

İSTANBUL BILGI UNIVERSITY
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HOW LONG CAN YOU HOLD YOUR BREATH UNDERWATER?
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF WHITE-COLLAR PROFESSIONALS'
EXPERIENCES OF LEAVING CORPORATE LIFE

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How Long Can You Hold Your Breath Underwater? A Qualitative Study of White-Collar Professionals' Experiences of Leaving Corporate Life

**Suyun Altında Nefesini Ne Kadar Tutabilirsin?
Beyaz Yakalı Profesyonellerin Kurumsal Hayatı Bırakma Deneyimlerini İnceleyen Nitel Araştırma**

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this thesis is to understand the process of leaving corporate life. Questions of the researcher are; (a) How people decide to leave corporate life?, (b) How the process continues once the individual makes a decision?, (c) What kind of changes occur in people's lives?, (d) How does the end result make them feel?, and (e) Which characteristics of corporate life people consider when leaving? Taking the grounded theory approach, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 9 participants who left the corporate life after working for at least ten years and who were satisfied with their choice. The research resulted in a Model for Leaving Corporate Life. The process starts with "Intense Dissatisfaction with Current Condition". These feelings grow out to become a "Feeling of Imprisonment". Along with "Facing the Critical Event and Awareness About the Burden of Corporate Life", individuals start "Searching for Alternatives and Prepare for Change". The model suggests that "Implementing the Plan for Leaving Corporate Life" follows. The model ends with explaining the "Experiences in New Life and Emotions About the Decisions". The model is discussed in terms of career development theories and mid-life career change.

Keywords: *Leaving Corporate Life, Career Development, Mid-Life Career Change, Career Counseling, Work-Life Conflict, Job Satisfaction, Life Satisfaction*

ÖZET

Bu çalışma bireylerin kurumsal hayattan ayrılma deneyimini incelemektedir. Araştırmacı yola çıkarken şu soruları sormuştur: (a) bireyler kurumsal hayatı bırakmaya nasıl karar veriyor?, (b) bireyler karar verdikten sonra süreç nasıl işliyor?, (c) bireylerin hayatında nasıl değişiklikler oluyor?, (d) sonuç bireylere nasıl hissettiriyor?, (e) bireyler kurumsal hayattan ayrılırken onun hangi karakteristik özelliklerini göz önünde bulunduruyorlar? Araştırma için gömülü teori yöntemi kullanılmış, 9 katılımcı ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu katılımcılar kurumsal bir işte en az on yıl çalışmış ve kurumsal hayatı bıraktıktan sonra tercihlerinden tatmin olmuş kişiler arasından seçilmiştir. Araştırma, bir kurumsal hayatı bırakma modeli ile sonuçlanmıştır. Bu modele göre, süreç kişilerin yoğun bir tatminsizlik duygusu yaşamaları ve bunun sonucunda kendilerini kapana kısılmış hissetmeleriyle başlamaktadır. Bunun ardından yaşanan kritik bir olay ve kurumsal hayatın getirdiği yükün farkına varılmasıyla, bireylerin alternatifler aramaya başladığı ve değişim için hazırladıkları görülmüştür. Bir sonraki adım, bireylerin planlarını gerçekleştirmesidir. Model, bireylerin yeni tecrübeleri ve verdikleri karar hakkındaki duyguları ile sona ermektedir. Bu tezde kurumsal hayatı bırakma modeli kariyer gelişim teorileri ve orta yaş kariyer değişimi kavramları üzerinden tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kurumsal Hayatı Bırakmak, Kariyer Gelişimi, Orta Yaş Kariyer Değişimi, Kariyer Danışmanlığı, İş Yaşam Çatışması, İş Tatmini, Yaşam Tatmin

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

What is a career? Is it a journey in which there is no turning back? Is it only made up of work-life, or is it something that is influenced by everything else in our lives? Researchers tried to clarify this for years. Some think it is a linear path, while others believe it is a more fluid phenomenon.

According to Collin and Watts, we are moving into a post-industrial phase of economic development (Collin & Watts, 1996). Twenty-four years after Collin and Watts's paper was published, the industry is now talking about Industry 4.0, and how many of the jobs will be under the threat of digitalization. It is foreseen in the mass media that this will also bring many new jobs that did not exist before (Caldwell, 2019).

Career is a term that came into use with industrialization. There was a concentration of work in large organizations and an increase in the division of labor (Collin & Watts, 1996). To understand how definitions of work, vocation, and career evolved, we need to go back to the beginning of the 20th century. In 1909 Frank Parsons published his book "Choosing a Vocation". Looking at only the contents of this book, one can see that Parsons put importance on "The Personal Investigation", "The Industrial Investigation", and "The Organization and the Work" (Parsons, 1909).

He starts his book "Choosing a Vocation" (1909) by;

"No step in life, unless it may be the choice of a husband or wife, is more important than the choice of a vocation. The wise selection of the business, profession, trade, or occupation to which one's life is to be devoted and the development of full efficiency in the chosen field are matters of the deepest moment to young men and to the public. These vital problems should be solved in a careful, scientific way, with due regard to each person's aptitudes, abilities,

ambitions, resources, and limitations, and the relations of these elements to the conditions of success in different industries.” (p. 3)

In his work, Parsons puts importance on scientific methods. In summary, he proposes to measure personality traits, and traits of the vocations and match the right people with the right vocations (Parsons, 1909). This is in line with how Kanter (1989) defines the bureaucratic career; as upward progression within a hierarchical organization (as cited in Collin & Watts, 1996). Hence, the vocational choice and upward progress were at the core of the conceptualization of career in the 20th century.

The meaning of work continued to evolve in the 20th century in the United States. The type of work one is engaged became the determinant of that person’s status (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). Occupation rather than work became the means of determining one’s status. There was an emphasis on climbing the corporate ladder, getting ahead, and making self more marketable (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). However, Savickas (1993) states that with recent developments, there are fewer ladders to climb, organizational structures are flatter. Employees are less willing to sacrifice everything for the employer since they are easily let go by their employers (as cited in Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). These developments led people to seek self-fulfillment; personal and professional growth. People started to search work that does not deny involvement in family, community, and other life roles (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). Henceforth, the term career should be considered along with economic, social, cultural, technological, political, and historical changes (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002). In today’s context, boundaryless careers are growing in recognition rather than bureaucratic paths. The likelihood of dynamic, multi-directional, and fluid career paths are increasingly being acknowledged (Collin & Watts, 1996).

There are many career development theories, each has a different look on the definition of career. Super’s career development theory (1980) takes into account many other roles people take on in life. Super (1980) defines the career as;

“...the combination and sequence of roles played by a person during the course of a lifetime. These roles include those of child, pupil or student, leisure, citizen,

worker, spouse, homemaker, parent, and pensioner, positions with associated expectations that are occupied at some time by most people, and other less common roles such as those of criminal, reformer, and lover.” (p. 282)

Career construction theories make distinctions between career, vocation, and occupation (Brown, *Career Choice and Development*, 2002). Crites (1969) states that vocational behavior is different than other types of behavior (as cited in Brown, 2002). When talking about the requirements of becoming a lawyer, one should refer to these as “occupational information” however if an individual is making a choice to become a lawyer, that means that individual is making a “vocational choice” (Brown, *Career Choice and Development*, 2002). Brown (2002) further explains “The term vocational refers to the responses an individual makes in choosing and adapting to an occupation.” (p. 151).

Contextualists base the term career on action theory (Young, Valach, & Collin, 2002). Action is simply the human intention, process, and change; and career is a construct that allows people to construct connections amid actions (Young et al., 2002). That means career makes plans, goals, effort, and consequences more sensible; also, career lets people frame their emotions and internal cognitions (Young et al., 2002).

Moving further, what should we understand from the term career change? According to Feldman (2002), career change occurs when a person enters a new occupation, and when that occupation requires fundamentally different skills, daily routines, and work environments from the previous one (as cited in Barclay, Stoltz, & Chung, 2011). Heppner, Multon, and Johnston (1998), approach career change as a change of duties, which may include a new work setting. Donohue (2007) takes on the issue from Holland’s categorical approach, which categorizes each occupation’s characteristic requirements by using the first letters of three of the following characteristics: “Realistic”, “Investigative”, “Artistic”, “Social”, “Enterprising”, and “Conventional”. Donohue (2007) states that career change occurs when an individual is changing from one three-letter vocation to another (as cited in Barclay, Stoltz, & Chung, 2011).

The goal of the current research is to investigate the experience of leaving corporate life. Questions of the researcher are; (a) How people decide to leave corporate life?, (b) How the process continues once the individual makes a decision?, (c) What kind of changes occur in people's lives?, (d) How does the end result makes them feel?, and (e) Which characteristics of corporate life people consider when leaving? Proposed model for leaving corporate life aims to cover proposed questions.

There is a lack of literature on leaving corporate life. Therefore, I will discuss the results from the career theories and mid-life career change perspectives.

1.1. CAREER TRANSITION AND MIDLIFE CAREER CHANGE

1.1.1. Mid-Life Career Change

When does midlife start? While some think middle adulthood or mid-life is between 40 years to 65 years of age (Capuzzi & Stauffer, 2016), upper and lower age limits of midlife may change as long as ten years (Guindon, 2010). This phase is characterized by a desire to reach for goals previously delayed or foreclosed upon. New targets may emerge that are more in line with the individual's current state and interests (Guindon, 2010). Levinson's Midlife Transition has the developmental task of individuation (Levinson, 1986). Levinson (1986) states that individuals become more compassionate, reflective and judicious. They are less tyrannized by their inner conflicts and external demands and also more loving towards themselves and others (Levinson, 1986).

Considering these theoretical approaches on midlife, it is not a coincidence that researchers are looking at the career change from a developmental – mid-life point of view.

1.1.1.1. Early Footsteps

I will start this topic with Roberts' report on mid-life career change. She wrote her report in 1973. This report has very interesting facts that can change our popular perspectives of leaving corporate life. Even though it is popularly perceived that the emergence of the internet made it easier for people to set up their own business or created opportunities for people to work as freelancers, leaving corporate life probably existed long before the internet was widely used. Forty-seven years ago, Roberts started her report with the examples of the Harvard economist who turns to opera singing as a career, an executive from New York City who left his job and opened up a restaurant in Wyoming. An article in life magazine shows us the perceptions were changing since the 1970ies (Bayer, 1970). The article suggests;

“In the old days, there was almost no way for a man to change direction. He had invested too much time and talent getting where he was, and he stood to lose too much if he started at the bottom somewhere else. Today, the switch is easier and there are even some incentives.” (p. 50)

The Time essay (Second Acts in American Lives, 1968) states;

“American males are suffering from what Sociologist Leon Bramson calls the "Charley Gray syndrome," after the hero of John Marquand's novel Point of No Return. Having finally won his bank vice-presidency, Gray finds it meaningless—and far worse, he has no alternatives. As Sociologist Bramson sees it: "We have made it virtually impossible for people to try different kinds of careers in middle life without extraordinary risks." With depressing finality, Novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald declared: "There are no second acts in American lives." Scott may have been right in his time. But no more. Now a noteworthy and increasing number of Americans are beginning second acts with verve and purpose.” (p. 1)

Considering the Times article, Roberts's report, and Life magazine essays we can conclude that this phenomenon may have started long before than we realize. An article that can navigate us to a narrower time frame is called "Understanding Midlife Renewal" (Beijan & Salomone, 1995). Beijan and Salomone (1995) stated that during the 1950s and 1960s, people did not frequently change careers after the age of 30. They link the midcareer reevaluation and change to social changes in America, such as automation and corporate downsizings. Many people had to look for new jobs, and this may have led people to believe that midlife career change is more acceptable (Beijan & Salomone, 1995). The 1970s and 1980s were a time when women were entering the workforce, and this may have also reduced the financial strain on families, which in return makes it easier to look for second careers (Beijan & Salomone, 1995). I would add the movie released in 2007, "Revolutionary Road" as an artistic example and an indicative of this trend. The story takes place in the 1950s, in which Leonardo DiCaprio's character Frank Wheeler tries to get out of corporate life.

It is necessary to note that most research, including Roberts's report, consider male white-collar employees. Roberts included male white-collar employees between the ages of 35 to 60 in her report and explains that women were either going into the workforce from domestic work or going to get university degrees; therefore, she will not include women in her report.

Roberts states two concerns about the mid-life career change. First, how this loss of skilled resources will affect the US economy? The second, how the government can provide resources for the career changers? According to Roberts (1973), some keywords for mid-life career change were: "mid-career blues", "mid-career crisis", "occupational menopause", and "career obsolescence". She also states that the topic interested sociologists, economists, psychologists, and gerontologists. The psychological view suggests that when the person faces reality and that reality doesn't measure up to his dreams, career change interest occurs (Levinson H. , 1969).

Roberts proposes a short model for a mid-life career change by using the previous research on the area. She gathers "push and pulls" of old careers and the

new ones. Table 1.1 is a summary of her model. I will refer to her model in detail on the discussion part and make comparisons to the model suggested by my research (Roberts B. H., 1973).

Table 1.1 Roberts's Model of Mid-Career Change

Roberts's Model of Mid-Career Change

1. Frustration with One's Situation
 - a. Performance inability
 - b. Career completion
 - c. Mid-career blues
 - d. Identity crisis
 - e. Discrepancy between aspirations and achievement
 - f. Work alienation
 - g. Dissatisfaction with pay, status, or security
 - h. Quest for exciting or socially useful work
2. Some Preconditions Relating to Career Change
 - a. Early retirement
 - b. Availability of mid-career clinics
 - c. Dislocation by external forces
 - d. Family crises
 - e. Availability of finances
 - f. Access to alternative careers
 - g. Word of mouth
 - h. Leisure time
 - i. Association with career changers
 - j. Career mobility and occupational expansion
3. Constraints on Entering a New Career
 - a. Risks
 - b. Familial obligations
 - c. Requirements of new career
 - d. Non-transferable status and seniority

Source: Roberts, 1973

If we come closer to today, mid-career changes symposium editorial (2015) suggests that instability of the market is increasing. The paradigm of lifelong employment is no longer the reality; therefore, managing career transitions is becoming a part of the individuals' lives (Mid-career Changes Symposium, 2015). With this new paradigm comes the need for upskilling or reskilling, which is assumed to be one of the biggest challenges that individuals will face (Editorial: Mid-career Changes Symposium, 2015).

In this new paradigm, there can be two types of career change; voluntary and involuntary. An involuntary career change may occur because of the events that are out of the control of the individual such as layoffs or limited employment opportunities. Voluntary career change occurs when an individual willingly changes his or her occupation. For this study, I will only include the voluntary mid-life career change.

1.1.1.2. Reasons and Results of Mid-life Career Change in the Literature

There are many research papers concerning mid-life career change published more recently. I should remind you that these researches do not solely focus on leaving corporate life, even though some participants in the research did leave corporate life, most only changed occupations. A paper published in 2005 suggests that career change is becoming more common amongst those who are in their thirties, and it is expected to rise due to increased multi-directional, dynamic, and fluid career paths (Wise & Millward, 2005).

Wise and Millward (2005) conducted their research with participants who changed their careers voluntarily in mid-life. They propose that three themes emerged from the interviews; continuity-discontinuity, values directing change, and influence of context. During the transition, they state that participants expressed positive emotions such as "relief", "sense of openness", and they felt like it was a beginning of a journey, full of possibilities (Wise & Millward, 2005). The results state that participants had a time-out period, where they took time from life's pressures and demands. It was a time when participants made decisions before

moving forward (Wise & Millward, 2005). Wise and Millward (2005) claim that participants needed a continued sense of professional identity, achievement levels, rewards, and recognition. Voluntary mid-life career changers value growth, learning, and self-fulfillment (Wise & Millward, 2005). The motivations for career change for those participants were self-awareness about the need to be honest with oneself, finding work that truly reflected their identity, wanting a sense of purpose and direction, a chance to do something for the society. Majority of the participants stated that they would like to achieve greater work-life balance (Wise & Millward, 2005). For many participants, researchers reported, the change resulted in benefits such as better personal relationships, enhanced body image, self-development, maturity, confidence, a more balanced life, and greater happiness (Wise & Millward, 2005).

Donohue's (2006) research on adult career attitudes suggest that people who do not want to change their careers score higher on job satisfaction than those who express intend to leave. Value misfit between the workplace and the individual may result in dissatisfaction and career transition (Brown, 1995).

Individuals who change careers during mid-life are no longer interested in their current work or learning about it (Power & Rothausen, 2003). Beijan and Salomone (1995) state that midlife clients express anxiety concerning death, lower self-esteem, dissatisfaction with their lives, desire for change, and fear of the unknown and uncertainty to their counselors. Perosa and Perosa (1984) state that when this period is severe enough to be called "crisis", the individual is compelled to choose among the various vocational, religious, and political alternatives (as cited in Beijan & Salomone, 1995).

When it comes to a midlife crisis, research is mostly on men (Beijan & Salomone, 1995). Women go through developmental stages similar to men with differences in how they work on their developmental tasks and their goals (Roberts & Newton, 1987). Roberts and Newton (1987) state that women experience more inner turmoil and conflict between family and career than men do. They often experience dissatisfaction with their careers or their relationships. Beijan and Salomone (1995) suggest that one-third of 25 career women in midlife in Liebllich's

(1986) study stated that their transition to age 40 was so severe that they called it a “crisis”. Her study is available online in Hebrew. Gallos (1989) states that women go through a period of reevaluation as well, and often chose to plateau in their career (as cited in Beijan & Salomone, 1995). She states they do this to give more attention to develop intimate relationships (as cited in Beijan & Salomone, 1995).

1.2. CAREER DEVELOPMENT THEORIES

One may ask, why there was a need for career theories. Even though the phenomenon seems new, people wanted to find appropriate careers since the fifteenth century (Brown, Career Choice and Development, 2002). The world has gone through difficult times in terms of production, economy, and human resource during the First and Second World War. The need for placing people into occupations that they can show their best performance became important (Brown, Career Choice and Development, 2002).

In his book Career Choice and Development, Brown (2002) suggests:

“Vocational psychologists have been primarily concerned with the degree of ‘fit’ between person and job. If there is a closer fit, in terms of the interests, needs, and personalities of the person and the experiences, rewards, and challenges that a job has to offer, it is expected that there will be greater job satisfaction and fulfillment and a lesser tendency to change jobs over the course of the career.” (p. 38)

We can conclude that career theories are both aim to improve the individual’s life as well as the society. Therefore, the knowledge produced by these theories is used in career counseling.

Parson’s trait and factor theory mentioned earlier was the first step towards the emergence of career development theories (Brown, Career Choice and Development, 2002). His theory consisted of three steps: understanding the self, understanding different lines of work, and understanding the relations of these two groups of facts (Parsons, 1909). There have been many theories evolved from Parsons’s trait and factor theory, and many others differed from it. In his book

“Career Choice and Development” Duane Brown (2002) proposes four main categories to ease the understanding of career theories. He explains that career theories can be grouped according to; sociological perspective, developmental and post-modern theories, career development theories anchored in learning theory, and trait and factor theories (Brown, Career Choice and Development, 2002). In this literature review, I decided to use his grouping because the terms used in this categorization is highly relevant to research results.

1.2.1. Sociological Perspective

Sociologists study career choice because it has consequences for mobility and socioeconomic inequality. Their interest is focused on intergenerational mobility, meaning how vocational choices affect a person’s status and to what extent a person can escape from disparities that were present for their parents by their vocational choice (Kirkpatrick Johnson & Mortimer, 2002). They look at the structures such as educational institutions and the labor market that influence the occupational options from which individuals choose. They claim interests and preferences are subject to structural influences (Kirkpatrick Johnson & Mortimer, 2002). Family, adolescent work experience, and community also influence career decision making in the context of the status attainment (Kirkpatrick Johnson & Mortimer, 2002).

