Who desires to stay? The role of relational job crafting on the intention to stay with the mediating role of workplace friendship*

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Abstract

Drawing on theory of reasoned action and identity theory, we examined the mediating effect of workplace friendship on the association between relational job crafting and the intention to stay. The hypotheses were tested by analysing the data collected from 228 participants. We found positive and significant relationships between the intention to stay and relational job crafting, as well as with workplace friendship. Furthermore, a positive and significant relationship between relational job crafting and workplace friendship was found. The results also indicate that workplace friendship has a partial mediating effect on the relationship between relational job crafting and the intention to stay.

Introduction

'Intention' refers to an individual's decision to behave and reflects his/her attempt to perform a behaviour (Abraham/Sheeran 2003). A great deal of research has been devoted to the intention to stay within a given establishment, but little theoretical and empirical research has examined the effects of crafting job-based relationships on the intention to stay, which has been studied in different disciplines such as human resource management and organizational behaviour. This concept refers to the employees' conscious willingness to remain in the organization (Tett/Meyer 1993). On the contrary, the willingness to leave can also have significant effects on organizations (Cho/Johanson/Guchait 2009). As the turnover incurs to recruitment costs, selection costs (Saeed/Waseem/Sikander/Rizwan 2014), relocation costs, training costs, loss of productivity, loss of customers, and loss of organizational knowledge (Alkahtani 2015), it is paramount that organizations retain their employees for as long as they can (Saeed et al. 2014). In addition, employers aim to keep high-quality employees who are productive for their organizations (Cardy/Lengnick-Hall 2011). From another perspective, in cases where the job roles within the organization are interdependent, leaving the job may disrupt the work processes (Staw, 1980).

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Employees could leave the current organization for another workplace, and the turnover process can negatively affect the behavior and perception of other employees working in the organization (Staw, 1980). The negative reflections of turnover on organizations forces them to keep the current employees within the establishment. For these reasons, today's managers need to consider the factors that will assist them in motivating their employees to remain with the firm.

Studies suggest that many organizational factors contribute to the employees' intention to stay. Previous research has shown that perceived job security (Zeytinoglu /Keser / Yılmaz / Inelmen/ Özsoy/Uygur 2012); job satisfaction (Chiang/Back/Canter 2005; Mehmood /Nadarajah/ Akhtar/ Brohi/ Khuhro 2018); organizational citizenship behaviour (Shanker 2018); affective commitment (Hansen /Sandvik /Selnes 2003); normative commitment and person-organization fit (Chew/Chan 2008); and, finally, task-shifting policy on the staff (Zeytinoglu /Denton /Brookman/Plenderleith 2014) affect this intention.

One of the influential factors concerning the employees' intention to stay is job crafting, which suggests that employees can make physical as well as cognitive changes in their jobs and shape their relational boundaries (Wrzesniewski/Dutton 2001). Job crafting enhances the person-job fit (Iqbal 2016) and the affective commitment to organization (Qi/Li/Zhang 2014), thereby likely to increase the intention to stay. It is also suggested that the more individuals can craft their jobs and tasks, the more likely it is that they remain within the establishment (Zhang/Li 2020). However, undertaking a job implies not just performing a task, but also engaging in interpersonal relationships and social interactions (Grant/Parker 2009). Since individuals interact with each other while carrying out their jobs and tasks, this helps them to develop interpersonal relationships as well. This process results in forming job-based relationships, otherwise known as relational job crafting (RJC). With RJC, employees can build new relationships, intensify existing relationships with each other (Weseler/ Niessen 2016), and alter the frequency of job-related interactions (Wrzesniewski/Dutton 2001). In that vein, those desiring to create a positive atmosphere for teamwork or to complete their jobs on time engage in job-related relationships. As stated earlier, this increases social interactions, some of which may turn into workplace friendships over time.

Workplace friendship is an interpersonal relationship developed among and between individuals within the organization (Sias 2005). The key elements that differentiate this type of friendship from job-related ones are mutual commitment (Berman/West/Richter 2002), and emotional (McGuire 2007) as well as psychological bonds formed between employees. Workplace friendship further meets socio-psychological needs, namely self-esteem (Abugre 2017) and self-enhancement (Sluss/Ashforth 2008) and provides a sense of identity. In the general sense, this type of friendship provides positive psychological

benefits to employees at the same time. Those who intend to maintain their existing friendship ties and the socio-psychological needs provided by workplace friendship will most probably stay in the organization (Tröster/Parker/Van Knippenberg/Sahlmüller 2019). Depending on these assumptions, we examined the mediating effect of workplace friendships on the relationship between RJC and the intention to stay.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development

Intention to stay

The intention to stay refers to the employees' desire to stay within their current organization on a long-term basis (Johari/Yean/Adnan/Yahya/Ahmad 2012). In anticipating and understanding social behaviour, theory of reasoned action introduced by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) forms a useful basis. The theory states that the main predictor of the individuals' behaviours is their intention (Fishbein/Ajzen 1975). The stronger the employees' intention towards a particular behaviour, the more likely they are to display that behaviour (Ajzen 1991). For this reason, it can be stated that organizations need to understand what their employees' intentions are concerning whether to stay or not.

There are many individual and organizational factors that help to increase the employees' intention to stay. Prior studies have revealed a positive relationship between the intention to stay and job satisfaction (Chiang et al. 2005), organizational citizenship behaviour (Shanker 2018), affective commitment (Hansen et al. 2003), and normative commitment (Chew/Chan 2008). In addition to organizational factors, there are other factors, such as a country's economy, that motivate employees to stay with a firm. In Turkey, where there is high unemployment, individuals accept job offers without sufficiently evaluating the positive and negative aspects of the working conditions (Zeytinoglu et al. 2012). Following the line of reasoning of Zeytinoglu et al. (2012), we can assume that employees in this country tend to commit to their organizations due to the high unemployment rates. Other factors that affect the possibility of staying in the organization can be RJC and workplace friendship. Individuals in general acting in a crafting manner feel more positively towards their jobs and organizations (Laurence 2010). Moreover, crafting a relation-based environment enhances organizational identification, which in turn increases the intention to remain with the establishment (De Moura/Abrams/Retter/Gunnarsdottir/Ando 2009). From another perspective, workplace friendships providing emotional (Sias/Heath/Perry/Silva/Fix 2004) and social (Asgharian/Yusoff/YaserMazhari/Mardani/HazratSoltan 2013) support creates a psychologically secure environment (Ozbek 2018), which may increase the employees' intention to stay.

