

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Mediating Effect of Perceived Ease of Use on the Relationship Between Communication Overload and Job Performance

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Abstract

While developments in information and communication technology have made access to information easier and faster, they can also bring about unique challenges. Communication overload is one of these challenges. The aim of this research is to examine the interaction between communication overload and job performance from the perspective of employees and to investigate the mediating effect of perceived ease of use related to information and communication technology in this relationship. The research was conducted by collecting data through survey among Karabük University employees in 2023. Data obtained from 408 employees of Karabük University were analyzed using SPSS 26 software package. The relationships between variables were examined using Pearson Correlation test, and the mediating effect was analyzed through multiple regression analyses. The research results revealed a weak negative relationship between communication overload and job performance as well as a strong positive relationship between perceived ease of use and job performance. The results of the multiple regression analysis indicate that perceived ease of use plays a mediating role in the relationship between communication overload and job performance.

Keywords: Communication Overload, Perceived Ease of Use, Job Performance, Mediation Effect

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Öz

Bilgi ve iletişim teknolojisindeki gelişmeler bilgiye erişimi daha kolay ve hızlı bir hale getirirken, kendine özgü sorunlar da ortaya çıkarabilmektedir. Aşırı iletişim yükü bu sorunlardan birisidir. Bu araştırmanın amacı çalışanlar açısından aşırı iletişim yüküyle iş performansı arasındaki etkileşimi ve bu ilişkide bilgi ve iletişim teknolojisiyle ilgili algılanan kullanım kolaylığının aracılık etkisini incelemektir. Araştırma, 2023 yılında, Karabük Üniversitesi çalışanları arasında anket yoluyla veri toplanarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Karabük Üniversitesinin 408 çalışanından elde edilen veriler SPSS 26 paket programı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmada değişkenler arası ilişkiler Pearson Korelasyon testiyle, aracılık etkisiyse çoklu regresyon analizleriyle gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırma sonucu, aşırı iletişim yüküyle iş performansı ve algılanan kullanım kolaylığı arasında zayıf düzeyde negatif bir ilişki, algılanan kullanım kolaylığıyla iş performansı üzerinde ise yüksek düzeyde pozitif bir ilişki tespit edilmiştir. Çoklu regresyon analizi sonuçları, algılanan kullanım kolaylığının, aşırı iletişim yükü ve iş performansı arasındaki ilişkide aracılık etkisinin olduğuna işaret etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: : Aşırı İletişim Yükü, Algılanan Kullanım Kolaylığı, İş Performansı, Aracılık Etkisi.

Introduction

Rapid advancements in information and communication technology have been influencing and reshaping both individual and organizational communication and work practices (Men, 2022). The internet and mobile technologies have significantly increased the communication load individuals are exposed to. The complexity resulting from intensive technology use is referred to as 'technology clutter,' with one of its dimensions being 'communication overload' (Zhang et al., 2022).

Communication overload refers to individuals being exposed to more diverse and abundant information and messages than they can effectively process at a given time (Perez, Romo & Bell, 2019). Within the realm of communication overload, individuals may struggle to identify crucial information or messages, leading to time wastage and delays in decision-making and response development (Stephens, Mandhana, Kim, Li, Glowacki & Cruz, 2017). The proliferation of the internet and mobile devices has increased the use of social media platforms and mobile applications, making individuals an integral part of a constant and multifaceted communication system.

Social networking platforms like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram are utilized as essential tools in individuals' daily communications. The widespread adoption of mobile devices has significantly boosted the demand for these services (Tuğtekin, 2022). According to the Digital 2023 Report (We are Social), 5.16 billion people worldwide use the internet, and 5.44 billion people use mobile phones. Notably, the report highlights that 59.4% of the world's population are active social media users. In Türkiye, there are 71.38 million internet users and 62.55 million social media users, according to the same report.

Technology has made access to information and communication faster and easier. However, it is argued that there has not been a proportional increase in productivity related to information and communication technology advancements. Particularly in knowledge-intensive work, the

message traffic conveyed by third parties through email or mobile devices can lead to distraction, work interruptions, and consequently, decreased productivity (Karr-Wisniewski & Lu, 2010). External interference in an employee's work can enhance their multitasking abilities up to a certain point, but communication overload, when crossed, can result in negative physical and psychological effects on employees (Zhu & Bao, 2018; McFarlane & Latorella, 2002).

Communication overload can have individual and organizational effects on employees. Bawden & Robinson (2009) suggest that it can lead to a sense of loss of control, fatigue, attention deficits, and health issues in individuals. At the organizational level, excessive information and communication burden are proposed to have adverse effects on job satisfaction, productivity, and performance (Ellwart et al., 2015).

