WHAT IS THE MODERATING ROLE OF SELF-LEADERSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYMENT HOPE AND CAREER OPTIMISM?

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ABSTRACT

Businesses need to adapt to rapidly changing communication and information systems, the global economy, and innovative techniques and methods. Business employees and managers will carry out these activities.

Young people studying today will become managers or employees in the near future. In young people planning their careers and realize their goals; It is important that they have career optimism, employment hope, and self-leadership characteristics. The purpose of this study is to examine the regulatory role of self-leadership between employment hope and career optimism. The sample of the study is consisted of students who are studying in private universities in Turkey. In this study, Data were obtained by simple random sampling method from 919 students studying at different levels between December 2019 and February 2021, and a quantitative study was conducted. SPSS 22 and AMOS analysis programs were used to evaluate the obtained data. According to the analysis, it has been concluded that employment hope and career optimism affect self-leadership. Furthermore, the regulatory role of the self-leadership in the relationship between employment hope and career optimism has been identified. In order to create a sustainable career in the changing and transforming new world order, individuals must have the characteristics of self-leadership, employment hope and career optimism and must develop and upgrade these features.

Keywords: Self-Leadership, Employment Hope, Career Optimism.

INTRODUCTION

People's feelings regarding their present situation and future objectives have been studied for many years. The prominent concepts that guide these feelings have been examined. Individuals' career strategies have been investigated in terms of the characteristics that are effective in determining their career strategies. In the international literature, there are many studies on the concept of employment hope. It has been stated that employment hope plays a driving role in determining the future career of individuals (Hodge et al., 2019; Hong et al., 2009). Employment hope is a factor that increases the individual's positive feelings. Researchers who studied career optimism emphasized the significance of believing that one's career will progress positively in the future (Karadaş et al., 2017; Kepir Savoly, 2017; McIlveen et al., 2013; Kalafat, 2012). Career optimism, which plays an important role in the adopting a positive frame of mind, causes individuals to focus more on goals. The concept of self-leadership focused on

the importance of the individual's self-leadership and self-motivation (Fidan, 2020; Lin, 2017; Marvel & Patel, 2017).

Considering the above studies, it is seen that career optimism, employment hope and self-leadership are critical elements in the field of management. Therefore, examining the relationship between these three variables is important in terms of management and organization. Especially, the high perception about above topics of young people who can take up managerial positions in the future will enable them to be more successful in business life. In this context, it is thought that the study will make a meaningful contribution to the current literature. In the study, the conceptual framework will be drawn first in the literature section, followed by an explanation of the purpose and method of the study. In the next section, the findings of the study will be presented. In the final section, the results of the study will be discussed and suggestions for further studies will be presented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employment Hope

Employment hope is defined as a basic intrinsic skill that consist of individuals to plan about their careers, to be aware of their own abilities and to develop these abilities, individuals' confidence in finding a job (Hong & Choi, 2013; Brown et al., 2012). At the same time, individuals use their skills and resources by motivating themselves means that realizing their forward-looking plans in order to be economically self-sufficient (Hong et al., 2016; Hong et al., 2009). People's confidence in their own abilities and powers, their belief that they will be successful, and their efforts to find the right ways to achieve the goals they set reveal business hope (Küpana, 2017).

Hong et al. (2009) states that in order for an individual to be economic self-sufficiency, they must experience the process of psychological self-sufficiency Hong et al. (2009). The employment hope consists of two components: being economic self-sufficiency and psychological self-sufficiency. Economic self-sufficiency is formed by the fulfillment of needs such as financial independence, economic security and employment. The psychological self-sufficiency feature consists of two bases: psychological empowerment and goal-oriented ways.

In this respect, it can be said that business hope is important for individuals to believe in themselves and to acquire economic success in achieving their career goals. To be able to create the necessary self-efficacy for economic purposes, finding the necessary ways to reach these goals and having the competence to achieve these goals will be possible with the development of employment hope.

Individuals needs to work in order to improve their living standards, fulfill their needs and desires, and earn a financial gain. For this purpose, it can be claimed that by completing the requisite theoretical and practical knowledge, they can hope to have a good job.

Career Optimism

Career optimism is defined as individual's positive approach to their future career, to have the idea that he / she will face positive developments in his / her career in the future, so that he / she feels comfortable and eagerly strives when setting a strategy for his / her personal career (Karadaş et al., 2017; Kepir Savoly, 2017; McIlveen et al., 2013; Kalafat, 2012).