1.2.2. Developmental and Postmodern Theories

1.2.2.1. Gottfredson’s Theory of Circumscription, Compromise, and Self-Creation

Linda Gottfredson’s theory (2002) mainly focuses on gender and class differences in career decision making and barriers that individuals face during the process. This theory highlights power of creating a public self. The public self resonates with the unique internal self, even when power is not exercised. The

theory assumes that individuals are actively creating themselves and shaping their destiny (Gottfredson, 2002).

There are three major concepts of the theory; self-concept, circumscription, and compromise. Concepts such as social space, cognitive map of occupations, and images of occupations also hold a prominent place.

Self-concept refers to how individuals view themselves publicly, as well as privately. Place in society, personality, values, and gender are some elements included in the self-concept (Gottfredson, 2002).

People have occupational stereotypes. If you are talking about a lawyer, there are certain assumptions in every culture about personalities of lawyers, lives they live, prestige, and so on. These stereotypes are called images of occupations. These images are organized on a cognitive map of occupations (Gottfredson, 2002). Linda Gottfredson (2002) suggests that people distinguish occupations according to dimensions such as masculinity-femininity, occupational prestige level, and field of work. This map can be seen as a map of the larger social world where different occupations have a different place (Gottfredson, 2002). When people identify themselves with different occupations, they use the cognitive map and assess the compatibility of the options (Gottfredson, 2002). While doing that, people tend to guard public presentations of masculinity-femininity, protect social standing among others, and ensure fulfillment in terms of activities and personality needs (Gottfredson, 2002).

1.2.2.2. Career Construction: A Developmental Theory of Vocational Behavior

Career is defined as the development of vocational behavior over time (Savickas, 2002). This theory is not interested in occupational information like trait and factor theories do, but is interested in vocational choice. Its focus is on the change of the vocational behavior of an individual over time (Savickas, 2002). Savickas (2002) proposes that his developmental theory of career construction is a newer version of Super's (1953) theory of vocational development (as cited in

Savickas, 2002). The theory proposes that individuals have a life structured by social processes, which bring them different roles, such as being a father and a teacher. Balance among core roles brings individual stability, but imbalance results in strain (Savickas, 2002). The theory bases occupational success on individuals' work roles. When they find adequate outlets for their vocational characteristics, occupational success is achieved (Savickas, 2002). Job satisfaction occurs if an individual establishes a work situation in which one can attend to roles that his or her experiences led to (Savickas, 2002). The theory also suggests the self-concept and vocational preferences change over time (Savickas, 2002).

According to Savickas (2002), there are five developmental tasks in career construction. The journey starts with growth, in which the individual is forming a vocational self-concept. This happens between the ages of 4 and 13. Exploration starts around the age of 14 and continues until the age of 24. During exploration, individuals fit themselves into society by their inner world. The establishment is the implementation of self-concept in an occupational role and happens between the ages of 25 to 44. After those years, individuals may come to ask themselves whether they would like to keep doing what they do for the next 25 years. This period is defined by the re-finding the self. Individuals may change their organization, field or occupation during this process. The decision of staying in the current occupation results in entering the stage of career maintenance. If a change occurs, individuals go through exploration and establishment again. Lastly, there is disengagement when an individual is focused on retirement planning. This starts around the age of 65 and continues throughout the rest of life (Savickas, 2002).

1.2.2.3. Contextualist Approach

Contextualist approach was developed by Young and Valach to reconceptualize the nature of career, to offer an explanation of career based on action theory (Young, Valach, & Collin, 2002). According to Young, Valach, and Collin (2002), there are 3 properties of context; a multiplicity and complexity of

parts, the complex working together of these parts, and the meaning of events or phenomena.

Young and Valach's contextualist approach is focused on the construction of action. Action is a goal-directed behavior; it is intentional (Young, Valach, & Collin, 2002). As you can imagine, career is also full of actions we take, however Young, Valach, and Collin (2002) believe that it is meaningless without any context. They consider action from three perspectives. They look at the manifest behavior, internal processes, and social meaning. Manifest behaviors are the behaviors that can be observed by others, such as going door to door to sell a certain product. Internal processes are more of the feelings of the individual. For instance, one can feel anxious about not being able to hit the sales target. Social meaning can be found when the individual tries to visit more houses to hit the sales target, to be considered successful. Thus, when we try to make sense of one's actions, we need to be able to see its context.

To make sense of the actions, Young, Valach, and Collins (2002) propose three constructs; joint action, project, and career. Joint action is when we consider individuals with others in their environment. For instance, a person may have particular career aspiration, but may discuss it with his or her partner and act differently. Joint action may shape the process for a particular project. Actions and plans lead to the goal. Career, on the other hand, extends over longer than project and includes more actions (Young, Valach, & Collin, 2002). Action is organized into three levels: elements, functional steps, and goals (Young et al., 2002) Physical and verbal behaviors are the elements of the action. The same words can be interpreted differently according to the individual who is involved. The functional step is when an element of action is contextualized by seeing it as one of a series of behaviors. Goals are the representations of general intentions (Young et al., 2002).

This theory is essential for the current study because it considers emotions. Young, Valach, and Collin (2002) state that many vocational counseling texts do not index emotion, but emotion and cognition are central to their theory. They claim that emotion and cognition regulate and guide action, they are motivational and energizing. Why is the emotion connected to context? Their answer is because

emotion arises out of context (Young, Valach, & Collin, 2002). Positive emotions can lead to growth and social connections for individuals (Fredrickson, 2001). If it is a motivating factor, they claim that emotion should also be connected to the goals and plans of an individual. Averill and More (1993) suggest that happiness is related to an individuals' ability to form a sense of what their life should be (as cited in Young, Valach, & Collin, 2002). Young, Valach and Collin state three reasons why emotion is vital in a career. First is the motivational factor. Without the emotion to sustain it, a career or project can not be attained in the long run. Second, emotions have a regulating effect. They control actions, projects, and careers, and the last reason is the emotion provides important narratives of project and career (Young, Valach, & Collin, 2002). They finally conclude that emotions regulate our actions and emotions are constructed by our actions, projects, and careers at the same time (Young, Valach, & Collin, 2002). Besides emotions, culture and gender are other contexts mentioned in the contextualist explanation of career.

1.2.3. Career Development Theories Anchored in Learning Theory

1.2.3.1. Social Cognitive Career Theory

Social cognitive theory focuses on cognitive variables. It assumes that these variables may govern career behavior (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002). Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) is inspired by Bandura's social learning theory.

Central concepts of the theory consist of person-environment interactions. SCCT assumes that people have a potential for self-regulation, and they are products as well as producers of their environment (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002). Self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals are considered as the building blocks of career development.

In his book *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*, Bandura (1997) states that self-efficacy refers to people's beliefs about their capabilities. Personal performance accomplishments, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and physiological and affective states can modify our self-efficacy.

Bandura (1997) states outcome expectations are what an individual believes what an outcome will be of a particular behavior. Goals are defined as the determination to engage in a particular activity to affect a particular future outcome.

SCCT brings forward three models that organize career-related interest, choice, and performance: interest development model, choice model, and performance model (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002). The interest development model claims that individuals are exposed to different activities throughout their childhood and adolescence. If they see themselves competent in an activity and believe performing that activity will produce valuable outcomes, they keep doing it. If their self-efficacy is weak, or they receive negative outcomes they tend to not develop an interest in that area (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002). The choice model assumes that if everything else is equal, people tend to choose occupations, they are interested in, but choices are affected by contextual influences and by other people. The model states that if people cannot attain to their area of interest because of limited opportunities and barriers, they choose less interesting occupational paths that are available to them in which they can feel like they perform adequately (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002). Performance model claims that if people's self-efficacy beliefs underestimate or exaggerate, their performance can be affected (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002).

1.2.3.2.Cognitive Information Processing Approach to Career Problem Solving and Decision Making

The cognitive information processing (CIP) approach is crucial for this research because it focuses on the decision making and problem-solving processes. The theory brings together Parsons's theory with cognitive information processing. The goal of this merger of ideas is to make clients more independent in their career decision making processes. Instead of using Parsons's exact terms, the theory prefers using the terms self-knowledge, occupational knowledge, and career decision making (Peterson, Sampson Jr., Lenz, & Reardon, 2002).

The theory proposes a new way of addressing career problems. Therefore, the question arises, what is a career problem? It is defined as the gap between an existing state of indecision and a more desired state (Peterson, Sampson Jr., Lenz, & Reardon, 2002). The theory states that career indecision may bring confusion, anxiety, and depression (Peterson, Sampson Jr., Lenz, & Reardon, 2002). Peterson, Sampson Jr., Lenz, and Reardon (2002) define career problem solving as;

“A complex set of thought processes involving the acknowledgment of a state of career indecision, an analysis of the causes, the formulation and clarification of alternative courses of action, and the selecting of one of these alternatives to achieve a more integrated state of decidedness.” (p. 316)

Career decision making includes not only making a choice but a commitment to the actions necessary to implement the option (Peterson, Sampson Jr., Lenz, & Reardon, 2002). The theory also suggests that a person should be ready to make an appropriate career decision, despite the complexity of family, economic, social, and organizational factors (Peterson et al., 2002). Their definition of lifestyle is vital for this research. Peterson, Sampson Jr., Lenz, and Reardon (2002) define lifestyle as, “the integration of decisions in the realms of career, personal, and family relationships, spirituality, and leisure that result in a guiding purpose, meaning, and direction in one’s life” (p.316).

According to Peterson et al. (2002) application of the CIP theory carries four key assumptions. The first one is “career problem solving and decision making involve the interaction of both affective and cognitive processes” (p. 318). When individuals are aware that there is a problem, they may experience depression, anxiety, or confusion. When analyzing the problem, they may feel puzzled or curious. Options may make individuals intrigued or frightened. When they arrive at a choice, they may feel relief. The application of the solution may bring anticipation and excitement (Peterson, Sampson Jr., Lenz, & Reardon, 2002).

Second assumption Peterson et al. (2002) states “the capability for a career problem solving depends on the availability of cognitive operations as well as knowledge” (p. 318). The third assumption states that career development is not a state that has an end, it involves growth and change in knowledge structures

continually (Peterson et al., 2002). The fourth assumption is that career counseling should aim to enhance the information processing skills of the clients (Peterson et al., 2002).

CIP approach is detailed on how career counselors can help their clients, however, for this research, I will not go into detail of those processes. In this approach, it is important to note that it takes emotions into account and their definitions of career decision making, problem solving, and lifestyle. These are essential concepts that relate to my research.

1.2.4. Trait-Factor Theories

1.2.4.1. Holland's Theory of Personalities in Work Environments

I will start explaining Holland's theory by quoting from one of his early works from 1958. In his work, he explains what the choice of occupation means (Holland, 1958). He states;

“The choice of an occupation is an expressive act which reflects the person's motivation, knowledge, personality, and ability. Occupations represent a way of life, an environment rather than a set of isolated work functions or skills. To work as a carpenter means not only to use tools but also to have a certain status, community role, and a special pattern of living. In this sense, the choice of an occupational title represents several kinds of information: the S's motivation, his knowledge of the occupation in question, his insight and understanding of himself, and his abilities. In short, item responses may be thought of as limited but useful expressive or projective protocols.” (p. 336)

The choice of an occupation being an expressive act is the reason why I decided to include Holland's theory in this literature review. In the discussion part of this thesis, I will discuss further how this view of “expressive act” can be related to leaving corporate life.

Holland defines six types of personality-interest and classifies the work environments accordingly (Spokane, Luchetta, & Richwine, 2002). If the

personality-interest fits the environment, this predicts satisfaction, stability, and performance (Spokane, Luchetta, & Richwine, 2002). What is relevant to my thesis is that the person is viewed as a rational individual who moves from one environment to another when there is no fit (Costa, McCrae, & Holland, 1984).

Holland's six types of personalities are; realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. He also categorizes the environment with the same labels. The theory assumes that people seek environments where they can express their attitudes and values, exercise their skills and abilities, and take on acceptable roles. Lastly, Holland assumes that the behavior of the individual is determined by the interaction between his or her personality and environment (Spokane, Luchetta, & Richwine, 2002).

For this thesis, I will not go into detail about the personality types. What matters for us here is how people interact with their work environments. According to Spokane (2001), if the environment resembles the individual's personality patterns, the individual finds the environment satisfying and his or her behavior is reinforced (as cited in Spokane, Luchetta, & Richwine, 2002). He also states that if there is incongruence, the individual seeks a new and congruent environment or changes his or her behavior and perceptions (as cited in Spokane, Luchetta, & Richwine, 2002).

1.2.4.2. Person-Environment-Correspondence Theory

Dissatisfaction is a significant topic of this thesis. I decided to include Person-Environment-Correspondence Theory (PEC) because it offers insight on satisfaction. This theory assumes that the person (P) and the environment (E) is in interaction (Dawis, 2002). According to PEC theory, P and E have requirements that have to be filled. The interaction should result in filling some of these requirements (Dawis, 2002). If the requirements are filled, satisfaction occurs, otherwise, the interaction creates dissatisfaction (Dawis, 2002). If there is satisfaction, the behavior is maintained, if there is dissatisfaction, there is either

adjustment of behavior or one of the parties give up on the interaction (Dawis, 2002).

According to PEC theory, needs are Person's requirements, and skills are Person's capabilities (Dawis, 2002). Needs can be physical things such as the need for water and food or psychological such as the need for comfort. Skills are behavior sequences in response to a task. A person can acquire needs and skills through experience and training (Dawis, 2002). Needs and skills become stable over time and they become the characteristics of the person, but they are also open to change in certain conditions (Dawis, 2002).

PEC theory defines satisfaction as something that is achieved by P when his or her needs are filled. The desired outcome for P-E interaction is satisfaction. Both P and E need to be satisfied through the interaction (Dawis, 2002). Dawis (2002) points out that when there are changes in E or P, P tries to achieve satisfaction and maintain it. When the perception of P comes into the equation, it may be not this easy to explain satisfaction. E may be filling P's needs in actual, but if P perceives his or her needs are not fulfilled, dissatisfaction may occur (Dawis, 2002). The theory also suggests that there may be as many satisfactions as needs. Some needs may be satisfied, when some others are not, and this can be apart from the overall satisfaction of P. Dawis (2002) states that single-need satisfaction and overall satisfaction is still a problem unsolved in PEC theory. You can view overall satisfaction as separate from single-needs, or as the sum of single-need satisfactions. Sometimes a surplus for one need can compensate for the lack of another. This is called compensatory. If there is no surplus, all needs have to be minimally satisfied (Dawis, 2002).

1.3. SATISFACTION vs. DISSATISFACTION

As you may have noticed, satisfaction and dissatisfaction have come up many times, in career development theories as well as the reasons for a mid-life career change. This term may need some special attention since it is also the first step of

leaving the corporate life model this thesis proposes. For this thesis, I will also include some research that has been conducted in Turkey.

I have explained in the career development theories section that the person-environment correspondence theory emphasizes the satisfaction of the needs of the person and the environment (Dawis, 2002). The theory suggests that the interaction between the person and the environment should lead to satisfaction, otherwise either the need will be adjusted or the relationship will be over (Dawis, 2002). This explanation can be carried to career change. If a person's needs are not satisfied, the person can adjust his or her needs, adjust the environment or finish all relationships with that environment and move on. However, it should be kept in mind that more contemporary approaches focus on cognitive processes rather than needs (Spector, 1997).

One of the most important purposes of career counseling is to enhance people's job satisfaction and lower the chances of dissatisfaction (Jepsen & Sheu, 2003). Is it simple to separate job satisfaction from life satisfaction? Do they influence each other? Let's look at the definitions and the previous research starting with job satisfaction.

The degree to which an individual enjoys his or her job is referred to as job satisfaction (Spector, 1997). It is an attitude we have towards our jobs. Because job satisfaction or dissatisfaction has a lot of consequences for the organizations, as well as the individuals, there is a lot of research devoted to this phenomenon (Spector, 1997). According to Spector (1997), common job satisfaction facets are; appreciation, communication, coworkers, fringe benefits, job conditions, nature of the work, the organization itself, policies and procedures, pay, personal growth, promotion opportunities, recognition, security, and supervision.

A study from Turkey looked at 249 Turkish workers in different occupations and found that monthly payment was the best predictor of overall satisfaction; different measures of tenure, education, age, sex, and the number of children were predictors of different aspects of job satisfaction (Bilgiç, 1998).

Vast amount of research shows that there is a relationship between life and job satisfaction (Erdogan, Bauer, Truxillo, & Mansfield, 2012). A recent longitudinal

study found that if the effects of core self-evaluations and nonwork satisfaction are considered, there is no significant relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction (Rode, 2004). Rechner (1993) analyzed responses from 8000 participants from 10 different countries and found that job satisfaction explained only 1% of the variance in life satisfaction (as cited in Erdogan, Bauer, Truxillo, & Mansfield, 2012). The reasons for these inconsistent outcomes may be that job satisfaction is not the only indicator of satisfaction with the work domain and some work events may affect life satisfaction through non-work events (Erdogan et al., 2012). A study conducted in Turkey with 131 participants who work for the government looks at job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and their relationship. The results suggest that job and life satisfaction levels of the employees are higher than average and there is a positive relationship between these two variables (Kolbaşı & Bağcı, 2019). Another study looking at the relationship between life satisfaction and job satisfaction among social workers found a positive relationship as well (Keser, Öngen Bilir, & Aytaç, 2019).

A thorough multidisciplinary literature review on the relationship between life satisfaction and work domain is conducted by Erdogan, Bauer, Truxillo, and Mansfield (2012). They proposed a model for the relationship between work-related antecedents and life satisfaction. They reviewed 193 studies. According to their model, work-related antecedents are; need satisfaction, mindful activity, and job-related tension. Need satisfaction is made up of financial, interpersonal need and power and status. Mindful activity is made up of challenge, growth, and meaning. Job-related tension includes work-nonwork conflict, work context stressors, and role stressors. Proximal mediators of the model are quality of work-life, quality of nonwork life, and feelings of self-worth. Quality of work life is made up of job satisfaction, career satisfaction and perceived job stress. Quality of nonwork life is made up of family satisfaction, leisure satisfaction and health. Feelings of self-worth come from perceived control and perceived competence. These proximal mediators mediate the relationship between work-related antecedents and the outcomes. The outcomes are life satisfaction, performance,

commitment, turnover intentions and turnover (Erdogan, Bauer, Truxillo, & Mansfield, 2012). Table 1.2 is a summary of their model.

Table 1.2
A Process Model of the Relationship between Work-Related Antecedents and Life Satisfaction

Work Related Antecedents	Proximal Mediators	Outcomes
Need Satisfaction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial needs • Interpersonal needs • Power and Status 	Quality of Work Life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job satisfaction • Career satisfaction • Perceived job stress 	
Mindful Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge • Growth • Meaning 	Quality of nonwork life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family satisfaction • Leisure satisfaction • Health 	Life Satisfaction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance • Commitment • Turnover Intentions • Turnover
Job Related Tension <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work-nonwork conflict • Work context stressors • Role stressors 	Feelings of Self-Worth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived Control • Perceived Competence 	

Source: Erdogan, Bauer, Truxillo, & Mansfield, 2012

When reviewing the literature on satisfaction, “career satisfaction” is another term that comes up often. How do we differentiate “career satisfaction” from “job satisfaction”? Career satisfaction is not solely about work, it is the general feeling about overall accomplishments, skill development and income expectations (Erdogan, Bauer, Truxillo, & Mansfield, 2012). In this sense, it is a much broader term. Erdogan, Bauer, Truxillo, and Mansfield (2012) conducted a meta-analysis on the studies that investigate the relationship between career and life satisfaction. They found that the correlation between career and life satisfaction is slightly larger than job and life satisfaction.

