

# The antecedents of career change intention in middle-level managers: the role of job and career satisfaction

The antecedents of career change intention

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This investigates the interrelationships between job and career satisfaction and career change intention through the extension of the theory of planned behavior (TPB).

**Design/methodology/approach** – The data for the study is collected from 219 top and middle-level managers and analyzed through partial least squares path structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM).

**Findings** – Findings indicate that job and career satisfaction have a significant and negative impact on personal attitude toward career change and subjective norms, whereas all three constructs of the TPB influence the intention to change career. In addition, the mediation of personal attitude and subjective norm pathways were found to be significant for both job and career satisfaction and career change intention relationships, while no mediation effect was identified for the perceived behavior control construct of the TPB.

**Research limitations/implications** – The results suggest important theoretical and practical implications. First, a novel model of mediation between job and career satisfaction and the intention to turn away from an existing career is introduced between job and career satisfaction and career change intention associations for testing the full TPB framework.

**Practical implications** – The findings imply that the impact of cognitive factors, including having a positive opinion about the potential outcomes of switching to a new career, the level of pressure exerted by significant third parties about making a career change, and the self-belief about making this change happen should be closely investigated when examining the determinants of career change intention.

**Originality/value** – To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is the first empirical research study that tests the impact of the determinants of TPB on career change intention within a sample of professional managers from an emerging economy context.

**Keywords** Careers, Managers, Emerging economies, Job satisfaction, Quantitative

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Due to rapid social and economic changes, technological advancements (Fu and Chen, 2015), new organizational structures (Van Steenberg *et al.*, 2018), and changes in personal life-styles (Prabhu and Sriram, 2021), the career trajectories of the workforce are undergoing a major shift towards successive or multiple careers (Sullivan and Aris, 2021; Archer and Yates, 2017). Interestingly, while job turnover is a research area that has attracted considerable interest from scholars (Rubenstein *et al.*, 2018; Hom *et al.*, 2017), understanding the psychological antecedents and motivators of a career change intention in working professionals remains to be a significantly under-researched field, to date (Albalawi *et al.*, 2019; Ibarra, 2004).

The current study aims to address this major gap and extend the current literature by examining the role of job and career satisfaction on career change intention through the



theory of planned behavior (TPB, Ajzen, 1991). With the intersection of social cognitive theory and vocational research, the TPB emerged as a valuable mechanism for explaining the antecedents of job-related behaviors of individuals (Kulkarni and Nithyanand, 2013; Khapova *et al.*, 2007; Arnold *et al.*, 2006). The TPB proposes that proximal predictors of behavior are the intention to perform that behavior. Thus, in this study, a new mediation model is proposed to be tested through the constructs of TPB, for extending the prior studies focusing on the associations between job and career satisfaction and career change intention. According to the TPB framework in the career change context, the satisfaction or dissatisfaction with an individual's current occupation could be a strong determinant of the formation of a personal favorable or unfavorable opinion about a career change, which would also affect the assessments and evaluations of a person's significant third parties about whether or not to consider making a career shift. Furthermore, the intention to change can be expected to be largely influenced by an individual's perceived level of control over this career change behavior. Besides direct associations, the introduced model also seeks to explore the possible mediating effects of the TPB constructs between job and career satisfaction and career change intention. As the empirical findings of the studies investigating the direct roles of job and career satisfaction on a person's intention toward a career change so far have been inconclusive (Bellini *et al.*, 2019; Joia and Mangia, 2017; Mc Ginley, 2018; Carless and Arnup, 2011; Carless and Bernhart, 2007), testing the personal attitude, social norm and perceived behavioral control determinants of the TPB framework as potential mediators in these complex associations can offer important theoretical implications to the vocational literature. Thus, this study aims to search for answers to some important research questions, including "Are job and career satisfaction negatively related to career change intention?", "Do the job and career satisfaction have a relationship with personal attitude, social norms, and perceived behavioral control constructs of the TPB?", and finally "Are those relationships mediated (indirect) or unique (direct)?"

Therefore, the present study makes the following contributions. First, within the organizational context, career development is an important function of human resources management (DeCenzo *et al.*, 2013). Because perceptions of human resources management practices affect job satisfaction (Wang *et al.*, 2020) and career-related issues, such as career expectations (Frenkel and Bednall, 2016) and career satisfaction (Bagdadli and Gianecchini, 2019; Singh, 2018), our study adds to the body of literature on human resources management by exploring the effects of job and career satisfaction on career change intention. Specifically, our study extends the understanding of how job and career satisfaction predict career change intention by demonstrating mediating effects of the TPB constructs on the relationships between job and career satisfaction and career change intention. Second, in addition to the novelty of the proposed mediation model, this study focuses on measuring these prescribed effects on a sample of individuals working in managerial positions in corporate settings. Prior research has shown that the loss of critical resources in the form of competent and trained professionals can be detrimental to a firm by reducing its operational productivity, leading to significant financial and organizational failures (Wong and Cheng, 2020; Joo *et al.*, 2015). The findings of the current study therefore can offer critical insights on having a better understanding of why and how a manager becomes a change seeker, which can offer major practical implications for managers, human resource professionals, and career counselors.

### **Theoretical background and hypothesis development**

#### *Job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and career change intention*

Job satisfaction, with its multi-faceted nature, is an extensively researched construct (Wickramasinghe, 2009), the systematic studies dating back to the initial works of

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Hoppcock (1935). Job satisfaction refers to “an accumulation of sentiments related to the job being performed” (Kianto *et al.*, 2016, p. 623). Job satisfaction contains both intrinsic and extrinsic factors related to a job (Howard and Frink, 1996) and is significantly influenced by one’s comparison of actual results and the personal expectations and desires causing an affective reaction towards a certain job (Wickramasinghe, 2009). Being satisfied with one’s job is considered a major antecedent of job-associated perceptions, intentions, decisions, and behaviors (Bellini *et al.*, 2019; Joo *et al.*, 2015), including job change intention and actual job change behavior.

