

## DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF THE EMPLOYEE EXIT EXPERIENCE SCALE

Kağan Güney<sup>1</sup>, & Emel Esen<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Vocational School of Health Services, Demiroglu Bilim University (Turkey)*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Business Administration, Yıldız Technical University (Turkey)*

### Abstract

Employee turnover research heavily focused on antecedents, decisions and treating leaving as a behavioral endpoint rather than a experience. This study addresses this gap by developing and validating the Employee Exit Experience Scale (EEES), a multidimensional scale capturing the psychological and organizational dynamics of the exit process. In the stud, a sequential mixed-methods design was used. In the qualitative phase, 16 semi-structured interviews were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis to generate an initial pool of 90 items. Following expert review and a pilot study (n = 66), data was collected from larger sample (n = 384 valid responses). Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the CB-SEM algorithm supported a two-domain structure. The antecedent model consisted of Leaving Motivation, Emotional Effects, Manager and Management, Coworker Support, Working Conditions and Balance, and Workplace Policies and Culture. The consequence model identified five dimensions, Knowledge Transfer, Employee Morale, Employee Networks, Turnover Intention Spillover, and Employer Brand. Both model showed acceptable fit and satisfactory reliability in the analyses. The findings showed that employee exit is a transition process with measurable organizational reverberations. The EEES provides a theoretically differentiated and psychometrically robust tool for turnover research and gives evidence-based offboarding practices.

**Keywords:** *Employee Exit Experience, turnover, scale development, organizational psychology.*

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### 1. Introduction

Employee turnover is one of the central topics in organizational psychology and behaviour. Most of research have identified job dissatisfaction, low organizational commitment, burnout, and perceived injustice as antecedents and its consequences for both employees and organizations (Hom et al., 2017; Lee & Mitchell, 1994). However, the dominant paradigm views leaving a job as a behavioral outcome stemming from cognitive evaluations and attitudinal processes. Within this framework, leaving a job is treated as an event rather than a transition that has already occurred. This outcome-oriented approach has left a critical conceptual gap.

However, the employee's experience of leaving a job can actually be conceptually different from other related constructs. For example, unlike burnout, which reflects chronic work-related stress that may be the reason for the decision to leave (Maslach & Leiter, 2016), the experience of leaving a job encompasses the subjective evaluation of the leaving process itself. Similarly, unlike organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991), the experience of leaving a job is concerned with how commitment changes after the decision is made. Likewise, while organizational justice and psychological contract breaches provide partial explanations for dissatisfaction or perceptions of breach (Colquitt et al., 2001; Rousseau, 1995), they do not address the entirety of the emotional, relational, procedural, and financial dynamics that emerge during the leaving phase. Therefore, the experience of leaving a job cannot be reduced solely to pre-existing attitudes or post-leaving consequences. It can represent a distinct transitional construct in its own right.

Theoretically, the experience of leaving a job can be understood as a multi-layered transitional phase shaped by pre-existing organizational conditions, the immediate relational and procedural dynamics experienced during the separation, and the post-separation consequences, both for the individual and the organization. From the perspective of the unfolding model of turnover (Lee & Mitchell, 1994), conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), and social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), the exit experience can be conceptualized as an interpretive process in which employees evaluate resource loss or gain, fair treatment, managerial responses, financial conditions and their own future expectations. These evaluations give rise to both immediate emotional responses and long-term consequences such as alumni advocacy, employer brand narratives, and psychological closure.

Although employee turnover and post-turnover employee relations are gaining increasing importance within the scope of employee experience, there is currently no scale designed to measure employee departure experience as a multidimensional construct. To address this limitation, the Employee Exit Experience Scale (EEES) was developed and validated in this study. Conceptually, the scale is structured in two complementary domains: (1) antecedent conditions shaping the exit experience and (2) perceived consequences emerging from that experience. The antecedent domain captures six dimensions: Leaving Motivation, Emotional Effects, Manager and Management, Coworker Support, Working Conditions and Balance, and Workplace Policies and Culture. These dimensions reflect employees' evaluations of motivational, emotional, relational, and structural conditions experienced during the separation process. The consequences domain encompasses five dimensions representing the organizational reverberations of exit experiences: Knowledge Transfer, Employee Morale, Employee Networks, Turnover Intention Spillover, and Employer Brand. Together, these domains conceptualize employee exit as a transitional process shaped by contextual conditions and extending to broader social and organizational consequences.

## 2. Methods

This study employed a sequential mixed-methods design to develop and validate the Employee Exit Experience Scale (EEES). The research process consisted of a qualitative item development phase followed by quantitative validation through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. Each stage adhered to established scale development procedures in organizational research.

### 2.1. Item development

The item development phase is based on inductive thematic analysis of qualitative data. Sixteen participants who voluntarily left their jobs within the last three years were included in the study using purposive sampling to ensure variability across sector, organizational size, and role level. A total of 577 minutes of semi-structured interviews were conducted. All interviews were transcribed prior to analysis.

