

*The Mediating Role of Self-Esteem in the Effect of Job Insecurity Perceptions on Social Loafing Behavior**

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Abstract

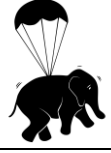
This study aims to examine the relationship between job insecurity perception, which has become more evident in today's complex and uncertain business world, and social loafing behavior, focusing specifically on the mediating role of self-esteem. As no previous study in the literature has examined self-esteem as a mediating variable between job insecurity perception and social loafing behavior, the significance of this study becomes evident, marking its originality. The study utilized survey data collected from 248 white-collar employees working in Istanbul. The study's results reveal that job insecurity perception positively influences social loafing behavior. Additionally, self-esteem negatively impacts social loafing behavior and partially mediates the relationship between job insecurity perception and social loafing. The study also reveals whether the variables differ significantly according to demographic data, and the results are discussed. Based on these findings, it is recommended that businesses foster a work environment that emphasizes job security, reduces workplace stress, seeks employee input, and prioritizes candidates with high self-esteem during recruitment.

Keywords: perception of job insecurity, self-esteem, social loafing behavior

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İş Güvencesizliği Algısının Sosyal Kaytarma Davranışı Üzerindeki Etkisinde Benlik Saygısının Aracılık Rolü

Öz

Bu çalışma, karmaşık ve belirsiz iş dünyasında günümüzde daha da belirgin hale gelen iş güvencesizliği algısı ile sosyal kaytarma davranışı arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu ilişkide ise benlik saygısının aracılık rolü araştırılmıştır. Literatürde, iş güvencesizliği algısı ile sosyal kaytarma davranışı arasındaki ilişkide benlik saygısı değişkenini aracı değişken olarak kullanan bir çalışmaya rastlanmadığı için bu çalışmanın önemi ortaya çıkmakta ve çalışma bu açıdan özgün bir çalışma olmaktadır. Araştırmada, İstanbul'da çalışmakta olan 248 beyaz yakalı çalışandan anket yöntemiyle alınan veriler kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçlarına göre iş güvencesizliği algısının sosyal kaytarma davranışı üzerinde pozitif bir etkisi bulunmuştur. Bulgulara göre benlik saygısı, sosyal kaytarma davranışını negatif yönde etkilemektedir. Araştırmada aynı zamanda benlik saygısının, iş güvencesizliği algısının sosyal kaytarma davranışı üzerindeki etkisinde kısmen aracı rolü oynadığı bulunmuştur. Ayrıca, değişkenlerin demografik verilere göre anlamlı şekilde farklılaşıp farklılaşmadığı ortaya konulmuş ve sonuçlar tartışılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre işletmelerin yönetimlerini iş güvencesini ön planda tutan bir iş ortamı oluşturmaları, iş stresini minimuma indirmeleri, çalışanların fikirlerini almaları ve işe alım süreçlerinde benlik saygısı yüksek bireyleri tespit ederek öncelik vermeleri tavsiye edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: iş güvencesizliği algısı, benlik saygısı, sosyal kaytarma davranışı



1. INTRODUCTION

In a turbulent environment, many employees in the world feel insecure about their jobs. Political, technological, economic, and other types of changes have increased the feeling of job insecurity in employees (Shoss, 2017). Also in a technological world, social loafing is common considering that “technology-supported teams opened a whole new set of problems with regards to social loafing” (Simms and Nichols, 2014). In this context, social loafing has been the topic of many studies including technology-oriented organizations (e.g. Ghadirinejadian et al., 2024). The relationship of the concept with “traditional organizational concepts” like organizational justice (e.g. Chen et al., 2024) and job performance (e.g. Alghamdi et al., 2024) has also been studied. Although an old phenomenon originally (also called the Ringelmann Effect which was brought forward in 1913 – Piezon and Donaldson, 2005), along with the technological advances of recent years, changing work environment with technology, and new perspectives to social loafing like considering it as a productive and positive phenomenon (e.g. Bluhm, 2009), social loafing remains an interesting research topic with its new dimensions.

It was detected that the literature did not properly explain how people with high levels of self-esteem and low levels of self-esteem exhibit social loafing behaviors in an environment with job insecurity. The relationships between job insecurity and social loafing (e.g. Akgündüz and Eryılmaz, 2018), self-esteem and social loafing (e.g. Rahman et al., 2014), and job insecurity and self-esteem (e.g. Kinnunen et al., 2003) have been studied. However, the mediating role of self-esteem in the relationship between job insecurity and social loafing is the gap in the literature and this study aims to prove that role. The study also aims to prove that people with high self-esteem tend to exhibit less social loafing behaviors and people with low self-esteem tend to exhibit less social loafing behaviors. Self-esteem is about how much individuals like themselves and believe they are skilled (Brown, 1998). Either accurate or inaccurate (Ziegler-Hill, 2013), high self-esteem is a “highly favorable view of the self”, whereas low self-esteem is “the evaluations of the self that are either uncertain or outright negative” (Campbell et al., 1996). This study assumes that if people like themselves and believe that they are competent, they do not feel the need to exhibit social loafing behaviors not to harm their reputation and also due to their self-respect. The conservation of resources theory (COR) denotes that people are eager to protect their current resources and try to achieve new resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014). According to Yıldız and Elibol (2020), when people are under stress about their resources, they they exhibit even more behaviors of protecting existing resources and gaining new ones. It is possible to attribute social loafing to the conservation of resources theory because social loafing can be a way for the person to preserve their time and energy resources in their tasks. Thus, employees can have the necessary energy to complete future tasks. In other words, employees can exhibit social loafing behaviors to sustain their performance for a long time (Orhan, 2022). Thus, it is hypothesized that in an environment with job insecurity, people with high levels of self-esteem are likely to exhibit less social loafing behaviors than people with low self-esteem. Businesses need to understand this relationship because once they understand it, businesses can place more emphasis on measuring self-esteem and hiring people



with high self-esteem, creating an environment with minimum job insecurity perceptions, and establishing control mechanisms to control and avoid social loafing.