In vocational studies, job and career satisfaction are regarded as different concepts requiring separate in-depth analyses. Career satisfaction can be defined as a person’s satisfaction with their career accomplishments and prospects for future advancement (Nauta *et al.*, 2009). In previous studies, several factors have been linked with being satisfied with one’s career, including personal factors such as openness to experience, extraversion, educational level, occupation tenure (Carless and Arnup, 2011), concerns for personal growth, self-fulfillment, and work-life balance (Messersmith, 2007), social network (Higgins, 2001), job stress (Carless and Arnup, 2011), and job security (Shropshire and Kadlec, 2012). Parallel to the studies on the influencers of career satisfaction, the initial research on career transition motivations identified a lack of challenge, stimulation, or opportunity to grow and insufficient opportunities for advancement as main indicators of career change thoughts (Doering and Rhodes, 1989). According to Smart and Peterson (1997), many persons shift to another job for a variety of reasons including pay, satisfaction, an opportunity for growth, shut-down, etc. after working in a particular field for a while. When the shift is a change in the field, not just working for another employer in the same field, it is commonly called a career change. While being similar, job and career change concepts are not identical, as while changing jobs are seen as routine career movements, a career change indicates an untypical progression of career by moving to a new occupation or profession (Carless and Bernath, 2007) and in general is considered as more costly and risky. The change in one’s career is generally regarded as a process, requiring a variety of skills and capabilities, such as researching, networking, adaptation, and knowledge transfer (Archer and Yates, 2017). Despite the importance of the career change phenomenon, there are still few empirical studies conducted to understand the antecedents and influencers of turn away behavior from one’s career (Ibarra, 2004), while there is a vast amount of literature regarding the job turnover and particularly job satisfaction (Kim *et al.*, 2017; Kulkarni and Nithyanand, 2013).

According to the seminal career change model of Rhodes and Doering (1983), the feeling of dissatisfaction with a current job is likely to lead to thoughts about a career change (Carless and Bernath, 2007). Similarly, in this study, we posit that when an individual feels unhappy at work, then that person would more likely to search for a new career path, and thus would have a higher intention for a career change. This relationship can be particularly expected for professionals with managerial positions, as these individuals are in general regarded to possess higher levels of skills, knowledge, networks, and a higher ability to cope with challenging situations. However, the findings of the empirical studies conducted to test the associations between satisfaction from an ongoing job and career and career change intention to date produced mixed results (Bellini *et al.*, 2019; Joia and Mangia, 2017; Mc Ginley, 2018; Carless and Arnup, 2011; Carless and Bernhart, 2007). Thus, we propose the following hypothesis to be tested with fresh data from private sector managers, to provide new empirical findings to this important discussion:

- H1. Job satisfaction (H1a) and career satisfaction (H1b) are negatively associated with career change intention.

*Theory of planned behavior, job satisfaction, and career satisfaction*

The TPB is concerned with the prediction of intention toward a specific behavior. According to the TPB, the intention shows the degree of willingness of an individual to make the required effort towards performing a certain behavior (Ajzen, 1991), this is regarded as the best predictor of behavior. With the convergence of cognitive psychology and vocational behavior research fields, the TPB became a valuable framework for predicting vocational intention and behavior (Khapova *et al.*, 2007; Arnold *et al.*, 2006), as changing jobs and careers is generally regarded as a planned behavior (Wong and Cheng, 2020; Ajzen, 1991). Prior studies have identified the intention to leave one's career as the first step preceding the actual change behavior and as a proxy measure of actual turn away from an existing career (Ngo-Henha, 2017; Blau, 2007). Recently, the elements of the TPB model were explored in job search studies (Kulkarni and Nithyanand, 2013; Schreurs *et al.*, 2009), and the use of the TPB in other areas of vocational behavior, particularly for understanding the cognitive determinants of job and career decisions of individuals have been called for by the scholars (Hom *et al.*, 2017, p. 10).

Within the TPB framework, the decision to change a career trajectory and shift to another can be perceived personally as positive or negative. Here, the link between a desired possible future self and the motivation towards a new occupation, facilitating the self-regulation to achieve a new career position has previously been discussed by scholars (Murtagh, 2009). It was also argued that being satisfied with one's job would be significantly influenced by the comparison of actual and desired outcomes from one's work (Hulin and Judge, 2003). Furthermore, Tent *et al.* (1994), extending socio-cognitive theory in the career context have suggested that self-efficacy merged with outcome expectations gave rise to career interests and goals. The outcome expectations refer to a person's expectations regarding the probability and value of the results of a specific action. According to Janman (1987), the expected significance of the rewards and outcomes from an occupation will lead to its being chosen over other occupations. Following these theoretical prescriptions, in the current study, we posit that when a person has a low level of satisfaction with a current job or career, the gap between the desired and actual outcomes would become larger, thereby leading to the development of heightened expectations and rewards from a new career path. Furthermore, prior studies implied that senior employees working in professional jobs tended to search for new career opportunities where they can attain more independence and relate to their self-actualization needs while utilizing their existing skills, later in their lives (Humphreys, 2017; Drucker, 2005). Therefore, it can be argued that feelings of dissatisfaction with one's current work would be associated with having a positive personal attitude (PA) toward a new career and facilitating the undertaking of activities related to a career change. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis to be tested with fresh empirical data from a sample of managers:

*H2a-3a.* Job and career satisfaction are negatively associated with the personal attitude toward a career change.