It is stated that individuals' being away from negative emotions while aiming and planning a career, having high level level of optimism makes it easier for them to cope with career difficulties, individuals' high level of optimism increases their career adaptability (Rottinghaus et al., 2005).

It is thought that increasing career optimism can help to make healthier career decisions (Zorbaz et al., 2020). Optimism is a motivating force for a person to overcome obstacles in their career. Career optimism can be described as an important factor in deciding a career goal and providing the required encouragement to achieve that goal.

An individual with career optimism is calm in the face of the problems he/she experiences while planning his/her career and has positive expectations that he/she will solve these problems. They can take steps to solve these problems and make healthier decisions (Çelik, 2020). They can adapt to changes, uncertainties and new conditions in their career, and they can be flexible in the face of these circumstances (Tolentino et al., 2014). Thus, they focus on the positive aspects of developing situations.

Self-Leadership

Self-leadership can be defined as the individual's self-motivation to achieve individual or organizational success, the ability of an individual to control his or her own behavior and to do any work on their own without the direction of someone else, the ability of an individual to manage himself, a process of having skills such as versatile knowledge, talent, education (Fidan, 2020; Bryant & Kazan, 2013; Bligh et al., 2006). Thus, individuals with self-leadership characteristics can make positive changes in their behaviors by developing various strategies and skills, and affect themselves positively by motivating themselves (Lin, 2017; Marvel & Patel, 2017; Tabak et al., 2017).

Self-regulation, self-motivation, self-management and self-control are the qualifications that a person should possess when it comes to self-leadership. Individuals with developed self-leadership characteristics can self-motivate and set individual and organizational goals without being dependent on others. They demonstrate positive performance by acting in accordance with their goals and are considered as valuable strategic resources for organizations. Individuals are believed to be capable of observing their own behaviors, making judgments about them, and changing their undesirable behaviours as a consequence (Fidan, 2018; Kızrak et al., 2017). Individuals who have a high level of self-leadership demonstrate constructive characteristics with their behavior, thoughts and ideas. In addition, self-leadership can be described as an aspect that facilitates an individual's efforts toward his or her own goals.

Self-leadership enables individuals to be their own leaders, to plan their life strategies constructively, and to positively impact themselves. Self-leadership can be regarded as an element that will be effective in guiding an individual's behavior, plans and thoughts in a constructive and optimistic manner.

Intervariable Correlation

The relationship between employments hopes and career optimism. According to Müceldili et al.'s (2017) study on career optimism, individuals' emotional support has a positive effect on career optimism. It was also concluded that it positively affected the perceived task performance**.**

In Kandemir's (2016) study, it was concluded that there is a positive relationship between hope and optimism.

In addition, Mirzeyev (2019) concluded in his study that students' employment hope and career optimism levels significantly and positively affect their individual career planning. This result supports the results of other studies.

We may infer from the above studies that there is a positive connection between career optimism and job prospects. In this direction, we can form the following H1 hypothesis:

H₁: *There is a connection between employment hope and career optimism.*

The effect of self-leadership on career optimism

There is no research that examines the impact of self-leadership on career optimism in the literature. However, it is possible to make an assumption based on the definitions of self-leadership and career optimism. It can be said that self-leadership has a positive effect on the individuals, and that they are more self-assured and well-motivated to make and execute decisions. Due to these factors, it can be claimed that self-leadership has a positive impact on career optimism and allows individuals to be more optimistic about their careers. Thus our H2 hypothesis is:

H₂: *Self-leadership has an impact on career optimism.*

The regulatory role of self-leadership in the relationship between employment hope and career optimism

There are many studies in the literature on employment hope, career optimism, and self-employment hope. However, no research has been found on the regulatory role of self-leadership between employment hope and career optimism. Therefore, the hypothesis will be tested.

H₃: *Self-leadership has a regulatory role in the relationship between employment hope and career optimism*
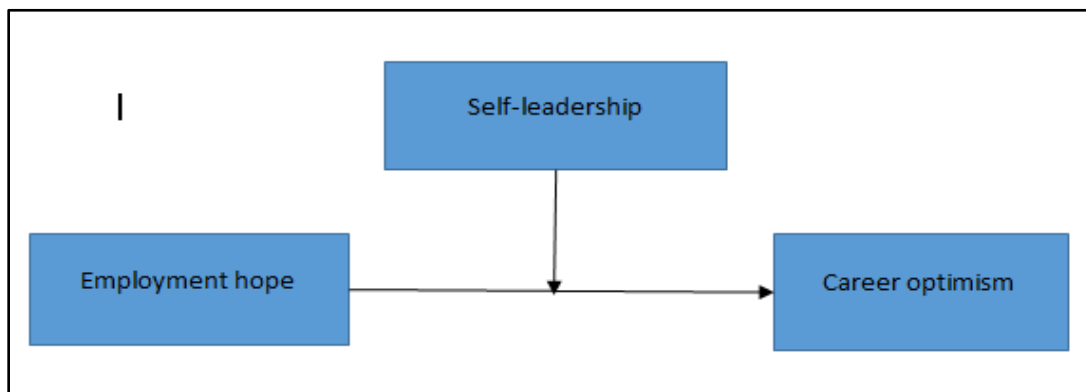