Employees working in universities, whether in academic or administrative roles, are in constant communication with a large number of individuals and institutions as part of their job responsibilities. When the transition to distance education occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic and earthquakes, education activities could continue thanks to information and communication technologies. However, this situation also resulted in an extraordinary increase in the communication burden faced by employees (Kaymaz, 2021). Even during face-to-face education periods, both administrative and academic staff are exposed to a significant communication burden. In the academic field, individuals are also required to allocate sufficient time for self-improvement, maintain healthy communication with students, fulfill administrative duties, and advance their careers. The high number of students significantly increases the workload for both administrative and academic staff.

Academic or administrative personnel who wish to complete their tasks without missing important information must regularly and frequently check their emails, official documents sent through the electronic document management system (EBYS), messages from students through the student information system (OBS), and announcements made through web pages. They

must also understand and evaluate requests received through phone calls or in-person interactions. In addition to this message traffic that needs to be evaluated, employees may also experience interruptions in their work due to messages received through social media platforms from their personal networks. Moreover, social media platforms are considered practical by workgroups, making it almost impossible to ignore messages conveyed through these platforms. As a result, employees today are exposed to a significant communication load. Understanding the consequences of this communication overload from both individual and organizational perspectives holds great importance for organizational development efforts.

This research examines whether university employees are exposed to communication overload and investigates the interaction between communication overload and job performance. Additionally, the study aims to determine whether employees' perceptions of the ease of use of information and communication technology play a mediating role in the relationship between communication overload and job performance.

Literature Review

Communication Overload

Communication overload occurs when an individual's capacity and capability fall short of meeting the demands of an overwhelming amount of communication (Perez et al., 2019). Modern psychology suggests that the human brain can focus on a specific amount of information at any given moment. When a person attempts to multitask, their effectiveness in different tasks decreases, leading to a state known as cognitive overload (Young, 2013).

The concept of communication overload was first developed by Meier (1963) and has been discussed across various disciplines. Similar to the concept of information overload, communication overload is defined as the situation in which the recipient is exposed to more information than they can manage, comprehend, or make decisions about (Batista & Marques, 2017). The determinative

factor in communication overload is not only the quantity of messages but also the time required to process the message content (Cho, 2017). Chung and Goldhaber (1997) described communication overload as a situation in which an individual perceives being exposed to more complex and uncertain information, in a larger quantity, than they can process within a specific time frame during the communication process.

Communication overload typically arises when communication needs in a network exceed an individual's communication capabilities, negatively impacting their normal work routines (Fan et al., 2021). Developments in information and communication technologies, such as advanced shared databases, have increased communication diversity, message demand intensity, and consequently, employees' communication burden in workplaces (Moen et al., 2015). This excessive load requires employees to be constantly prepared to respond, placing increasing pressure on them. The abundance of information and messages also makes it challenging to filter out unclear and unnecessary messages (Stephens et al., 2017).

Communication overload can hinder an individual's ability to focus on their work, create doubts about the reliability of information, and, in the long term, lead to stress, fatigue, and a sense of anxiety among employees (Hsu & Lin, 2016; Pang et al., 2023; Fan et al., 2021).

In addition to the communication burden they face in the course of their professions, employees are also exposed to a personal communication load through a wide variety of social media platforms and mobile applications. Managing this intensive flow of messages and information, filtering out the unhelpful and unnecessary ones, and accessing the necessary information without wasting time requires considerable effort and time. The negative consequences of communication overload can vary based on employees' characteristics and the organizational climate. According to Cho et al. (2011), communication occurring in channels that enable advanced simultaneous communication in organizations generates a lower perception of communication overload. Similarly, in organizations where an organizational trust climate is established, and employees are included in decision-making mechanisms, the adverse

effects of communication overload can be minimized (Barrett et al., 2022).

Job Performance

For organizations to reach their goals, gain a competitive advantage over their rivals, and sustain their success, it is imperative that their human resources are effective, exhibit high job performance, and possess the necessary capabilities (Obi, 2015). In this way, employees can contribute to the achievements of their organizations. Traditionally, job performance has been focused on individual task performance, which is defined as the ability to fulfill job requirements (Cortina & Luchman, 2012). Nowadays, contextual performance, which encompasses behaviors contributing to the effective functioning of the organization, is also included under the concept of job performance. Task performance assesses how well employees complete their tasks, while contextual performance is associated with behaviors such as compliance with rules, voluntariness, teamwork, and alignment with organizational goals (Doğan, 2018).

Fleishman (1975) introduced three dimensions of job performance. The first dimension centers on task performance, which focuses on employees' abilities required for the job based on learning theories and training techniques. In this modeling, the second dimension is organizational citizenship behavior, and the third dimension comprises counterproductive, undesirable behaviors leading to inefficiencies. Organizational citizenship behavior refers to voluntary behaviors that contribute to the effective functioning of the organization, which are not part of the job description (Organ & Ryan, 1995). Undesirable behaviors are intentional actions by employees that violate the organization's rules and, as a result, threaten the well-being of the organization or its employees (Robinson & Bennett, 1995).