The intention to leave or to stay in the organization are two sides of the same coin (Johnston 1995). In other words, the elimination of factors that trigger the

intention to leave will positively affect the employees' intention to remain in the organization (Cho et al. 2009). Since the intention to stay is an indicator of the actual turnover, the factors influencing the intention to stay need to be examined so as to keep staff within the establishment the longest (Nedd 2006).

Crafting relations at work

'Job crafting' refers to the process of physical, cognitive, and relational changes, based on which employees redesign their tasks, relationships, and roles to create a more meaningful job (Wrzesniewski/Dutton 2001). The construction of job crafting complements job design theory. In the traditional approach to job design theory, the managers are the job crafters altering the task features in such a way that motivates employees and increases their satisfaction, whereas, in the contemporary approach to job design, employees are the crafters changing the tasks and the relational boundaries of their jobs (Wrzesniewski/Dutton 2001). With the increasing contribution of the employees to the job design processes, they have assumed more active roles in this process. What is more, the fact that organizations now expect employees to display proactive behaviours that are not included in their job descriptions has altered the role of employees in the organization and the structure of the jobs (Lee/Lee 2018). Hence, a process that works from bottom to top has emerged.

Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) identified three forms of job crafting: task, cognitive, and relational. Task crafting is related to a change in the number, scope, and type of the work that is done (Wrzesniewski/Dutton 2001). Cognitive crafting is associated with a change in the cognitive task boundaries, the aspects of the job (Wrzesniewski/Dutton 2001), and how individuals view their jobs (Zhang/Parker 2019), which, in turn, makes the job meaningful for them (Slemp/ Vella Brodrick 2013). By altering the cognitive focus, employees give their jobs more purpose, and this situation provides them the opportunity to better perceive the positive aspects of their jobs (Hommelhoff/Weseler/Niessen 2021). In RJC, employees can create, maintain, change, or end their job-related relationships with other employees (Miller 2015), and they interact with the ones having similar skills and interests in the organization while doing their jobs (Slemp/ Vella-Brodrick 2013). Job crafting, which has attracted considerable attention recently and has been studied by researchers, has positive effects on many organizational outcomes. It has been shown that positive relationships exist between job crafting and job performance (Ting/Ho 2017; Zhang/Liu 2021), job satisfaction (Cheng/Yi 2018), innovative behaviour and psychological safety (Cao/Zhang 2020), and organizational identification (Kılıç/ Tatar/Erdil 2020a). Furthermore, the study of Rofcanin, Bakker, Berber, Golgeci and Las Heras (2019) analysed the relationship between different types of RJC namely expansion/contraction-oriented RJC, work engagement, and manager-rated employee

behaviours (work performance and voice). The results of the study revealed that expansion- oriented RJC stimulates work performance, whereas contraction-oriented RJC decreases the level of work performance, in turn causing probable declines in productivity within the organization.

In this study, we focus on RJC for two reasons. Firstly, since a job includes tasks, interpersonal relationships, connections, and interactions (Rofcanin et al. 2019), and individuals are embedded within social relations that surround them in the organization, the social aspect of jobs also needs to be taken into consideration. Early job design research rules out the social aspects of the job while designing it (Kilduff/Brass 2010); however, this aspect of the job is being given more importance than ever before (Rofcanin et al. 2019). As the social environment of the job determines both the employees' behaviour (Grant/Parker 2009) and their intentions, more research should be devoted to this subject. The second reason is to examine the relationship between RJC and other variables, namely the intention to stay and workplace friendship. Research so far has generally focused only on task crafting, and little attention has been paid to the relational dimension. Nevertheless, examining the concept of RJC in the context of its predictors and consequences may provide a better understanding of the influences pertaining to the job-based relations on the organizational outcomes.

Employees can craft their job-based relationships by extending or contracting them. They can increase the frequency or the intensity of existing job-based relationships (Weseler/Niessen 2016) and, in this way, boost supportive relationships with other employees (Geldenhuys/Bakker/Demerouti 2021). Conversely, they may isolate themselves from others by reducing the number of job-related relationships (Weseler/Niessen 2016) to manage difficult relationships with other employees (Geldenhuys et al. 2021). The social capital approach suggests that employees extending their job-based relationships access more task-relevant information, get feedback from the others, and increase the amount and quality of the communication with others, all of which enhance the perception of belongingness (Weseler/Niessen 2016), thereby strengthening the intention to stay. Put differently, frequent and intensified job-related relationships with others increase the source of task knowledge or cues which might be used to craft better task strategies (Ghitulescu 2007). These relationships, while meeting the need for self-development, also change the meaning of the work, work identity (Wrzesniewski/Dutton 2001), and how individuals perform their tasks (Berg/Wrzesniewski/Dutton 2010). Building on these assumptions, employees desire to craft their relational environment since such crafting contributes to the creation of a positive work environment and the completion of tasks. Crafting behaviour helps individuals feel better (Laurence 2010) regarding their jobs and organizations. Those performing well and endeavouring for the organization feel more committed, which may lead them to craft their relational work environment (Rofcanin/Las Heras/Bakker 2017). Drawing on social identity

theory, developing the relational boundaries involved in performing tasks/jobs increases organizational identification because changing relationships improves value congruence between the employee and his/her organization (Kim/Im/Qu/NamKoong 2018), and a high level of organizational identification increases the intention to stay (De Moura et al. 2009). From this perspective, crafting behaviours increases the possibility of remaining in the organization (Zhang/Li 2020).

