

# Impact of Organizational Characteristics on Employees' Workplace Preferences

## Alperen Mustafa Yigit (Correspondent Author)

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Ordu University, Turkey

E-mail: alperenyigit@odu.edu.tr

## Murat Koc

Assistant Professor, Law Faculty and Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Çağ University, Turkey

E-mail: muratkoc@cag.edu.tr

## Sema Yigit

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Ordu University, Turkey

E-mail: semayigit@odu.edu.tr

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to find the important attributes of organizations that effect employee choice, using conjoint analysis as an analytical tool. According to the purpose firstly 11 organizational attributes were determined based on relevant literature then the following five attributes of organizations were identified with a pilot study: pay level, social insurance, organizational reputation, working hours and transportation. Using subjects from a cement factory in Ordu, 105 respondents were asked to rank 16 cards for five organizational attributes with different combinations of these five attributes. The results indicate that pay level has the greatest influence on the respondents' choice, followed by social insurance, organizational reputation, working hours and transportation. Additionally it is revealed that forth card which is one of the created cards based on analysis results represented most desirable situation for employees. Employees are willing to work in businesses which have good reputation, provide social insurance and have ability to pay high wages to its employees. They also want to arrive to business easily and work in normal working hours.

**Keywords:** Preferences of Workplace, Blue Collar Employees, Conjoint Analysis, Organizational Attributes, Ideal Business

## 1. Introduction

The success of a business largely depends on the quality of its employees and qualified workforce emerges as a separate source of competitive advantage in the best way for the fulfillment of the basic functions of the businesses (Kayabaşı,2010:38). The lack of skilled labor led to an increase in unemployment is also considered to be one of the biggest problems.

Especially in industry, qualified intermediate labor are known to be more needed (Yüksel et al.,2011:131). Although many human resource management practices define the quality of human resources, the most important is the process of staffing (employee recruitment and selection) (Harold and Ployhart, 2008:191). Because the entire process begins with the withdrawal of skilled labor force into business. From this point of view, being a preferred business by the employees means; the expansion of the pool of potential job candidates as well as a long term employment provision for those who are already working in the business.

Well, what kind of qualities should an ideal business have or in what kind of business do the employees want to work? When trying to answer these questions, as it should be, "the best business" concept is encountered in terms of each attribute. When "best business" concept is pronounced, such a large business comes alive in minds, that pays the highest costs, has appreciable transportation facilities, pays for the being insured of employees fully and regularly, has working hours in which work-life balance is not disrupted, has a good reputation, and also provides financial assistance except the charge. However, in terms of all these qualities, the best businesses are very few in real life. In this case, employees will choose "the best business" for some features and "the average" for some other features. In other words, employees will make choices among different decision alternatives. For example, a business providing a moderate level of wages will be preferred to the one that offers higher fees just because of appropriate working hours and easy transportation facilities. At this point, not the best business but, as a question, "what characteristics should the best possible business have?" stands out against us. To answer this question, many qualities are required to be taken into account at the same time. For this reason, conjoint analysis, one of the techniques used in multi-dimensional decision-making, was used in the study.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Organizational Attributes Which Have Impact on Workplace Preferences**

Employees consider a variety of criteria in workplace preferences. The most important of them is the wage. Wage, which can be defined as the income of the employees in exchange for their labor, is often the main cause of the work (Bingöl,2013:414) and has a significant impact on the preferability of the organization (Cable and Judge, 1994:317). However, the level or sufficiency of wages are at the forefront for the employees (Ataay and Acar,2013: 360). The person who takes an adequate charge will be pleased to the extent that he can meet the needs. In addition, wage, as a tool for meeting the needs of employees, has such importance in various aspects that it is the symbol for the feeling of achievement and also a criterion for how much progress have been made (Bingöl,2013:414-415). Some businesses also provide premium to the employees in addition to the wages. Premium is the result when reaching various criteria to direct the employee for a specific behavior or to produce a predetermined amount of production (Ataay and Acar,2013: 439). Premium system is highly suitable for employees who have strong desire to earn (Bingöl,2013:478). Premium system, providing the opportunity to earn extra revenue, is one of the factors that employees take into account.

Some businesses also provide social benefits to employees. Social benefits can be defined as the financial contribution to employees (Bingöl,2013:494). These contributions are usually stated as food, clothing, fuel and training aid. These returns are also the factors affecting workplace preferences especially for low-paid employees.