Job performance encompasses measurable actions, behaviors, and outcomes that contribute to the realization of organizational goals (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000). Job performance is linked to both fulfilling job requirements and

contributing to the organizational culture, mission, and vision (Befort & Hatrup, 2003). Job performance can be measured in various ways, including self-evaluation by the employee, evaluation by the manager, using objective performance criteria, or a combination of these methods (Gilboa et al., 2008). In this study, the method of employees self-evaluating their own performance was preferred for measuring job performance.

In the literature, the antecedents of job performance have been examined from individual, environmental, managerial, and organizational perspectives. Among those related to communication, individual communication skills, communication style, and organizational communication have drawn attention (Turunç & Turgut, 2020). Factors affecting and originating from management include motivation and stress management, business operations methods, and extensive technology usage within the organization (Özmutaf, 2007; Yılmaz, 2012). Human resources are strategic in the workplace, and managing and planning these resources is a critical indicator of job performance (Dursun et al., 2020).

Perceived Ease of Use of Information and Communication Technologies

Perceived ease of use is defined as an individual's belief that they can easily use a technology without exerting excessive effort (Davis et al., 1989). Perceived ease of use is a variable within the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis (1989). The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a model created to determine the reasons why users either adapt to or struggle with the use of information and communication technologies. According to this model, individuals' intention to use a new technology increases if they believe they can easily use it and that it will benefit them professionally (Görhan & Öncü, 2015). Additionally, there are studies in the literature that question the importance of ease of use in the acceptance of information communication technology (Keil et al., 1995). Some research results show that there is relationship between perceived

ease of use of electronic documents and job performance and employee attitudes are the key elements that influence the technology acceptance behaviors (Hashim & Ismail, 2013).

Hypotheses Development

Below, information will be given about the hypotheses developed regarding the effects and relationships between variables and the theory and research results that underpin these hypotheses.

The Relationship Between Communication Overload and Job Performance

Research indicates that communication overload has negative effects at both individual and organizational levels in the workplace. Communication overload can lead to stress, ongoing mental fatigue, and decreased job performance among employees (Pang & Ruan, 2023). Intensive use of social media can reduce individuals' academic and job performance and lead to mental health problems (Dhir et al., 2018). Communication overload is viewed as a stress factor based on behavior. Stress can create tension in individuals and affect their behavior and performance (Ou et al., 2023).

According to Lee et al. (2016), communication overload is one of the determinants of excessive technology load, and overloads resulting from information, communication, and system characteristics create stress on individuals.

There have been limited studies in Türkiye regarding the interaction between communication overload and job performance. Özbek (2022) found in his research that there was no significant relationship between teachers' communication overload, motivation, and job performance. Another study during the COVID-19 pandemic found that teachers experienced a "moderate" level of communication overload, negatively affecting their job satisfaction to a "low" extent (Dilekçi & Limon, 2020). Similarly, Şahin and Göktaş (2023) identified a significant, weak negative relationship between teachers' perception of communication overload and their job satisfaction.

Internationally, research by Giri and Kumar (2010) suggested that organizational

communication is a determinant of organizational satisfaction and job performance. Yu et al. (2018) found that excessive information and communication load reduced job performance in employees by leading to social media fatigue. Stephens et al. (2017) identified the dimensions of communication overload as "risking message quality, frequent distraction, exposure to excessive information, using numerous information and communication technologies, decision-making pressure, response obligation, being overwhelmed by excessive information, and message accumulation." According to Karr-Wisniewski and Lu (2010), there is a significant and negative relationship between employees' communication overload and their productivity. Research conducted in various sectors has shown that communication overload leads to a decrease in employees' job skills, makes it difficult to concentrate, and negatively impacts job performance (Delpechitre et al., 2018; McFarlane & Latorella, 2002; Sean Burns & Bossaller, 2012).

Based on these explanations and research findings, the following hypothesis has been formulated regarding the relationship between communication overload and job performance:

H1 There is a negative relationship between employees' levels of communication overload and their job performance.

Relationship between Perceived Ease of Use and Communication Overload/Job Performance

Perceived ease of use is defined as the belief that an individual can use a technology without excessive effort, and it influences individuals' preferences for personal and work-related communication tools and their intentions for online shopping (Ocak, 2023). Employees' attitudes, behaviors, and intentions towards using information and communication technologies positively affect perceived ease of use (Özer et al., 2010). In measuring personal intentions and attitudes related to the use of information and communication technologies, perceived ease of use and benefit variables have been utilized by many researchers, and it has been determined that these variables have a direct and positive impact on individuals' technology acceptance behaviors

(Legris et al., 2003; Venkatesh, 2000). According to Gefen and Straub (2000), if a transaction performed using information communication technology is part of a decision-making process related to a task, it influences individuals' technology acceptance behavior.

