

Responsible Leadership, Work Engagement and Meaningful Work Relationship in Organizations

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Responsible leadership Work engagement Meaningful work Received 20 October 2024 Revised 13 March 2025 Accepted 20 March 2025 Article Classification: Research Article	Purpose – While traditionally, the workplace primarily focused on fulfilling individuals' basic needs, there is a growing recognition of the importance of meeting psychological needs as well. Employees now desire well-being, satisfaction, and a sense of meaning in their work lives. Factors such as meaningful work, job resources, and leadership styles play a crucial role in fostering these positive experiences and influencing organizational commitment. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the impact of responsible leadership and meaningful work on work engagement among female employees in the automotive sector within the Ankara Organized Industrial Zone (OSTİM). Specifically, the study will examine the direct effects of responsible leadership on work engagement and the mediating role of meaningful work in this relationship. This focus on responsible leadership stems from its increasing recognition as a critical aspect of responsible leadership that considers the needs of various stakeholders while promoting individual and organizational well-being. Design/methodology/approach – This research was conducted in Ankara Organized Industrial Zone (OSTİM) in Türkiye with a sample of 242 people. Findings – It was concluded that responsible leadership positively impacts work engagement and that meaningful work mediates this relationship. Discussion – This study examined the impact of responsible leadership on work engagement, with a specific focus on the mediating role of meaningful work, among female employees in the automotive sector within the Ankara Organized Industrial Zone (OSTİM). The findings indicated a significant positive relationship between responsible leadership and work engagement, and further revealed that meaningful work partially mediated this relationship. These results offer valuable theoretical contributions and practical implications for organizations and managers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations are no longer places where individuals spend only their work lives and remain beyond the boundaries of their vital areas. Although employees work for their material needs, they now have different expectations and demands from their organizations. Along with their desire to obtain financial results for their performance, they expect their work environment to be enriched with opportunities and supports that provide them with a living and enable them to evaluate the time spent there with quality. First of all, whether the work done by an individual is meaningful to him/her determines the amount of energy and the quality of effort he/she will spend on this work and task (Zeglal & Janbeik, 2019). On the other hand, the responsible consideration and evaluation of the individual's efforts within the organization by the manager is as valuable as the individual's efforts. Responsible leaders bear fair responsibility towards all stakeholders/environments with which they establish relationships outside the organization, embrace ethical values and apply them (Kul, 2017). The current practice is reciprocated and spread among all interacting parties. Over time, this practice takes its place in the procedures as part of the organization's culture (Muktamar, 2023).

The responsible leader applies moral standards equally to all employees. This improves the perception of justice on the part of employees. Positive feelings develop towards the work they do. The task they perform becomes meaningful for the individual (Al Halbusi et al., 2019). An individual shows his/her full performance towards a task only when the task has meaning for him/her. When the job becomes meaningful for the

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individual, it enables the individual to internalize this task and give all his attention to the task success (Grama & Ramona, 2017). This situation causes the individual to develop work engagement.

In sum, the individual reviews the support provided by the organization and whether the manager has a moral responsibility towards him/her through his/her own efforts. A positive outcome of this comparison results in the organizational culture appealing to him/her and the work becoming meaningful to him/her. This situation greatly benefits work engagement. Based on these assumptions, this research addresses the relationship among responsible leadership, work engagement and meaningful work and aims to reveal these relationships

2. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

2.1. *Responsible Leadership*

Responsible leadership is defined as “a relational and ethical phenomenon that occurs in processes of social interaction with individuals who influence or are influenced by leadership and who share the purpose and vision of the leadership relationship” (Maak & Pless, 2006, p. 32). This relationship is not only within the scope of ethics, but also consists of the demands of stakeholders. This perspective focuses on the relationships of leadership with stakeholder groups and argues that these relationships should be at the centre of leadership due to their “building” feature. Pless & Maak (2011) also state that while explaining responsible leadership, the basic responsibility points in leadership such as accountability, fair decision making and confidence are highlighted with respect to the term ‘responsible’.

