A META ANALYTIC STUDY ON THE IMPORTANCE OF WEAK TIES IN ORGANIZATIONS

Örgütlerde Zayıf Bağların Önemine İlişkin Meta Analitik Bir Çalışma

Serkan ADA[*] **Şebnem ADA**[**]

ÖZ

Problem: Do weak ties matter? This question has been attempted to answer, since Granovetter has first argued the importance of weak ties. Literature has contradictory findings with supporting and rejecting Granovetter's arguments, which requires further attention.

Research Objectives: The initial objective of this study is to resolve this conflicting debate by attempting to answer the question whether weak ties provide benefits to individuals. Another objective is to show the importance of several contingency factors in weak ties-outcomes relationship. These factors include the context of weak tie usage, type of work conditions, hierarchical position, and type of outcomes.

Method: This paper uses a meta-analysis methodology, which is a technique to quantitatively review the literature on a given research area, to test the hypotheses.

Findings and Results: Based on 15 samples (N = 3657), we confirmed that Granovetter is actually right (weak ties provide positive outcomes). Contingency analysis shows that people (1) who use weak ties towards searching jobs, (2) who are working at low levels in organizational hierarchy, and (3) who are seeking status outcomes, have greater positive benefits out of their weak ties, while the analysis for information intensity is inconclusive.

Recommendations: Rather than examining whether weak ties matter, which is achieved in this paper, future research should focus on underlying mechanisms regarding why and how weak ties provide benefits to the people who hold it. Researchers may also focus on the contingency factors which affect weak ties-outcomes relationship as well as different contexts which might change the benefits of weak ties.

Keywords: Strength of ties, weak ties, job search, job status, hierarchical position.

ABSTRACT

Problem: Zayıf bağlar önemli midir? Bu soru, Granovetter'in zayıf bağların önemli olduğu görüşünü ortaya koymasından itibaren pek çok kişi tarafından yanıtlanmaya çalışılmıştır. Granovetter'in görüşünü desteklemeyen çalışmaların yapılmış olmasına rağmen, çoğu araştırmacı Granovetter'in görüşünün doğruluğunu desteklemektedir.

Araştırmanın Amacı: Bu çalışmanın temel amacı; zayıf bağların bireylere gerçekten faydasının olup olmadığı sorusunu yanıtlamaya çalışarak birbiriyle çelişen bu iki görüş üzerindeki tartışmayı ortadan kaldırmaktır. Bu çalışmanın bir diğer amacı da zayıf bağlar-fayda ilişkisinin hangi koşullarda değiştiğini göstermektir. Bu koşullar da; zayıf bağların kullanımının gerçekleştiği ortamı, çalışma koşulu türlerini, hiyerarşik konumu ve zayıf bağların sağladıkları fayda türlerini içermektedir.

Yöntem: Çalışmada, belli bir araştırma alanındaki litaratürün sayısal olarak incelenmesi gerektiren bir teknik olan meta analizi yöntemi kullanılarak hipotezler test edilmiştir.

Bulgular ve Sonuçlar: 15 örneğe dayanarak (N=3657) yapılan analizde Granovetter'in zayıf bağların pozitif fayda sağladığı görüşünün doğruluğu desteklenmektedir. Çalışmanın sonuçlarına göre zayıf bağlar; (1) iş arama sürecinde daha etkilidir, (2) örgütteki hiyerarşik yapının alt seviyelerinde yer alan bireylere daha fazla fayda sağlamaktadır, (3) örgütte statü açısından fayda sağlamayı amaçlayan bireylere daha fazla fayda sağlamaktadır. Zayıf bağların bilgiye dayalı çalışma koşullarındaki etkisi konusunda ise bir sonuca varılamamıştır.

Öneriler: Gelecekteki calismalar, zayif baglarin onemli olup olmadigindan cok, zayif baglarin kisilere nasil ve neden fayda sagladigi konusunda olmalidir. Ayrica arastirmacilar, zayif baglarin

Balıkesir Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi
Cilt 13 Sayı 23
Haziran 2010
ss.115-128

[*] Araş. Gör. Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi, İİBF, İşletme Bölümü.
[*] Araş. Gör. Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi, İİBF, İşletme Bölümü

kisilere sagladigi faydalarin daha fazla oldugu kosullari, isletmeleri, ve bunun gibi durumlari inceleyebilirler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: bağların kuvveti, zayıf bağlar, iş arama, iş statüsü, hiyerarşik pozisyon.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tie strength is one of the basic and important characteristics of the social relationships. Granovetter (1973) has defined strength of a tie as "combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie." Prior research has showed that tie strength can be strong or weak, which has different implications. Krackhardt (1992) states that an individual who has strong ties to the others have several benefits, including social support and trust. On the other hand, Granovetter (1973) has suggested that weak ties enable individuals to get access to the networks beyond their own social circle. This provides new ideas or information which is not directly accessible through individuals' direct or strong ties.

