The Relationship Between Performance and Loneliness at Workplace: A Study on Academicians

Volkan Akçit (PhD Candidate)
Esin Barutçu (Assoc. Prof. Dr.)
Pamukkale University Honaz Vocational High School, Departmant of
Business Administration, Turkey
Pamukkale University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences,
Deparment of Management and Organization

Abstract
        The objective of this study is to determine the relationship between workplace loneliness and performance. The sample of the study consists of 109 academicians in total, 64 males (58.7%) and 45 females (41.3%) who are working at Manisa Celal Bayar University. The study data were gathered through face-to-face and online questionnaires. Workplace loneliness scale by Wright, Burt and Strongman was used as a scale in the study. When the collected data were analyzed, it was found that there was a significant relationship between workplace loneliness and various demographic factors, while there was a negative relationship between workplace loneliness and performance.

Keywords: Loneliness, Workplace, Performance, Academicians

Introduction
        Changing environmental conditions, new conditions that arise as a result of the rapid progress of technology, and the fact that information can be reached more quickly by humans have led to the change of human needs. One of the needs of human beings that have remained the same in this process is the need for socialization that is the result of human's nature. Humans have long been trying to satisfy their needs for socialization by establishing healthy relationships with other humans around them. Psychological and physical problems may arise if humans can not establish healthy relationships with other humans around them. It is true that the emergence of such problems will affect people's lives. According to Peplau and Perlman (1982), loneliness is defined as a feeling arising from the fact that the relationship between human and other people does not occur as expected and that human's expectations in this regard are not met. For this

reason, one can find himself in a sense of loneliness without a visible reason. The individual's experiencing this feeling in the workplace is described as loneliness in the workplace. Workplace loneliness should not be confused with the individual's need for loneliness when a quiet working environment is required, when doing a job which requires intense mental effort. In such situations, the individual's desire to be alone is about using his/her creativity and keeping his/her concentration at a higher level.

Performance is something that businesses are sensitive to. The continuity and development of the workplace is related to the performance of the employees. Good performance often means achieving goals, while poor performance means not achieving goals. Workplace loneliness, a factor that can affect the performance concept that is important to businesses, is therefore an important issue for businesses.

Loneliness

Humans live in a wide network of social relations. Changes in life (moving, divorce, leaving home, death of close relatives, etc.) can sometimes lead to significant changes in quality and sometimes in quantity of these social relations. Moreover, there may sometimes be differences between the expectations of individuals and the quality and quantity of social relations. Significant social changes and personality traits (demographics, shyness, lack of self-esteem, etc.) cause this difference to gradually open up and eventually lead to a painful, distressing mood called loneliness (Çakır and Çakır 2011). Therefore, social relations are important for all ages.

All humans need to communicate and interact with others throughout their lives. Nowadays, interpersonal relationships deteriorate due to many reasons and a rapid increase is observed in the number of people deprived of close relationships. Andersson (1993) defines loneliness as the lack of relationships in the person's private life and social life and as the dissatisfaction with these relationships. According to Ponzetti (1990), loneliness is a psychological condition based on the unpleasant thoughts and feelings of the individual arising from the inconsistency between the social relationship the individual has and the social relationship he / she wants to have.

Loneliness is an unpleasant feeling and is accompanied by negative emotions such as sadness, distress, anxiety, and helplessness. However, loneliness is defined as the least understandable among all psychological phenomena (Eldeleklioğlu, 2008). It is a universal, powerful, and quite common emotional experience (Duck, 1991). Although these are the general beliefs about loneliness, exceptions can be seen. For example, if the individual is having problems with someone in his or her social life, this may cause the individual to feel negative feelings (Tilburg, 1985). This is not

regarded as loneliness because the source of the problem is not the entire social life of that person but his/her problem with that individual (Gesten and Jason, 1987).

In his study, Weiss (1973) stated that loneliness consists of two dimensions, emotional and social loneliness. Emotional loneliness can be defined as the absence of someone to feel close to and to be attached to, the decrease in the level of one's emotional affinity, the absence of someone to have an emotional relationship and the feeling of emptiness (Öksüz, 2005; Kılınç 2005; Erözkan 2004). In another definition, emotional loneliness can be defined as the absence of an object of love in an individual's life (Mullins et al., 1989). Social loneliness emerges as a result of lack of a social network of friends where one can share one's interests and activities (Weiss, 1974). Such loneliness is possible when individuals are involved in a new social atmosphere and change their environment (Russell et al., 1984). Social loneliness can be defined as the individual's feeling himself/ herself alone in the society, isolating himself/herself from the society, reluctance to communicate with other people in the society, his inability to find a place and establish healthy relationships in the society.