In addition to the original research model, the study can further contribute to the literature. The question regarding social loafing “is the problem coordination and not motivation?” has been asked in the literature by Simms and Nichols (2014). This study hypothesizes a reverse relationship between high self-esteem and social loafing. Considering that self-esteem is a “highly favorable view of the self” (Campbell et al., 1996) and this is the essence of a person’s motivation about himself/herself, this study aims to prove that social loafing is more of a coordination problem than motivation. This conclusion will contribute to a clear answer to the question. Furthermore, high self-esteem is a positive personal issue and both job insecurity and social loafing are mostly negative concepts. Thus, examining a “positive phenomenon in a dominantly negative work environment” may bring a unique approach to the literature.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Job Insecurity Perceptions

Job insecurity is a job-related stressor that adversely affects the individual (Debus et al., 2014). It also negatively affects job performance (Blackmore and Kuntz, 2011). Perceived job insecurity of employees may stem from various factors such as economic recession, budget cuts, new technologies, and expected reorganization. Job insecurity is the relevant perception and feeling of employees caused by those kinds of factors and the fear and anxiety they have about losing their jobs. These people are concerned about the future permanence of their jobs (van Vuuren and Klandermans, 1990). De Witte (2005), describes perceived job insecurity as a phenomenon of “perceived threat of job loss and the worries related to that threat”. De Witte (2005) also mentions that a common description of job insecurity in the field can be expressed as “the concern regarding the future continuity of the current job”.

Job insecurity can arise due to today's modern world and VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous). Increasing demands, business complexity, aging workforce, new technologies are having a major impact on the business world (Blackmore and Kuntz, 2011). In this uncertain environment, organizations want to be profitable in the long run and reduce their costs to adapt to the environment (Sverke et al., 2006). Employees know that a common way to reduce costs is to lay people off. Therefore, this may create a perception of job insecurity among employees. In addition, downsizing strategies in businesses (Sverke et al., 2006), economic crises, pandemics, etc. can lead to layoffs (Johnstone, 2023). In times of recession, companies are mainly under pressure to reduce labor costs, and downsizing and mass layoffs are the two most commonly used methods. It is estimated that more than 60 million people lost their jobs after the 2008 global crisis (ILO, 2014, p.22). In 2020, the year the COVID-19 pandemic began, 33 million people lost their jobs and 81 million people withdrew from the labor market and became "inactive" (ILO, 2020, p.7). Based on these facts, it is possible to say that during and after



economic, health or other crises, the perception of job insecurity increases and creates anxiety among workers.

The changing work environment due to technological change and advances also can be another source of an insecure environment because employees believe that machines or robots will replace them in workplaces. According to popular wisdom, some jobs will disappear shortly. Technological advances and continuous innovation pose threats as well as give opportunities to employees. For some employees, rapid technological changes may create a perception of job insecurity (Nam, 2019). Although these issues are not near future issues for most employees, they may feel job insecurity because not all types of perceptions are based on current concerns. They may also be based on future concerns.

The distinction between qualitative and quantitative job insecurity was introduced by Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984). The researchers make the distinction from the starting point of whether the change of the individual's employment status is about the job itself or loss of job features. In the literature, some studies intend to measure the qualitative and quantitative aspects of job insecurity (ex. Lastad et al., 2015; Fischmann et al., 2021; Blotenberg and Richter, 2020), reveal the associations between the two dimensions (ex. De Witte et al., 2010; Callea et al., 2019), and reveal the relationship of job insecurity with job performance (ex. Fischmann, et al., 2018). Job insecurity feeling about the job itself states quantitative job insecurity, whereas the job insecurity feeling about the features of the job represents qualitative job insecurity (De Witte et al., 2015). As the qualitative job insecurity elements, Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) suggest that loss of valued job features is an important but usually ignored feature of job insecurity. Qualitative job insecurity is considered a lighter phenomenon than quantitative job insecurity because the threat of job loss is less severe (Hellgren et al., 1999). Since change can be fast and deep in workplaces in an ever-changing world, individuals can find their jobs with different features and this can make them feel both insecure and demoralized. Thus, qualitative job insecurity is considered a relevant concept in today's ever-changing world (Lee et al., 2018).

Although qualitative job insecurity is considered to have a milder effect on the individual compared to quantitative job insecurity, qualitative job insecurity can initiate many harmful effects on employee attitudes and behaviors (Stynen et al., 2015). Therefore, both job insecurity types pose different risks to the well-being of organizations and employees (Shoss, 2017). Urbanaviciute et al. (2021) suggest that whenever an individual experiences quantitative job insecurity, they are likely to experience qualitative job insecurity as well because if the person feels insecure about losing their job, this means that they will also lose all valued features of their job. Another question that comes to mind is which job insecurity type initiates the other. Chirumbolo et al. (2017) found that quantitative job insecurity affects employee outcomes through qualitative job insecurity. In other words, qualitative job insecurity explains or mediates the harmful effects of quantitative job insecurity.



2.2. Social Loafing Behavior

Social loafing can be defined as when individuals working in a group produce less output than their individual output (Simms and Nichols, 2014). The concept is also called ‘free-riding’ and it can be observed when an individual does less than the average of others in a group and takes advantage of group work (Albanese and Van Fleet, 1985). The outlet of the concept was the ‘Ringelmann Effect’ which was described by the German researcher Ringelmann. Ringelmann found the effect in a rope-pulling experiment where some individuals’ efforts decreased as the number of men increased (Piezon and Donaldson, 2005). Since social loafing can also be seen in cognitive activities (Petty et al., 1977), it has become more of an issue in recent years due to a more complex and turbulent business life. Therefore, social loafing can be a serious threat to an organization’s productivity.