1.4. LEAVING CORPORATE LIFE

When we are talking about leaving corporate life, the first question that comes to mind is “What is corporate life?” or “How do people generally perceive corporate life?”. To have an idea about this, I searched on google to examine how people perceive corporate life, however, the idea for this thesis comes from the general comments made, pages of blogs written and people I met in person that chose to leave corporate life. Therefore, I find it important to include some general perceptions of the corporate life. Also, there is no academic definition of corporate life.

When you search the keywords of “what is corporate life” or “corporate life” on google, some common themes emerge. If you have a corporate job that means hours of work are pre-set and usually between 8.00 am to 5.00 pm or 9.00 am to 6.00 pm. You have an office, open or close and mostly at a plaza. You have lunch breaks. You arrive and leave work by a shuttle provided by the company. You are not expected to do physical work, work is usually on a desk, and done through a laptop, which you take home and keep working if needed. Most of the time, there is no over-time payments for that work. Sometimes you go to the office during holidays, which do not count as over-time as well. Some corporate jobs offer private health insurance. People also state financial security when they are talking about corporate jobs.

As I stated at the beginning of this literature review, I could not find a study that only focused on leaving corporate life. The goal of this section of the literature review is to provide some examples of how this topic is discussed in public. Even though this topic could easily be a subtopic under “Mid-life Career Change”, people may be perceiving this beyond a simple career change activity. I will provide examples from Turkey.

As of April 27, 2020, if you simply type “Kurumsal Hayatı Bırakmak” (Leaving Corporate Life) on google, ten million and three hundred thousand results come up. Some of the topics on the first page are; “leaving the corporate life for my own enterprise”, “why did I leave the corporate life”, “I left the corporate life”, “ten things I learned after I quit my job”, “let’s listen from the ones who had courage to do it: leaving corporate life”... When you conduct the same search in English, three hundred and sixty million results come up. Some topics that come up in the first page are; “two years after leaving my corporate job”, “five things I wish I knew before leaving the corporate life”, “10 things you need to know before leaving your corporate job”, “burned out and want a big life reset?”, “drop out and stay out!”, “Leaving the corporate America for good”... There are also many podcasts on this topic. Some people who left corporate life became famous figures on social media. For instance, Mehmet Genç who calls himself “Rotasız Seyyah” has 421K followers on Instagram as of April 27, 2020. On his Facebook page, he explains how he left corporate life;

“In 2010, the electronics company I work for gave me a chance to get some education seminars about my profession in Taiwan. All my story started with this travel. After I am all done with this seminar, I also visited Hong Kong on the same trip. After these start-up experiences, I felt like I need to discover what the world offers me all around. My future plans also started to change, and life thoughts also have been changed. After I flew back to Turkey from Taiwan, I decided to end up my business career. And I started working as a freelance photographer. I also slowly kept traveling to new destinations. Now I try to travel so often and I wanna make it all lifestyle. This passion is spreading so fast into my all body cells. Now I know that I can’t stop it. It is a travel bug!!!”

(https://www.facebook.com/pg/rotasizseyyah/about/?ref=page_internal,
09.08.2019; 27.04.2020)

He wrote two books; his photography projects were shown on TV, and he is followed by thousands of people, but this is not the reason I include him on this thesis. It is the comments to his posts that took my attention. One of his followers left this comment on his website;

“I envy what you are doing. You have been to journeys I could never go to. You probably feel more alive than those of us who go to work and come back home every day. Sometimes I feel like I can do it too, but then I tell myself not to be crazy. I have a spouse, I have children. What you did crosses everyone’s mind, but no one can really dare to do it.” (<http://www.rotasizseyyah.com/kimim>,
15.08.2015; 27.04.2020)

Another follower adds;

“Just like you, I have been working like an ant in the IT department. But my situation is alarming, I am burned-out. Let’s assume we choose the path you have chosen; we need to have good financial resources? Isn’t it the most important thing? How could you achieve it? Please tell me it can be done without money so I can save myself from here, I want to live.” (<http://www.rotasizseyyah.com/kimim>, 01.09.2015; 27.04.2020)

There are many other comments similar to those I just quoted. Many people indicate their desire to leave the corporate life. Many mention that they are not really “living”.

There is also Kaan Sekban, a Turkish comedian whose fame is beyond social media now. He left corporate life and became a comedian. His jokes are mostly about corporate life and white-collar employees. He ridicules the corporate environment. He has over 371K followers as of April 27, 2020, on Instagram, and he has an active Youtube account where you can find interesting comments from the viewers. To his video where he ridicules budget performance meetings, a viewer commented;

“I worked in different sectors. The first sector I worked at was banking and I spent eight years there. After that, wherever I worked, I heard the same thing: “How could you leave banking? Are you crazy?” Everyone thinks we sit on a desk from 9.00 to 6.00 and leave. You can’t explain what it really is, they don’t understand. I started having panic attacks, I lost my temper most of the time. I had to use medicine for years. I had to work. The company had a shuttle, meals, and bonus, it was hard to find such a job. How could I leave, I had years of compensation. I was a bank employee; it was my job, what would people say? They’d think I was fired, who would leave on their own? You are at the headquarters, in a plaza, lunches are great, there is a shuttle. Everything seems so nice, right? No! Banking is a terrible sector; it is a terrible job.” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHG3th6lkKw>, 2018 ; 27.04.2020)

There are many other comments about mobbing, burn-out, and wanting to leave corporate life. It is possible to include examples like these for many pages, but I only wanted to take a small sample here for this thesis.

In sum, I started my literature review with career development theories, and I am ending it with the perceptions of corporate life. The results of my thesis are related to almost every topic in this literature review. I will make comparisons and connections in the discussion part.

1.5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main focus of this research is the process of leaving the corporate life. This research aims to answer following questions; (a) How do people decide to leave corporate life?, (b) How does the process continues once the individual makes a decision?, (c) What kind of changes occur in people’s lives?, (d) How does the end result makes them feel?, and (e) Which characteristics of corporate life people consider when leaving? Using grounded theory allowed us to come up with a model that explains the phenomenon of leaving the corporate life and the questions we aimed to answer.

1.6. RESEARCH IMPORTANCE

From the lack of literature, one can deduce there is not enough focus on only leaving corporate life. The career change theories take this phenomenon as a part of a mid-life career change. However, people who leave corporate life do not only aim to get a different career, but they try to avoid jobs that are by definition in line with “corporate jobs”. They change careers and even become “careerless” to avoid working at a corporate job.

Since this phenomenon became a popular one, it is vital to understand how the process works. Its implications for the individuals, as well as the corporations and society are essential to understand. This research also provides us clues about what makes corporate life unbearable for people with the intentions to leave and how to form a work environment to keep talent. There are no statistics available of people who leave corporate life. However, people who would like to leave corporate life, but cannot for reasons such as finances, lack of confidence, or family obligations may be experiencing the same negative consequences of corporate life. If this is the case, organizations may take precautions to prevent their employees to be intensely dissatisfied with their conditions, which may affect productivity.

For the individuals, this research can provide information on what to expect when leaving corporate life. Small individual differences aside, there is a model that shows common themes that arise during the process. There is also useful information on the issues arised during the process and how people overcame them or at least attempted to.

Mid-life career consultants can consider taking this model into account when they are providing consulting service to clients that would like to leave corporate life. A stage by stage approach on what to expect during the process can be a guideline for those consultants who are interested in mid-life career change.

1.7. ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Charmaz (2006) states that she has a different approach than Glaser and Strauss when it comes to how grounded theory works;

“In the classic grounded theory works, Glaser and Strauss talk about discovering theory as emerging from data separate from the scientific observer. Unlike their position, I assume that neither data nor theories are discovered. Rather, we are a part of the world we study and the data we collect. We *construct* our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices.” (p. 10)

Construction of grounded theory cannot be separated from our past and present involvements. Therefore, I would like to take some time to talk about my personal experiences about career and career change.

I remember my first day going to pre-school. My mother and I wrote a poem for my teacher and I memorized it to surprise my teacher. As soon as I learned how to write, I wrote poems for our pets, for my teachers etc... As I get older, I just kept writing. Recently I found my yearbook from 8th grade. Every single one of my friends thought I was going to be a famous author! During high school years, for some reason, I started to think I had to study something that is considered a vocation and to my childish perceptions, literature was not a vocation. I kept reading and writing but I focused on going to college to study psychology. I wanted to make my family proud. I thought I would be happy if I go to the best university and get a great job, get a lot of promotions, I could consider myself successful. It cost me many years to understand that I had to make a living by writing, or at least by being creative because even though I tried many other things and made money, I was unhappy.

Today, I am a 31-year-old woman, who has already changed more jobs than most of the people do in their lifetimes. My first job was counseling film crews on how to work with child actors. I worked as an HR specialist on a factory, worked at a small consultancy firm, worked as a scriptwriter for TV series and that became the longest job I held. When I could not find work as a scriptwriter, I went back to

corporate life, solely because of immediate monetary necessities. I worked at a well-known consultancy firm as a project manager, and the first chance I got for a scriptwriting job, I quit the consultancy firm. Right now, I write scripts for motion pictures that are used for corporate training and commercial purposes. Somehow, in the end, I managed to bring every prior experience I have together, even though they seem to be irrelevant. I created a job for myself doing what I am best at, and love the most. I work freelance and can finally make a living. I also have movie and tv series projects that are waiting to be written after this thesis. While writing this thesis, I changed three jobs, and moved three times. The last time I moved, I moved from the biggest city in Turkey, İstanbul, to a small town on the shores of Marmara Sea, Mudanya.

I experienced first-hand, many times, what it is like to change careers. Now I am experiencing what it is like to transfer from a metropolitan lifestyle to a small-town lifestyle. Making a career and lifestyle decisions was very hard. I am an only child whose parents have put too much effort and money on education. They expected me to have a successful career, and the first 10 years would not seem promising from their perspective.

Every change I made resulted in loss of time and money in the short term, which is expected. Financial hardships get worse with emotional and social hardships. It is easy to get lost in your expectations from life, your obligations, family's expectation, and also even your friends' and society's expectations. You always ask yourself if you are doing the right thing. Most of the time, people tell you, you are doing the wrong thing. I needed to be tough in order to have the strength to do what I always wanted to do: make a living by writing.

Before I started interviews, I assumed that stories of the participants were going to be different from mine. They did manage to stay in their corporate jobs for more than ten years, which I never could. I was partially right about my assumption. However, when it comes to hardships, they claimed many similar emotions about obligations, expectations of family, friends, and society, and also their expectations of themselves.

My story is different from the participants of this study. However, I was curious about people who left the corporate life after working for ten or more years successfully, after investing so much effort to become good at what they do, probably because I went through a lot of career crisis. To me, leaving a corporate job after many years would require much more different circumstances. I did not stay in corporate life long enough to say “I left” but I do not plan on getting a corporate job. My experiences were short but long enough for me to understand that neither the lifestyle nor the work environment is for me. I am just not a match. That is why I decided to focus on leaving the corporate life.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

This research started with the curiosity about “how” people left the corporate world. I needed an approach that would help me understand what stages people went through when leaving corporate life. With the help of my thesis advisor, we decided that the best approach for my purpose was using a qualitative approach, and we decided to use the grounded theory approach.

2.1. PARTICIPANTS

We decided to focus on how people left the corporate life, we choose to do purposeful sampling in order to understand the process. We decided to look for people who worked at corporate jobs for at least ten years, decided to leave corporate life voluntarily, and spent some amount of time out of corporate life, with no intention of going back to their corporate jobs. We wanted to avoid people who left involuntarily, who worked at a corporate job for a short period and decided it was not for them. The grounded theory approach requires the researcher to code after every interview. During the process of forming our model, we decided to include one participant who left corporate life in less than two months to understand the state the individual was in when he or she first left corporate life.

In order to choose participants, I wrote an announcement on social media with the purpose of research and the requirements for participants. Two of the participants were referred by individuals, others contacted the researcher through social media.

I interviewed nine participants for the purpose of this study. Table 2.1 consists of the summary of the participants’ demographic information, as well as their prior experiences.

All participants were interviewed once, except for participant nine. He was the only participant who left corporate life in the past two months. I interviewed him

after the second month he left corporate life, and six months later in order to understand the early stages of the process. Participants five and six are married, and they asked to be interviewed together. The average age of the participants is 44, the youngest participant is 37, and the oldest is 49. There were four male participants and five female participants. The number of married participants is six, two participants are divorced, and one participant has never married. All participants have at least an undergraduate degree. The number of participants who studied further and got their graduate degrees was three. The average time participants spent in corporate life is 14.6 years (10 years min., 18 years max.), and the average time they spent out of corporate life is 5.4 years (0.16 min., 10.0 max).

Table 2.1**Demographics of the Participants**

Part. Number	Sex	Age	Children	Marital Status	Education Level	Job in the Corporate Life	Current Profession	Sector	Years in Corporate life	Years in Current Profession	Reason to Leave the Corporate Life
1	Male	43	2	Married	Under-grad	Sales Director	Owner of a consultancy firm	Retail	12	7	Entrepreneurship
2	Female	37	1	Married	Under-grad	Marketing Manager	Part-time consultant	Banking	11	3,5	No other options
3	Female	43	0	Married	Graduate	Corporate Marketing Manager	Owner of a consultancy firm	Banking	13	5	Entrepreneurship
4	Female	47	1	Divorced	Under-grad	Director	Owner of a consultancy firm	Banking	18	4	No other option
5	Female	49	0	Married	Graduate	Software Developer	Non-profit Farming	Technology Software	17	10	Getting away from the city
6	Male	49	0	Married	Graduate	Software Developer	Non-profit Farming	Technology Software	17	10	Getting away from the city
7	Female	45	1	Married	Under-grad	Public Servant	Non-profit Farming	State	16	5	Raise the child out of the city
8	Male	41	0	Single	Under-grad	Graphic Designer	Owner of a studio	Television	10	4	To do arts
9	Male	43	0	Divorced	Under-grad	Maintenance Manager	Traveler	Technology Hardware	18	0,16	To travel the world

2.2. METHODOLOGY

The grounded theory approach is the perfect fit for our purpose of modeling the process of leaving corporate life. In the grounded theory approach, the theory is assumed to be grounded in the data itself, and the approach consists of guidelines for collecting and analyzing data to construct a theory (Charmaz, 2006). To attain the goal of forming a model of leaving corporate life, we used the grounded theory approach.

Grounded theory methods were first used by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss in 1960ies, and they wrote the book called *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* in 1967 (Charmaz, 2006). Glaser (1978) and Strauss (1987) claim there are certain defining components of grounded theory approach which is also followed during the current research. The researcher is simultaneously involved in data collection and analysis processes, constructs analytic codes and categories from the data, and uses constant comparative method. The theory development is advanced at each step of data collection and analysis. The memo writing takes an important part for the researcher to elaborate categories, specify their properties and define relationships. When sampling, researcher does not focus on population representation, instead the focus is on theory construction. Finally, the literature review is conducted after developing the model or the theory (as cited in, Charmaz, 2006).

Charmaz (2006) states that grounded theory only provides guidelines for the researchers, and they are not strict rules that need to be followed. This study is conducted in the light of those guidelines.

2.3. PROCEDURES AND DATA COLLECTION

About 15 participants reached out to us to be on the research. The first interview was with participant one, a male who worked at a corporate job for 12 years and spent seven years out of corporate life. After the first in-depth interview, we worked

on the coding. This led us to choose our next participant with a new mindset and this process kept going until we thought that the data we had was enough. Therefore we ended up conducting interviews with nine participants. Before every interview, the participants were informed about the study, the voice recording and they signed consent forms. Only Participant 7 was interviewed via Skype due to her living in another city. She gave her consent through voice recording. Participant 8 was interviewed at his art studio. The rest of the interviews were held in cafés.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews consisted of three demographic questions and approximately 30 open ended questions (Appendix A) aimed at understanding the process of leaving corporate life. These questions consisted of their early life experiences, their corporate experiences, experiences of leaving corporate life, present situation and future expectation. Questions were modified a little every time after coding of an interview, in order to construct a model.

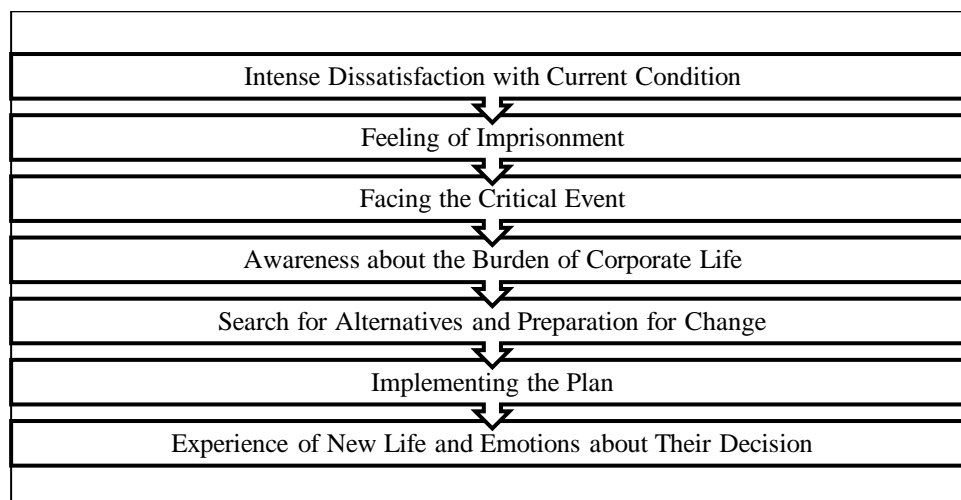
CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

3.1. MODEL FOR LEAVING THE CORPORATE WORLD

During the coding of the interviews, one thing became noteworthy. As every interview has been over, it became more clear that negative feelings were present for most of the participants when they talk about their corporate life experiences. When asked about their experiences in corporate life, participants expressed negative emotions which could be covered under the theme of dissatisfaction which is the starting point for leaving the corporate world. Feelings of dissatisfaction consisted of six aspects which will be elaborated later. Dissatisfaction was followed by a “feeling of imprisonment”. There is a common idea of a ”critical event” which ends with gaining “awareness” of the situation. Later on, participants go through “the search for alternatives and preparation period”. Next comes the “implementing the plan period”. The consequences of the implementation and how participants felt after leaving the corporate life is expressed as “experience of new life and emotions about the decision”. A summary of the model can be found in Figure 3.1.

