

A Proposal of Employee Life Cycle within the Context of Individual and Organization

Birey ve Örgüt Bağlamında Bir Çalışan Yaşam Döngüsü Önerisi

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Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, işletmeler için kritik önem taşıyan çalışan yaşam döngüsünü (ÇYD) oluşturan aşamaları kapsamlı bir şekilde ortaya koymak ve akademik açıdan hem bütüncül hem de yalın bir çalışan yaşam döngüsü tanımlamaktır. Böylelikle kavramın daha önce sınırlı bir şekilde ele alındığı literatüre katkı sağlanarak, daha kullanılabilir bir çalışan yaşam döngüsü sunmak ve işletmelere çalışanlarla ilişkilerini yönetme konusunda uygulamaya ilişkin bir çerçeve sunmak istenmektedir. Buradan hareketle çalışan yaşam döngüsünün birey ve örgüt için ne anlam ifade ettiğine değinilerek, çalışan yaşam döngüsüne ilişkin literatür rafine edilmiştir. Sonuç olarak, genel anlamda birbirine benzemekle beraber tam anlamıyla bir uyuşmanın söz konusu olmadığı çalışan yaşam döngüsü varsayımlarından hareketle bir döngü önerisi yapılmıştır. Bu öneri doğrultusunda çalışan yaşam döngüsü; iş ilişkisi öncesi, iş ilişkisi süreci, iş ilişkisinin sonlandırılması ve iş ilişkisi sonrası olmak üzere dört ana faaliyet ile açıklanmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Çalışan Yaşam Döngüsü, İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi, ÇYD'nin Bireysel ve Örgütsel Boyutları

Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to set forth the stages of employee life cycle (ELC) in a detailed way and define both holistic and plain ELC from an academic point of view. Thus, by making contribution to the related literature where the aforementioned concept has been investigated in a limited way, the present research intends to offer a more usable employee life cycle and provide businesses with a practical framework for managing their relations with employees. With reference to this point, the literature on employee life cycle was refined by touching upon the meaning of employee life cycle from the perspectives of the individual and organizations. Based on the employee life cycle assumptions, which are generally similar but not with the features of exact match, a cycle proposal was ultimately suggested in the study. In line with this suggestion, employee life cycle is explained with four main activities: pre-business relationship, the process of business relationship, the termination of business relationship and post-business relationship.

Keywords: Employee Life Cycle, Human Resource Management, Individual and Organizational Dimensions of ELC

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Introduction

The fact that the labor market has a very dynamic structure and changing environmental conditions increase the importance of managing human resource (HR) activities effectively. Today, it can be put forward that there is a common view of accepting human resource as a significant means of competition (Schuler and MacMillan, 1984; Sun and Liu, 2011; Thompsen, 2009). Unlike the past, it can be advocated that the existing labor force varies and differs in many subjects including age, gender, experience, education levels and expectations. Hence, there are some roles for companies to make employees an important resource for achieving competitive advantage by following the right policies in line with the current situation of the labor market. The strategic quality obtained by human resources management (HRM) within this framework requires that employees be managed with a long-term mentality.

The concept of employee life cycle comes to the forefront with the following factors: the change in the context of HRM and labor force, the involvement of an employee in a business, the employee's leaving that business and the practices carried out until the next processes. Gulati (2013) notes that an ELC covers the steps that employees go through from the time they are hired in an organization until they leave. Thus, attracting and retaining qualified human resources (HR) to the organization require an effective management of the ELC. Otherwise, the loss of existing qualified employees will lead to serious problems which will result in the loss of productivity in macro activities and training activities, particularly in re-employment and orientation processes (Smither, 2003). Furthermore, Smither (2003) states that the rapid growth in the economy and the drop-in birth rates can be managed by employing the most productive employees. Verive and DeLay (2006), on the other hand, argue that the organizations, which implement the ELC effectively, have established learning opportunities that can provide competitive advantage. As well as being important, an employee's life cycle is also a long and difficult journey for both the employee, himself/herself, and the business that hires him/her. The people, who think that an employee is easily recruited, employed, quit the job and all these processes are easy, are likely to be the managers that cannot make use of employees adequately and suffer from high levels of absenteeism and labor turnover rate. For this reason, understanding the concept of ELC and how to manage this cycle effectively is vital in the reduction of costs (Irvin, 2014). HR costs are related to many issues such as the acquisition, development, absenteeism, and retention of manpower and labor turnover. In this regard, the control of HRM and HR costs needs to be constructed on the basis of ELC. Each stage of ELC, which will be discussed in detail later, involves different cost elements and HR costs must be minimized to achieve maximum economic efficiency. Also, managing and sustaining the HR-related costs of the organization with regard to ELC increases the potential of human resource and stimulates the motivation and passion of employees. In this way, employee lifecycle perspective increases the competitiveness of the business and enables it to take an advantageous position in the market (Sun and Liu, 2011). All the aforementioned arguments refer that businesses need to manage the ELC effectively so as to survive in the market and gain competitive advantage through HR.

The aim of the present study is to identify the stages that form the critical employee life cycle for businesses in a detailed way and define ELC both in a holistic way and plain way from academic point of view. Thus, it is intended to offer a more usable employee life cycle and a practical framework for businesses to manage their relations with employees by making contribution to the literature where the concept has been handled in a limited way. For this purpose, this study initially explains the concept of ELC with its stages and touches on what it means for both the individual and the organization. Afterwards, so as to eliminate the confusion related to the concept in the literature, differences were filtered and a new definition of the concept was made by the researchers and an employee life cycle proposal was suggested. In

this way, a cycle was proposed by drawing attention to the assumptions of ELC, although they are generally similar to each other but there is no exact match among them.

Employee Life Cycle (ELC)

Approaching the business world with a current perspective, it is observed that market demands are changing, corporate culture continue to develop and more businesses are becoming globalized. As businesses grow and the search for international workforce increases, talent market shrinks and becomes more competitive. Thompsen (2009) states that the days are gone when senior management simply leaned back and expected the HR team to guide new and talented individuals along a linear career path. The above-mentioned change draws attention to the significance of ELC model and how to manage it effectively. The concept of ELC is also expressed in the literature in different ways such as human resources flow (Beer et al., 1984), human resources cycle (Sun and Liu, 2011) and human capital cycle (Thompsen, 2009). Nevertheless, these concepts differ in terms of how businesses position their employees, define and manage their employees' activities. With reference to this point, the definition and scope of ELC is hereby handled in this chapter, together with its relationship with other concepts available in the literature.