Previous studies have shown that career decisions are influenced by third parties (Whiston and Keller, 2004; Phillips *et al.*, 2001). Subjective norms (SN) relate to an individual's beliefs on whether important persons for the individual think he or she should engage in certain behavior. According to the TPB, social pressure coming from an individual's close circle such as family, friends, relatives, professors/teachers, mentors, or colleagues for a career change would significantly impact one's intention toward a career change (Khapova *et al.*, 2007). Here, it can be expected that in a situation where a person is not satisfied with the current job or career, this dissatisfaction would likely be communicated to the individuals forming a person's family, friends, and other significant third parties, leading to getting their increased support about a potential career change behavior.

Within the TPB framework, a person's perceived behavioral control (PBC) towards a career change indicates the perceived ease or difficulty of conducting career change behavior and is closely related to opportunities and resources an individual believes to possess for an intended career change (Evers and Sieverding, 2015). The TPB suggests that, when individuals are given enough control over their behavior and with the emergence of an opportunity, they can be expected to realize their intentions (Ajzen, 1991). Therefore, we may contend that feeling a low level of job and career satisfaction would lead an individual towards an enhanced willingness to act on opportunities for a change, and that person would be more inclined to turn away from an existing career path and seek an alternative career. For example, Oyserman *et al.* (2006) associated the image of a possible self with future goals and advocated that the perception of a possible detailed self with knowledge of how this ideal self can be realized could facilitate self-regulation. Thus, when a professional with a managerial position feel dissatisfied at work, a high degree of self-regulation and goal-orientation towards possessing a new career image could lead to serious considerations about changing a career. Similarly, Arnold *et al.* (2006) argued that the perceived behavioral control element of the TPB, particularly when operationalized as self-efficacy, can be included as a valid variable when constructing a model of career choice. Self-efficacy determinant has been frequently used in career research and in general regarded as being suitable for explaining career-related intentions and career development (Evers and Sieverding, 2015; BarNir *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, the following hypotheses are developed to be tested on a sample of professional managers:

- H2. Job satisfaction is negatively associated with subjective norm (2b) and perceived behavioral control (2c) towards a career change.
- H3. Career satisfaction is negatively associated with subjective norm (3b) and perceived behavioral control (3c) towards a career change.

#### *The relationships between PA, SN, and PBC and career change intention*

Previous studies supported that, having a positive outlook is a crucial determinant of increased self-confidence and readiness for a career change (Archer and Yates, 2017). According to the TPB, individuals who hold a positive subjective opinion about making a career shift would be more likely to engage in career change behavior. A negative personal attitude toward continuing an existing career trajectory has been suggested as a valid predictor of the intention to quit one's career in prior studies (Arnold *et al.*, 2006; Coombs *et al.*, 2007). However, due to the limited empirical studies targeting to measure this association which remains to be inconclusive, the scholars have been calling for further investigations of the attitude determinant to change an existing career. When considering career change decisions, the impact of the support of family, friends, and close work associates was also found to be significant (Ibarra, 2003). Other studies support this influence of the SN construct of the TPB on the intention to quit one's career, as the expectations of significant referent individuals and the social pressure coming from the close personal network are found to affect the intention to pursue or leave a certain career (Khapova *et al.*, 2007).

According to Ajzen (1991), perceived behavior control not only affects behavior through intentions but also has a direct effect on behavior. In the career change context, a low change self-efficacy may refer to a perceived insufficiency in one's skill or knowledge about how to make a major change in the career trajectory. In such a case, this lack of skill or knowledge would not only affect the career change behavior by decreasing career change intentions but could also be expected to reduce career change behavior directly. As a result, a person can be expected to be more inclined towards making a career turn-away decision

when that individual believes to have personal control over that career change behavior. In a recent empirical study, [Gisby \(2020\)](#) found that the need to feel in control of the career change process was crucial to individuals pursuing a career change, as taking external advice or being directed was perceived as a loss of autonomy. [Zikic and Saks \(2009\)](#) found a significant positive correlation between self-efficacy and new career exploration, whereas the findings of the recent empirical study by [Baskurt \(2017\)](#) conducted on 227 working professionals showed that the subjective norm (SN) and PBC constructs of the TPB are significantly associated with a career change intention ([Baskurt, 2017](#)). Similarly, [Khapova et al. \(2007\)](#) found that perceived behavioral control perceived social pressure, and attitude toward a career change were significantly and positively associated with career change intention. In another study, [Evers and Sieverding \(2015\)](#) found that the personal attitude toward becoming a professor, the expectations of significant others, and self-efficacy contributed significantly to explaining the intention to pursue an academic career. Conversely, [Song et al. \(2006\)](#) found that personal attitude and subjective norm had a significant, while self-efficacy had an insignificant association with job-search intentions while [Rubenstein et al. \(2018\)](#) found that when an individual has a stronger internal locus of control and a higher level of internal motivation, this person would be more resilient when faced with difficult situations and are less likely to quit a career. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated through the constructs of the TPB to be tested with fresh empirical data from a sample of managers:

*H4. Personal attitude (H4a), subjective norm (H4b), and perceived behavioral control (H4c) are positively associated with career change intention.*

