

## The effect of working life quality of hotel employees on individual creativity performance

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### Abstract

*This study determined how the working life quality of hotel employees affects their individual creativity performance. Survey data were collected in June-July 2018 from 310 hotel employees working in five-star hotels in Bodrum district, Muğla province, Turkey. Correlation analysis indicated positive, moderate and weak relationships between working life quality and individual creativity. A regression analysis was then performed to test the research hypotheses. This showed that career opportunities and work safety significantly affected individual creativity. However, working conditions and wages and earnings had no significant effect on individual creativity. The results of this research have great importance because it is the first research that investigates the effect of the quality of working life on individual creativity performance of employees working in hospitality businesses in Turkey.*

**Keywords:** Working life quality, Individual creativity, Creativity, Employee, Hotels

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### 1. Introduction

The tourism sector has a significant market share in the current changing world. Accommodation businesses, which are one of the most important building blocks of the sector, provide services such as eating and drinking, entertainment, rest, and participation in activities, in addition to accommodation, which are the basic needs of customers in the tourism sector. It is therefore critical that employees who serve customers 24 hours a day in accommodation businesses are committed to their jobs and are productive. Since accommodation businesses must prioritize quality service for their customers, they should be inclined to improve the quality of their employees' working life as they are the ones providing this high-quality service. The quality of employees' working life can be affected by their working conditions, wages, feeling of security in their job, and their future career goals.

The concept of working life quality (Davis & Trist, 1974) emerged in the 1950s in the United Kingdom and the United States before reaching Norway, the Netherlands, India, and Japan. It highlights aspects of the environment that individuals may or may not like. That is, it expresses employees' satisfaction with their current job in direct relation to their work environment. Businesses should pay careful

attention to working life quality since improving it will primarily benefit the company.

Creativity, defined as linking any idea with another idea to reveal a new, original thought (Nazari & Shahdadnejad, 2011: 56), is an important sustainability factor for business nowadays. It is also linked to working life quality. While employees' satisfaction with their work environment and job affects their working life quality, their ability to produce new, original ideas depends on their ability to be creative within the organization. The better the employees' working life quality, the more they can feel free in terms of creativity. This in turn enables them to do what is necessary to perform their work. Accordingly, the main aim of this study is to determine the effects of hotel employees' working life quality on individual creativity performance. By investigating the relationship between working life quality level and individual creativity performance, this study can contribute to the relevant literature and the individual creativity performance of the employees working in the accommodation businesses.

### 2. Working life quality

Working life quality, defined as good working conditions, is related to having a more democratic and humane

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workplace structure and environment (Işık, 1991: 46). Attention to this concept encourages the development of employees and reduce alienation from work (Huzzard, 2003: 21). By examining the workplace characteristics that determine working life quality, organizations can better satisfy employees' physical and mental needs, ensure work environment-employee harmony, and support employees materially and spiritually (Demirbilek & Türkan, 2008: 49).

By studying working life quality, it is possible to identify appropriate principles for management philosophy. This in turn can lead to more favorable working conditions and improve the qualifications of the employees, thereby increasing productivity (Harvey & Brown, 1988: 335). For example, a study of businesses in France found that 67% had increased productivity by improving working life quality (Cooper, 1979: 17). By prioritizing working life quality and implementing appropriate strategies, businesses can increase employees' satisfaction, which in turn increases work performance and productivity, ultimately raising profits (Sirgy et al., 2012: 297).

### 2.1. Dimensions of working life quality

Working life quality can be examined in terms of eight dimensions: adequate and fair wages, safe and healthy working conditions, opportunities to develop human capacity, future opportunities for continuous improvement and security, social integration within the organization, legal rights in the organization, work and total living space, and the social relationship of work life (Walton, 1973: 11-21).

*Adequate and fair wages:* The responsibility of the employee is related to deciding on the wage level by taking into account factors such as the comfort of the current workplace and work environment, and the workload (Rose, 2006: 65).

*Safe and healthy working conditions:* These include absence of dangers that threaten employees' physical health in a work environment and appropriate job security for employees (Walton, 1973: 13).