Although it is not directly mentioned as the employee life cycle, a definition with similar features to ELC was made by Beer and his colleagues (1984). This process, which is defined as human resources flow, consists of three main stages including different practices and policies. These are defined as inflow (recruitment, assessment and selection, orientation and socialization), internal flow (evaluation of performance and potential, career development, internal placement, promotion, and demotion, education and training) and outflow (termination, outplacement, and retirement) (Beer et al., 1984).

Another explanation draws attention to the emphasis that ELC can be accepted as an HR model identifying the different stages a worker advances through in an organization, as well as the role HR plays in optimizing that progress. In short, employee life cycle refers to the professional path of an employee in a given business as an individual. Certain stages in employee lifecycle overlap with core HR responsibilities and can include talent management. For this reason, ELC is sometimes called HR life cycle or only HR cycle (Rouse, 2012). Within this scope, the entire process from the acquisition of HR to leaving is also expressed as HR life cycle (Sun and Liu, 2011). Von Grebmer (2012), on the other hand, explains employee life cycle as a reflection of the steps which are taken by an employee during his or her employment period in the organization. It attracts attention that the concepts in the literature on employee life cycle differ in terms of their inability to explain the cycle, as well as the ways in which the stages forming the cycle are handled. In the following chapters of the study, each stage of ELC is explained by the researchers and a proposal of employee life cycle, which is believed to explain the process better, is suggested with reference to these explanations.

In line with the explanations regarding the concept, the relationship between ELC and HRM was embraced by mentioning what employee life cycle means to the individual and organization. In this way, the aspects that ELC and HRM resemble and differentiate will be seen more clearly.

Employee Life Cycle from the Perspectives of the Individual and Organization

As mentioned before, employee life cycle is an HR model identifying the different stages a worker advances through in an organization, as well as the role HR plays in optimizing that progress. HRM is defined as “the whole body of the activities performed so as to provide an efficient and stable workforce required in terms of quality and quantity in achieving a sustainable competitive advantage of a business” (Ardıç and Özdemir, 2017). Within this context, considering the concept in terms of the individual and organization, which are two main partners owing to the nature of working life, it will be very useful in terms of producing

effective results in business life by providing a better understanding of the academic framework of ELC. Beer and his colleagues (1984) also emphasized the impact of organizational and individual requirements while addressing the process they defined as human resources flow.

Considered as a HR model, it is possible to say that employee life cycle is associated with many HRM functions in terms of organization. Latemore (2020) also emphasized that HRM activities embrace strategies to attract, develop and retain talent throughout the employee lifecycle. Based on the previous definition of HRM and the stages of employee life cycle, which will be discussed in detail later, it is possible to list the functions of HRM as follows: HR planning, HR procurement and selection (recruitment), performance management, career development and termination of the employment relations (e.g. leaving job and dismissal). Likewise, the literature review on the topic indicates that employee life cycle includes many related and similar practices to HRM functions: the recruitment of the employee (Gulati, 2013; Hawker, 2014; Rouse, 2012; Verive and DeLay, 2006; Von Grebmer, 2012), career practices (Nagendra, 2014; Von Grebmer, 2012), terminating the business relationship (Hawker, 2014; Lupfer, 2017; Nagendra, 2014; Rouse, 2012; Shyam and Ramachandra, 2015; Verive and DeLay, 2006; Von Grebmer, 2012).

To manage employee life cycle in an efficient way, the relationship between ELC and HRM reveals the need that HR practices must also be designed unique to the individual for a better service to the aforementioned target. ELC model is a concept that explains the dimensions of the interaction that a business establishes with the employees through the development process. With this concept, businesses can develop strategies on how to interact with their employees on an individual basis in all processes, from the stage of attractiveness for procuring HR to the end of business relationship, and can implement HR practices with regard to these strategies. Such a perspective will also contribute to the identification and solution of various problems related to the individual at different stages. The above-mentioned interaction between the employee and the business also changes during the individual's employment period in the business. The needs of the individuals, the importance of their needs, how these needs are met, and the degree of satisfaction are constantly changing.

When individual needs are handled in the scope of employee life cycle, it is explicit that the stages employees belong to differentiate the needs they feel in life cycle, and the risks and difficulties faced by businesses in managing employees in different life cycles vary (Smither, 2003). Understanding the whole process in which the individual interacts in the business is of great importance for both individuals and businesses. In order to explain the behavior of individuals and make employees contribute to the business more by increasing the satisfaction level of employees, it becomes a must to handle the individuals' interaction process with the business through a systematic point of view.

When the literature is examined, it is seen that there is not much research and academic discussion on the concept of employee life cycle. However, it can be said that some studies have been carried out on the subject recently. For example, Gladka and colleagues (2022) explained the employee lifecycle for both employees and employers in two main phases attracting and retaining, with an emphasis on personnel marketing. While the titles of the attracting stage are called search and discover, consider and apply, assess, accept, there are four titles in the retention phase: explore, build-up, maturity, repeat or decline and leave (Gladka, Fedorova and Dohadailo, 2022). As a result, it can be concluded that the concept has not been fully clarified yet, since current academic discussions on the subject are limited. To this end, the differences among the concepts, which can be associated with the concept of employee life cycle, such as "career stages", "human capital cycle" and "talent life cycle" should be briefly explained.

“Career stages” address the way an employee configures and develops his career in an individual sense, regarding to the interaction with the institution (s) he works in and based on

periods. When the literature on career stages is examined, it is clearly seen that there are many different classifications (Özdemir, 2005). One of these classifications belongs to Schein (1978: 40-45) that handles the career of an individual in a nine-stage structure which starts from childhood period and in each period starting from the third one in which the individual joins the business world to the last period, which is retirement, the following reviews appears: the individual's career, position-specific duties in relation to the business he works for and the role of the employee in the business (such as new and full members). Schein's review points out the similarities and relationship between career stages and ELC by indicating that ELC is a process including some career stages. Although the working life cycle and career cycles are perceived to be similar at first glance, the two concepts diverge from each other. The traditional way of evaluating career is to deal with career in stages, and these stages are associated with the development of human life in periods. Regardless of the profession, it is possible to examine the career of many adults in five stages: exploration, establishment, mid-career, late career and decline. Age constitutes a reference point in the classification of phases. However, the important point is, the identity formation of the individual, abilities, interests, expectations, experience, concerns, family, and interaction of these factors in stages. To this end, individuals may experience similar situations at different ages due to the decisions and changes regarding to business life (DeCenzo et al. 2010: 216; Sullivan, 2006: 251-253). At this point, ELC differs from career cycles by considering career development of an individual within a single organization. In other words, career stages are used to explain the changing and developing stages of an individual's own life and these stages are unique to individuals. Whereas the concept of ELC tries to explain the mutual interaction of any business, starting from the first stage when each employee is communicated one by one, until the end of business relationship. Unlike career cycles, the concept of ELC is not about the individual career development of a person in this aspect. In fact, ELC examines the development structure of the interaction of an individual with any business where his/her path crosses in a period of his/her career process.