When the individual feels lonely in the workplace, either socially or emotionally, this is called workplace loneliness. Loneliness is a feeling with harmful consequences, and it is important to identify the sources of loneliness and identify the right way to overcome them. Workplaces can have a structure that pushes people to loneliness and makes them feel lonely (Wright, 2005). Loneliness in the workplace is different from other loneliness concepts. Loneliness in the workplace means being isolated and separated from the social environment and being left alone. On the other hand, workplace loneliness can also emerge from one's individual characteristics (Wright et al., 2006). The loneliness of the individuals in the workplace can be affected by certain values. Values that affect individual preferences can help us to understand the characteristics of the individual in other areas. These values can affect the individual's loneliness in the workplace (Yılmaz, 2011).

Performance

The word performance deriving from the Latin *forma* (Müller, 1867) is defined as "*başarım*- success-performance" in Turkish (TDK). It is difficult to make a definite definition of performance. It may have different meanings depending on different processes. At the same time, it is multi-dimensional and the factors that influence performance vary. Since every definition can exclude some contents and scopes, it is difficult to make a complete description of performance. However, in terms of human resource management, performance can be defined as the result of interaction between

individual's integrity and organizational goals (Çalık, 2003). Performance is also defined as the extent to which a job is performed according to specified conditions or the behavior of an employee. In other words, performance is the total of "the outcomes that an employee achieves by performing the task assigned to him within a certain time frame" (Bingöl, 2003). Performance is the quantitative and qualitative expression of the extent to which an individual, a group, or an organization is able to reach the intended goal. In short, it is the degree of success in any job (Özer, 2009).

In literature, performance is generally examined under two headings, individual and organizational. There are two important types of individual performance behaviors. These are task performance and situational performance. Task performance behaviors include professional and technical skills and activities of a person. Situational performance behaviors include factors such as helping colleagues, making extra effort and improving the organization (Gül, 2007). Organizational performance is the performance arising from achieving or not achieving the goals set by the business in line with its goals (Drucker, 2011). In general, performance refers to the level of success of employees in fulfillment of the task in various dimensions. In other words, it is the employee's performing the work in accordance with the identified characteristics and capabilities.

Study Methodology

The study was applied to 109 academicians working at Manisa Celal Bayar University. The scale laid down by Wright, Burt and Strongman was used as a measure of loneliness in the workplace. In the scale, it is stated that the workplace loneliness has two dimensions. One of the dimensions is "Emotional Deprivation" while the other dimension is called "Social Friendship". The scale consists of 16 questions. The first 9 questions were used to measure the "Emotional Deprivation" dimension and the next 7 questions were used to measure the "Social Friendship". The 5th, 6th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 14th, 15th and 16th questions in the scale were reverse coded in the computer. While the high scores in the scale show increased loneliness in business life, the low scores in the scale show that the level of loneliness experienced in business life is low. The last 9 questions in the questionnaire were designed to determine the effect of workplace loneliness on performance. 1st, 2nd and 5th questions were reverse coded in the computer. The high scores in the scale indicate that absence of loneliness in the workplace positively affects the performance, whereas the low scores indicate that the performance is negatively affected.

Objectives and Hypotheses of the Study

The objective of the study is to examine the relationship between workplace loneliness and performance. In this study, the effect of workplace loneliness on workplace performance, i.e. the positive or negative effects on workplace performance, will be investigated. While the hypotheses of the study were being put forward, the literature was examined and hypotheses were established that there could be a significant relationship between age, marital status, and title and workplace loneliness. The last hypothesis of the research was formed by considering that the effect of workplace loneliness on performance would be negative, and that high-level workplace loneliness would cause disruption in employees' carrying out their tasks, lack of teamwork, and low performance. There are studies supporting this hypothesis in the literature (Özçelik and Barsade 2011).

H_1: There is a significant relationship between workplace loneliness and age.

H_2: There is a significant relationship between workplace loneliness and marital status.

H_3: There is a significant relationship between workplace loneliness and academic titles.

H_4: There is a significant relationship between workplace loneliness and performance.

Study Findings

41.3% of the participants were women and 58.7% were men. 11% of the participants were in the age group of 25 and below, 47.7% of them were between the ages of 26-35, 24.8% of them were in the age group of 36-45, and 16.5% of them are in the age group of 46 and above. 67.9% of the participants included in the sample of the study were married, 24.8% were single, and 7.3% were divorced. 11% of the employees in the study were professors, 18.3% were associate professors, 25.7% were assistant professors, 33% were research assistants and 11.9% were lecturers.