Some problems have been emphasized for a long time within the scope of current leadership theories regarding organizational leadership. There have been some discussions on the issue that leadership does not carry responsibility towards the organization and acts on the axis of personal purpose and interest (Pless & Maak, 2011, p. 64). On the other hand, some new leadership approaches emphasize that the sense of responsibility lies at the heart of responsible leadership (Waldman & Galvin, 2008). With the economic crises experienced worldwide, the concept and content of social and organizational responsibility have been re-established, and responsibility has been considered as one of the basic tasks of leadership (Sachs, 2003, p. 27). The concept of responsible leadership emerges at individual, organizational and structural levels and deals with social, moral and environmental challenges that arise in organizational life (Miska & Mendenhall, 2018). Thus, it has become increasingly important and the need to use it to combat new challenges has emerged. The perspective of this concept examines the business environment from the perspective of stakeholders. These stakeholders are individuals, groups, organizations, and finally, society-level stakeholders (Miska & Mendenhall, 2018).

2.2. *Meaningful Work*

The term meaningfulness of work for individuals in the workplace has recently begun to gain ground in organizational literature. Hackman and Oldham (1980) stated that employees' feelings about their work and the meaning of the work for individuals are a necessary and important prerequisite for both motivation and outcome. Hackman and Oldham (1976, p. 162) define meaningfulness of work as “the degree to which the employee experiences the job as generally meaningful, valuable, and worthwhile.”

Meaningfulness also indicates the degree of significance or value that employees assign to their work (Wrzesniewski et al., 2013). In another definition, meaningfulness is considered as “a positive psychological state in which people feel that they are making a positive, important, and useful contribution to a valuable purpose by doing their work” (Albrecht, 2013, p. 238). Meaningfulness of work is seen as a situation in which people have the need to transform themselves and the world around them as they progress towards different and important outcomes they design (Sudin & Budiarto, 2021). Meaningful work enhances a person's feeling of purpose in life and boosts their satisfaction with their job (Rosso et al., 2010). It is reported that increasing the work meaning provides multiple advantages in cognition, mental health, behaviour, and finances for individuals (Steger et al., 2012). Thus, meaning is a part of the interest in work (Rosso et al., 2010).

As a result, meaning has emerged as a requirement of work. In line with this need, many studies have investigated the concept and reached important data. In line with the expected effects, it has been shown that it has a substantial impact on life satisfaction (Ertosun, 2021), job satisfaction (Keles & Findıklı, 2016) and on

the individual's job preference (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). Hackman and Oldham (1976) also suggested that three essential mental states (meaningfulness, responsibility, and feedback) play a role in connecting job attributes with favourable work results. Kahn (1990) suggested that psychological meaningfulness derives from jobs that offer challenges, utilize a range of skills, and enable workers to feel they are making a valuable impact. In addition, meaningfulness has been linked to mental healthiness (Crego et al., 2020), higher commitment, satisfaction, and participation (Milliman et al., 2003), increased work motivation (Allan et al., 2019) and lower nonattendance rates (Soane et al., 2013). In addition, meaningfulness has positive relationships with work engagement (Karataş & Özdemir, 2022; Kaur & Mittal, 2020).

2.3. Work Engagement

Work engagement is a concept that has gained considerable attention in recent years. It is defined as a positive and fulfilling work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010: 10). Vigorous individuals exhibit high levels of energy and mental resilience at work, demonstrating a willingness to invest effort and persist even in the face of challenges. Dedication is marked by a strong involvement in one's work, accompanied by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. Absorption, on the other hand, is characterized by a state of complete concentration and immersion in one's work, where time seems to pass quickly and disengaging from work becomes difficult.