As employees' technology usage skills increase, it is expected that they will experience less stress related to technology usage difficulties. The perception of technology ease of use in individuals is directly proportional to their technology usage capabilities. Communication overload can lead to ambiguity in decision-making mechanisms, role conflicts, and delays in decision-making for employees (Dilekçi & Limon, 2020). Perceived ease of use is expected to increase message processing speed, thereby reducing delays in the decision-making process. Excessive information and communication load lead to social media and information fatigue in individuals (Eliyana et al., 2020; Pang & Ruan, 2023; Fu et al., 2020). Individual technological inclination is expected to reduce fatigue caused by excessive information and message overload. In the case of excessive communication load, unnecessary communication leads to work interruptions and decreased productivity (Karr-Wisniewski & Lu, 2010). Technology usage skills accelerate the process of filtering out unnecessary information for employees.

Based on this information, Hypothesis H2 has been formulated as follows:

H2 There is a negative relationship between employees' levels of communication overload and perceived ease of use

Perceptions of ease of use of information and communication technologies affect individuals' decision-making processes (Temizkan & Nart, 2021). Perceived ease of use, as a sub-dimension of digitization, is one of the factors that positively affect job performance (Uzkurt, Atan, & Develi, 2022). In a study conducted by Omar et al. (2019) among public employees, a significant and positive relationship was found between perceived ease of use and job performance. Employees with a high level of technology usage are expected to have more advanced organizational skills, resulting in higher job

performance. Based on this information, Hypothesis H3 has been formulated as follows:

H3 There is a positive relationship between employees' perceived ease of use and job performance.

Mediating Effect of Perceived Ease of Use on the Interaction of Communication Overload and Job Performance

Research has been conducted on the mediating effect of the perceived ease of use of information and communication technology among various variables. Mustapha and Obid (2015) confirmed the mediating effect of perceived ease of use on service quality and online tax system usage in their research. Similarly, research on the widespread use of e-government services by citizens has shown that ease of use plays a mediating role in shaping individual behaviors related to technology usage (Chen & Aklikokou, 2020). In the online distance education system, ease of use is one of the determinants of students' intentions to use information and communication technologies. Ease of use has a mediating effect between individuals' self-efficacy factors and their intentions to use technology (Panergayo & Aliazas, 2021). According to a study by Kabakuş & Küçükoğlu (2022), perceived ease of use was found to mediate the relationship between the trust factor and the use of mobile banking platforms. Based on this explanation and research findings, hypothesis H4 has been formulated as follows:

H4 Employees' perceived ease of use regarding the information and communication technology mediates the relationship between communication overload and job performance.

Methodology

The significance and purpose of the research

In the context of businesses, human resources, which are one of the most crucial production factors, hold strategic value due to their capabilities. Work performance serves as a significant indicator in measuring these capabilities (Dursun et al., 2020). Within this

framework, factors that influence work performance gain importance. Factors at the organizational level, such as motivation, leadership styles, organizational culture, intensive technology usage, business methods, and stress management, are variables associated with work performance (Özmutaf, 2007; Yılmaz, 2012). Among the individual factors related to work performance and communication, communication skills, communication style, and organizational communication stand out (Turunç & Turgut, 2020).

Rapid developments in information and communication technology have been influencing and altering people's communication and lifestyles as well as the ways businesses conduct their operations (Men, 2022). While these technological advancements expedite access to information and offer various conveniences in life, they also bring about unique risks. Information overload, technology addiction, and time wastage are among these risks. Communication overload, which can be described as a situation where an individual is exposed to more information and messages than they can process at a given time due to intensive technology use, can also affect employees' work performance.

The aim of this research is to examine whether employees are exposed to communication overload and the interaction between communication overload and work performance. Additionally, it will determine whether the perceived ease of use of information and communication technology plays a mediating role in the interaction between communication overload and work performance. The limited number of studies on this subject in Türkiye, coupled with the novelty and significance of demonstrating the mediating effect of perceived ease of use in the interaction between communication overload and work performance, adds to the originality and importance of this research.

Research Model

The process of collecting data from the target population to determine the cause-effect relationship between variables is called the relational screening model (Kırcaali-İftar & Tekin,

1997). In this research, the relational screening model was used in accordance with the aim to be achieved. The developed model is shown in Figure 1.