When the internal consistency of the scales used to measure workplace loneliness and performance in the study is examined, it is recognized that Cronbach's Alpha values are 0.938 for workplace loneliness and 0.878 for performance. The emerging values indicate that the internal consistency of the surveys is reliable.

Table 1. Workplace Loneliness Scale Score Ranges

1-1,8	Very Low
1,81 - 2,60	Low
2,61 – 3,40	Medium
3,41 – 4,20	High
4,21 – 5,00	Very High

When the workplace loneliness and its subscales were examined, it was seen that the average of the emotional deprivation dimension was 2.34, the average of social friendship dimension was 1.8 and the average of workplace loneliness was 2.1. Considering the scores from the sample, it is possible to say that the workplace loneliness is low in the sample, the employees in the sample have good friendship relationships with other employees, they can find people to spend time and communicate with in the workplace, they have a group of friends in the workplace, they do not have difficulty in communicating with others in the workplace, they can find people to share their feelings with in their workplaces and they usually feel comfortable and peaceful in the workplace.

When the relationship between age and workplace loneliness is examined, it is seen that there is a significant difference between workplace loneliness of age ranges of 26-35 and 46-above. When the scores of these age groups are examined, it is seen that 2.29 for 26-35, and 1.6 for 46-above. In this case, Hypothesis 1 is accepted. It is possible to say that the individuals who are at the beginning of their business lives have not fully established friendship relationships. It takes time that people develop friendship relationships in the workplace and create a group which they feel they belong to. Another finding of the study, the relationship between workplace loneliness and employees' titles supports this end result. There is a significant difference between researchers and professors' workplace loneliness. While researchers 'workplace loneliness scores were 2.42, professors' scores were 1.57. In this case Hypothesis 3 is accepted. Considering the titles and age groups of the people making academic career, it is possible to say that they feel that they belong more to the workplace in the later stages of career, they can establish meaningful relationships for themselves, form friend groups, and that they feel very little and maybe no workplace loneliness as the number of the people they share their feelings and thoughts increase.

When the marital status of employees, another variable of the survey, was examined, a significant difference was found between married, single and divorced persons' workplace loneliness. The workplaces loneliness scores of the married are 1.96, the singles' are 2.15, and the divorced ones' are 3.23. In this case Hypothesis 2 is accepted. According to the results, divorced people feel lonely in the workplace. The emotions resulting from divorce can lead to these people's experiencing various difficulties in trusting people, in the sincerity of friendship relations, and in feeling attached to a group. Other employees at the workplace may have taken a stand against these people and kicked them out of their groups, restricted communication with them and reassessed their ties with them. The viewpoint of society against divorced people can also be effective in the outcomes.

Table 2. Workplace loneliness Performance

	Performance	Workplace loneliness
Performance Sig.	1	*-0,432 0,000
Workplace loneliness Sig.	*-0,432 0,000	1

When the relationship between workplace loneliness and performance are examined, it is seen that there is a negative relationship between workplace loneliness and performances of employees'. In this case Hypothesis 4 is accepted. It is an expected outcome that the performances of employees who do not feel themselves belong to a group, who cannot share their thoughts, who cannot establish friendship bonds and who can connect themselves to the workplaces will decrease. Team work in the workplace, cooperation and sharing tasks are the factors that affect performance. With the sense of loneliness one feels in the workplace, he will not be able to conduct his/her task in the workplace properly. He will never be able to fulfill his role in team work as long as he does not feel himself belonging to the group. Since it is very difficult to understand an employee who does not share his feelings and thoughts, it is possible that he or she may experience communication disruptions with other employees. As this situation will affect the performance of the workplace, the employee may end up losing his/ her job.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there was a significant relationship between workplace loneliness and age, marital status and titles. One of the remarkable outcomes is that divorced people feel themselves lonelier in the workplace than other groups. The structure of society, the spiritual and physical states of divorced people may be the cause of this conflict. It was also observed that academicians formed closer friendships in later years of their careers, and that they share their feelings and thoughts easily in their own friend groups, and that older age leads to a decrease in workplace loneliness. It was also seen that there is a negative relationship between workplace loneliness and performance, and that the workplace loneliness negatively affected employees' performances, that is to say, there was a high level of belief that performance will increase when workplace loneliness decreases. It is a natural desire of a person who is a social entity to establish relationships with people around him/her, and to be around people s/he will spend time with. It will not be hard to imagine that this desire will also arise in the workplace if we think that the individual now spends most of his/her time at work.

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