Engaged employees tend to be enthusiastic and dedicated, demonstrating a strong identification with their work (Schaufeli et al., 2002). It has been widely acknowledged that work engagement is associated with numerous positive outcomes for both individuals and organizations. These outcomes include heightened job satisfaction, increased organizational commitment, and improved performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Furthermore, work engagement is particularly relevant in the context of responsible leadership. Leaders who prioritize ethical conduct, stakeholder well-being, and sustainable practices are more likely to cultivate work environments that foster employee engagement. By promoting fairness, transparency, and a sense of purpose, such leaders empower employees to feel valued, motivated, and committed to their work. Moreover, responsible leadership often encourages meaningful work by providing employees with autonomy, opportunities for growth, and a connection to the organization's mission and values.

Meaningful work, in turn, can further enhance work engagement. When employees perceive their work as significant and contributing to a greater purpose, they are more likely to experience the dimensions of vigor, dedication, and absorption. This dynamic creates a positive feedback loop where responsible leadership fosters meaningful work, which in turn strengthens work engagement, leading to improved individual and organizational outcomes.

2.4. Developing Hypothesis

Many studies have reported that the characteristics of individuals' work settings can affect their attitudes or behaviours towards work (Ratnaningtyas et al., 2022; Marlene et al., 2021). The theory that can best reveal the connections in this regard is Job Demands and Job and Personal Resources Theory (JD-R theory) (Demerouti et al., 2001). This theory suggests that job demands have a driving motivational force that either overwhelms the individual or, conversely, drives him or her. It also suggests that this situation has various effects on the individual and, as a result, causes the individual to experience burnout or, conversely, engagement (Demerouti et al. 2001). According to Bakker and Demerouti (2017), the individual's perception of control over their environment has an impact on their capability to handle the requirements of the environment. Thus, the importance of valuable individual characteristics such as coping with difficulties, continuing without giving up or eliminating environmental pressure and turning this into motivation has been emphasized. Individuals who do not receive the organizational support that will enable them to carry out this process successfully experience burnout, while individuals who have a high degree of managerial support for work, such as responsible leadership, lead to greater motivation and increased commitment to work. It explains that meeting the requirements for autonomy, proficiency, and connection in the work environment will lead to increased levels of internal motivation and experiencing work as meaningful (Albrecht, 2013). For example, working with a leader who exhibits responsible leadership can help employees better understand the work context, promoting meaningfulness through experienced competence (Sudin & Budiarto, 2021). It is anticipated that this effect will affect employees' engagement to work. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory offers a valuable framework for understanding the factors that contribute to employee well-being and motivation

(Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). This theory suggests that job demands, such as high workload and time pressure, can lead to strain and burnout, while job resources, such as autonomy, social support, and opportunities for growth, can foster engagement and motivation. Responsible leadership can be considered a crucial job resource, as it cultivates a supportive and empowering work environment. responsible leaders who prioritize fairness, transparency, and employee well-being are likely to create a context where individuals feel valued and motivated (Eisenbeiss, 2012). This aligns with the JD-R theory's proposition that job resources can buffer the negative impact of job demands and promote positive work outcomes. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H1. Responsible leadership has a positive effect on work engagement.

Moreover, research suggests that work engagement can contribute to a sense of meaningfulness in one's work (May et al., 2004). When individuals feel energized, dedicated, and absorbed in their tasks, they are more likely to perceive their work as significant and contributing to a greater purpose. This connection between work engagement and meaningful work aligns with the concept of "flow," where individuals experience a state of deep focus and enjoyment in their activities (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Thus, we propose:

H2. Work engagement has a positive effect on meaningful work.