According to Latané, Williams, and Harkins (1979), the causes of social loafing are attribution and equality, setting goals that do not reach the maximum, and decreasing the relationship between input and outcome. In the case of attribution and equality, the individual believes that other individuals in the group are less motivated or have a lower skill level than himself, and in this case, social loafing occurs. In the case of setting a goal below the maximum, the individual thinks about how to achieve the set goals and standards with minimum effort and shows social loafing behavior because he thinks that others will help him with the work. At this point, researchers, quoting Steiner (as cited in Latané et al., 1979), defined maximizing a task and making the task optimum. Task maximizing measures success by how much and how quickly the task is done. Optimizing a task is an approach where success is measured by how close an individual or group comes to a predetermined “best” or correct outcome. Therefore, in group studies, participants may think that if they optimize tasks rather than maximize them, then the whole group will achieve the output more easily and may exhibit social loafing behavior. In the decreasing relationship between input and result, since the output is common, the individual may think that his own output cannot be measured fairly even if he works hard, and may want to get lost in the crowd and shirk (Latané et al., 1979). After this basic research, which reveals the reasons for social loafing in detail, different studies have addressed different aspects and causes of social loafing.

According to Latané et al. (1979), group interaction, task commitment, and distinctiveness are the inhibiting factors of social loafing. Accordingly, the solidarity of the group creates internal pressures, the interaction of the group creates the environment for applying these pressures, and distinguishable individual effort applies these pressures. This complex group structure leads to lower social loafing.

Jackson and Williams (1985) stated that social loafing may not always be a negative concept and that it can serve as a good mechanism for human psychology in the sense that it is a factor that reduces stress when working in a group (Jackson and Williams 1985; as cited in Simms and Nichols, 2014). Another researcher who examined the consequences of social loafing as a



positive concept was Bluhm (2009). According to Bluhm, individuals exhibiting social loafing behavior experience less stress and tension because they use fewer resources per unit of time. In this way, individuals can use their resources more economically in long-term work and projects. In this context, Bluhm predicted that the individual's future performance would also increase.

There are reasons for the effect of job insecurity on social loafing. When employees do not feel themselves as individuals and the job they do is not important to the organization, they may feel job insecurity. Other reasons for job insecurity are being excluded from decision-making processes and ignoring individual requests about the work (Akgündüz and Eryılmaz, 2018). In other words, when individuals feel 'out of the circulation of people and decisions', they feel insecure about their jobs. Social loafing, on the other hand, occurs when employees are not rewarded for their individual contributions, their tasks are not meaningful and appealing to them, and tasks are quite distinct so they are very difficult to follow for the employee (Doğan, et al., 2012). Thus, when employees feel that 'they and their jobs are meaningless, hard to follow with no rewards', they tend to display social loafing behaviors. When all these conditions come together, job insecurity is assumed to affect social loafing.

2.3. Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is a topic that has a rich literature in the field of psychology. Self-esteem started gaining popularity in the 1970s due to socioeconomic issues including unemployment, drug addiction, violence, and academic failure. Some researchers argue that self-esteem has a remarkable effect on life whereas others think that it has a limited value. Self-esteem is generally considered to be "the evaluative aspect of self-knowledge that reflects the extent to which people like themselves and believe they are competent". Self-esteem may or may not be based on reality, therefore, it is a matter of perception of the individual rather than the objective assessment of them (Ziegler-Hill, 2013). Bailey (2003) defines self-esteem as "a simplistic term for varied and complex mental states pertaining to how one views oneself". In other words, self-esteem is "the negative and positive attitude that individuals have of themselves" (Rosenberg, 1979). Self-esteem is a very important psychological element and it is among others to shape human psychology.

Self-esteem has both motivational and cognitive aspects (Kernis, 2003). Individuals with a high level of self-esteem try to make their self-esteem and feelings of self-worth higher, whereas individuals with low self-esteem try to preserve their self-worth and self-esteem. Individuals with low levels of self-esteem tend to use protective strategies and defensive behaviors to conceal their low self-esteem. Also, individuals generally tend to report high self-esteem (Ziegler-Hill, 2013). It is possible to indicate that when the self-esteem of an individual is low, it is a challenge for the individual to make it high.

People with high self-esteem seem quite resilient to social rejection and feel positive about their self-esteem because they focus on the positive side of their social environment, i.e. social



acceptance. Thus, concerning self-esteem, individuals' perceptions about social acceptance and social rejection are important. Research reveals that individuals mostly state a higher self-esteem when they experience social acceptance, whereas they do not indicate a lower self-esteem when they experience social rejection (Blackhart et al., 2009). Thus, it is possible to indicate a relationship between job insecurity and self-esteem because job insecurity generally contains social rejection in the workplace for an individual. Kinnunen et al. (2003) found a two-way relationship between job insecurity and low self-esteem. As the dimension of personality that is based primarily on social comparison (Kinnunen et al., 2003), people with low self-esteem tend to compare themselves with other employees in the workplace and may feel job insecurity because they may perceive that others' positions are stronger and theirs are weaker. The opposite can also be true when an employee feels job insecurity, i.e. an employee can have lower self-esteem as their feeling of job insecurity increases. Research about the relationship between self-esteem and social loafing reveals that high self-esteem has a negative relationship with social loafing (Rahman et al., 2014). A person with high self-esteem is ready to participate in group work and social life in general. That person also can balance organizational demands, social demands, and personal desires (Garrety et al., 2003). If an employee who receives sufficient respect and recognition, in other words, intrinsic rewards in a group, combines this with their high self-esteem then they tend to put more effort, contribute more to the goals of the group, and thus create more value (Tyler and Smith, 1999). Therefore, an individual with low self-esteem can be assumed to avoid maximum output in group work and likely to exhibit social loafing behavior.