The review of the literature reveals that another concept similar to ELC is named as "human capital cycle". It is worthy to note that when the concepts of employee life cycle and human capital cycle are compared, there is a great deal of similarity. However, human capital cycle (describes human capital management through ELC. When the stages related to human capital cycle are analyzed, they appear to be addressed in six stages, which are: the emergence of a new need/strategy, the definition of the human capital plan, recruitment and selection, onboarding and orientation, the development of existing skills or career development and turnover. The most critical point emphasized in employee capital cycle is that the "new strategy or emergence of need" phase is the most important phase for the cycle (Thompson, 2009). As seen, after the emergence of new employee needs and a related planning, employee life cycle comes into play. After determining the need for HR and how this need will be met, the following steps are followed: attracting potential candidates, recruitment and etc.

In another review, Von Grebmer (2012) indicates that ELC management is related to the concept of "talent management" and reveals its connection with HR practices. As mentioned before in the conceptual framework related to ELC, hiring and retention of qualified employees is vital for businesses. Here, we notice the concept of talent management, which is expressed as "the effort of the business to help employees at all levels exceed their current potentials" (Cheloha and Swain, 2005). Similar to ELC, talent management is also a unique function that covers a process consisting of different stages and combines many activities and responsibilities. In this regard, it is possible to advocate that talent management is the way the talent life cycle is managed. When the concept is reviewed in terms of HRM, talent management is defined as "a single function related to managing the talent cycle, integrating all activities and responsibilities starting from attraction and acquisition to development and retention". With this aspect, it is possible to consider talent management as a holistic framework handling HRM functions such as recruitment, performance management, training and development and career

development. Talent life cycle is defined as “countless ways for a business to interact with the talent, which are from attracting and acquiring a talent to starting the job, developing, managing, retaining, and even regaining (Schiemann, 2014). As can be seen, it catches attention that the stages explained in talent life cycle are also addressed in ELC. Considering the mission of employee life cycle to compete through HR, it will be easier to comprehend its similarity with talent life cycle. Indeed, employees who will provide competitive advantage to the business carry out this mission with their “talents” which are called as unique skills to them such as knowledge, experience, intelligence, reasoning skill, attitude, character, learning and development ability (Michaels et al., 2001). In this regard, as Von Grebmer (2012) noted, it is possible to argue that ELC is related to talent management.

When the literature is reviewed, it is explicit that the stages making up employee life cycle and how these stages are sorted differ. Below are the different phases of employee life cycle explained, and the typologies related to the classification are summarized.

The Stages of Employee Life Cycle

When the literature on employee life cycle is reviewed, it is clearly seen that the concept is tackled in different numbers and qualities on the basis of stages. Here the stages of ELC, which can be evaluated from a process-oriented angle, are explained in the light of the differences in the literature. In Table 1, it is possible to summarize the stages of ELC and how they are handled in different ways.

As seen in Table 1, employee life cycle is handled with different number of stages in each study and these stages are named differently. With reference to the aforementioned classifications, this part of the study tries to identify the common elements observed in the mentioned differences. Then, in line with the aim of the present study, a new employee life cycle definition will be made in the light of the previous studies and a proposal will be suggested with regard to the stages of this process.

Table 1. The Studies on Employee Life Cycle and Classification Typologies

| | 1st Stage | 2nd Stage | 3rd Stage | 4th Stage | 5th Stage | 6th Stage |
|--|--|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------|
| Smither (2003) | Introduction | Maturity | Growth | Decline | | |
| Verive and DeLay (2006) | Attract/Recruit | Join/Onboarding | Engage/Retain | Leave | | |
| Rouse (2012) | Recruit | Onboard | Develop | Retain | Offboard | |
| Von Grebmer (2012) | Entry/Hiring | On-boarding | Internal transfer | Exit/Retirement | | |
| Gulati (2013) | Hire | Inspire | Admire | Retire | | |
| Hawker (2014) | Hire | Manage | Exit | | | |
| Nagendra (2014) | Onboarding | Orientation | Career planning | Career development | Termination | |
| Irvin (2014) | The pre-join | The employee stage | The post-employment stage | | | |
| Shyam and Ramachandra Gowda (2015) | Introduction | Development | Promotion | Mid Career Crisis/Retirement | | |
| Lupfer (2017) | Attraction | Recruitment | Onboarding | Development | Retention | Separation |
| Tabassum and Sahni (2017) | Recruitment and Selection | Employee Contract | Personal Development Program | Annual Compensation | Termination of Employment | |
| Cattermole (2019) | Attraction | Recruitment | Onboarding | Development | Retention | Separation |
| Gladka, Fedorova and Dohadailo (2022) | Attraction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search and Discover • Consider and Apply • Assess • Accept | Retention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore • Build-up • Maturity • Repeat or decline and leave | | | | |

Source: Own

• **Attraction:** Considering the classifications related to employee life cycle, it is seen that only three of them (Lupfer, 2017; Verive and DeLay, 2006; Cattermole, 2019) include the stage of attraction. All three studies embrace attraction as the first stage of employee life cycle. Verive and DeLay (2006) put forward that employee life cycle measurement begins before a candidate employee is included in a given organization. Here, the target is to evaluate the applicability of an organization's employment offer. In other words, it is tried to identify what attracts the candidate to evaluate an organization's employment offer. Comprehending the above-mentioned relationship allows the organization's recruitment function to attract the right candidates. As can be seen, the attraction stage was combined with the recruitment metrics in the mentioned study. Correspondingly, Lupfer (2017) argues that the awareness of the candidates is high; therefore, a good candidate will investigate the organization extensively and ask questions about the value proposition of the organization to both himself and his professional environment. It is also keynoted that the statements of the employees will be effective in attracting new talents or, on the contrary, moving them away from the organization. Hence employers should take internal and external issues into consideration.