Finally, it is plausible that meaningful work acts as a mediator between responsible leadership and work engagement. Responsible leaders, by fostering a supportive and empowering environment, can enable employees to find meaning in their work, which in turn can enhance their engagement. This mediating role of meaningful work is consistent with the JD-R theory, which suggests that job resources can indirectly influence work outcomes through their impact on psychological states such as meaningfulness (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). This is also supported by studies that have found a positive relationship between responsible leadership and meaningful work (e.g., Rego et al., 2016). Furthermore, Demerouti et al. (2001) highlight the importance of personal resources, such as meaningful work, in mediating the relationship between job resources and work engagement. Based on this, we hypothesize:

H3. Meaningful work mediates the relationship between responsible leadership and work engagement.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1. Participants

This study aimed to investigate the effects of responsible leadership on work engagement and the mediating role of meaningful work among female employees in the automotive sector within the Ankara Organized Industrial Zone (OSTİM). Ankara was selected as the study's geographic focus due to its status as the capital of Turkey and a significant economic hub. OSTİM, on the other hand, was specifically chosen for its concentration of small-to-medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across various sectors. This provided a valuable context for examining the dynamics of responsible leadership and work engagement within this important segment of the Turkish economy. To ensure generalizability, the automotive sector, characterized by a more homogeneous structure and a concentration of medium-sized enterprises, was preferred over other sectors. The primary reasons for selecting the automotive sector were its prevalence of medium-sized enterprises, its involvement of intensive interpersonal interactions and collaborative activities, the increasing employment of women, its potential to provide valuable insights into sector dynamics, and its significant role and impact within OSTİM and the national economy.

The study employed a quantitative research approach. Data were collected through an online survey, resulting in 242 valid responses. This sample size is considered adequate for complex analyses such as structural equation modeling (Kline, 2016). While the exact number of women employed in the approximately 920 active automotive businesses in OSTİM is not known, the online survey successfully reached this broad population, yielding 261 responses. Although the response rate was limited, the advantages of online surveys in reaching a wide audience and the voluntary nature of participation were taken into consideration. Demographic characteristics of the employees are presented in Table 1 (n=242).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Feature	Category	Percentage (%)	Feature	Category	Percentage (%)
Marital Status	Bekar	45.7	Business Size (Number of Employees)	1-50	15.0
	Evli	54.3		50-100	21.5
Age	18-25	12.0		101-200	29.3
	26-35	32.1		201-300	20.7
	36-45	30.8		301 ve üzeri	10.3
	46 ve üzeri	20.5	Tenure	1-3 yıl	17.2
Education Level	Lise	19.9		4-6 yıl	11.0
	Ön Lisans	37.5		7-9 yıl	15.9
	Lisans	32.8		10-15 yıl	19.2
	Lisansüstü	9.8		16 yıl ve üzeri	36.7
Occupational Status	İdari Personel	24.7			
	Hizmet Personeli	46.3			
	Teknik Personel	19.0			
	Diğer	10.0			

3.2. Measures

According to the construct of the proposed model, the following scales were used for measurement:

Meaningful Work Scale: Meaningful Work Scale: A three-item scale created by May et al., (2004) was used. Ratings were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale that includes options from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). A sample item includes: “The things I do at work are important to me”. Cronbach's Alfa in this study was $\alpha = 0.95$. The Turkish adaptation of this scale was conducted by Findıklı et al., 2017.

Employee engagement Scale: The abbreviated 3-item form of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-3) (Schaufeli et al., 2019) was assessed for employee engagement measurement. A reliability coefficient of 0.90 was determined for Cronbach's Alpha. The Turkish adaptation of the UWES has been used in numerous studies (e.g., Ergin, 2012).

Responsible Leadership Scale: Responsible leadership was assessed using the scale consisting of five items created by Voegtlin (2011). A sample item is “My direct supervisor demonstrates awareness of relevant stakeholder allegations.” Cronbach's Alfa in this study was $\alpha = 0.96$. This scale was adapted to Turkish by Özkan and Üzümlü (2021).

There were no reverse items in any of the scales. Thus, the data evaluation process was started.

4. FINDINGS

The statistical analyses of this study were performed using SPSS 25.0 and AMOS 24.0 package programs. While the SPSS program was employed for statistical description and correlation analyses, the AMOS program was used for reliability and validity analyses of the structures and hypothesis testing.