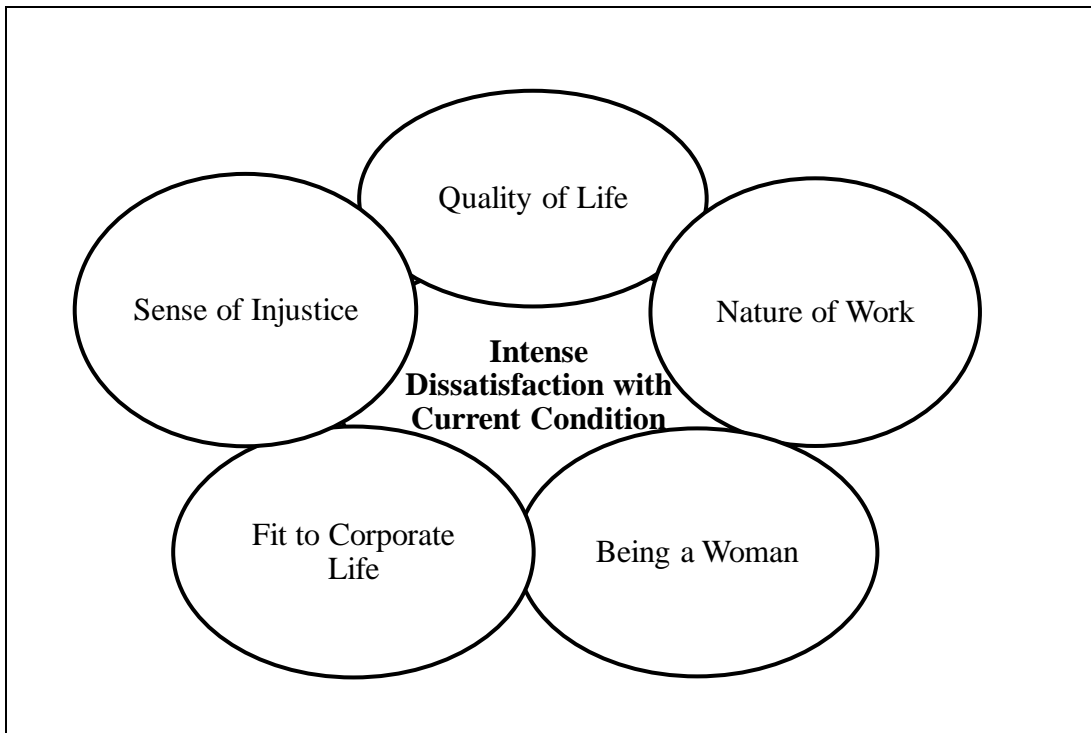
Figure 3.1 Summary for Model for Leaving the Corporate World



3.1.1. Intense Dissatisfaction with Current Condition

The participants mention certain aspects of corporate life that made them experience negative emotions such as misery, stress, and depression. These aspects are Quality of Life, Nature of Work, Being a Women, Fit to Corporate Life, and Sense of Injustice. Participants felt that demands of the corporate life had an important effect on how they spend their leisure time, how they connect with their family and friends, and how satisfied they are with the time they spent away from work. These demands of corporate life added to their dissatisfaction. I will be explaining this effect further while explaining the ‘Quality of Life’ aspect of dissatisfaction, however, this effect comes up in almost all topics and have an important influence on the decision-making process. Themes of Dissatisfaction is modeled in Figure 3.2.

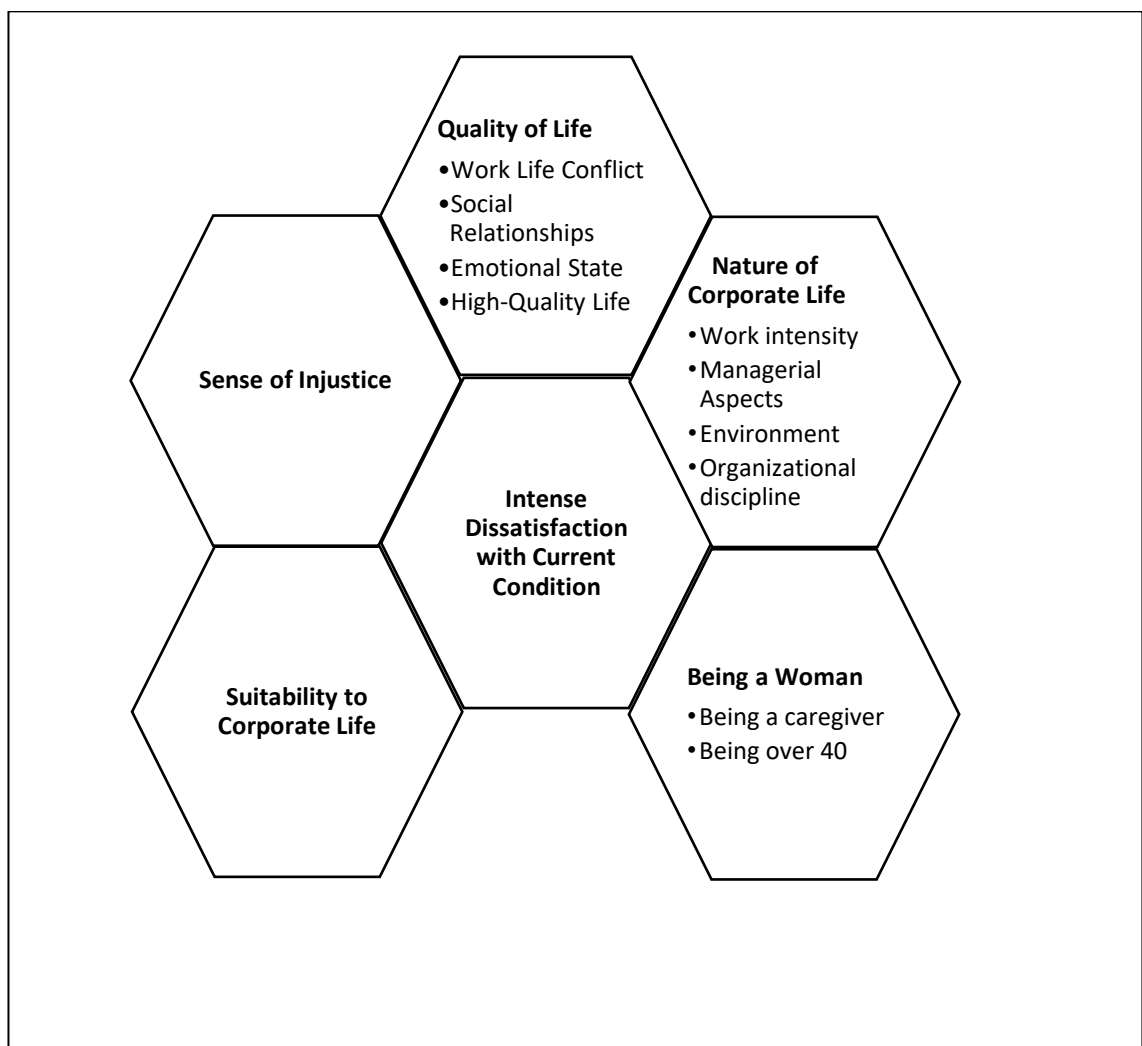
Figure 3.2 Themes of Intense Dissatisfaction with Current Condition



You may see from Figure 3.2 that all the circles touch each other. Even though these topics will be explained one by one; it is important to point out that they influence each other. For instance, being a woman is taken as a separate topic, however, what awakens the feeling of dissatisfaction is not solely being a woman but the responsibilities that brings in one's life. Therefore it is also connected to quality of life.

For a better understanding, a detailed list of aspects of dissatisfaction is provided Figure 3.3

Figure 3.3 Subthemes of Intense Dissatisfaction with Current Condition



3.1.1.1. Quality of life

When participants were talking about their dissatisfaction, they mostly talked about things that affected their quality of life in general. They mentioned Work-Life Conflict, Social Relationships, and Emotional State. They also mentioned their ideas about the prerequisites of maintaining a quality of life while pursuing a career in corporate life. For a better understanding see Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 Aspects of Quality of Life

Quality of life
Work life conflict
Social Relationships
Emotional state
High-Quality Life

3.1.1.1.1. Work-Life Conflict

The issues about work-life conflict arise from the responsibilities of work affecting the participant's responsibilities in private life. These include self-care and providing care for others.

Work life conflict came up more often during the interviews with female participants. This may be because women are expected to take care of children and family members in Turkish society.

A pre-set work time is another aspect that needs to be considered under work-life conflict. A pre-set work time is the hours that employees are supposed to spend in the office. In Turkey, this is usually 08:00 to 17:00 or 09:00 to 18:00. Participant five suggested:

“For me, it is this classical long working hours, eight in the morning, six or seven in the evening and later coming home tired, eating something, going

to bed and the same thing next morning all over again. I did not want to live life until the end like that.” (Participant five)

Even though some firms have flexible hours, this is not the common rule. There are two aspects of pre-set work time that participants felt were lowering their quality of life. One aspect is that the hours were not flexible. They had to be at work at a certain hour no matter how much sleep they need or how tired they might be from doing housework, taking care of children or family members in need. The other aspect was even though the hours were set and they had to obey it, firms did not have to obey these hours and participants usually had to work over time. This left no time for them to handle their private matters. It was also harder for female participants when they needed to care for their children. They complained about fatigue due to having to wake up early and also when they had to work over time; they felt guilty about not spending that time with their children. Even the time devoted to self-care awakened feelings of guilt for working mothers.

Participant two explained the conflict as:

“You know sometimes you go for a massage at the weekend? Is there such a luxury, doing things to only relax? You cannot do this in corporate life because you work like a slave, you do not have the luxury to spend the weekend for yourself. You have to be with your children. You want to spend time with them too, but you do not have time left to rest, to feed your soul. Therefore, you cannot live the luxury I am living right now, in the corporate life. At least I couldn’t live this luxury back then. I was dying from neglect; I couldn’t even go to get manicure or pedicure. I wasn’t able to work out. I was fat. (*At the time of the interview, she arrived from a run on Bosphorus and she looks fit.*) The only joy I had was eating. I lost 20 kilos. I gained 20 kilos in corporate life and I lost after I left. I was eating out of depression back then. I started to work out. Now I do Pilates three times a week and I run two-three times a week.” (Participant two)

Participant four was having issues with her teenage son at school. She was stressed about the issue and had to take some time off from work. She suggests:

“It affected my career. As I said he is tense (her son), I am tense at home. And my tension was not only from work. Women cannot separate work life from home. There is not such a thing as “private life can be separated from work life”. That is a lie. Man do it if they can. If you have a problem at home, there is no way it doesn't affect your work, if you have a problem at work there is no way it doesn't affect your home. Therefore, things I went through; sorrow, heartbreak, stress... all of them affected my work life and made my life harder as a whole.” (Participant four)

To quote a male participant, I will take participant nine. Participant nine claims that he could spare time for three different aspects of his life while working at a corporate job. He states:

“I had different responsibilities in a (political) party, and I also had a nightlife when I had a corporate job. I could handle these at the same time. I had a girlfriend and we traveled to let's say Czech Republic. If we had 10 days, we would trek through the south of Czech Republic and walk all the way to Austria. We would camp at Austria and return. And I could go back to work on Monday. In this sense, my life was never sterile when I worked. It was colorful compared to others.” (Participant 9)

When I followed his claims with a question: “Do you believe work-life balance is possible in corporate life?” he answered:

“It is necessary for “dear managers” to make employees believe such a thing so that the corporate life can be maintained. It is not a healthy way of working. It is coded for more surplus value and planned accordingly. Naturally, in order to make this sustainable, they'll say: “Dear friend, you should balance your life so that you can serve this purpose for a very long time. I do not want you to go fast and give out three years later. I want to utilize you for twenty years.” (Participant 9)

He believes corporate life give the responsibility of the work-life balance to the individual. Another male participant, participant one explained his issues with working hours. His explanation suggest that pre-set working hours can be

influenced by the culture of the firm. He suggest that people who left early or on time were discredited in the environment;

“We had long working hours because people who left work early or on time were frowned upon in that environment. Even though it was a big company, expectations from the employees was that they work hard for long hours and ask for nothing in return. All this was wrong to my soul.” (Participant one)

3.1.1.1.2. Social Relationships

Participants feel that social relationships in corporate life is different from social relationships in private life. For a person who works intensively there is no time for private life. So that their relationships with their co-workers become very important. Participant 3 states that: "Even to get your hair done, they open up a hair salon in the plaza, they open up a dry cleaner there. It is almost like you are kept there for breeding.". Participant 9 has a similar perspective:

“Why do they give us health insurance? To make us work for longer hours. Why do they give us lunch? So that you eat lunch at the office and keep working. So that you won’t lose time going outside. Corporations give us some benefits but they do not do that out of love. They do that to keep their own system in line.” (Participant nine)

From participant three and nine’s statements, we can conclude that it is not uncommon for people to spend most of their time in the office. This makes the co-worker relationships more important. Which is most of the time, based on mutual benefit. Therefore the way co-workers socialize is also an aspect of dissatisfaction. Participant 1 talks about the need to protect oneself from others: “Corporate life is not about doing your job. It is about trying not to strengthen someone's hand. It is a highly political environment.". When asked about the relationships in the corporate world, participants used words like "dogs eat dogs world", "abrasive" and “surviving in tricks”. These examples suggest that working at a corporate

environment limits the chances of having a social life outside of that world and relationships in that world are too political for the participants.

Participant 3 suggests that corporate co-worker relationships do not continue after leaving the corporate world:

“You think when you become a freelancer, your friends (from your previous firm) would support you. That does not happen. They make things as much difficult as they can within their power. Maybe they do not do this on purpose but they do it instinctively because you got out and they couldn’t. They know deep down that going to work with a Mercedes is no oil painting. They do not want to face it. I use the metro for transportation I go around in flat shoes all day but I feel the sun on my forehead.” (Participant three)

It is possible to point out the generalization made by the participants. They perceive as if everyone want to leave corporate life. This can be considered as a biased perception, which is present when a person is unhappy.

3.1.1.1.3. Emotional State

Emotional State is about how participants felt during their last years in corporate life. Common feelings consist of unhappiness, fatigue, stress, burn-out, depression and emotional agony. Participant 1 suggested that he started using anti-depressants in order to manage his panic attacks while Participant 2 suggested she was eating unhealthy in order to manage her depression. Participant 3 suggested: “You live in agony so much that is all you talk about in corporate life.” Participants who also left the big city find these negative feelings mostly connected to the city life. Moreover, they do not distinguish city life from corporate life since they believe corporate life designates the way of city life.

Participant five suggested:

“At first, it wasn't that bad, I liked my job. I wasn't doing something I did not like. There is no problem with doing the job I like. Only the description of the job and how it has an effect on my relationships with my family, the time I spend with the loved ones... That pushed me out of corporate life. On

top of that the city, how people treat each other there... There is a huge difference between living in a big city and a small town. People do not look at each other in big cities, they do not say hi. You hold the door, they never say thank you. There is a horrible alienation. Small towns are like small neighborhoods, I did not experience it when I was a child. But what I feel when I am here is good relationships with neighbors. When you come to the cafe, people know you, it is unbelievable and it shouldn't be abandoned. We came back here because of that.” (Participant five)

Participant nine explained his stress levels as:

“For example, I was living in Cihangir. My workplace was in Levent. The first thing I did in the morning when I woke up was to check Facebook to see if there are any terrorist attacks. To see if I can use the metro that day. Waking up with this thought raises your stress level 20%. Yes, you go out on the street, you ride with a group of people who couldn't get their sleep, who frown. You ride the metro. You get in with a crowded group. Most of them “unhappy” and looking at their cell phones. No one is aware of the other person. Everyone is trying to push you to get to his or her own way. No one yields. Your stress level rises to 30%-35%. You get out of the metro; there are two panzers in front of the Mall where my office is. There is a consulate where my office is, and there is always a police lineup in front of it. You enter your workplace accompanied by panzers and police, every day. Not one day or two days. You come to your workplace, and you already have 50% stress. In order not to shout at someone, you need to be very... in order not to explode to the first negative thing you need to be very patient. You get back home in the evening; the level goes up to 70%-80% because of the things you face at work. When I worked I was almost always tense. I would start an argument because of something very unimportant. I realize now I was the one started the argument. At the other corner, it is the opposite. What is there to make you tense out of the city, in a natural environment, when you wake up?” (Participant nine)

It is easy to see how social developments such as terrorist bombings affect the participant's stress-level. He attributes his negative emotions to extrinsic factors. He is pessimistic about other people around him and disturbed by their alienation. One could easily argue that the conditions he describes, the attacks and the security measures are temporary, and in reality, they diminished over time. However, at the time of writing this, there are new measures taken for the COVID-19 pandemic. It may be something else in the future. Therefore, it is possible to read these social developments as events that may have stressful consequences for people living in the big cities, no matter what the source is.

3.1.1.1.4. A Possibility of High-Quality Life

Three participants suggest that it is possible to increase life quality and be satisfied when working at a corporate job. The two criteria for that are to have a home that is close to your work, and not having to work overtime. If these two criteria are fulfilled participants believe they can spend time with their friends and family, and spend time on their hobbies. They believe it would increase their quality of life.

Work – home distance seems to be more important for female participants. They suggest that it is a must for a woman and having a home close to work makes life much easier. Participant four explained: "My luck was that I could go to the office in 5 minutes. I was never a woman who was groveling in İstanbul traffic. It was unbelievable, you start life winning 2-0 as a working woman.". Participant four also suggests that she was managing work and home better because of the distance: "Let me tell you a funnier thing, I would start the laundry in the morning and come home during lunch break to hang the wet clothes. I had that kind of luxury because I lived close by." What she defines as "luxury" is the ability to finish household chores during work hours. The real luxury is the time saved later on in the day, so that the individual can spare that time to herself. As also stated in the topic work-life conflict, women have more responsibilities at home than men. Every extra hour

that is saved from the traffic or the household chores may go into self-care or spending time with family and friends.

3.1.1.2. Nature of Corporate Life

Nature of corporate life is how participants perceive corporate life. This consists of work intensity, managerial aspects which we decided to name with one of the in vivo codes as “managers can make your world hell”, physical work conditions, and work discipline. When asked to define the corporate world, participants used negative concepts such as; slavery, chaos, too much responsibility, working hard but not needing too much in return, and exploitation.

Participant nine suggests: “Corporate life plans everything with logic. That logic is not based on our needs, it is based on the company’s, that class’s, and system’s continuity.” (Participant nine)

Table 3.2 consist of themes that make up the Nature of Corporate Life.

Table 3.2 Nature of Corporate Life

Nature of Corporate Life

1. Work Intensity
 2. Managerial Aspects – Managers can make your world hell
 3. Physical Work Conditions
 4. Work Discipline
-

3.1.1.2.1. Work Intensity

Work intensity is how hard and how long participants had to work to complete their tasks. They mentioned they faced responsibilities they weren't ready for, they worked for longer hours than expected and they had more workload than they could handle. They also suggest that workload increased over time. Even

though these hard conditions were sometimes seen as a challenge to overcome, most of the time participants ended up feeling burnt out. Participant four was given a promotion she felt made her workload unbearable. She doesn't think that she was ready for such a workload. She explains:

“I had to do it, as I told you. I had to do it but I couldn't handle it anymore. Because of four departments, four meetings a day. You have no time left to do work. There were times I attended two meetings at the same time, in rooms next to each other. I talk about something with someone, go next door and listen to what is going on there, get some ideas... They asked me to attend three meetings at the same time once, I was like whoa!” (Participant four)

She also suggests that she didn't have time to fulfill her basic needs:

“I was responsible with a team of 45. Some of them I am directly responsible. One day I went downstairs from a meeting to my office and I left my stuff on my desk and people filled my room, they are people that are reporting directly to me. I just wanted to go to the bathroom. I yelled ‘I have to pee!’ So girls waited in the bathroom while the boys waited outside the bathroom. To such degree, yes! They had to ask me some things otherwise business is not running. I couldn't handle that. I said enough.” (Participant four)

It is necessary here to question why so many employees directly report to one manager? There may be design or management issues in where Participant four previously worked. This made her job unbearable.

3.1.1.2.2. Managers Can Make Your World Hell

From the perspective of the participants, managers are very important people who set the tone in the work environment. Participants think that managers designate the culture of the organization and sometimes managers come even before the culture. When they talk about managers, they mostly bring up their managers' behaviors. Also perceived competencies of managers is very important for some of

the participants. Some participants referred to managers as cruel, insufficient, authoritarian, and exploitative. Participant 1 explains “I have faced the worst mobbing there. All managers faced mobbing from the upper management.” Participant 4 suggests that "To be realistic, there is a superior-subordinate relationship in corporate life." Participant 2 suggests:

“You should guess that I have a lot of managers from corporate life come to me because of my job now (*recruitment consultant*). They complain about their firms. They tell me why they want to leave, they complain about their managers and tell me what kind of a firm they'd like to work at. I see the same thing in everyone when I look at it today. Why wouldn't I want to go back to corporate life? All firms are the same. You hear firm X (*a popular love brand company*) everywhere, it used to be my love brand. I'd say if I worked there I wouldn't ask for anything else. Inside the firm, you see that everyone is unhappy. A manager is more important than culture. That manager can make your world hell. Right, you may need to forget what you know as to right or wrong or you go somewhere else, you see what kind of politics people play to get promotion even in popular companies. Relationships are more important than the work you do. All the firms I mention here are love brands. I see now in consultancy that all the firms are the same.” (Participant two)

3.1.1.2.3. Physical Work Conditions

The environment consists of the physical workplace and its properties. Most of the answers were about the environment being ‘set.’ When asked about what she noticed first after leaving the corporate life Participant three answered: “I realized there are four seasons.” She was referring to the temperature that is set in the office, and she didn’t experience the weather conditions outside during the day.

