational behavior used in a similar framework, while focusing on how it has been approached both academically and its organizational outcomes.

Kahn (1990), as the person who first addressed the concept of engagement, defines "engagement" as the simultaneous exercise and expression of a person's "preferred self" in task behaviors that support their full physical, cognitive, emotional, and active performance, their connections with work and others, and their personal presence. According to Kahn, who takes Goffman's role theory as a basis, the three psychological conditions of engagement are the concepts of meaningfulness, safety, and availability. The person asks himself/herself these three questions subconsciously while working. How does it mean to me to do this job? How safe is it? And, how available am I for this job? If the answers given to these questions satisfy the person, the prerequisites of engagement are fulfilled.

Compelling, clarity, variety, creativity, and autonomy of the job of the employee are important features for meaningfulness. Safety is the feeling of being comfortable and safe while doing the job without feeling any fear. Psychological availability is that the person is physically and emotionally available. In 1992, Kahn states that a person must be physically, emotionally, and cognitively at work in order to feel full and with

all of his/her being at work. He explains the four basic dimensions of psychological being as attentiveness, connection, integration, and focus.

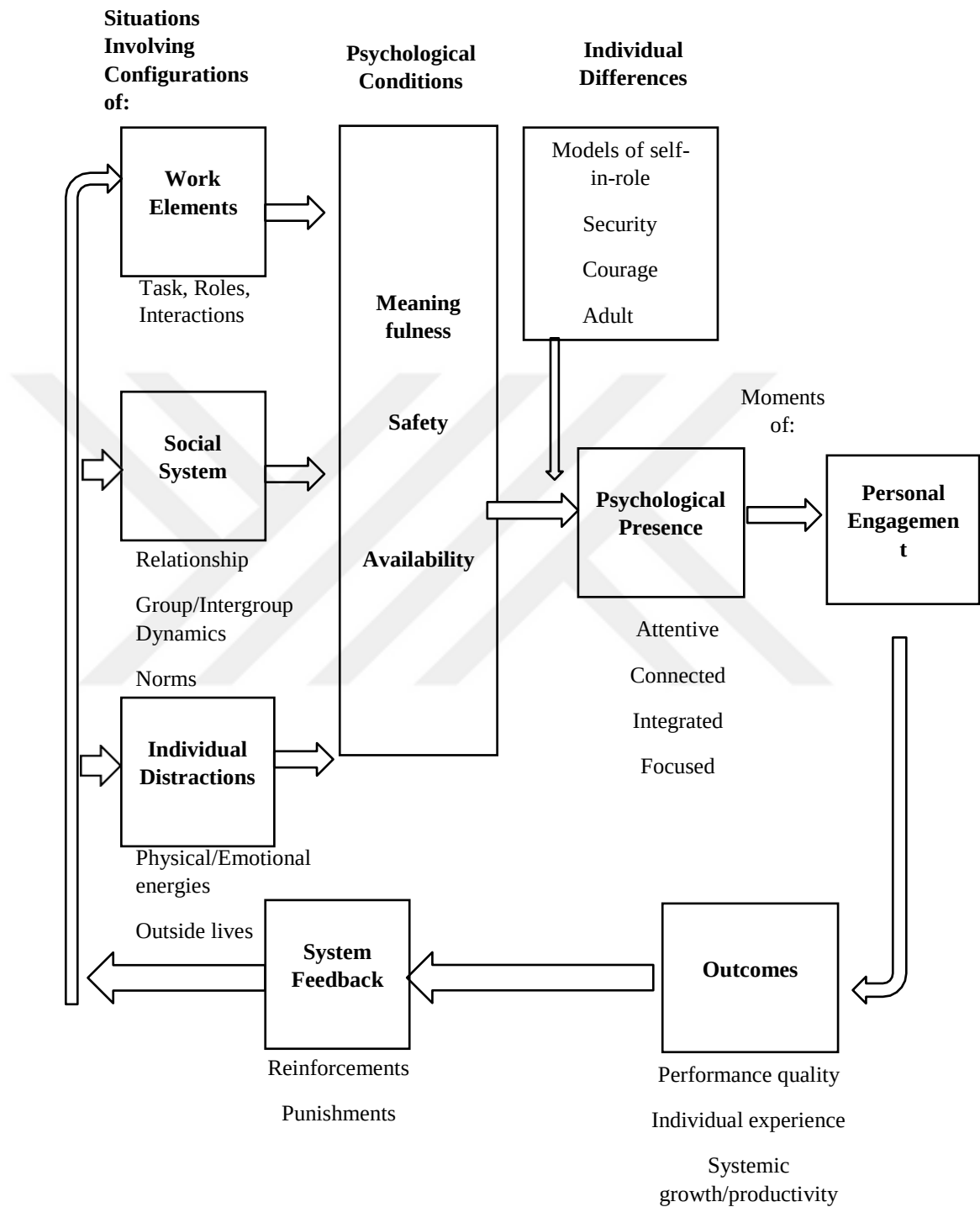


Figure 1-2 Kahn's Recursive Model of Psychological Presence (1992)

Engagement concept is evaluated within the framework of organizational behavior and positive psychology. Positive psychology is a field of science that focuses on improving the positive aspects of people instead of their negative aspects and aims to strengthen individuals and increase their resilience (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Although Kahn's concept development article (1990) was the basic building block in understanding the concept of "engagement", in academia, on the other hand, job engagement was interpreted as the opposite of the concept of burn out. The concept of burn out is the state of exhaustion, cynicism, and ineffectiveness in which the employee becomes. In simpler terms, it is the state of exhaustion of one's relationship with his / her job. (Maslach et al., 2001). Considering the mood at work, "exhaustion" which is analyzed within the concept of burn out, has been interpreted as "vigor" in the engagement as an opposite meaning. Feeling tired when going to work and working indicates that you are exhausted and that you no longer want to take care of that job. In this case, the person will not benefit himself/herself, nor will benefit his/her job. In the opposite case, the vigor, excitement, and engagement can be also felt while going to work and working. It can be said that the person made the highest contribution to his/her job in this situation. Similarly, "cynicism" analyzed within the concept of burnout has been interpreted as "dedication" in the concept of engagement in the opposite sense. Even if it is not in the opposite as a meaning, being cynical at work can be understood as feeling away from work and working half-heartedly. But the concept of "dedication", on the other hand, is a situation that is seen in every entrepreneur as embracing job, seeing that he/she has developed that job even in dreams, and trying to develop that job with all his/her might (Schaufeli et al., 2001).

In summary, we can say that while Kahn (1990) states that the concept of engagement is the full commitment of one's work in a physical, emotional and cognitive framework, Schaufeli et al. (2002) explain that the feelings of vigor, dedication and absorption while doing one's work are present in one's self with a positive mood (Schaufeli et al., 2002). When we combine these two definitions, we can say that employees are engaged to their job, if they dedicate themselves physically, emotionally, and mentally in their work, and they can work vigorous, dedicated, and absorbed with positive emotions. While we define vigor as having high energy and mental flexibility at work, we can explain dedication as an individual's pride in their

work, inspiring from their work, and working enthusiastically, and finally, absorption as a concentrated, content, and focused work.

In one of the systematic literature research projects on engagement has framed 4 basic approaches (Shuck, 2011): Need-Satisfying, Burnout Antithesis, Satisfaction-Engagement and Multidimensional. If we go through details;

- Needs Satisfying Approach, pioneered by Kahn (1990), is based on the employee's ability to establish an emotional connection with his / her job by meeting the meaningfulness, safety and availability needs related to the job and to dedicates himself / herself physically, emotionally, and cognitively. May, Gilson, and Harter (2004) tested Kahn's conceptualization for the first time empirically. In addition, Rich, LePine and Crawford also made Kahn's engagement base measurable in a way that would get very comfortable outcomes in practice, and they developed one of the most widely cited scales today. While defining the antecedents of engagement May, Gilson and Harter (2004) used job enrichment/work role fit/co-worker relations as meta features for meaningfulness, co-worker relations/supervisor relations/co-worker norms as meta features for safety, self-consciousness/resources/outside activities as meta features for availability.

- In Burnout Antithesis Approach, which Maslach et al., (2001) pioneered, engagement concept is viewed as the exact opposite of the burnout concept. While Maslach and Leiter were describing the concepts of engagement and burnout in 1997, they drew attention to the concept of "single continuum". This concept, which means a single continuity, has been conceptualized psychologically as engagement at its most positive end and as burnout at its most negative end. Burnout is analyzed as its exact opposite with the concepts of exhaustion, cynicism, and lack of accomplishment, respectively, while engagement comes to the fore with the concepts of energy, involvement and efficacy.

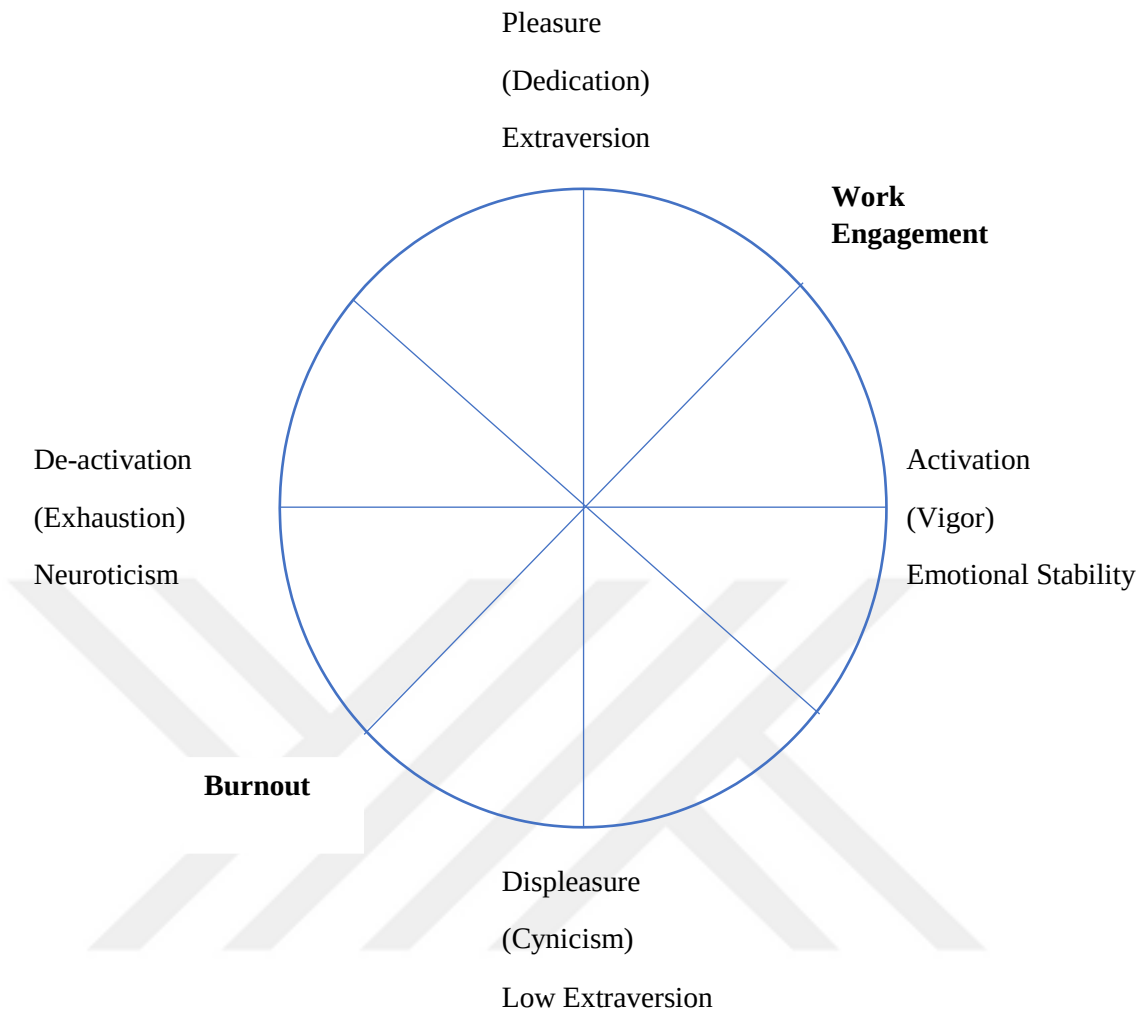


Figure 2-3 Integrated model of burnout and work engagement which is adopted from Russel and Carrol 1999 (Langelaan et al., 2006)

- In the Satisfaction-Engagement Approach pioneered by Harter et al., (2002), the concept of engagement refers to the employee's enthusiasm and satisfaction with doing that job, as well as the employee's interest in his/her job (Harter et al., 2002). The Gallup Organization, which has been working in the field of Job Involvement and Job Satisfaction for many years, has used the concept of engagement in its research.