The role of weak ties in job search and work contexts has been discussed by the past research studies. As shown in the following figure, these research studies have conflicting findings. Another way of saying is that some of the research conducted regarding weak ties support Granovetter's proposition (Lin et al., 1981), while others claim that weak ties do not positively affect outcomes (Montgomery, 1992).

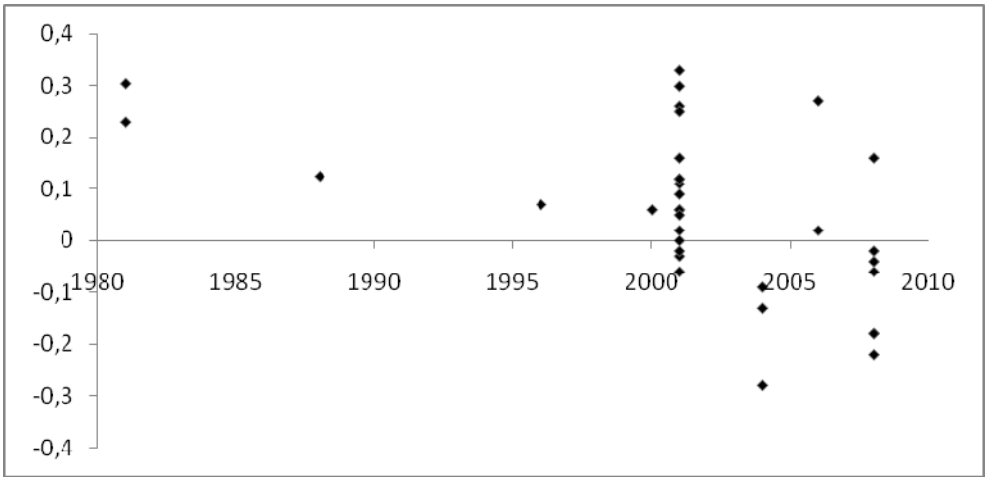


Figure 1. Findings of the past research studies with respect to weak ties

The objective of this paper is to initially answer the question of whether weak ties provide benefits. In addition to attempting to answer this overarching question, this paper also examines several factors on which weak ties and related outcomes relationship is contingent upon. Important research questions from this contingency approach include the following: (1) Do weak ties provide greater benefits in job search context or work context? (2) Do weak ties provide greater benefits in information intensive work conditions or in non-information intensive work conditions? (3) Do weak ties provide greater benefits for people having higher or lower positions in organizational hierarchy? (4) Do weak ties have stronger impact on status outcomes or monetary outcomes?

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: The next section provides a brief discussion regarding the findings from prior literature. The following section provides the hypothesis to be tested in this study. In the third section, we provide

the details about the meta-analysis methodology, paper search process, coding and measurement of the variables. The fourth section reports the results from the meta-analysis for each hypothesis. The final section provides a discussion on the implications of the findings as well as the limitations and conclusions.

2. BACKGROUND LITERATURE

2.1. Overview of "Weak Ties" Proposition

The concept of the "strength of weak ties" is first coined by Granovetter (1973). Before he developed the theory, it was widely accepted that people mostly receive their necessary information from the friends which they see more frequently (strong ties). By hypothesizing in this way, Granovetter has conducted a research in order to find out whether people use information from their strong ties during job search process. However, the finding was the opposite: people actually used their weak ties in finding jobs. One possible explanation was that strong ties created redundancy, which means that strongly tied groups are composed of people having similarities, and in turn similar information. On the other hand, people who need to acquire jobs needed to get access to unique information, which can not be provided by their strong ties. Those having more weak ties were getting access to social circles different from their current social contacts, which provide non-redundancy and quality information (Granovetter, 1973; Monge and Contractor, 2003).

2.2. Literature Supporting the Proposition

Research literature has empirically tested Granovetter's proposition. One of the earliest works for testing this proposition was conducted by Lin and his colleagues (1981). By using the data from working males in the metropolitan area of Albany-Troy-Schenectady, New York, they investigated the relationship between tie strength and the occupational status attainment. In this study, tie strength is labeled as weak tie, when the respondent's contact person was acquaintance or an indirect contact (e.g., friend's relatives, relative's friends), and as strong tie, when the respondent's contact person was his/her relatives, friends, and/or neighbors. The finding of this study was that tie strength is negatively related to the attained occupational status, which supports the strength-of-weak-ties proposition.

A recent research study by Perry-Smith (2006) examined how this phenomenon applies in the context of an applied research institute in a major southeastern university in the United States. Based on the data collected from ninety seven research scientists, this study attempts to answer the question whether weak ties lead to individual creativity. The study operationalizes the tie strength in terms of closeness, duration, and frequency. It is found that weak ties are more beneficial for creativity.

According to a group-level study by Shah et al. (2006), tie strength is identified as "the average level of intensity for the friendship ties within a group". The data in this study is collected from the MBA students in a large public Midwestern university. Based on 35 MBA teams in this university, the study found that weak relationship groups have a higher performance, when they have few external bridging toes with other groups.