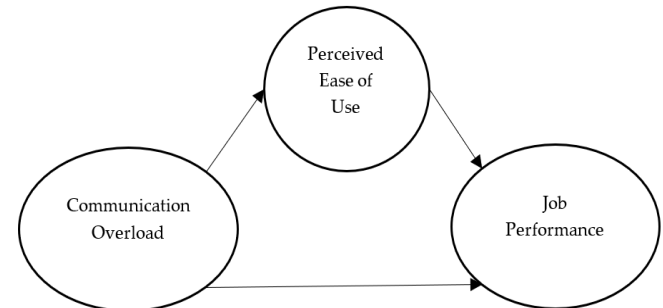


Figure 1. Research Model (Source: Developed by the author)

Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of the administrative and academic staff of Karabük University. As of the end of 2022, the university employs 1,166 academic and 481 administrative personnel (Administrative Activity Report, 2022). The university places special importance on the performance of its employees in its strategic planning activities. Data were collected using the convenience sampling method, a non-random sampling method, based on voluntariness. In determining the sample size, the table developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was utilized. According to the significance level of $\alpha=0.05$ and a $\pm 5\%$ margin of error, it is stated that the sample size should be 313 individuals. In this study, a total of 408 individuals at Karabük University were reached, and the collected data were evaluated. The findings obtained from the descriptive statistics conducted to determine the distribution of participants' general characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants

Gender	n	%
Female	147	36
Male	261	64
Age	n	%
20-30 years old	65	15,9
31-40 years old	117	28,7
41-50 years old	157	38,5
51 and over years old	69	16,9

Professional Positions/Titles	n	%
Administrative staff	123	30,1
Academic staff	78	19,1
Assistant Professor	91	22,3
Associate Professor	62	15,2
Professor	54	13,2
Years of Service	n	%
Less than 5 years	68	16,7
Between 5-10 years	67	16,4
Between 11-15 years	117	28,7
Between 16-20 years	90	22,1
More than 21 years	66	16,2
Proficiency level at Using Information and Communication Technology	n	%
Very advanced skills	33	8,1
Advanced skills	189	46,3
Intermediate level skills	166	40,7
Low level skills	18	4,4
No skills at all	2	,5
Total	408	100

Of the participants in the study, 36% are female, and 64% are male. In terms of age, it is observed that 15.9% of the employees are in the 20-30 age range, 28.7% in the 31-40 age range, 38.5% in the 41-50 age range, and 16.9% are 51 years and older. Considering the participants' professional positions/titles, 30.1% are administrative staff, 19.1% are academic staff, 22.3% are Assistant Professors, 15.2% are Associate Professors, and 13.2% are Professors. Regarding the years of service, 16.7% of the employees have worked at the university for less than 5 years, 16.4% between 5-10 years, 28.7% between 11-15 years, 22.1% between 16-20 years, and 16.2% have worked for 21 years or more at the university. When looking at the participants' levels of proficiency in using information and communication technology, it is observed that 46.3% of the employees have advanced skills, 40.7% have intermediate skills, 8.1% have very advanced skills, 4.4% have low skills, and 0.5% have no skills.

Data Collection Tools and Scales

In the research, the survey technique was used as the data collection tool. The research was carried out between July-August 2023. The first part of the questionnaire consists of five questions related to the participants' demographic characteristics. In

the second part, the "Communication Overload" scale has been adapted from the scale developed by Wisniewski and Lu (2010). In this scale, communication overload is measured with four statements. The "Job Performance" scale in the third part of the questionnaire was used by Kirkman and Rosen (1999) and Sigler and Pearson (2000), and the Turkish translation and application were performed by Çöl (2008). This scale consists of a total of 4 statements. In the fourth part of the questionnaire, there is the "Perceived Ease of Use" scale, which consists of 5 statements. This scale was developed by Dawis (1989) and the Turkish version was used by Turan (2011).

Data Collection and Analysis

SPSS 26 software package was used for data analysis. The structural validity of the scales was assessed using Factor Analysis, and their reliability was examined using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients. In the interpretation of reliability coefficients, the following intervals were considered: " $0.00 \leq \alpha < 0.40$ indicates unreliability, $0.41 \leq \alpha < 0.60$ indicates low reliability, $0.61 \leq \alpha < 0.80$ indicates moderate reliability, and $0.81 \leq \alpha < 1.00$ indicates high reliability" (Kalaycı, 2010). Subsequently, arithmetic mean values were examined to determine the levels of employees' excessive communication loads, perceived ease of use, and job performance perceptions. In interpreting arithmetic mean values, the following ranges were used: "1.00-1.80 = strongly disagree, 1.81-2.60 = disagree, 2.61-3.40 = undecided, 3.41-4.20 = agree, and 4.21-5.00 = strongly agree" (Özdamar, 2001).

The normality analysis provided skewness and kurtosis values within the range of -1.5 to 1.5 for the communication overload scale (-0.509; -0.201), perceived ease of use scale (-0.928; 1.487), and job performance scale (-0.719; 0.631), indicating that parametric tests could be used in the analyses. Pearson correlation test was used to determine the relationships between communication overload, perceived ease of use, and job performance. The level of the relationship between variables was interpreted considering the following intervals: "0.00-0.25=very weak; 0.26-0.49=weak; 0.50-

0.69=moderate; 0.70-0.89=high; 0.90-1.00=very high" (Kalaycı, 2010). Simple and multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine the mediating role of perceived ease of use in the interaction between communication overload and job performance.