- In the Multidimensional Approach pioneered by Saks (2006), the engagement concept is essentially based on social exchange theory. When employees obtain economic and social benefits from their organizations, they make physical, mental, and cognitive contributions to their jobs, which are not easy to express financially.

Saks (2006), who put role performance on the agenda as in Kahn (1990) did, reveals the difference between job engagement and organizational engagement. The concept of job engagement focuses on the performance of the person, however, the concept of "organizational engagement" subjects the person to the role of "a member of the organization".

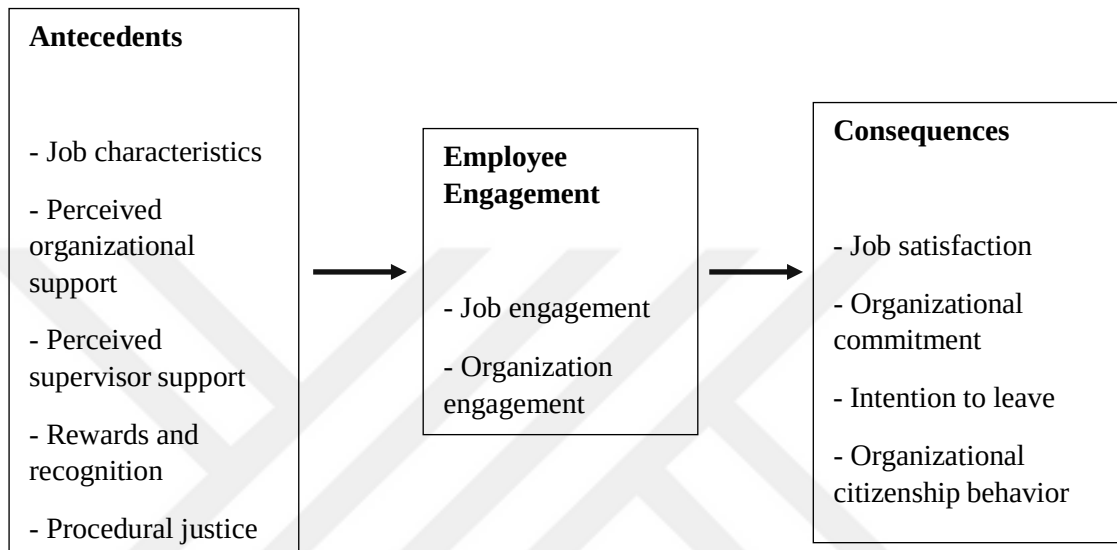


Figure 2-4 Saks (2006)

While the studies clearly state that job engagement leads to work outcomes and customer satisfaction, they also found critical findings in relation to the organizational and personal resources of engagement (Baker et al., 2008). The autonomy given to the employees within the organization, the coaching provided by the superiors, and the regular performance feedbacks are the main organizational resources that create employee engagement. In addition to these, these are the situations that indicate that the employee may be engaged about personal resources such as self-efficacy, self-esteem, and optimism. In the researches on the topic of engagement, many studies have been conducted between a set of engagement for work and the performance of employees. In these studies, the main reasons why employees with high work engagement level have better work outcomes than employees with low work engagement level are as follows (Baker and Demerouti, 2008);

-They always have positive emotions. People who are engaged about work are generally happier, more enthusiastic, and more excited. This positive mood makes them more tolerant and helpful towards others.

- Their health condition is also better. It is known that individuals with high work engagement experience less psychological stress (Timms et al., 2015), it has been observed that they have less psychosomatic disorders (Schaufeli et al., 2008).

- They know how to use resources. Opportunities constantly appear before people, and thanks to their attention and motivation, they can use these opportunities positively. Organizational and personal resources are likewise available in their company but making it functional depends on their engagement.

- They add those around them to their engagement. Due to their high level of motivation and commitment, they constantly radiate energy to their environment.

Therefore, they contribute to the creation of a strong organizational climate and the transformation of the corporate culture into a beneficial and progressive one for everyone.

Engaged employees use their job performance by being physically, cognitively, and emotionally involved in their work. (Rich et al., 2010). In the definition that is academically cited most about engagement, engagement is defined as a state of enduring positive emotional satisfaction in employees with self-absorption, dedication to work and vitality. (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Previous research supports the fundamental role of engagement in employee and organizational outcomes. Bakker and Bal (2010) showed a significant positive relationship between job engagement and performance. Warshawsky et al., (2012) recently found that job engagement is significantly associated with proactive work behavior. Hakanen et al., (2008) have illustrated those employees working at higher job position exhibit greater personal innovation. Rich et al., (2010) stated that job engagement has a positive relationship with organizational citizenship behavior. These studies justify the importance of examining job engagement in organizations. Maslach

and Leiter (2008) found evidence in the North American education sector that the harmony between employee and job is positively correlated with job engagement. Shuck et al., (2011) reported recently similar findings regarding the effect of suitability for work on employee engagement.

Kahn explained engagement as the situation where the person performs his/her role at work and dedicates himself/herself physically, emotionally, and cognitively. Here, the person completes the mental engagement process by asking three questions: How does it mean to me to do this job? How safe is it? And, how available am I for this job? The question about safety shows the importance of the relationship between engagement and psychological safety concepts.

According to Kahn (1990), the social context of work determines the extent to which a person is willing to invest in cognitive, emotional and physical energies in his/her role performance. Trust in the manager is part of the social context, and as that safety environment increases, the engagement level of the person is likely to increase. Specifically, it can be argued that character-based safety, reflected in the trust in the competence and reliability of the manager increases the psychological safety of employees, because it provides clarity and predictability in working conditions (Lam and Peng, 2011), and reduces concerns about negative consequences. (Skinner and Searle, 2011).

In the relationship between engagement and psychological safety, it can be argued that psychological safety promotes engagement because self-study engagement is an act of risk that makes employees feel vulnerable to negative consequences and their main concern becomes how safe is this (Schneider et al., 2010).

## **2.5 Thriving**

In 2005, Spreitzer et al. explained the "thriving at work" approach as the situation that occurs with the simultaneous experience of the employee's vitality and learning feelings. Vitality, which can be defined as feeling energetic and vigor, has an important meaning in terms of employees' attachment to their jobs. The feeling of learning as the acquisition of new knowledge, improving and experience is known to increase

employees' commitment to work (Paterson et al., 2014). Burnout is observed after a while in employees whose sense of vitality is lacking, but continuous learning is dominant. Likewise, in an employee whose sense of learning is lacking but where energy and vitality are dominant, signs of stagnation emerge after a while. Burnout and stagnation are dangerous conditions in terms of human resource development and productivity. Therefore, employees who feel that they are vigor, energetic, and constantly increasing their knowledge in their workplaces pave the way for them to improve themselves. This ultimately leads to an increase in their commitment to the job (Porath et al., 2012).

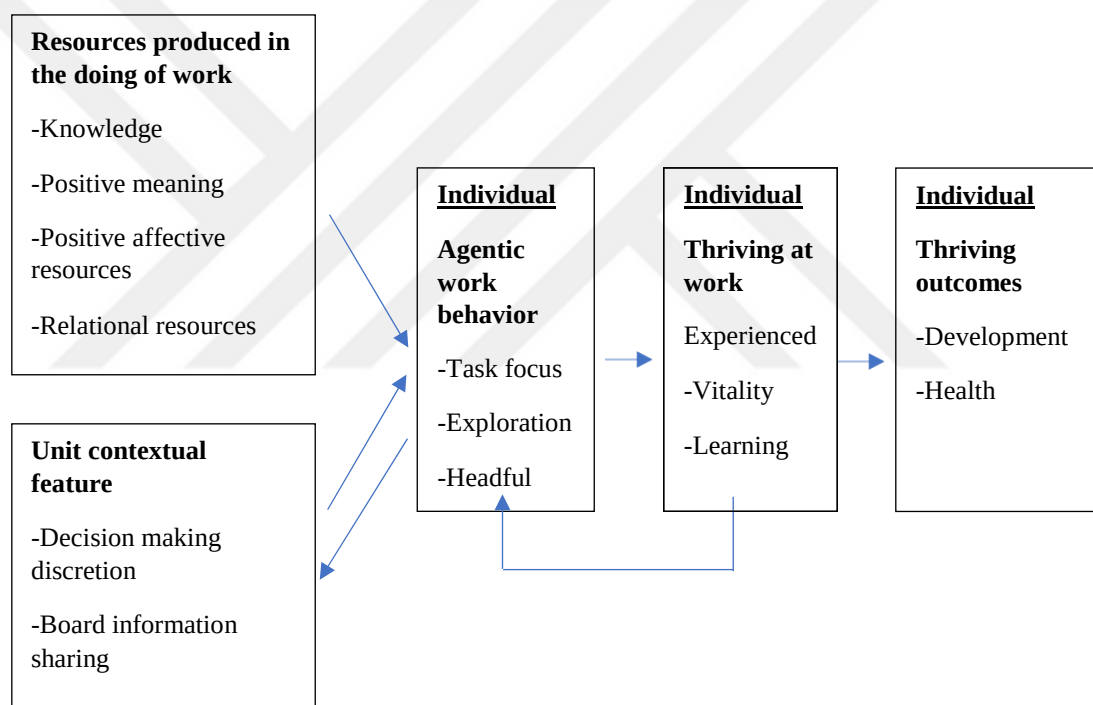


Figure 2-5 The Social Embeddedness model (Spreitzer et al., 2005)

In the social embeddedness model, Spreitzer et al., (2005) reached thriving outcomes by combining decision making, information sharing, trust climate and knowledge, positive meaning/affective resources into agentic behaviors such as task focus, exploration and heedful relating.

Some of the important behaviors for employees to improve themselves at work are focusing on the task, being open to discoveries, and paying attention to the

relationships (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Employee's focus on the task and the concentration towards success will be at the highest level and it will reinforce the sense of vitality. Another behavior that allows a person to grow himself is to discover new things. As people discover new things, they will increase their knowledge and experience. Employees' attention to their relationships with others will also increase the sense of vitality through the positive emotions that they will create in their minds and will make a significant contribution to the employee's self-improvement at work.

The positive mood in the person involved in the work is called work engagement (Kahn, 1990). The employees energetic, vitality, focus on work and being proud of their job reflect their engagement for work (Turgut, 2013). Vigor, dedication, and absorption stand out as the 3 sub-dimensions of the work engagement concept (Shaufeli et al., 2002). There are fundamental similarities between the concepts of thriving and work engagement. The fact that both concepts are related to vitality, lack personality and character features, and not being continuous, that is, they are construed with only for a certain period and work (Kocak, 2016). The most crucial difference is that work-engagement focuses on the present, while thriving focuses on the future. In addition, the learning function is not compulsory in the work engagement process, the person can always have a positive mood by doing the same thing. However, in thriving, learning with positive mood and vitality is essential.

Measurement of thriving at work is well-established by Porath, Spreitzer and his friends with the work they have done in 2012. Learning status has been measured by how much the person has improved himself in the workplace and how much new knowledge and experience he has been equipped with. The concept of vitality has been measured by how lively and excited the person feels and how energetic is when he/she goes to work.

Although the concept of improvement has similarities with many concepts known in organizational behavioral science, there are also very fundamental differences (Spreitzer et al., 2005). We will examine these concepts one by one below.

**Resilience:** The concept of resilience, which is referred to as endurance in psychology, refers to the ability of people to return to their former state after a

tribulation (Carvel, 1998). It is an important ability and a valuable development process in human life to be able to hold on to life again, after a tribulation occurred. In Thriving it is the positive mood means that the employee can improve herself or himself without experiencing any tribulation (Spreitzer et al., 2005). The combination of Carmens' resources for positive leadership and organizational resilience capabilities brings us a new way of thinking about thriving (Vera et al., 2020).