Business reputation is another criterion taken into account by the employees. Reputation consists of the perceptions of the stakeholders' ability to add value to the organization (Rindova et al., 2005:1035). These perceptions are sum of the ratings of individuals within and outside the organization. From an external point of view, reputation improves profitability drawing customers to products and services, and investors to invest in the business. From the perspective of the employees, the workers and their families inevitably contribute to the reputation of the business outside. In addition, identification with the business, their motivation and therefore the performance of the employees is high in a company with good reputation (Men and Stacks,2013:173). Employees are keen to work in a business that has a good reputation and can be integrated with their own values. Thus, employees can be proud of organizations in which they are employed. Being proud of the organization has impact on the effectiveness of the organization. In the opposite case, ie when the employee is not proud of the organization, that is to say, the organization does not have a good reputation for the employee; there will be a lack of trust, belief, and enthusiasm (Pruzan, 2001:53). In a study in 2010, Deloitte research company stated that 48% of 754 participants consider the lack of confidence factor as a reason pushing them to seek a new job (Deloitte,2010).

While other factors are equal, big business are known to pay better wages when compared to small ones (Dennis, 2000:248). Besides, there is an idea that big business are thought to employ more skilled labor, be able to compensate poor working conditions, have more market share and share the profit with employees (Lallemand et al.,2005:706). Therefore employees want to work in big business. Regarding the size, a physical feature indicating the nature of the organizational structure (Dalton et al., 1980: 51), some criteria are included such as the number of employees, number of sections, the number of lower units, and the amount of financial resources (Blau, 1972; Kimberly 1976; Weiner and Mahoney, 1981; Gooding and Wagner, 1985). However, the number of staff employed by the company is considered as a good criterion of the size (Child, 1973: 170).

Working hours and shift work are very important because they directly affect the work-life balance of employees. If work-life balance, that can be defined as coping with the requirements of a person's family and business life effectively and the ability to harmonize these needs (Forster et al., 2013: 34), deteriorates, employees are confronted with problems in family relations, stress, burn-out, low morale, poor performance and exhaustion. Long working hours, irregular shifts and working at the weekend are such situations related to working hours and they are the major causes of work-life balance deterioration (Brown et al., 2010: 196). Therefore employees are willing to work in a business that protects this balance.

The opportunity of promotion in business is another factor taken into consideration. Promotion is the event of appointing an employee from a level within the organization to a higher one that requires more responsibility and better payment with a wide range authority (Bingham, 2013: 453-454). Many employees do not want to work for a business in which there is lack of promotion opportunities. Every employee, as a matter of course, wants to get ahead in his career (Huffaker, 2013: 152).

Although training opportunities existing in the business are considered as a criterion that white-collar staffs care about, there are significant benefits of training in terms of blue-collar workers. The first point is to ensure employees' job security with the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. However, an educated employee, when showing better performance, gets the

opportunity for promotion (Bingham, 2013: 288). Once having met the basic needs, individuals want them to be guaranteed in the future and to ensure security in the work environment (Örücü et al., 2004: 138). Although being insured is a legal requirement and can be seen as reflections of safety requirements in business environment, in March 2014 in Turkey, proportion of employees working without being registered with any social security institution is 34.4% (TÜİK, 2014). This leads us to the result that the business providing being insured is a preferred cause for the employees.

Location of the business and transportation facilities are also factors that employees consider. Especially in big cities, when the estimated time en route is added to moderate working hours, the work-life balance is disrupted. The transportation facility of the business reduces the time spent on the road and as it is free, employees get rid of an additional cost.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Objective of the Study and Methodology**

In this study, it is intended to identify what factors blue-collar workers give priority to while they prefer their workplaces. The conjoint analysis was used in determining preferences. There is no consensus about conjoint analysis that it is based on the works of a psychologist, Luce and a statistician, Tukey (Green and Srinivasan, 1978: 103). Conjoint analysis is a technique mostly used in marketing researches. It is used in design of new products, repositioning of existing products, determining the impact of the price in purchasing and increasing the market share (Kuhfelder, 2010: 681). The basic assumption of conjoint analysis is of the opinion that preference on a particular topic affects separately each with different levels of qualifications (Poortinga et al., 2003: 55). A number of independent variables have the joint effect on the dependent variable in measurement. Independent variables generally get nominal values, but sometimes they get intermittent values (Kuhfelder, 2010: 682).