4.1. Data Analysis

Table 2. provides the mean, standard deviation and correlation data for the variables. Based on the correlation analysis results, a positive and significant relationship was found between responsible leadership and

meaningful work ($r=0.41$; $p<0.01$). Similarly, a positive and significant relationship was discovered between meaningful work and work commitment ($r=0.69$; $p<0.01$).

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation Values

Constructs	M	SD	1	2	3
1. RL	3.97	1.12	1		
2. MW	3.10	1.44	0.41**	1	
3. WE	2.67	1.24	0.16*	0.69**	1

Notes: n=241; * $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; M=Mean; SD=Standard Deviation; RL=Responsible Leadership; MW=Meaningful Work; WE=Work Engagement

4.1.1. Measurement Model

The measurement model was evaluated via confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the AMOS program. In this context, the maximum likelihood method was used to analyze whether the data supported the predicted scale structures (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 2006).

The adequacy of the measurement model to the available data was evaluated based on the fit indices suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999). These are; chi-square (χ^2), degrees of freedom (df), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), goodness of fit index (GFI) and comparative fit index (CFI). Of these indices, the χ^2/df value being below 3, the RMSEA and SRMR values being below 0.05, and the GFI and CFI values being above 0.95 is an indication that the model demonstrates a strong overall fit (Byrne, 2016; Kline, 2016). As a result of the CFA, it was determined that $\chi^2/df=2.73$; RMSEA=0.08; SRMR=0.04; GFI=0.92; CFI=0.85 and it was observed that the specified criteria regarding the indexes were met.

In the study, after structural validity analysis, reliability, convergent and discriminant validity were tested. For internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability (CR) should be > 0.70 . For convergent validity, it is recommended that standardized factor loadings should be > 0.50 ; $CR > 0.70$; average variance extracted (AVE) > 0.50 ; $CR > AVE$, and for discriminant validity, it is recommended that $AVE > \text{maximum shared variance (MSV)}$; $AVE > \text{average squared variance (ASV)}$ (Hair et al., 2014).

As shown in Table 3, it is observed that α and CR values are > 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). It is observed that standardized factor loadings are > 0.50 , CR is greater than 0.70, AVE is greater than 0.50, CR values for each factor are higher than AVE, and AVE values are also greater than MSV and ASV (Hair et al., 2014; Malhotra and Dash, 2011). The results obtained reveal that the model has sufficient construct validity, internal consistency reliability, convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 3. Measurement Model

Constructs	Items	Factor Loadings	α	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV
Responsible Leadership	RL1	0.94**	0.96	0.96	0.83	0.17	0.10
	RL2	0.88***					
	RL3	0.95***					
	RL4	0.90***					
	RL5	0.88***					
Meaningful Work	MW1	0.95**	0.95	0.95	0.88	0.49	0.33
	MW2	0.95***					
	MW3	0.91***					
Work Engagement	WE1	0.68**	0.90	0.91	0.78	0.49	0.26
	WE2	0.98***					
	WE3	0.95***					

Notes: *** $p<0.01$; ** $p<0.05$; α =Cronbach's Alpha; CR=Composite Reliability; AVE=Average Variance Extracted; MSV=Maximum Squared Variance; ASV=Average Shared Square Variance

4.1.2. Structural Model

To help understand the significance level, this study used a structural model analysis with 5,000 bootstraps and computed a 95% confidence interval (CI) to determine the upper and lower boundaries. Table 4 presents the outcomes of the hypothesis test.

According to the results gathered, responsible leadership has a positive and significant effect on meaningful work ($\beta=0.41$; $p<0.001$). Hence, hypothesis 1 is supported. Meaningful work has a positive significant effect on work engagement ($\beta=0.70$; $p<0.001$). According to this result, hypothesis 2 is also accepted. Upon examining the bootstrap results, it appears that the indirect effect of responsible leadership on work engagement through meaningful work is significant ($\beta = 0.29$; $p < 0.001$). This finding supports hypothesis 3.