It is also clear that participants had an image of ‘plaza’ in their minds. That image was positive in some aspects but negative in others. Participant 4 suggests: “My firm had an advantage, it was not a pretentious plaza environment. It was one

of the oldest plazas, the profile of employees and properties of the building, it was not a pretentious plaza life.” Even though most participants find these properties negative, Participant 2 suggested that some of the properties of plaza life may add to the feeling of belongingness:

“There is a profile of a white collar, people who wear suits. There is a certain pleasure of being in that environment, I can say that. I sometimes miss that pleasure. ... Even going into the plaza is something. You go through security; you show your ID. It even smells different. Being a part of something that big can only be felt in corporate life if you are not the owner of such a corporation.” (Participant two)

3.1.1.2.4. Work Discipline

When I asked participants if there was anything that they've learned from corporate life that was useful after leaving, participants talked about discipline and being systematic. Although it seems like this aspect should not be discussed under dissatisfaction, discipline was part of their dissatisfaction when in corporate life. This might be due to the rule makers. In organizations, participants did not make the rules, and they mentioned they needed flexibility, but in an environment where their flexibility seemed infinite, they needed to make some rules for themselves. Participant one states:

“I can tell that discipline, I learned at least this, I needed to be disciplined. I learned it from the firm. I needed to take myself to work every day. I needed to dress in a certain way, I needed to act a certain way, and I did not know these things before corporate life. I did not have much experience back then. Therefore corporate life thought me about organizational management and power.” (Participant one)

Participant 6 talked about how being systematic helps them in their new lifestyle;

“There are departments in corporate life, there are meetings, positions, you report to someone, you explain your status etcetera. Except for the farming

stuff we do on the land, we have non-profit activities with people here. The activities are about sustainability, building a community, protection of the environment. We have some projects, managing these projects is not very different than managing projects in corporate life. People who learned how to do these things very well in corporate life, use their talent to manage non-profit projects here. Such things we've learned in corporate life are more beneficial here, I think." (Participant 6)

To contrast how they perceived project management while in corporate life, I would like to quote Participant 6 one more time on project management:

"We were doing projects for many years when we were in corporate life. It has been said that certain stages of the project should end on certain dates. As that date approached, stress increased. You did not go home in the evening, but it was not very clear why it should be finished next week. What would happen if it was finished three months later? Why did we do this project first and leave the other one for later? In fact, the other one was more important. If that can easily wait 3 months, why can't this one wait? I think that every one of these thoughts are a terrible source of stress, because people cannot easily agree on these issues. On the one hand, you have to finish this project, but you don't believe yourself why you should finish it on a certain date." (Participant 6)

3.1.1.3. Being a Woman

Gender makes difference regarding to dissatisfaction in corporate life. It may be due to women having more responsibilities at home than men in Turkish society. Women are expected to provide care for their children and their family members. There are five female participants in this study. For three of the female participants, having children or taking care of a family member had a very important effect on their decisions to leave. Participant two gave birth and her father discovered that he had a terminal disease at very similar time periods. Participant three had to take care of her sick mother. Participant four had to deal with her son's

issues at school which ended up her son getting therapy and having to change schools. When they talked about these issues, it was clear that they were the primarily concerned parties in their families about these issues and they had to attend. Even though their firms managed to give them some free time, that time was spent with family members. This time away from work made them realize how hard it is when they have to go to work and care for their families at the same time.

There are two important aspects about being a woman that may have an effect on a woman's decision making about leaving the corporate life: being a caregiver and being over 40.

3.1.1.3.1. Being a Caregiver

This topic includes being a mother and also taking care of other family members. Becoming a mother and how this increases the dissatisfaction of the female employee is about how their organizations handle maternity leave and what support they can provide for the new mothers. Organization's flexibility in terms of pre-set work hours and being able to give time off when mothers need to be with their children is very important. Participant two told the story of how she got back from maternity leave:

“I didn't go back to work until my son was 5 months old. General manager called me and told me she was going to promote me. She said: "I came to a conclusion that things aren't the same at work without you." Because she flattered me, I said I was coming back. I went back. I was still pumping milk. 15 days before I went back to work they told me to go on a business trip. It was a nice business trip but before even starting work, this is life, my son learned that I can leave him and go. When he was only 4,5 months old, I left him and was gone for three-four days. I pumped my milk there, so I wouldn't stop lactating. I threw my milk away. There were no business trips later on but I had a busy schedule. There was no time to pump at the office. General manager, even though she was a woman, she wasn't really tolerant about pumping milk. She would say 'Is this a cow farm?'. When this

happens and you are a career focused person... I stopped. I stopped my milk after 15-20 days I got back to work. I could still nurse but you have to make a choice.” (Participant two)

It is apparent that having a child may conflict with the requirements at work. However, interestingly, it may also conflict with the decision of leaving the corporate world since families are responsible for providing for their children. If leaving the corporate world seems financially risky for the participant, participants delay or change their plans with less risky solutions while leaving the corporate world. Participant four explained it clearly:

“If I didn't have a child back then I could still leave. But what happened after I left would be different. Because until then, I would be more than fine with the money I had. Having a child brings different responsibilities, it brings the responsibility to live in İstanbul because he also has a father (divorced parents) and he needs to be with his father too. He needs to go to school, we need money to send him to school. If I were alone, I would be free. I would use my resources efficiently. If I wanted I would be painting, taking pictures, playing the piano, I would have a life like that but I do not have a life like that. Still the same... I had to go on a survival mode in the big city.” (Participant four)

Participant 3 had to delay her decision of getting out of the corporate world because of her mother's illness. She had to travel every week to see her mother and even though this made her life harder, she couldn't think of leaving the corporate world, because she felt she didn't have the strength with everything that was going on.

“I got back (*from America*) but my mother got sick. She went through a very serious depression. It was one year after my return. This is, unfortunately, the turning point of my life. My life became family focused. I couldn't change jobs for 10 years after that because I chose to keep status-quo at work and to give my energy to my family in İzmir. Therefore my private life was seriously interrupted.” (Participant three)

As can be seen from the examples, having a child or providing care for other family members have different effects on making the decision to leave corporate life. Financial concerns may influence how women make their decisions. Participant two was not the only bread earner in the family, at the end of all the things she went through she decided to leave the corporate life and looked for other options that can give her the flexibility to take care of her child. Participant four was divorced and was the only breadwinner in the family so she had concerns about financial issues and that affected her decisions after she left the corporate life. Women may perceive the decision of leaving the corporate life risky if they have other responsibilities like raising a child or taking care of family members, however in the long term those responsibilities may end up being one of the main reasons to leave the corporate world because of the conflict they create with the corporate life.

3.1.1.3.2. Being over 40

Some female participants mentioned that the age of 40 is a turning point for women. Participant four expresses her thoughts about the age of 40: “40 is an age where things change, they say. Things settle during the end of 30ies.” Participant three thinks that corporate life does not need people over 40. She explains:

“Young people do this work very well. There is no difference in technical abilities between someone that is 25 and me. I’ve learned many things from doing my job for many years but people younger than 40 know better than me. I have experience, I have managerial assets, but there are a few managers in the firms. There are not enough managerial positions; it does not add up. ... I have friends who couldn’t find a job for over a year. Some even longer than that. They are well equipped but what will the corporate life do with you, what will it do? You will not work for little money anymore; you are an expert on a very specific topic, you can not do everything, you will not fit every role. You want more vacation days. I think corporate life only needs us as managerial or consultancy positions. It does

not need the drama we bring. Because they are big machines and they always want to go forward.” (Participant three)

Participant four shared an experience where she met a group of women who were at their early 40ies and who made changes in their work life:

“We are all in 40-year-old transformations. One of them closed her firm and became a yoga instructor, one of them was in corporate communications in a big firm and she started writing songs and singing and she released an album. One of them had a child at the age of forty and was questioning everything. One of them was about to get a divorce. We were eight women who were in transformation. We used the word "awareness." We have a group; we wrote a blog about this.” (Participant four)

From a wider perspective, it can be concluded that symbolically age 40 is perceived as a crucial time in women's lives when they look back and may need to make adjustments in their lives and career even though it is harder to move around in corporate life, they may end up pursuing other goals.

3.1.1.4. Fit to Corporate Life

This topic is highly related to the nature of corporate life and work. How participants perceive their fit to the corporate life is a very important aspect on their dissatisfaction at corporate life.

Misfit was not something that appeared suddenly. Most of the participants knew they were not cut out for the corporate world from the beginning, but they felt they did not have any options and tried to fit in. Participant one thinks he is usually dissonant in life, let alone corporate life. He suggests:

“I think there are two types of people in this world. First type is harmonious with the world and life and do not think there is a problem with it, the second type is dissonant, they are the ones that want to create their own world. I am the second type and let me tell you, it is miserable” (Participant one)

Even though misfit does not suddenly end with leaving the corporate world, incidents add up, and finally, it becomes unbearable for an employee to stay in that

environment. If there is a misfit, one can stay in the corporate life, but in the long term, if the aspects that created the misfit are still there, this may become a reason for one to look for options out of corporate life. Conflict sometimes occurs with one's values, other times it can occur because of the career choices that were made early on in life. For instance, Participant eight believes that he was different since he was a child but no one guided him to pursue his abilities. Instead, he had to go with the flow, and that was finding a corporate job.

“I have no problem genetically, but do you know what, my mindset is different, I had a problem with reading. I lost because I started in a stupid system. I could not fit the system from the beginning. If you cannot fit the system from the beginning you are labeled as stupid. The insecurity it caused me lasted for 35 years. At five years old, six years old, seven years old, let's say eight years old I could not learn how to read. I had a problem. I was 34 or 35 years old when I finally realized I could achieve something. I am 40 now, and I still find new aspects about myself. I started to like myself. For all my life, I was introverted. People were like “You are good at football.” I responded, “No, I am not,” people said “You make beautiful paintings and I was like “No, I don't”. Now I tell myself “Yes, I do, I do them very well.” I am just discovering myself. Because as I said, my family was not guiding me. They did not tell me to become an astronaut but they told me I had to go to school. That much was even a big pressure for me.”
(Participant eight)

The role of the family here should also be considered. Their lack of providing guidance, and overlook to what their child wants or chooses builds a background for misfit.

Participant four also felt that she was more of an artistic person. However, her father had a different career path in his mind for her:

“I was playing the guitar, I was in the theater, my dream job was to work for IKS (culture and arts foundation). However, what happened? I had a father who said, “You will work at a bank.” I could not even become an

architect, not even a translator which is very popular today. I wish I could go to the school of translation and interpreting.” (Participant four)

Value fit is also important for participants. It is possible to get a sense of how misfit piled up over the years and finally Participant 1 decided to make a change:

“The thought of justice makes one struggle, one should understand early on there is no such thing, it is not protecting yourself, justice is abstract. One needs to get away from the thought of justice as soon as possible. I realized it there and therefore it became my last corporate job.” (Participant one)

Both participant 9, 5 and 6 think that corporate life is not natural. Humans by nature misfit to the system. These participants also think that city life is not natural. Their thought resulted in them leaving the corporate life and the city life altogether. Participant six suggested: “I think of humans as mammals. I think of mammals as a part of all other creatures alive. I do not think the problems of humans are the most important problems. I do not think humans should be protected no matter what.” Participant nine suggests very similar thoughts and he talks about the physical fit of humans to corporate life:

“There is an evolutionary process until now. We were evolved to live in nature. Now, almost all of us have back pains, hernia. Is there such a creature in the nature that sits like us? Is there a mammal close to your biology that sits? There is no such thing. Are there a species that sit eight hours a day, in front of a computer to only move its fingers?” (Participant nine)

For participant three misfit was visible from outlooks and behaviors:

“There is peer pressure in corporate life. In every level, and it is strongly present. There is a certain dress code, certain behavior code. I could never fit into that. I was always liked but in a way that a naughty child was liked. I was like the crazy person of the bank. No one had anything to say because I was working like a horse. I mean, I was trying to play football by volleyball rules. With the age of 40, this becomes more clear. Corporate life does not want people like us.” (Participant three)

During most of the interviews, as mentioned above, participants expressed their misfit to the corporate world. The reasons change from characteristics to physical requirements of the corporate life. Misfit plays a role in participants decision to leave corporate life. When they were asked about others who did not leave the corporate life or are not thinking about leaving, participants formulated the idea that they must be satisfied with the conditions or the conditions must fit their characteristics and needs.

3.1.1.5. Sense of injustice

The sense of injustice came up many times during the interviews. Some aspects of corporate life that were seen as unjust were: corporate life being a part of the capitalist system, the work itself requiring lying to the public, unjust treatment in benefits and promotions. Some of the participants believed they were treated unjustly after they disclose their decision to leave, which made their negative beliefs about corporate life even stronger. Participant three suggests: "There was nothing from the bank I worked at. No compensations, nothing. You work for 15 years, there are even more terrible things that happened, I couldn't get my bonus I earned for that year." Participant eight suggests that: "I like to work at a firm where I know how much my boss makes. That way I am not deceived." Participant nine's perception of corporate life consists of surplus value and how it is not divided equally:

"We are not supposed to see the big picture. In order for us to run like a hamster, we are not supposed to see the mill. Because when you say 'I will see this as a whole and start enjoying it, you realize you produce surplus value and other people enjoy that surplus value, not you. It is not a threat to the system if three or five people come to that realization but it is problematic if masses come to that conclusion.'" (Participant nine)

Participants believe that it is not smart or professional to look for justice in the corporate world. However, they were still emotionally affected by the incidents they perceived unjust.

Above I tried to explain the aspects of dissatisfaction of the participants who decided to leave the corporate world. These aspects consist of Quality of Life, Nature of Work, Being a Women, Suitability to Corporate Life, and Sense of Injustice. As you may have noticed they are not entirely separated from each other, many aspects go hand in hand. Therefore a difference in one aspect may influence many other aspects. This issue will be further discussed in the discussion session of this work.

3.1.2. Feeling of Imprisonment

The feeling of imprisonment showed itself on the data when I asked participants to compare corporate life to their current life. They associated the time spent in corporate life with words that evoked the feeling of imprisonment. The contents of this aspect seems similar to that explained in work-life conflict, however, the difference is that participants felt like the situation they were in was not going to change soon and they were trapped. For instance, Participant six suggests: "I used to go on a lot of business trips, I had to be in a room in a certain hour, I had to be in a building in certain hours, it was untenable." However, when they talk about their current life, they were far more positive with the words and emotions. For instance, Participant four suggested:

"I make my own schedule now. If I work on Saturday, I know I can do something on weekdays but it was not like that back then. You have to be there from nine to six. If you go out five minutes early, they ask where you are going. They tell you they have to treat all departments equally. Am I going to get work done in the last five minutes? I am packed and I am leaving. That's it. After a while, it felt very stupid to deal with this stuff."
(Participant four)

Most participants felt like they were not in control of how they lived their daily lives. The reasons for that was not limited to the hours spent in the office. For instance the location of their house was also influenced by the location of their office. Decisions that were not related to work, were actually influenced by their

work and the life-style that workplace demands. They suggest that even the necessary events such as going to doctor created a great amount of stress. Participants felt like there was no room to actually live their lives. Participant two suggested:

“The shift ended in 6:30 pm hustle and bustle. I could get out of the office at seven pm the earliest. I came home around 08:00 pm. I had my son sleep in the afternoon just so I could spend time with him when I get home. I came home, I bathed him, I fed him, I put him to sleep. Then I watched something on TV with my husband and waited until midnight to feed my son milk or something so that he wouldn't wake up during the night. He would wake up, and there is another sleepless night. I woke up in the morning, same hustle and bustle, same pace. What did I get out of this life?” (Participant two)

Participant five referred to her time in corporate life as ‘dead end’:

“This flexibility here, this makes me very happy. Whatever happens, I do not feel like I have to go to work right now although there is something wrong at the house, no I do not feel that! It would be a scary dead end to turn to.” (Participant five)

I asked the question of why some people stay in corporate life in order to get a sense of participants’ perceptions. Almost all participants expressed that no one would work in corporate life unless he or she needed money. Two of the participants thought that people who stay in corporate life stay because they find meaning in things that corporate life has to offer. When participant three said “Driving a Mercedes that belongs to the firm may be important and meaningful to some people”, participant two said “Titles may be important for some people and they may feel empty without them.”. They all concluded that the reason behind staying may be financial, or finding a meaning. Participant three suggested:

“I decided to change my life because I realized the ship was not going in the right direction. There were steady loops in my life. I was in continuous loops in private life and in work life. I wanted to break from that loop.” (Participant three)

Participant two said she used to find meaning in titles and the work she did but after the critical events such as giving birth and death of her father, she realized there is more to life.

In summary dissatisfaction and feeling of imprisonment go hand in hand, however, with the occurrence of a critical event, a spark for change is born.

3.1.3. Facing the Critical Event and Awareness About the Burden of Corporate Life

I simply asked the participants if there were any events that helped them make the decision to leave. The events they claimed were; panic attacks, death of a father and birth of a child, 38th birthday, a teenage son needing support, push powers of corporate and city life, newborn child, censorships in media, and Gezi Incident. I grouped these events as critical events, since they were critical in participants' decision making processes.

Critical events do not immediately end in leaving the corporate life; they only give way to awareness. Even though participants paint a clear picture of the corporate life from their point of view now, that picture became clear to them after the awareness period. They talk about some kind of misfit from the beginning, but critical events gave way to a higher awareness of their situation and how they felt in corporate life.