*The mediation of PA, SN, and PBC in job-career satisfaction and career change intention.* While being dissatisfied at work is in general associated with the search for a new career trajectory, the findings of the empirical studies conducted to test the associations between satisfaction from an ongoing job and career and career change intention to date remain to be inconclusive ([Bellini et al., 2019](#); [Joia and Mangia, 2017](#); [Mc Ginley, 2018](#); [Carless and Arnup, 2011](#); [Carless and Bernhart, 2007](#)). These mixed findings provide a base for investigating the psychological antecedents and personal factors as the influencers of the prescribed satisfaction-intention relationship. For instance, according to the TPB, when a person subjectively believes that the career change would result in a positive or negative outcome, this can be expected to lead to a perceived personal attitude that could significantly affect the link between job satisfaction and the intention to change careers. A similar mediation effect can be expected for the social circle influence ([Whiston and Keller, 2004](#); [Ibarra, 2004](#)). The positive or negative comments of significant others are found to largely affect the career change intention of an individual despite the presence of high or low-level job satisfaction ([Ibarra, 2004](#)). Finally, the personal opinions and beliefs about the existence of potential career opportunities and required resources (e.g. financial or relational) can change an individual's perspective about a career shift, and mediate the role of that individual's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with current job or career on the considerations of a new career search. The PBC construct of TBP states that the perceived ease or difficulty of a behavioral change has a great influence on the intention towards performing that certain behavior ([Evers and Sieverding, 2015](#)). In the career change context, the impact of dissatisfaction or satisfaction with work may affect a person's self-confidence and self-efficacy related to the changed behavior which in turn can influence the intention for a change. For example, previous studies have shown that possessing a high locus of control can reduce the impact of negative feelings resulting from dissatisfaction ([Firth et al., 2003](#)). Thus, following the calls from scholars for developing new intention models with new factors, the following hypotheses are developed to be tested with empirical findings:

- H5. Personal attitude toward career change (H5a), subjective norm (H5b) and perceived behavioral control (H5c) mediate the negative relationship between job satisfaction and career change intention.
- H6. Personal attitude toward career change (H6a), subjective norm (H6b) and perceived behavioral control (H6c) mediate the negative relationship between career satisfaction and career change intention.

## Method

### *Sample and procedure*

The data used in the study were collected between November 2018–February 2019 from a sample of individuals who are currently working in managerial positions in corporate settings, in line with the substantial literature indicating that managerial behavior is separate from non-managerial behavior (Lounsbury *et al.*, 2003). A total of 920 potential respondents were randomly selected from the companies enlisted to the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey.

Before the actual investigation, a pilot study was conducted to test the feasibility and reliability of the proposed study design. Because the measures were developed in English, we used standard translation–back-translation procedures (Brislin, 1970) to translate the majority of them [1] into Turkish. Inconsistencies were discussed with the researchers and translators, which increased the chances of achieving a final translation agreement. Following the translation process, the measures were pilot-tested on a group of managers to see if the terms and concepts had the same meanings, as well as to test the feasibility of the proposed study design. In the pilot study, all the study measures were administered to a total of 38 employee mid-level managers of the participating companies. We found that the measures were reliable, resulting in Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) values that ranged from 0.71 to 0.83. Furthermore, the readability of the items on the scales received no negative feedback from the participants. Given the reliability values and no negative feedback from the participants, the measures were not modified, and they were used for further data collection.

In the main data collection, 235 completed questionnaires were returned by the managers of targeted firms, resulting in a final sample of 219 questionnaires, with a 23,8% response rate. The sample composed of 65% males and 35% were females, with an average age of 4,114 years and average managerial experience of 1,144 years. In the sample, 39% of the respondents had a university degree, 1% had a high-school grade, and % 60 had a graduate school degree. 78.5% of participants were middle-level managers whereas 21.5% were top managers. As for sectoral distribution, 4.5% of participants were from construction, 6.3% from finance, 25.1% from manufacturing, 52.7% from non-financial services, 4.1% from technology, and 7.3% from trade sectors.

### *Measures*

The present study analyzes the number of selected variables that were derived from the literature considered mature enough by showing good psychometric properties in previous studies. All questions related to the study variables were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Table 1 shows detailed measurement items, as well as item loadings and reliability coefficients.

*Dependent or endogenous variable.* This criterion variable is measured by using a validated one-item scale suggested by Smart and Peterson (1997). The Likert scale was adapted to 7 points or response levels for the indicator, to assess whether an individual considers a career change.

Construct	Factor loadings	$\alpha$	CR	AVE
<i>Career Satisfaction (CS)</i>				
CS1 How satisfied are you with the career progress you have made in this organization up to now?	0.877	0.723	0.880	0.786
CS2 How satisfied are you with your chances for career advancement in this organization in the future?	0.896			
<i>Job Satisfaction (JS)</i>				
JS1 All in all, I am satisfied with my job	0.917	0.797	0.881	0.714
JS2 In general, I do not like my job	0.709			
JS3 In general, I like working here	0.894			
<i>Personal Attitude (PA)</i>				
PA1 I think it is wise to seek a (new) job in the next 4 months	0.958	0.937	0.960	0.889
PA2 I think it is beneficial to seek a (new) job in the next 4 months	0.961			
PA3 I think it is useless to seek a (new) job in the next 4 months	0.909			
<i>Subjective Norm (SN)</i>				
SN1 My significant other thinks that I should try to seek a new job	0.905	0.816	0.915	0.844
SN2 Most people closest to me think that I should try to seek a new job	0.932			
<i>Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)</i>				
PBC1 make a good list of all the skills that can be used to find a new job	0.707	0.792	0.895	0.588
PBC2 complete a good job application or resume	0.704			
PBC3 make the best impression and get points across in an interview	0.798			
PBC4 use friends or other contacts to discover promising job-openings	0.784			
PBC5 contact and persuade employers to consider you for the job	0.783			
PBC6 use friends and other contacts to find out about employers that need your skills	0.817			
<i>Career Change Intentions (CI)</i>				
CI1 After working in a field for a while, many persons shift to another job for a variety of reasons: pay, satisfaction, opportunity for growth, shut-down, etc. When the shift is a change in field, not just working for another employer in the same field, it is commonly called a "career change"	1	1	1	1
Please rate your career change intention on the scale				
<b>Note(s):</b> All items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale				