Table 4. Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses	Paths	β	p	CI	Result
H1	RL \rightarrow MW	0.41	0.000**	(0.315–0.500)	Supported
H2	MW \rightarrow WE	0.70	0.000**	(0.615–0.776)	Supported
H3	RL \rightarrow MW \rightarrow WE	0.29	0.000**	(0.224–0.356)	Supported

Notes: ** $p<0.001$; Coefficients are standardized (β); RL=Responsible Leadership; MW=Meaningful Work; WE=Work Engagement; CI=Confidence Interval

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Theoretical Implications

Our findings have several theoretical implications. First, this study sought the connection between responsible leadership, work engagement, and meaningful work by providing a description of the responsible leadership in organizations and the impact on employees. Using data obtained from a sample created from Ankara Organized Industrial Zone (OSTİM), a direct positive relationship was determined between responsible leadership and meaningful work, together with the meaningful work and work engagement relationship. Besides these relationships, the results suggested that work meaningfulness mediates the relationship between responsible leadership and work engagement. Therefore, this study has made significant contributions to the leadership literature, especially the responsible leadership literature, in terms of the model and the relationships it investigates.

The findings of this study suggest that the effects of responsible leadership on employees' work engagement through meaningful work are generalizable based on Job Demands and Job and Personal Resources Theory.

In accordance with the theory of Demerouti et al. (2001), the connection among responsible leadership and work engagement was determined as expected, and the mediating effect of meaningful work was determined in this relationship. These findings are in line with studies supporting the relationship between responsible leadership and work engagement (Gomes et al., 2022; Çetin et al., 2020; Haque et al., 2019) and with studies supporting the relationship between responsible leadership, work engagement and meaningful work (Mostafa et al., 2020). The data obtained revealed the need to emphasize nurturing responsible leadership in organizational environments and encouraging employees' sense of work meaningfulness.

To cultivate responsible leadership within organizations, several practical strategies can be implemented. Firstly, organizations should prioritize fairness-focused training and development programs for their leaders. These programs should focus on building awareness of responsible dilemmas, developing fair decision-making skills, and fostering a culture of integrity (Brown & Trevino, 2006; Northouse, 2018). Secondly, organizations should establish clear accountable guidelines and codes of conduct that reflect their commitment to responsible leadership. These guidelines should be communicated effectively to all employees and integrated into performance evaluation processes (Schein, 2010; Treviño et al., 2006). Thirdly, organizations should create a supportive and inclusive work environment where employees feel empowered to raise ethical concerns without fear of reprisal. This can be achieved through open communication channels, anonymous reporting systems, and a culture of transparency. Finally, organizations should recognize and reward leaders who demonstrate responsible leadership behaviors. This can be done through performance-based incentives, public recognition, and opportunities for advancement (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). By

implementing these strategies, organizations can create a culture that fosters responsible leadership and promotes positive outcomes for both employees and the organization as a whole.

Secondly, and more importantly, from a theoretical perspective, the present study is the first to simultaneously investigate the relationship between responsible leadership and work engagement in a Turkish sample through the mediating role of meaningful work. Thirdly, the limited understanding of the concepts in the model has been expanded and guiding results have been presented for both the service sector and other sectors.

Leadership is considered one of the biggest factors that strengthen employees' positive feelings toward work and contribute to work engagement (Zhu et al., 2009). As responsible leaders, they address values such as honesty, integrity, impartiality, altruism, or concern for the well-being of others. Responsible leaders who are moral managers both communicate these standards and reward employees who comply with them (Yang et al., 2016).

When managers and leaders exhibit responsible leadership behaviours in work environments, this makes employees feel that they are individually valuable and cared for by their managers. In such a case, employees will have the perception that their behaviours are evaluated fairly and responsibly by their managers. This motivation causes them to exhibit more vitality and dedication in their work, and to dedicate themselves further to work and experience engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2002). For this reason, responsible leadership can be seen as a necessity that develops, spreads and implements positive emotions in an organizational sense due to its impact on the individual and the organizational sides. Encouraging and developing it by top management will have positive effects on organizational processes.