*Opportunities to develop human capacity:* These include behaviors that support the employees' self-confidence and dignity in the working environment (Demir, 2009: 87).

*Future opportunities for continuous improvement and security:* This involves providing opportunities for employees to participate in activities that support their personal development (Göyşen, 2015: 23) and prioritizing career goals for employees to plan future opportunities (Rose, 2006: 65).

*Social integration within the organization;* This refers to the employees' ability to feel that they are an important part of the organization while conflicts within the organization are minimized and there is no discrimination in the working environment (Walton, 1973: 15).

*Legal rights in the organization:* This refers to elements of working life, such as the employees' equal rights within the organization and the ability to express themselves in an organized way (Erdem, 2008: 39).

*Work and total living space:* This relates to the effects of overtime obligations or travelling as part of the job on employees' ability to spend time on their non-work activities (Walton, 1973: 16).

*Social relationship of work life:* This relates to the way organizational activities, employment practices, sales and marketing methods, products, waste management, and orientation to political activities affect the employees' quality of working life (Göyşen, 2015: 24).

### 2.2. Factors affecting working life quality and working life quality programs

Employees' working and environmental conditions directly affect their working life quality. Regarding working conditions, key determinants include education, job security, work life-private life balance, career, motivation, technology, wages, and participation in management. Regarding environmental conditions, key determinants include ergonomics, noise-vibration, lighting, and atmospheric conditions (Ünlü, 2011).

Human resources management can improve working life quality by identifying how to maintain employee motivation, such as educational and career opportunities (Bilge, 2010: 100). Other ways to improve working life quality through increasing productivity include job design practices like job simplification, job changing (rotation), job enlargement, job enrichment, and quality circles (Igarria et al., 1994: 178; Garg & Rastogi, 2006: 574). Financial incentives can also be effective, for example earnings sharing, which is used to motivate employees by offering rewards beyond the salary for achieving targets. These schemes may also include rules to encourage teamwork. By improving working life quality, these schemes can positively affect job satisfaction and productivity (Scbuster, 1987: 18). Therefore, it is possible to evaluate the working life quality programs implemented by businesses to increase the employees' efficiency in terms of human resources practices, job design, and incentive programs.

## 3. Individual creativity

Creativity, derived from the Latin 'creativitöt' and the French verb 'creer', means 'to create, bring about, give birth' (Özen, 2012: 232). Creativity is also defined as developing a physical object or thought that was never considered before, came to mind, or been made despite an awareness of it (Esen, 1996: 19). In the workplace, individual creativity refers to developing new methods, technologies, processes, techniques, and alternative product ideas to increase business excellence and organizational performance, enable a competitive advantage, and make the organization sustainable (Ussahawanitchakit, 2011: 3). Individual creativity is also considered a component of individuals' knowledge, intrinsic motivation, and social factors (Borghini, 2005: 20).

Individual creativity creates useful outputs for organizations by developing new alternative methods to solve

organizational problems (Zhou et al., 2012: 895). It relies on individual characteristics like scientific reasoning method, skills, and encouragement (Yılmaz, 2009: 478).

More specifically, Barker (2002: 41) suggests that individual creativity has the following characteristics:

**Personal aesthetic:** To achieve a certain goal, patience is required for problem solving and dealing with uncertainty, and the ability to connect events and situations by making things simpler.

**Ability to search for issues:** Problems are addressed with high self-confidence to solve them before examining the next potential problem.

**Mental activity:** Problems are investigated from different perspectives by developing different mindsets for specific situations or problems while new ideas are developed using different methods and word games.

**Risk taking:** There is an urge to take risks and investigate unexplored areas, although this can be avoided by learning about risk through failure.

**Objective evaluation of work done:** Future work takes account of previous criticisms.

**Self-motivation:** Intrinsic motivation is required to perform the job and remains unaffected by external motivation.

These features of individual creativity can be fulfilled more healthily if employees are motivated by their work. This is because highly motivated individuals are willing to try different approaches, focus on situations that other individuals do not care about, and take pleasure in developing creative thoughts (Pıçakçı, 2013: 45).