Factor Analysis and Reliability Results

Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to test the structural validity of the scales used in the study. Cronbach's Alpha test was used to assess the reliability of the scales. The obtained results can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Factor analysis and reliability results of the scales

Scales	Items	Factor Load	I. Eigen value	% of Variance	α	
Communication overload(CO)	CO1	0,809	5,784	28,442	0,810	
	CO2	0,864				
	CO3	0,804				
	CO4	0,607				
Perceived Ease of Use (PEU)	PEU1	0,709	2,044	20,953	0,833	
	PEU2	0,811				
	PEU3	0,761				
	PEU4	0,766				
	PEU5	0,813				
Job Performance (JP)	JP1	0,804	1,193	19,997	0,899	
	JP2	0,845				
	JP3	0,765				
	JP4	0,799				
Cumulative % Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)				69,392	0,880	0,669
Bartlett Test of Sphericity			X ² =2916,778	0,000		

As a result of the factor analysis conducted, it is understood from the KMO (0.880) and Bartlett ($\chi^2 = 2916.778$; $p = 0.000$) values that the data obtained from a total of 408 participants regarding a total of 13 items related to the scales used in the survey demonstrate a certain structure. Since the total variance explanation rate of the scale is ≥ 0.55 , it has been determined that the data sufficiently measure the research problem (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). Although there are different values for factor loading values in the literature, the value widely accepted in social sciences is ≥ 0.35 (Büyüköztürk, 2002). In this context, it has been revealed that the factor loading values of the scale range from 0.607 to 0.864 and are above the accepted threshold. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were examined for scale reliability. In the literature, a reliability coefficient in the range of

$0.61 \leq \alpha < 0.80$ is considered quite reliable (Kalaycı, 2010). In this framework, Alpha coefficients were found to be (0.810) for the CO scale, (0.833) for the PEU scale, and (0.899) for the JP scale. The overall Alpha coefficient obtained for the scale was determined as (0.669), and it was decided that the scale is reliable (Akgül and Çevik, 2003).

Findings

In this section, the findings obtained from the analysis of the data obtained from the field study conducted for Karabük University employees are examined.

Findings regarding employees' perceptions of communication overload, perceived ease of use, and job performance

Descriptive statistics, including arithmetic means and standard deviations were examined to determine the levels of communication overload, perceived ease of use and job performance perceptions of Karabük University employees. The findings obtained are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

Variables	f	X	SD
Communication Overload	408	3,3511	,88569
Perceived Ease of Use	408	4,0784	,56805
Job Performance	408	3,9816	,70643

It can be stated that Karabük University employees perceive their communication overload at a moderate level ($X=3.35$), while their perceived ease of use ($X=4.07$) and job performance perceptions ($X=3.98$) are at a higher level.

Findings Related to Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis results can be seen in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Average, standard deviation, and correlation values for the variables of communication overload, perceived ease of use, and job performance

Variables	M	S	1	2	3
			D		
1. Communication Overload (CO)	3,35	0,885	1		
2. Perceived Ease of Use (PEU)	4,07	0,568	-0,313**	1	
3. Job Performance (JP)	3,98	0,706	-0,353**	0,726**	1

Based on the correlations presented in Table 4, it can be observed that there is a negative and weak relationship between employees' communication overload and job performance ($r = -0.353$, $p < 0.01$). Accordingly, as employees' perceptions of communication overload increase, their perceptions of job performance decrease. As a result of the correlation analysis conducted, the hypothesis "H1: There is a negative relationship between employees' levels of communication overload and their job performance." has been accepted.

The findings also indicate a negative and weak relationship between communication overload and perceived ease of use ($r = -0.313$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, as employees' perceptions of communication overload increase, their perceptions of perceived ease of use decrease. Similarly, as perceptions of ease of use of information and communication technology increase, perceptions of communication overload decrease. As a result of these findings, the hypothesis "H2: There is a negative relationship between employees' levels of communication overload and perceived ease of use" has been accepted.

The correlation findings indicate a positive and high-level relationship between perceived ease of use and job performance ($r = 0.726$, $p < 0.01$). This relationship demonstrates that as employees perceive ease of use increase, their perceptions of job performance also increase. Based on these findings, the hypothesis "H3: There is a positive relationship between employees' perceived ease of use and job performance." has been accepted.

Simple and Multiple Regression Analysis Results Conducted to Test the Mediation Effect of Perceived Ease of Use

The situation where a third variable provides the relationship between two variables is referred to as a mediation effect. In order to claim the existence of a mediation relationship between variables, there must be a significant statistical relationship between all variables. When the effect of the mediator variable is examined, if there is a decrease in the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable, it is called partial mediation effect, and if this relationship becomes statistically insignificant, it is called full mediation effect. In cases where the relationship is found to be insignificant, the Sobel test is used to statistically test this relationship by examining the z value that will be obtained (Baron and Kenny, 1986).