3. RESEARCH METHOD AND HYPOTHESES

The study aims to reveal the effect of job insecurity on social loafing. It also aims to exhibit the mediating effect of self-esteem in that relationship. Job insecurity can cause social loafing and some studies support the assumption (ex. Akgündüz and Eryılmaz, 2018; Alyahya et al., 2021; Primadi and Sawitri, 2023). Akgündüz and Eryılmaz (2018) classified job insecurity as affective and cognitive job insecurity. Their study revealed that affective job insecurity has a strong direct effect on social loafing. Regarding cognitive job insecurity, the researchers found an indirect relationship through turnover intention. Alyahya et al. (2021) also found a direct relationship between job insecurity and social loafing. Primadi and Sawitri (2023) found an indirect relationship between job insecurity (both affective and cognitive) and social loafing. These studies verify the relationship between job insecurity and social loafing. When employees perceive job insecurity, their hope about their future in their company or institution diminishes and their tendency of loafing may increase. Not all employees perceiving job insecurity display social loafing behaviors, therefore, this study aims to test whether the majority of employees exhibit such behaviors or not. Moreover, apart from defining the relationships between variables, the study also aims to determine whether self-esteem is mediating in the effect of employees' perceptions of job insecurity on social loafing behaviors.



Individuals protect and try to gain new resources even more when they are under stress due to the threat of losing their resources (Yıldız and Elibol, 2020). The conservation of resources theory indicates that humans always try to protect their existing resources and try to gain new resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014). The theory can be associated with social loafing because when time and energy resources are protected through social loafing, employees can have the energy necessary to perform other tasks. Thus, resources preserved through social loafing in one task can translate into better performance in the next task. The theory provides a clear sight of the antecedents of social loafing. The stress of losing their resources creates stress on individuals and a stressful environment for them and individuals working in stressful environments tend to display social loafing behaviors (Ünaldı Baydın et al., 2020).

Based on the findings above, the first hypothesis was created.

H₁: Employees' perceptions of job insecurity positively affect their social loafing behaviors.

Self-esteem is a subjective view of oneself. Individuals with low self-esteem tend to have protective manners and behaviors (Ziegler-Hill, 2013). By doing so, they aim to hide their low self-esteem. This hiding attitude is thought to encourage individuals to display social loafing behaviors whenever they get a chance. The hypothesis below was created based on that point.

H₂: Self-esteem negatively affects social loafing behavior.

In the relevant literature, it is a common finding that job insecurity perception has an effect on social loafing behaviors (for ex. Akgündüz and Eryılmaz, 2018; Alyahya et al., 2021; Primadi and Sawitri, 2023). Self-esteem is a strong tool of self-knowledge and therefore, self-esteem is considered to be a factor that can diminish the perception of job insecurity. As job insecurity perception decreases, with the help of high self-esteem, social loafing is thought to also decrease and vice versa. The thought encouraged the authors develop the following hypothesis.

H₃: Self-esteem has a mediating role in the effect of job insecurity perception on social loafing behavior.

Another hypothesis of the study is as follows.

H₄: Job insecurity, social shirking and self-esteem differ significantly according to demographic characteristics.

3.1. Aim and Significance of the Study

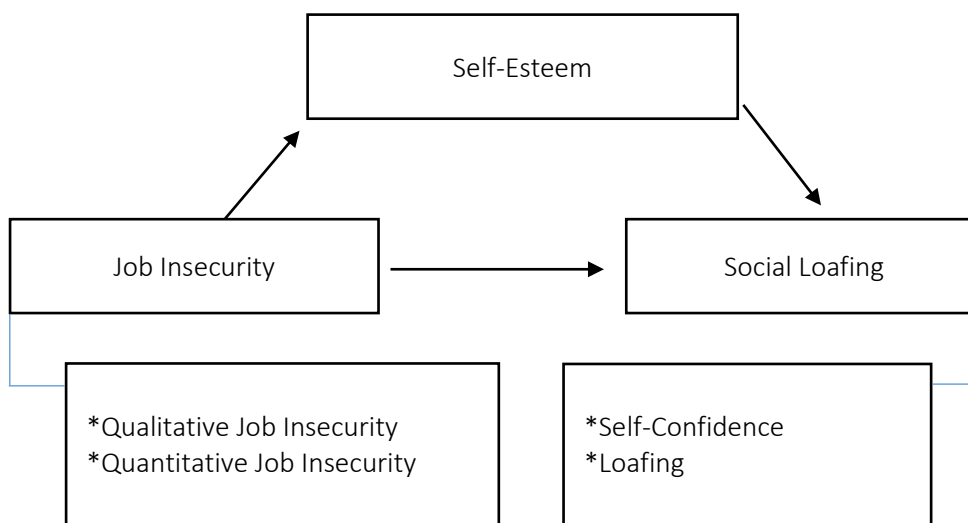
The study aims to determine whether employees' perceptions of job insecurity affect their social loafing behaviors and the mediating role of self-esteem in this effect. Another aim of the study is to determine whether the averages of the variables differ according to demographic characteristics.



As a result of the literature review, studies on job insecurity and social loafing were found, but no studies were found in which self-esteem was considered as a mediating variable. Also, studies examined in the relevant literature were mostly conducted with samples consisting of hotel or restaurant employees whereas the sample of this study is composed of white-collar employees working in companies. These factors constitute the importance and unique value of the study and thus, the study is thought to contribute to the relevant literature on job insecurity, self-esteem and social loafing.

In light of the literature and the above information, the model of the research is as follows.