In a nutshell, staying in the organization will lead to keeping the existing job-related relationships within the organization which helps to access more task-relevant information, obtain feedback from others, perform better at work, and develop a more constructive atmosphere. Considering these assumptions, we develop the following hypothesis:

H1: *Employees crafting their job-based relationships will have an intention to stay in the organization.*

The role of relational job crafting on workplace friendship

Workplace friendship is an important initiative that creates interpersonal bonds among employees in the organization (Sias/Drzewiecka/Meares/Bent/Konomi/Ortega/White 2008). It is a voluntary, informal (Pillemer/Rothbard 2018), reciprocal, and interpersonal relationship that occurs between two or more employees having mutual goals and shared values (Biçer/Büyükyılmaz 2019).

Workplace friendships are a positive factor for both individuals and organizations; they increase organizational citizenship behaviour (Chang / Wu /Mui / Lin 2018), innovation (Cao/Zhang 2020; Lu/Hafenbrack/Eastwick/Wang/Maddux/Galinsky 2017), job satisfaction (Mehmood et al. 2018; Riordan/Griffeth 1995), organizational commitment (Morrison 2005), job involvement (Riordan/Griffeth 1995), well-being (Craig/Kuykendall 2019), and perceived organizational politics (Yen/Chen/Yen 2009). Moreover, they boost task performance at the individual, group, and organizational level (Pillemer/Rothbard 2018), while reducing the level of turnover intention (Morrison 2005) and absenteeism (Berman et al. 2002).

Just as workplace friendship causes desirable organizational outcomes, it has also some drawbacks for establishments. For example, it can be related to negative gossip, organizational politics, and nepotism (Song/Olshfski 2008). Berman et al. (2002) stated that managers have concerns that the deterioration of workplace friendships may harm the organization. The authors emphasized that such a situation may reduce the organizational commitment of the employees and cause conflict of interest. As friendships are essential to organizational functioning, their dissolution can hinder work processes (Sias et al. 2004). Moreover,

such dissolution can reduce the individuals' abilities to perform tasks and this situation can increase the turnover rate (Sias et al. 2004) and have a counter effect on work productivity. Put in a different way, as workplace friendship provides both instrumental and emotional support which helps employees to carry out their tasks well, the deterioration of workplace friendship may decrease the effectiveness of performing jobs (Sias et al 2004). Despite their detrimental effects for the organizations, the positive aspects of workplace friendships have been reported to surpass their negative effects (Song 2006).

The nature of workplace friendship includes exchange, reciprocity, satisfactory network of interpersonal supports (Mao/Hsieh/Chen 2012), trust, liking, mutual commitment, shared interests (Berman et al. 2002), volunteering, informal relationships, communal norms, and socioemotional goals (Pillemer/Rothbard 2018). At this point, we need to differentiate job-based relationships from workplace friendship. The main attribute of workplace friendship is that friendship at work depends on voluntariness, which allows employees to decide for themselves who they want to be friends with, and this is what differentiates peer relationships from peer friendships (Sias/Cahill 1998). However, job descriptions may require employees to interact with each other while doing their jobs (Ghitulescu 2007). By crafting job-based relationships, while some employees may desire to increase the number or intensity of relationships in which they will interact while doing their job, others may want to reduce such number or intensity (Ghitulescu 2007). For example, in complex tasks, employees can increase interactions with others to learn different task strategies or to manage complex tasks (Ghitulescu 2007). As seen from these statements, job-based relationships take place within the framework of the employees' job descriptions, which are restricted to the defined tasks, expectations, and structures of the organizations (Wong/Tetrick 2017). In this situation, employees can select their co-workers within the framework of defined jobs/tasks. In this vein, we can conclude that this kind of relationship arises from the employees' organizational roles and responsibilities. By changing the relational boundaries, employees can decide on whom they will interact with while doing the job (Wrzesniewski/Dutton 2001). The purpose of developing job-based relationships is related to accomplishing tasks/jobs (Berman et al. 2002), and communication and interaction are based on work-related issues. On the other hand, employees can build friendships at work as they wish and irrespective of any work-related tasks/jobs (Sias/Cahill 1998). Accordingly, for the development of workplace friendship, emotional bond (McGuire 2007), emotional support (Rueger /Malecki /Demaray 2010), psychological relationship, psychological intimacy (Biçer/Büyükyılmaz 2019), and emotional satisfaction (Xiao/Mao/Quan/Qing 2020) are all prerequisites. Friendship at work entails more than just people appearing friendly or being common acquaintances; there should also be mutual trust, liking, and shared interests (Berman et al. 2002). In addition, perceived similarities such as attitudes,

values, and demographic structure (Sias/Cahill 1998), education, lifestyle and subculture, and life interest (Omuris 2019) encourage employees to become friends at work.

Through the lens of social psychology, individuals sharing intimacy and holding similar self-concepts are more likely to become friends (Morrison 2005). Workplace friendship provides self-worth, self-esteem (Abugre 2017), emotional support (Rueger et al. 2010), a sense of belonging, and identity (Morrison 2002). In other words, having a workplace friendship means having emotional (McGuire 2007) and psychological ties developed between individuals and sharing the same organizational identity. In addition to the social identities obtained by being a member of a group or an organization, individuals have relational identities arising from their role relations. Relational identity is derived from identity theory, which emphasizes the roles of individuals in their social relationships. According to this approach, individuals undertake different roles in social life while establishing relationships, and the quality of the relationships that they establish in accordance with their roles in any social group affects their self-definition (Stryker/Burke 2000). In terms of relational identity, individuals identify themselves based on dyadic and role relationships (Luo/Song/Marnburg/Øgaard 2014) and connections with others (Brewer/Gardner 1996). A relational identity, which is socially constructed, includes goals, values, and norms (Ashforth/Sluss 2006), and brings the role networks and role incumbents together in a social system (Sluss/Ashforth 2008).