In this regard, it can be postulated that the stage of attractiveness was neglected in the majority of the classifications which were made regarding ELC. Nevertheless, recruiting the right candidate with the application of attraction and enabling him to stay in the business provide the business with an important opportunity in the reduction of costs via reducing the turnover rate significantly (Bretz et al., 1994; Porter, 2011). At this point, the concept of employer brand appears. It represents the effort of a business to show a clear perspective on what makes it different and desirable as an employer both inside and outside the company (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). In other words, employer brand grounds on how potential candidates and current employees perceive the business and sets forth that considering the expectations of the aforementioned people will contribute to the construction of HRM. Having a strong employer brand will make it easier to attract potential candidate employees. Nevertheless, many employers are unaware of how they are perceived from the outside (Pritchard, 2014). Having talented employees in changing competitive conditions is regarded as the main source for achieving sustainable competitive advantage (Von Krogh and Kameny, 2002). In this case, ignoring the application of "attraction" while mentioning about ELC will hinder the effective management of the process. The ultimate aim of ELC is to make contribution to the ability of businesses to sustain their assets effectively in the current conditions, where the talent market is shrinking and becoming more competitive. In this case, mentioning about an ELC model which bypasses attraction stage will generate a limited perspective.

• **Recruitment-Entry:** As the classifications related to ELC are continued to review, it is noteworthy that attraction stage was discussed only in three studies (Lupfer, 2017; Verive and DeLay, 2006; Cattermole, 2019), whereas in the remaining classifications, the first stage is related to the recruitment of employees. While Smither (2003) and Shyam and Ramachandra Gowda (2015) define this stage, which is the beginning of employee life cycle, as "introduction", other studies (Gulati, 2013; Hawker, 2014; Rouse, 2012) designated this stage as "hire". Verive and DeLay (2006) combined the stages of "attract" and "recruit", while Lupfer (2017) and Cattermole (2019), handled the stage of "recruitment" as the second stage after "attraction".

According to Smither (2003), the stage of "introduction" is the stage immediately after hiring, when a new employee enters the business and needs to create a productive role or position within the company. On the other hand, Rouse (2012) described the stage of "recruit" as a combination of many applications such as talent acquisition software, application tracking system, pre-employment screening and including the recruitment of a new employee. On the other hand, Gulati (2013) points out the importance of employing the best candidate to be found at the stage of "hire", which is probably the most important stage when explaining the ELC.

Since the cost of hiring is high, the cost of hiring the wrong candidate exceeds the marginal additional salary costs or expenditures required to hire the best person at the first step. An organization's culture can be a powerful hiring tool. Thus, the organization should be turned into a place where people want to come and work. In addition to accepting the stage of hiring as the first step of ELC, the statements about what attracts qualified employees to an organization catch attention. As it is seen, it is vital to hire the right candidate and reduce the recruitment costs and make the organization attractive for the right candidate. The findings from the literature support the view that ELC starts by attracting a qualified employee prior to the hiring process and making the organization a place to work for potential candidates. With reference to this point, it was deemed appropriate to describe the first stage of ELC proposal of the current study as “attract”.

It is possible to put forward that the recruitment metrics stated by Verive and DeLay (2006) in relation to employee life cycle can be considered as assessment tools for “attract and recruit” stages of the cycle. In other words, these metrics can also be defined as performance indicators of the recruitment function of a business. Among these metrics, base rate and selection rate are available, which are used to measure the effectiveness of HR supply. Base rate is about whether the applicants with the required qualifications apply and selection rate is for the candidates with eligible qualifications. In brief, these rates, which are related to the quantity and quality of the candidate pool of the business, referring to the number of candidates it can offer job, can be considered as an important indicator for HR department at macro level and recruitment function (Özdemir, 2017) as well as employee life cycle.

• **Onboarding:** Another concept which is widely encountered in employee life cycle is the stage of “onboarding”. While this stage was regarded as the first stage of employee life cycle by Nagendra (2014), the other studies (Lupfer, 2017; Rouse, 2012; Verive and DeLay, 2006; Cattermole; 2019) put the stage of onboarding after the stage of “recruit”. Nagendra (2014) defines the onboarding stage as the period when the employee is included in the institution and gains access to institutional data. With the participation of the employee in the organization, it becomes important to understand how well the employee integration and socialization process worked (Verive and DeLay, 2006). Realizing the socialization or organizational socialization process in relation to the recruitment process with the inclusion of the orientation is important from the perspective of the new employee’s providing the expected contribution to the business (Özdemir, 2017). Organizational socialization, a process in which new employees turn into influential members of the business involve the following stages: "expectant socialization" that begins before the candidate joins the business, "encountering" that occurs when the employee has just started work and "settlement" in which the employee is interested in performance and career development processes (Noe, 2009). In this respect, socialization can be considered as a process which is related to the positioning of an employee within the business. In other words, a relationship is established between the individual and the business, first as a candidate then as an employee, and the positive experiences at each stage of socialization ensure that the employee continues to work in the business. The first a few months following a person's joining the organization determine whether the employee chooses to stay in the organization or leave. At this point, it is vital to measure whether expectations are met and the employee feels himself like a team member (Verive and DeLay, 2006). Another explanation about the recruitment stage of employee life cycle was made by Lupfer (2017). In this regard, employees who are new to a company experience not only the excitement of joining a new company, but also enjoy helping other employees play new roles. In the stage of onboarding, organizations and especially managers should make sure that new employees have the feeling of being welcomed. Otherwise, weak first impression will lead to a gradual decrease in efficiency. Managers may not always have time to direct onboarding stage. Hence, it is of great importance to introduce new employees to their colleagues immediately.

• **Retention:** In some of the studies related to the classification of ELC (Lupfer, 2017; Rouse, 2012; Verive and DeLay, 2006; Cattermole, 2019), the practice of “retention” is regarded as a stage of ELC. In his statement related to the stage of retention, Lupfer (2017) advocates that businesses that provide collaborative work environments and know their employees with their jobs are at the highest level in retaining qualified employees. In order to ensure that qualified employees stay in the organization, creating loyalty in employees (Lupfer, 2017; Verive and DeLay, 2006), and recognizing them with their efforts (Hiltrop, 1999; Lupfer, 2017) and their performances (Sandhya and Kumar, 2011) is quite important. Verive and DeLay (2006) also support this view by integrating the stage of retention with building employee commitment. From the perspective of Rouse (2012), when an employee is integrated into the company and has a sound understanding of his/her role, the forthcoming challenge is to retain the employee and ensure continued employee development. Increasing the organizational commitment level of the employees will decrease the rates of absenteeism and turnover while easing the retention of qualified employees by creating an effect that increases job satisfaction as well (Verive and DeLay, 2006). Companies spend a lot of resources on their employees with the expectation that they will work for them in the future; however, if employees leave the company in a short time, all these investments go down the drain. Owing to the fact that retention becomes unsuccessful, labor turnover and costs increase. For this reason, retaining qualified employees is more important than hiring new employees (Sandhya and Kumar, 2011).