Individuals with creative personality traits can produce more creative ideas (Oldham & Cummings, 1996: 608) as their thought processes are more flexible and independent. Creative individuals tend to be more independent in their decisions and social values (Akat et al., 2002: 436). Thus, their values, goals, attitudes, and styles tend to differ from those of other individuals (Balay, 2010: 47). Bentley (2004: 193-194) suggests that creative individuals have the following characteristics:

- Liking to spend time with other people
- maintaining their motivation rather than giving up easily
- Following long and difficult paths to achieve success
- Showing considerable freedom in experimentation and research
- Having a very good sense of humor

To ensure their success, organizations need to make great efforts to find and retain creative individuals while creative individuals need to develop appropriate opportunities and a work environment so that they can use their potential (Kale, 2010: 27).

Various studies have investigated working life quality and individual creativity in Turkey (Akdeğirmen, 2015; Aslım, 2013; Aydemir, 2008; Bektaş, 2015; Canal, 2017; Demir, 2009; Demir, 2011; Demirbilek & Türkan, 2008; Göyşen, 2015; Güvenli, 2006; Kanbur, 2015; Kaya, 2011; Küçükusta, 2007; Özmete, 2002; Turunç et al., 2010; Tuncer & Yeşiltaş, 2013; Ünlü, 2011). In contrast, the non-Turkish literature focuses on whole rather than individual creativity, including research into working life quality and creativity (Cooper, 1979; Considine & Callus, 2002; Davisand Trist, 1974; Efraty & Sirgy, 1990; Gu et al., 2015; Gurteen, 1998; Hammer, 1984; Horng & Hu, 2008; Huzzard, 2003; Igarria et al., 1994; Jiang et al., 2012; Kristensen, 2004; Lokanadha & Mohan, 2011; Mauzy et al., 2003; Nadler & Lawler, 1983; Nazari & Shahdadnejad, 2011; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Sirgy et al., 2012; Walton, 1973).

Despite the range of previous research, no study has investigated individual creativity among employees in accommodation businesses. Thus, the current study provides valuable original findings in this field as the first to investigate the effects of employees' working life quality on individual creativity performance in Turkish accommodation businesses.

## 4. Method

### 4.1. Research model and hypotheses

The research model included four variables to measure working life quality that may affect the individual creativity performance of hotel employees. The working life quality scale had four dimensions whereas the individual creativity scale has one. Four hypotheses were tested regarding the relationships between the four independent variables and the dependent variable (see Table 1). Figure 1 presents the research model.

Table 1. Research model hypotheses

Hypotheses	
H <sub>1</sub>	Career opportunities significantly affect the individual creativity performance of employees.
H <sub>2</sub>	Working conditions significantly affect the individual creativity performance of employees.
H <sub>3</sub>	Work safety significantly affects the individual creativity performance of employees.
H <sub>4</sub>	Wages and earnings significantly affect the individual creativity performance of employees.

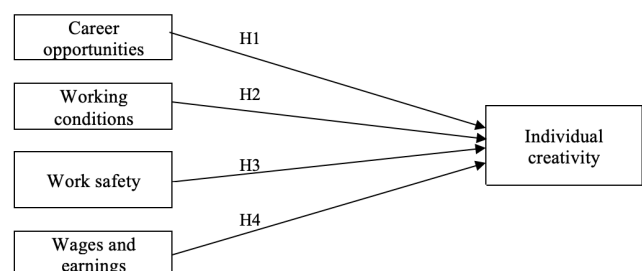


Figure 1. Research Model

#### 4.2. Scales

A two-part survey, a commonly used quantitative research tool, was used to collect data in line with the research aims. The first part of the questionnaire form had open-ended questions to record the participating employees' demographic characteristics. The second part had two scales to measure working life quality and individual creativity performance. The participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale (1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Undecided, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly Agree). The Working Life Quality Scale was adapted from Demir (2011) while the Individual Creativity Scale was adapted from Kanbur (2015).

#### 4.3. Data collection

The universe of the research consisted of employees working in five-star accommodation businesses in Bodrum district, Muğla province, Turkey. The survey was administered during June and July 2018 after obtaining necessary permissions from the businesses. Before the questionnaire forms were distributed to the hotels' accommodation facilities, the general manager or accommodation facility department managers gave the number of employees to ensure the correct number of questionnaire forms were distributed.