When analyzed individually it is possible to see that there is a main critical event, but there are also other events accompanying the one with the highest burden that participants thought of to make their conclusions about corporate life. For instance, participant 2 was affected by the birth of her child and her father's disease and death. However, she also went through less critical events that she still remembers to this day:

“There was no singular moment; there were some levels. My father was sick, but he was okay, he was getting treatment in Turkey. There was no reason for me to leave corporate life but I was very busy, my son was born, and I could not see him, little matters became big problems. For instance, I

organized a press conference to promote a food group. It was an activity with dinner. It was a big activity; we had great business results. We met later on with all the managers and general manager. In the middle of the meeting, the general manager told me the tablecloth was white and asked me why it was not cream. She told me white is inappropriate. Well, we finished the arrangements at 1:00 am. Yes, I'd rather have cream than white but (her voice gets tense) it is not important enough to get people to change it at midnight. The color of the tablecloth does not affect the business results. When you hear criticism about this, you snap. I work day and night, I do not get to see my son, but there will be a discussion about whether the tablecloth should be white or cream. I snapped at the meeting in front of all the managers. I said if I am not capable of making a decision this small, if I will hear criticism because of this, I suggest you arrange these activities yourself." (Participant two)

The participants who left the big city along with corporate life had concerns about the city life, their lifestyle and the state in general. Participant nine stated that the Gezi Incident opened his eyes to what was happening in the country. He also met his ex-girlfriend there and she had an influence on him as she left corporate life before he met her. He was working at a corporate job at the moment but his ex-girlfriend was an ex-white collar employee and she spent four months in India, traveling. Participant 9 states that when he first met his girlfriend, he thought he might leave the corporate life and be okay. Participant 8, even though he did not leave the city he stated that he may leave the city in near future. He was also affected by the political environment mostly because he was working at a TV station and could hear what was going on in the country every single day. He states that he was tired of censorship in media and started to wonder about the value of the work he did. Participant 7 was worried about her daughter and the values she was going to grow up with. She stated:

"In İstanbul, people are consumption focused, especially children. I realised that when I took our daughter to pre-school. A three year old girl, asks

another three year old girl: “Why do you only have one jacket?”. This opened my eyes and I said to myself, if a three year old asks this now, what kind of questions will follow in the future? We were going to be dragged into a life I do not embrace. I told my spouse, let’s find a village school or something, I will not let my daughter go to school here (the city). This was the reason we left İstanbul.” (Participant 7)

Interviews show that participants get into an awareness period after the critical events. These stages are not clear-cut, one may start to feel somewhat aware of his or her dissatisfaction and have a critical incident and become more aware of the situation. However, participants mostly mentioned they came to the realization after the critical events. This realization is about what they want and don’t want in their lives. Participant one started having panic attacks due to problems in the workplace. He states that:

“What happened was, three strikes and you are out. I had three bad bosses in a row, they made a mark in my life. Why? Because one reason is this: not getting any orders from anyone is the most important criteria in my life now. I think it is the most important motivation why I decided to start my own business. Because I am extremely bothered if someone tells me what to do.” (Participant one)

For Participant two, her father’s death was the critical event, but also she had to leave her job to take care of her father who was in another country for treatment, she realized she did not want to go back to corporate life after his death:

“He passed away now; it has been four and a half maybe five years. They asked me to go back to corporate life. I got an offer from a food company and a private bank. I got offers for my previous position and different positions. However, to be honest, I was very tired of corporate life, being a slave to corporations. There is a system that exploits you to the end. I wanted to get away from that for a while. I did not work at all for seven-eight months. After that, I was sure I did not want to go back to corporate life.” (Participant two)

3.1.4. Search for Alternatives and Preparation for Change

These two periods, search and preparation are also not clear-cut from the awareness period in terms of timing. They are also highly nested in each other therefore I decided to explain them under the same topic. For instance if participants were going to leave the city, they looked for places to live while they were still working at their corporate jobs. If they wanted to start a new business, they tried to work on the business they were going to build before they left their corporate jobs.

This is also the period when they started to disclose their thoughts about leaving the corporate world to their friends and family. Emotional support from friends was important to an extent however support from the spouses was the most important of all, especially if the participant had children. Since this period also involved financial readiness, spouse support became even more important. Participants who are married and have children also have spouses who are the main providers of the family now. The participants who did not have spouses had to reckon well in order not to suffer financially after leaving corporate life.

It is possible to say that there are three major topics during the search and preparation period that preoccupy the participants. Finance, Emotion, Planning and Trial that will be elaborated in following sections.

3.1.4.1. Financial Readiness

Participants state that the best thing about corporate life is to have a steady income with good benefits. Reduced income was a concern for all participants at the beginning of their journey. Since they could foresee the risk, they took actions before leaving. Some participants stayed long enough to be eligible for a certain amount of compensation, some asked to be terminated so that they could receive a certain compensation. Some participants decided to make changes in their lifestyles so that they could lower their cost of living.

Even though participants thought that there was a serious financial risk of leaving corporate world, they took the chances because they felt like things couldn't

keep going the way they were. They mention that after a certain point, it is easier to give up on the things you like to consume, to live the life you want to live. Participant six, who left the corporate world with his wife and started a village life says that there is a need to lower the financial standard. However, they were lucky because they were not living in a big city and village life enables them to reach to things they need to survive at a very low cost. They practice an exchange of the goods there, however, it would be very different in the city. Participant three stayed in the city after leaving corporate life. She mentioned getting ready financially:

“I did the calculation, how much I will get from my termination indemnity, for how long can that amount pay for my mortgage, what can I cut down on etcetera. I had to find money to give me some time for action, at the end the bank I worked at gave me nothing, no termination indemnity, nothing.”

(Participant three)

After a well-thought process, participants figured out ways to get over the financial risk. However, some participants were faced with financial hardship despite the precautions. Details about the hardships of leaving the corporate life will be explained under the experience topic.

3.1.4.2.Emotional Readiness

Emotional readiness consists of the emotions that evoked during the disclosure of the decision to family members and friends, the emotions that evoked because of the decision to leave and how they dealt with those emotions. The participants were asked about how they felt during the disclosure. Their feelings varied from ease to sadness and stress. For participants who felt like their work was their identity, there was sadness and suffering to find a new identity. Participant two talks about how corporate identity may become a person's identity and this may make leaving the corporation emotionally harder. "There is an identity, a belongingness, a self-confidence side to it. You feel some kind of frustration (*after leaving*) if you've been in the corporate life long enough." Participant four felt like she was leaving a part of herself in the firm while leaving the corporate world.

“There was sadness. The sadness of leaving. For whatever it's worth, it was a place I loved to work at. I left many things behind that I produced. I left my name. I left a team.” (Participant four)

Reactions from family and friends did not matter as much as reactions from spouses as mentioned before. Participant one pointed out that his wife had to take on the load, even though she was stressed at the beginning, everything turned out fine. Participant two had a husband who provided for the house so his wife had time to make a decision and he supported her decision. There are also participants who took action as a family. For instance, participant seven left the corporate life and the city life with her husband. Participants five and six also acted together. They mentioned that they both agreed on the decision.

Participants point out that some of their friends were concerned that they would be at financial risk and some of them envied their decision. They did not mention any concrete support from any of their friends.

Participant 3 pointed out that her friends from corporate life did the opposite of support. She believes it was too much of a confrontation for them to see her after she left the corporate life. She believes they want to do the same but do not have the chance or the courage.

On the other hand family members' such as mothers' and fathers' reactions varied. Participant four was highly influenced by her father in her career. She made decisions to make him happy. Her family believed in financially safer ways of living, and that was corporate life. When she got out of corporate life her mother said: "I am glad your father is dead and did not see this!" Participant four told that this really had an effect on her motivation but she got over it and now her mother is even proud of her.

On the other hand, male participants either did not feel the need to disclose their decision to their parents before taking action or did not care about their parents' opinions.

Two of the male participants were accompanied by their girlfriends during search for alternatives and preparation for change process. They told that they found support from their girlfriends. They planned the leaving process together, they

planned what they would like to do afterwards together, however, both girlfriends broke up with the participants shortly after they left the corporate life. One of the girlfriends told the participant that she would like to settle down and have children, she doesn't want to travel like they have planned. Even though the break ups had emotionally negative effects on both of the participants, they just followed the plans they made and could keep on.

3.1.4.3.Planning and Trial

Participants made plans before leaving the corporate life. Their plans varied from startup business plans to finish mortgage payments. They also mentioned they wanted to get a taste of what they were planning to do beforehand. For instance, Participant eight wanted to open up an art studio where he could build furniture with recycled materials. So he started to build furniture before he left his job. Participants five and six did not leave corporate life immediately but started to work from home, since their software profession allowed it. They looked for a place to build their farm in their free time. Participant one started his own business. He talks about his planning period as "I made the website for my firm. I created an advanced corporate identity for my firm. It was not like a company with one or two employees, it looked like a big serious corporation with a serious basis."

Participants suggest that search and preparation period is very important. Even though things may not go as planned, planning makes leaving the corporate life less stressful.

3.1.5. Implementing the Plan for Leaving the Corporate Life

Application period starts when employees disclose their decision to leave to the firm. This period captures the time until they are sure they will not go back to corporate life and their current lifestyle is somewhat sustainable without a corporate job. There was one participant, participant nine, who was interviewed two months after he left corporate life and 6 months after. On the second interview, he was

convinced that he wouldn't be returning back to corporate life. This time frame may change from person to person. Some participants mentioned a year or two to call their new life their new routine, time frame extends especially if the participants were to become entrepreneurs. Implementation period is composed of Formalities, Relief, Realities, and Out.

3.1.5.1. Formalities

Formalities consists of the steps and events that are faced by the participants after disclosing their decisions to their firms. They were not sure if they will get their compensations in full. They were worried about cuts. This process was found to be stressful by most of the participants, however most of them got their compensation and benefits, except for participant three; "I did not get anything from the bank, no compensation, nothing! You work for 15 years, there were also many other unpleasant events, but in the end, they did not pay my bonus for that year either". The length of the period varied as well as the emotions during this period. Participant one suggested:

"I went and talked to the boss about leaving. We decided that I keep working for another six months, or three, I don't remember exactly. My bosses did not want to let me go. Your boss's real thoughts about you come in view when you want to leave. He did not want to let me go. He said it is easy to quit but hard to come back. I found that interesting.... Even during the last three days or one week or so, they asked me to work extra. That was horrifying to me. That's when I realized I made the right decision. They wanted to make the best out of my salary, until the last minute." (Participant one)

3.1.5.2. Relief

The application period is filled with ups and downs for participants. It is important to look at the feelings earlier in the application period since it is highly tied with imprisonment. Participants expressed positive feelings of relief, joy, freedom, and success shortly after they left the corporate world which is contrary to their feelings in corporate life. I choose to call this period the relief period because at that point participants are not faced with any challenges of leaving their corporate jobs yet. They simply enjoyed being outside during work hours, spending time with their families and friends, and bonding with their interest areas. This is the period when participants told themselves ‘What a relief!’. Participant four describes the feeling of the first couple of weeks: “You know you go on a vacation, first time you wear your bikini, you go to the beach, you are still tired but the moment you step on the sand energy starts to flow...”

Interview was conducted at the fourth week out of corporate life for Participant 9. When asked about how he felt, he replied:

“I was very happy with the reactions I got from my facebook status. I put up a farewell note the other day. I realized I have a lot of friends, I had an effect on many people. It is important for me to have a positive effect on people. I feel free. I feel like I can do anything. I feel like I will produce nice things. I feel like I can do things that will satisfy me, make me happy and leave a mark.” (Participant nine)

Participants state that relief doesn’t go away. The first thing they bring up when asked to compare corporate life to their current life they talk about stress and imprisonment. However, the excitement of the relief doesn’t last for years. It becomes a part of their routine. The time period for that to happen may change from person to person. When participants start to work on their new ways of earning income, hardship starts.

3.1.5.3. Facing Realities: “How long can you hold your breath under water?”

Facing realities period starts when participants start working on their new ways of earning income. Some things go as planned and some things do not.

Realities period can also be seen as a ‘learning period’. Even though they have made plans, participants stated that many things went wrong. Participant three, who started working as a freelancer, mentioned that she did not know anything about accounting, she did not get paid from many of her first customers and she lost money. She finally learned about accounting and how she should handle the finances of her own firm. For participants five and six, the realities period was about learning how to raise plants, learning about the rhythm of nature and they mentioned that there is so much to learn that they are still learning. Participant eight talked about how his plans were ruined by unforeseen events:

“The last year before I left the corporate world, I sat down and did the math of how much compensation would I get and how much I would spend on the stuff I need. But there were things I couldn't do the math for. I had a traffic accident, my car was gone, I lost money. Muscles were torn on my left arm, I couldn't move my arm for three months, which is very crucial for what I do (building furniture). I had a girlfriend when I rented this place (studio). We were together for nine years, I thought we would get married. She was my moral and material partner. She left a year and a half ago, she left all the financial debt to me and ran away. So here I am... but I am trying hard.” (Participant eight)

Participant nine also did all his plans with his girlfriend and a week before he left the corporate world, his girlfriend backed down and told him she wants to settle down. Because his girlfriend was the inspiration to his plans, he felt lonely but he decided to leave the corporate world and start traveling anyways.

Participants agree on the cruciality of the planning but they also state that there will always be things you did not think of. When you are faced with those issues, you realize it won't be easy but these challenges also bring the feeling of

success if they are overcome. When asked about what he would suggest to those who are willing to leave the corporate world, Participant one explained:

“How long can you hold your breath underwater? That would be the first question to ask. If you are given enough time and enough chances of failure, everyone can be successful but we fail because most of the time there is not enough time and not enough chances. We come to a point where we can not try again. How long can you live underwater without taking a breath, meaning without money and success?” (Participant one)

This point of view paints a picture of the realities period. This is the period where people realize they have lost their previous identity, they lost their steady income, and they lost the main challenge in their lives which made them feel successful from time to time. In order to resolve these challenges, some participants changed the way they viewed success. They built new identities and they had to make changes to their lifestyles in order to maintain their lives with their new income level.

3.1.5.4. Sustaining New Way of Life

This is the period when participants found ways to maintain their new lifestyle without going back into corporate life. None of the participants expressed any intention to go back to corporate life. Most of them used the word ‘never’. When asked to Participant nine in the second interview he stated: ‘I’ve clearly changed my life. I do not have the slightest thought about getting back.’ This was about seven months after he left the corporate world. He stated there were many hardships along the way but he forced himself to change the ways he was used to before. Now he feels he became a more interactive person, he stated he has higher self-confidence and better relationships with people, with nature and with life. Other participants also state changes in how they view life, what is valuable for them and most importantly, stress levels they experience. All these aspects convince participants that they do not want to go back to corporate life. When asked about short and long-term plans, Participant two explained:

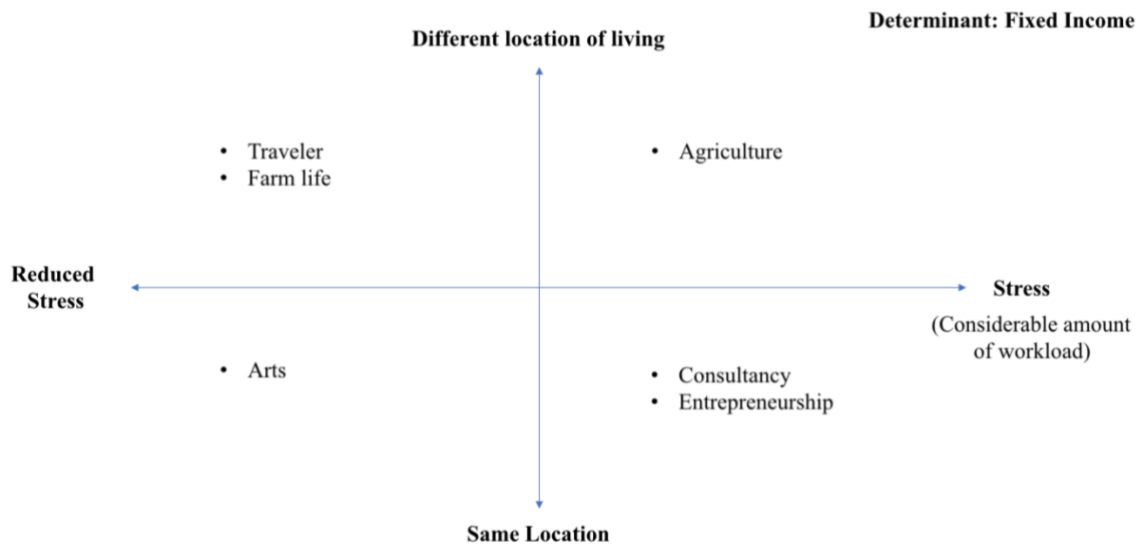
“No plans. Lots of traveling. Honestly traveling a lot, I have no plans. Since I left the corporate world I lost my greed. I used to have greed, plans, goals... I have no goals. Even though this sometimes makes me feel like I lost my identity, I am living in the moment, I have nooooo goals! I hope my son grows up healthy, my family stays together. I have a good time with them. I wish to see new countries, new cultures, I do not want to do anything else.” (Participant two)

All in all, the application period consists of four periods, formalities, relief, facing realities and sustaining new way of life. This period is when the participants' journey starts, they face challenges and they overcome them in their own ways. For further study, it would be crucial to interview participants who go back to corporate life during this period and why. For the purposes of this study, I chose participants who did not go back to corporate life and have no plans to do it.

3.1.6. Experience in New Life and Emotions about Their Decisions

This topic is concerned about participants' experiences after they put their new lives in order and how they feel about their new lives. What I mean by new life varies from participant to participant. Some participants maintained a higher pace within their own small firms, some participants have a calmer lifestyle in their farms and one participant is still traveling and he has no intention to settle. See Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4. Life Style Choices of the Participants



3.1.6.1. Village and Farm Life

Participant 6 states "We started to live on a farm. Gradually it turned out to be similar to villager life. Our routine at the moment is more like a classic villager life dealing with our animals and land." Participant 7 also finds their life similar to villager's life. The most important change they all mentioned was the decrease in their need for money. Participant 7 shared that her daughter goes to a private school near their village. She gets a quality education with almost less than half the cost compared to Istanbul. She also states that food is cheaper and she gets to grow most of her own food. These participants think that it is important to have good relationships with the locals. It is important to change their own habits instead of trying to change others. Open-mindedness, and being open to change might be considered as a strength. Participant seven suggests:

"This may sound harsh but, some of the people who come here from the city are "snob". We came here later on, we can not change the locals. We have to adapt to locals. We can not underestimate locals. Quite the opposite, they (the locals) know a lot about this place. I ask everything to locals. But some people who come here later on, they want to "educate" the locals. Why?

How will you educate them? They should educate you. I am irritated by this education thing. What does it mean to educate? First, educate yourself on how to be a villager, since you've chosen to live here. Go collect turf, you will do it if you've chosen to live this way. Why do you want to educate the villagers?" (Participant seven)

Participant 5 and 6 think that after 10 years they blended in very well with the environment and local people. Participant 5: "At the end of the first year here, I felt like if I ever have to leave here I will have a breakdown. I could say in the first six months. It was very fast for me."

Participant six added:

"It was like that for me too. It did not happen slowly. Maybe it is also about character. We usually make positive assumptions about things and get involved. For instance, most people who come from the city have conflicts with the locals here because of the differences in habits. We are easy going. We came here, we need to adapt to them. We do not approach to it as 'we would never change our habits' we always approached as 'oh how nice'." (Participant six)

Participants stated changes in their beliefs and values over time. Participant five and six suggested that their social awareness and awareness of nature increased since they started their life in the village. They say it is about changing the center of thought. They do not put themselves or humans in the center anymore. They also mentioned that they are using less technology, which is also mentioned by Participant seven. Participant six suggests that now they believe it is more important to achieve something as a group than as an individual. He believes it is essential to have social individuals who can work together.

The participants who live in a village mostly felt content with their current life. Participant six mentioned their regret of choosing the land. They realized, later on, the land was hard to cultivate, however they managed to do it. He thinks land is not the only important aspects, people who live on the land is also important and should be taken into account while choosing a spot and they believe they found the right land because of that.

3.1.6.2. Entrepreneur Life

Four participants are entrepreneurs. Three of them have their own consultancy firms, firms that only employ one to two employees. Participant eight owns an art studio and he makes furniture from recycled material. They all mentioned they are earning enough money to make the ends meet. Participant one stated that he is ready to take the next step and expand his business.

People who became entrepreneurs state a longer time period when asked how long it took to get a new life routine. They state that there are challenges to overcome such as finding clients, getting your brand out there and some unforeseen problems about getting payments from customers.

Participant three maintained a high paced work life after she left the corporate life:

“Our holidays are centered on work. People think we are on a holiday but for instance, we went to the USA. We woke up in the morning and the first place we visited was the Media Lab in MIT University. *(She laughs)* So, after that, we took a tour at Harvard University. My husband is 55 and I am 44, we are still touring universities. We seldom take time off. I do not foresee a retirement for myself.

Interviewer: I see your eyes are glowing when you say you don't take time off very often.

Participant three: But I hope we will go on Wednesday. I hope we will go on a real vacation but I am with my computer on the beach. I will also work every day.”

Participant four chooses a slower paced lifestyle. Along with taking clients, she likes to be involved in arts and she mentioned having many hobbies.

Participants who choose to be entrepreneurs are also content with their current life. Participant four stated regret about past, she thought she could plan the process better but in the end, she states she learned 'how to swim'. Participant one and three wish to continue their work as consultants in the future. Participant four and eight would like to leave the city and start living in a small town in the future.