Reviewing the studies that include retention stage in ELC (Lupfer, 2017; Rouse, 2012; Cattermole, 2019), the common point of these studies is that they have taken retention stage as the step before separation stage. Only one of them (Verive and DeLay, 2006) mentions that retaining-related activities can cover the period from joining to the organization to retirement. Nevertheless, the previous explanations indicate that retention does not lose its importance from the moment the individual joins the organization until he/she leaves the organization. From the moment an employee joins the business to the moment he leaves the business, the following practices are effective in keeping that employee in the business: fees (Cappelli, 1999; Sandhya and Kumar, 2011), career development opportunities (Hiltrop, 1999), perception of equality (Pritchard, 2015), the feeling of cherishment (Pritchard, 2014) and job satisfaction (Sandhya and Kumar, 2011). It needs to be kept in mind that retention is necessary and significant for other stages of ELC. As a result, it can be put forward that accepting the function of retention as a stage means to neglect the fact that it is necessary and important for other stages as well. Therefore, retention in the proposed cycle in this study was not expressed as a separate stage; in other words, it was accepted as an integrated activity in all stages.

• **Leaving-Offboard:** The literature review indicates that the stage where the employee's connection with the organization has ended is expressed in different concepts, which are: leave (Verive and Delay, 2006), separation (Lupfer, 2017; Cattermole, 2019), offboard (Hawker, 2014; Rouse, 2012; Von Grebmer, 2012), retire/retirement (Gulati, 2013; Shyam and Ramachandra Gowda, 2015; Von Grebmer, 2012) and termination (Nagendra, 2014).

Verive and DeLay (2006) note that the last stage of ELC is the time when an employee leaves the company. On the other hand, Nagendra (2014) states that the last stage an employee leaves the company is sometimes called “transition”. Besides, the author states that the reasons for leaving the job are the determinant of the process and he lists these reasons as retirement, resignation and layoffs. While Hawker (2014) expresses the reasons for the appearance of exit stage as resignation, more HR supplies than demand, low performance, death, fraud and robbery, Rouse (2012) lists these reasons as follows: the employee leaves due to a new job, retirement, layoffs, personal reasons or termination for violating company policy. In short, it is underlined that it is a must to comprehend why employees leave the company in separation stage (Lupfer, 2017). When an employee leaves the company, not only HR but also expert knowledge is lost. Offboard stage is critically significant to help organizations maintain a strong

employer brand and gain valuable feedback from employees leaving the business. The aforementioned information helps the business retain other employees and improve HR processes, respectively (Rouse, 2012). In addition, in spite of the fact that the employees leaving the job are the best candidate pool for further recruitment, they can also be the biggest enemy of the business if they leave the job with the idea that they are not appreciated enough (Lupfer, 2017). To this end, it is significant to understand the reasons for leaving the job correctly.

The above-mentioned explanations display that employee turnover is not an end but includes a feedback function that provides important input to the business. Indeed, Nagendra (2014) puts forward a claim to support this view by mentioning that exit interviews are planned by organizations so as to get useful input from employees leaving the job. A similar explanation was made by Verive and Delay (2006), which advocated that it is possible to conduct exit interviews, exit surveys and retirement surveys in order to find out the reasons for employees leaving the business. It is also observed that there are different studies keynoting that similar applications need to be carried out for the information pool that will benefit the business (Hawker, 2014; Lupfer, 2017). Hence, in the present study, the proposal of ELC presented by the researchers also includes the process that develops after the termination of the business relationship.

The Proposal of Employee Life Cycle

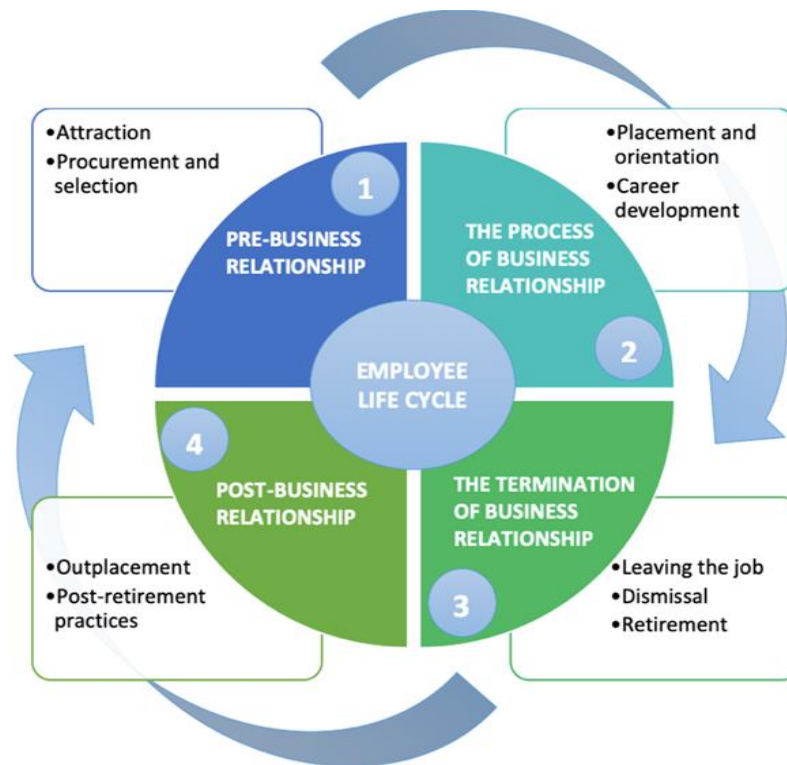
Considering the previous studies about the stages of ELC, it is tracked that the majority of these studies started with the recruitment stage and ended with the exit stage. The previous classifications look similar in general; however, it seems that there is no exact match, which indicates that a new classification is needed with reference to the literature on ELC. Moreover, the aforementioned detection provides a very important basis for the current study, which aims to address ELC in a holistic way.

Before explaining the stages to be suggested in the proposal of employee life cycle, the concept of employee life cycle should be explained with the thought of contributing to the field and guiding the stages. With reference to this point, employee life cycle is defined as “an HR model that addresses the ongoing communication that starts from the moment an individual comes into contact with the organization and continues even if the business relationship between the company and the employee ends and the interaction of the employee with the organization at different stages of the employee's journey in that organization as a development process and explains the role of HRM in optimizing this interaction”.