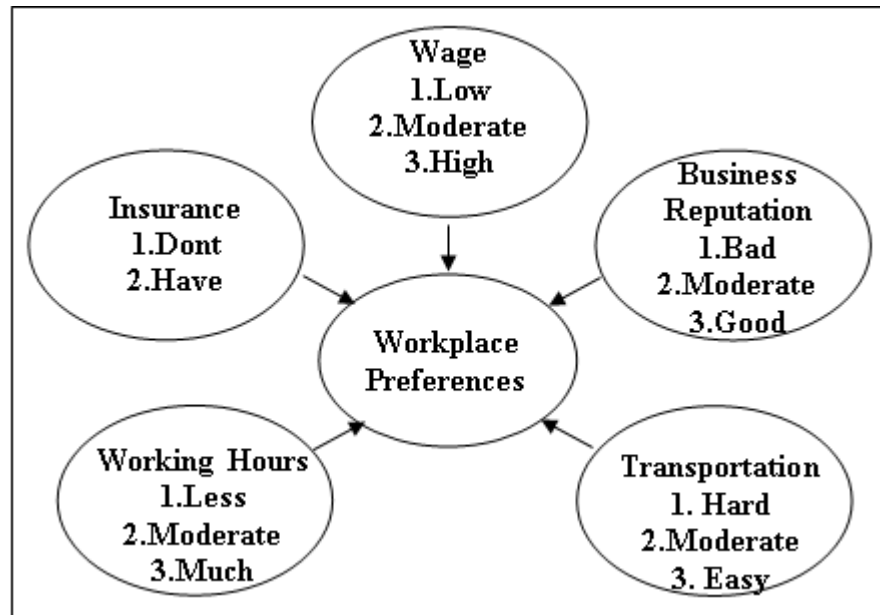
The study was carried out by a survey with 105 employees working in a cement factory in Ordu ( a city in The Black Sea Region of Turkey) through a random sampling method during the months of April-May 2014. In the study, the data is taken from employees working already in the business, not from job seekers. The reason for that is of the assumption that a significant portion of job seekers can not have realistic expectations about business life because they are inexperienced. A preliminary study was conducted to determine factors used in survey. Related literature review was used in this preliminary study. As a result, 11 attributions that are thought to affect the preferences of workplace for employees were formed.

Attributions included in the pilot study:

- Wages
- Premium / surcharge
- Social Benefits
- Being insured
- Business Reputation
- Transport opportunity (proximity to the business / service vehicle)
- Training Facilities
- Career / promotion opportunities
- Business Size
- Working Hours

- Shift Work

50 employees working in this business were asked to give an overall score out of 10 to these 11 attributions. The number of attributions were limited to 5 both for respondents not to feel forced and for conjoint analysis application not to be too complex, and in the light of the pilot study results, the best rated attributions in top 5 have been included in the study. In Figure 1, organizational attributions, which are included in the study and are believed to have impact on employees' workplace preferences, are shown.



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Model of Study

These attributions and lower levels defined for the attributions are as follows:

**Wages:** It is defined as " the cost the employee receives in return for his labor ". Three different levels as low, moderate, and high were determined for this attribution. Here, due to the factors such as employees' ages, experiences and tasks are different, the level of fees they receive are not given in figures. These levels are the levels that the respondents determined according to their own ideas.

**Working Hours:** It is defined as " the weekly working period of the employee ". Three different levels as less, moderate and much were determined for this attribution.

**Business Reputation:** It is defined as " all of the impressions and opinions formed in minds about the business as a result of experiences acquired ". Three different levels as bad, moderate, and good were determined for this attribution.

**Transportation Facility :** It is defined as "the efforts of employees during their transport to the workplace ". Participants rated according to the levels defined as hard, moderate, and easy.

**Being insured:** It is defined as " fully and regularly payment of the being insured premium of the employees". Of course, it is a legal requirement to be insured for the employees. But employees are not questioning this attribution in some jobs that appears to be temporary or short-term. For that reason, this attribution has entered the top 5 at the last row and is

described in two levels in the form of “have” and “not-have”. Table 1 show the attributions included in the analysis and their levels.

**Table 1-Attributions&Levels**

Attributions	Levels		
	Wages	Low	Moderate
Working Hours	Less	Moderate	Much
Bus.Reputation	Bad	Moderate	Good
Trans.Facility	Hard	Moderate	Easy
Being insured	Don't	Have	

Considering all levels, a conjoint card that contains  $3 * 3 * 3 * 3 * 2 = 162$  different combinations can be created. Paging so many cards in order of preference is both very difficult and time consuming for respondents. With the assumption that each choice of the attribution and level is independent, therefore, the orthogonal layout, in which only the main effects are taken into account, experimental scheme was used. By orthogonal experimental design using SPSS program, 16 cards representing the 162 cards and 4 cards for simulation application have been created. These selection cards are available in Table 2.

