



# The effects of paternalistic leadership on workplace loneliness, work family conflict and work engagement among air traffic controllers in Turkey



Ercan Öge<sup>a</sup>, Mehmet Çetin<sup>b,\*</sup>, Seyfi Top<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Istanbul Aydın University, Turkey

<sup>b</sup> Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Turkey

<sup>c</sup> Abant İzzet Baysal University, Turkey

## ARTICLE INFO

### Keywords:

Air traffic controllers  
Paternalistic leadership  
Work engagement  
Workplace loneliness  
Work family conflict

## ABSTRACT

Given the unique nature and extreme work requirements of air traffic control units (e.g., high work demands, intolerance for mistakes, long working hours and night shifts), this study problematizes two critical yet understudied variables in this context, namely, workplace loneliness and work family conflict, and suggests a model in which paternalistic leadership mitigates them through boosted work engagement. Specifically, the study examined the mediating role of work engagement in the links between paternalistic leadership and workplace loneliness, and paternalistic leadership and work family conflict. Data were collected from air traffic controllers employed in İstanbul. The results of structural equation modeling analysis supported the hypothesis that work engagement fully mediated the links in the model. Paternalistic leadership, through increasing work engagement, decreases the workplace loneliness and work family conflict levels of air traffic controllers. The findings provide valuable insights and managerial implications.

## 1. Introduction

Air traffic controllers (ATCs) are among the most important agents in air traffic management and in air transportation, in terms of safety and efficiency. ATCs are responsible for keeping air traffic orderly with appropriate flight distance and timely landing of planes and for preventing possible traffic-related accidents and delays. High responsibilities, heavy workloads and extreme working conditions (e.g., working with high-tech machines, isolated workplace and night shifts) create a unique work environment for ATCs (see [Costa, 1993](#); and [Nealley and Gawron, 2015](#)) that necessitates extensive investigation of the study variables. The aforementioned nature of the work role makes ATCs prone to experiencing work family conflict (WFC) and workplace loneliness (WL), which have various negative outcomes that may hinder the health and effectiveness of the employees and organizations. However, limited research on these variables has been conducted to build models that can provide antecedent information and expand our knowledge on how to manage these variables effectively in such organizational settings.

Social needs are among the most fundamental needs of human kind, as listed in Abraham Maslow's well-known hierarchy of needs. One of the less apparent but equally important reasons for work is to socialize. The way people relate themselves with the work group or the people in

an organization is essential for determining their behaviors and attitudes. [Ernst and Cacioppo \(1999, p.1\)](#) define loneliness as a feeling that is experienced because of unsatisfied social relationship needs. Likewise, WL is defined as “distress caused by the perceived lack of good quality interpersonal relationships between employees in a work environment” ([Wright, 2005, p.63](#)). Extreme work conditions make WL, which is associated negatively with various individual and organizational outcomes such as work-related wellbeing and organizational commitment ([Ayazlar and Güzel, 2014](#); [Erdil and Ertosun, 2011](#)), a basic and presumable hazard for ATCs.

Another variable the study addresses is WFC. WFC is a well-established concept that is defined as mutual inharmonious and unbalanced aspects of work and family and the burden of interrole contradictions between them ([Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985, p.77](#); [Kahn et al., 1964](#)). It is characterized as devoting too much effort, resources, energy and time for one role, being unable to sufficiently and effectively carry the other role, and feeling caught between the roles and their requirements ([Carlson et al., 2000](#)). The concept can exist both ways, as work roles can contradict and affect family roles (work to family conflict), and family roles and demands can conflict with and inhibit work demands (family to work conflict; [Netemeyer et al., 1996](#)). Work to family conflict is addressed in the current study. WFC is chosen as one of the main foci of the study because ATCs are likely to experience it, and it is

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [eoge@aydin.edu.tr](mailto:eoge@aydin.edu.tr) (E. Öge), [mehmet.cetin@izu.edu.tr](mailto:mehmet.cetin@izu.edu.tr) (M. Çetin), [seyfitop@ibu.edu.tr](mailto:seyfitop@ibu.edu.tr) (S. Top).

understudied in terms of many crucial variables. Although WFC is positively associated with concepts such as depression, burnout, stress, absenteeism and turnover and negatively associated with concepts such as work satisfaction, family satisfaction, life satisfaction, career satisfaction, happiness and organizational commitment (Russell et al., 1984; Allen et al., 2000; Lu et al., 2006), few studies have been conducted on this issue for ATCs.

Work engagement (WE) is modeled as a mediator variable in many studies (e.g., Karatepe and Talebzadeh, 2016; Karatepe and Eslamlou, 2017; Chen and Chen, 2012; Chen and Kao, 2012; Xanthopoulou et al., 2008) that are conducted in air transportation settings. Kahn (1990, p. 694) defines WE as “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances”. WE is the collective form of its three sub dimensions, where vigor stands for high energy towards work; dedication refers to giving self to work with a sense of significance, and absorption infers high concentration and involvement in the work (Schaufeli et al., 2002). We proposed WE as the underlying dynamic that links paternalistic leadership (PL) with WFC and WL.