When we look at the workplace friendship from the perspective of relational identity, two central arguments draw attention; first, that relational identity serves the purpose of managing the relationship, as well as revealing the purpose of friendship occurring between individuals (Burch 2018). Second, that relational identity draws attention to friendships that exist between individuals. With the emergence of the relational identity, communication patterns and behavioural habits form between friends and the level of trust and information sharing increases, which helps in building strong relationships between individuals (Burch 2018). That is to say, the relational self-perceptions are formed by individuals' closeness and dependence on each other (Brewer/Gardner 1996). The more the relational identity meets the socio-psychological needs, the more attractive it becomes and, hence, an identification with relational identity will be achieved depending on the degree or the level at which these needs are met (Sluss/Ashforth 2008).

As stated earlier, employees can craft job-based relationships by expanding or contracting their job-relevant relations. Those expanding job-based relationships benefit from the positive aspects of RJC, such as creating a more positive atmosphere for teamwork, doing the job better, or completing tasks on time. The reason for crafting job-based relationships and interaction depends

on job-related issues. Even though these interactions start based on the job, casual relationships provide both parties to get to know each other better. In other words, job-related relationships increase the frequency of interaction and quality of communication between employees (Weseler/Niessen 2016), and this situation provides them with better awareness of their similarities and shared interests (Berman et al. 2002). The important point here is that not all job-based relationships are likely to turn into a workplace friendship. Sharing intimacy, holding similar self-concepts (Morrison 2005), meeting the need for self-esteem (Abugre 2017), providing a sense of belonging and identity (Morrison 2002), and having perceived similarities may turn RJCs into workplace friendships that are more attractive for employees. As seen from these statements, RJC paves the way for developing friendships at work. Consistent with this line of thinking, the second hypothesis of the research was developed as follows:

H2: There is a significant and positive relationship between relational job crafting and workplace friendship.

The relationship between workplace friendship and the intention to stay

Workplace friendships have psychological and emotional meanings for employees, while providing them with certain benefits as well. They increase connections and interactions among employees, thereby increasing the amount of information shared among them and possibly creating a favourable atmosphere within the organization (Abugre 2017). Additionally, workplace friendships reduce the level of stress by increasing support (Berman et al. 2002), which, in turn, creates a psychologically secure environment for the employees by enhancing the sense of security in the organization (Ozbek 2018). When work is stressful, such friendships provide social support, thus reducing the likelihood of turnover (Asgharian et al. 2013). Considering that high levels of stress tend to increase the intention to leave (Zeytinoglu/Denton/ Davies/Baumann/Blythe/Boos 2006), one can conclude that workplace friendships could strengthen the intention to stay with an organization by reducing the overall stress level. Having relational resources, such as colleague support, helps in motivating employees to keep these resources (Huyghebaert-Zouaghi/Berjot/Cougot/Gillet 2021). Conversely, having no social support in the workplace may cause depression, anxiety, neuroticism, and anti-social behaviour, all of which, in turn, could incur turnover patterns (Demissie /Alamrew /Minlargh /Melesse /Fentie 2017). A study of Morrison (2005) revealed that employees who have at least one negative relationship are less satisfied and are more likely to leave the organization. Consistent with this result, it would be possible to assume that workplace friendships providing social support to employees and influencing their perceptions positively will increase the satisfaction of employees and their intention to stay. In that context, good and strong friendships within the organization can be considered as an

investment (Biçer/Büyükyılmaz 2017). Simply put, individuals having strong workplace friendships most probably prefer to stay in the organization in order not to lose support and the information they can obtain as a result of such ties (Berman et al. 2002).

From the view of social psychology, the relational identity developed by strong and positive workplace friendships within the organization motivates employees to stay in the organization (Tröster et al. 2019; Morrison 2005) by affecting their perceptions positively. Based on this line of reasoning, positive and strong workplace friendships reduce the possibility of turnover intention (Nielsen/Jex/ Adams 2000; Riordan/Griffeth 1995; Morrison 2005) and increase commitment to the organization (Shih/Wang 2016) with the help of enhanced relational self-perception. Workplace friendships enhance the individuals' sense of belonging to a group (Tröster et al. 2019) and increase their intention to stay with the orga-nization (Morrison 2005; Nielsen et al. 2000) because of the relational identity and self-definition developed through mutual interactions between friends. In a nutshell, we can conclude that employees wanting to keep their relational identi-ties and the positive aspects of workplace friendship within the organization will most probably desire to stay in the organization. Depending on these theoretical statements, the following hypothesis was developed:

H3: *There is a significant and positive relationship between workplace friend-ship and the intention to stay.*

The mediating effects of workplace friendship in between relational job crafting and the intention to stay

RJC allows employees to craft their job-related relationships, which are formed based on designated tasks for employees and are, thus, limited to such defini-tions, expectations, and structures determined by the organization (Wong/Tetrick 2017). By changing their relational boundaries, employees can decide on whom they will interact with while doing the job (Wrzesniewski/Dutton 2001) and, hence, the purpose of developing such job-based relationships is attributed to accomplishing tasks/jobs (Berman et al. 2002). These relationships increase the number of individuals' interactions, and they spend more time with each other as a result. Although starting as mere peer relationships, these ties can turn into friendships as people get to know each other better over time and discover their commonalities and similarities. From the perspective of social psychology, similarities and shared self-perceptions are the basis of friendship between individuals (Morrison 2005). Therefore, sharing similar self-concepts leads to the development of workplace friendships (Pillemer/Rothbard 2018), which pave the way toward forming psychological relationships, psychological intimacies (Biçer/Büyükyılmaz 2019), emotional satisfaction (Xiao et al. 2020), emotional support (Rueger et al. 2010), emotional ties (McGuire 2007), and

trust and relational identity (Burch 2018). Relational identity leads to forming workplace friendships and strengthens the relationships developed between employees (Burch 2018). The relational identity developed by a workplace friendship within the organization increases the perception of belonging (Weseler/Niessen 2016) and commitment to the organization (Shih/Wang 2006), thereby increasing the intention to remain in the organization (Tröster et al. 2019). On the upshot, psychological factors which trigger the development of workplace friendship and a sense of dependence on relational identity (Brewer/Gardner 1996; Morrison 2005) encourage employees to reconsider their turnover decisions (Vardaman/Taylor/Allen/Gondo/Amis 2015). Based on these statements, we assume that RJC strengthens workplace friendships, which will enhance the intention to stay in the organization. Accordingly, the next hypothesis is formed:

H4: Workplace friendship has a mediator effect on the relationship between relational job crafting and the intention to stay.