A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed, of which 12 were not returned, another 17 were received empty, and another 11 were filled in incorrectly or incompletely. These were therefore excluded, leaving a research sample of 310 participants. This number of questionnaires met the requirement for the 95% confidence interval of the sample and was at least five times the number of expressions ( $27 \times 5$ ) required to perform factor analysis. The analysis was therefore conducted using the data from 310 hotel employees.

#### 4.4. Data analysis

SPSS 22.0 was used for the analysis. First, the validity and reliability of the measurement tool were tested. The demographic characteristics of the participants were examined with frequency and percentage distributions. Factor, correlation, and regression analyzes were carried out to test the hypotheses regarding the effects of hotel employees' working life quality on individual creativity performance.

### 5. Findings

#### 5.1. Demographic characteristics of participants

57.1% of the participants were male, 82.8% were aged between 18-25 years, 92.3% were single, and 46.8% were undergraduate graduates. The level of work experience was not very high: 30.3% had worked in the tourism sector for 1-3 years while 61.6% had worked for less than 1 year in their current workplace. Finally, 54.8% of the participants worked in their hotel's food and beverage department.

#### 5.2. Reliability and validity analysis

Reliability analysis is a method developed to evaluate tests, questionnaires, or scales used in measurement

(Kalaycı, 2018). The 21-item Working Life Quality Scale had a Cronbach Alpha value of .891 while the 6-item Individual Creativity Scale had a Cronbach Alpha value of .858. As these reliability coefficients were higher than the acceptable threshold of 0.50, the questionnaire scales were reliable.

Factor analysis was performed to determine the factor structures of the scales (see Table 2). Based on this analysis, several statements were excluded because they did not have the required characteristics and values, disrupted the scale structure statistically, or loaded onto meaningless dimensions. Thus, the Working Life Quality Scale was reduced from 21 to 18 statements that loaded onto four dimensions (career opportunities, working conditions, work safety, wages and earnings). The Individual Creativity Scale was reduced from 6 to 5 statements that loaded onto one dimension. The former scale explained 47.31% of the total variance whereas the latter explained 16.26%. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin sample adequacy level of the scale was 90% while the Bartlett test of sphericity was 3516.8, which was significant at the 0.01 level.

#### 5.3. Correlation analysis

Table 3 shows the results of the correlation analysis performed to determine whether there was any relationship between the working life quality scale dimensions and the individual creativity scale. There were a number of significant positive linear relationships between the dimensions of working life quality: career opportunities had a moderately significant relationship with working conditions ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $p = .000$ ;  $r = .519$ ), work safety ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $p = .000$ ;  $r = .507$ ), and wages and earnings ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $p = .000$ ;  $r = .515$ ); working conditions had a weakly significant relationship with work safety ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $p = .000$ ;  $r = .456$ ) and a moderately significant relationship with wages and earnings ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $p = .000$ ;  $r = .512$ ); work safety had a moderately significant relationship with wages and earnings ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $p = .000$ ;  $r = .197$ ).

Regarding the relationship between the scales, individual creativity had significant positive linear relationships with all four working life quality dimensions: a moderately significant relationship with career opportunities ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $p = .000$ ;  $r = .513$ ); a weakly significant relationship with working conditions ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $p = .000$ ;  $r = .385$ ); a moderately significant relationship with work safety ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $p = .000$ ;  $r = .630$ ); and a weakly significant relationship with wages and earnings ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $p = .000$ ;  $r = .268$ ).

#### 5.4. Regression analysis and hypothesis testing

To test the research hypotheses, a regression analysis was conducted on the relationship between the four dimensions of the Working Life Quality Scale and the Individual Creativity Scale. The findings are shown in Table 4.