To test the mediation effect of perceived ease of use on the relationship between communication overload and job performance, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. The analysis results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of multiple linear regression analysis on the mediation effect of perceived ease of use in the relationship between communication overload and job performance

Dep. variable	Independent variable	B	Std. error	β	T	p	R ²	F
1-JP								
CO								
Constant		4,926	0,128	—	38,374	0,000	0,125	57,848
	CO	-0,282	0,037	-0,313	-7,600	0,000	0,000	—
2-PEU								
Constant		4,751	0,105	—	45,335	0,000	0,098	44,009
	CO	0,282	0,037	0,313	7,600	0,000	0,000	—

CO	-	0,0	-	-	0,0		
	0,2	30	0,3	6,63	00		
	01		13	4			
3-JP	CO						
	and						
	PEU						
Const	0,8	0,2	----	3,91	0,0	0,5	242,
ant	92	28	---	1	00	45	796
CO	-	0,0	-	-	0,0		
	0,1	28	0,1	3,95	00		
	11		40	8			
PEU	0,8	0,0	0,6	19,3	0,0		
	49	44	83	53	00		

According to the results of the multiple linear regression analysis, it is found that the relationships between independent and dependent variables are significant ($p=0.000$). The level of the relationship between communication overload and job performance is ($\beta=-0.353$), and when the mediation effect of perceived ease of use is controlled, this relationship decreases to ($\beta=-0.140$), and at the same time, it is statistically significant ($p=0.000$). These results indicate that perceived ease of use partially mediates the relationship between communication overload and job performance. As a result of the multiple regression analyses conducted, the hypothesis "H4: Employees' perceived ease of use regarding the information and communication technology mediates the relationship between communication overload and job performance." was accepted.

Below, in Figure 2, the mediating effect of perceived ease of use on the interaction between communication overload and job performance can be seen.

The proportion of the indirect effect in the total effect in the mediation effect of perceived ease of use has been determined as 0.604. According to this result, it can be stated that 60.4% of the effect of communication overload on job performance is attributable to the mediating variable, perceived ease of use, and there may be other mediating variables influencing this relationship.

Discussion and Conclusion

This research was conducted to determine whether perceived ease of use mediates the relationship between Karabük University employees' perceptions of communication overload and their job performance. A total of 408 university employees participated in the field study. The analyses revealed that employees' perceptions of communication overload were at a moderate level ($\bar{X}=3.35$), while their perceptions of ease of use ($\bar{X}=4.07$) and job performance ($\bar{X}=3.98$) were higher.

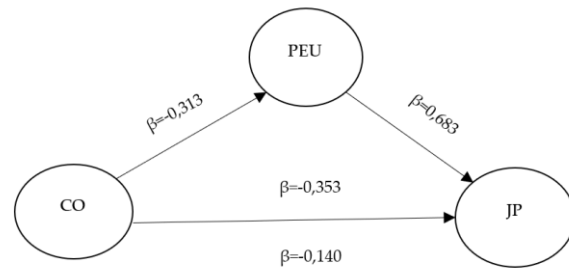


Figure 2. Mediating effect of perceived ease of use on the interaction between communication overload and job performance

This suggests that employees are proficient in using the necessary information and communication technology. However, despite this, it is also understood that they are exposed to a moderate level of communication overload. Academic or administrative staff at the university are often required to evaluate the message traffic directed to them within a certain time frame, especially during the academic year, in order to make necessary decisions and take actions. These messages can include emails, social media posts, text messages, official documents received through electronic official correspondence channels, messages conveyed through the student information systems, announcements and correspondence from the university, higher education board, or other official institutions, and, especially for academic staff, correspondence, emails, and announcements related to academic activities such as journals, conferences, and congresses. Academic staff also need significant time for their primary duty, which is teaching and research. In addition to their academic duties, academic staff members who have also taken on

administrative duties may experience even greater communication loads.

When examining the relationships between communication overload, perceived ease of use, and job performance, the following points were identified: There is a negative and weak relationship between employees' perceptions of communication overload and their job performance ($r=-0.353$, $p<0.01$). This result indicates that as employees' perceptions of communication overload increase, their perceptions of job performance decrease. The correlation between the two variables supports the hypothesis "H1: There is a negative relationship between employees' levels of communication overload and their job performance."