This model starts with attracting qualified workforce into the company to ensure sustainable employment relationship with employees hired in an organizational context based on the interaction of individuals and organization. Then, it provides a comprehensive and long-term perspective or framework that envisages to ensure that the interaction and communication go on in an appropriate way, even if the existing employees are retained and the employment relationship ends. In this way, ELC provides with a couple of benefits to employees such as the continuity of the relationship between the business and individual in various ways even after the end of employment, being considered as a possible candidate again in the future and creating new opportunities. In other words, it contributes to the sustainability of an employee's career by accepting that the career of the employee is not composed of a single business or period.

With reference to this definition, review, and the similarities of different studies related to ELC, mainly together with the classifications of Hawker (2014) and Irvin (2014), which largely reflects the employment relationship that has gained different characteristics in recent years, it is possible to advocate that the proposal of ELC displayed in Figure 1 deserves to be discussed in the field.

Figure 1. Employee Life Cycle



Source: Own

It is possible to handle employee life cycle in a more extended perspective than the definition of Gulati (2013), which is: an ELC covers the steps that employees go through from the time when they are hired in an organization until they leave.

With this necessity, it can be noted that the following factors might be effective: handling the employment relationship in different ways as HRM gains a strategic quality (Alvesson, 2009; Greer, 2001), outplacement applications which are performed to reduce the negative effects of layoffs and turnover, which are undesirable with the change in management understanding (Torrington et al., 2005) and especially re-employment of young retirees (Cahill et al., 2006; Fasbender et al., 2016). Therefore, as seen in Figure 1, the proposed ELC model, which is different from other studies, takes into account the post-employment period. In this regard, it is possible to explain the stages of the ELC proposal briefly as follows:

(1) Pre-business relationship: The first stage, which covers the practices before the potential employee candidate is included in the company, is comprised of attraction, procurement, and selection.

• **Attraction:** Organizational attraction or the attractiveness of an organization, which starts employee life cycle, is defined in many ways. In general, this concept can be explained as the individual's intention and attitude towards an organization within the context of organizational benefits and values. One of the most prominent examples of this attitude is the individual's desire to work in an organization and turn to the recruitment process (Highhouse et al., 2003). When the literature is reviewed, it is probable to come across the studies indicating that organizational attractiveness affects the intention of joining the organization positively (Gomes and Neves, 2011). Moreover, it is vital for a business to have a large pool of candidates to select the right people with the required features. For this purpose, appropriate steps should be taken to create a pool of candidates at the desired size/quality and attract candidates by contacting the labor market in the most efficient way (Tulgan, 2000). In other words, it is quite significant for

the company to attract the labor market so as to choose the most appropriate person among the candidates to achieve job-person fit. In this respect, the stage of attraction has a major supporting role in the stages of procurement and selection.

Also, it is possible to put forward that the quality of the candidates attracted into the business is related to recruitment, management of pricing costs and retention. There are samples indicating that the significance of retention has increased particularly after the second half of 1990s, and the attraction of the business, its attitude towards the employees, the presentation of different opportunities and offers in the first two years, 4-5 years and 7-8 years of employment relationship affect the success of retention (Fitz-Enz, 2000). Several academic studies reveal that the ability of the organization to attract candidates and employees affects organizational commitment and organizational loyalty levels of the employees, their intention to leave the business, as well as the recruitment process (Pierce and Dunham, 1987; Steers, 1977). Based on these findings, it is probable to put forward that there is a relationship between the attraction of a company and employee life cycle, and attraction makes ELC last longer.

• **Procurement and selection:** The stage of attraction also makes contribution to conducting the stage of procurement and selection in a more efficient way by attracting the potential candidates who will contribute the most to the business. At this stage, it is aimed to select the most suitable candidate from the pool of talent created by the organization. Barber (1998) defines this stage as “the practices carried out by the organization primarily to designate and attract potential employees”.

It is observed that the studies about organizational attractiveness are mainly focused on identifying the factors that affect the job selection and application decisions of the individuals looking for a job and the recruitment process (Highhouse and Hoffman, 2001). Besides, in the past, it seems that most businesses had a simple recruitment purpose to ensure the applications of many people (Wanous, 1992). Instead, Rynes (1989) advocates that it would be wiser for employers to consider a wider range of recruitment goals. In this regard, the author suggests that employers can consider post-recruitment outputs, which are: job satisfaction of the new employee, initial job performance, and first year retention rate of new hires. In this respect, the stage of procurement and selection also activates the stage of retention within ELC.

At the stage of procurement and selection, the business asks the following question: “What kind of an employee is required?”. With this question, it is aimed to determine which knowledge, skills and abilities are important for the vacant position. Another question to seek an answer after determining the important elements for the position is which resources to choose for recruitment. Responding to these questions contributes to choosing the right candidate suitable for the job during the procurement and selection process, in other words, increasing the satisfaction of the employee and ensuring a longer employment relationship (Breaugh and Starke, 2000). Recruiting and retaining the right candidate appears as a factor that reduces the costs of re-hiring and makes ELC longer, which indicates the time spent by an employee in a business.

(2) The process of business relationship: The second stage of ELC is the process of business relationship, which becomes active with the inclusion of an employee in a business. Starting with the candidate’s entering the business after the job offer is made and the candidate responds positively, this stage consists of placement, orientation and career development activities.

• **Placement and orientation:** After collecting all possible data about the candidates and making the selection decision clear, recruitment offers are made and then placement stage begins when employee is placed in the job (Özdemir, 2017). If the person-job fit and person-organization fit is achieved with the placement, the long-term employment and usefulness of the employee will become easier. Orientation becomes important as job placement greatly affects the employee's future performance and decision to remain in the business. Orientation,

which is after job placement, is a training conducted in order to introduce new employees to their jobs and colleagues (Klein and Weaver, 2000). With this program, it is aimed for new employees to feel themselves good, get excited to be a part of the organization and be motivated to do their best at work (Lawson, 2006).

When the literature is examined, one can come across the studies (Acevedo and Yancey, 2011; Cadwell, 1988) which put forward that the rate of staff turnover also increases in the companies that do not include orientation programs. As a result, it can be suggested that orientation programs reduce re-hiring costs by having influence on the newly recruited employees to decide to stay in the organization. Moreover, orientation programs facilitate the stage of procurement and selection by attracting the potential candidates who are competent at different fields of expertise and contribute to the first stage of ELC. Besides, with the orientation, the employee's acceptance of the business is accelerated and career development is supported.