The theory is tested at the inter-unit level as well. In a study that uses the data from a large electronics company, Hansen (1999) attempted to answer the question whether inter-unit weak ties improves project completion time in the context of one hundred and twenty product development projects. The study measures inter-unit tie weakness by using classic network measures, that is the average frequency and closeness scores based on a 7-point likert scale from the responses of research and

development managers. According to the findings of this study, useful knowledge is gathered through the weak ties with other organizational subunits. However, he founds that transfer of complex knowledge requires more strong ties.

2.3. Literature Rejecting the Proposition

On the other hand, there is another body of literature asserting that weak ties do not matter at all. Based on the data collected from a large metropolitan labor market, Bridges and Villemez (1986) questioned the generalizability of the fact that people finding jobs with weak ties have greater income. The results confirm the generalizability for broadly defined relationships. However, when controls are added, the effectiveness of weak ties has decreased to a large extent.

Another study by Marsden and Hurlbert (1988) attempted to replicate the studies conducted by Lin and his colleagues (1981) and Bridges and Villemez (1986). The objective was to test whether findings in these studies are due to the sample selection bias or the absence of important control factors. They found that this wasn't the case. They also concluded that tie strength is not a significant predictor of mobility outcomes and access to the social resources.

Montgomery (1992) develops a formal economic model of job search in order to validate the findings of Bridges and Villemez (1986). He focuses on two formulations of tie strength: "weak ties relay job offers more frequently than strong ties" and "weak-tie offers are drawn from a better distribution". He concludes that weak ties are by no means related to higher expected wages. For the second formulation, he asserts that weak ties are sometimes positively associated with higher expected wages.

3. THE ROLE OF WEAK TIES: OVERALL AND CONTINGENT EFFECTS

3.1. Hypotheses Development

A brief review on prior literature on Granovetter's proposition shows that the impact of weak ties on relevant outcomes is inconclusive. Literature shows the effective use of weak ties towards searching jobs or seeking useful information. On the other hand, in some cases, weak ties do not provide benefits as much as strong ties. Therefore, our objective is to resolve this contradictory debate, and find out whether weak ties really matter. In addition, this paper also focuses on several contingency factors on which weak ties-outcomes relationship may differ. Following figure shows our main research model and the contingency factors which is derived from the main model;

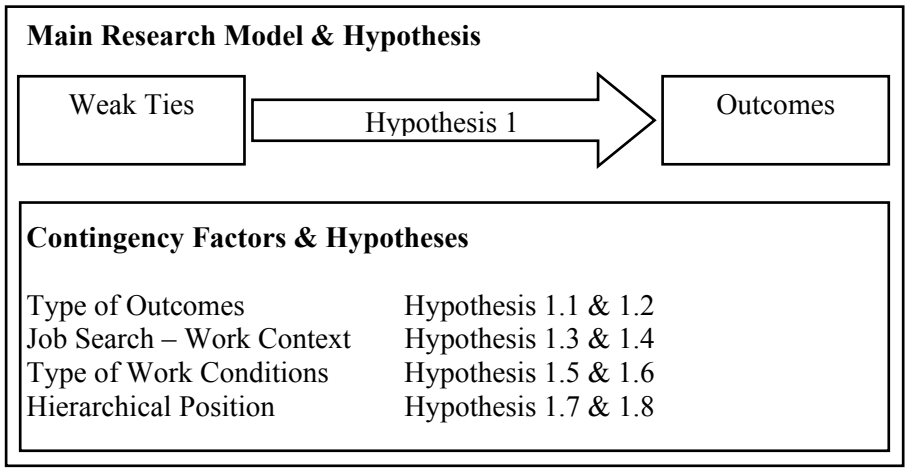


Figure 2. Research Model

As mentioned above, Granovetter proposed that people actually used their weak ties when searching jobs. The reason was that people get access to different sources of information, which is non-redundant, when they have weak tie contacts. Out of their weakly tied contacts, people acquire several outcomes including salary and bonus (which can be tagged as monetary outcomes), promotion, tenure, and occupational status (which can be tagged as status outcomes).

Literature is sprinkled with several studies which focus on the role of weak ties in organizations in terms of monetary outcomes. Brown and Konrad (2001) investigate the use of personal contacts in job search process. They also examine the effect of job seeker's network on several job search outcomes, such as occupational status and salary. Results reveal that job seekers focus more on the inclusion of their weak ties in their search process. They also significantly leverage their weak ties towards their salary and status in the organization. Mizruchi (2008) examines whether job performance, network tie strength, and network structure have any impact on the size of the year-end bonuses received by customer relationship officers in a multinational commercial bank. The findings of this study show that job performance has a positive influence on bonuses, while several variables with regards to the social networks have significant impact as well. When information acquisition in networks is considered, sparse or weakly-tied networks are positively related to high bonuses.