**Flourishing:** This concept means that the human mind becomes ready to work psychologically and socially. Apart from the mental comfort of the employee, his / her relations with both society and the environment are critical in understanding this concept (Keyes, 2005). In this context, flourishing is a concept with a wider scope than thriving, in other words, thriving is a situation related to the person's self rather than social and mental dimensions (Spreitzer et al., 2005).

**Subjective-well-being:** The concept of subjective well-being is having positive feelings in one's own life, job, family and environment (Ryff, 1989). Likewise, it covers a much broader meaning than thriving, which focuses on one's own psychological mood. Imran et al., (2020) discussed the relations between perceived organizational support and work engagement and they have figured out the mediation effect of thriving and flourishing.

Together with the positive feelings and thriving you have, if the organization that you work values your ideas, you might have strong work engagement. Organizational support effects work engagement with the mediation of flourishing and thriving (Imran et al., 2020).

**Flow:** It means that while spending time with a job that people love, they focus on that job, mentally give themselves completely to that occupation, and ultimately their life flow very quickly (Csikszentmihelyi, 1982). Its main difference with the concept of thriving is the possibility that a person cannot learn at the same time while experiencing the flow (Spreitzer, 2010).

**Self-actualization:** In 1943, Maslow developed the hierarchy of needs theory, which has been spoken for many years. In this theory, people first focus on meeting

their physical needs (food and water, etc.). If their physical needs are fulfilled, the need for security comes to the fore, such as shelter, etc. Then, social needs, in other words, establishing relationships with people come to the question. The last step of a person who solves their physical, shelter and social needs is the self-realization phase, that is, trying to be the person who has a dream. Spreitzer et al., (2013) described thriving as a person's "self-actualization" and differentiated it from this concept.

The concept of self-cultivation is associated with many concepts of organizational behavior. Besides that, the work environment and individual characteristics of the person emerge as factors that directly affect the development process at work (Kocak, 2016). Seeing and experiencing different work environments and acquiring experiences in the same project with different functions also contribute to the thriving process (Ashton, 2004). The fact that a person receive feedback from his / her colleagues about his / her performance in the work environment is an important factor that positively affects the thriving process (Spreitzer et al., 2013) The more the strategy, vision, mission, and objectives of the organization are explained and are widespread within the company, the more individuals can see the overlap between themselves and the goals and objectives of the organization, and ultimately, this affects the thriving process positively.

Since people's speaking, meeting, and extraversion characteristics make them more prone to learning, there is also a positive relationship between thriving and extroverted personality structure (Kocak, 2019). Finally, the high level of expectation, resilience, optimism, and belief in one's own abilities, which is called psychological capital, also contribute to thriving.

## **2.6 Organizational Support**

Today, the intense competitive environment has made the importance of human resources much more critical for organizations to be efficient and successful (Ostroff and Bowen, 2016; Frazier et al., 2017; Cafferkey, 2018). The importance and value attached to human resources has been one of the main driving forces for organizations to achieve their mission, vision, and goals (Yukl, 1989). Institutions that give importance to human resources and strive to improve their human resources are able

to survive in today's environment of fierce competition (Sanders et al., 2008). It does not seem possible to be successful and survive for organizations when they do not value human resources, do not appreciate the contributions of employees to the organization, and care about the happiness of their employees (Edmondson and Lei, 2014; Bednall et al., 2014; Farndale and Sanders, 2017).

Another concept in which organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior (Batemen and Organ, 1983), organizational justice and job satisfaction (Bernerth, 2007) are closely related is “perceived organizational support” (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002), which positively affects human resources and contributes significantly to organizational success (Podsakoff et al., 1996.)

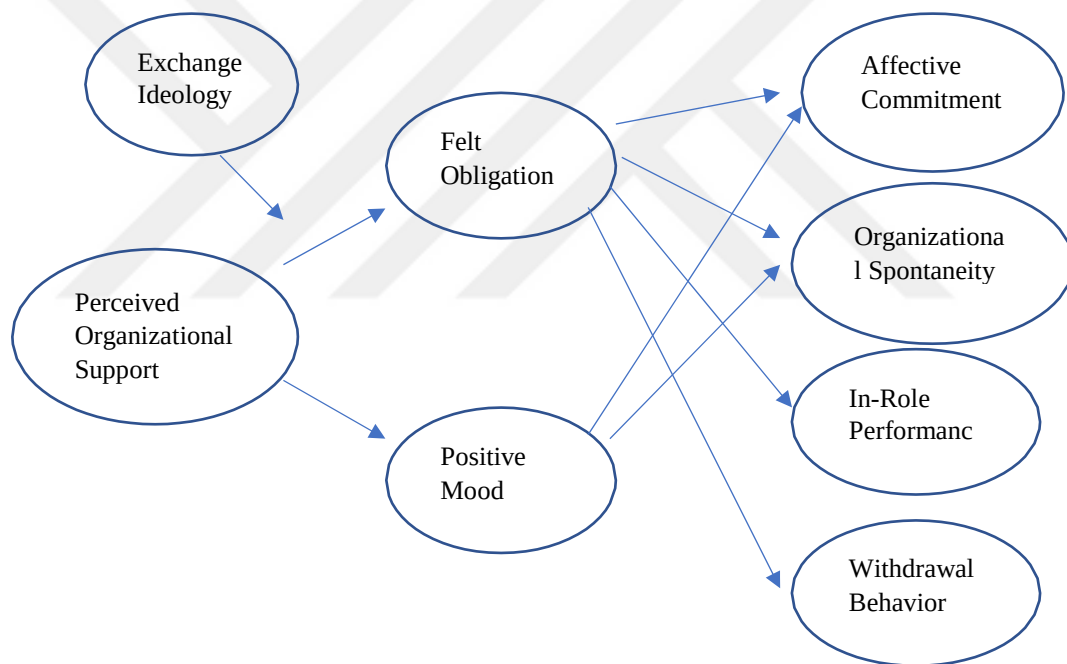


Figure 2-6 Reciprocation of POS (Eisenberger et al., 2001)

The organizational support theory, which tries to explain the relationships between the organization and the employees, is based on the "Social Exchange Theory" (Blau, 1964) and "Reciprocity Theory" (Gouldner, 1960; Eisenberger, 2001). Organizational support refers that the organization recognizes the value of employees' contributions and cares about the happiness of the employees (Rhoades et al., 2001; Eisenberger et al., 1986). Knowing the contribution of the employees to the

organization and making employees feel this situation are one of the most important indicators revealing that the organization cares about the tranquility and happiness of the employees (Wen et al., 2019). This situation increases the organizational commitment of the employees, positively affects the emotional relations between employees and the organization, which leads corporate success (Kurtessis et al., 2015; Afsar and Badir, 2017).

Social exchange theory explains these attitudes of individuals who have positive relations with their organizations and try to be beneficial to their organizations (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). According to the social exchange theory, people develop positive relationships with people and institutions that they think will benefit them in certain situations (Eisenberger et al., 2001). When organizations are considered as environments where this change is experienced from the perspective of social exchange theory, it is seen that when organizations are positive towards their employees, employees will develop positive attitudes and behavior towards their organizations. Employees will work in line with the interests of their organizations and will make the necessary effort to achieve the goals of their organizations (Cullen et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2016).

The main characteristics of the supporting organization can be summarized as follow:

- Being aware of the efforts made by the employees and their value,
- Caring for the happiness and well-being of employees,
- Valuing employees' ideas and suggestions,
- Providing a certain level of job security for employees,
- Being fair and avoiding nepotism, and

-Creating a positive interaction climate within the organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Jiang et al., 2017; Wen et al., 2019).

Based on the social exchange theory, in organizations that organizational support is applicable, employees' commitment to the organization, job satisfaction and performance increase (Rhoades et al., 2001), the rate of preferring to stay in the job increases, and employee turnover rate decreases. At the same time, extra working and efforts that will benefit the institution beyond the official job descriptions, which are described as organizational citizenship behaviors, are put forward by the employees (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Thanks to organizational support, corporate identification comes to the fore among employees, and this situation leads to the development of individuals who are aware of their duties and responsibilities, who work devotedly to be more beneficial to their organizations, and who are helpful among their colleagues. In institutions with organizational support also the rate of anxiety and stress in employees, organizational cynicism and burnout, avoidance of work, and attitudes and behaviors that harm the organization decrease (Kim et al., Baik, 2016; Cheng and Yang, 2017; Jiang et al., 2017).

However, there is an important point to be considered here. The organizational support provided for the employees should be presented sincerely and intimately, and at this point, employees should perceive and interpret the organizational support positively. Otherwise, if the organizational support provided for employees is perceived as sincere efforts to correct the negative image of the organization rather than good-intentioned, sincere, and reliable initiatives, the organizational provided support will not show the expected positive effect and will not produce the desired effective outcomes.

Based on the literature, it is thought that perceived organizational support may be the precursor of many organizational behaviors in the field of management and organization.

Perceived organizational support can be summarized as the fact that organizations care about the welfare of their employees in general (Eisenberger et al., 1990). In this case, employees create a parallelism between their own values and the values of the place where they work, and this makes significant contributions to the organization (Moorman, 1998). Supportive organizations are proud of their teams, give them what they deserve, and try to meet their needs. Thus, the performance of the

employee increases, and they feel more belonging to the organization (Wayne, 1997). As a result of a study on the subject, it was found that there is a negative and significant relationship between perceived organizational support and intention to leave (Chiu et al., 2009).

When organizational commitment is high, absenteeism decreases. (Bennett, 2002). Yang and Hsieh (2007) mention a positive relationship between organizational support and the implementation of performance measurement. Perceived organizational support is the trust and beliefs of employees about the quality of their interactions with their organizations (Eisenberger, 1986).

The literature explains the subjects included the organizational support theory, which is based on the organizational support perception of the employees with the organization, the identification of the employees with the organization (Cheung and Law, 2008), job satisfaction and organizational citizenship (Searle et al., 2001), job performance (Chow et al., 2006), and the social exchange theory that describes the bonds between the employees and the organization (Garg and Dhar, 2014).

Perception of organizational support is the general belief developed by the employee about how much the organization values the contribution of the employee and how much importance is given to their happiness in terms of increasing the work effort of the employees and meeting the need for praise and approval by attributing personality to the organization they are in (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

The perception of organizational support, which is about the extent to which the organization attaches importance to the contribution and welfare of the employee, meets the need for approval, trust, and creating a social identity, as well as creating the expectation of extra-role behavior that will be remembered and rewarded later in the work carried out by the managers on behalf of the organization. Thanks to this, the perception of organizational support helps to increase employee performance and to provide an effective organizational attachment (Eisenberger et al., 1997). Organizational support and overall job satisfaction showed a great consistency with the satisfaction and organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 1997).

Concrete reward systems to be implemented within the scope of perceived organizational support will help meet the expectations of employees who have difficulties in meeting their socio-emotional needs (Armeli et al., 1998).

Thanks to the perception of organizational support based on the reciprocity norm, the organization creates obligations to obtain welfare and achieve the goals of the organization. The perception of organizational support, which recalls giving importance, approval and respect, and meeting socio-emotional needs, guides the employees in being included in the membership of the organization and adding a role to their social identity. In addition, it can be said that the perception of organizational support strengthens the belief that employees will be remembered and rewarded by increasing their performance. This process has positive results such as increasing job satisfaction and increasing positive mood on behalf of employees, as well as increasing organizational commitment and performance, and decreasing employee turnover (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002).

In the study of Arshadi and Hayavi (2013), it was seen that perceived organizational support was significantly related to organization-based self-esteem and significantly affected job performance and emotional commitment.

In the study of Rhoades, Eisenberger, and Armeli (2001), perceived organizational support was found to be related to effective commitment, organizational rewards, procedural justice, and top management support. Edwards (2009) revealed that perceived organizational support is related to organizational identification.

Ashforth and Meal (1989) has described organizational identification as a perception of oneness and feeling belongingness to the organization. She, Zhu, and Zheng (2014) concluded in their research that perceived organizational support is positively related to organizational identification. Hence, we understand that there is an absolute connection between the person's feeling of belonging to the workplace and the workplace's making the employee feel important. In the research of Qi and Ming-Xia (2014), it was concluded that organizational identification mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and employee voice behavior, and when employees' trust in the organization is high, organizational identification is more

positively related to employee voice behavior than when employees' trust in the organization is low. The mediating effect of organizational identification was seen in the relationships between perceived organizational support and various work outcomes. Wang et al. (2014) concluded that perceived organizational support has a mediating role between job safety and work outcomes.