Figure 1. The research model



3.2. Population and Sample

The population of the study consists of white-collar employees working in the service sector in Istanbul. The purpose of including white-collar employees in the study is that white-collar employees may show more social loafing behavior due to their perception of job insecurity because white-collar employees are more employable and will be able to find a job more easily when they look for a job due to their perception of job insecurity (Rothwell and Arnold, 2007). However, unlike white-collar employees, blue-collar employees can show higher performance because they do not want to lose their jobs even if they perceive job insecurity (Fugate et al., 2004). In this context, it is thought that blue-collar employees will show less social loafing behavior than white-collar employees, both due to the nature of the job they do and because they do not want to lose their jobs. For this reason, in the study, 248 white-collar people were reached by using social media tools and a convenience sampling method. In the literature, researchers stated that a sample size between 100-200 people is sufficient (Akgül and Çevik, 2015), and a sample between 200-300 is sufficient for an accurate analysis (Gaur and Gaur, 2009). Similarly, Kline (1994) and Siddiqui (2013) stated that a sample size of 200 is sufficient for analysis. In this context, it is possible to indicate that the 248 samples obtained in the research are sufficient for the analysis.



The findings of the study revealed that 127 of the participants were women (51.2%) and 121 (48.8%) were men. 87 (35.1%) of the participants were married and 161 (64.9%) were single. 138 of them (55.6%) were in the 20-30 age group, 55 (22.2%) were in the 30-40 age group, and 55 were in the 40 and over age group (22.2%). 55 (22.2%) of the participants were high school graduates, 30 (12.1%) had an associate degree, 111 (44.8%) had a bachelor's degree, and 52 (21%) had a postgraduate degree.

The data were collected by the Ethics Committee of ISTANBUL GELİŞİM UNIVERSITY RECTORSHIP, at its meeting dated 19.04.2024, numbered 2024-05 and with the approval of the ethics committee numbered 2024-07-36.

Table 1. Demographic findings of the study

Variables	Frequency	%
Gender		
Female	127	51,2
Male	121	48,8
Marital Status		
Married	87	35,1
Single	161	64,9
Age		
Between 20 and 30	138	55,6
Between 30 and 40	55	22,2
40 and over	55	22,2
Education		
High School	55	22,2
Associate Degree	30	12,1
Bachelor's Degree	111	44,8
Master's Degree	52	21,0
Total	248	100,0

3.3. Data Collection Tools and Analysis

Data for the study were collected by the survey method. The first part of the survey form contains questions about the demographic characteristics of the participants, and the second part about the research variables. The first scale is the job insecurity scale designed by Hellgren, Sverke, and Isaksson (1999), Ashford, Lee and Bobko (1989), and De Witte (1999) and translated into Turkish by Şeker (2011). The scale has 2 dimensions and 9 items. The scale consists of qualitative and quantitative job insecurity dimensions. The second scale is a one-dimensional social loafing scale consisting of 13 items to measure employees' social loafing behaviors (Liden et al., 2004). The last scale is the self-esteem scale developed by Rosenberg (1965) with 12 subcategories and 63 items. The first 10 items of the scale adapted to the Turkish language by Çuhadaroğlu (1986) measure self-esteem. In this study, 10 statements of the scale



measuring self-esteem were used. The scales in the study are 5-point Likert-type scales: “1. Strongly Disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly Agree.”

3.3.1. Data Analysis Process

The data were analyzed with SPSS 22 software. Normality analyses were performed to determine the normal distribution of the data and parametric tests were used since the data showed normal distribution. Factor analyses and reliability analyses were conducted for the scales used in the study. In addition, descriptive statistics, Pearson Correlation and regression analyses were used in the study. Finally, the mediation effect was evaluated with Process Macro 3.5 to determine the mediating variable effect. To determine the differences, t-test and One-Way Anova analyses were performed.

4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

In this section, the findings of the study are explained and interpreted in detail.

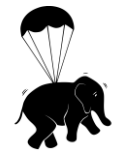
4.1. Common Method Analysis of Variance

Differences in the structures of measurement tools and obtaining the sample group from a single group may cause method problems (Malhotra et al., 2006). One of these problems is common method variance. To determine whether there was a common variance problem, a single-factor test recommended by Harman was performed. In this test, all of the scales were included in the factor analysis and the analysis was carried out without rotation. As a result of the single-factor test, a single factor should not be obtained and the first of the factors should not explain the majority of the variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). As a result of the analysis, 6 factors were obtained and the 1st Dimension explained 27.41% of the variance. 2nd Factor explains 17.15% of the variance, 3rd Factor explains 7.85%, 4th Factor explains 6.59%, 5th Factor explains 4.50%, and 6th Factor explains 4.03% of it. The findings obtained as a result of the single-factor test show that there is no common variance problem in the study.

4.2. Factor and Reliability Analyses

Looking at the averages of the scales in Table 2, it is seen that job insecurity is close to the average with 2.36, social shirking is low with 2.17 and self-esteem is above the average with 3.96. Skewness and Kurtosis analyses were used to determine the normal distribution of the data in the study. Skewness and Kurtosis values are stated by Hair, Hult, Ringle and Sarstedt (2014) to be in the value range of -1 +1 and according to Bollen (1989), skewness values should be in the range of ± 2 and kurtosis values should be in the range of ± 7 . The results show that the data are normally distributed and are suitable for further analysis.

As a result of factor analysis; As a result of this analysis, the KMO value of the self-esteem scale was found to be 0.855 and the Bartlett Sphericity test χ^2 value of the scale was 1432.683 (df=45 p<0.001), the KMO value of the job insecurity scale was found to be 0.745 and the



Bartlett Sphericity test χ^2 value of the scale was 919.416 (df=36 $p < 0.001$), and the KMO value of the social loafing scale was found to be 0.907 and the Bartlett Sphericity test χ^2 value was 2584.013 (df = 105, $p < .001$). These values are considered ‘good’ in social sciences (Sipahi et al., 2008, p.80). The findings show that the sample size is sufficient for factor analysis.