There are also several studies examining the impact of weak ties as it relates to the status of the individuals in organizations. Kim and Canella (2008) study the effect of social capital (as measured by the tie strength) of the managers in Korean corporations on their likelihood of promotion to the next level in the organizational hierarchy. Their results show that tie strength is negatively correlated with the promotion, leading us to conclude that managers are promoted as they have more weakly-tied contacts. Another study regarding the impact of weak ties on status outcomes is conducted by Perry-Smith (2006). According to the findings, it is suggested that weak ties have a positive impact on tenure in the organizations. Lin et al. (1981) examines the question of interest by focusing on occupational status and provide conclusions in parallel with the propositions of Granovetter.

Based on the evidence from the literature and the propositions made by Granovetter, we would expect that weak ties have a positive influence on any type of outcomes, both monetary and status outcomes (*Hypothesis 1, 1.1, and 1.2*).

On the other hand, researchers usually focused on two types of contexts. Some researchers' focus was that weak ties provide people important information, so that their job search process will be facilitated (Brown and Konrad, 2001). Some other researchers focused on the internal company perspective. They argued that people having weak ties in an organization will be able to use them towards their creativity (Perry-Smith, 2006) as well as their status inside the organization (Lin et al., 1981; Kim and Canella, 2008). Parallel to Granovetter's argument, we suggest that weak ties will be providing positive outcomes, regardless of where and in which context they are used (*Hypothesis 1.3 and 1.4*).

Another phenomenon in the weak-ties argument is that weak-ties are used in several contexts. Granovetter proposed that weak ties are usually helpful when people need non-redundant and necessary information to achieve some goals. Another way of saying is that, information needs make people to find out weak ties. Literature shows that weak ties are used in information-intensive (i.e., information is created and used) as well as non-information intensive (i.e., work conditions are more mechanical and technical information is used rather than created) work conditions in order to acquire benefits. For example, Levin and

Cross (2004) examined the issue in mid-level professionals engaged in knowledge-intensive work (research and development, financial modeling, and oil exploration) in industries, such as pharmaceutical companies, banks, and oil-gas companies. They find that professionals receive more useful knowledge, as they have more weakly-tied contacts in the organization. Perry-Smith (2006) also investigates the impact of weak ties in information-intensive context (i.e., research scientists involved in applied research in a US-based university), and the findings were in line with the weak-ties proposition. There are studies which investigates the role of weak ties in non-information intensive context. For an example of this context, Constant et al. (1996) find that weak-ties facilitate the information seeking of employees of Fortune 500 computer manufacturer companies. Based on the evidence provided, it is inevitable to assume that weak ties will be providing positive outcomes in any context that are being examined, including information and non-information intensive work conditions (*Hypothesis 1.5 and 1.6*).

The last but not least phenomenon is that weak ties may have different implications for people working at different levels in hierarchical positions in organizations. Constant et al. (1996) and Totterdell (2008), among the studies regarding the impact of weak ties on individuals at relatively lower levels in the organizational hierarchy, examine the issue with data collected from employees. Other researchers, such as Davern and Hachne (2006) and James (2000), explore the topic by sampling managers that have higher levels in the hierarchy in their organizations. In general, these studies converge on the conclusion that weak-ties matter. Thus, we propose that weak ties will be positively associated with related outcomes for people in both low and high level hierarchical positions (*Hypothesis 1.7 and 1.8*).

3.2. Research Hypotheses

Based on the seminal work of Granovetter (1973) and the literature that is parallel with his arguments, we propose the following main research hypothesis and sub-hypotheses developed under this overall proposition;

Hypothesis 1: Having weak ties will be positively related to outcomes.

Hypothesis 1.1: *Having weak ties will be positively related to monetary outcomes (i.e., salary and bonus).*

Hypothesis 1.2: *Having weak ties will be positively related to status outcomes (i.e., promotion, tenure, and occupational status).*

Hypothesis 1.3: *Having weak ties will be positively related to outcomes in job search context.*

Hypothesis 1.4: *Having weak ties will be positively related to outcomes in work context.*

Hypothesis 1.5: *Having weak ties will be positively related to outcomes in information-intensive work conditions.*

Hypothesis 1.6: *Having weak ties will be positively related to outcomes in non-information intensive work conditions.*

Hypothesis 1.7: *Having weak ties will be positively related to outcomes for people having low hierarchical positions (i.e., employees) in the organization.*

Hypothesis 1.8: *Having weak ties will be positively related to outcomes for the people having high hierarchical positions (i.e., managers) in the organization.*

4. METHODS

4.1. Meta Analysis Methodology

In this paper, we used meta-analysis procedure in order to quantitatively review the research literature on Granovetter's strength of weak ties proposition. Meta-analysis is one of the best ways of summarizing, integrating, and interpreting the quantitative findings of the literature (Lipsey and Wilson, 2001). Glass (1981) defined meta-analysis as "the statistical analysis of a large collection of analysis results for the purpose of integrating the findings". Meta-analysis is a kind of survey research in which research reports are surveyed instead of people. Research reports are "interviewed" by a coder who assigns codes to completed published studies in accordance with a pre-defined coding protocols and procedures. Meta-analysis study can be done if the collection of research reports are empirical and have quantitative research findings. Furthermore, the studies should examine similar and/or same constructs and relationships and findings should be in a comparable or convertible statistical form which is called "effect size" in meta-analysis methodology (Lipsey and Wilson, 2001).