• **Career development:** The stage of career development, which starts with the orientation training applied after a new employee is hired, has been addressed in the literature in different ways. The most common of these discussions is to accept career development as a concept that integrates career management (organizational) and career planning (individual) practices. It is emphasized that this stage is a long-term phase that can last from a few months to decades, unlike other stages of ELC. Furthermore, this stage involves many practices such as increasing the skills, knowledge, and work experience of employees, gaining more competitive advantages through employees, and designing/implementing training programs (Thompson, 2009). Accordingly, a company carries out the aforementioned activities so as to contribute to the advancement of working life by taking the employee to the center and it is possible to state that the responsibility of career development belongs to the employee (DeCenzo et al., 2010: 36-37).

In this regard, as long as the individual's planning for his/her career becomes compatible with the organization's career management process, the person's employment in the organization will increase. The literature review also confirms that the career opportunities offered by the organization reduce the employee turnover rate (Buzeti, Klun and Stare, 2016). This situation prevents the hiring costs and the existence of career opportunities will also provide convenience in attracting qualified candidates. Another contribution of career development practice is that it supports the procurement and selection stages by allowing the employees needed for future positions to be trained in the organization. The review of the literature reveals that there are many studies drawing attention to the relationship between career development stage and outplacement stage, which will be discussed later (Aquilanti and Leroux, 1999; McDaniels and Hesser, 1983). The point that the studies compromised is that the outplacement consultancy provided after the termination of the business relationship is an application making contribution to the career development of the person. In this respect, the application of outplacement helps the employee who lost his job to find new jobs, supports his/her career development and affects the retention of the employees positively who continue to work in the business.

(3) The termination of business relationship: From the angle of ELC, the termination of the job refers to the period that occurs when the expectations between the company and the individual are not met and goes on until the end of the legal relationship of the employee with the company. The third stage of ELC consists of the following actions: employees' leaving the business voluntarily, dismissal from the workplace and retirement.

• **Leaving:** When the literature on leaving is analyzed, it is seen that the intention to leave is often considered as the predecessor and predictor of this behavior (Eby, 2006: 328; You, 1992: 51). From this perspective, it is possible to define the intention to leave the job as "the desire to end the business relationship that occurs in employees owing to organizational or individual reasons, such as the organization's inability to meet the expectations of employees, to leave the job and organization" (Özdemir and Özdemir, 2015). Many individual and organizational

factors such as the negative emotional nature of the employee and the assessment/perception of an alternative job superior to the current position (Steel, 2006: 692) and lack of perceived organizational support (Rubel, Kee and Rimi, 2020) lead him to end his business relationship voluntarily.

- **Dismissal:** For whatever the reason it is, dismissal, which means the termination of the business relationship, is regarded as an undesirable HRM practice. This application, which must have defined and shared the operation of the business, is structured within the framework of law and originates from many reasons. Among these reasons, which are also included in the company's disciplinary regulations/guidelines and business agreements, there are many individual, organizational and environmental situations, which are: poor performance, downsizing, theft, sexual harassment, violence, plagiarism or sabotage (DeCenzo et al., 2010), indiscipline, cultural incompatibility and corporate marriages (De Vries and Balazs, 1996). Layoffs create difficult emotions and economic hardship and can cause lawsuits. Therefore, an evaluation should be made with a long-term perspective on the decision of dismissal, except for compulsory reasons which may be crime-related. In layoff practices, it must be particularly paid attention to documentation and the issue of whether performance improvement is possible or not (DeCenzo et al., 2010).

As it will be mentioned later, so as to avoid negative consequences of layoffs, companies need to set up a more qualified communication level with employees, rehire the former employees in case it is appropriate and increase the efforts to develop occupational compatibility capacities. Companies that support their former employees with various methods can positively affect the perceptions towards themselves and especially the perceptions of prospective candidates and employees, who are other labor market actors, and contribute to organizational processes since attractiveness.

- **Retirement:** Retirement (DeCenzo et al., 2010: 218), which is considered to be the most difficult and last period of an individual's career, is an application based on criteria such as the year of service, age, number of premium days, gender and health conditions. Also, retirement can be implemented in line with the decisions of companies to downsize. In addition to the compulsory aspects of retirement that vary from country to country in macro terms, there are also some flexible aspects that vary from business to business (Torrington et al., 2005). Eventhough it is an operational business owing to regulations, retirement is a step which expresses psychological and economic changes for the employee and can even be considered as a transition period to a second career. To this end, in order for the transition to be in an appropriate way, it must be supported by the business with various tools.

(4) Post-business relationship: The last stage of employee life cycle deals with the services and practices offered to the employee who leaves the organization after the business relationship ends. Within this context, particularly outplacement application is widely encountered.

- **Outplacement:** The growth of the industry increased dramatically as companies underwent major restructuring in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This situation no longer required a large number of mid-level positions (Cyngler, 2001). Indeed, free trade, globalization, organizational contraction, and technological change brought many job losses (Butterfield and Borgen, 2005; Cyngler, 2001; Knowdell et al. 1983). All the above-mentioned developments have been effective in the emergence of the outplacement application. Pickman (2013) defines outplacement consulting as the process of helping employees who lose their jobs to develop effective career opportunities and find new jobs.

Outplacement is an indication that the relationship with the employee continues after the employment relationship has ended. Accordingly, while creating the proposal of ELC in the present study, the last stage was determined to be outplacement, which was neglected in most

studies in the field, not the termination of the business relationship. Outplacement consultancy eases attracting potential employee candidates by providing support to the employee after the employment relationship ends; in this way, it contributes to procurement and selection stage. Besides, with the consultancy practice offered after the employment relationship, the individual's re-integration into the labor market becomes easier, which supports the career development stage in employee life cycle.

•**Post-retirement practices:** The allowances (fixed retirement income, defined contribution plan, profit-sharing plans, etc.) and arrangements in the context of practices after retirement, which especially focus on the people being retired at an early age (Jerrome, 1989), differ in many countries (Peiró et al., 2012).

Retired individuals continue to work since they think they are required to do so, or they want to go on working for various reasons. These reasons can be listed as follows: income, protecting company-sponsored health benefits, benefiting from flexible working hours offered by employers or gradually moving to retirement, loving the job (DeCenzo et al., 2010), getting bored of retirement, being still energetic (Russel, 2005), and the job's social, personal, financial and productive meaning (Fasbender et al., 2016). Businesses, on the other hand, continue to employ retired employees or hire retirees for a number of reasons, which are: labor shortage (Greer, 2001), preventing loss of expertise and skills, aging rate in the society (Fasbender et al., 2016), and positive effects on productivity, customer service and turnover due to the experience of retired elderly workers (DeCenzo et al., 2010).