Figure 1. Research model
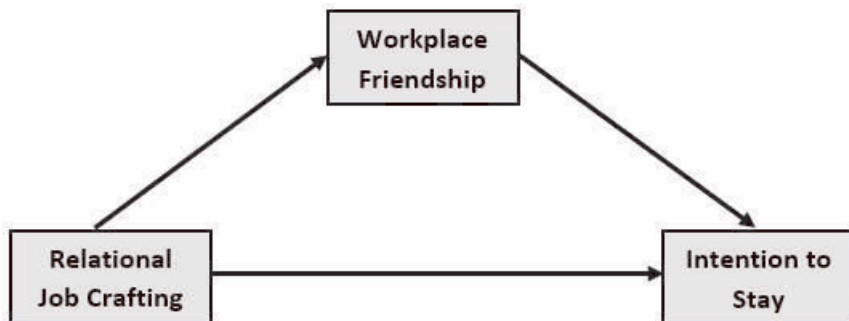
Method

Sample

In the study, the data were collected using the convenience sampling method. The model was analysed with a 228 sample of employees working in Turkey. The participants completed an on-line questionnaire including three scales: intention to stay, relational job crafting, and workplace friendship. Furthermore, demographic questions such as age, gender, organizational tenure, education, and sectoral background were asked. The sample included 51.8% (n=118) female and 48.2% (n=100) male participants. Of the total 228 participants, 1.8% (n=4) was between the ages 18 and 24, 46.5% (n=106) between 25 and 35, 45.6% (n=104) between 36 and 54, and 6.1% (n=14) was 55 and higher. Of the total number, 50% had a bachelor's degree (n=114), 37.7% a master's degree (n=86), and 12.3% a PhD degree (n=28). The organizational tenure of the

participants ranged from 1 year to 43 years, with an average of 13 years. The participants had different sectoral backgrounds, such as sales (34.6%, n=79), marketing (32.9%, n=75), and human resources (32.5%, n=74). Table 1 displays the demographic information of the participants.

Table 1. Demographic results of the participants

Demographics		n	%
Gender			
	Male	100	48.2
	Female	118	51.8
Age			
	18 to 24	4	1.8
	25 to 35	106	46.5
	36 to 54	104	45.6
	55 and over	14	6.1
Education			
	Bachelor's degree	114	50
	Master's degree	86	37.7
	Doctorate degree	28	12.3
Organizational Tenure			
	1 to 5 years	112	49.1
	6 to 10 years	61	26.8
	11 to 15 years	14	6.1
	16 and over years	41	18
Sectors			
	Sales	79	34.6
	Marketing	75	32.9
	Human Resources	74	32.5

Measures

In the study, the intention to stay, RJC, and workplace friendship scales were used to collect data. The measurement scales had originally been developed in English. In the present study, previously translated scales into Turkish were used. All the analyses were conducted using the SmartPLS 3.3.3 statistical program.

The Intention-to-stay scale: The scale was developed by Gellatly, Meyer and Luchak (2006). The 3-item scale consists of statements such as: "I rarely think of quitting my job." The Turkish version of the scale was used as in Karadeniz (2010)'s study. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree"). High scores showed that a

participant had a high tendency toward the intention to stay in the organization (M= 3.46, SD=1.09)

The Job-Crafting Scale: A scale developed by Slemp and Vella-Brodrick (2013) was used in the study to measure RJC. The scale was translated into Turkish by Kerse (2017). The items in the scale were asked in 5-point Likert-type ranging from 1, "Hardly Ever" to 5, "Very Often". The three-dimensional scale consists of 19 items concerning task, cognitive, and RJC. In this study, only the items under RJC were used to measure RJC. Some sample statements are "Make friends with people at work who have similar skills or interests" and "Organize special events in the workplace". High scores in this category indicated that participant had a high tendency toward crafting relationships with others (M=3.81, SD=.86).

Workplace Friendship Scale: Workplace friendship was initially developed by Nielsen et al. (2000). There are twelve items in the scale. One of these items was reverse scored. The extent to which the participants agreed to the items on the scale was inquired on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The scale consists of items, such as: "I have the opportunity to develop close friendships at my workplace" and "I have formed strong friendships at work". High scores from the scale implied that a participant had a high tendency for developing workplace friendship (M= 3.63, SD= .83)

Results

The internal consistency reliability of the measurement model is evaluated using Cronbach alpha and composite reliability. Convergent validity is evaluated through rho-A and average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity is assessed through the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio.

First, we analysed the reliability of the measurement model. According to Table 1, the results of Cronbach alpha ranged between .80 and .907, and the results of composite reliability (CR) between .878 and .907. All the values pertaining to Cronbach alpha, CR, and rho-A were above the cut-off threshold of .70, .70, and .60, respectively (Hair/Ringle/Sarstedt 2011; Dijkstra/Henseler 2015). Therefore, the internal consistent reliability of the model was satisfied.

Next, the outer loadings of the indicators and AVE are measured for the convergent validity of the measurement model. As shown in Table 2, all the outer loadings of the indicators of the intention to stay were above the acceptable level (.707). On the contrary, two items in RJC and five items in workplace friendship were below the recommended level. However, Hair et al. (2011) states that the indicator of the loadings between .40 and .70 can only be removed from the scale in case this causes an increase in the CR and has an AVE value below

the threshold (.50). Accordingly, the AVE values of the scales were between .515 and .707, which were above the threshold. For this reason, these items were not removed from the scale. The only item (WF12) having a value lower than .40 and reducing CR was eliminated from the workplace friendship scale. The results of the indicator loadings and AVE indicated satisfactory convergent validity.