In order to code, summarize, analyze, and interpret a collection of research findings, there should be a common way of comparison which is achieved by "effect size statistic". It is the effect size which makes the meta-analysis possible and which is a very useful statistic in order to standardize the research findings across studies. Correlation coefficient is the most common effect size statistic, whereas t-scores, z-scores, etc. can also be used as an effect size statistic with a proper transformation (Lipsey and Wilson, 2001).

4.2. Sample

4.2.1. Inclusion Criteria for Papers

An important initial step in meta-analysis is to determine the decision criteria for including possible primary studies to be included in the analysis. In accordance with the inclusion criteria employed in this paper, we only included the individual level papers examining the relationship between tie strength and/or weak ties with individual level outcomes. In addition, the inclusion is limited with the papers in job search and work context, which are somewhat related to employment. Studies using the data in other contexts are excluded. Another criterion was that we only included the studies reporting correlation coefficients.

4.2.2. Paper Search Process

Two different search strategies are used in searching possible papers: bibliographic search and online database search. Initially we search for the papers cited in Granovetter's review paper as well as other impactful research studies. Second, we conducted an online database search using following online sources and databases: Business Source Complete, Web of Science, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. Keywords that we used in the search included *strength of ties, tie strength, weak ties, job search, wages, salaries, promotion,* and *tenure*.

Paper search process yielded 75 relevant results. After a careful review of these papers, we have identified 13 papers which can be meta-analyzed. Two of the papers have included two samples, therefore we have a total of 15 cases to meta-analyze.

The sample includes 14 journal papers and one working paper. Journal papers are published in following journals: Academy of Management Journal, American Journal of Economics and Sociology, American Sociological Review, Group & Organization Management, International Journal of Japanese Sociology, Journal of World Business, Management Science, Organization Science, Social Forces, Social

Balıkesir Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi
Cilt 13 Sayı 23
Haziran 2010
ss.115-128

Networks. Most of the papers in the sample are published recently. Publication year of studies and counts are as follows: (1) 1981, (1) 1988, (1) 1996, (1) 2000, (2) 2001, (3) 2004, (2) 2006, (4) 2008. National origin of samples in the set of papers are mostly from United States (11 studies), while we have samples from United Kingdom (2 studies), Korea (one study), and Japan (one study).

4.3. Coding and Measurement of Variables

4.3.1. Weak ties: Variables that describe the tie strength in following terms are regarded as weak ties: frequency (Levin and Cross, 2004), closeness (Perry-Smith, 2006), intimacy (Brown and Konrad, 2001), density (Mizruchi, 2008).

4.3.2. Outcomes: We have coded outcomes in two broad categories. Outcome variables, such as salary (Brown and Konrad, 2001) and bonus (Mizruchi, 2008), are coded as monetary outcomes; while outcome variables, such as promotion (Kim and Canella, 2008), tenure (Perry-Smith, 2006), occupational status (Lin et al., 1981), are coded as status outcomes.

4.3.3. Job search/Work context: If weak ties are used towards searching for jobs, we have coded that study as job search context. If the study examines weak ties in the context of an internal company perspective, we have coded it as work context.

4.3.4. Type of work conditions: Research studies using contexts in which weak ties are utilized for creation and usage of information are coded as information-intensive working conditions. Examples include services context (James, 2000), research lab activities (Perry-Smith, 2006), financial modeling (Levin and Cross, 2004). Manufacturing related works will be coded as non-information-intensive working conditions (Constant et al., 1996).

4.3.5. Hierarchical position: When studies collect data from people in lower levels in organizational hierarchy, we have coded them as low hierarchical position. Examples include employees (Constant et al., 1996; Totterdell, 2008), researchers (Perry-Smith, 2006), etc. When studies collect data from people in higher levels in organizational hierarchy, we have coded them as high hierarchical position. Examples include managers (James, 2000; Davern and Hachen, 2006), directors (Kim and Canella, 2008), etc.

4.4. Meta Analytic Computations

In order to calculate the effect sizes, we have used the guidelines provided by Hunter and Schmidt (1990). Since correlation coefficients are the best statistics for reflecting the relationship between two variables, we have used them as effect sizes. Other than correlation coefficients, we haven't used other statistics.