FIGURE 1
RESEARCH MODEL

As the above results clearly shows that different studies have concluded differently about the critical factor behind career optimism. But there are limited studies about the relationship between self-leadership and employment hope with career optimism in the literature. In this

context, this research aims to link the relationship among those three variables by trying to answering the question that does self-leadership has a moderating role in the relationship between employment hope and young persons' perceived career optimism? Therefore, we design the research model as seen in Figure 1.

METHODOLOGY

Research Sample Selection and Data Collection

Quantitative research method is used as the research intends to gather data from a large number of participants. The sample of this research is composed of young person's studying in universities of Turkey. Simple random sampling was used to get data from 919 young persons in different levels from November, 2019 to January, 2021. Three scales were used in this research to collect data. The first one is employment hope created by Hong et al. (2012) and then was translated and to adapted Turkish. It consists of 14 items that measures hope of people about employment. The second one is career futures inventory developed by Rottinghaus et al. (2005) and adapted to Turkish by Kalafat (2012). It consists of 11 items that measures people career optimism. The last scale is self-leadership scale developed and adapted to Turkish by Fidan (2018). Measuring a firm perceived marketing performance developed by) was used to gather data. It consists of 35 questions. All items are measured on a five-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree).

In this study, frequency analysis revealed that most of the respondents are male of the total respondents (54.2%). Mostly, 67.1% respondents have their age in the range of 18-21 years followed by another group of 22-25 years old i.e. 12.3% respondents. The rest are in the range of 26-30 years. Furthermore, 98% respondents in this study are single. Most of the participants (84.4%) stated that they willingly preferred the departments they studied.

Validity and Reliability

In this section, Cronbach's alpha coefficient used to test the internal consistency for each item of the research. Table 1 shows acceptable levels of reliability to all three scales, where the reliability coefficient was ranging between (0.701-0.879), and all constructs were above (0.7) (Hair et al., 2014).

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used in this section to assess the internal accuracy of each study item. For all three scales, where the reliability coefficient ranged from (0.764-0.938), and all constructs were above (0.7) which is the critical level of reliability in literature (Hair et al., 2014). Table 1 shows acceptable levels of reliability.

Table 1 CRONBACH'S ALPHA COEFFICIENT FOR STUDY VARIABLES	
Construct	**Cronbach's Alpha**
Employment hope	0.938
Career optimism	0.764
Self-leadership	0.907

Sekaran & Bougie (2013) stated that there are three categories that show the score mean of variables. Low is less than 2.99; medium is from 3 to 3.99 and high is greater than four. Mean values of employment hope the present study lies in the range of 3 and 3.99 therefore it comes in

the category of medium. However, career optimism and self-leadership are greater than four, so these two variables come in the category of high. In this study, self-leadership has highest mean score such as 4.223. Employment hope has lowest mean score such as 3.385. Table.1 presents the mean and standard deviations scores of all variables of this study.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Table 2 **DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**					
Employment hope	919	1.00	5.00	3.385	0.495
Career optimism	919	3.00	5.00	4.010	0.564
Self-leadership	919	3.00	5.00	4.223	0.692
Valid N (list wise)	919				

Data Distribution

SEMs can have varying model structures, degrees of multivariate non-normality (skew and kurtosis), sample sizes, number of variables, and degrees of freedom (Ory & Mokhtarian, 2010). Non-normal data inflate the standard deviation and parameter significance of the model. Therefore, Hair et al. (2014) has recommended to apply skewness and kurtosis tests to check the normal distribution in research. Skewness refers to the values around mean of data either positively skewed (longer tail on right side) or negatively skewed (longer tail on left side). Kurtosis measures the flatness and height of the distribution. Data is normally distributed provided values of skewness and kurtosis lies in the range of +2 and -2 (George, 2011). Based on the data analysis, skewness and kurtosis values of all variables in the study lies in the range of +2 and -2. Therefore, Table 3 presents there is normally distributed data in this study.