Table 2. Loadings, Cronbach alpha, composite reliability and average variance extracted results

Variables	Item	λ	α	CR	rho-A	AVE
Intention to stay	ITS1	.883	.801	.878	.870	.707
	ITS2	.794				
	ITS3	.843				
Relational job crafting	RJC1	.844	.867	.898	.876	.559
	RJC2	.759				
	RJC3	.702				
	RJC4	.765				
	RJC5	.782				
	RJC6	.683				
	RJC7	.684				
Workplace Friendship	WF1	.756	.907	.923	.917	.515
	WF2	.613				
	WF3	.767				
	WF4	.620				
	WF5	.843				
	WF6	.467				
	WF7	.796				
	WF8	.765				
	WF9	.629				
	WF10	.826				
	WF11	.744				
	WF13_inverse	.604				

Note. λ = loadings; α = Cronbach's alpha; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted

Lastly, the discriminant validity of the model was examined using the Fornell Larcker criterion and the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio proposed by Henseler/Ringle/Sarstedt (2015). According to Fornell/Larcker (1981), the square root of the AVE values of the structures must be higher than the correlations coefficients between the structures in the research model. The results revealed that the square root of AVE for each structure, shown in parentheses

in Table 3, was higher than the correlation coefficients of other structures. The results also showed that all the constructs satisfied discriminant validity.

Table 3 . Fornell- Larcker criterion

Variables	Mean	S.D.	Intention to stay	Relational job crafting	Workplace friendship
Intention to stay	3.46	1.09	(.841)		
RJC	3.81	.86	.411	(.748)	
Workplace friendship	3.63	.83	.429	.666	(.711)

Note. N = 228. Values in parentheses show the square root of the variance extracted (AVE). RJC: Relational job crafting

Later, the HTMT ratio was measured to see if it is lower than .90 (Henseler et al. 2015). This ratio between the 'intention to stay' and RJC was .464, between the 'intention to stay' and 'workplace friendship' as .473, and between RJC and 'workplace friendship' as .743 (see Table 4). All the results were below the .90 threshold. The Fornell-Larcker criteria and the HTMT ratio showed sufficient discriminant validity.

Table 4. HTMT ratio results

	Intention to stay	Relational job crafting	Workplace friendship
Intention to stay			
RJC	.464		
Workplace friendship	.473	.743	

Structural model

The Structural Equation Model (SEM) was applied to test the hypothesis of the study using SmartPLS, where the model includes three indices; namely, path coefficients squared multiple correlations (R^2), and the t-value. To evaluate the significance of the PLS path coefficients, the t-values were calculated by taking 5000 subsamples from the sample using bootstrapping. In addition, the effect size (f^2), predictive validity (Q^2) and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) were measured, as displayed in Table 5.

As multicollinearity may reduce the effect of predicting construct (Mela/Kopalle 2002), we first measured the VIF values to check for any multicollinearity problems in the study. According to Hair et al. (2011), the VIF values must be lower than 5, which threshold is not violated and there is no collinearity problem based on Table 5 for the present study. Then, R^2 was examined to determine the coefficient level of each dependent latent variable. R^2 also represents the predictive power of a structural model (Soltani/Zareie/Milani/Navimipour 2018).

The results indicated that the 'intention to stay' was explained by 21.3 % and 'workplace friendship' explained by 44.4 % (see Table 5).

The coefficients of effect size (f^2) .02 and above is low, .15 and above is medium, and .35 and above is high (Cohen 1988). The F^2 results revealed that RJC (.036) and workplace friendship (.055) had a low effect size on the 'intention to stay'; however, RJC had a high level of effect size on workplace friendship (.799) (see Table 5).

In what followed, the predictive validity coefficients (Q^2) were calculated; those values above 0 indicate that the research model has the power to predict endogenous variables (Hair/Hult/Ringle/Sarstedt 2017). The Q^2 results in the present study were above 0, which stated that the research model had power to predict the 'intention to stay' and 'workplace friendship' (see Table 5).

Table 5. Results of coefficient determination

		VIF	R^2	f^2	Q^2
Relational job crafting	Workplace friendship	1.00	.444	.799	.216
Relational job crafting	Intention to stay	1.79	.213	.036	.134
Workplace friendship		1.79		.055	

Finally, the structural model was evaluated through direct and indirect path estimation. Table 6 shows the positive effects of RJC (β= .225; p< .01) and 'workplace friendship' (β= .280; p< .01) on the 'intention to stay'. Moreover, RJC (β= .666; p< .01) had positive effect on 'workplace friendship', thereby supporting Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3.

Table 6. Direct effect results of the structural model

Variables		Standardized β	S.D.	t values	p values
RJC	Intention to stay	.225	.086	2.61	.009
RJC	Workplace friendship	.666	.037	18.06	.000
Workplace friendship	Intention to stay	.280	.085	3.27	.001