Overall, the results in Table 4 indicate that working life quality significantly explains individual creativity, accounting for 44% of the variance in the dependent variable

( $R=0.670$ ;  $R^2=0.449$ ; corrected  $R^2= 0.442$ ;  $F=62.102$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). More specifically, however, only some of the working life quality dimensions explained individual creativity. That is, individual creativity was significantly predicted by career opportunities ( $p<0.05$ ;  $p=.000$ ) and work

safety ( $p<0.05$ ;  $p=.000$ ) but not by working conditions ( $p>0.05$ ;  $p=.771$ ) or wages and earnings ( $p>0.05$ ;  $p=.421$ ). Thus, as shown in Table 5,  $H_1$  and  $H_3$  are accepted whereas  $H_2$  and  $H_4$  are rejected.

Table 2. Factor analysis results

Factors	Number of variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Eigenvalue	Explained variance (%)
Individual creativity	5	.87	8.10	16.26
Career opportunities	4	.79	2.67	13.63
Working conditions	5	.80	1.53	13.26
Work safety	6	.84	1.28	12.73
Wages and earnings	3	.73	1.02	7.68

KMO = .900; Bartlett's test of sphericity = 3516.8

Table 3. Correlation analysis results

Working life quality	1	2	3	4	5
1- Career opportunities	1				
2- Working conditions	.519**	1			
3- Work safety	.507**	.456**	1		
4- Wages and earnings	.515**	.512**	.197**	1	
5- Individual creativity	.513**	.385**	.630**	.268**	1

\* $p<0.05$  \*\* $p<0.01$

Table 4. Regression analysis results for the relationship between the dimensions of the working life quality scale and the individual creativity scale

Independent variables	Non-standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	p
	B	Standard Error	$\beta$		
Constant	.804	.193		4.163	.000
Career opportunities	.228	.057	.230	3.995	.000
Working conditions	.016	.055	.016	.291	.771
Work safety	.496	.052	.497	9.552	.000
Wages and earnings	.038	.047	.043	.806	.421

Dependent Variable: Individual Creativity  
 $R=0.670$ ;  $R^2=0.449$ ; Corrected  $R^2= 0.442$ ;  $F=62.102$ ;  $p=0.000$   
 \*\*  $p<0.01$ . \* $p<0.05$

Table 5. Test results

Hypotheses	Constructs	Result
$H_1$	Career opportunities significantly affect the individual creativity performance of employees	Accepted
$H_2$	Working conditions significantly affect the individual creativity performance of employees.	Rejected
$H_3$	Work safety significantly affects the individual creativity performance of employees.	Accepted
$H_4$	Wages and earnings significantly affect the individual creativity performance of employees.	Rejected

## 6. Conclusion

Improving working life quality depends on adapting working conditions and making work more humane through a more democratic workplace and work environment. Individual creativity generally depends on employees having sufficiently stimulating working conditions to produce creative results. Thus, it is critical that organizations ensure that the working conditions ensure the employees' working life quality. If working life quality is improved, employees can express their ideas more freely. If this is blended with individual creativity, then employees can benefit the enterprise.

Therefore, to maximize the individual creativity performance of employees in accommodation businesses, these organizations must first improve the employees' working life quality.

In this study, a correlation analysis was first performed to determine the relationships between the four-work life quality dimensions. This revealed positive relationships of varying significance between the working life quality dimensions themselves and between them and individual creativity. Individual creativity had the strongest relationship with work safety and the weakest with wages and earnings.

A regression analysis was then performed to test the research hypotheses. This showed that individual creativity was significantly affected by career opportunities and work safety but not by working conditions and wages and earnings.

As the regression analysis suggested, after work safety, the career opportunities dimension is particularly important for employees in accommodation businesses to display their individual creativity. The participants' responses indicated that some hotels provide opportunities for promotion, personal development, vocational training, convenient in-house training, overtime work and staff. These opportunities enable employees to demonstrate their creativity by applying new ideas, researching new business-improvement techniques and making a difference to the business. The accommodation businesses that do this increase the individual creativity performance of their employees. Thus, hypothesis H1 was accepted: career opportunities significantly affect the individual creativity performance of employees.

Individual creativity was most strongly affected by work safety. That is, there is an important relationship between hotel employees' trust in the business and their ability to display their creativity. In their responses, some of the participating hotel employees indicated that they have social security, can express their thoughts on any subject easily, their job is guaranteed by an employment contract and their personal information is not shared with other people. These factors all affect their creativity performance.