**Table 1.**  
Measurement model  
results

*Mediator variable.* Attitude toward behavior was measured using three items validated by [Vinokur and Caplan \(1987\)](#). The items assessed the degree to which an individual has positive or negative feelings about the behavior of career change. SN was measured using the two-item scale validated by [Vinokur and Caplan \(1987\)](#). The items assessed the belief about whether significant others think the individual will perform the behavior. PBC was measured by six items obtained from [Van Ryn and Vinokur \(1992\)](#). The items assessed appraisal of the individual of the extent to which performance of the behavior is easy or difficult.

*Independent variable or predictor.* Career satisfaction was measured through a validated 2-item scale suggested by [Smart and Peterson \(1997\)](#) and job satisfaction by a validated 3-item scale obtained from [Egan et al. \(2004\)](#). For the study, all items linked to career and job satisfaction were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale.

*Control variables.* Several demographic variables are linked to career change intentions including age, gender ([Blau and Lunz, 1998](#)), and family ties ([Gattiker and Larwood, 1988](#)).

In the study, measured gender (0 for women and 1 for men) and marital status (0 for not single/divorced/widowed and 1 for married) were measured using a dummy-coded variable. The analyses were conducted with and without control variables and fundamentally the same results were produced. Thus, for the sake of clarity, only the results without control variables were reported.

### Analysis strategy

The structural model was evaluated by the partial least squares path structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), more specifically, the SmartPLS package version 3 (Ringle *et al.*, 2015). Concerning small sample size or non-normal distributed data, PLS-SEM contains advantages that make it more appropriate than other statistical estimation techniques (Hair *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, PLS-SEM is particularly suitable for studies that examine whether complex relationships exist (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Therefore, PLS-SEM was chosen over CB-SEM because of its focus on the confirmation of theoretical relationships.

## Results

### Evaluation of a reflective measurement model

The performance of the reflective measurement model was examined by assessing its convergent and discriminant validity. The loadings of all items exceeded the required threshold of 0.7 (see Table 1), meeting the necessary criteria (Hair *et al.*, 2013). Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) and composite reliability (CR) values were computed for establishing reliability:  $\alpha$  values ranged from 0.723 to 0.937 and CR values ranged from 0.880 to 0.960. The average variance extracted (AVE) ranged from 0.588 to 0.889, which was above the acceptable value of 0.5 (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Since all the constructs met the necessary criteria (AVE > 0.50 and CR > 0.70) (Hair *et al.*, 2013), convergent validity was established.

Two approaches were employed to examine the discriminant validity of the constructs. First, the indicators' cross-loadings were examined, which reveals that all indicator loadings were less than the opposing endogenous constructs (Hair *et al.*, 2013). Second, the square root of each construct's AVE was further compared with the correlations of other latent constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), which explain better the variance of its indicator instead of the variance of other latent constructs (see Table 2).

To test for common method variance, Harman's single-factor test (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003) was conducted. The results indicated that a single factor did not account for the majority of variance in our data (i.e. 29.35%), which implies that common method bias is not a problem in the present study.

### Evaluation of structural model

Hair *et al.*'s (2013) five-step approach was followed for the evaluation of the structural model. First, this study examined the variance inflation factor (VIF) inner values of all sets of

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	CS	JS	PA	SN	PBC	CI
CS	4.661	1.403	0.886					
JS	5.249	1.136	0.660	0.844				
PA	3.712	2.103	-0.504	-0.567	0.942			
SN	3.137	1.830	-0.395	-0.414	0.644	0.918		
PBC	5.529	1.036	0.065	0.011	0.215	0.255	0.766	
CI	3.678	2.018	-0.466	-0.483	0.794	0.656	0.273	1.000

**Note(s):** Values in diagonal show the square root of AVE

**Table 2.** Scale validation and discriminant validity

predictor constructs in the structural model for possible collinearity. The results indicated that no multicollinearity issues were found as all the VIF outputs were lower than 5 (Hair *et al.*, 2011).

Second, structural model was evaluated by using the bootstrapping method (with 219 cases) with 5,000 bootstrap resample to generate standard errors and *t*-values (Chin, 1998; Hair *et al.*, 2013). Path coefficients that represent the relationships (hypothesized relationships) among the latent variables in the model were assessed through the sign and magnitude of path coefficients. The results are summarized in Table 3 (Figure 1). Concerning H1, job satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.004$ ,  $t = 0.068$ ,  $p = 0.946$ ) and career satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.018$ ,  $t = 1.715$ ,  $p = 0.086$ ) did not directly affect career change intentions. Thus, H1a and H1b are not supported. Regarding H2, job satisfaction had a significant and negative impact on personal attitude toward career change ( $\beta = -0.430$ ,  $t = 5.207$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and subjective norm ( $\beta = -0.288$ ,  $t = 3.468$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), however its influence on perceived behavioral control was insignificant ( $\beta = -0.064$ ,  $t = 0.576$ ,  $p = 0.565$ ). Therefore, H2a and H2b are supported, but H2c is not supported. Regarding H3, career satisfaction had a significant and negative impact on personal attitude toward career change ( $\beta = -0.214$ ,  $t = 2.516$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and subjective norm ( $\beta = -0.204$ ,  $t = 2.361$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), however its influence on perceived behavioral control was insignificant ( $\beta = 0.103$ ,  $t = 0.935$ ,  $p = 0.350$ ). Therefore, H3a and H3b are supported, but H3c is not supported. The results for H4 revealed that the positive impact of the three TPB dimensions on career change intention. Specifically, personal attitude toward career change ( $\beta = 0.583$ ,  $t = 8.644$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), subjective norm ( $\beta = 0.220$ ,  $t = 3.855$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and perceived behavioral control ( $\beta = 0.100$ ,  $t = 2.548$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) had a significant and positive impact on CCI. Therefore, H4a-H4b-H4c are supported.