PL is proposed as the key source to alter the aforementioned variables in the study. PL is characterized as the sum of “authoritarianism”, which stands for the powerful and unquestionable authority of the leader over his/her followers; “benevolence”, which refers to the interest of the leader in the employees’ individual lives and welfare, and finally “moral leadership”, which refers to a virtuous, sacrificing leader (Cheng et al., 2004, p. 91). Perceptions of PL vary among countries. A paternalistic leader can be perceived as both “manipulative” or “caring and considerate” in accordance with the culture, and Turkey is on the positive side of this statement (Aycan et al., 2000). Having a characteristically collectivist, feminine and high-power distance culture with high uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1980, 2001), Turkey stands out as one of the most appropriate contexts for PL with other Eastern cultures such as China and India (Aycan and Kanungo, 2000; Aycan et al., 2000). In contexts with cultural characteristics such as those in Turkey, PL is perceived as an effective leadership style and source of positive organizational outcomes (Aycan and Kanungo, 2000; Casper et al., 2011). Employee participation, loyalty towards community and obligations towards others are evidenced to be positively associated with PL (Aycan et al., 2000), supporting the links between PL and the aforementioned study variables.

Typically, demonstrating characteristics such as providing close managerial support, creating a familial atmosphere and handling non-work-related problems of employees (Aycan, 2001, 2006), PL can foster the WE levels of employees, resulting in decreased levels of WL and WFC. Xu and Thomas's (2011) findings supported this proposition by providing evidence for the positive association between relationship-oriented leadership and WE. Supportive work environment and colleague support are positively associated with altered WE levels (Xanthopoulou et al., 2008). The findings of Shuck and Herd (2012) indicated that attention to the needs of members and showing willingness to handle them alter the WE levels of employees. PL, by enhancing employees' sense of role obligation (Farh and Cheng, 2000), can foster their WE. The culture shapes the expectations of employees, as they perceive a paternalistic leader to be an effective leader, and this perception makes them feel more dedicated, energetic and absorbed in their jobs. Macey and Schneider (2008) support this by linking the quality of the leader–member exchange relationship with WE. Although many studies link leadership style with WE (e.g., Carasco-Saul et al., 2015; Babcock-Roberson and Strickland, 2010), few studies specifically attempt to associate PL with WE (e.g., Ceneci and Özçelik, 2015).

Aycan (2006) emphasizes the role of PL as the creator of a family and togetherness climate in the organization, close individual relationships and concern for the lives of employees in and out of work. These characteristics are related with the WL and WFC in many ways. First, a familial climate is a good protector against WL. Erdil and

Ertoşun (2011) provide evidence for the link between the social climate of organizations and the loneliness levels of employees. If togetherness and family atmosphere are sustained in a workplace, employees' propensity to feel alienated, left out of the group and lonely would be lower. Oğuz and Kalkan's (2014) findings demonstrating the negative relationship between social support and loneliness are parallel with the suggestions of these examples. In addition, Cindiloğlu et al. (2017) indicate a negative association between quality of leader member exchange and WL.

Sakuraya et al.'s (2017) findings indicate a positive association between WE and increasing social job resources. Increased social job resources strengthen employees against WL. WE can also create a positive atmosphere for hindering WL. Yeh's (2012) findings demonstrate positive associations between WE, service climate and service performance among cabin service directors and flight attendants. Paternalistic leaders can enhance the WE levels of employees, and in this way, they can develop their skills and sources that will decrease the levels of WL and WFC. Our study explores how PL affects employees' WL and WFC levels through fostering WE. Specifically, we propose that PL, through increasing WE, will reduce the WL and WFC levels of ATCs.

### 1.1. Importance, relevance and contribution of the study

Air traffic control units provide one of the best grounds to test the key variables of this study. Likewise, many factors make the study variables crucial to analyze in air traffic control units. As mentioned, WFC and WL are probable and foreseeable outcomes of the work demands and conditions of ATCs, and they are associated with individual and organizational concepts.

Although there has been significant technological improvement in air traffic management systems, ACTs, with their physiological, mental and psychological labor, are the main factors and the real heroes in the process. The workload and mental demand are very high even with high-tech systems (Sollenberger et al., 2005). In addition, technostress (consisting of techno complexity, techno uncertainty and techno overload) is found to be associated with higher levels of workload and lower levels of productivity (Alam, 2016). The consequences of any possible mistakes of ATCs may be catastrophic in terms of human lives and economic value. Considering the extreme importance of such work and its intolerance for mistakes, ATCs are subjected to unusual and complex working conditions and high levels of work demands. Such conditions and demands may require them to work 24-h shifts in a highly automated room with high tech machines and demand their full concentration for work under high levels of stress. Given that even being chronically exposed to high aircraft noise is a stressor and a cause for hypertension (Black et al., 2007), ATCs well deserve concern and attention for in-depth analysis. This nature of the work role makes WFC, WL, WE and the leadership that manage those factors very important for air traffic control units.

ATCs may be more prone to WL for many reasons. Increased automatization, highly structured distance communication, high levels of stress and tension and the need for high concentration in such a work domain may hinder social interaction and isolate employees from each other. Distant or peripheral locations of airports, complex working conditions and night shifts may also prevent employees from sufficient human interaction. These make WL an interesting concept to study in such a work domain. Moreover, despite these circumstances, to our knowledge, there is no study addressing this phenomenon in air traffic control units.

The nature of ATCs' work and work demands may also prepare the ground for WFC in ATCs. Devoting their mental capacity, time and psychological resources for work, employees may be left with less to offer for their families. Sleeplessness, night shifts, high levels of stress and tension transmitted from work to home with the crossover and spillover effects (Bakker et al., 2008) can be listed among the other dynamics that make WFC an important issue to address among ATCs. However,

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

**ISI**Articles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات