

# Resilience and Post-Traumatic Growth after Discriminatory Job Loss: The Case of Academics Dismissed after Turkey's 2016 Coup

Erhan Atay et Serkan Bayraktaroglu

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## Résumé de l'article

Discuter de la perte discriminatoire des emplois (PDE), plus spécifiquement des licenciements et de la discrimination collective peut contribuer de manière significative à la littérature sur la perte d'emploi et la discrimination au travail. L'étude actuelle vise à combler certaines lacunes dans la compréhension du phénomène de la perte d'emploi et à explorer les déclencheurs spécifiques derrière ces attitudes. Contrairement aux études précédentes, cette étude dévoile le côté caché, inconnu et voilé de la PDE, car les changements d'attitude sont difficiles à remarquer, ou dans certains cas, imperceptibles, jusqu'à ce que les individus agissent ou s'expriment. Ainsi, nous approfondissons les recherches antérieures en explorant les effets de la perte d'emploi discriminatoire sur une main-d'oeuvre qualifiée. Nos explorations montrent que la gratitude, la patience et les attitudes optimistes et/ou pessimistes envers leur avenir et leur carrière étaient les principaux impacts internes de la perte d'emploi discriminatoire. Les travailleurs et travailleuses académiques emploient des mécanismes d'adaptation basés sur la résilience et des stratégies de croissance post-traumatique.

Notre constat théorique est qu'être victime d'un licenciement inéquitable et de discrimination punitive pourrait ne pas empêcher une main-d'oeuvre hautement qualifiée d'avoir de l'espoir, des attentes et des plans pour l'avenir. Le personnel académique lutte pour réduire les impacts négatifs en utilisant des stratégies de résilience, des attitudes optimistes, reconnaissantes et patientes. En pratique, la discrimination sur le lieu de travail peut être réduite grâce à la résilience et aux stratégies de GCP.

# Resilience and Post-Traumatic Growth after Discriminatory Job Loss: The Case of Academics Dismissed after Turkey's 2016 Coup

## **Erhan ATAY**

Senior Lecturer, Orcid ID: (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4190-3452>), Institution: Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University, Sutherland Building, 2 Ellison Pl, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 8ST  
[dr.erhan.atay@google.com](mailto:dr.erhan.atay@google.com)

## **Serkan BAYRAKTAROGLU**

Adjunct Professor. Institution: Sprott School of Business, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada  
[sbayraktaroglu@hotmail.com](mailto:sbayraktaroglu@hotmail.com)

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## **Abstract**

This study is about the impact of discriminatory job loss (DJL) on individual attitudes. It is based on interviews with 36 academics who were inequitably and involuntarily fired, and aggressively and punitively discriminated against. We extend previous research on workplace discrimination by exploring the effects of discriminatory job loss on a skilled workforce and by going beyond the job loss itself to examine coping mechanisms, resilience and post-traumatic growth. We found that gratitude, patience and optimism or pessimism about one's future and career were leading individual factors in the ability to cope with discriminatory job loss. Such coping mechanisms, and their roles in resilience and post-traumatic growth, were described to us by academics in Turkey and abroad.

## **Summary**

This study of DJL (discriminatory job loss) is a contribution to the literature on job loss and workplace discrimination. In particular, we aim to improve understanding of the psychological outcomes of job loss and termination while exploring their specific causes. Unlike previous studies, this one shows a hidden, unknown and veiled side of DJL, as changes in attitudes are hard to notice, or in some cases unnoticeable, until individuals act or speak out. We extend previous workplace discrimination research by exploring the effects of discriminatory job loss on skilled workers and by providing a broader perspective that includes positive aspects, such as resilience and post-traumatic growth. We found that gratitude, patience and optimism or pessimism about one's future and career were leading determinants of the ability to cope with discriminatory job loss. Among academic victims of DJL, the ability to cope was key to resilience and strategies for post-traumatic growth.

Thus, unfair firing and punitive discrimination do not necessarily stop highly skilled workers from having hopes, expectations and plans for the future. They struggle to reduce external negative outcomes by combining resilience and PTG strategies with internal attitudes of optimism, gratitude

and patience. On a practical note, workplace discrimination may be prevented through resilience and PTG strategies.

**Keywords:** Discriminatory job loss; discrimination; involuntary job loss; attitude; career; academic

## Résumé

Discuter de la perte discriminatoire des emplois (PDE), plus spécifiquement des licenciements et de la discrimination collective peut contribuer de manière significative à la littérature sur la perte d'emploi et la discrimination au travail. L'étude actuelle vise à combler certaines lacunes dans la compréhension du phénomène de la perte d'emploi et à explorer les déclencheurs spécifiques derrière ces attitudes. Contrairement aux études précédentes, cette étude dévoile le côté caché, inconnu et voilé de la PDE, car les changements d'attitude sont difficiles à remarquer, ou dans certains cas, imperceptibles, jusqu'à ce que les individus agissent ou s'expriment. Ainsi, nous approfondissons les recherches antérieures en explorant les effets de la perte d'emploi discriminatoire sur une main-d'oeuvre qualifiée. Nos explorations montrent que la gratitude, la patience et les attitudes optimistes et/ou pessimistes envers leur avenir et leur carrière étaient les principaux impacts internes de la perte d'emploi discriminatoire. Les travailleurs et travailleuses académiques emploient des mécanismes d'adaptation basés sur la résilience et des stratégies de croissance post-traumatique.

Notre constat théorique est qu'être victime d'un licenciement inéquitable et de discrimination punitive pourrait ne pas empêcher une main-d'oeuvre hautement qualifiée d'avoir de l'espoir, des attentes et des plans pour l'avenir. Le personnel académique lutte pour réduire les impacts négatifs en utilisant des stratégies de résilience, des attitudes optimistes, reconnaissantes et patientes. En pratique, la discrimination sur le lieu de travail peut être réduite grâce à la résilience et aux stratégies de GCP.

**Mots clés:** Perte d'emploi discriminatoire; discrimination; perte d'emploi involontaire; attitude; carrière; académique

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# 1. Introduction

Discriminatory practices still threaten the careers of many workers (Marchiondo et al., 2018). To understand the consequences of discriminatory job loss (DJL), particularly its attitudinal outcomes, we studied the case of a mass dismissal of Turkish academics. We had one main research question: "What are the optimistic outcomes of DJL, such as resilience and post-traumatic growth, among the victims who stayed in Turkey and among those who moved abroad?" We sought to explore post-DJL mindsets (Bagozzi & Burnkrant, 1979) and positive psychological tendencies (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). By fully understanding such outcomes, it will be possible to explore DJL further and predict what will happen to DJL victims and how they may behave at work.

In the aftermath of the July 2016 coup in Turkey, a state of emergency was declared for an unspecified period. As of now, more than 6,000 academics have lost their jobs and have no right to work in Turkey's public service for the rest of their lives. Purged academics have faced several sanctions, including unfair imprisonment, and their passports have been cancelled and confiscated, with the result that they cannot leave the country and legally seek employment abroad (SAR, 2019). Some participants decided to leave the country illegally, as they felt that staying was neither safe nor secure for them and their families. Most left for different European countries, mainly through Greece, and most preferred Germany, which has become Europe's leading destination for asylum-seekers. Academics who left their country in time were able to apply for asylum in Germany and other European countries. Others had to stay in Turkey because of the ban on travelling abroad, their passports being cancelled. In the second group, almost all were convicted, imprisoned and excluded from the public service. (Aydin, 2022; Abbas & Zalta, 2017). The government invented new pretexts for prosecution, such as "connection" and "adhesion" to anti-State groups. Purge lists were prepared even before the coup attempt because many opposition groups had already been excluded from state offices and much of society (Özdemir, 2021).

Through this study, we aim to contribute to contemporary debates about DJL in two ways. First, we extend previous research on discriminatory job loss by exploring the attitudinal outcomes. There is a gap in the existing literature on the results of DJL, and there has been limited research on how either job loss or discrimination shapes the victim's mentality and emotions. As Bell et al. (2013) suggested, the adverse consequences of DJL may include extended unemployment and inferior re-employment quality, both of which can further impact the victim's attitudes. By investigating such attitudinal outcomes, we may better understand the full impact of DJL in all its dimensions. Victims must not only build new lives and struggle to reduce external negative outcomes but also deal with their internal attitudes. They must develop positive attitudes toward their life, self-image, career and future. In addition, our theoretical framework integrates the literature on resilience with the post-traumatic growth process.

Second, we emphasize the macro nature of DJL and its possible positive outcomes, such as resilience and post-traumatic growth. While the literature on discriminatory job loss focuses explicitly on individual termination and discrimination, there is a combination of collective discrimination and mass termination in this specific Turkish case. Purged academics and publicly banned people have been stigmatized and perceived with negative stereotypes by society (Bell et al., 2013; Vinokur et al., 2000). While individual cases of discrimination are easy to notice and combat, it is difficult to fight collective cases of discrimination, which result from norms, values and beliefs that work within society to legitimize oppression (Brantlinger & Guskin, 1985). There is a clear need for more contemporary research on the positive implications of discriminatory job

loss for personal growth (Waters & Strauss, 2016). In the current study, we explored the potential positive outcomes of DJL by using the theoretical concepts of resilience and PTG.

This paper will proceed as follows: (1) DJL framework of resilience and post-traumatic growth; (2) methodology of our study; (3) analysis of our research findings; and (4) discussion

## 2. Conceptual and Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Discriminatory Job Loss

Job loss is an involuntary departure from a job due to an employer's decision based on unsatisfactory job performance or misconduct (e.g., McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). Discrimination is the unequal treatment of persons or groups because of certain undesirable characteristics, which thereby become even more undesirable (Yerochewski & Gagné, 2017; Pager & Shepherd, 2008). Both concepts come together in DJL, which is job dismissal for reasons other than physical, observable or lifestyle characteristics. Specifically, the reasons are political or ideological, i.e., being opposed to authority or having different ideas (Bell et al., 2013). DJL can lead to trauma, since it is a major life-changing event.

The ability to adapt to and recover from trauma has been studied with reference to resilience, post-traumatic growth (PTG) and coping strategies (Bonanno, 2004; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Exposure to traumatic events can cause physical and mental reactions, such as anxiety, fear, depression, grief, family conflict and psychosomatic diseases (Guerrero & Naulleau, 2016; Dohrenwend et al., 2006). In addition, family members may react similarly after observing the victim's personal trauma or after listening to the victim talk about it. The trauma can shake or change one's cognitive schemas, i.e., one's fundamental beliefs about the world and the future, and cause feelings of anger or betrayal directed against oneself, one's family, one's society and one's government (Slobodin & de Jong, 2015).

Usually, the victim copes initially through assistance from family, relatives, peers and friends or, more broadly, through spiritual or religious support. Different coping mechanisms can be developed to reduce the impacts of trauma. Resilience is the most common one.

### 2.2 Resilience

Psychological resilience has been studied in various settings and disciplines (Rees et al., 2015). The concept arose in positive psychology and has led to various explanations of how individuals can produce positive outcomes during adversity (Mukherjee & Kumar, 2016). Resilience can produce positive outcomes even for individuals who have not experienced adverse events (Ledesma, 2014), notably by helping them regulate and control their emotions (Southwick et al., 2014).

Resilience is defined by Masten et al. (1990, p. 426) as "the capacity for, the process of, or outcome of successful adaptation despite threatening or challenging circumstances" (p. 426). It is a dynamic process that enables one to "bounce back" from personal setbacks and grow through adjustment (Herrman et al., 2011). It has been found in nearly all aspects of human relationships, including positive emotionality and repressive coping processes (Dahmani, 2021; Lyons et al., 2015).

Recently, resilience has become more central to the positive psychology literature. It has moved away from disorder-based psychology and toward a positive psychology paradigm with a focus on well-being and strength, along with other concepts of psychological capital, such as optimism, self-efficacy and hope (Luthans et al., 2006). Research has thus moved from a trait-based view of resilience to a more contextual view of resilience as an adaptation to adversity or trauma (Campbell-Sills et al., 2006).

Resilience is closely related to coping as a proactive and preventative action that balances threats, negative factors and coping ability (Akgemci et al., 2013). However, the two concepts are different: resilience is an active process, whereas coping is a reactive process of adapting to adversity (Rothstein et al., 2016). Involuntary job loss causes changes to an individual's well-being and leads to perceived positive or negative emotions (Zikic & Klehe, 2006). Sudden and unexpected job loss is a psychosocial stressor with long-term physical and mental effects, including reduced life satisfaction, lower quality of life and higher chances of depression and anxiety (Peláez-Fernández et al., 2021). Resilience helps individuals cope, increases their chances of re-employment and may have other positive effects on such aspects as self-regulation, job search clarity, self-efficacy and psychological well-being (McLornan et al., 2020).

### 2.3 Post Traumatic Growth (PTG)

Growth differs from resilience. It is the ability to return to the pre-traumatic state. It provides new benefits, physical and psychological changes and transformation possibilities. Through PTG, one can survive and return to one's old self by coping with difficulties, by experiencing profound changes and, hence, by improving oneself (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) suggested that PTG can be expressed in five areas: appreciation of life; connection with others; personal strength; new possibilities; and spiritual growth. It includes positive changes to one's life philosophy, better appreciation of the opportunities one has, setting of new priorities that cause improvement in one's life, increased sense of personal power, more value in one's immediate surroundings, increase in relationship intensity and quality and positive spiritual changes. (Joseph & Linley, 2008; Tedeschi et al., 1998; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

PTG has been reported in studies of a wide variety of traumatized individuals, such as refugees (Ersahin, 2022), veterans (Tsai et al., 2015), ex-inmates (Kira et al., 2013), health workers (Finstad, 2021), tsunami survivors (Augustine, 2014), forcibly displaced Muslims (Alsubai et al., 2021) and unemployed adults (Waymentt, 2018).

PTG shows a positive correlation with high levels of trauma in some studies (Augustine, 2014; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). It is influenced by such factors as family communication, family flexibility and, especially, employment opportunities (Augustine, 2014). Positive predictors include hope, emotional coping and social support (Wolfe & Ray, 2015).

A meta-analysis has shown that PTG is associated with religious coping and spirituality (Prati & Pietrantonio, 2009). Religious coping increases PTG for individuals who have suffered moderate to high levels of discrimination (Alsubaie et al., 2021). Unemployment and job loss may offer opportunities for PTG, but little research has examined this possibility. Individuals in the "stuck" state define themselves as feeling such emotions as sadness, disappointment, helplessness and depression. In contrast, those in the "moving on" group define trauma as a lived experience and an opportunity for a new beginning. (Moran et al., 2013).

The duration and content of trauma can affect PTG. For example, suppose a traumatic event is still ongoing and is not likely to stop quickly, as with discrimination and racism. In such cases, a negative relationship can be expected between the collective trauma and PTG (Kira et al., 2013). Studies have also shown a curvilinear relationship between the traumatic event and PTG. Growth can occur when post-traumatic symptoms are at a certain level of severity; beyond that level, however, the traumatic event may inhibit growth (Tsai et al., 2015; Li et al., 2015). On the other hand, some studies have found no relationship between the severity of the trauma and the degree of growth (Ai et al., 2007).

### 3. Methodology

We empirically examined post-DJL attitudes through a qualitative study. The participants were dismissed academics, mainly lecturers, senior lecturers, professors and research assistants in different fields of research and teaching (Richardson & McKenna, 2006). Because the dismissals had been listed in the Official Gazette and announced through national broadcasting systems, it was easy for us to conduct purposeful sampling (NTV, 2017; Official Gazette, 2016).

We reached the participants through purposeful sampling and snowball sampling (Seidman, 1998; Hornby & Symon, 1994). Purposeful sampling is network sampling, an alternative method for hard-to-reach or hidden populations (Lavrakas, 2008). To be sure, the dismissed academics were not hidden. In fact, the government listed them in the Official Gazette (2016) as guilty of criminal conduct. It was for that reason that they isolated themselves from society, and society hesitated to contact them.

We conducted 36 qualitative email interviews after obtaining ethical approval from the participants. Interviews were used to collect DJL stories (Seidman, 1998). After first contacting the academics, we asked them to refer us to other dismissed academics they knew through their networks. We ensured that the potential participants had been fired by executive orders and thus matched our research goal. We then invited them to participate voluntarily in our research.

The participants were “hard-to-reach,” a typical label for people whom researchers struggle to access, engage and retain. They had been labelled as criminal offenders and suffered from stigmatization, lifelong bans and legal exclusions from the job market (Bonevski et al., 2014). Although they had been permanently dismissed only from public/state universities or organizations, private colleges and organizations strictly avoided hiring them.

The data collection method was chosen on the basis of three factors: the current circumstances of the participants; their apprehensions and willingness to consent; and the quality of the data in terms of consistency and balance. The participants wished to feel safe when communicating in Turkey or abroad. They were therefore approached via email interviews, which are neither observable nor recordable by a third party. Most of them (31) felt comfortable via email communication, which provided them with enough time to respond in depth, to communicate efficiently, to respond quickly (Morgan & Symon, 2004) and to manage the interview according to their perceived safety and comfort. Some of the participants who lived abroad (5) agreed to be interviewed by Zoom or Skype, and the interviews were recorded. However, most of the participants felt safe using emails, and the same data collection method and email interview protocol were used to ensure textual consistency, coherence and balance.

For those reasons, we considered an email interview (Morgan & Symon, 2004; Salmons, 2014) to be the most appropriate means to collect the qualitative data. Such interviews have been used for educational research (James, 2007), investigation of online behaviours of college students (Chou, 2001) and research on drug dealers (Coomber, 1997). We used open-ended interviews (Patton, 2002).

The interviews were conducted in line with three principles. First, we took care to make the participants feel comfortable and safe. Second, we ensured the completeness of the answers to the interview questions. Third, we kept no identifying, institutional or locational information on the participants, except for those in Turkey or abroad. We identified them numerically (P#) to ensure the anonymity of their answers.

In addition to the demographic questions (age, gender, marital status, educational background, occupation, professional field, last job title, current job title, last institution, current place of abode and current legal status), there were also closed-ended questions that encouraged the participants

to answer with a yes, a no or a one-word answer. The closed-ended questions were asked to find out whether the participant had been detained or imprisoned, whether the participant had an open case or had family members with an open case, and the length of the participant's sentence, if any. The open-ended questions were asked to obtain a brief history of the participant's DJL (i.e., feelings, challenges, situations of risk, life-quality changes, current problems, strategies and adjustment techniques to feel better), the effects of the career disruption, the participant's experience abroad if any, the participant's academic work and studies, the participant's sources of motivation after job loss (to understand his/her resilience) and the factors contributing to PTG.

The collected data were categorized, compared and interpreted by means of a template (King, 2006) and by qualitative content analysis (Holsti, 1969; Luborsky, 1994). A qualitative approach was used to understand the target structures and individuals within the sample, typically through observations, interviews and open-ended questions. The focus was not on sample size but on ensuring that the sample provided sufficient depth and breadth of information about the target structure and individual (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). We first used template analysis to interpret the data. A template is a varied but related group of techniques for organizing and analyzing textual data (King, 2006). It is flexible and can be adapted to the needs of a particular study (King & Brooks, 2016).

We then analyzed the interview texts by measuring the frequencies of the most common expressions and themes, i.e., qualitative content analysis. We thus created a systematic, in-depth and qualitative description of DJL. Conventional approaches to content analysis were used (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The aim was not to generalize the results to all people who experience DJL but primarily to obtain and analyze experientially rich cases of DJL.

The methodology was quality-checked at different stages. Five pilot interviews were conducted at the beginning of data collection to try out the questions, to control the questions and to prevent possible misunderstandings. Then, three datasets (P11, P26 and P30) were selected randomly. Ninety per cent of the codes and themes were similar. Subsequently, the results of three randomly selected participants (P12, P20 and P33) were sent to the same participants to determine whether the results correctly reflected their cases. All three participants found them to be consistent with their cases (97%). Finally, representative quotations were taken from the datasets.

## 4. Results

In this section, we will first present a description of the participants, followed by their attitudes toward the present and the future. There was a total of 36 participants: 7 women and 29 men. Their average age was 43 (range: 28–56 years). There were 4 research assistants, 2 teaching assistants, 9 assistant professors, 13 associate professors and 8 full university professors. There were 21 who worked in state universities, and 15 in private universities. At that time, 16 of the participants had migrated to other countries. Table 1 provides data on the legal actions against them, including detention, open cases and sentences. As presented in the table, 30 of the 36 participants still had open cases, and the remaining 6 did not know whether their cases were still open. For 14 participants, family members had open cases. P1 mentioned that wives and husbands of dismissed academics had been fired.



Table 1

**Legal Actions against the Participants**

	<i># of participants</i>
<i>Detention</i>	21
<i>Sentencing</i>	27
<i>An open case on him/her</i>	30
<i>An open case on his/her family members</i>	14
<i>Passport cancellation</i>	36 (total)

Life circumstances differed between those participants who had stayed in their home country and those who had migrated abroad (Table 2). The first group was struggling with (1) unemployment, (2) isolation and (3) legal exclusion. The second group was dealing with (1) a new, unfamiliar or unpredictable environment, (2) a local language barrier and (3) the requirements of the new job market. Everyone in the second group had to make an unplanned and sudden journey from their homeland to a new host country.

Table 2

**Employment Status**

<b>In Turkey</b>	<b>Abroad</b>
-Journal editor	-Full-time professor
-Part-time teacher	-Full-time lecturer
-Freelance researcher	-Part-time lecturer
-Insurance consultant	-Cab driver
-Interpreter	-Student
-Academic writing jobs	-Food deliverer
-Freelance consultant	-Manager in a company
-Freelance academic advisor	- Unemployed, asylum seeker (9)
-Private tutor	
-Freelance analyst	
-Human resource expert	
-Salesman	
-Language teacher	
-Entrepreneur	
-Business consultant	
-Unemployed (5)	

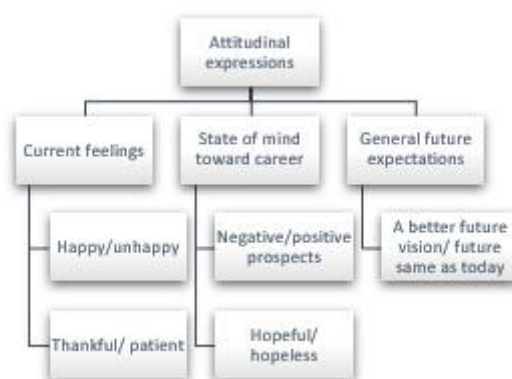
Participants in the first group had two primary types of employment status: part-time or unemployed. All of them were banned from being hired by tax-registered organizations. They worked as illegal part-time workers and could not be registered in the official records by their employers. They worked in non-academic positions as part-time consultants, sales clerks, tutors or

independent workers. Five of the female participants in the first group were housewives. Women with jobs had part-time, low-income, high-workload and temporary jobs, and none were employed academically. In both groups, participants who had earned academic degrees abroad had obtained academic jobs. In the second group, 4 participants had begun learning the local language for employment and had reached a satisfactory level. Some, however, remained unemployed because of the language barrier and credential/accreditation problems. Most participants in the second group had applied for refugee status and were not allowed to work during the assessment process.

Figure 1 presents the primary data. The “initial template” provides information on the participants’ state of mind and their emotions about current conditions and future expectations. At first, we thought there were two opposing mindsets, such as believing either in a better future or in a future the same as today. By the end of our analysis, we realized that the attitudes were more complicated. We modified and revised the data in the initial template accordingly. Figure 2 presents the final template and the final codes and themes

Figure 1

### Initial Template



Template analysis was used to determine and organize the initial and final codes and the relationships among them. Qualitative content analysis was used to identify the most-used expressions, such as happiness (24 participants), unhappiness (12 participants), spirituality (32 participants) and justice (16 participants), and to determine the general themes.

Figure 2

### Final Template



Our main findings are centred on the "pessimistic, optimistic, gratitude and patience attitudes" of the participants toward "back to career" and "the future." In this context, an attitude refers to one's post-dismissal psychological tendency, emotional state, and mentality with respect to one's career and future (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). After exploring the attitudinal outcomes, we will present the factors that determined the participants' attitudes of gratitude, patience and optimism or pessimism. Those determinants are grouped under the following general themes: the individual; relationships; career/profession; and security.

#### 4.1 Attitudes of Gratitude and Patience

Gratitude and patience were the two leading attitudes of the participants in Turkey or abroad. The two attitudes support and complement each other, since gratitude helps one become more patient. Gratitude enabled the participants to improve their resilience by feeling less suffering and disappointment. Despite their enormous troubles, difficulties and losses, they expressed their gratitude and appreciation to family and friends, thus helping themselves become healed and empowered.

Despite everything we have been through, the despair, sleepless nights, fear, etc., I feel right now, and I am almost thankful for being pushed to live in a much better country...

P27

It is like I am just starting from scratch. I am happy and peaceful. Yes, I am hopeful. I wholeheartedly believe that if I start again, I will do much better work...

P1

All the participants made an effort to remain patient while struggling with difficulties and having no expectations of possible changes in the short term. They accepted facts and situations through realism, thus maintaining their endurance, calm and stability. Patience made them more level-headed, with some saying that they felt relaxed and enjoyed each moment with their loved ones. For example, P3 saw his situation as an opportunity to examine his life and counselled himself to be patient. P24 said that realizing who was honest and dishonest in life had a cleansing effect.

Of course, as a family, we faced hardship. I worked from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Despite these challenges, the time was short. The entire family prayed from those days to the end. Additionally, there were some benefits for the children and my wife, as they gained the opportunity to learn more diverse cultures and English. Hopefully, my children will take further steps to become global citizens.

P3

All the participants said that they used meditation or spirituality as a strategy to be more patient and thankful. There was a relationship between their attitude, their meditation/spirituality and their belief in justice. They said that they kept their minds clear and open through gratitude and patience. Some observed that they placed their trust in universal justice and innocence. Participants who defined themselves as either religious or non-religious used spirituality and meditation as, respectively, mental or emotional sources of refreshment. Table 3 shows their coping methods, which may impact their positive attitudes.

Table 3

### Coping Methods

Institutional, organizational	EXTERNAL		INTERNAL
	Medical, psychological	Family and social networks	Individual
-Foreign government universities	- Physiotherapy	- Family, spouse, relatives	- Meditation, spirituality and religion
-Foreign universities	- Medical treatment	- Purged colleagues in Turkey	- Work in different jobs
-Civil society organizations	- Psychological treatment	- Diaspora networks	- Sports
-Academic rescue funds	- Anti-depression treatment	- Host country nationals	- Hobbies
	- Psychological treatment for family members	- Participation in informal gatherings	- Keeping a daily routine
	- Attention deficit disorder treatment		- Positive thinking
			- Staying hopeful
			- Self-motivation
			- Self-improvement
			- Maintaining and improving academic qualifications

## 4.2 Optimism and Pessimism

In addition to gratitude and patience, the participants felt optimistic or pessimistic about returning to their careers (Figure 3) and about the future (Figure 4). According to the results, 23 of the 36 participants were optimistic about returning to their careers, and 15 were optimistic about the future. A positive outlook and hope were the primary determinants of optimism. A positive mental and emotional state gave the participants hope that they would return one day to a career and that the future would be better. Optimistic participants living in Turkey or abroad were self-motivated and tried to be happy. They all enjoyed the moment rather than think about the past or the future, while firmly believing that the process would end well and that the future would be different. In

addition, their belief in their innocence and justice made them more upbeat and self-confident. Pessimism is a negative state of mind or feeling about the future and returning to a career. Pessimistic participants expected things to remain the same or worsen, and they tended to think that, from now on, nothing would be the same as before.

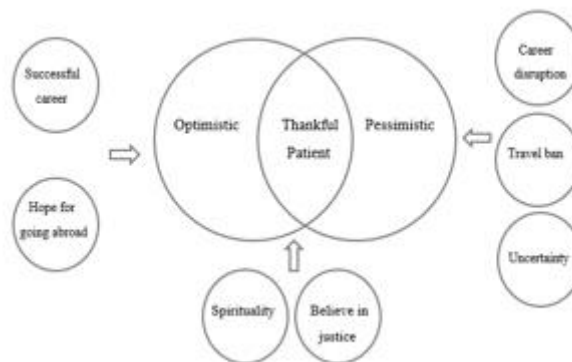
Respectively, I am content...Seeing my family beside me and supporting each other gives me another type of happiness. In addition, I have spiritual books that can guide my mind. Rather than continuously remembering bitter memories, I focus on future opportunities.

P15 in Turkey

Optimistic participants in Turkey kept their patience active, struggled with difficulties and tried to keep motivated. For example, P26 mentioned that he hoped and felt he would start his job again (if he left his home country) and wanted to prepare for prospective job markets. Some participants from abroad had a negative mood and negative attitudes, even though they were free to move around in their new country. For example, P7 isolated himself socially and focused on earning money and overcoming economic difficulties. He was isolated by his difficulty in mastering English. Language became a barrier for participants who needed to integrate or have contact with the new social environment.

Figure 3

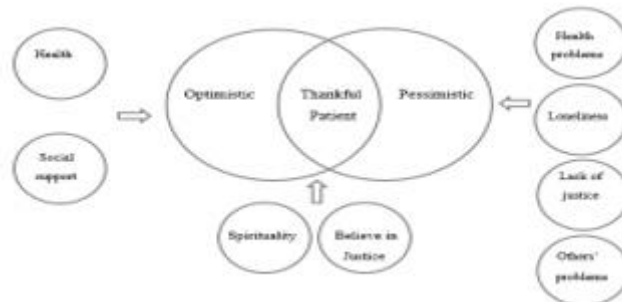
### Attitudes toward Returning to a Career



Optimism about returning to a career was increased by a successful career in the past and by hope for one's prospects for going abroad. Those determinants can be categorized as career/profession-related and security-related. Conversely, pessimism was increased by career disruption, by the travel ban and by living in uncertainty. While career disruption seems to be career/profession-related, having a travel ban and facing uncertainty appear to be security-related. Other determinants were the participants' health, the social support they received as individuals and social issues. Pessimism was increased by poor health and by lack of social support, as well as by lack of justice (security) and by worrying about others (social).

Figure 4

### Attitudes toward the Future



Optimistic participants mentioned their hope for return to an academic career. They kept their minds positive, reassuring themselves that they had previously enjoyed a solid and successful academic career. Their academic background made them feel that they deserved a better future. They also felt that a change could happen in the medium or long term, perhaps not in the short term, but one day everything in their lives would change. This was their shared belief: the process would end well, and they would become free, much better and able to stand up again.

Physical and psychological health was another determinant of optimism. In fact, the participants considered it to be life's most valuable treasure. This determinant may be self-fulfilling: if you feel optimistic about your health, you will feel healthier. Thus, P12 empowered herself by planning for the medium and long term, and not for the short term. Likewise, P24 motivated herself by being thankful for being with her family, for being healthy and accessible and for not being in jail. P12 and P24 were detained under the travel ban and could not travel abroad. They said that they might rebuild a successful career abroad; therefore, their hope of being able to go abroad was another determinant of optimism.

Moving abroad caused some participants to feel positive because it was a new beginning for them, enabling them to pursue a career and build a better future. Relocation was a relief for some of them and helped improve their attitude. As the last determinant of optimism, social support motivated them to be more patient and hopeful. The participants experienced the entire spectrum of situations, from complete abandonment by their social environment to being supported by their network of social relationships. For example, those living abroad were supported by people they had never met before, such as home country nationals, immigrants from their home country and host country nationals and locals.

People (of the host country) are incredibly insightful, and they treat us very warmly. I know that they pray for us. This may be a rare event that makes us happy...

P11

In my current place, they have never caused me to feel like a foreigner. They are unbelievably kind, warm, friendly and humanist.

P29

However, 13 participants (40% of those living in Turkey and 44% of those living abroad) were pessimistic about their chances of having a career, and 14 participants (42% of those living in Turkey and 44% of those living abroad) were pessimistic about the future. Their negative, unhappy views were another determinant of their pessimism. Career disruption was the strongest determinant of pessimism. They had no right to work in the public service of their home country for the rest of their lives.

Sympathy and sorrow for the plight of others affected some participants, who mentioned other academics who were living under worse conditions. In general, uncertainty and anxiety for the future negatively affected some of the participants and increased their pessimism. They inevitably worried about themselves and their children because of their home country's uncertain and restricted conditions. Their academic careers were on hold, and they had no permanent jobs, income or future goals. Lack of social support was another reason for pessimism, as they felt very alone. The presence or absence of social support directly impacted their attitudes toward the future and possibly going back to a career. Participants with social support felt more optimistic, whereas those with less support felt more negative, unhappy and desperate.

Participants living in Turkey described a lack of justice as the reason for their pessimism.

Constitutional rights were presented to me as evidence of a crime. While I should have been acquitted 100 per cent, it has been going on for a long time.

P10

Health problems were another reason for pessimism. Because the participants had been permanently terminated, they had all lost their social security and health care, a loss that would make the rest of their lives difficult. They had all experienced at least one psychological problem, typically depression, nightmares, forgetfulness, claustrophobia and poor concentration. Some of them were simultaneously optimistic and pessimistic about the future. Although they had optimistic expectations and feelings toward their career and their future, they experienced pessimistic emotions because of their current difficulties. Table 3 shows the difference in attitude between the participants living in Turkey and those living abroad.

Table 4

**Attitudes of Participants Living in Turkey and Abroad**

Table 4: Attitudes of Participants Living in Turkey and Abroad				
Hope	Representative Quotations from Participants Living in Turkey	Themes	Representative Quotations from Participants Living Abroad	Themes
<b>Hopeful</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-I will be a much better academic in the future (P1, Turkey).</li> <li>-I hope to live in a country where I can do my profession when I can go abroad (P4, Turkey).</li> <li>-I am more hopeful than yesterday (P9, Turkey).</li> <li>-I try to be motivated by believing that I can continue my career (if I have a chance to go abroad (P10, Turkey).</li> <li>-I am full of faith in my actions (P15, Turkey).</li> <li>-I am optimistic. I hope I will go abroad with my family after the ban is lifted (P18, Turkey).</li> <li>-Things will be better over time. I trust in universal justice. Time will show everything (P22, Turkey).</li> <li>-My belief that I am on the right side of humanity makes me very happy (P26, Turkey).</li> <li>-I am full of faith that I will return to academic life (P28, Turkey).</li> <li>-I have my family, I am healthy, and history shows that authoritarianism never wins. I am happy to be on the right side (P31, Turkey).</li> <li>-I have suffered a lot, but I am patient enough to wait for good outcomes (P33, Turkey).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Is optimistic</li> <li>✓ Has future plans</li> <li>✓ Is self-confident in his/her opinions and where he/she stands</li> <li>✓ Believes in universal justice</li> <li>✓ Has faith in God and destiny</li> <li>✓ Appreciates health and having family</li> <li>✓ Receives support from family and peer peers</li> <li>✓ Has patience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Making a fresh start in a new country excites me. (P35)</li> <li>-I believe in destiny and justice. I believe I will get what I deserve. (P1)</li> <li>-All this is a maturation process; my experiences have strengthened me. (P29)</li> <li>-The support of the people of this country keeps me afloat. (P17)</li> <li>-As a character, I have never given up in the face of difficulties. I will rise again. (P23)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ A new start</li> <li>✓ Destiny</li> <li>✓ Appreciation</li> <li>✓ Support</li> <li>✓ Personality</li> </ul>
<b>Hopeless</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-I felt hopeless in Turkey, especially thoughts of the people against us were very disappointing (P7, Turkey).</li> <li>-I am not optimistic about my career in the future (P20, Turkey).</li> <li>-I have lost hope. I have not thought anything about my career. I want to go abroad after my case is closed. It will take a very long time to adapt overseas. I am hopeless about my job. I have no aim to study (P21, Turkey)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Feels hopeless</li> <li>✓ Mistrusts institutions</li> <li>✓ Has career worries</li> <li>✓ Has struggles in a foreign country</li> <li>✓ Has adjustment problems abroad</li> <li>✓ Has trouble starting a new career</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-I am safe here, but all my loved ones are in Turkey. (P34)</li> <li>-I am divorced from my wife and cannot see my children. I have lost everything I had. (P14)</li> <li>-I have lost my trust in justice. Wherever you are, evil always wins. (P19)</li> <li>-Language problems, classroom problems, unemployment and adaptation will take years. (P25)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Loneliness</li> <li>✓ Family problems</li> <li>✓ No trust in justice system</li> <li>✓ Adjustment</li> </ul>
<b>Sophisticated</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-I am not happy. Because it makes me sad that I still know that the innocent are in jail, and I do not have anything. I hope to be in a country where I can do my profession when I go abroad (P2, Turkey).</li> <li>-I do not believe I will have an opportunity in this country. I cannot travel abroad, and this process I predict will take at least two years. I am happy to be alive and not in prison and have my loved ones around (P12, Turkey).</li> <li>-I am unhappy but not hopeless (P5, Turkey).</li> <li>-I am not happy. Seeing many innocent people's experiences is upsetting, but I am not very pessimistic. I believe that these problems will end soon. When it is finished, I will try not to leave any compensatory damage (P6, Turkey).</li> <li>-I am relatively happy. I have slight unrest inside me, but there is great reassurance. I become unhappy when I return to the past and think about what I have lost. Therefore, I feel more confident about the future (P8, Turkey).</li> <li>-I am not happy. I am trying to live with a neutral feeling. --There is nothing to rejoice about. There are many negatives. I am trying to be neutral to keep my neural system alive. From time to time, the sun shines (P16, Turkey).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Worries about others</li> <li>✓ Hopes to move abroad</li> <li>✓ Is happy to be healthy and have family</li> <li>✓ Feels unhappy but not hopeless</li> <li>✓ Is not pessimistic</li> <li>✓ expects better for the future</li> <li>✓ Feels confident about the future</li> <li>✓ Sun will rise again</li> <li>✓ Things will settle down, but not in the short term</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Maybe everything will be better in the future, but the [present] moment is essential.</li> <li>-I do not know if I can bear to wait for years after not being happy now. (P27)</li> <li>-Yes, the people here are very kind and try to be helpful, but an influential group is prejudiced against foreigners. (P30)</li> <li>-I am happy individually, but I am separated from my children. I do not know when I can meet them. The bureaucracy for family reunification moves very slowly. (P36)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Optimistic but not happy</li> <li>✓ Time matters</li> <li>✓ Stereotypes against refugees</li> <li>✓ Optimistic, but family problems</li> </ul>

Table 5 lists the primary determinants of attitudes and the numbers of participants for each determinant. Nineteen participants mentioned their hope of returning to an academic career. The most common determinants were personal health (7 participants) and hope of going abroad (6 participants). Those who lived abroad believed that they would be able to rebuild a successful career. The last determinant of a positive attitude was social support (3 participants).

Table 5

**Clustering of Determinants of Attitudes**

Determinants and Respondent #			
Clusters	Pessimism	Optimism	Gratitude and Patience
<b>Individual</b>	Health (physical and psychological) 7	Health problems 3 Lack of justice (travel ban, passport cancellation) 4	Spirituality 32 Belief in justice 16
<b>Relationships</b>	Social support 3	Others' problems (feeling sorry about others) 13 Loneliness (lack of social support) 5	
<b>Career/ Profession</b>	Having a successful career 19	Career disruption 18 Uncertainty (future anxiety) 6	
<b>Security</b>	Hope of going abroad 6		



The strongest determinant of negative attitudes was career disruption (18 participants). Feeling sorry about others was the second-strongest one (13 participants). The participants mentioned feeling sorry about other academics who were still living under challenging and worse conditions. For 6 participants, uncertainty and future anxiety were the most common determinants of a negative attitude. Lack of social support was mentioned by 5 participants, who felt very alone. Four participants (in Turkey) described lack of justice as the reason for their negative attitude, specifically their travel ban and passport cancellation. Health problems were least often mentioned as determining a negative attitude (3 participants).

The participants would heal themselves internally through meditation and spirituality. Thirty-two of them mentioned spirituality as determining their gratitude and patience. Finally, the participants felt self-confident because they believed in justice and in their innocence. Sixteen of them mentioned that they were patient and were confident that universal justice would triumph someday.

Those who had been forced to stay (or chose to stay) in Turkey were more optimistic because, although they had been pursued and imprisoned for some time, they were now with their families, including their parents, relatives and friends. They used their networks as a vital resilience factor to cope with DJL and reconstruct their careers in different occupations. They could remain with their families in their homeland and were comfortable with the cultural and social traditions and habits. Those who managed to leave thought they would be free to live in peace abroad. However, the asylum-seeking process was painful. Due to language and cultural barriers, they had to stay in refugee camps with their families for a long time. Due to restrictions, they could not use their diplomas, skills or professional backgrounds abroad. The European dream had not been realized for many academics who had settled in different countries without a chance to start a new life in a research institution or a university.

## 5. Discussion

We primarily sought to explore the attitudes of academics as highly skilled workers and examine the primary determinants of their attitudinal outcomes. Unlike previous studies of DJL (Major et al., 2007; Bell et al., 2013), our study is about the mass and collective DJL of academics with academic abilities, skills, knowledge, education, training, a degree and a respected career in their respective area of expertise (Freidson, 2001). They were discharged without consideration of objective performance criteria (Bell et al., 2013). Our main aim was to contribute to the literature on DJL by exploring the attitudinal outcomes of DJL in order to clarify the macro nature of DJL and the effects of mass termination, authoritarianism in work life and collective discrimination. We aimed to learn more about attitudes as internal and non-observable outcomes to comprehend how the participants struggled mentally and emotionally with external challenges (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978).

The results show that DJL made a double negative impact on the participants' personal, social, family and professional lives that exceeded the negative impact of either job loss or discrimination. In addition to adverse psychological, physical and social problems (Benner et al., 2018), lack of money and family challenges (McKee-Ryan & Maitoza, 2018), they were struggling with labelling by society, legal exclusion by the government, stigmatization by public newspapers and their need to isolate or relocate (including their need to leave their home country illegally) in order to protect themselves.

The results also confirm deprivation theory. The participants had lost their jobs and their social status, time structures, goals, social networks and educational activities (Jahoda, 1981). Further, they were also deprived of their freedom, reputation, prestige, profession, career and future in

their home or adopted country. Despite the mentioned deprivations, they continued life as active agents by looking for alternatives and possible opportunities, such as working in non-academic jobs (having been banned from academia for the rest of their lives), pursuing academic studies independently at home and being self-employed. Because they were stigmatized, excluded permanently and negatively perceived (Bell et al., 2013; Vinokur et al., 2000), they could not build a new career and enter other fields of employment (Zikic & Richardson, 2007) in their home country. Therefore, they relocated, left their country and struggled to adjust to a new country (by learning English and the local language, by resolving accreditation/credential problems and by preparing themselves for a new job market).

Even though the participants expected to be pessimistic (upset, unhappy, scared, hostile, hopeless) as a result of the DJL and its multiple effects, the majority of the purged participants remained positive (happy, hopeful, optimistic, expectant, contented) through their resilience and PTG. Our findings show that career issues were the most influential determinant of optimism or pessimism because the participants defined themselves as dedicated, hardworking, successful and devoted professionals. Conversely, their worst disappointment was losing their job and being legally excluded from their career. Their strongest hope for the future was to regain their career. For the participants, their job provided them with goals (Jahoda, 1981) and a meaningful identity, as noted in the research of Joelson and Wahlquist (1987).

As Vinokur and Caplan (1987) pointed out, social support is one of the most significant contributors to the job-seeking behaviour and well-being of unemployed individuals. More than job seeking and well-being, social support increased the participants' resilience by encouraging them to be assertive about past events and hopeful for the future.

Feeling sorry about others caused a negative attitude toward the future. Even some participants who had relocated abroad and been hired as academics still worried about the difficulties and challenges that confronted others like them. On the other hand, the participants believed that justice could be a barrier to DJL.

Unlike McKee-Ryan et al. (2005), we found that the hope of going abroad was not only a coping strategy but also a source of positive attitudes toward the future. While relocation has been mentioned in the job loss literature, going abroad or hoping to do so is also a determinant of a positive attitude for individuals who struggle with discrimination.

In addition to the above-mentioned attitudes and determinants, the participants, whether optimistic or pessimistic, had an attitude of gratitude and patience as an intersectional attitudinal outcome. They generally had a paradigm of "nothing so bad, but it might have been worse," which made them durable and willing to struggle. The positive interaction between their gratitude and their patience was a strong resilience factor.

Half of the participants had relocated abroad. In general, developing countries may suffer from the departure of such highly skilled workers. The effects are both positive and negative for the countries of origin and destination (Lowell & Findlay, 2001). Whether one stays or emigrates, life will be shaped by one's resilience and PGT.

## 6. Conclusion

By discussing the issue of DJL in a context of mass termination and collective discrimination, we have significantly contributed to the literature on job loss and workplace discrimination. We sought to fill a gap in understanding of DJL, specifically the psychological outcomes of job loss and termination and their specific determinants. Unlike previous studies, ours shows the hidden,

unknown and veiled side of DJL, for attitudes are not observable until the affected individuals act or speak out. Their attitudes may influence their behaviour today and in the future. By exploring post-DJL attitudes, researchers can identify the psychological processes after job loss and termination and the possible actions of the passivized victims. In particular, they may explore our finding that inequitable dismissal and punitive discrimination do not necessarily stop highly skilled workers from having hopes, expectations and plans for the future. They reduce their negativities through optimism, gratitude and patience, which are the foundations of resilience and PTG.

Resilience and post-traumatic growth could be seen in the participants who had been forced to stay or leave Turkey. It seems that the ones who stayed in their country adopted coping mechanisms to deal with DJL issues with the help of their families, peer networks, spirituality and part-time jobs. Even though the academics living abroad felt secure, they were faced with adjustment problems, such as loneliness, language, employment, certification and lack of peer groups to support them.

Finally, our study had sample and data collection limitations. The sample included only academics, but many other skilled workers had also been affected by the DJL process. Because of the mass dismissals and collective discrimination, it was challenging for the potential participants and the researchers to communicate with each other via personal networks. Hence, we limited the sample to those academics we knew directly or indirectly and could reach through our networks. Another limitation of our study was that the participants were hard to reach because they had been defined as criminal offenders (Bonevski et al., 2014). Face-to-face interviewing with them was impossible because of the conditions, threats, fears and worries they had to live with. Email interviewing might reduce data quality. On the other hand, we ensured data quality by contacting the participants several times to ask them about the wording they had used in their emails.

Future research will focus on the destructive impact of discrimination on the workforce and on workplaces. In addition, authoritarianism or autocratic discrimination can threaten both the workplace and the skilled workforce of the affected country by increasing its brain drain. To alleviate such problems, organizations and institutions of higher education in receiving countries could provide skilled immigrants with integration programs to help them overcome difficulties, adjust to the new context and engage with the new academic environment. For DJL academics who cannot relocate, they could use their contacts to locate academic projects that may help them maintain and renew their academic motivation and expectations for the future.

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