Moorman et al., (1998) found that perceived organizational support was positively related to procedural justice, and perceived organizational support mediated the relationship between procedural justice and organizational citizenship behavior. If there is a concept of justice within the values shared by everyone in the company and it is fully implemented, a strong organizational citizenship can be mentioned in that company, which is an indicator of the value given to its employees.

Organizational commitment, which is one of the well-known concepts of organizational behavior and is unthinkable without organizational support. A person's self-esteem also finds meaning and develops when the company cares about his ideas and values them. In the study of Lee and Peccei (2007), that perceived organizational support has a significant positive relationship with organization-based self-esteem and directly affects organizational commitment.

Ngo et al., (2013) found that perceived organizational support was positively related to emotional commitment and job satisfaction, and negatively related to the intention to leave. It has been observed that organizational commitment is positively related to emotional commitment and job satisfaction, and negatively related to the intention to leave. As antecedents of job satisfaction and organizational support, Yoon and Thye (2002) theorized job characteristics, organization-related variables, controls and covariates. Job characteristics are defined by autonomy, variety, workload and pays. Organization-related variables are defined by communication, distributive justice and procedural justice. Finally controls and covariates are defined by tenure, occupation, age, male and education (Yoon and Thye, 2002).

Randall et al., (1999) concludes in their study that perceived organizational support was positively related to emotional commitment, job satisfaction, performance, and organizational citizenship behavior, and negatively related to the

intention to leave. According to Cropanzano et al., (1997) perceived organizational support is positively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and negatively related to turnover intention. Gakovic and Tetrick (2003) concluded in their research those part-time employees have a higher level of perceived organizational support than full-time employees, and that perceived organizational support is positively related to affective and normative commitment. Nye and Witt (1993) confirmed a positive relationship between perceived organizational support, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. In the study of Farh et al., (2007), it was observed that perceived organizational support was significantly and positively related to organizational commitment.

As long as the support of the organization to the employee is high and the employee understands this notion clearly, higher affective commitment is expected and therefore employees show much better business performance. Takeuchi et al. (2009) also found that perceived organizational support is significantly related to work adjustment and affective commitment.

## **2.7 Psychological Safety**

Today, the communication environment, leadership style, culture and climate in the organization have become much more important for organizations to be successful and achieve sustainable growth. Especially, acting with a team spirit and within the framework of teamwork, cooperation will make it much easier to achieve the goals of the organization (May et al., 2004). In addition, the establishment of the management in the organization within the framework of fairness and the formation of an transparent, positive, free and democratic communication atmosphere will motivate the employees more and ensure the successful performance of the works (Carmeli and Gittell, 2008). At this point, we come across the concept of psychological safety. Although there are different definitions of psychological safety, the common point in these definitions is that the person can do his / her duties in the organization, without fear of anything, express himself/herself and participate in the processes (Carmeli et al., 2010; Edmondson and Lei, 2014;). As Maslow (1943) stated, the need for safety is one of the most basic human needs.

Kahn (1990) describes psychological safety as a person's self-expression and sense of participation in an organization without seeing her/his status or career in danger. Edmondson (2003) states that psychological safety also indicates the feeling of individuals working as a team will not be exposed to any negative reaction by their teammates due to their opinions, thoughts, or actions they will put forward during their activities together.

For employees to contribute to the organization, they must first have a sense of psychological safety (Newman et al., 2017). Employees who do not have a sense of psychological safety, do not expected to be able to criticize any issue, ask questions, express themselves freely, communicate openly, represent themselves in teamwork and participate in the organization's processes in a healthy way (Kostopoulos and Bozionels, 2011). From this perspective, it is seen how important is to establish a psychological sense of safety in the organization in order to use the human resource, which is critical for the organization to achieve its goals effectively and efficiently (Frazier, 2017). Individuals with a sense of psychological safety can freely express their ideas without any concern, voice the problems in the organization, take part in teamwork, and participate in organizational processes. Kahn (1990) expresses the factors affecting the psychological sense of safety as interpersonal relations, group or intergroup dynamics, management style and organizational norms. Some of the most important factors that affect the formation of psychological safety in the organization are organizational justice, clarity of job descriptions, positive leadership style, positive organizational climate, peer support, desire to learn and develop. Especially trust and justice-based communication and interaction environment, supportive leader behaviors, and cooperation within and between teams increase the psychological sense of safety (Edmondson, 2003).

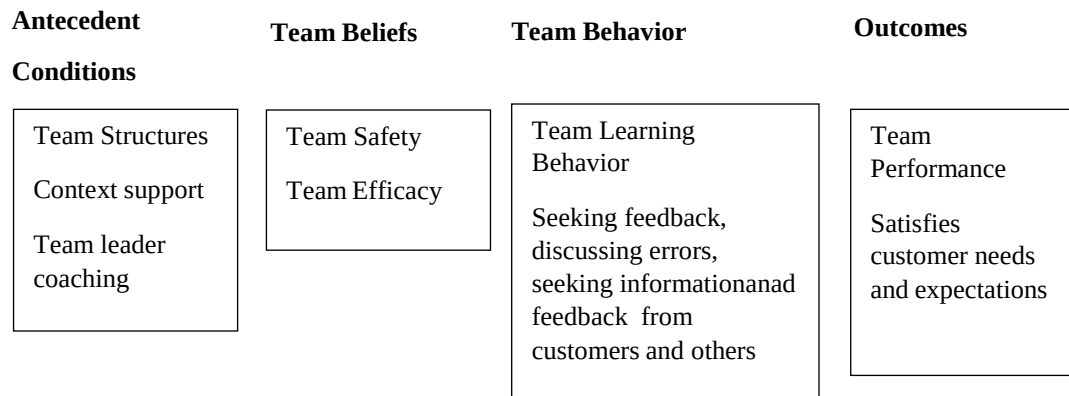


Figure 2-7 A model of team working and safety (Edmondson, 2003)

Psychological sense of safety increases organizational commitment and trust, innovation, performance improvement, job satisfaction, open communication and efficient teamwork in the organization, while reducing organizational silence, staff turnover and organizational cynicism (Jiang et al., 2019). Considering the premises and consequences of psychological safety, psychological safety plays an important role in the effective use of human resources in the organization and in achieving corporate success. At the same time, the psychological sense of safety strengthens the organizational identification and contributes to the creation of an organizational climate open to learning and development (Edmondson, 2003). Thanks to the psychological sense of safety, people can actively contribute to the solution of problems, focus on the goals of the organization, and express themselves freely. Such an organizational environment strengthens the self-esteem of individuals and enables employees to use their opportunities and capabilities more actively within the framework of the interests of the organization (Kahn, 1990; Edmondson and Lei, 2014).

In an organizational level context, Edmondson and Lei (2014) hypothesized psychological safety as a mediator for the relationship between commitment-based HR practices, high quality relationships, process innovations and organizational learning, knowledge exchange, organizational performance.

### 3. RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

#### 3.1 Research Model

This study will examine the relationship between perceived human resource system strength and job engagement through thriving at work and psychological safety by analyzing the moderating effect of perceived organizational support.

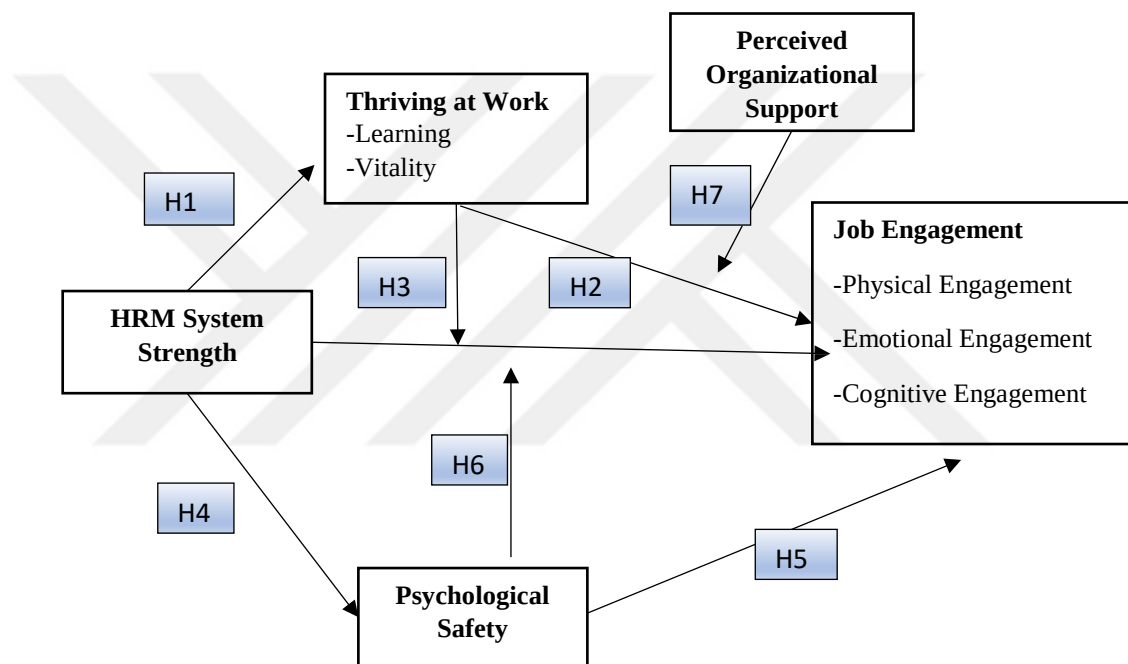


Figure 2-8 Research Model

In the introduction, we mentioned Bowen and Ostroff's HRM system strength study, which creates a groundbreaking effect in the science of organizational behavior. The concept of HRM system strength aims to create a strong organizational climate by integrating Human Resources practice contents and messages, and the way they are communicated throughout the organization by the HR department and all line managers. It emphasizes the importance of distinctive and consistent messages given to employees about what behavior is expected of organizational members and what results are rewarded to achieve organizational goals, and that it is also applied in a

similar way with consensus by managers (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). Studies have found a positive relationship between these three features of the HRM system strength and employee behaviors (Li et al., 2011). In the study of Li et al., (2011) it has been proven that distinctiveness and consensus concepts have a positive relationship with “work satisfaction” and “vigor” and a negative relationship with “intention to leave”. This shows us that when employees find their HR practices distinct and fair, they are more satisfied with their work, they go to their jobs with vigor, and they do not intent to leave their jobs.

### **3.2 The Relationship Between HRM System Strength and Thriving at Work**

In 2005, Spreitzer et al. explained the "thriving at work" approach as a situation that occurs when an employee experiences feelings of vitality and learning simultaneously. Vitality, which can be understood as feeling energetic and fit, has an important meaning in terms of the engagement of employees for their work. The perception of fairness, which is one of the most important elements of HRM system strength, is also closely related to thriving at work (Yang et al., 2019). Employees are more inclined to improve themselves where overall fairness is high. Bendall, Sanders and Runhaar's (2004) study on informal learning activities, performance evaluation and HRM system strength sheds light on this concept. In this study, the relationship between HRM system strength and employee development is discussed in two main frameworks. First, the distinctive HR policies on how employees can improve themselves in the organization and secondly the fact that the development of juniors is supported by all managers in a similar “consensus” shows us that a positive relationship can be expected in the field of thriving at work and HRM system strength.

**Hypothesis 1:** Perceived Human Resources Management System Strength is positively related to Thriving at Work

### **3.3 The Relationship Between Thriving at Work and Job Engagement**

Vitality, which can be understood as feeling energetic and fit, has an important meaning in terms of the engagement of employees towards their work. Schaufeli et al. (2002) defined the concept of engagement as a positive and satisfying mood characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Previous studies have found a positive relationship between thriving at work and job satisfaction (Jiang et al., 2020). Vitality and vigor, which are close concepts for thriving at work and Job engagement, constitute the most important link in this relationship.