3.1.6.3.Change in Life Standard

Participants state that they are content with their current living standards. They mentioned changes they had to make in their lifestyles in the past, however, losses were minor when compared to gains. Losses are financial and gains are things that participants find valuable, such as flexibility in planning, making their own decisions, not getting orders from anyone, right to be depressed, seeing their children grow up and feeling of living a life that is fit to their character and values.

3.2. SUMMARY

The journey for leaving the corporate life starts with dissatisfaction which consists of the topics of Quality of Life, Nature of Work, Being a Woman, Suitability to Corporate Life, and Sense of Injustice. All these topics touch each other, and even though I explained them separately in detail before, they seem to be more united in the big picture. For instance being a woman makes a difference in almost all of these topics or nature of work may have an effect on quality of life of the person or person's perceived suitability for corporate life. The decision to leave the corporate life does not come because of dissatisfaction in one topic but it should be considered as a whole. Dissatisfaction leads to a feeling of Imprisonment and with the awakening effect of Critical Event, people move on to the Awareness period. Awareness goes hand in hand with Search and Preparation period. No period has a clear-cut ending. While people are on the Search period, they may go through events that are critical. The application period is sour and sweet. If the issues are solved and the new lifestyle is successfully adopted, participants are filled with content and feeling of success. Even though some participants mentioned getting offers from corporations still, no one mentioned any intention to go back to corporate life. Table 3.3 consists of a summary of all the topics mentioned, with their sequence of appearance above.

Table 3.3 Model of Leaving the Corporate World

Leaving the Corporate World

3.1.1. Intense Dissatisfaction with Current Condition

3.1.1.1. Quality of life

3.1.1.1.1. Work-life conflict

3.1.1.1.2. Social Relationships

3.1.1.1.3. Emotional State

3.1.1.1.4. A Possibility of High-Quality Life

3.1.1.2. Nature of Corporate Life

3.1.1.2.1. Work Intensity

3.1.1.2.2. Managers Can Make Your World Hell

3.1.1.2.3. Physical Work Conditions

3.1.1.2.4. Work Discipline

3.1.1.3. Being a Woman

3.1.1.3.1. Being a caregiver

3.1.1.3.2. Being over 40

3.1.1.4. Fit to Corporate Life

3.1.1.5. Sense of Injustice

3.1.2. Feeling of Imprisonment

3.1.3. Facing the Critical Event and Awareness About the Burden of Corporate Life

3.1.4. Search for Alternatives and Preparation for Change

3.1.4.1. Financial Readiness

3.1.4.2. Emotional Readiness

3.1.4.3. Planning and Trial

3.1.5. Implementing the Plan for Leaving Corporate Life

3.1.5.1. Formalities

3.1.5.2. Relief

3.1.5.3. Facing Realities: "How long can you hold your breath under water?"

3.1.5.4. Out

3.1.6. Experience in New Life and Emotions about Their Decision

3.1.6.1. Village and Farm Life

3.1.6.2. Entrepreneur Life

3.1.6.3. Change in Life Standard

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

Leaving corporate life could be discussed solely as a “mid-life career change process” but it would be too limiting. It is a career decision as much as it is a lifestyle decision. The first phase of the model is Intense Dissatisfaction with “Current Condition” and the naming of this phase is not by chance. Dissatisfaction is not limited to only work or career-related issues. Therefore it is not named as Intense Dissatisfaction with “Work” or Intense Dissatisfaction with “Career”. Participants were dissatisfied with the way things were in their lives. They believed that making changes in their career would improve the rest of the issues in their lives. Hence, I will try to discuss the phenomenon from different approaches.

The goal of this research was to understand the process of leaving corporate life and our research resulted in a model. Despite lack of literature specifically on leaving corporate life; literature on career development theories and mid-life career change seems to support the model for leaving corporate life this research proposes.

4.1. COMPARISON OF TWO RESEARCH

The literature analysis Betty H. Roberts conducted in 1973 about mid-life career change has similarities to this research. She looked at previous research and came up with a model for mid-career change. I chose to compare current research to hers because her analysis includes examples of leaving corporate life under the topic of career change, even though she does not single out the process of leaving corporate life. She is analyzing the previous research on mid-career change and these researches include people who left one corporate career to pursue another corporate career as well as people who left corporate life completely.

It has to be reminded that her analysis was published in 1973 and it covers studies that were conducted mostly with men. This makes it hard to conduct an

exact comparison, however, her model is the best tool available in the literature for a discussion of the results of the thesis.

Roberts (1973) proposed three main steps of mid-career change; “Frustration with One’s Situation”, “Some Preconditions Relating to Career Change”, and “Constraints on Entering a New Career”.

4.1.1. Frustration with One’s Situation vs. Intense Dissatisfaction with Current Condition

What the current thesis proposes as “Intense Dissatisfaction with Current Condition” is partially in line with Roberts’ (1973) “Frustration with One’s Situation”. She states that she used the word “frustration” because it is “more than just dissatisfaction, it has the impact of provoking a reaction.” (Roberts, 1973). While coding, we also decided that “dissatisfaction” was not enough to express the condition, since the dissatisfaction stage along with the critical event, resulted in taking action. We decided to name the stage “Intense Dissatisfaction with Current Condition”. There are differences as well as similarities in the contents for “Intense Dissatisfaction” and “Frustration”. See Table 4.1 for Roberts’ model and Table 4.2 for the model for leaving corporate life.

Table 4.1 Roberts’s Step of Frustration with One’s Situation

Roberts’s Step of Frustration with One’s Situation

1. Performance inability
 2. Career completion
 3. Mid-career blues
 4. Identity crisis
 5. Discrepancy between aspirations and achievement
 6. Work alienation
 7. Dissatisfaction with pay, status, or security
 8. Quest for exciting or socially useful work
-

Source: Roberts, 1973

Table 4.2 Step of Intense Dissatisfaction with Current Condition

Model of Intense Dissatisfaction with Current Condition

1. Quality of life
 - a. Work-life conflict
 - b. Social Relationships
 - c. Emotional State
 - d. A Possibility of High-Quality Life
 2. Nature of Corporate Life
 - a. Work Intensity
 - b. Managers Can Make Your World Hell
 - c. Physical Work Conditions
 - d. Work Discipline
 3. Being a Woman
 - a. Being a caregiver
 - b. Being over 40
 4. Fit to Corporate Life
 5. Sense of Injustice
-

4.1.1.1. Similarities between Frustration with One’s Situation and Intense Dissatisfaction with Current Condition

Roberts’ “Frustration” includes the inseparability of life and career patterns from Levinson’s (1969) research. Her study quotes Levinson: “this inseparability leaves the person to shudder at the specter of catastrophe beyond his control.” (p. 21). She cites Levinson (1969) adding that if the person views his career choice as influenced by external factors, this adds to his frustration. The issues of being in control of your own career, of your own time, of your own lifestyle, also comes up in the leaving corporate life model under intense dissatisfaction and work-life conflict.

Roberts’ paper is focused on mid-career change; therefore, one important theme of her analysis is age. She discusses the effects of age on frustration in terms of mid-life crisis. Age also comes up in the dissatisfaction stage of the model for leaving corporate life but only for female participants. These participants do not

perceive middle age as a period of crisis. They perceive it as a period of development and change. It should be added that Roberts' analysis does not include female experiences.

“Quest for Exciting or Socially Useful Work” shows itself on current research under the “Fit to Corporate Life” factor of “Intense Dissatisfaction with Current Condition”. Some participants claim that corporate life was not “for them” because originally, they were cut out for more exciting or more meaningful work.

4.1.1.2. Complete and Partial Differences between Frustration with One's Situation and Intense Dissatisfaction with Current Condition

There are some themes in Roberts' (1973) “Frustration” stage that “Intense Dissatisfaction with Current Condition” topic of the leaving corporate life model does not include. “Performance Inability”, “Career Completion”, “Identity Crisis” “Work Alienation”, “Dissatisfaction with pay, status, or security” are those elements that are not included in the current study (Roberts, 1973).

Current thesis does not include “Performance Inability” and “Career Completion” as factors of dissatisfaction, because we deliberately excluded leaving corporate life due to performance inability or career completion which are related to age. Performance inability is the inability of someone to perform due to age (Roberts, 1973). When explaining career completion, Roberts (1973) gives the example of dancers, who at a certain age, have to complete their careers and she gives retirement as a more general example of career completion. However, one of our participants suggested that she was not going to get any promotion and felt that the position she was working at was the last position for her. There was no chance for promotion or transfer, so she felt like she was stuck. One could consider this participant had a feeling as if her career was “completed”, however this theme did not emerge in other participants.

“Identity Crisis” is the crisis that occurs when one's occupation becomes the person's identity and his job is wiped out or becomes obsolescent (Roberts, 1973). These people go through an identity crisis and may look to change their careers.

This is not a part of intense dissatisfaction with the current condition because of the way of our sampling. We did not include participants whose jobs were wiped out or became obsolescent. We purposefully invited people who were successful in their corporate jobs, who could keep working and succeeding if they were not willing to leave their corporate jobs. Considering Roberts is looking at the mid-career change, it is not surprising that her model has the identity crisis as a factor.

“Work alienation” is not a factor in “Intense Dissatisfaction with Current Condition” by itself. Nonetheless, some participants who took on agricultural work stated that they did not know why they had to complete certain tasks at a certain time while in corporate life, and that was discouraging. While doing agricultural work, they know why they should complete a task at a certain time, they can choose not to complete it if they are willing to face the consequences.

“Dissatisfaction with pay, status, or security” did not come up directly from the participants. “Sense of injustice” may partially be connected to dissatisfaction with pay, even though not in the way Roberts (1973) mentions. Some participants mentioned the capitalist system and surplus value and how corporations made much more money than they give to their employees. However, this was not specifically an issue of getting a higher paycheck. Also, leaving corporate life does not promise people higher pay, status, or security. Since Roberts’ (1973) report is on changing careers in general, it is natural that this may come up as one of the factors for “Frustration”.

4.1.2. Some Preconditions Relating to Career Change

I will compare Roberts’ (1973) “Some Preconditions Relating to Career Change” step to various steps from the model for leaving corporate life. See Table 4.3 for Robert’s model.

Table 4.3 Roberts’s Step of Some Preconditions Relating to Career Change

Roberts’s Step of Some Preconditions Relating to Career Change

1. Early retirement
 2. Availability of mid-career clinics
 3. Dislocation by external forces
 4. Family crises
 5. Availability of finances
 6. Access to alternative careers
 7. Word of mouth
 8. Leisure time
 9. Association with career changers
 10. Career mobility and occupational expansion
-

Source: Roberts, 1973

Early retirement, availability of mid-career clinics, dislocation by external forces, association with career changers, and career mobility do not appear as independent topics on the model for leaving corporate life. We deliberately left out retirement and external factors such as dislocation by external forces while sampling.

To compare “Availability of mid-career clinics” it is necessary to mention that such clinics do not exist in Turkey. Roberts (1973) claims that at the time there were several clinics that aimed to ease the career change of the individuals. There are no government institutions in Turkey that aim to ease career change. Today people tend to get guidance or coaching from experts for such purposes. Participants did not mention taking guidance or coaching from any professionals, except for one. One of the participants mentioned she was in therapy and it helped her leave corporate life, but the intervention was not specifically aimed at her career. Even though none of the participants did, some people may choose to receive coaching or therapy during the process which would be discussed under the preparation period of leaving corporate life.

Participants did not mention any association with other career changers except for one. One of the participants mentioned being in contact with a community of women over forty and what they had in common was that they all left their corporate jobs. This did not have any effect on her decision since she met them after she left corporate life.

Participants did not mention occupational expansion such as getting further education for a different career while working at their corporate jobs or working part-time for the desired career while in the corporate world. However, it could be present for some other people especially for people who are going into fields that require education, such as becoming a yoga trainer, a coach, etc. If it was present for the participants of this study, it could be considered under the “preparation” stage of leaving corporate life.

Roberts’ (1973) “Some Preconditions Relating to Career Change” step includes a very interesting similarity to the “Facing the Critical Event and Awareness of the Burden of Corporate Life” stage of the model for leaving corporate life. She proposes that family crises such as the death of a spouse, or the illness of a spouse or divorce may trigger the change. She adds that there is not enough research to conclude (Roberts, 1973). Model for leaving corporate life suggests that death or illness of a family member, not limited to a spouse, may have an effect on the decision making process for women. The difference between the two models in terms of the effects of the family crises is that Roberts’ research considers male experiences, hence it can be said that death of the wife or divorce may make the husband feel more independent on his career choices considering at the time of Roberts’ report, men were mostly responsible with earning the bread for the family. However, the model for leaving the corporate life suggests that women’s societal obligation to take care of the family members who are sick conflicts with the demands of corporate life, creating a work-life imbalance. Also, as Participant two of the current research suggested, the death of a family member may lead a person to reevaluate the meaning and purpose of life, as well as giving birth to a child. It is certain that events in the family affect the decision-making process but in order to explain how in detail, there is a need for further research.

Roberts claim that the availability of finances is also an important precondition relating to a career change. She refers to Heistand's book from 1971, "Changing Careers After 35". Unfortunately, this book is not available in libraries or online. Roberts states that Heistand's research proposes available financing made a career change "much more attractive and easy to facilitate" (Roberts B. H., 1973, p. 39).

Roberts (1973) further states:

"Heistand, however, did find some in his study who made the necessary economic sacrifices because they were more interested in changing careers than in increasing their later income. That is money was neither a primary motivation nor a particular hinderence to their career change." (p. 42)

Even though this seems to contradict the effect of availability of finances making the career change much more attractive, it shows that even though finances are not available, people can make changes to their lifestyles or spending habits in order to be able to change their careers. This is also the case when leaving corporate life. "Financial Readiness" is a part of the "Search for Alternatives and Preparation for Change" step of the leaving corporate life model. Participants did have financial concerns due to leaving their corporate jobs. They all tried to put aside enough resources to get by until they have a new way of earning income. Some participants changed their spending habits in order to avoid financial hardships. Being married, having children, being the bread earner or not, may all be factors here. For instance, one participant suggested that she has a son in high school, and he goes to a private school. She had to think about how to pay for her son's school and needs which had an effect on what she did after leaving the corporate life. She suggested that she could have lived without financial concerns if she did not have her son, but she had to look for options where she can earn money out of corporate life.

"Access to Alternative Careers" is partially related to "Search for Alternatives and Preparation for Change". Even though people who leave corporate life do not look for other "jobs", they do look for other ways of earning income. The most important thing about these alternatives is that the way of earning income should be other than a corporate job. If they believe they are capable of having their own

ventures that makes the decision easier. Although this is not having an “access” to the alternative already, it is a “search” period for the alternative.

Word of mouth is not completely parallel to any of the stages on the model for leaving corporate life. However, participants suggested that during their search and preparation period, they encountered people who inspired them. For one of the participants, this person was his girlfriend at the time, for another participant, family friends who were looking to buy property in a small town.

Roberts (1973) argue that some people redirect their leisure time activities into a career. This is the case for only one of the participants. He opened up a workshop and started to build furniture to sell which was one of his leisure time activities before leaving corporate life.

4.1.3. Constraints on Entering a New Career

Roberts (1973) proposes that risks, familial obligations, requirements of a new career, and non-transferable status, and seniority are the constraints on entering a new career.

While arguing about the risks of changing careers, she puts forward the problem of age, need of re-training for a new area of expertise, and discrimination against middle-aged adults. The problem of age was mentioned by one of the participants. She mentioned that it is harder to find a corporate job after forty years old. Even though she did not mention it as a risk, this can make it harder for people who left the corporate life to go back to corporate life after a certain age. In the current study, it is clear that participants thought about the risks before they quit their job and took precautions against the risks. When asked about risk, they mostly mentioned financial risks and “fear of not being able to make it”.

Roberts (1973) take familial obligations from the perspective of middle age. She states;

“Many family responsibilities reach their apex of demand – that is children are going to college; there are aging parents to support; expenses for healthcare increases; and the standard of living and style of life become more expensive.

If these demands persist and one cannot make the trade-off for a more satisfying career because he feels these obligations to be serious, he is trapped.”
(p. 52)

These obligations were present for some of the participants of the current study, and they had to plan accordingly during the preparation for the change period. They found ways to make things work. Our participants were the ones who could manage to leave corporate life successfully, therefore it is impossible to conclude from this research if these obligations would trap someone.

Roberts’ (1973) requirements of a new career consist of the requirement of training which was discussed before. Here she adds the necessity of a network for some jobs such as lawyers and how it would be harder for a middle-aged person to start creating network from scratch in the new career. One participant of the current study mentioned people from her previous network did not help her in her consultancy work, not because they were not able to, but they did not want to. Other than that, most of the participants mentioned forming new relationships especially those who took on agricultural work. They needed a network of locals in order to learn about the new area they started to live and about growing plants. They claim life in villages is more interdependent, so a network of local people is crucial. The necessity of forming a new network did not come up as a constraint factor. Participants found out about this necessity and tried to form strong bonds with their new network or community.

Finally, Roberts’ (1973) “non-transferable status and seniority” constraint is about losing money when transferring to another job. This is more about the laws and regulations of the USA at the time of her study. However, it was also a concern for some participants of the current study. Some of them tried delaying the resignation for a certain time so that they will be eligible for indemnity. One participant asked to be terminated by the company so that he can receive his indemnity. Some participants faced cuts on their compensations and bonuses. It was not a reason not to leave but it certainly raised participants’ attention and was an important part of the preparation period.

4.2. EXISTING THEORIES AND MODEL FOR LEAVING CORPORATE LIFE

In the book “Career Choice and Development” Duane Brown (2002) proposes four main categories for career theories. I will continue the discussion of career theories and the model for leaving the corporate life under these four categories. They are; sociological perspective, developmental and post-modern theories, theories anchored in learning theory and trait and factor theory. All the theories that fall under these categories were explained in detail in the literature review. Here, I will only include parts that are needed for the discussion. I will not compare every aspect of every theory to the current study, I will only include how earlier theories may add value to leaving corporate life model and ease the understanding of the phenomenon if it is approached from a career decision perspective.

4.2.1. Sociological Perspective

The sociological perspective is focused on how vocational choices affect a person’s status and to what extent a person can escape from disparities that were present for their parents by their vocational choice (Kirkpatrick Johnson & Mortimer, 2002). The current thesis does not question participants’ or their parents’ socio-economic status.

It is partially possible to discuss but not conclude the social status of the participants in the corporate life and their status out of corporate life. There is one participant that felt like she lost her “power” along with her “title” due to leaving her higher management job. However, the loss may be replaced by some other variable and this was not addressed in the current research. Further studies with a sociological perspective can shed a light on this issue. Research with a sociological perspective could benefit from how participants of current study distinct themselves from those who “did not leave corporate life.” “Being able to leave corporate life when others can not” may be the distinction that makes up for the loss of “corporate status”. For most of the participants, the status that comes with the corporate job

seems to have lost its meaning and there are “more meaningful things in life” that people in corporate life have not “discovered” yet.

4.2.2. Developmental and Post-Modern Theories

Gottfredson’s theory of circumscription, compromise, and self-creation assumes that individuals are actively creating themselves and shaping their destiny (Gottfredson, 2002). Another approach, contextualist approach, defines action as a goal-directed intentional behavior, and one’s career is made up of one’s actions (Young, Valach, & Collin, 2002). When participants of the current study decided to leave corporate life, there were many factors that affected their decision, but the decision belonged to the participants. No one forced them to leave the corporate life, it was an action they took willingly.