Another important factor for displaying the creativity was having equal rights with other employees. On the other hand, the participants were undecided as to whether they are union members or not, suggesting that they do not have a clear attitude regarding union activities. Overall, the accommodation businesses that pay attention to these make their employees feel safe in the work environment, which in turn enables them to display their individual creativity. Thus, hypothesis H3: work safety significantly affects the individual creativity performance of employees.

According to the double factor (two factor) theory (Herzberg et al., 1959), satisfying needs is the basis of motivation. Therefore, good working conditions are necessary for employees to perform effectively. The survey responses showed that the participants generally find the physical working condition suitable and their working hours are regulated by the labor law. However, they were undecided about whether the management in the accommodation businesses they work for should follow fair practices and that workloads should be equal. Overall, these factors had no significant effect on the participating employees reported individual creativity performance. This may be because hotel employees try to perform their jobs regardless of whether their working conditions are easy or difficult. Thus, hypothesis H2 was rejected: working conditions do not significantly affect the individual creativity performance of employees.

The participants' responses regarding wage and earnings varied as to whether the wage was sufficient or not. The findings also showed that some employees are paid different wages for doing the same job in the enterprise, balanced wages are applied between different positions, and that hotel employers offer premiums, bonuses, rewards and incentive opportunities. However, these factors had no significant effect on the employees' reported individual creativity performance. This can be explained by Herzberg et al. (1959), who argued that wages can only prevent job dissatisfaction rather than motivate employees because wages are considered a right. Thus, hypothesis H4 was rejected: wages and earnings do not significantly affect the individual creativity performance of the employees.

Overall, working life quality significantly affected the individual creativity performance of hotel employees in two dimensions (career opportunities and work safety) but not two others (working conditions, and wages and earnings). In related research, Demir (2011) found that employee absenteeism is significantly predicted by all four dimensions of working life quality (career opportunities, working conditions, work safety, wages and earnings) as well as employees' intention to stay in the job and their intention to work. Thus, whereas all four working life quality dimensions affect intention to stay in the job and absenteeism, wages and earnings and working conditions do not significantly affect individual creativity performance. Hence, two hypotheses were accepted and two hypotheses were rejected.

Based on these findings and the research literature, a number of recommendations can be made:

- This study, which was conducted to determine the effect of the working life quality of hotel employees on individual creativity performance, will be a source for future studies on working life quality and individual creativity.
- Since the freedom of employees to participate in union activities can increase their individual creativity performance, accommodation businesses should adopt a clear attitude towards the employee in this regard.
- Accommodation business should ensure that employees feel safe in the work environment in order to display their creativity, particularly regarding social security, equal rights, freedom of thought, job guarantees and privacy of personal information.
- Working life quality can be improved if employees can express their thoughts clearly without pressure from management or colleagues.
- Accommodation businesses should provide overtime opportunities for employees to increase their income and create a work environment where employees can show their creativity.
- Employees should be rewarded with promotions to increase their commitment to the business and allow them to display their creativity.

- Businesses should organize activities that increase that improve working life quality and employee motivation, such as personnel-oriented entertainment or competitions in accommodation businesses.

- Accommodation businesses should help their employees receive vocational training in order to increase the level of creativity.

- While working conditions do not affect individual creativity performance, safety does. Therefore, accommodation businesses should ensure that employees feel safe in their work environment.

- Employees should be allowed to move freely within the organization without limiting their creative thinking, and they should be made to feel that their ideas are valuable.

- Since factors wages and financial incentives do not significantly improve creativity, businesses should provide their employees with moral rather than material rewards, given that career advancement increases individual creativity performance.

- This study should be replicated with another universe than the one for this study.

- Apart from five-star accommodation businesses, similar studies can be carried out in other accommodation businesses.

Scientific studies of the relationship between working life quality of hotel employees and their individual creativity have made a positive contribution to tourism research. Future research can consider other kinds of hotel employees as well as employees in restaurant businesses, travel agencies and airline companies.

#### Author contribution statements

Authors contributed equally to the design and implementation of the research, to the analysis of the results and to the writing of the manuscript.

#### Disclosure statement

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