As a result of the factor analysis, self-esteem was found to have 2 factors and factor loadings ranged between 0.740 and 0.875. Job insecurity scale was found to have 2 factors and factor loadings ranged between 0.642 and 0.867. Finally, the social shirking scale was also obtained with 2 factors and factor loadings ranged between 0.601 and 0.871. Factor loading values of 0.60 and above are considered as high, and between 0.30 and 0.59 are considered as medium (Büyüköztürk, 2002).

Cronbach Alpha values are expected to be above 0.60 (Kalaycı, 2009, p.405), composite reliability (CR) coefficients are expected to be 0.70 and greater than the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) value, and AVE values are expected to be above 0.50 for convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2010; Hair et al., 2022). Cronbach Alpha values of the scales vary between 0.709 and 0.820. In social sciences, these figures are considered quite reliable. CR values are above 0.70 and convergence reliability is achieved. AVE values are above 0.50 and convergent validity is achieved.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

	Descriptive Statistics								
	N	Mean		Std. Deviation Statistic	Variance Statistic	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error			Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Job Insecurity	248	2,36	0,04	0,64	0,41	-0,06	0,15	-0,32	0,31
Quantitative	248	2,04	0,06	0,87	0,76	1,05	0,15	1,23	0,31
Qualitative	248	2,62	0,06	0,88	0,77	0,26	0,15	-0,13	0,31
Self-Esteem	248	3,96	0,04	0,64	0,41	-0,35	0,15	-0,41	0,31
Positive	247	4,13	0,05	0,75	0,56	-1,54	0,15	3,61	0,31
Negative	248	3,79	0,05	0,83	0,69	-0,57	0,15	-0,27	0,31
Social Loafing	248	2,17	0,04	0,70	0,49	0,23	0,15	-1,05	0,31
Self-Confidence	248	2,02	0,05	0,76	0,58	1,17	0,15	2,17	0,31
Loafing	248	2,27	0,06	0,96	0,93	0,78	0,15	0,11	0,31

**Table 3.** Social loafing scale factor analysis

Scales	Items	Factor Loads	Eigenvalue	Variance Extracted %	Cronbach Alpha (α)	AVE	CR
Self-Esteem					0,736		
Positive	1	0.726	4.366	43.66	0.67	0.92	
	2	0.856					
	3	0.875					
	4	0.784					
	5	0.856					
	6	0.840					
Negative	7	0.740	2.581	25.8	0.68	0.89	
	8	0.863					
	9	0.875					
	10	0.842					
Job Insecurity					0,709		
Quantitative	1	0.836	3.053	33.91	0.66	0.88	
	2	0.742					
	3	0.823					
	4	0.867					
Qualitative	5	0.642	2.638	29.3	0.59	0.88	
	6	0.815					
	7	0.858					
	8	0.828					
	9	0.704					
Social Loafing					0,82		
Self-Confidence	1	0.721	6.189	41.26	0.66	0.92	
	2	0.779					
	3	0.865					
	4	0.857					
	5	0.853					
	6	0.817					
Loafing	7	0.678	3.733	24.86	0.63	0.94	
	8	0.601					
	9	0.841					
	10	0.831					
	11	0.837					
	12	0.871					
	13	0.849					
	14	0.809					
	15	0.833					

4.3. Findings Regarding Correlation Analysis

The study tested the relationships between participants' perceptions of job insecurity, social loafing behaviors, and self-esteem with Pearson Correlation Analysis. The correlation analysis revealed that job insecurity has a positive correlation of 0.405 with social loafing and a negative correlation of -0.486 with self-esteem ($p < 0.01$). A strong negative relationship was determined



between social loafing and self-esteem with a value of -0.603. There were no significant relationships between qualitative job insecurity and self-confidence, loafing, and positive self-esteem ($p>0.05$). A significant relationship was found between quantitative job insecurity and social loafing at the level of 0.311 and self-esteem at the level of -0.375 ($p<0.01$).

Table 4. Correlation analysis of job insecurity perception, social loafing and self-esteem

	Correlations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Job Insecurity	1								
2	Quantitative	.648**	1							
3	Qualitative	.795**	0.05	1						
4	Social Loafing	.405**	.311**	.283**	1					
5	Self-Confidence	.425**	0.12	.461**	.575**	1				
6	Loafing	.265**	.312**	0.10	.903**	.167**	1			
7	Self-Esteem	-.486**	-.375**	-.338**	-.603**	-.547**	-.439**	1		
8	Positive	-.333**	-0.08	-.373**	-.421**	-.623**	-.180**	.792**	1	
9	Negative	-.451**	-.509**	-.186**	-.555**	-.286**	-.518**	.834**	.323**	1

p**0.01 p* 0.05

4.4. Regression Analysis

Regression analyses were performed using the bootstrap method and the resampling 5000 option. According to the data obtained as a result of the first regression analysis, job insecurity has a positive effect on social loafing ($B= 0.65, p=0.00<0.01$) and a negative effect on self-esteem ($B= 0.32, p= 0.00< 0.01$) and the effects are statistically significant. In this context, the study concluded that a 1-unit increase in the perception of job insecurity would lead to a 0.50-unit increase in social loafing and a 0.36-unit decrease in self-esteem. The R^2 value obtained shows that 24% of the change in social loafing and 13% of the change in self-esteem can be explained by job insecurity.