This situation points out a much longer-term and comprehensive relationship between the employee and the business today, in short, a longer and perhaps repetitive ELC. In this context, the following factors are crucial: retirement age (Cahill et al., 2006), companies' employing the retirees at part-time mode, voluntary basis or wage basis while protecting their pensions related to the factors such as the practices of HR (Cahill et al., 2006; DeCenzo et al., 2010), allowing them to work within the scope of bridge employment (Kim and Feldmen, 2017), employees' going back to business life (Moen et al., 2000: 215), individuals' adapting to another period of their lives after retirement, providing retirees with professional counseling support in order for them to do occupational exploration again (Sterns and Subich, 2005; Wilson and Aggrey, 2012) and also giving this support incase retirees are employed again.

Conclusions

Explaining employee life cycle in the form of sub-processes which are dependent on four essential processes seems meaningful in respect to regarding the concept in a more general and overarching way. The reason for this is that the classifications made in the previous studies leave the current discussions of HRM incomplete. In fact, while some classifications did not include the concept of attraction and some classifications did not involve post-layoff period. For sample, it is observed that the activities for "retention of the employee", which is one of the most important tools of achieving competitive advantage by effectively managing HR, are neglected and not taken into account in most of the assumptions with regard to ELC. The findings obtained from the literature reveal that only a limited part of ELC related studies (Lupfer, 2017; Rouse, 2012) involves the stage of "retention". As previously suggested in the present study, the stage of retention is the product of an ongoing insight. The view that the concept is accepted as a series of activities integrated with all processes is supported by the study carried out by Verive and DeLay (2006). In this context, it is assumed that propounding a new and more comprehensive cycle in the light of the findings obtained from the literature regarding ELC will help to overcome the deficiencies related to the subject and the sub-activities within the employee life cycle clarified through four basic stages will be discussed on an appropriate ground. With reference to this point, the current study examines ELC in four main titles, which are: Pre-business relationship, the process of business relationship,

termination of the business relationship, post-business relationship. Thus, the current proposal of ELC handled the concept of attraction, which is available in few studies (Verive and DeLay, 2006; Lupfer, 2017; Cattermole, 2019), in pre-business relationship stage and keynoted the stage of post-business relationship, which was only tackled in a single study (Irvin, 2014); in this way, it was aimed to fill the gap in the related literature. At this point, De Vries (2003) lays stress on the significance of how individuals and organizations can develop more effective and humanistic separation strategies by noting that the process related to the graceful termination of the business relationship faces many financial, social and psychological barriers.

It is seen that practitioners show more interest in ELC. It is possible to advocate that insufficient explanation of the concept in few academic studies related to the concept caused a confusion for practitioners. As stated before, the target of the present study is to try to clarify the concept of employee life cycle, which has been handled with a limited number of studies, and to contribute to further discussion. It is expected to contribute to the further research in the literature. The current study aims to make contribution to the further studies on ELC by suggesting a proposal. The fact that the concept has not been examined sufficiently in the field, the presence of a fairly scattered literature on the subject, and the similarity of the concept with close concepts appear as an important limitation that makes it difficult to examine the concept of ELC. Another limitation is that since each study is manifested as a reflection of the authors' perspectives on the field, it holds the possibility that the point of view may affect the context associated with the handling of the subject.

The studies on ELC explain the interaction process between the individual and the organization. Evaluating these explanations separately in line with career cycles which express individual career development can lead to different results regarding the usability of the concept. For sample, it is likely that there will be differences in HR practices of companies in the attraction activities that will be applied for an individual in the stages of career exploration and late career within the scope of ELC. Since one of the individuals might be approaching the end of his career while the other one is at the beginning of his/her career. The present situation requires that there are differences in the perspectives of individuals regarding the business life, businesses or the business they want to do, and different studies need to be conducted for the perception that these differences bring about. On the other hand, a similar situation is valid for the termination of business relationship stage of ELC. At this stage, the support that will be given to an individual who has reached the end of his career in the process of leaving the job will be different from the support that should be given to an individual who started his career in that business. While it is necessary to support retirement adjustment programs for the individual who is at the end of his/her career, the company will be expected to assist the individual to find a new job to continue his business life in another business. While it is a necessity to support retirement adjustment programs for the individual who is at the end of his/her career, the business will be expected to assist the individual, who will continue his business life in another business, find a job. ELC can be evaluated and managed for employees representing different generations as well as for different career cycles. For the academic field, conducting new researches by establishing a connection between each stage of ELC and career circuits separately will enable to obtain the findings with the potential to create a new perspective for the HRM field.

It is envisaged that the studies conducted with the new obtained perspectives will have positive effects on the HR practices of the companies which implement the concept of employee life cycle. Today, the success of HRM requires comprehending the differences between individuals and adopting managerial practices that will take these differences into consideration. In another saying, new perspectives are needed for companies to empower the employer brand by making the employee experiences more positive. Indeed, Russell and Brannan (2016) keynote the importance of the issue, emphasizing that the employer brand can be used as a recruiting tool

to reflect the organization's core features to potential candidates. Considering ELC in the context of individual differences, examining the differences between generations will also make positive contribution to the retention process of the employee by contributing to the understanding of individuals at different stages of ELC. In fact, it seems difficult to evaluate the employees, who represent different generations and have different expectations/needs related to business and private life, from the same point of view. Kapoor and Solomon (2011) also put forward that employers should define different characteristics of each generation in their workplace. The fact that the generations, whose relationship with many different variables are examined in the organizational context, are also reviewed from the angle of employee life cycle will benefit to the attraction and retention of employees, and the determination of their expectations in an appropriate way. Another element that can be handled in terms of individual differences is personality. Examining personality differences through the employee lifecycle will enable employees to have a customized experience tailored to their individual needs. As a consequence, businesses can increase the efficiency of HRM by meeting their needs with reference to changing motivation factors on ELC.

With a new study to be conducted after this study, it is a necessity to empirically test whether ELC stages that are discussed in this article are correctly constructed or not by reflecting the perspectives of HR professionals as well. In this way, the findings to be obtained from practitioners' perspectives will contribute to testing the validity of the proposed cycle and establish a clearer framework on the subject. Finally, it is thought that more comprehensive studies can be conducted for each stage of ELC in the light of the obtained findings.

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