Third, the values of  $R^2$  were evaluated for the endogenous constructs which indicate the predictive power of the structural model. As shown in Figure I, the structural model accounts for 24.5% of the variance in personal attitude, 21.1% of the variance in the subjective norm, 1.1% of the variance in perceived behavioral control, and 49.4% of the variance in career change intentions. Except for perceived behavioral control, these values of  $R^2$  substantiate the model's predictive validity (Hair *et al.*, 2013).

Fourth, the  $f^2$  and  $q^2$  effect sizes which indicate the change in the  $R^2$  value and are used to assess whether there is a significant impact on endogenous constructs by removing an exogenous construct from the model, were calculated. The values of the effect size of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, respectively, represent small, medium, and large effects (Chin, 1998). The results are presented in Table 3.

Structural path	Path coefficient	SE	<i>t</i> -value	Effect size ( $f^2$ )	Effect size ( $q^2$ )	95% BCB-CI	Conclusion
JS → CI	-0.004 <sup>ns</sup>	0.060	0.068	0.000	0.000	-0.124; 0.110	H1a not supported
CS → CI	-0.018 <sup>ns</sup>	0.051	1.715	0.000	0.000	-0.191; 0.013	H1b not supported
JS → PA	-0.430***	0.083	5.207	0.209	0.174	-0.585; -0.264	H2a supported
JS → SN	-0.288***	0.083	3.468	0.084	0.083	-0.451; -0.122	H2b supported
JS → PBC	-0.064 <sup>ns</sup>	0.110	0.576	0.000	0.000	-0.257; 0.176	H2c not supported
CS → PA	-0.214*	0.085	2.516	0.055	0.061	-0.379; -0.038	H3a supported
CS → SN	-0.204*	0.086	2.361	0.041	0.042	-0.368; -0.026	H3b supported
CS → PBC	0.103 <sup>ns</sup>	0.110	0.935	0.000	0.000	-0.120; 0.303	H3c not supported
PA → CI	0.583***	0.067	8.644	0.276	0.281	0.439; 0.704	H4a supported
SN → CI	0.220***	0.057	3.855	0.091	0.092	0.109; 0.334	H4b supported
PBC → CI	0.100*	0.039	2.548	0.040	0.041	0.024; 0.177	H4c supported

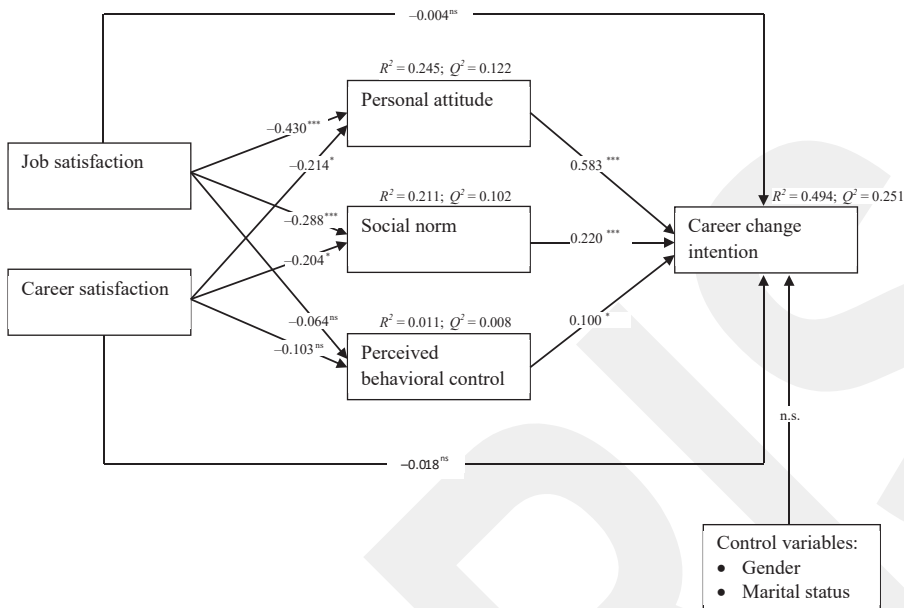
**Table 3.**

Significant testing

results of the structural model path coefficients

**Note(s):** \* $p < 0.05$  ( $|t| > 1.96$ ); \*\* $p < 0.01$  ( $|t| > 2.58$ ); \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  ( $|t| > 3.29$ ); ns = non-significant; BCB-CI = bias-corrected bootstrapping confidence interval of 5,000 subsamples

## The antecedents of career change intention



**Note(s):** Results obtained using Smart PLS: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; ns, not significant

**Figure 1.** Results of the model linking job and career satisfaction and TPB to career change intentions

Finally, the blindfolding procedure was performed for examining Stone-Geisser's  $Q^2$  value (Geisser, 1974), which indicates the model's out-of-sample predictive power or predictive relevance (Hair *et al.*, 2013). All  $Q^2$  values are considerably above zero, indicating the predictive relevance of the structural model (Figure 1). Therefore, the results provided support for the model's predictive validity on career change intentions.