If a study contains multiple correlations coefficients for a given relationship, we have converted individual correlation coefficients into Fisher's Z score and taken the average of all of these values. After calculating the average Fisher's z value, we have converted this value back into correlation coefficient by using inverse Fisher's z formula. This final outcome is called *effect size* per study.

For the hypothesis related to the overall weak ties-outcomes relationship, we have combined all of the correlation coefficients by using the procedure mentioned above. For the moderator analysis, we have divided the entire sample of studies into subgroups depending on the moderators (e.g., outcomes, job search/work context, type of work conditions, and hierarchical position).

We have calculated effect size weighted by the sample size for the population effect size estimates of each relationship that we hypothesized. Confidence intervals around these weighted average effect sizes are calculated in order to test whether the effect size is statistically significant.

Furthermore, we have done homogeneity analysis in order to test the presence of moderators for each meta-analytic estimate. This is done by calculating the Q-Statistic (Hedges and Olkin, 1985). If the homogeneity hypothesis is rejected, it is concluded that individual effect sizes do not estimate a common population mean. Another way of saying is that the differences among the effect sizes are greater than the sampling error (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001). In order to find out these differences, moderator analysis is done.

5. RESULTS

Each of the hypotheses is tested regarding the weak ties-outcomes relationship and the contingency factors underlying this relationship, by using the meta-analytic techniques described above. Table 1 presents the results from the meta-analysis and the relevant statistics;

Table 1. Meta-analytic Results on Weak Ties-Outcomes Relationship

	Hypothesis Number	*k* studies	Total *n*	*R*	95% Conf. Int. Lower	Upper	Q
Main Research Hypothesis							
Weak ties-Outcomes	H1	14	3657	0.05	0.01	0.08	71.43
Sub-hypotheses							
Type of Outcomes							
Monetary outcomes	*H1.1*	*4*	*1031*	*0.08*	*0.01*	*0.14*	*3.26*
Status outcomes	*H1.2*	*9*	*2238*	*0.11*	*0.06*	*0.15*	*18.41*
Job Search vs. Work Context							
Job search context	*H1.3*	*3*	*912*	*0.19*	*0.12*	*0.25*	*4.65*
Work context	*H1.4*	*10*	*2345*	*0.05*	*0.01*	*0.09*	*6.68*
Type of Work Conditions							
Information intensive	*H1.5*	*3*	*792*	*-0.09*	*-0.16*	*-0.02*	*29.87*
Non-information intensive	*H1.6*	*8*	*1953*	*0.04*	*-0.01*	*0.09*	*3.74*
Hierarchical Position							
Low	*H1.7*	*8*	*1954*	*0.06*	*0.01*	*0.10*	*6.31*
High	*H1.8*	*3*	*791*	*-0.13*	*-0.20*	*-0.06*	*17.79*

Note: k = # of studies used in weighted mean effect size calculation, n = sample size, r = weighted mean effect size, Q = Homogeneity statistic

5.1. Main Research Hypothesis (*Hypothesis 1*)

Recall that Hypothesis 1 was proposing that weak ties will be positively related to relevant outcomes. The results in Table 1 suggest that *Hypothesis 1 is supported*. Weak ties are positively related to outcomes, albeit the impact is small (r= .05, k = 14, N = 3,657, 95% CI: .01–.08). 95% confidence intervals do not include zero, which shows the statistical significance. The Q-statistic which measures the heterogeneity in the effect size was significant (Q = 71.43, $p < 0.01$), meaning that the studies are not coming from the same population. This is an expected result, since the studies have different characteristics, which allows us to conduct moderator analysis. Therefore, based on this homogeneity analysis, we have decided to seek contingent affects for explaining the heterogeneity among the studies.

5.2. Sub-hypotheses

5.2.1. Type of Outcomes (*Hypothesis 1.1 and 1.2*)

Hypothesis 1.1 and 1.2 proposed that weak ties are positively associated with both monetary and status outcomes. The results show that weak ties are positively related to monetary (r= .08, k = 4, N = 1,031, 95% CI: .01–.14) and status outcomes (r= .11, k = 9, N = 2,238, 95% CI: .06–.15). When we made a comparison, the data shows that people have greater status outcomes than monetary outcomes based on their weak ties. Based on the findings, we are able to conclude that *Hypotheses 1.1 and 1.2 are supported*.

5.2.2. Job Search vs. Work Context (*Hypotheses 1.3 and 1.4*)

Do weak ties provide greater benefits in job search context or work context? The results in Table 1 suggest that weak ties are positively related in both job search (r= .19, k = 3, N = 912, 95% CI: .12–.25) and work contexts (r= .05, k = 10, N = 2,345, 95% CI: .01–.09). When we make a comparison, weak ties provide greater benefits in job search context than work context. 95% confidence intervals indicate that results are significant. We conclude that *Hypotheses 1.3 and 1.4 are supported*.