Finally, as seen in Table 7, we found that the indirect effect of RJC on the 'intention to stay' through 'workplace friendship' was significant (β= .186; p< .01). To be considered as a mediator effect, there must exist statistically significant effects from an independent variable on the mediator variable, and also statistically significant effects from a mediator variable on a dependent variable (Zhao/ Lynch/Chen 2010). In this study, the significant effect of RJC on 'workplace friendship', as well as that of 'workplace friendship' on the 'intention to stay', indicated such a mediation effect. Because the indirect effect in the RJC →
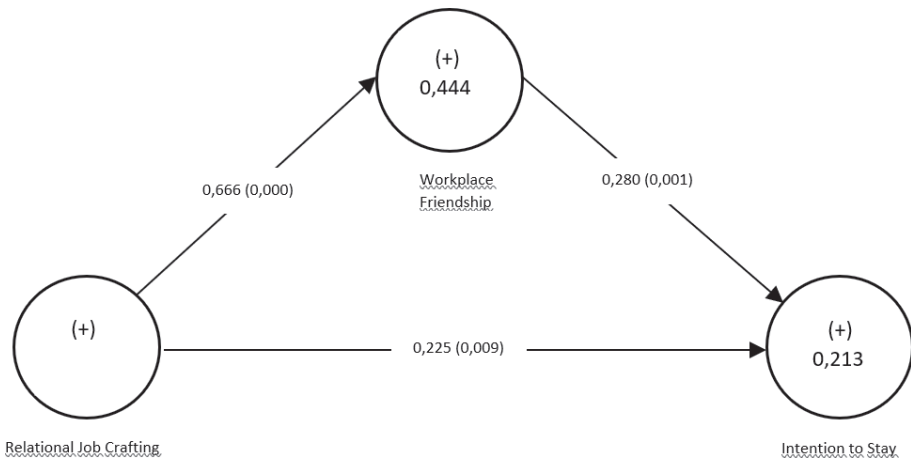
Workplace Friendship → Intention to Stay path was significant, the direct effect in RJC → Intention to Stay path was significant, and the specified path coefficients were positive, it can be concluded that the 'workplace friendship' variable has a complementary partial mediator role in the relationship between the RJC variable and the 'intention to stay' variable. Moreover, Variance Accounted For (VAF) value was used to understand the mediation effect. According to Hair et al. (2017), a VAF value higher than .80 shows full mediation effect, and one between .20 and .80 indicates partial mediation effect. On the other hand, a VAF value lower than .20 means that there is no mediation effect. According to Table 7, the VAF value of .31 shows the partial mediator effect of 'workplace friendship' on the relationship between RJC and the 'intention to stay'. Hence, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Table 7. Indirect effect and total effect results

	Indirect effect		Total effect	VAF
	Standard-ized β	p value		
RJC -> workplace friendship -> intention to stay	.186	.002	.412	.31

Figure 2 shows the structural equation model of the study.

Figure 2. Structural equation model

General Discussion

Theoretical contributions

The core tenet of this study was to explore the mediator effect of 'workplace friendship' in between RJC and the 'intention to stay' in the light of the theory of reasoned action and identity theory. Although there has been ample research on job crafting in recent years, it is seen that the cognitive and the task dimensions of this concept are more emphasized, leaving the relational dimension rather disregarded. As the social environment of any job influences employees' behaviour (Grant/Parker 2009), employees are embedded into social relations that surround them in the organization and more attention needs to be given to this social aspect of the job (Rofcanin et al. 2019).

Today, the increasing importance of human resources makes it necessary to examine and understand the relationships among employees. As there are both formal and informal relationships within organizations, they need to motivate their employees to not just suffice to doing their jobs and to be ready to take on more if necessary. From the perspective of RJC, individuals can craft their job-based relations by expanding or contracting their relations or changing their quality. The job crafting literature emphasizes that job-based relationships increase the perception of belongingness (Weseler/Niessen 2016) and organizational identification (Kim et al. 2018), which in turn increases the intention to stay in the organization. Drawing upon these statements, we assumed that RJC motivates the employees' intention to stay. Not surprisingly, and consistent with the organizational behaviour literature, we found that the more individuals craft job-based relations, the more likely they will stay in the organization. There have been studies showing that job crafting decreases the turnover intention (Zhang/Li 2020; Dominguez/Stassen/Grave/Sanabria/Alfonso/Dolmans 2018; Zhang/Parker 2019; Rofcanin/Berber/Koch/Sevinc 2016; Xin/Cai/Gao/Liu 2021). Despite these attempts, none have so far analysed the effects of RJC on turnover or the intention to stay. Another study revealed the insignificant effect of RJC on turnover intention (Kılıç/Tatar/Erdil 2020b). In this vein, the present study contributes to the literature by revealing the significant and positive effects of RJC on the intention to stay. From the viewpoint of theory of reasoned action, intentions are determinants of behaviours. In this context, understanding the intention of employees to stay in the organization will help to understand whether they will remain in the organization in the future, thus guiding the organization toward investing in these employees. In the same manner, identifying those who have no intention of staying at work is of particular importance as well. If these intentions are well-understood, then organizations can develop various strategies to keep them within the organization.

The purpose of job-based relationships is based on job/task-related issues. Even though the interaction between parties may start as a causal relationship, it

can turn into a close workplace friendship over time as employees become aware of their similarities. Perceived similarities such as attitudes, values, demographic structure (Sias/Cahill 1998), education, lifestyle and subculture, life interests (Omuris 2018), mutual trust, likings, shared interests (Berman et al. 2002), emotional bond (McGuire 2007), emotional support (Rueger et al. 2010), psychological relationship, psychological intimacy (Biçer/Büyükyılmaz 2019) and emotional satisfaction (Xiao et al. 2020) encourage employees to become friends at work. In other words, formal relationships may turn into informal relationships over time. Depending on these statements, we further assumed that RJC may evolve into a workplace friendship over time. The findings supported this assumption. To the best of the authors' knowledge, since there have been no studies revealing the relationship between RJC and workplace friendship, this study contributes to the literature by showing the existence of such a relationship. Another contribution of this study is to differentiate between RJC and workplace friendship as two separate variables. To elaborate, RJC refers to job-based relationships derived from assigned jobs/tasks and responsibilities. Workplace friendship, on the other hand, refers to the informal relationships at work.