**Hypothesis 2:** Thriving at Work is positively related to Job Engagement.

### **3.4 The Mediating Effect of Thriving at Work in The Relationship Between HRM System Strength and Job Engagement**

The two-wave study of Bendall, Sanders, and Runhaar (2014) showed us that the concept of thriving at work can play a mediator role in the relationship between perceived HRM system strength and job engagement. Because the employees' feeling of being vital and thriving at the work implies that the HRM system can create a stronger organizational climate with its distinctive, consistent and fair features, and this shows that the employees will devote to their work with greater engagement, love and enthusiasm.

In their socially embedded model, Spreitzer et al., (2005) mentioned agentic work behaviors and its three constructs. First one is task focus which we expect a result of distinctive HR procedures as an indicator of strength of HRM system. The second one is exploration which trigger intrinsically learning activities. Third one is heedful relating which can leads vitality so an individual can help others.

Strong HRM systems derive from a distinctive HR communication which brings a strong climate that people can easily explore and learn. In addition to this, strong climate also bring a safe zone for people to discuss and initiate new ideas. Unit contextual features are also meaningful with a strong HRM system (Spreitzer et al.,

2005). Positive affective resources and positive meanings are resources that are produced in social embeddedness of thriving at work. Together with a strong HRM system, these positive resources brings trust and respect.

**Hypothesis 3:** Thriving at Work mediates the relationship between Perceived Human Resource System Strength and Job Engagement

### **3.5 The Relationship Between HRM System Strength and Psychological Safety**

Psychological safety is the ability to demonstrate and use oneself without fear of negative consequences for one's self-image, status or career (Kahn, 1990). The literature in this field has been further developed and elaborated by Edmondson (1999). Edmondson defines the perception of psychological comfort as the set of shared beliefs within the framework of the perception of interpersonal risk in organizations. In a working group where the perception of psychological safety is seen, it becomes a part of the organizational culture for employees to self-criticize, express problems, and produce solutions in this regard (Kessel, 2012). It is also known that where there is a perception of psychological safety, organizational learning is positively affected (Higgins et al., 2005). In this context, employees in a constantly developing organization see the expectation of "continuous improvement" from themselves, and they reach the conclusion that a strong organizational climate will be created when they act within this framework. Concordantly, a positive relationship can be mentioned between HRM system strength and Psychological Safety.

**Hypothesis 4:** Perceived Human Resource System Strength is positively related to Psychological Safety

### **3.6 The Relationship Between Psychological Safety and Job Engagement**

According to Kahn (1990), who defines the concept of engagement as one's physical, emotional, and cognitive attachment to one's work, there are three basic conditions for engagement. Meaningfulness, safety and availability. In order to be

engaged about the job, the employee must answer the questions of how meaningful the job is to her/him? How safe is it? How available? He/she needs to give comforting answers to his/her questions. The safe part of these questions relates the concepts of psychological safety and job engagement.

**Hypothesis 5:** Psychological Safety is positively related to Job Engagement.

### **3.7 The Mediating Effect of Psychological Safety in The Relationship Between HRM System Strength and Job Engagement**

The high-quality relationship brought about by common purpose, shared knowledge and mutual respect creates a positive social context in the workplace where people will work safely and take risks and act as they deem necessary. (Carmeli and Gitell, 2009). If the employees in the organization feel safe, we can predict that they will be more engaged in their work in a stronger organizational climate, based on their common goals and common knowledge levels. Hence, the association between HRM system strength and job engagement will be mediated by psychological safety.

There is a great number of research conducted into leadership (Bass, 2008). We believe that in an organization that has a strong HRM system, leaders can easily empower employees, and this will provide psychological safety in turn. (Hu et.al., 2019). Furthermore, fairness aspect of strong HRM system shapes act of leaders ethically which is also increase the level of psychological safety (Walumbwa and Schaubroeck, 2009). We expect strong HRM systems produces more authentic leadership which is directly related to psychological safety (Liu et al., 2015). Since HRM is a complex communication system from employer to employee, a strong HRM system will result a strong “leader membership exchange” which foster psychological safety (Yin, 2013).

**Hypothesis 6:** Psychological Safety mediates the relationship between Perceived Human Resources Management System Strength and Job Engagement

### **3.8 The Moderating Effect of Perceived Organizational Support in The Relationship Between Thriving at Work and Job Engagement**

Perceived organizational support is a concept that examines the extent to which the organization values the views of the employees, how much they care about them, and how much they consider the well-being of the employee (Eisenberger, 1986). Perceived organizational support, which has a direct relationship with many concepts in the field of organizational behavior, is one of the phenomena that play the most important role in the formation of an employee's intention to leave (Tai et al., 1998). Since the concept of “burnout” that is used in the literature and practical business life as the opposite of the concept of Engagement, is directly related to the concept of “intention to leave” (Nantsupawa et al., 2017), the concept of perceived organizational support is expected to play a moderator role between perceived HR system strength and job engagement. Because an organization without organizational support and that HR practices are not distinct, consistent, and fair will be unable to affect employee engagement.

Perceived organizational support and risk-taking are positively related (Neves and Eisenberger, 2014). Risk-taking is a basic indicator of psychological safety in the organization. Thus, Perceived Organizational Support regulates the association between Perceived Human Resource System Strength and Psychological Safety.

In a very recent study, the relationship between the concepts of organizational support and thriving at work was examined and it was found that there is positive relevance (Guan and Frenkel, 2020). In the absence of organizational support, it is expected that it would not be reasonable to discuss the concept of thriving at work because that company must be supporting you, your contributions, and your views in order for you to feel vital and thriving at your work. For this reason, it is expected that organizational support to regulate the relationship between HRM system strength and thriving at work.

**Hypothesis 7:** Perceived Organizational Support moderates the relationship between Thriving at Work and Job Engagement

## **4. METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Measures**

Measurements in the scale can be classified in two sections, namely as demographic and variable measurement scales. To test the proposed hypotheses, multi-item scales were adopted from past studies for assessing our variables. We measured perceived human resource system strength, thriving, job engagement, psychological safety and perceived organizational support variables using 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree. Demographics section involves demographic variables, gender (male-female), age, educational level (high school, associate degree, undergraduate, and graduate), number of working years, number of working years in current organization, position, department (finance, selling, marketing, advertisement, communication, production, R&D, logistics, operation, HR, strategy, IT, and other. Additionally, there are questions about organization characteristics, number of employees, industry type and firm age. The second part is human systems strength which is composed of nine questions; the third part is perceived organizational support which is composed of four questions; the fourth part is psychological safety which is composed of five questions; the fifth part is thriving which is composed of ten questions; and the last part is job engagement which is composed of eighteen questions. The appendix includes the measures used, and the brief summary of the measures is as follows:

#### **4.1.1 Perceived HRM Systems Strength**

Perception of HRM system strength is measured with a 9-item scale. The scale was developed by Frenkel et al., (2012). HRM system strength is defined by three facets of a strong HRM system as distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus. The items of scale are shown in Table 4-1:

Table 4-1 Source: Alfes et al., (2019)

| No | Item                                                                               |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | HR practices here contribute to my work satisfaction                               |
| 2  | Managers here don't implement HR policies properly                                 |
| 3  | HR policies here are clearly communicated to employees                             |
| 4  | Managers here adopt a similar approach to managing employees                       |
| 5  | HR practices here make me feel much more confident in my ability to do my job well |
| 6  | HR practices here help me to achieve my goals                                      |
| 7  | HR practices here help me to a great deal to develop my knowledge and skills       |
| 8  | Managers here agree on how to implement HR policies                                |
| 9  | HR practices here help me to achieve the company's goals                           |

#### 4.1.2 Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived organizational support shows the belief of employee about how much their organization values their role and how much support their activities. The scale was adopted by Eisenberger et al., (1986) and consists of four questions. The items of scale are shown in Table 4-2:

Table 4-2 Source: Eisenberger et al., (1986)

| No | Item                                                   |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | My organization cares about my opinion                 |
| 2  | My organization really cares about my well-being       |
| 3  | My organization strongly considers my goals and values |
| 4  | My organization shows a lot of concern for me          |

#### 4.1.3 Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is defined as the extent to which employees feel safe to show and express their real natures at work. The scale is adopted from Edmonson (1999) and includes five items. The items of scale are shown in Table 4-3:

Table 4-3 Source: Edmonson (1999)

| No | Item                                                                                   |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | I am able to bring up problems and tough issues                                        |
| 2  | People in this organization sometimes reject others for being different                |
| 3  | It is safe to take a risk in this organization                                         |
| 4  | It is easy for me to ask other members of this organization for help                   |
| 5  | No one in this organization would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts |

#### 4.1.4 Thriving at Work

Thriving at work is refer as the mental situation in which employees feel both a sense of vitality and learning in the organization. The scale consists of five items related to learning and five items related to vitality. We modified the questions items from Spreitzer et al., (2011) for thriving. The items of scale are shown in Table 4-4:

Table 4-4 Source: Spreitzer et al. (2011).

| No | Item                                     |
|----|------------------------------------------|
| 1  | I find myself learning often             |
| 2  | I continue to learn more as time goes by |
| 3  | I see myself continually improving       |
| 4  | I am not learning                        |
| 5  | I am developing a lot as a person        |
| 6  | I feel alive and vital                   |
| 7  | I have energy and spirit                 |
| 8  | I do not feel very energetic             |
| 9  | I feel alert and awake                   |
| 10 | I am looking forward to each new day     |

#### 4.1.5 Job Engagement

Job engagement is defined as the extent to which employees settle fully down to their job while physically, emotionally, and cognitively connected to their organization. The scale includes the three components of job engagement which are physical, cognitive, and emotional engagement. Job engagement was measured by Job Engagement Scale which was developed by Rich et al., (2012). The items of scale are shown in Table 4-5:

Table 4-5 Source: Rich et al., (2012)

| No | Item                                                 |
|----|------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | I work with intensity on my job                      |
| 2  | I exert my full effort to my job                     |
| 3  | I devote a lot of energy to my job                   |
| 4  | I try my hardest to perform well on my job           |
| 5  | I strive as hard as I can to complete my job         |
| 6  | I exert a lot of energy on my job                    |
| 7  | I am enthusiastic in my job                          |
| 8  | I feel energetic at my job                           |
| 9  | I am interested in my job                            |
| 10 | I am proud of my job                                 |
| 11 | I feel positive about my job                         |
| 12 | I am excited about my job                            |
| 13 | At work, my mind is focused on my job                |
| 14 | At work, I pay a lot of attention to my job          |
| 15 | At work, I focus a great deal of attention on my job |
| 16 | At work, I am absorbed by my job                     |
| 17 | At work, I concentrate on my job                     |
| 18 | At work, I devote a lot of attention to my job       |

After clarifying these questions items clearly in English, the items were translated into Turkish. Research assistants in organizational behavior retranslated the results into English. After that a draft questionnaire was developed and evaluated by two HR practitioner and two PhD students in management at Gebze Technical University. A pilot test was conducted for clarifying to whether the questions are understood properly. The data were collected from twenty-five employee from different organizations and different sectors. After pilot test the participants confirmed

the clarity of the scale, we distribute the survey to actual sample. Self-administrated questionnaire method was applied for distributing and collecting the data.

## **4.2 Sampling**

The data was collected from white collar employees from different industries over three months in Turkey, İstanbul. Overall, a total of 545 employees participated in this study on a voluntary basis. We informed each participant that their responses would remain anonymous, and the result of the study has not linked them individually nor their departments or companies. Moreover, the participants were informed that it is important to answer the questions as honestly as possible and that there are no right or wrong answers. We emphasized that nobody had access to survey data except for academic purpose. We write this sentence on every questionnaire and verbally repeated during delivery. After data screening, surveys that have missing factors or inconsistency among answers were discarded. Thus, 537 of the questionnaires were used in the final analyses of the study.

Of the participants, 72.4 % were male. Considering participants' education, 51.6% had a bachelor's degree and 39.9% master or PhD degree. The participants had 24.4% 11-15 years organizational tenure.

The sample consisted of employees having different titles and positions within the firms. Table 4-6 shows the participants' positions within the firms. As shown in table, the participants were employees/staff members (8.2%), senior employee (28.3%), department chief / head of department (30.2%), director (9.3%), vice general manager (4.3%) manager (13%), and with other positions (6.7%).