*Mediating analysis.* For mediation analysis, the framework developed by Zhao *et al.* (2010) was followed for determining the mediation effects of the TPB constructs. First, the significance of the indirect effect via the mediator variable (see Tables 4 and 5) was examined. For the constructs with nonsignificant indirect effects, no mediation in the tested relationship was concluded. Further, the direct effect (see Table 3) of the three constructs was analyzed. Specifically, for the constructs where both the indirect and direct effects were significant, partial mediation was concluded. A bias-corrected bootstrapping analysis with 5,000 sub-samples was run (Hair *et al.*, 2013; Preacher and Hayes, 2008) and this provided the total and specific indirect effects results (see Tables 4 and 5).

Of the three pathways of mediation, only the first and second were found as significant. The indirect effect of job satisfaction on career change intention through PA (point estimate =  $-0.250$ ; 95th percentile CI =  $-0.370$  to  $-0.152$ ) and through subjective norm (point estimate =  $-0.063$ ; 95th percentile CI =  $-0.121$  to  $-0.024$ ) were negative and significant. However, PBC had no mediating effect between job satisfaction and career change intention (point estimate =  $-0.001$ ; 95th percentile CI =  $-0.030$  to  $0.021$ ). Therefore, H5a and H5b are supported, but H5c is not supported.

For H6, we found that the indirect effect of career satisfaction on career change intention through personal attitude (point estimate =  $-0.125$ ; 95th percentile CI =  $-0.230$  to  $-0.026$ ) and

Structural path	Path coefficient	SE	<i>t</i> -value	95% BCB-CI	VAF (%)	Mediation type	Conclusion
JS → PA → CI	-0.250 ***	0.056	4.508	-0.370; -0.152	98.42	Indirect only mediation	H5a supported
JS → SN → CI	-0.063 **	0.024	2.601	-0.121; -0.024	94.03	Indirect only mediation	H5b supported
JS → PBC → CI	-0.001 <sup>ns</sup>	0.012	0.425	-0.030; 0.021	19.24	No mediation	H5c not supported
CS → PA → CI	-0.125 *	0.052	2.411	-0.230; -0.026	87.41	Indirect only mediation	H6a supported
CS → SN → CI	-0.045*	0.023	1.965	-0.102; -0.009	71.43	Indirect only mediation	H6b supported
CS → PBC → CI	-0.004 <sup>ns</sup>	0.012	0.827	-0.011; 0.040	18.18	No mediation	H6c not supported

**Note(s):** \**p* < 0.05 (|*t*| > 1.96); \*\**p* < 0.01 (|*t*| > 2.58); \*\*\**p* < 0.001 (|*t*| > 3.29); ns = non-significant; BCB-CI = bias-corrected bootstrapping confidence interval of 5,000 subsamples

**Table 4.**  
Specific indirect effects

Structural path	Path coefficient	SE	<i>t</i> -value	95% BCB-CI
JS → CI	-0.320 ***	0.071	4.490	-0.460; -0.182
CS → CI	-0.160 *	0.071	2.263	-0.298; -0.017

**Note(s):** \**p* < 0.05 (|*t*| > 1.96); \*\**p* < 0.01 (|*t*| > 2.58); \*\*\**p* < 0.001 (|*t*| > 3.29); ns = non-significant; BCB-CI = bias-corrected bootstrapping confidence interval of 5,000 subsamples

**Table 5.**  
Total indirect effects

through subjective norm (point estimate = -0.045; 95th percentile CI = -0.102 to -0.009) were negative and significant. However, PBC had no mediating effect between career satisfaction and career change intention (point estimate = -0.004; 95th percentile CI = -0.011 to 0.040). Therefore, H6a and H6b are supported, but H6c is not supported.

Supplementing the bootstrapping results, variance account for (VAF) which indicates the size of the indirect effect concerning the total effect (i.e. direct effect + indirect effect) (Hair *et al.*, 2013) was calculated. VAF results are presented in Table 4.

## Discussion

In the model, the three determinants of the TPB have been hypothesized to have positive associations with the intention to change career, and the findings provided support for the previous studies of Baskurt (2017) and Khapova *et al.* (2007). Interestingly, no direct significant relationship was found between job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and the intention to change the career in the sample of professional managers, contrary to the findings of Mc Ginley (2018) and Carless and Bernhart (2007) and supporting the findings of Carless and Arnup (2011) and Breeden (1993). Previously, Ostroff and Clark (2001) have discussed that the impact of being satisfied with one's work on the willingness of changing a career can be affected by various determinants such as the involvement of relocation and the extent of a career change. In another study conducted by Tschopp *et al.* (2014), researchers found that the effect of job satisfaction on change intention varied concerning the independent and loyalty-focused employees. Particularly for professionals with managerial careers, both extrinsic and intrinsic factors can be argued to play major roles when making important career-related decisions. Thus, the current findings might indicate that, besides

satisfaction, other influencers including wage concerns, the fear of losing a prestigious management position, or feeling loyal to a company or employer can impact the interrelationships between job and career satisfaction and the intention to change one's managerial career.

For the hypotheses regarding the associations between job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and the TPB determinants, findings indicated a negative link between job and career satisfaction, PA and SN determinants, parallel to the findings of [Baskurt \(2017\)](#), [Evers and Sieverding \(2015\)](#) and [BarNir et al. \(2011\)](#). However, the results were insignificant for the satisfaction and PBC relationships, contrary to these aforementioned findings and supporting the results of the study by [Song et al. \(2006\)](#). This finding might imply that for the sample of managers, being dissatisfied with one's current job or career would not have a significant influence on the perceived ease or difficulty of performing a career change behavior. Furthermore, this finding combined with the results of [hypothesis 1](#) might indicate that the self-efficacy levels of professionals working in managerial positions might weaken the impact of the feelings of dissatisfaction from the occupation which were expected to lead an individual towards making a career change decision.