5.2.3. Type of Work Conditions (*Hypotheses 1.5 and 1.6*)

In terms of the type of work conditions, does the impact of weak ties on relevant outcomes differ in information-intensive and non-information intensive work conditions? The analysis resulted that weak ties are negatively related to outcomes in information-intensive work conditions (r= -.09, k = 3, N = 792, 95% CI: -.16– -.02), while we found no statistical support in non-information intensive work conditions context. Therefore, *Hypotheses 1.5 and 1.6 are not supported*.

5.2.4. Hierarchical Position (*Hypotheses 1.7 and 1.8*)

Hypotheses 1.7 and 1.8 assert that weak ties will be positively related to individual outcomes for people working in lower levels and higher levels in organizational hierarchy. Table 1 shows that people working in low level hierarchical positions have positive outcomes (r= .06, k = 8, N = 1,954, 95% CI: .01–.10), while high level managers have negative outcomes based on their weak ties (r= -.13, k = 3, N = 791, 95% CI: -.20–-.06). Put another way, statistically significant results suggest that people low in organizational hierarchy have greater benefits out of their weak ties, as compared to the people high in organizational hierarchy. We conclude that *Hypothesis 1.7 is supported*, but *Hypothesis 1.8 is not supported*.

Table 2 shows the list of main and sub-hypotheses of this study and the summary of the findings.

Table 2. Research Hypotheses and Summary of the Findings

Hypotheses Number	Hypotheses	Finding
Main Research Hypothesis		
Hypothesis 1	Having weak ties will be positively related to outcomes.	Supported
Sub-hypotheses		
Type of Outcomes		
Hypothesis 1.1	Having weak ties will be positively related to monetary outcomes	Supported
Hypothesis 1.2	Having weak ties will be positively related to status outcomes	Supported
Job search/Work context		
Hypothesis 1.3	Having weak ties will be positively related to outcomes in job search context	Supported
Hypothesis 1.4	Having weak ties will be positively related to outcomes in work context	Supported
Type of Work Conditions		
Hypothesis 1.5	Having weak ties will be positively related to outcomes in information-intensive work conditions	Not Supported
Hypothesis 1.6	Having weak ties will be positively related to outcomes in non-information intensive work conditions	Not Supported
Hierarchical Position		
Hypothesis 1.7	Having weak ties will be positively related to outcomes for people having low hierarchical positions in the organization	Supported
Hypothesis 1.8	Having weak ties will be positively related to outcomes for the people having high hierarchical positions in the organization	Not Supported

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

There are many research studies attempting to validate Granovetter's strength of weak ties proposition in the literature. Results from these research studies show that weak ties sometimes provide positive outcomes to individuals, while several studies argue that weak ties do not matter at all. In this paper, we try to resolve this contradictory debate using a meta-analytic technique as a methodological approach.

Our initial finding is that having weak ties is positively related to relevant individual outcomes. Next, we have examined the impact of several contingency factors on the relationship between weak ties and individual outcomes. First, we found that weak ties are positively related to outcomes in both job search and work context, while people have greater outcomes from their weak ties when searching for jobs. Another contingency factor was regarding the hierarchical position. We found that weak ties provide positive outcomes to people working in low level positions, while people working in high level positions have negative outcomes based on their weak ties. We intuitively conclude that low level employees have greater benefits from their weak ties. Our final contingency factor was about the type of outcomes. We found that weak ties lead to positive monetary and status outcomes, while status outcomes have higher values than monetary outcomes.

Balıkesir Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi
Cilt 13 Sayı 23
Haziran 2010
ss.115-128

One of the limitations in this study is that we have relatively small sample size for some of the analysis. In our contingency analysis pertaining to information

intensity, our results were inconclusive due to this reason. We believe that researchers should focus on this perspective, and should test weak ties hypothesis based on information intensive and non-information intensive working conditions. We also believe that there are few studies which are conducted in counties other than the United States. Therefore, the findings of this study should be interpreted cautiously. For instance, since most of the data values of the current study come from studies conducted in United States, the findings may only be generalized in similar countries which share the same set of values. It is known to all that United States is an individualistic culture in which individuals seek their own goals instead of the goal of the group. Thus, we can generalize the findings of this study to those countries, such as United Kingdom and Canada, sharing same values. On the other hand, social networks and relationship are different in countries where collectivism is the dominant value. It is possible to assert that Turkey (or other collectivistic countries such as China, Taiwan, and etc.) has a collectivistic culture, thus leading us to interpret that strong or weak ties may have different implications, unlike United States or other similar cultures.

In this paper, we believe that we well answered the question of whether weak ties provide positive outcomes. We suggest that researchers should focus on the possible contingency factors underlying the weak ties-outcomes relationship, rather than focusing on the question whether weak ties matter. Researchers may also examine the effect of information intensity and hierarchical positions on weak ties holders in a separate analysis with the support of a primary data collection. Also, validating the generalizability of Granovetter's propositions in other cultural contexts is of great importance, thus we suggest researchers to do more studies in other countries.