Table 4-6 The position of the participants within the firms

| <b>Position</b>                       | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Department Chief / Head of Department | 30.2%             |
| Senior Employee                       | 28.3%             |
| Manager                               | 13%               |
| Director                              | 9.3%              |
| Employees/Staff Members               | 8.2%              |
| Other Positions                       | 6.7%              |
| Vice General Manager                  | 4.3%              |

The industries and their percentages are shown in table 4-7. The industries are; IT (3.5%), consulting (3.9%), education (3.7%), energy (3%), finance (9.9%), food (3.9%), aviation (5.2%), fast moving consumer (10.1%), communication (6.3%), automotive (8%), health (4.1%), transportation (5.2%), manufacturing (9.5%) and other such as chemical industry, agricultural, construction, and advertising.

Table 4-7 The sectors and their percentage

| <b>Sector</b>        | <b>Percentage</b> |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Fast moving consumer | 10.1%             |
| Finance              | 9.9%              |
| Manufacturing        | 9,5%              |
| Automotive           | 8%                |
| Communication        | 6.3%              |
| Transportation       | 5.2%              |
| Aviation             | 5.2%              |
| Health               | 4,1%              |
| Food                 | 3.9 %             |
| Consulting           | 3.9 %             |
| Education            | 3.7%              |
| IT                   | 3.5%              |
| Energy               | 3.7%              |
| Other                | 23%               |

The departments in the study and their percentages are demonstrated in table 4-8. The departments are finance (8.8 %), marketing (17.3%), operation and R&D (10.2%), HR (21.8 %), IT (10.2), and other (31.7).

Table 4-8 The departments and their percentage

| Department | Percentage |
|------------|------------|
| HR         | 21.8%      |
| Marketing  | 17.3%      |
| R&D        | 10.2%      |
| IT         | 10.2%      |
| Other      | 31.7 %     |

### 4.3 Measure Validity and Reliability

In this research, the method of Kleijnen et al., (2007) was followed and reflective indicators for all constructs was used. The reliability, unidimensionality, discriminant and convergent validity of scale items were assessed by following Fornell and Larcker (1981). Since all variables are measured previously at individual level, we conducted Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). We investigated 8 constructs involving 46 question items in one CFA model by using AMOS. In the analysis we eliminate problematic items with factor loadings lower than the 0.5 or cross-loading with the other factors in the measurement model follow step by step procedure. The resulting measurement model fit was found to produce a good fit.  $X^2_{(832)} = 2338.843$ , comparative fit index (CFI)=0.92 also TLI=0.91, IFI=0.92, RMSEA= .05. As Table 4.9 shows, the resulting measurement model was found to fit the data reasonably well. Moreover, all items loaded significantly on their respective constructs (Table 4-9).

Table 4-9 Fit indices

| $\chi^2 / df$ | CFI | IFI | TLI | RMSEA | PNFI |
|---------------|-----|-----|-----|-------|------|
| 2.76          | .92 | .92 | .91 | .05   | .81  |

Table 4-10 demonstrates the reliabilities of the multiple items with construct correlations and descriptive statics for the scales. We followed Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion to check discriminant validity. The variance extracted for each construct was greater than the squared latent factor correlations between the pairs of constructs. Also, all constructs indicated acceptable indices on internal consistency scales, composite reliability, and convergent validity of indicators -average variance extracted (AVE) also calculated. It is important to note that CR was calculated through first-order dimensions as factor loads. After these tests, we demonstrated that measures have both convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 4-10 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

| Variables | Items | F1  | F2  | F3  | F4  | F5  | F6 | F7 | F8 |
|-----------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|
| HRSS      | HR1   | .81 |     |     |     |     |    |    |    |
|           | HR2   | .80 |     |     |     |     |    |    |    |
|           | HR3   | .79 |     |     |     |     |    |    |    |
|           | HR4   | .63 |     |     |     |     |    |    |    |
|           | HR5   | .90 |     |     |     |     |    |    |    |
|           | HR6   | .91 |     |     |     |     |    |    |    |
|           | HR7   | .87 |     |     |     |     |    |    |    |
|           | HR8   | .77 |     |     |     |     |    |    |    |
|           | HR9   | .91 |     |     |     |     |    |    |    |
| POS       | P1    |     | .81 |     |     |     |    |    |    |
|           | P2    |     | .81 |     |     |     |    |    |    |
|           | P3    |     | .90 |     |     |     |    |    |    |
|           | P4    |     | .85 |     |     |     |    |    |    |
| PS        | PS3   |     |     | .72 |     |     |    |    |    |
|           | PS4   |     |     | .57 |     |     |    |    |    |
|           | PS5   |     |     | .85 |     |     |    |    |    |
| TVL       | TVL1  |     |     |     | .89 |     |    |    |    |
|           | TVL2  |     |     |     | .92 |     |    |    |    |
|           | TVL3  |     |     |     | .90 |     |    |    |    |
|           | TVL4  |     |     |     | .89 |     |    |    |    |
|           | TVL5  |     |     |     | .62 |     |    |    |    |
| TVV       | TVV1  |     |     |     |     | .89 |    |    |    |

Table 4-10 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (continued)

|    |      |  |  |  |  |     |     |     |     |
|----|------|--|--|--|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|    | TVV2 |  |  |  |  | .93 |     |     |     |
|    | TVV3 |  |  |  |  | .93 |     |     |     |
|    | TVV4 |  |  |  |  | .76 |     |     |     |
|    | TVV5 |  |  |  |  | .62 |     |     |     |
| PE | PE1  |  |  |  |  |     | .72 |     |     |
|    | PE2  |  |  |  |  |     | .78 |     |     |
|    | PE3  |  |  |  |  |     | .79 |     |     |
|    | PE4  |  |  |  |  |     | .70 |     |     |
|    | PE5  |  |  |  |  |     | .65 |     |     |
|    | PE6  |  |  |  |  |     | .77 |     |     |
| CE | CE1  |  |  |  |  |     |     | .77 |     |
|    | CE3  |  |  |  |  |     |     | .87 |     |
|    | CE4  |  |  |  |  |     |     | .70 |     |
|    | CE5  |  |  |  |  |     |     | .90 |     |
|    | CE6  |  |  |  |  |     |     | .80 |     |
| EE | EE1  |  |  |  |  |     |     |     | .85 |
|    | EE2  |  |  |  |  |     |     |     | .69 |
|    | EE3  |  |  |  |  |     |     |     | .77 |
|    | EE4  |  |  |  |  |     |     |     | .84 |
|    | EE5  |  |  |  |  |     |     |     | .85 |
|    | EE6  |  |  |  |  |     |     |     | .88 |

$\chi^2_{(832)} = 2338.843$  ( $CFI$ )=0.92  $TLI$ =0.91,  $IFI$ =0.92,  $RMSEA$ = .05.

*HRSS: Human Resource System Strength; POS: Perceived organizational Support;*

*PS: Psychological Safety TVL: Thriving Learning TVV: Thriving Vitality*

*PE: Physical Engagement CE: Cognitive Engagement EE: Emotional Engagement*

Table 4-11 Correlations and descriptive statistics

| Variables                        |   | 1     | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8     |
|----------------------------------|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Human Resource Systems Strength  | 1 | (.82) |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Perceived Organizational Support | 2 | .74** | (.84) |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Psychological Safety             | 3 | .54** | .62** | (.72) |       |       |       |       |       |
| Thriving Learning                | 4 | .46** | .52** | .42** | (.84) |       |       |       |       |
| Thriving Vitality                | 5 | .44** | .50** | .43** | .56** | (.85) |       |       |       |
| Physical Engagement              | 6 | .19** | .25** | .16** | .36** | .27** | (.74) |       |       |
| Emotional Engagement             | 7 | .45** | .50** | .42** | .56** | .65** | .47** | (.81) |       |
| Cognitive Engagement             | 8 | .27** | .28** | .20** | .36** | .39** | .63** | .60** | (.80) |
| Mean                             |   | 3.16  | 3.49  | 3.50  | 3.89  | 3.59  | 4.04  | 4.08  | 3.90  |
| S. dev.                          |   | .97   | .92   | .72   | .75   | .85   | .64   | .68   | .70   |
| CR                               |   | .95   | .90   | .76   | .92   | .93   | .87   | .92   | .90   |
| Average Variance Ext (AVE)       |   | .68   | .71   | .52   | .72   | .73   | .55   | .66   | .65   |

\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ , Values along the diagonal are the square root of AVE

#### 4.4 Common Method Bias Assessment

We control common method bias by using Harman's single-factor test that employed an unrotated principal component analysis with varimax rotation (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The results showed that factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 emerged. These factors explain 71.09% of the total variance and a single factor at the highest level extracted only 36.82% of the total variance.

## 4.5 Hypothesis Testing

After examining the reliability and validity of measures, we further analyzed the main model by structural equation modeling using the AMOS 23. Concerning the hypothesized effects, we found that perceived human resource system strength is positively associated with thriving learning and vitality ( $\beta = 0.39, p < .01$ ;  $\beta = 0.41, p < .01$ ) supporting H1. Our results also demonstrated that thriving learning is positively related to job engagement ( $\beta = .41; p < .01, \beta = 0.21, p < .01, \beta = 0.18, p < .01$ ), and thriving vitality is positively related to job engagement ( $\beta = 0.43, p < .01, \beta = 0.09, p < .05, \beta = 0.21, p < .01$ ) supporting H2.

In order to test the mediating effect of thriving, perceived human resource system strength and job engagement, we employed the Baron and Kenny's (1986) procedure. To address these issues, we performed three different SEM models, as shown in Table 4-12 and presented in Figure 4-1.

(a) model 1, including perceived human system strength (X) and job engagement (Y), indicates that perceived human system strength ( $\beta=0.38, P<0.01$   $\beta=0.12, P<0.01$   $\beta=0.20, P<0.01$ ) is positively related to the job engagement, and  $R^2_{peng}= 0.13$ .  $R^2_{eeng}= 0.38$ .  $R^2_{ceng}= 0.21$ .

(b) model 2, covering the perceived human system strength (X) thriving (M), shows that perceived human system strength is positively associated with thriving ( $\beta=0.39, P<0.01, \beta=0.41, P<0.01$ ), and  $R^2_{learn}= 0.40, R^2_{vital}= 0.42$ .

(c) after perceived human system strength is controlled, as shown in model 3, it was found that thriving ( $\beta=0.20, P<0.01$ ) is positively associated with job engagement.

The three models that were built for investigating the mediational hypothesis, it is shown that mediation in the relationship among human resource system strength and job engagement when thriving is present ( $\beta=0.12, P<0.01, \beta=0.07, P>0.01, \beta=0.05, P>0.01$ ), supporting H3.

Table 4-12 Model Results

| Hypothesized path                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Path value                                              | Results   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| H1: Perceived human resource system strength → Thriving vitality<br>Perceived human resource system strength → Thriving learning                                                                                                                                       | .41***<br>.39***                                        | Supported |
| H2: Thriving vitality → Emotional Engagement<br>Thriving vitality → Physical Engagement<br>Thriving vitality → Cognitive Engagement<br>Thriving learning → Emotional Engagement<br>Thriving learning → Physical Engagement<br>Thriving learning → Cognitive Engagement | .43***<br>.08**<br>.21***<br>.30***<br>.21***<br>.18*** | Supported |
| $(\chi^2 = 2264.047; \chi^2 / df = 3.86; CFI = .90; PNFI = .80; RMSEA = .07).$                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                         |           |

\*p < .10. \*\*p < .05, \*\*\*p < .01.

Table 4-13 Mediator Analysis

| Paths                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Model 1                                                                           | Model 2          | Model 3                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Perceived human resource system strength → Emotional Engagement                                                                                                                                                                                                    | .382***                                                                           |                  | .121***                                                                               |
| Perceived human resource system strength → Cognitive Engagement                                                                                                                                                                                                    | .205***                                                                           |                  | .057                                                                                  |
| Perceived human resource system strength → Physical Engagement                                                                                                                                                                                                     | .126***                                                                           |                  | .007                                                                                  |
| Perceived human resource system strength → Thriving vitality<br>Perceived human resource system strength → Thriving learning                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                   | .41***<br>.39*** | .41***<br>.39***                                                                      |
| Thriving vitality → Emotional Engagement<br>Thriving vitality → Physical Engagement<br>Thriving vitality → Cognitive Engagement<br>Thriving learning → Emotional Engagement<br>Thriving learning → Physical Engagement<br>Thriving learning → Cognitive Engagement |                                                                                   |                  | .39***<br>.08<br>.19**<br>.25***<br>.20***<br>.15***                                  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | X <sup>2</sup> (43) = 97,232<br>CFI = 0.89<br>PNFI = 0.78,<br>$\chi^2 / df = 5,2$ | Full model       | X <sup>2</sup> (183) = 2246,385<br>CFI = 0.90,<br>PNFI = 0.89,<br>$\chi^2 / df = 3.8$ |

\*p < .10. \*\*p < .05, \*\*\*p < .01.