Qualitative data were analyzed using MAXQDA 2024. Inductive open coding was performed on the entire dataset. In the first stage, short descriptive codes were generated to capture meaningful textual units reflecting key aspects of the exit experience. Coding was performed iteratively, allowing for the refinement of the code list as new patterns emerged. In the second stage, the entire dataset was systematically coded using finalized open codes to ensure consistency between interviews. Conceptually relevant codes were then grouped into higher-level categories and subsequently clustered into broader themes representing the central dimensions of the employee exit experience. Themes were reviewed and refined to ensure internal consistency and conceptual divergence. Themes were merged, split, or redefined as needed. Qualitative findings revealed that the exit experience encompassed both the antecedent conditions shaping the exit process and the perceived consequences stemming from it. These themes were integrated with information obtained from a literature review on job exit and related theoretical concepts, leading to the item generation phase.

Based on this qualitative and theoretical foundation, a question pool of 90 items was created. The items were written to reflect experiential evaluations of the exit experience rather than general work attitudes. Following item generation, the draft scale was reviewed by experts for content validity, clarity, and redundancy. Revisions were made before the quantitative test. Subsequently, a pilot study ( $n = 66$ ) was conducted to examine item performance and explore latent structure. Based on the pilot findings and expert review, the items were revised before being administered in the main study.

### 2.2. Participants

The main validation sample consisted of 412 respondents, of which 384 cases were retained as valid after data screening. A total of 139 males (36.4%) and 243 females (63.6%), aged between 18-55. Of the participants, 52 were between 18-25 years old (13.6%), 160 were between 26-35 (41.9%), 127 were between 36-45 (33.2%), and 43 were between 46-55 (11.3%). Regarding educational status, 18 were high

school graduates (4.7%), 281 were university graduates (73.6%), 49 had a master's degree (12.8%), and 34 had a doctorate (8.9%). In terms of economic status, 9 participants reported only meeting basic needs (2.4%), 235 reported spending thoughtfully (61.5%), and 138 reported spending comfortably (36.1%). Concerning the type of organization they left, 31 departed from public organizations (8.1%), 335 from the private sector (87.7%), and 16 from non-governmental organizations (4.2%). Lastly, regarding the time elapsed since leaving their jobs, 149 had left 1 year ago (39.0%), 148 had left 2-3 years ago (38.7%), 9 had left 3-4 years ago (2.4%), and 76 had left 5 years or more ago (19.9%).

### 2.3. Application

Data were collected via an online survey. Participants responded to the scale using a Likert-type scale. Standard data screening procedures were applied prior to factor analyses. EFA analyses were conducted with SPSS and CFA analyses were conducted with SmartPLS 4 programs.

### 2.4. Results

Table 1. Factor Loadings, Internal Consistency, and Convergent Validity of the Antecedents of the EEES.

Factors	Items	Factor Loading	CA	CR (rho a)	CR (rho c)	AVE
<b>Leaving Motivation</b>	During my separation process, I felt that the work I did was valued.	0.863	0.933	0.932	0.933	0.776
	During my separation process, there were adequate incentives to maintain my motivation.	0.882				
	During the separation process, the satisfaction I derived from my job decreased.	0.888				
	During the separation process, I felt that the work I did was meaningless.	0.890				
<b>Emotional Effects</b>	During the separation process, my stress led to a feeling of burnout.	0.849	0.932	0.931	0.932	0.774
	During the separation process, the pressure and targets at the workplace wore me out.	0.876				
	During the separation process, the stress I experienced at the workplace negatively affected my personal health.	0.894				
	During the separation process, I had to work under constant stress.	0.898				
<b>Manager and Management</b>	During the separation process, the attitude displayed by management in a specific incident reinforced my decision to leave the workplace.	0.880	0.949	0.947	0.949	0.790
	During the separation process, the attitude displayed by management decreased my desire to stay at the workplace.	0.884				
	During the separation process, the feedback from my manager was insufficient and unconstructive.	0.887				
	During the separation process, I did not feel supported by my managers.	0.896				
	During the separation process, I experienced communication problems with my manager.	0.897				
<b>Coworker Support</b>	During my separation process, the attitude of my coworkers was positive.	0.840	0.913	0.912	0.915	0.779
	During the separation process, I had difficulty finding social support at the workplace.	0.890				
	During the separation process, my coworkers supported me.	0.916				
<b>Working Conditions and Balance</b>	During the separation process, the working environment at my workplace was comfortable and supportive.	0.877	0.921	0.917	0.920	0.794
	During the separation process, my heavy workload negatively affected my personal life.	0.889				
	During my separation process, my working hours were already irregular and exhausting.	0.908				
<b>Workplace Policies and Culture</b>	During the separation process, the workplace policies I encountered increased my desire to distance myself from the workplace.	0.866	0.915	0.914	0.915	0.782
	During the separation process, the culture of the organization contributed to a positive working environment.	0.884				
	During the separation process, the workplace policies positively affected my experience.	0.903				

All standardized factor loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of .70, indicating strong item-factor relationships. Internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability) were above .90 across all antecedent dimensions, demonstrating high reliability. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged between .774 and .794, exceeding the .50 criterion and supporting convergent validity. Confirmatory factor analysis using the CB-SEM algorithm indicated good model fit (CFI = .937, TLI = .948, RMSEA = .041, SRMR = .036), suggesting that the six-factor antecedent structure adequately represents the data.