**Table 2: List of Cards Created for Determining Workplace Preferences**

Card Number	Being insured	Transport Facility	Business Reputation	Working Hours	Wage Level	Situation
1	Don't	Moderate	Moderate	Less	Moderate	Design
2	Don't	Hard	Bad	Less	Low	Design
3	Have	Moderate	Bad	Moderate	High	Design
4	Have	Easy	Good	Less	High	Design
5	Have	Hard	Bad	Less	Moderate	Design
6	Have	Hard	Bad	Less	Low	Design
7	Don't	Moderate	Good	Less	Low	Design
8	Have	Hard	Good	Much	Moderate	Design
9	Have	Moderate	Bad	Much	Low	Design
10	Have	Easy	Moderate	Less	Low	Design
11	Don't	Easy	Bad	Much	Low	Design
12	Don't	Hard	Good	Moderate	Low	Design
13	Have	Hard	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Design
14	Don't	Easy	Bad	Moderate	Moderate	Design
15	Don't	Hard	Bad	Less	High	Design
16	Don't	Hard	Moderate	Much	High	Design
1	Have	Hard	Moderate	Less	High	Simulation
2	Have	Easy	Bad	Much	Low	Simulation
3	Don't	Easy	Bad	Less	Moderate	Simulation
4	Don't	Hard	Moderate	Less	High	Simulation

## 4. Analysis Results

### 4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

Firstly, some demographic characteristics of the study participants have been introduced. 16,2% of respondents were between the ages of 21-30 and 30.5% of were aged between 31-40, 42.9% of were between 41-50 years and 10.4% of were at 51 years and above.

40.0% of respondents were primary school graduates, 38% of were secondary school graduates, 20% of were high school graduates, 1% of were associate degree graduates and 1% of were graduates.

21% of respondents have been working in the business 1-5 years, 41,9's% of have been working for 6-10 years, 21.9% of have been for 11-15 years, 11.4%of have been for 16-20 years, and 3,8% of them have been working for more than 21 years.

14.3% of respondents have been working in a job for 1-5 years, 27.6% of them for 6-10 years, 27.6% of them for 11-15 years, 24.8% of them for 16-20 years, and 5.7% of them have been for more than 21 years.

1.9% of respondents were paid less than TL 1000, 82.8% of them were paid between TL 1001-1500, 14.3% of them were paid between TL 1501 - 2000 and only 1% of them were paid between TL 2001-2500.

81.9% of respondents were married, while 18.1% were single. In addition, while 21% of them had no children, 13.3% of them had one child, 28.6% of them had two children, 24.7% of them had three children, and 12.4% of them had 4 children and more.

### 4.2. Significance Levels of Variables

Aimed at finding the factors affecting the workplace preferences choices, conjoint analysis of cards was made after determining the demographic characteristics of employees. According to the results, wage is the most affecting factor in employees' workplace preferences. The transportation facilities have been the least affecting factor on choices of five factors in the study. In Table 3, factors and their significance values are given.

**Table 3:** Variables and Significance Levels

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Significance Levels (%)</b>
Wage Level	36,24
Being insured	22,52
Business	18,43
Working Time	12,72
Transportation	10,09

Utility estimates and standard errors of selected variables obtained from analysis are indicated in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Utility Estimates and Standard Errors of Variables

Variables	Levels	Utility	Standard
Being insured	Don't	-2,048	0,209
	Have	2,048	0,209
Transportation	Hard	-0,351	0,278
	Moderate	-0,004	0,326
	Easy	0,355	0,326
Business	Bad	-0,648	0,278
	Moderate	-1,048	0,326
	Good	1,695	0,326
Working	Less	-0,583	0,278
	Moderate	0,723	0,326
	Much	-0,141	0,326
Wage	Low	-2,265	0,278
	Moderate	-1,116	0,326
	High	3,381	0,326
(constant)		9,462	0,251

According to the results of conjoint analysis for employees the "Wage Level" is the most significant variable with a ratio of 36.24% significance. The most desirable level for the "Wage Level" variable is "high". The second important variable is "being insured". This variable has a ratio of 22.52% significance. Employees are willing to work as insured in the workplaces. The "Business Reputation" variable comes in the third place with the ratio of 18.43% significance. Employees are willing the business reputation at "good" level. The fourth variable is the "Working Hours" variable and has a ratio of 12.72% significance. Employees are seeking for working hours at "moderate" level the most for this variable. The fifth variable is the "Transportation" variable and the employees desire it to be "Easy".