Table 5. Regression analysis on the impact of job insecurity on self-esteem

	Variables	B	β	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	VIF	Durbin Watson
Social Loafing F=73,6 p=0,00 $R^2 =0,24$	Constant	0.93		3.90	0.00	0.46	1.40	1.00	1.80
	Job Insecurity	0.65	0.50	8.58	0.00	0.52	0.80		
Self-Esteem F= 37,93 p=0,00 $R^2 = 0,13$	Constant	2.53		17.10	0.00	2.24	2.82	1.00	1.75
	Job Insecurity	0.32	-0.365	6.15	0.00	0.21	0.42		

In the regression analysis, where job insecurity and self-esteem were included in the model as independent variables, the effect of the variables on social loafing was examined. According to



the analysis results, the effect of job insecurity and self-esteem together on social loafing is significant ($F=24.37$; $p=0.000$). The obtained R^2 value shows that 16% of the variation in social loafing can be explained by job insecurity and self-esteem.

Table 6. Regression analysis on the effect of work-life balance and mental well-being on perceived stress

Variables		B	β	T	p	LLCI	ULCI	VIF	Durbin Watson
Social Loafing $F=24,37$ $p=0,00$ $R^2=0,16$	Constant	1.25		5.10	0.00	0.771	1.741		
	Job Insecurity	0.13	0.40	2.23	0.02	0.164	0.263	1.00	1.80
	Self-Esteem	0.38		5.34	0.00	0.241	0.523		

4.5. Analyses Regarding the Mediating Role

Regression analysis was performed using the bootstrap method to determine the mediating role of self-esteem in the effect of job insecurity perception on social loafing. This method is used in many studies because it is more reliable than traditional mediation analysis (Baron and Kenny, 1986) and the Sobel test (Hayes, 2018; Zhao et al., 2010). Process Macro developed by Hayes (2018) was used for mediation analysis and resampling was performed with the 5000 option. To mention the mediator effect in mediation analysis, there should not be 0 in the range of the values obtained (Hayes, 2018). Regarding the mediation effect, it is expected that the independent variable will have a significant effect on the dependent variable, and also, when the independent and mediator variables are included in the model together, the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable will disappear or decrease. When the mediator variable mediates the entire relationship between the dependent and independent variable, it is defined as full mediation, and when it mediates a part of the relationship between the dependent and independent variable, it is defined as partial mediation effect (Yılmaz and Dalbudak, 2018: p.520).

The results of the regression analysis conducted to examine the mediating effect of self-esteem on the effect of job insecurity perception on social loafing reveal that job insecurity has a positive and significant direct ($\beta=0.13$; $p, 0.16-0.26$) effect on social loafing and a positive and significant indirect effect on the mediating role of self-esteem ($\beta=0.122$; $p, 0.003-0.22$). The findings exhibit that the direct effect of job insecurity on social loafing (direct effect + indirect effect) is positive ($\beta=0.26$) and significant ($p, 0.14-0.38$). The results obtained show that job insecurity has a low impact on social loafing, and the effect increases with low self-esteem. If the effect size is around 0.01, it indicates that the mediation effect is low, if the effect is 0.09 and close to it, it indicates a medium-level effect, and if the effect is 0.25 and above, this indicates a high mediation role (Hayes, 2018). The fact that the effect value in the study is 0.262 indicates that the mediating variable, self-esteem, has a high level of partial mediation effect.



Table 7. The mediating role of self-esteem in the effect of job insecurity on social loafing behavior

Direct Effect			Effect	S.H.	LLCI	ULCI	t	p
Job Insecurity		Social Loafing	0.139	0.062	0.16	0.26	2.23	0.00
Ccs 0.139								
Indirect Effect								
Job Insecurity	Self-Esteem	Social Loafing	0.122	0.04	0.003	0.22	4.26	0.00
Total Effect			0.262	0.06	0.14	0.38		
Standardized Coefficient			0.122					

4.6. Difference Analyses

In this part of the study, analyses of whether the variables differ according to demographic variables such as gender, marital status, age, and education are included. The reason for this was to determine which of the individuals working in the service sector perceive job insecurity or engage in social shirking behavior more according to demographic characteristics.

The analysis conducted to determine whether the variables differ significantly according to gender reveals that job insecurity, self-esteem, and social loafing ($p > 0.05$) do not show a significant difference according to gender. The analysis conducted to determine whether the variables differ significantly according to marital status exhibits that self-esteem and social loafing ($p < 0.05$) differ significantly.

According to the Levene test results, p-values were found to be above 0.05 and it was concluded that the group variances were equal. These results show that the necessary condition for ANOVA analysis is met. The ANOVA analysis reveals that the significance values of self-esteem and social loafing were below 0.01. Scheffe test was performed to determine between which ages the differences occurred. The Scheffe test results reveal that self-esteem differs significantly ($p < 0.01$) between the ages of 20-30 (3.77), between the ages of 30-40 (4.20), and between the ages of 50 and over (4.31). Social loafing, on the other hand, varies significantly ($p < 0.01$) between the ages of 20-30 (2.34), between the ages of 30-40 (1.95), and between the ages of 50 and over (1.75).

Table 8. Levene and ANOVA values of difference analyses by age

	Levene Test		Descriptive Statistics				ANOVA	
	F	p	Age	N	Avg.	Std. D.	F	p
Job Insecurity	0.798	0.496	Between 20-30	138	2.448	0.644	2.157	0.09
			Between 30-40	55	2.257	0.543		
			Between 40-50	33	2.300	0.696		
			50 and over	22	2.167	0.672		



Self-Esteem	4.73	0.30	Between 20-30	138	3.770	0.654	10.37	0.00
			Between 30-40	55	4.205	0.581		
			Between 40-50	33	4.079	0.494		
			50 and over	22	4.314	0.521		
Social Loafing	4.73	0.30	Between 20-30	138	2.343	0.707	7.960	0.00
			Between 30-40	55	1.954	0.633		
			Between 40-50	33	2.101	0.626		
			50 and over	22	1.752	0.554		

The Levene test results exhibit that only the p-value of job insecurity was found to be above 0.05 and the group variances were found to be equal. The p-value ($p > 0.05$) obtained as a result of the ANOVA analysis shows that job insecurity does not differ significantly according to educational background. Levene values for self-esteem and social loafing indicate that the variances are not equal below 0.05. In this case, the Games Howell test was performed. Results of the Games Howell test reveal that the averages of employees' self-esteem differ significantly according to their educational background, namely between high school (3.75) and master's degree (4.32), and between bachelor's degree (3.90) and master's degree (4.32) ($p < 0.05$). The test also concluded that the averages of social loafing differed significantly between a high school degree (2.40) and a master's degree (1.91).