This result is consistent with some other research on the effects of communication overload on job performance (Dhir et al., 2018; Giri and Kumar, 2010; Delpechitre et al., 2018; McFarlane and Latorella, 2002; Sean Burns and Bossaller, 2012; Yu et al., 2018; Ou et al., 2023). However, in a study conducted among teachers by Özbek (2022), no significant relationship was found between communication overload and job performance.

communication overload occurs when individuals are exposed to information and messages beyond the level they can effectively cope with. This situation can undoubtedly lead to a decrease in job performance, even due to time constraints alone. communication overload can also lead to stress, interruptions in work, and difficulty in focusing on work, among other consequences. To reduce the effect of excessive communication load, it is necessary to either increase the individual's capacity to process a certain amount of information and messages in a given time or reduce the load of irrelevant or unimportant messages in the workflow. The first approach can be achieved through personal development, while the second approach can be realized by advanced technology suitable for efficient workflow or by developing personal discipline awareness. To make technology purpose-oriented, it is necessary to develop useful software and hardware in line with business processes.

The analyses also showed a negative and weak relationship between communication overload and perceived ease of use ($r=-0.313$, $p<0.01$). This result suggests that as employees' perceptions of the ease of using information and communication technology increase, their perceptions of communication overload decrease. The findings support the hypothesis "H2: There is a negative relationship between employees' levels of communication overload and perceived ease of use." Depending on the nature of the relationship, to reduce the effect of communication overload on employees, it may be necessary to improve the technological capabilities used for effective job performance. In addition, it can be said that the technology used should be easy to learn, apply, and user-friendly.

According to the research findings, there is a positive and strong relationship between perceived ease of use and job performance ($r=0.726$, $p<0.01$). This result indicates that as employees' perceptions of ease of use increase, their perceptions of job performance also increase. These findings support the hypothesis "H3: There is a positive relationship between employees' perceived ease of use and job performance." The result obtained in this research is similar to some other research findings in this field. Uz Kurt, Atan, and Develi (2022) found a significant and positive relationship between perceived ease of use as a sub-dimension of digitalization and job performance in their study. Akça and Özer (2012) determined that there is a significant and positive relationship between perceived ease of use in enterprise resource planning applications and organizational performance. Similarly, regarding the use of social media applications, a significant and positive relationship was found between perceived ease of use and job performance (Omar et al., 2019; Iswanto et al., 2021).

Perceived ease of use refers to the feelings and thoughts that individuals develop based on how easily a technology can be used by the user. A high perception of ease of use indicates that the technology used is clear, understandable, and easy to use. It also suggests that the user has a high level of technological capability. Based on the results, the relationship between perceived ease of use and

job performance is high, and this finding is remarkable. Therefore, improving the perception of ease of use of technology should be a priority in efforts to enhance job performance in jobs where information and communication technology is used in work processes. To increase the perceived ease of use of employees concerning a technology, it may be necessary to focus on two different areas. The first area is related to the user-friendly design of the technology, which is purely a technical matter. The second area involves training activities aimed at increasing employees' knowledge and skills related to technology use. Through these training activities, employees' capacities are increased, allowing them to more easily handle excessive communication loads and improve their job performance.

The results of multiple linear regression analysis indicate that perceived ease of use partially mediates the relationship between communication overload and job performance. This result supports the hypothesis "H4: Employees' perceived ease of use regarding the information and communication technology mediates the relationship between communication overload and job performance." The proportion of the indirect effect in the total effect in the mediation effect of perceived ease of use has been determined as 0.604. This result indicates that the mediating effect of perceived ease of use is highly significant. The result also suggests that there may be other mediating variables influencing this relationship. In research examining whether perceived ease of use mediates the relationship between various variables, it has been found that this variable has a mediating effect in the relationships between service quality and online tax system usage (Mustapha and Obid, 2015), technology use and shaping individual behaviors (Chen and Aklkokou, 2020), individuals' self-efficacy factors and technology usage intentions (Panergayo & Aliazas, 2021), and trust and mobile banking usage (Kabakuş and Küçüköğlü, 2022).

In this research, it has been observed that perceived ease of use, acting as an intermediary, reduces the direct impact of communication overload on job performance. In other words, perceived ease of use serves as a buffer to mitigate the negative effects of employees' communication

overload on job performance. Based on the findings, employees' high technological proficiency enables them to more easily shoulder the burden of communication overload and cope with stress resulting from it.

Based on the results obtained in the research, the following recommendations can be made regarding organizational development activities aimed at preventing performance declines due to communication overload in organizations:

Designing in-service training activities aimed at enhancing employees' information and communication technology capabilities,

Enhancing the ease of use and user-friendliness of the information and communication technology used in job requirements,

Implementing technical adjustments to consolidate different and numerous communication channels into a common and interactive platform,

Increasing employees' awareness and consciousness regarding personal use of social media applications during work hours to prevent time wastage,

Developing systems that can filter out irrelevant and unnecessary information and communication data by carefully reviewing business processes.

Limitations

One of the most significant limitations of the research is that the data used in the study is limited to Karabük University personnel. Still results can be generalized at least for state universities considering the magnitude of staff and student numbers in Karabük University. While technology makes our lives easier, it can also create unique problems. Communication overload has recently emerged as one of these issues. There are still relatively limited research about communication overload and job performance in literature.

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