Finally, the expected mediation effects of the three determinants of the TPB were supported between the job and career satisfaction and the career change intention relationships for this sample. This finding also is parallel to the results regarding the [first hypothesis](#) of the current study, which indicated that job and career satisfaction do not have a significant direct association with career change intention.

#### *Theoretical and practical implications*

Our study makes several contributions to the literature on career and human resource management. The extant literature (e.g. [Beurden et al., 2020](#); [Wang et al., 2020](#)) suggests that perceptions of human resource management practices are an important predictor of job satisfaction and furthermore, organizational career management practices and career satisfaction are related ([Bagdadli and Gianecchini, 2019](#); [Singh, 2018](#)). Our results add to the growing body of literature on human resources management showing the influence of job and career satisfaction on career change intention within the TPB framework. Specifically, the main theoretical contribution of the study is the introduction of a novel mediation model of the TPB for the linkages of job and career satisfaction and career change intention. The results are, to the best of our knowledge, the first in the literature testing the mediation effects of the TPB determinants within the job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and career change intention relationships. The second theoretical contribution of the study stems from its sample. While there have been several calls from researchers for a focus on career change behaviors of managers, this study is one of the first studies in literature aiming to investigate the complex cognitive processes of individuals with managerial experience before realizing the actual career change behavior, through the TPB. As a final contribution, this study provides new evidence to the prescribed but controversial direct associations between satisfaction at work and career change intention, as well as confirms the applicability of the TPB to different areas of vocational behavior ([Kulkarni and Nithyanand, 2013](#); [Arnold et al., 2006](#)).

The empirical findings also suggest important practical implications both for managers considering career transition and human resource management staff who are concerned with retaining the experienced managerial workforce within the organization. Managers are vital for the proper functioning and attainment of successful outcomes for every type of organization. The findings of the current study highlight that when a manager is dissatisfied with his or her current employment, this could lead to an increased positive perception and a stronger level of pressure from other people towards choosing a new career path. The search

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for a new career alternative would facilitate the exploration of opportunities by that individual in different knowledge fields or sectors such as academia or non-governmental organizations, while it would also mean the loss of a valuable human resource factor from that particular organization. Therefore, these findings highlight the critical role of the HR departments and management of the experienced personnel within the companies and imply the requirements for new human resource management strategies specifically designed for senior staff who hold managerial positions in their organizations, by considering their personal job-related needs and future career plans. Prior research studies have shown that the employees feel positive about their organization, when they perceive that the HR and line managers are genuinely interested in their careers, which in turn positively affect their work performance and career satisfaction (Carless and Bernath, 2007; London, 2002). Thus, frequently conducting interviews or finding unique methods to understand the satisfaction of experienced managers and then formulating and implementing the necessary mechanisms to overcome potential demotivating factors, such as employing them in positions where they can feel more creative and independent can be suggested as alternative HR management tools for increasing the motivation of managers towards their work.

The results also offer new insights to career counselors as they indicate the importance of psychological constructs in career change decisions. Previous studies have indicated the importance of managerial coaching in the career management of professionals (Beattie *et al.*, 2014). To guide in a challenging process of a career change, offering different tools for skill development and gathering of new and crucial knowledge that could help with the professional readiness of the individual can be significant for heightened self-efficacy of a manager considering a career change. These suggestions can include joining competency-related training programs or strengthening the ties with a targeted career network. Also, the found association between the social norm and the career change implies that the career change is not a purely individual decision but is strongly affected by the influences of spouses, friends, or close co-workers, particularly within a collectivist culture. Therefore, the scope of career counseling practices can be widened for including significant third parties, to reach maximum effectiveness.

#### *Limitations and implications for future research*

The first major limitation of the study is contextual. Our sample included managers from Turkish firms, and we recognize that this may limit the cross-cultural generalization of our findings. It is quite clear that efforts to replicate our findings with samples from other cultures are needed to facilitate generalization and provide further evidence.

Another limitation of this study is that there are factors that potentially affect the career change intention beyond just job and career satisfaction. Adding additional variables to our research model may differentiate the findings and make them difficult to interpret. For example, individual-level factors (such as personality traits, age, gender, and educational level) and organizational-level factors (such as job security, and salary), to list a few, are all concerned with the process by which individuals develop the intention to change career (Carless and Arnup, 2011; Higgins, 2001). Future studies could continue to investigate the relationship between these factors and career change intention in the context of the TPB (Ajzen, 1991), as well as Rhodes and Doering's (1983) models of a career change. This investigation would aid our understanding and provide insight into how and why these factors influence career change intention.

Third, in the current study, we used a cross-sectional design. Caution is warranted in drawing firm conclusions about cause-effect relationships without longitudinal data. To establish causality, future research may consider a longitudinal research design that examines the job and career satisfaction and career change intention several times over a

longer period. In addition, while there are several applications of the TPB scales (Zhao *et al.*, 2021; Fietze and Boyd, 2017; Khapova *et al.*, 2007) in intention research and the use of personal reflections is a frequent practice in both psychological and vocational studies, the cross-sectional and self-reporting nature of the current study could be subject to potential biases. Therefore, in the current research, the choice of the research instrument and the collection of data were done with great diligence.

In conclusion, despite the importance of job and career satisfaction, research examining the promising mechanisms by which these variables influence career change intention within the TPB is lacking. By applying the TPB to the field of career change, we believe that this study makes a significant contribution. Given these promising findings, we encourage additional research into career change intention within the TPB.

#### Note

1. The job satisfaction scale was adapted to Turkish before. This scale has been widely used in Turkish studies.

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### Further reading

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