	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
Table 3 **DATA DISTRIBUTION**					
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Employment hope	919	-1.385	0.081	0.382	0.161
Career optimism	919	.507	0.081	0.773	0.161
Self-leadership	919	-1.370	0. 081	0.127	0.161

RESULTS

The Correlation and Covariance results of the proposed model are presented below Table 4 and Table 5.

	Estimate
Table 4 **CORRELATIONS: (PROPOSED MODEL)**	
Emp_hope ←→Self_leadership	0.625
Emp_hope←→ Emp_Self	0.503
Self_leadership ←→Emp_Self	0.758

0.625 is the estimated correlation between employment hope and self-leadership. 0.503 is the estimated correlation between employment hope and interaction (employment hope*self-

leadership). 0.758 is the estimated correlation between self-leadership and (employment hope*self-leadership).

Table 5
COVARIANCES: (PROPOSED MODEL)

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
Emp_hope ←→Self_leadership	0.432	0.027	16.058	***	
Emp_hope ←→Emp_Self	1.071	0.079	13.610	***	
Self_leadership ←→Emp_Self	2.332	0.127	18.300	***	

The probability of getting a critical ratio as large as 16.058 in absolute value is less than 0,001. In other words, the covariance between employment hope and self-leadership is significantly different from zero at the 0,001 level (two-tailed).

The probability of getting a critical ratio as large as 13.61 in absolute value is less than 0,001. In other words, the covariance between employment hope and interaction (employment hope*self-leadership) is significantly different from zero at the 0,001 level (two-tailed).

The probability of getting a critical ratio as large as 18.3 in absolute value is less than 0,001. In other words, the covariance between self-leadership and interaction (employment hope*self-leadership) is significantly different from zero at the 0,001 level (two-tailed)

The results of the proposed hypotheses are presented in below Table 6. At large, all proposed hypotheses are supported in this study. It is confirmed that employment hope (Self-leadership) has a positive and significant effect on young persons' career optimism attitude.

Table 6
HYPOTHESES TESTING

Hypotheses	B	S. E.	T-values	P	LLCI	ULCI
Employment hope → Career optimism	0.1101	0.0285	3.8637	0.0001	0.542	0.1661
Self-leadership → Career optimism	0.2990	0.0475	6.3022	0.0000	0.2059	0.3922

Moderation Analysis of Self-leadership

This study has investigated the role of self-leadership as a moderator between the employment hope and career optimism. Data analysis has concluded that self-leadership significantly strengthens the relationship between the employment hope and career optimism (β=0.4607, p<0.05) so, the moderating role of self-leadership is confirmed. Results have been exhibited in below Table 7

Table 7
MODERATION TESTING

Hypotheses	B	S.E.	T-values	P	LLCI	ULCI
Employment Hope*Self-leadership → Career optimism	0. 4607	0.0119	3.8690	0.0001	0.0693	0.0227

Based on the data analysis, this study has also presented the graphical results of moderator-self-leadership. The graphical analysis shows that in the presence of higher self-leadership, employment hope amplifies its impact on career optimism (Figure 2).
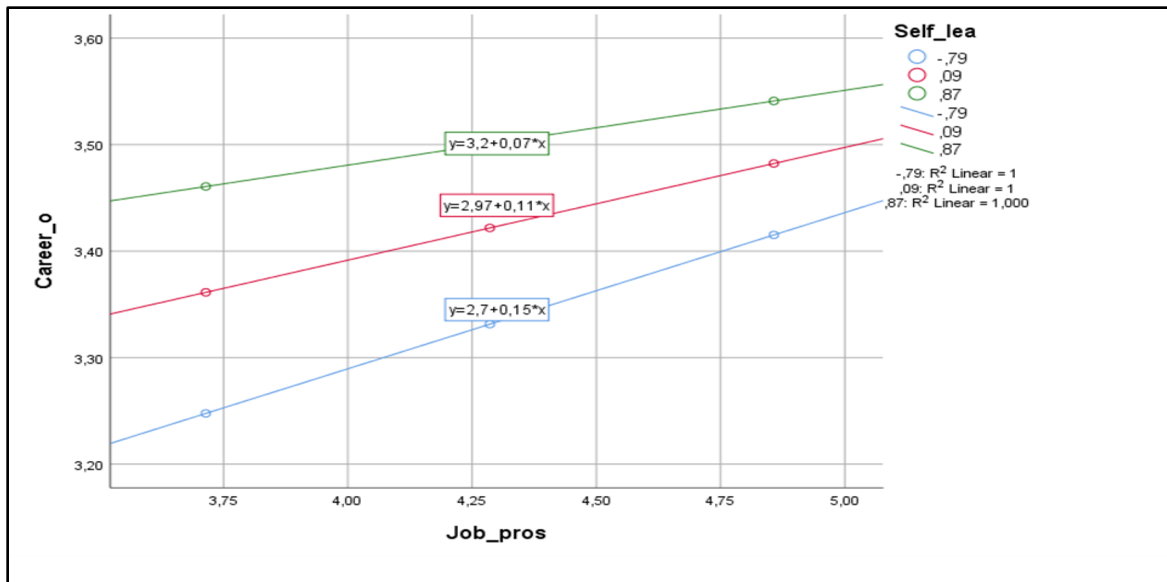
FIGURE 2
MODERATING ROLE OF SELF-LEADERSHIP