Table 2. Factor Loadings, Internal Consistency, and Convergent Validity of the Consequences of the EEES.

Factors	Items	Factor Loading	CA	CR (rho_a)	CR (rho_c)	AVE
<b>Knowledge Transfer</b>	My separation process negatively affected knowledge transfer.	0.807				
	My separation experience increased knowledge loss during knowledge transfer.	0.865				
	My separation process increased the workload during the handover process.	0.884	0.751	0.769	0.841	0.582
	My separation process increased delays experienced during the knowledge transfer process.	0.888				
<b>Employee Morale</b>	My separation process negatively affected the morale of other employees.	0.711				
	My separation experience weakened the sense of belonging at the workplace.	0.883				
	My separation experience decreased my coworkers' trust in the job.	0.886	0.839	0.829	0.868	0.632
	My separation process negatively affected my coworkers' performance.	0.890				
	My separation process negatively affected the team spirit at the workplace.	0.891				
<b>Employee Networks</b>	My separation experience caused my negative views about the organization to spread to others.	0.881				
	My separation experience negatively affected the organization's recognition.	0.885				
	My separation experience led to the spread of negative information about the organization's atmosphere.	0.894	0.941	0.939	0.941	0.799
	My separation process led me to share my negative experiences about the organization.	0.913				
<b>Turnover Intention</b>	My separation experience decreased my coworkers' motivation to stay at the workplace.	0.762				
	My separation experience strengthened my coworkers' intentions to leave their jobs.	0.863				
	What I experienced during my separation process accelerated other employees' decisions to leave.	0.880	0.728	0.702	0.782	0.576
	What I experienced during my separation process triggered other employees' thoughts of leaving.	0.883				
<b>Employer Brand</b>	My separation experience negatively affected my perception of the job security and stability the organization provides to its employees.	0.893				
	My separation experience created the impression that the organization does not value its employees.	0.896				
	My separation process caused me to question the organization's commitment to its employees.	0.902				
	What I experienced during my separation process caused me to negatively evaluate the organization's attitude towards its employees.	0.907	0.971	0.970	0.971	0.825
	My separation process made me find the support and opportunities provided by the organization to its employees inadequate.	0.909				
	My separation process caused me to develop negative thoughts about the organization's reputation.	0.916				
	What I experienced during the separation process reinforced the perception that the organization is not a fair employer.	0.934				

Standardized factor loadings ranged between .711 and .934, exceeding the recommended threshold of .70, with only one item slightly above the acceptable lower bound. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values were above .70 for all consequence dimensions, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. AVE values ranged from .576 to .825, exceeding the .50 criterion and supporting convergent validity. Confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated acceptable model fit (CFI = .894, TLI = .876, RMSEA = .069, SRMR = .071), suggesting that the five-factor consequence structure adequately represents the data.

### 3. Results

This study conceptualizes leaving a job not as a decision or a single event, but as a multidimensional experiential transition, and developed and validated the EEES. Research on turnover has largely focused on the reasons for the decision and the types of decision-making process (Hom et al., 2017; Lee & Mitchell, 1994). However, the findings of this study show that the exit phase itself constitutes a psychological and relational process.

The model of the antecedents of the exit experience showed strong psychometric properties with high attributions, good reliability, and robust convergent validity. The six antecedent dimensions capture employees' context-specific evaluations during separation, including managerial behavior, emotional strain, workplace climate, and perceived fairness. These dimensions are conceptually different from burnout, which reflects chronic stress (Maslach & Leiter, 2016), and organizational commitment, which reflects attitudinal commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Instead, the EEES measures interpretations specific to leaving, supporting its status as a transitional construct.

The consequence model demonstrated acceptable model fit and satisfactory reliability, identifying five individual and organizational outcomes such as knowledge transfer, employee networks and other employees turnover intention. Particularly strong validity in the Employer Brand and Employee Network dimensions suggests that exit experiences shape post-exit narratives and reputational perceptions. Consistent with social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), employees evaluate how they are treated during separation and translate these evaluations into broader organizational consequences.

Overall, EEES has the potential to advance work-off research by empirically capturing the experiential essence of employee exit and relating it to outcomes at both individual and organizational levels. The findings highlight that exit management is strategically important, shaping not only individual perceptions but also morale, information continuity, and employer reputation.

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