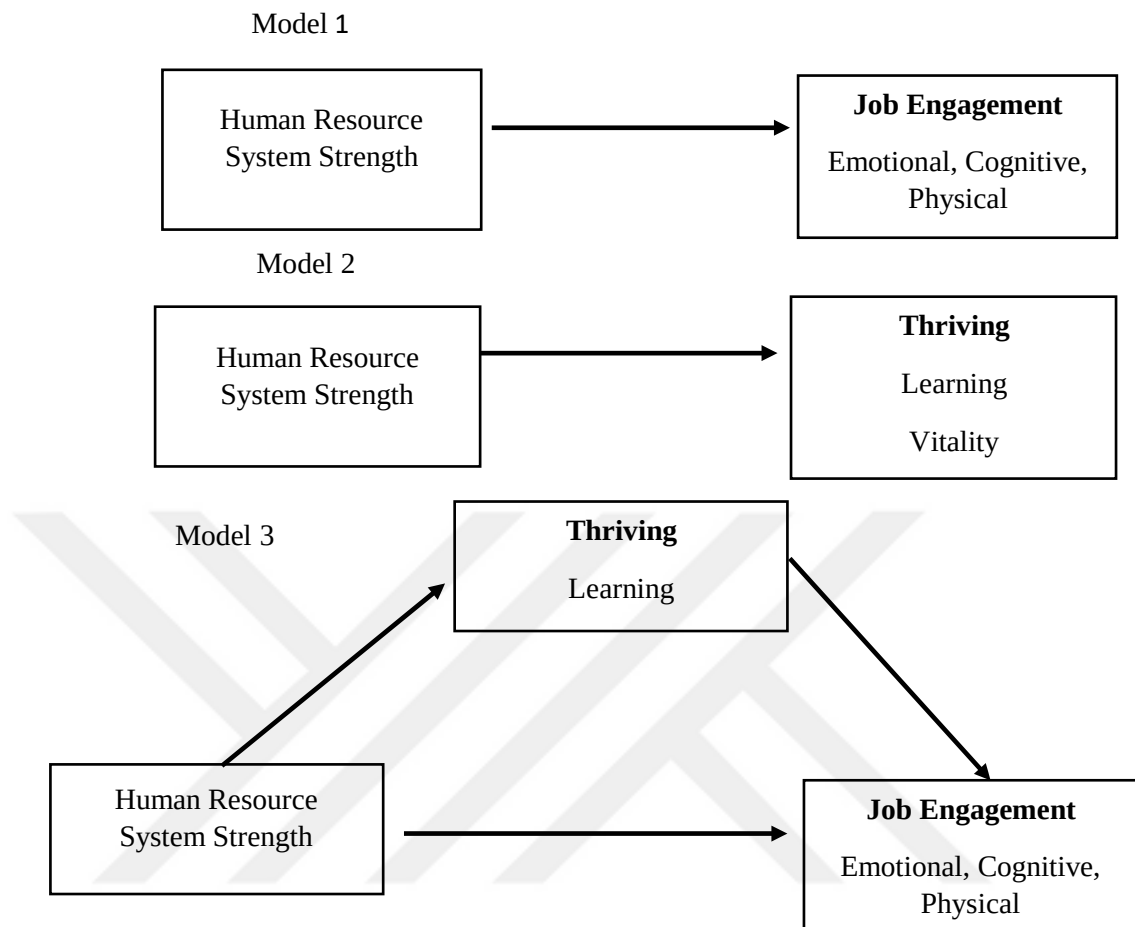


Figure 4-1 Models for the Hypothesis 3

Concerning the hypothesized effects, we found that perceived human resource system strength is positively associated with psychological safety ( $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $p < P < 0.01$ ) supporting H4. Our results also demonstrated that psychological safety is positively related to job engagement ( $\beta = .14$ ;  $p < .01$ ,  $\beta = 0.6$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\beta = 0.8$ ,  $p < .01$ ), supporting H5.

In order to test the mediating effect of psychological safety, perceived human resource system strength and job engagement, we employed the Baron and Kenny's (1986) method. To address these issues, we performed three different SEM models, as shown in Table 4.15 and presented in figure 4.2.

(a) model 1, including perceived human system strength (X) and job engagement (Y), indicates that perceived human system strength ( $\beta=0.38$ ,  $P<0.01$   $\beta=0.12$ ,  $P<0.01$   $\beta=0.20$ ,  $P<0.01$ ) is positively related to the job engagement, and  $R^2_{peng.} = 0.13$ .  $R^2_{ceng.} = 0.38$ .  $R^2_{ceng.} = 0.21$ .

(b) model 2, covering the perceived human system strength (X) psychological safety (M), shows that perceived human system strength is positively associated with psychological safety ( $\beta=0.54$ ,  $P<0.01$ ) and  $R^2_{safety} = 0.55$ .

(c) after perceived human system strength is controlled, as shown in model 3, it was found that psychological safety ( $\beta=0.20$ ,  $P<0.01$ ) is positively associated with job engagement.

The three models that were built for investigating the mediational hypothesis, it is shown that mediation in the relationship between human resource system strength and job engagement when psychological safety is available ( $\beta=0.12$ ,  $P<0.01$ ,  $\beta=0.07$ ,  $P>0.01$ ,  $\beta=0.05$ ,  $P>0.01$ ), supporting H6.

Table 4-14 Model Results

| Hypothesized path                                                   | Path value | Results   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| H4- Perceived human resource system strength → Psychological safety | .23***     | Supported |
| Psychological safety → Emotional Engagement                         | .14***     | Supported |
| Psychological safety → Physical Engagement                          | .68**      |           |
| Psychological safety → Cognitive Engagement                         | .89***     |           |

\*p < .10. \*\*p < .05, \*\*\*p < .01.

Table 4-15 Mediator Analysis

| Paths                                                           | Model 1                                                                   | Model 2    | Model 3                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Perceived human resource system strength → Emotional Engagement | .382***                                                                   |            | -.901                                                                     |
| Perceived human resource system strength → Cognitive Engagement | .205***                                                                   |            | -.311                                                                     |
| Perceived human resource system strength → Physical Engagement  | .126***                                                                   |            | -.168                                                                     |
| Perceived human resource system strength → psychological safety |                                                                           | .54***     | .54***                                                                    |
| Psychological safety → Emotional Engagement                     |                                                                           |            | .014                                                                      |
| Psychological safety → Physical Engagement                      |                                                                           |            | .027                                                                      |
| Psychological safety → Cognitive Engagement                     |                                                                           |            | .263                                                                      |
|                                                                 | X2(296)<br>= 1594,019<br>CFI = 0.89<br>PNFI = 0.78,<br>$\chi^2$ /df = 5,3 | Full model | X2(183)<br>= 1430,183<br>CFI = 0.91<br>PNFI = 0.80,<br>$\chi^2$ /df = 3.6 |

\*p < .10. \*\*p < .05, \*\*\*p < .01.

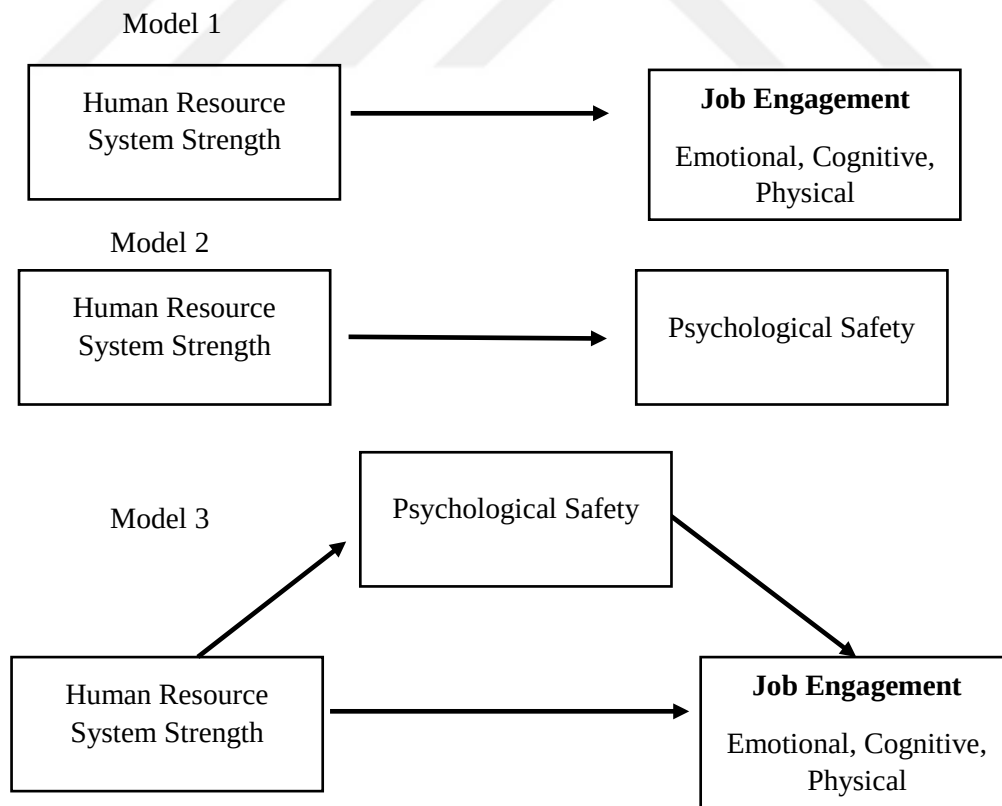


Figure 4-2 Models for the Hypothesis 6

To assess the moderating effect of perceived organizational support, H7, we used a moderated multiple hierarchical analysis. Because of the possibility of multi-collinearity, thriving and job engagement measures were mean centered before performing linear regression. We asses variance inflation factors (VIFs) to examine multi-collinearity levels and found the results ( $VIF \leq 10$ ) to be below a harmful level. Table 4-16 demonstrates the moderating effect of perceived organizational support between the relationship between thriving and job engagement. However, we did not find a moderating role of perceived organizational support in the relationship between thriving and job engagement that does not support H7.