DISCUSSION

When the study's findings were examined, it was discovered that there was a positive and meaningful relationship between employments hope and career optimism. Having employment hope helps individuals develop an optimistic approach to their career. It has also been discovered that self-leadership has a positive effect on career optimism. We can state that individuals with self-leadership develop career optimism and have a more positive perspective on their career. It has been determined that there is a positive regulatory role of self-leadership in the relationship between employment hope and career optimism. It can be said that individuals with self-leadership develop more employment hope and career optimism.

There are some studies in the literature that support these results. According to the results of a study conducted by Seçer & Yazıcı (2018) with university students, employment hope is a variable that can partially reduce the burnout levels of students. There are significant positive relationships between university students' employment hope and academic branch satisfaction levels. Kim et al. (2021) studied the factors associated with employment hope for those who fled North Korea and settled in South Korea. Based on their findings, they concluded that age, education, return and time spent as an irregular migrant contributed significantly to job prospects. These studies support our H1 hypothesis.

In addition to these, Mirzeyev (2019); Müceldili et al. (2017); Karadaş et al. (2017); Kandemir (2016) also have conducted research on career optimism and employment hope and concluded that it had a positive effect.

CONCLUSION

According to the results of this study in which 919 students from different levels who studying in universities in Turkey participated, it has been determined that there is a significant and positive relationship between career optimism, self-leadership and employment hope. This

study shows that self-leadership significantly strengthens the relationship between employment hope and career optimism. Moreover, the regulatory role of self-leadership has been identified between employment hope and career optimism.

Study has shown that individuals with high employment hope also have high self-leadership. Individuals with strong self-leadership and employment hope are more optimistic when it comes to planning and achieving their careers. To put it another way, if individuals' levels of self-leadership are increased, so is their level of career optimism. If we increase the level of career optimism, we can increase employment hope. Today's young people are the managers of the future. Therefore, they need to guide employees and develop their self-leadership characteristics.

Increasing employees' job prospects and self-leadership skills and behaviors can play an important role in strategic management. Thus, thanks to individuals with self-leadership characteristics, it may be possible to develop dynamic abilities such as feeling change in organizations, learning about change and integrating this change into the organization. Because in today's companies where change is very fast, it may be possible to struggle with change, to catch opportunities, and to direct teams or individuals in this way. Self-leadership behaviors can affect individuals' dynamic abilities, innovative performance, productivity, and encouragement of followers. This positive relationship can help individuals to have a successful working environment, as well as increase the motivation of employees and teams.

In business life, positive thinking and a positive approach is extremely important to individuals so that they can choose and succeed in an adequate job. It can be said that students and graduates have information about labor markets, working conditions and changing employment situations and improving the self-leadership characteristics will have a positive effect on them in finding a job. If individuals feel comfortable while planning their careers and adopt positive attitudes, the employment hope will increase as the career optimism is enhanced. In addition, managers are recommended to work on training needs assessment, training and development, career planning and career management processes for employees of the company. By establishing the collaboration among employees such as knowledge management, learning organizations and agile teams, in-service training programs can be organized to increase these qualifications.

The limitations of the study can be listed as following; sample of the study is limited with Turkey, only the students studying at foundation universities has been selected and the study is cross-sectional. In subsequent studies, it is recommended to select samples from different sectors, if possible, in different countries, to analyze the data with a qualitative or mixed method and self-leadership variable is suggested to be taken as mediator variable in another study.

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