However, the results obtained in the study provided an explanation using intrinsic motivation theories (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; 2017) on how responsible leadership affects employees' work engagement experiences through meaningful work. In other words, it has been shown that the responsible leadership style (taking employees into consideration, making and implementing responsible decisions in social interaction processes with them, managing relational processes within the scope of ethics) and the meaningfulness resulting from jobs requiring the use of various skills encourage employee engagement. These results are also consistent with Kahn's (1990) study.

Managers may find this study useful in helping them understand the value of responsible leadership and meaningful work. Although meaningful work is a perception, managers can help employees make work meaningful. They can help this by showing close attention with the responsible leadership style and by developing the importance of work for them in a relational sense. The atmosphere they create with this type of leadership style can help increase employees' belief in their businesses, which can result in higher levels of corporate commitment and better job performance.

The service sector in particular is one of the sectors where commitment to the organization is expected the most and where the organization is most affected by this. In order for businesses to continue their relationships with the groups they are associated with continuously and without interruption, employees need to be committed to their work and continue to stay at work. In this respect, we believe that the findings of the study will motivate managers to better understand the value of these concepts and focus on improving employee-management relations.

5. 2. Practical Implications

Companies can foster responsible leadership by integrating it into their corporate culture. This can be achieved by prioritizing candidates with accountable values and stakeholder-oriented approaches in recruitment processes, focusing leadership development programs on responsible decision-making, stakeholder engagement, and sustainability, and adding criteria to performance evaluation systems that measure leaders' responsible behaviors. Additionally, opportunities should be provided for employees to engage in projects where they can utilize their skills to support them in finding their work meaningful, the societal impact of work should be emphasized, and work processes should be improved by taking feedback into account. In particular, for companies to adopt a responsible leadership approach, regular training should be provided to all employees, starting from top management. These trainings should cover topics such as how to resolve ethical dilemmas, how to communicate effectively with stakeholders, and how to implement sustainability

principles. Furthermore, companies should create a safe environment where employees can freely express responsible violations or concerns related to stakeholders. This can be achieved through mechanisms such as anonymous reporting hotlines or ethical consulting services. Finally, companies should reward and recognize employees and managers who exhibit responsible leadership behaviors. This can be done through methods such as performance-based incentives, promotion opportunities, or public recognition.

5.1. Limitations and Recommendations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the focus on female employees in the automotive sector within the Ankara Organized Industrial Zone (OSTİM) limits the generalizability of the findings. While this focus allowed for a detailed examination of the experiences of women in this specific context, it is important to recognize that the results may not be directly applicable to male employees or to individuals working in different sectors or regions. Future research could address this limitation by replicating the study with diverse samples, including male employees and individuals from various industries and geographic locations.

Secondly, the cross-sectional nature of the study restricts the ability to draw definitive conclusions about causality. While the findings suggest relationships between responsible leadership, meaningful work, and work engagement, it is possible that other factors not measured in this study may influence these relationships. Longitudinal studies could provide more robust evidence about the causal links between these variables.

Thirdly, the reliance on self-reported data through an online survey introduces potential biases. Participants may have responded in a way that they perceive as socially desirable or may have difficulty accurately recalling their experiences. Future research could incorporate multiple data sources, such as supervisor ratings or objective performance measures, to mitigate these biases.

Finally, while the sample size of 242 is adequate for the statistical analyses conducted, a larger sample size could enhance the statistical power and generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the response rate, while not uncommon for online surveys, was limited. This may introduce a degree of self-selection bias, as individuals who chose to participate may differ from those who did not. Future research could explore strategies to increase response rates and minimize this potential bias.

Despite these limitations, this study makes several important contributions. It provides valuable insights into the experiences of female employees in the automotive sector, highlighting the importance of responsible leadership and meaningful work for fostering work engagement. The findings have implications for both research and practice, informing future studies and guiding organizational leaders in creating work environments that promote employee well-being and engagement.

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