Table 4-16 Moderator Analysis

|                    | Emotional Engagement |             |            |            | Physical Engagement |         |           |            | Cognitive Engagement |         |           |      |
|--------------------|----------------------|-------------|------------|------------|---------------------|---------|-----------|------------|----------------------|---------|-----------|------|
|                    | Model 1              |             | Model 2    |            | Model 1             |         | Model 2   |            | Model 1              |         | Model 2   |      |
|                    | Path                 | T val       | Pat        | Tv         | Path                | T va    | Pat       | T va       | Path                 | T va    | Path      | T va |
| Main effect        |                      |             |            |            |                     |         |           |            |                      |         |           |      |
| Thriving Learning  | .22                  | 5.69*<br>** | .32        | 2.29*<br>* | .28                 | 5.43*** | .43       | 2.97*<br>* | .17                  | 3.50*** | .18       | 1.30 |
| Thriving Vitality  | .44                  | 11.32***    | .33        | 2.62*      | 0.8                 | 1.17    | -.34      | 2.03*      | .25                  | 4.97*** | .08       | .48  |
| Support            | .15                  | 4.09*<br>** | .19        | 1.50       | 0.6                 | 1.21    | -.22      | -1.3       | 0.4                  | .038    | -.16      | 0.9  |
| Interaction learn  |                      |             | -.22       | -.09       |                     |         | .29       | 2.69*      |                      |         | -.04      | 0.13 |
| Interaction vital  |                      |             | .19        | .08        |                     |         | .29       | -.09       |                      |         | .32       | 1.09 |
| R <sup>2</sup>     | .49                  |             | .49        |            | .14                 |         |           | .15        | .16                  |         |           | .17  |
| R <sup>2</sup> adj | .49                  |             | .49        |            | .13                 |         |           | .14        | .16                  |         |           | .16  |
| ΔR <sup>2</sup>    |                      |             | .001       |            |                     |         |           | .011       |                      |         |           | .001 |
| F                  | 173.37***            |             | 104**<br>* |            | 29.201***<br>.      |         | 19.516*** |            | 35,330*<br>**        |         | 21.679*** |      |

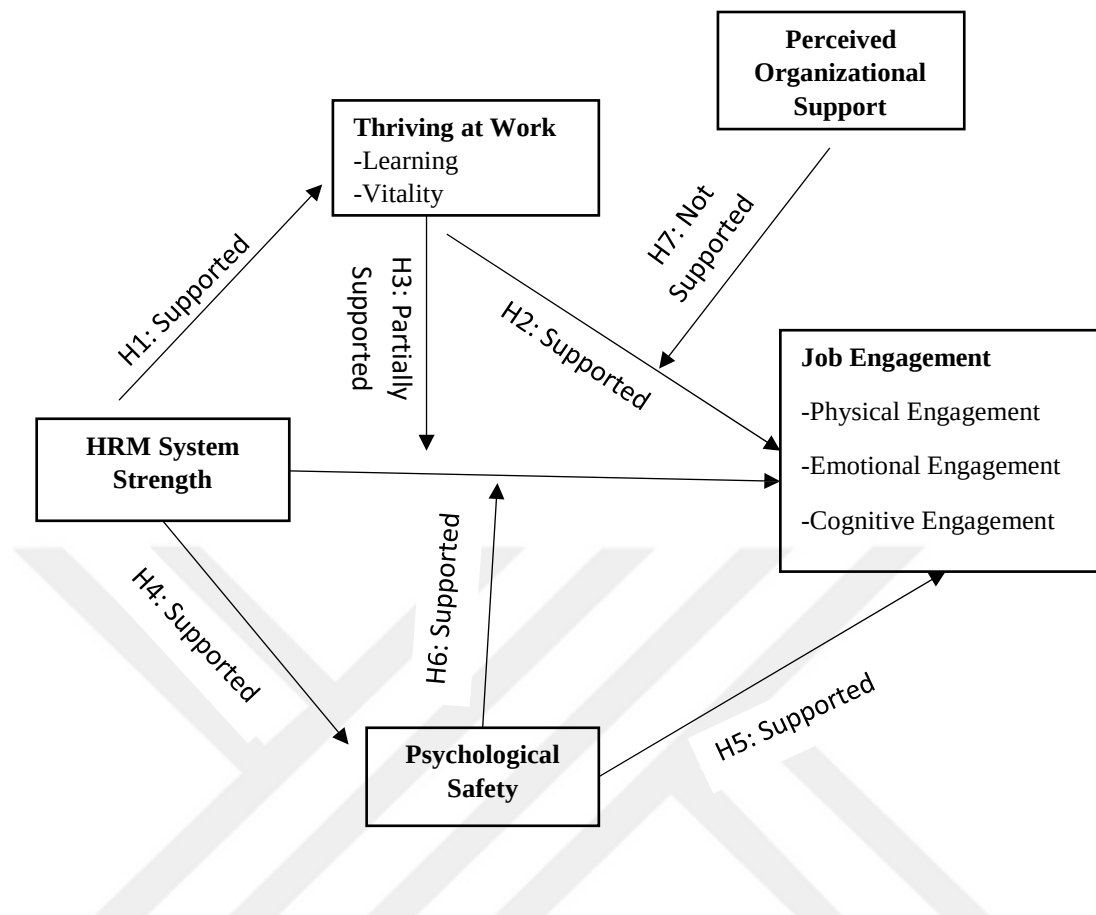


Figure 4-3 Our Thesis Hypothesis (Results)

## **5.DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION**

### **5.1 Theoretical Implications**

We extend and contribute the literature of “HRM System Strength”. Previous studies show that the HRM strength and performance are linked each other (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Hauff et al., 2016; Podolsky and Hackett, 2021). Our findings demonstrated that HRM System Strength is positively related to job engagement. Moreover, we empirically showed that perceived HRM system strength positively influences thriving at work. HRM systems are positively associated with employees' learning and vitality activities and this result supports previous organizational behavior literature (Spreitzer, 2005; Kleine et al., 2019).

Our model, in which the thriving at work concept plays a mediating role, has been largely supported with, which shows that our findings are consistent with many studies in the thriving literature (Prem et al., 2017; Van der Walt, 2018; Abid et al., 2018, Imran et al., 2018). Likewise, the mediating role of psychological safety in the relationship between HRM System strength and Job engagement is fully supported. This is also consistent with the relevant literature (May et al., 2004; Basit, 2017; Lyu, 2016).

Although there are some studies on the relationship between perceived organizational support and thriving at work, our data analysis did not support the moderating role of perceived organizational support in thriving and job engagement relationship (Guan and Frenkel, 2020; Imran et al., 2020).

As we proposed, our examination showed that HRM system strength is positively related to psychological safety. It is expected to be beneficial contribution to both HRM system strength literature and psychological safety literature.

## 5.2 Managerial Implications

It is an undeniable fact that human resource management has a critical importance for all businesses, regardless of scale. The "contents" of high-performance work systems are effective in improving and managing employee performance. However, as emphasized in this thesis, "content" is not sufficient alone, the "process" of how these contents is perceived by the employees is very important as well. We can say that there is a strong HRM system in the organization when the employees know clearly what is expected of them, and the HR practices adopted by the company consistently are applied similarly by all managers.

Unlike the concepts of Commitment and Involvement, the concept of Engagement shows the employees' love for their job. An employee experiences physical engagement by going to work every day and emotional engagement by being happy and sad about what he/she experiences at work, but most importantly, he/she provides cognitive engagement by keeping always his/her mind on the work. When there is engagement, organizational success is indispensable. In this thesis, thriving and psychological safety, as the two precursors of the concept of engagement, have been examined and it has been proven that both of them directly result in job engagement.

The subject of thriving is popular in academia with its scientific name, as well as in the business world in terms of learning feeling and vitality. Organizations provide various training e.g., leadership, teamwork, management by objectives, etc., however, the employee's sense of learning is a phenomenon that persists with the people around him/her. What employees expect from their managers is not only to command them to work, but also to guide their development. Likewise, people find themselves in a "development ecosystem" when they consist of groups with friends they work with that support their own development. On the other hand, the issue of "vitality" is gaining importance day by day. What is meant here is not going to work by running and jumping. What is mentioned here is the energetic pleasure of going to work, dealing with working issues, and supporting the customer. While talking to the customer, you read the high energy of the employee, you see that dynamism when presenting a new project to the manager, they make you experience what a vital and powerful project

will be. Behind all this learning feeling and working energy lies a strong HRM system. If you clearly reveal what you expect from the employee, that employee will vitalize you.

Psychological safety is one of the precursors proposed by the thesis for job engagement. If the employee feels safe and is not afraid to take risks, he/she will be more comfortable and "engaged" to his/her job and this will provide a high job performance. In order for the employee to feel safe, it is possible to have a situation as clear and strong, in other words, red/green traffic lights as Mischel mentions. In more detail, employees in companies are not afraid to take risks if they anticipate what results they will face. The subject will be better understood when we discuss management by objectives and "promotion in management". Imagine that of two regional directors who have goals over financial results, satisfaction and efficiency, one exceeds its goals and the other fails to reach its goals by making many excuses. It is necessary to know that companies always care very much about achieving their goals, and constantly preach to the employees that those who achieve the goals can become managers. If you promote those who exceed their targets to management, it will be understood by everyone that the promotion policy of the company is "success" oriented. If you promote an employee who does not achieve his/her goals but has many excuses, other employees know that to be a manager it is not necessary to be successful and achieve goals, but to make skillfully excuses and present them with an impressive display of oratory. While the success-oriented part sees a company that constantly grows, develops and stands out in competition, the other side sees a company that shrinks, experiencing problems and loses its power in competition.

Our thesis shows that a strong HRM system supports thriving and psychological safety approaches, which are two important precursors of employee engagement. In particular, when examining the intermediary roles between job engagement and HRM system strength, we saw how critical the HRM system strength is for emotional engagement. It is also possible to see this in administrative practices. When we look through Mischel's traffic light metaphor, people experience confusion at a yellow light, and they hesitate with questions e.g., "Shall we pass?", "Should we wait?". In fact, the yellow light signals people to either prepare to stop or prepare to pass, but the human mind is different. You will see that it turns from green to yellow while you are speeding

by the car, if you are brave, you will try to increase your speed and pass, if you have a more cautious personality, you will take your foot off the gas and start to slow down. In companies, if you do not give people a mix of emotions, they will engage you emotionally and focus on their goals with all their heart and soul. How does one not create confusion? If your human resources procedures are clear, distinctive, understandable, and your practices are consistent and fair, people will agree on what is expected of them and focus on success.

Finally, we tested the moderator role of perceived organizational support in the relationship between thriving and job engagement. The results showed us how powerful a phenomenon thriving is. In other words, when a person's intrinsic motivation is high, his/her desire for improvement and enthusiasm for work increase so much that how much the company supports him/her does not change the "engagement" of this person to the job. Based on this, it is not enough to just value and care about employees, we need to give them new excitement, and we need to guide their development.

### **5.3 Limitations and Future Research**

Although our study has very useful outputs in the field of "Organizational Behavior", it has some managerial and methodological limitations.

First, based on the way we collect data, we can say that our data includes a single time period. Therefore, our variables may have some limitations in analyzing their causal relationships. At this point, we can suggest a longitudinal research design for future research. As we mentioned in the methodology section, "common method bias" may seem to be one of our limitations (Spector et al., 2019). In future studies, measuring and observing dependent and independent variables in separate frameworks stands as an option.

We did not include personality types as one of the variables in our study. Considering that people's intrinsic motivations are very critical in terms of their desire to learn and their enthusiasm for work, we think that different personality types may experience different orientations in "engagement" situations. Likewise, since people's

risk-taking tendencies differ from person to person, different results may appear, especially in the psychological safety approach. In addition to this, it would be an interesting research area to look the relationship between psychological contract, thriving and engagement all together.

Since we planned our field research with participants from different sectors, we can say that our results are cross-sectoral. However, each sector has its own human resources management practices. Considering these differences, it may be clearer that the study is conducted with participants from a single sector rather than participants from different sectors. Likewise, each management function has its own working principles. In the same research, considering the employees from the production department and the employees from the finance department together brings some department-based boundaries. We can see the similar difference in management levels as well. Considering and handling managers and employees in the same way seems to be one of the important limitations of the research.

Conducting field research only in Turkey seems is another limit in terms of generalizing the results. Cross-cultural research design can shed light on future studies. Since our hypothesis which “the moderation effect of perceived organizational support on the relationship between thriving and job engagement” is not supported with our quantitative data analysis, it might be a good idea to analyze the same hypothesis with a qualitative research design in the future research.

The most interesting point is that this research was conducted under pandemic conditions. In other words, the effect of filling out the questionnaire on the results in a period when people are mostly new to working remotely is uncertain.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Our thesis examined the relationship between perceived human resource management system strength and job engagement through thriving at work and psychological safety by analyzing the moderating effect of perceived organizational support.

Considering high-performance work systems as strong HR contents, Bowen and Ostroff created an important avenue in the academy by emphasizing the “process” communicated and applying these contents to employees. Our findings showed that the mediating role of psychological safety and thriving exists in the individual-level analysis of HRM system strength and job Engagement relationship. On the other hand, the moderating role of perceived organizational support in thriving and job engagement relationships is not supported in our analysis. That showed the strong effect of learning and vitality aspects of thriving at work on the psychical, emotional, and cognitive engagement.

We hope that the outputs of our thesis will shed light on future research, and we think that practical conclusions can be drawn for both academicians and administrators.

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Ecertaş graduated from Beykent University, Department of Business Administration as a valedictorian. After receiving his undergraduate education, He did his Master's degree in Marketing Communications at Emerson College in Boston as a Fulbright scholar. Between 2011 and 2019, he served as Corporate Development Manager and Board Member at Çilek, a leading children furniture brand. Since 2015, he has been working as Management Consultant and took part in “HR System Design, Performance Management Systems, Total Rewards Model, Strategic Planning, Talent Management, HR Digital Transformation and other Organizational Development” projects in many domestic and abroad organizations. Ecertas is also serving to Turkish Airlines as a Board Member.