In Table 5, Pearson's R value is considered as 0.988 and Kendall's tau value is as 0.950. Compared to the significance level of 1%, this indicates that the established model is appropriate to choices of employees who participated in the survey.

**Table 5:** Correlation Values

Correlations		
	Value	Sig.
Pearson's R	0,988	0
Kendall's tau	0,95	0

As indicated in Table 2, in addition to the combination of 16 cards, 4 other cards have been established for simulation. These cards created for the simulation are not presented for



evaluation of study participants. Preference scores belonging to the cards, created with the help of value coefficients that are identified for variable level options, are calculated. Thus, it is determined how much simulation cards generated for this study were appreciated by the employees. Maximum benefit (utility) related to four combinations created in order to make simulation, Bradley-Terry-Luce and logit coefficients are given in Table 6 in terms of percentage. Thus, evaluating the results it is seen which combination obtained is more preferred.

**Table 6:** Preference Probabilities of Simulations

Card Number	Maximum Utility	Bradley-Terry-Luce	Logit
1	87,60 %	35,90%	78,30%
2	1,90%	13,40%	2,70%
3	10,00%	26,60%	13,90%
4	0,50%	24,20%	5,00%

Preferred model created in the study was as follows:

$$Total\ Utility\ Score = constant + \beta_1 (being\ insured) + \beta_2 (Transport) + \beta_3 (Business\ Reputation) + \beta_4 (Working\ Hours) + \beta_5 (Wage\ Level)$$

Accordingly, the total utility scores of each card, levels of coefficient values belonging to the cards were calculated by placing into the model. Scores of 16 cards used in the study are given in Table 7.

**Table 7:** Total scores of the cards used in the analysis

Card Number	Card Score	Card Number	Card Score
1	4,66	9	8,45
2	3,57	10	7,97
3	14,96	11	4,72
<b>4</b>	<b>16,36</b>	12	7,22
5	8,81	13	8,57
6	7,66	14	6,73
7	6,26	15	9,21
8	11,60	16	9,26

Higher total utility score means a higher degree for the preference. Accordingly, the most preferred card was number 4, while the least preferred was number 2.

## **5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

In this study, using the conjoint analysis, it has been studied to determine the factors that blue-collar workers consider for the choice of the workplace they want to work for and the significance levels of these factors. The findings obtained indicated that blue-collar workers consider the wage level variable the most in the workplace. Among 5 variables discussed in the study, the "Wage Level" variable had a significance of 36.24%. This variable was followed by the "Being insured" variable with 22.52%, the "Business Reputation" variable with 18.43%, the "Working Hours" variable with 12.72% and, the "Transport" variable with 10.09%.

One of the most important benefits of the conjoint analysis is that it revealed the importance of the variables, and also it gave the opportunity to review the levels of these variables in terms of preference. Of the five variables examined in this study, "High" level for the "Wage Level" variable, "Have" level for the "Being insured" variable, "Good" level for the "Business Reputation" variable, "Moderate" level for the "Working Hours" variable, and "Easy" level for the "Transportation" variable were more preferred by the participants. In particular, it is very important for the business, which runs the business with a large number of blue-collar workers, to find qualified labor force as well as to provide their existing employees be faithful, successful and highly motivated in their work. According to the results obtained from the study, it would be useful for businesses to determine a higher level than the average wage level in the hiring process in order to incorporate both qualified and faithful employees. All employees need to be insured. Individuals care much more about a business that has a positive image. Business should create a good image in public. Neither more nor less daily working hours are preferred. Employees are willing to be able to spend enough time with their families as well as to have much free time to do socio-cultural activities. Today, transportation is increasingly a major problem.

Developing cities, heavy traffic, increasing distances between residential areas and workplaces or factories and intense time spent in transportation have made transportation facilities extremely important. Providing accessibility to workplace for the employees will increase the preference of the business.

One of the most important sources of business is human resources. Working together with qualified and value-adding people will assure success in competing. Therefore business should incorporate people who are always better equipped than the competitors. Consequently, business should know what people expect from a business. Due to time and cost constraints, the study was made in a company operating in the cement sector. In order to obtain more reliable results, doing similar studies in other sectors would be useful. This study is also hoped to guide business in staffing process.

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