Gottfredson (2002) suggests that people try to create a public self that resonates with the unique internal self. Self-concept consists of one’s place in society, personality, values, and gender. People also hold images of occupations. According to Gottfredson (2002), these images consist of “the personalities of people in those occupations, the work they do, the lives they lead, the rewards and conditions of the work, and the appropriateness of that work for different types of people.” (p. 88). She also states; “People may not be able to articulate their self-concepts, nor may their self-perceptions always be accurate, but they act on them and protect them just the same.” (p.88). So, the inevitable question arises here. What makes people leave corporate life? Did they choose the wrong occupations to start with? Did their self-concept change over time? Did their “image of occupations” change? When I asked participants, what made them leave corporate life, “fit to corporate life” was one of the themes that emerged. Some thought they were not a fit from the beginning but went with it. This research does not aim to answer the question “why” people leave corporate life, but “how” they leave it. In that sense, Gottfredson’s theory sheds a light on how misfit may play a role on Intense Dissatisfaction of Current Condition.

In his developmental theory of vocational behavior, Savickas (2002) assumes that individuals' lives are structured by social processes that bring them different roles. Balance among core roles such as being a mother, a teacher and a daughter brings stability, and imbalance results in strain. He suggests that job satisfaction can only be achieved if one can balance these roles. He also suggests that the self-concept and vocational preferences can change over time (Savickas, 2002). In the model for leaving corporate life, one of the factors of intense dissatisfaction is work-life conflict. When asked about what made them leave corporate life, they talked about different roles that they had to attain and how tiring it was. I will discuss work-life conflict further under the topic of gender, because it was mostly female participants that had a hard time balancing through different roles.

One other interesting support from Savickas's theory is that after the career establishment period which is in between the ages of 25 to 44, individuals may ask themselves whether they would want to keep doing what they do for the next 25 years, and if the answer is no, they may change their organization, field or occupation. If a change occurs, individuals go through exploration and establishment again. This is also in line with the model for leaving corporate life.

In their contextualist approach Young, Vallach, and Collins (2002) give great importance to emotion because (1) emotion is a motivational factor, (2) emotions have a regulating effect, and (3) emotion provides important narratives of project and career. In the model for leaving corporate life, the emotional state holds an important place. It is the feeling of intense dissatisfaction coupled with the feeling of imprisonment that leads to a change in individuals' lives.

4.2.3. Career Theories Anchored in Learning Theory

Cognitive information processing approach defines a career problem as the gap between an existing state of indecision and a more desired state (Peterson, Sampson Jr., Lenz, & Reardon, 2002). It further states that this phase may bring confusion, anxiety, and depression. This knowledge can enrich the phase "Search for Alternatives and Preparation for Change" of the model for leaving corporate life.

Peterson et al. (2002) define career problem solving that is in line with how participants searched for alternatives and prepared for change;

“A complex set of thought processes involving the acknowledgment of a state of career indecision, an analysis of the causes, the formulation and clarification of alternative courses of action, and the selecting of one of these alternatives to achieve a more integrated state of decidedness.” (p. 316)

This is important because all of the participants took time to make their decisions, they searched for alternatives and tried to choose the best one. Peterson et al. (2002) adds that when individuals arrive at a choice they feel relief. Relief is one of the components of “Implementing the Plan for Leaving Corporate Life” phase of the model for leaving corporate life.

Peterson et al. (2002) define lifestyle as; “the integration of decisions in the realms of career, personal, and family relationships, spirituality, and leisure that result in a guiding purpose, meaning, and direction in one’s life” (p.316).

I wanted to discuss cognitive information processing theory because this theory has the potential to enrich the model for leaving corporate life. As one can infer from the definition, career, relationships, spirituality, and leisure are all important for an individual’s purpose, finding meaning in life, and direction. If we take this point of view it is easier to understand that decisions participants made about leaving corporate life was not only about their career. They perceived other aspects of their lifestyle was affected by their corporate job, and it was not their jobs specifically but corporate life that made them intensely dissatisfied.

4.2.4. Trait-Factor Theories

Trait-factor theories are concerned with the fit between the individual, the work, and the environment. If an environment is in line with an individual’s personality, the individual finds the environment satisfying and his or her behaviors are reinforced but if there is incongruence, the individual seeks a new and congruent environment or changes his or her behavior and perceptions (Spokane, Luchetta, &

Richwine, 2002). This perspective strengthens the fit to corporate life component of the model for leaving corporate life.

4.3. MIDLIFE CAREER CHANGE PERSPECTIVE

As a result of our preconditions for the participants of this study, we interviewed people that are in their middle adulthood years. We wanted to include people that worked at least 10 years at corporate jobs, which meant they made the decision to leave the corporate life when they are in their midlife. According to research on midlife, it is a time when individuals desire to reach for goals they have previously delayed (Guindon, 2010). Goldstein (2005) suggests that Jung considers midlife as a turning point that provides opportunities for growth and change, and this opportunity creates a shift in goals and values.

I compared Roberts' report on mid-career change to the model for corporate life in detail and discussed the similarities and differences about age. There is a more current study by Wise and Millward (2005) concerning mid-life career change. Their participants are voluntary mid-life career changers. Their study has similarities to the model for leaving corporate life.

Wise and Millward (2005) suggested that during the transition period their participants expressed positive emotions such as "relief", "sense of openness", and they felt like it was a beginning of a journey, full of possibilities. This is in line with how participants of this thesis reported they felt during their transition. Participant 9 who was interviewed twice because he was in the transition period, also expressed similar emotions. Even though he was a little bit scared, he was more excited to start his journey.

Wise and Millward's (2005) research results also revealed that their participants took some time away from work, they had a time-out period where they took time from life's pressures and demands. It was the time when their participants made decisions before moving forward. This was also the case for some participants. The difference is those participants did not take the time off to make a decision, but they had to take time off because of giving birth or family issues

and during that time away from the hustle and bustle of work, they started to consider leaving corporate life. Even though being away from corporate life for a certain time is not included as a topic on the model for leaving the corporate life, this is something that needs to be looked at further.

The motivations of Wise and Millward's (2005) participants is also in line with "fit to corporate life", "sense of injustice" and "work-life conflict" of the model for leaving corporate life. Their participants had a need to be honest with themselves, wanted to find work that truly reflected their identity, they wanted a sense of purpose and direction, a chance to do something for the society and majority of their participants stated that they would like to achieve greater work-life balance (Wise & Millward, 2005).

Wise and Millward (2005) report that many of their participants suggested the change resulted in benefits such as better personal relationships, enhanced body image, self-development, maturity, confidence, a more balanced life, and greater happiness. These benefits are also in line with "Experiences in New Life" phase of the model for leaving corporate life.

4.3.1. Gender

Beijan and Salomon (1995) state that the research on midlife crisis is mostly on men. Roberts and Newton (1987) state that women experience more inner turmoil and conflict between family and career than men do. They may experience dissatisfaction with their careers or their relationships. Beijan and Salomon (1995) state that in Lieblich's (1986) research one-third of 25 career women in mid-life stated that their transition to age 40 was so severe that they called it a "crisis". Gallos (1989) states that women go through a period of reevaluation as well, and often choose to plateau in their career and they do that to spare more attention to develop intimate relationships (as cited in Beijan & Salomone, 1995).

Gender is an important factor in model for leaving corporate life. Being a woman is one of the factors of Intense Dissatisfaction with Current Condition. We could place it under work-life conflict but the responsibilities with caregiving came

up so often that, we decided to include it separately. Male participants did not mention any conflict in terms of housework or the need to take care of children or elderly family members. Only two of the male participants were married and one of them had children. He never mentioned his children having any effect on his decision to leave. He was more concerned about how his wife was going to react since he felt that he needed to be the bread earner for the family. He stated that wives expect men to be the steady bread earners.

Female participants reported busier schedules at work. Age 40 came up as a discussion point for two female participants. One of those participants believe that it is a turning point for women. It is a time when women make changes to their lives, they transition. She stated they have a group of female friends who are older than 40 and they are all experiencing transition in their careers or families.

Middle age is also when people need to take care of their children and elderly family members who may need care. In Turkish culture, the woman of the family is expected to take care of the elderly and the children. Women are expected to do housework, cook, and help their children with their homework etcetera. With the busy schedules of women who work in higher management positions, this is hard to achieve. Some participants expressed feeling insufficient and guilty because they could not attend to their children's needs. This may create intense dissatisfaction in all areas in life.

4.4. SATISFACTION VS. DISSATISFACTION

According to Jepsen and Sheu (2003) one of the most important purposes of career counseling is to enhance people's job satisfaction. I have discussed job satisfaction and life satisfaction in literature review. According to Spector (1997) common job satisfaction facets are; appreciation, communication, coworkers, fringe benefits, job conditions, nature of the work, the organization itself, policies and procedures, pay, personal growth, promotion opportunities, recognition, security, and supervision. Intense dissatisfaction with current condition phase of the

model for leaving corporate life includes some of these variables as part of the intense dissatisfaction.

Person environment correspondence theory suggests that the interaction between the person and the environment should lead to satisfaction. If it can not achieve this goal, either the needs of the individual are going to be adjusted or the relationship between the individual and the environment will be over (Dawis, 2002). This perspective sheds a light on why intense dissatisfaction ends with leaving corporate life. Further research may focus on how people who are working at corporate jobs and experience intense dissatisfaction manage to stay in corporate life.

Two studies conducted in Turkey (Kolbaşı & Bağcı, 2019; Keser, Öngen Bilir, & Aytaç, 2019) suggest a positive relationship between life satisfaction and job satisfaction. Also, a thorough multidisciplinary literature review was conducted by Erdogan, Bauer, Truxillo, and Mansfield (2012). Their model supports the part of intense dissatisfaction of the model for leaving corporate life. They propose that quality of work life, quality of nonwork life, and feelings of self-worth are mediators between work related antecedents such as need satisfaction, mindful activity, and job related attention; and outcomes such as performance, commitment, turnover intentions, and turnover. Their study supports the model for leaving corporate life.

4.5. LEAVING CORPORATE LIFE

Previous studies on satisfaction, mid-career change, and career theories seem to support the model for leaving corporate life in general. What does the model add to the equation? The difference in our model is that participants' attitudes are not solely towards their organization or their jobs. They feel like corporate life is the problem, so their decision ends up with leaving corporate life, not their organization or their line of work. Participants believe if they change their organizations, things will be the same. If they change their line of work, say becoming a lawyer after working at a bank for ten years, as long as they are working at a corporate job,

things will not change. There is no research in the literature that aims to discover the process of leaving the corporate life. Therefore, this study along with previous studies that are concerned about career change, shed a light on process for leaving corporate life.

4.5.1. Big Cities vs. Small Towns

Lifestyle changes are more apparent in participants who left the city life along with corporate life. When asked about why they left corporate life, they were less disturbed by the nature of corporate life, but they were more disturbed by the fact that they had to live in a big city in order to have a corporate job. Less disturbed does not mean they were fine with all the requirements of the corporate life; they had the same issues others had, but they talked more about the burden of living in the big cities. Their decision to leave was more aimed at changing their lifestyles.

4.6. IMPLICATIONS

Roberts' (1973) topic of research is "Mid-Career Change, Smoke or Fire?". While conducting her research, she was worried about how many people would change careers in the future and if it would have an effect on the corporations and on the economy. Today, I believe we live in a world that is similar and at the same time different. There are more resources available for corporations as well as for the employees. Entrepreneurship is becoming widespread among those who are just starting their career. If leaving corporate life becomes widespread, we would still worry about what Roberts is worried about in her research.

Not everyone who leaves corporate life to have their own ventures succeed. If failure becomes widespread, it will have an effect on the individuals as well as on the economy. Also, most participants of this study stated they were valuable assets to their companies. Some were asked not to leave; some were asked to come back. Over ten years of experience is valuable to the individual as well as to the company. When companies lose such talents, they also lose time and money. It may not be

hard to replace these employees at the moment, however, if leaving corporate life becomes more spread, this may become an issue.

4.6.1. Organizational Level Implications

Intense dissatisfaction with the current condition part of the model for leaving corporate life offers great insight to organizations that are willing to make their organizations a better place for their employees. Performance, commitment, turnover intentions, and turnover are affected by the quality of work life, quality of nonwork life, and feelings of self-worth of the employees (Erdogan, Bauer, Truxillo, & Mansfield, 2012). Therefore, it is not only about making employees happy, but it is also about keeping the organization healthy and productive.

4.6.1.1. Quality of Life

Organizations that would like to avoid their employees feel imprisoned because of all the factors that are related to intense dissatisfaction should support their employees who are going through familial issues, and try to ease their lives as much as possible in order to prevent captivating work-life conflict. Family issues may require time to solve, and that space should be given to those who are in need.

4.6.1.2. Nature of Corporate Life

Organizations should be aware of the workload of their employees. Employees may seem to be handling their workload but in the long run, too much workload may lead to burnout. One of our participants stated she was not even able to go to the bathroom in the office anymore, because of her workload. This type of situations should be avoided.

The culture of the workplace is one other factor that adds to the intense dissatisfaction. Organizations should be aware of how their managers treat their employees. Some of our participants brought up issues with their managers. One of the participants suggested that “Managers can make your world hell.” Organizations should make sure managers are not above the culture and everyone feels they are treated equally.

Most participants were dissatisfied with the working hours. Some stated that their managers forced them to stay after work, some stated not being able to leave even five minutes early, even though they have completed their tasks for the day. Organizations may benefit from a more result-oriented approach and give employees autonomy on the hours they work. This may ease the burden of work-life balance on the employees.

Organizations may also consider making physical conditions of the plaza environment more in line with their employees’ needs. Some participants find the environment not fit to human nature. One of the participants stated that the first thing she realized after leaving the corporate life was the seasons because there is only one season in the plaza, and it is determined by the air-conditioning system. An environment where employees feel more connected to nature may be beneficial.

Organizations may consider rotation programs for middle-aged employees in which employees feel they can grow in different areas. Sabbatical leaves may also be considered with the same goal.

Even though obvious, basic rights such as maternity leave and breastfeeding breaks should not be inhibited.

4.6.2. Individual Level Implications

The target audience of this part of the thesis is individuals who are willing to leave corporate life. The sampling of the participants made in a way so that we included people who managed to leave corporate life and are now happy how things turned out. The implications here should not be considered scientific truths. The

goal here is to share the experiences of the participants with those who are willing to go through the same process.

Individuals who are considering leaving corporate life should pay close attention to the phases that come after “Search for Alternatives and Preparation for Change”. All participants suggested that financial readiness is very important. They have all made plans before they quit their jobs. This planning period took as long as two years. If you are willing to leave corporate life, the biggest question in your mind probably is “Should I?” or “Can I?”. If you have resources, you can benefit from career counseling and therapy to find out what you really want. Participants put a lot of focus on trial before quitting your job. Whatever it is that an individual would like to pursue after corporate life, they should try it while in corporate life to see if they actually like it. If possible, taking time off to figure out what you would like to do may be beneficial.

Participants state that even though you prepare and plan for years, there are going to be things you can not prepare for. Some participants state first couple of years are hard. It would be beneficial to make plans that are flexible so that you can handle surprises. One participant suggested that he had a traffic accident right after leaving the corporate life which cause financial and emotional hardships.

For individuals who would also like to leave the big city life, and move to a small village, participants suggest that determining the place to live is the most important part. When deciding on a place, one should consider the endeavors that are possible in that place and the society. Participants found it beneficial to form good social relationships with the locals.

4.7. LIMITATIONS

We included only the individuals who left corporate life and are satisfied with their current pursuits. In order to have a more accurate picture, it is needed to interview individuals who left the corporate life and are not dissatisfied with their decision, are looking for corporate jobs or went back to corporate life. We also did

not include those who decided to leave corporate life in the first five years of working at their corporate jobs.

We did not put attention on how participants made their early career decisions. Digging deeper to early career decision making processes of those individuals who change careers during mid-life could bring a different perspective.

4.8. FURTHER STUDIES

We could not find any other research that focuses solely on the process of leaving corporate life. Firstly, the replication of the current study would be beneficial. Quantitative or mixed approaches to the phenomenon of leaving the corporate life would also give us a change to advance the current model.

In order to be able to cover the whole parts of the phenomenon of leaving corporate life, a multi-disciplinary perspective will be beneficial. Looking at the phenomenon from a sociological point of view could shed more light on the phenomenon, especially taking a “lifestyle change” perspective.

Looking at the early career decision making processes of those who leave corporate life could be beneficial. Those who left the corporate life but could not find satisfaction should also be examined. Those who are willing to leave the corporate life, who experience intense dissatisfaction and imprisonment, but can not or do not leave should be targeted too. Also, the performance of these individuals and its effects on individual and organizational level should be examined. Individuals, who do not want to leave corporate life, who are satisfied with their work life and private life should be included in the studies also.

There are not statistics on those who leave or intend to leave corporate life. Quantitative approaches may target this deficiency.

Lastly, differences such as gender, age and marital status can be brought to focus on further research.

4.9. LAST NOTE

I was having breakfast at a café in Moda, one of the areas that became popular recently in İstanbul when I decided which topic to choose for my thesis. The owners of the café were a very welcoming family. They made small talk to every customer, food was great, and they made you feel like you are home. They were a little bit different than an average café manager and it took my attention.

They offered coffee after breakfast and I had a chat with the owner, which lasted longer than any of us expected. She told me she used to work at a bank, she had a great career ahead of her, but she was very unhappy. She decided to leave corporate life and open up a café in one of the most popular areas of İstanbul. She told me how much her life improved after leaving the corporate life, even though it is even harder work to run a café, she felt happier.

I was curious. I went home, made some searches online. There were many more blogs and posts about leaving corporate life than I ever expected. I got curious because people left the jobs they worked for over ten, even as long as twenty years, they left the financial security, they left the titles and all that titles can provide, they gave up on so many years of effort they put to get to where they were in corporate life and decided to start a new journey. My curiosity about how this process works led me to write my thesis on leaving corporate life.

As I am writing the discussion part of this thesis, we are experiencing a major change in how we work. The change is not only on corporate jobs, but in almost all areas of work and life. People who work in corporate jobs are affected as well as people who own their own ventures. COVID 19 changed the way we work drastically in one day. It is impossible to know how long this new way of work will continue, how it will evolve or are we going to go back to “normal” at all. This is a time when offices are empty, plazas look like ghost towns. Many people are working from home in order to stay healthy and prevent the spread of the disease. Global economy is crashing, and unemployment is rising rapidly. It is possible to say that the corporate life defined in this thesis does not really exist right now, the way it existed only about two months ago. It is out of this research’s reach to

analyze the current situation and how these current events will affect the way we work. However it is important to make a note of this event since it seems to be affecting the way we work, the economy and unemployment, all of which will have an effect on how people decide to leave corporate life. Or is there going to be a corporate life to leave?

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Appendix A: Ethical Committee Approval Form

ETİK KURUL DEĞERLENDİRME SONUCU/RESULT OF EVALUATION BY THE ETHICS COMMITTEE

(Bu bölüm İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurul tarafından doldurulacaktır /This section to be completed by the Committee on Ethics in research on Humans)

Başvuru Sahibi / Applicant: Elif Ayaz

Proje Başlığı / Project Title: Leaving the Corporate World


Proje No. / Project Number: 2017-20024-29

1.	Herhangi bir değişikliğe gerek yoktur / There is no need for revision	XX
2.	Ret/ Application Rejected Reddin gerekçesi / Reason for Rejection	

Değerlendirme Tarihi / Date of Evaluation: 4 Nisan 2017

Kurul Başkanı / Committee Chair

Doç Dr. İtir Erhart (izinli)



Üye / Committee Member

Prof. Dr. Hale Bolak

Üye / Committee Member

Doç. Dr. Koray Akay

Üye / Committee Member

Doç Dr. Ayhan Özgür Toy

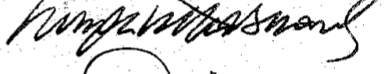
Üye / Committee Member

Prof. Dr. Aslı Tunç



Üye / Committee Member

Prof. Dr. Turgut Tarhanlı



Üye / Committee Member

Prof. Dr. Ali Demirci