Apart from these, workplace friendships lay the ground for the formation of relational identity. An identity provides individuals with the opportunity to understand who they are and affects their self-concept. Relational identity, which is activated when individuals begin to define themselves with role relationships, influences individuals by meeting their socio-psychological needs, which are self-esteem, self-worth, self-definition, and self-enhancement to name a few. It is thought that meeting such needs will make a positive contribution to the self-concept of individuals and increase their level of identification with relational identity. In a nutshell, crafting job-related relationships provides an opportunity for developing workplace friendships and, thus, attain a relational identity. Therefore, associating one's self with this identity positively affects their intention to remain in the organization. As stated before, in the organizational behaviour literature, there are some studies revealing that workplace friendship decreases turnover (Nielsen et al. 2000; Riordan/Griffeth 1995; Morrison 2005; Yu-Ping/Chun-Yang/Ming-Tao/Chun-Tsen/Qiong-Yuan 2020). In line with these statements and empirical results, a positive relationship was observed between 'workplace friendship' and the 'intention to stay', where the former is an important predictor of the latter.

The final assumption of this study was that 'workplace friendship' has a mediator effect on the association between RJC and the 'intention to stay'. In this respect, the results show this effect to be partial and both direct and indirect.

As culture affects workplace friendship (Yen et al. 2009) and employees' perception and behaviour, evaluating research findings from the cultural perspec-

tive is essential. Concerning this topic, Hofstede (1980) defined the cultural dimensions, one of which is individualism/collectivism. Accordingly, Turkey, the country where the present study was carried out, is classified as a highly collectivist country. Individualism and collectivism yield different implications in the structure of relationships (Raeff/Greenfields/Quiroz 2000). In collectivist cultures, employees give more importance to friendship than those in individualistic cultures (Xiao et al. 2020), and they perceive their organization and its members as an in-group. This perception increases the importance of the relationships and the interdependence among them (Triandis/Bontempo/Villareal/Asai/Lucca 1988). In contrast, individualistic cultures can be defined by detachment from relationships (Guess 2004) and independence from organization and its members. In-groups in collectivistic cultures are related to direct versus indirect relationships or relational networks (Brewer/Chen 2007). Put differently, in a collectivist culture, it would be better to consider employees in the context of their groups, connections, and interactions with others (Sorensen/Oyserman 2011). From another perspective, employees in collectivist cultures have high commitment to the team/organization and more tendency to stay in the organization (Rego/Cunha 2009). Consistent with this statement, we can assume that the commitment to team/organization would be the same for interpersonal relationships and workplace friendship, and it encourages employees to stay in the organization.

This study contributes to the literature by showing how job-based relationships among employees are important and affect the employees' intention to stay in the organization in collectivist cultures.

Practical implications for managers

Intentions are the predictors of actual behaviours. Learning more about the intentions of employees will help managers to predict their future behaviours in terms of whether they will remain in the organization. Since RJC and workplace friendship increase the intention to stay in the organization, managers need to create an organizational climate that allow employees to craft their work environment and relationships and develop workplace friendships. Studies show that these friendships increase mutual support, information sharing, and cooperation among employees, eventually improving work quality and performance (Yu-Ping et al. 2020). In contrast, as lack of social interaction among employees causes anxiety, disappointment, and neuroticism, leading to increased absenteeism and turnover behaviour (Yu-Ping et al. 2020), managers need to encourage employees to develop social interactions. From another perspective, crafting job-related relationships increases accessing more task-relevant information and obtaining feedback from the others which, in turn, contribute to performing the job better, task accomplishment, and higher performance. In short, with RJC

and workplace friendships, managers can both improve employee performance and keep them in the organization. In particular, since hiring new employees is a burden on the organization in terms of time and cost, it is important for managers to create an organizational culture that supports job-based relationships and workplace friendships.

Limitations of the study

There are some limitations to this study. First, the data collection was based on self-report by the participants and the emerging social desirability concept. The self-report-based questionnaire used in the study led to common method variance issues. To avoid these problems and increase the explanatory power of the research model, a similar research model from different sample groups can be conducted in future attempts. Second limitation, in this study we concentrated on different-sector employees. In further studies, focusing on a particular sector in which relationships are essential may provide different results because workplace friendship opportunities and needs are not same for all sectors.

Directions for future research

In future studies, including the role of personality traits, especially the introverted/extroverted dimension in the "Big Five Personality Traits Model", may yield interesting results. To put it more clearly, the behaviours and attitudes of introverted/extroverted individuals in crafting relationships and developing workplace friendship may be different. While extroverted individuals prefer to increase the number and intensity of interpersonal relationships, introverted individuals tend to reduce such number and intensity (Simion /Burtaverde /Mihaila/Chraif 2014). Accordingly, it is predicted that extroverts will most probably craft their job-related relationships by expanding them, and introverts will rather shape their job-based relationships by contracting them and they might also not prefer to develop workplace friendships. On the other hand, to generalize the results of this study, which was conducted in Turkey, a country where in-group collectivism is high according to GLOBE (Pagda /Bayraktar /Jimenez 2021), and to increase the explanatory power of the model, it is recommended to conduct this study in a country with lower in-group collectivism, such as Germany and Netherlands, located in Central Europe. As individualistic cultures attach less importance to relationships and friendships among employees, studies in these countries may yield interesting results (Guess 2004). In this way, one can generalize the results of the model proposed in this paper.

Conclusion

In this study, we developed a model to test the mediator effect of workplace friendship on the relationship between RJC and the intention to stay. The results

revealed that employees crafting their job-relevant relationships are more likely to have an intention to stay in the organization, and that workplace friendship mediated the relationship between RJC and the intention to stay. Moreover, it is shown in here that RJC lays the ground for the development of workplace friendship.

This study contributes to the organizational behaviour literature by showing the direct and indirect effect of RJC on the intention to stay, as well as the effect of RJC on workplace friendship. RJC and workplace friendship refer to relationships within the organization, but this paper also shows that the type of relationships in RJC and workplace friendship are different. The findings of the study provide implications for both researchers and practitioners. Considering that leaving the job has many costs to the organization, RJC and workplace friendship are important ways that organizations can use to keep employees within the establishment. As job-based relationship and friendship at work motivate the intention to remain in the organization and contribute to accomplishing tasks and jobs in an effective way, managers need to create an organizational culture which supports developing these relationships. To this end, it is suggested that decision makers extend their understanding of interpersonal relationships in organizations.

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