REFERENCES

Studies included in the meta-analytic computations are marked by an asterisk (*)

Bridges, W. B., Villemez, W. J. (1986). Informal hiring and income in the labor market. *American Sociological Review*, 51:574-82

*Brown, W., Konrad A. M. (2001). Granovetter was right: The importance of weak ties to a contemporary job search. *Group and Organizational Management,* 26: 434-462.

*Constant, D., Sproull, L.S., Kiesler, S. B. (1996). The kindness of strangers: the usefulness of electronic weak ties for technical advice. *Organization Science*, 7(2), March-April 1996

*Davern, M., Hachne, D. S. (2006). The role of information and influence in social networks: Examining the association between social network structure and mobility. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 65: 269-293.

Glass, G. V., McGraw, B. (1981). Meta-analysis in social research, Beverly Hills, CA, Sage Publications.

Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology,* 78: 1360–1380.

Hedges, L. V., Olkin, I. (1985). Statistical Methods for Meta–analysis, Orlando, FL, Academic Press.

Hansen, M. T. (1999). The search-transfer problem: the role of weak ties in sharing knowledge across organization subunits. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, (March) 44: 82–111.

Hunter, J. E., SCHMIDT, F. L. (1990). Methods of meta-analysis: Correcting error and bias in research findings. Newbury Park, CA, Sage Publications.

*James, E.H. (2000). Race-related differences in promotions and support: Underlying effects of human and social capital. *Organization Science*, 11, 493-508.

*Kim, Y., Canella, A. A. (2008). Social capital among corporate upper echelons and its impacts on executive promotion in Korea. *Journal of World Business*, 43 (2008) 85–96.

Krackhardt, D. (1992). The strength of strong ties: The importance of philos in organizations. In N. Nohria & R. C. Eccles (Eds.), Networks and organizations: Structure, form, and action: 216–239. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

*Levin, D. Z, Cross, R. (2003). The strength of weak ties you can trust: The mediating role of trust in effective knowledge transfer. *Management Science*, 50: 1477-1490.

*Lin, N., Ensel, W., Vaughn, J. (1981). Social Resources, Strength of Ties and Occupational Status Attainment. *American Sociological Review*, 46(4): 393-405.

Lipsey, M. W., Wilson, D. B. (2000). Practical Meta-analysis, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, California.

*Marsden, P. V., Hurlbert, J. S. (1988). Social resources and mobility outcomes: a replication and extension. *Social Forces*, 1988, vol. 66, pp. 1038–1059.

*Mizruchi, M. S., Steams, L. B., Fleischer, A. (2008). Getting a Bonus: Performance, Social Networks, and Reward among Commercial Bankers. Working paper, Department of Sociology, University of Michigan

Monge, P. R., Contractor, N. (2003). Theories of communication networks. New York: Oxford University Press.

Montgomery, J.D. (1992). Job search and network composition: the strength of weak ties. *American Sociological Review*, 57, 586–596.

*Nakao, K. (2004). Social Resources and Occupational Status Attainment: Comparison of Japanese and American Employees' Personal Networks", International Journal of Japanese Sociology, 2004, Number 13.

*Perry-Smith, J.E. (2006). Social yet creative: The role of social relationships in facilitating individual creativity. *Academy of Management Journal*, 49(1), 85-101.

*Seibert, S. E., Kraimer, M. L., Liden, R. C. (2001). A social capital theory of career success. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44(2): 219–247.

Shah, P. P., Dirks, K. T., Chervany, N. (2006). The multiple pathways of high performing groups: The interaction of social networks and group processes. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 27, 299–317.

*Totterdell, P., Holman, D., Hukin, A. (2008). Social networkers: Measuring and examining individual differences in propensity to connect with o

Araş. Gör. Serkan ADA

Lisans eğitimini 2003 yılında Celal Bayar Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi İşletme Bölümü'nde tamamlamıştır. 2003 yılında Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu bursunu kazanarak Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi İşletme Bölümü'nde Araştırma Görevlisi olarak görev yapmaya başlamıştır. 2007 yılında ABD'de State University of New York at Oswego'da İşletme yüksek lisansını tamamlamıştır.

Halen ABD'de University at Buffalo'da doktora eğitimine devam etmektedir. Bilişimin işletme değeri, bilişim güvenliği teorileri ve uluslararası iş etiği konularında makaleleri, uluslararası konferans bildirileri ve kitap bölümleri bulunmaktadır.

Şebnem ADA

Lisans eğitimini 2003 yılında Celal Bayar Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi İşletme Bölümü'nde tamamlamıştır. Yüksek lisans eğitimini 2006 yılında yine aynı üniversitenin Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü İşletme Anabilim Dalı Muhasebe-Finansman Bölümü'nde tamamlamıştır. Entelektüel sermaye'nin firma değerine etkisi ve muhasebeleştirilmesi konularında yayımlanmış makaleleri bulunmaktadır. Yabancı dili İngilizcedir.