Table 9. Difference analyses Levene and ANOVA values by educational background

	Levene Test		Descriptive Statistics				ANOVA	
	F	p	Educational Background	N	Avg.	Std. S.	F	p
Job Insecurity	0,701	0,592	High School	55	2.300	0.678	0.701	0.59
			Associate Degree	30	2.315	0.589		
			Bachelor's Degree	111	2.400	0.643		
			Master's Degree	52	2.269	0.654		
Self-Esteem	6,533	0,00	High School	55	3.750	0.719	6.533	0.00
			Associate Degree	30	3.853	0.649		
			Bachelor's Degree	111	3.906	0.598		
			Master's Degree	52	4.327	0.559		
Social Loafing	4,805	0,01	High School	55	2.400	0.707	4.805	0.00
			Associate Degree	30	1.998	0.679		
			Bachelor's Degree	111	2.201	0.708		
			Master's Degree	52	1.915	0.561		



5. DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

5.1. Discussion

The study aimed to examine the effect of job insecurity on social loafing and also the mediating role of self-esteem among white-collar employees working in Istanbul, Turkey. The findings of the study exhibit that job insecurity has a positive effect on social loafing behaviors, verifying the first hypothesis. Supporting the findings of this study, Akgündüz and Eryılmaz (2018), Alyahya et al. (2021), and Primadi and Sawitri (2023). Akgündüz and Eryılmaz (2018) found a positive relationship between affective job insecurity and social loafing, whereas they found a partial effect of cognitive job insecurity on social loafing. Confirming the findings of this study, these findings also reveal that different kinds of job insecurity may have different amounts of effects on social loafing. Alyahya et al. (2021) found a positive and significant relationship between job insecurity and social loafing as well. Primadi and Sawitri (2023) found a positive relationship between job insecurity (both affective and cognitive) and social loafing with turnover intention as the mediator.

The second hypothesis was created based on the assumption that self-esteem would negatively affect social loafing behaviors. It was hypothesized before the analyses that people with high self-esteem should be less likely to display social loafing behaviors because they are confident and want to prove themselves with their effort. The findings confirmed that assumption and the second hypothesis was supported. Some studies also reveal this relationship. Awee et al. (2020) found that self-esteem has a moderating role in the relationship between workplace envy and social loafing. Another study with parallel findings to this study is that of Rahman et al. (2014). They also found a negative relationship between self-esteem and social loafing. Putri and Dewi (2021) examined the direct relationship between self-esteem and social loafing with no other variables. They also found a significant and negative relationship between self-esteem and social loafing among college students. Another study that investigated self-esteem as the moderator in the relationship between a variable and social loafing is that of Thahir et al. (2022). They found a negative relationship between self-esteem and social loafing in college students.

The study concluded that self-esteem has a partial mediating role in the effect of job insecurity on social loafing. Therefore, the third hypothesis was verified. Since there are studies that examine the relationship between job insecurity and social loafing (e.g. Akgündüz and Eryılmaz, 2018), no study was found examining those three variables with self-esteem as the mediator.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth hypotheses were created intending to find whether the variables differed significantly according to demographic characteristics or not. Findings reveal that the variables do not differ according to gender. Self-esteem and social loafing differ significantly according to marital status. Significant differences were found in self-esteem and social loafing for specific age groups, 20-30, 30-40, and 50 and over for both variables. Regarding the age characteristics of the participants, self-esteem and social loafing differed significantly in some



age groups. The findings for educational background characteristics reveal a similar picture to the age characteristics. The findings show that self-esteem and social loafing differed significantly in some categories of educational background.

The unique value of the study lies in the research model. No studies were found in the literature connecting job insecurity and social loafing with self-esteem as a mediating variable. Overall, the findings validate the proposed hypotheses, thereby strengthening the research model's robustness.

5.2. Implications for Management

In our competitive age, managers strive to achieve efficiency and employee motivation to stay competitive and innovative. One of the ways to motivate employees is to create a secure environment. This study shows that job insecurity can have many consequences including contributions to low self-esteem and social loafing behaviors. Akgündüz and Eryılmaz (2018) found that affective job insecurity directly increases social loafing. Thus, creating a secure environment in terms of employees' perception of their jobs will also likely contribute to a more efficient organization with less social loafing. Based on the findings of Akgündüz and Eryılmaz (2018), it is possible to assume that businesses can prioritize the affective part of job insecurity and motivate their employees for a secure environment before working on the objective part of their employee policies. Apart from creating a secure environment for their employees, organizational leaders should also create an environment in which job stress is minimized, employees' ideas are taken into account, and they are rewarded whenever necessary. Interviewing the employees leaving an organization to understand what went wrong in the organization to understand the causes of organizational stress, training employees to allow for variation of duties and reducing burnout, establishing, communicating, and encouraging career development opportunities, and recognizing and rewarding employees are some ways of minimizing job stress (Manning and Preston, 2003). Employees have to believe that their resources are safe and secure so that they do not react in ways like social loafing. Another implication from the study is that the hiring process in organizations can prioritize people with high self-esteem. Especially corporate companies can include self-esteem measurement systems while hiring people so that these people are more motivated to participate in group work, tend to consider organizational demands more and control their personal interests and resources effectively. Correspondingly, Pierce and Gardner (2004) concluded that global self-esteem, which concerns more of psychological well-being (Rosenberg et al., 1995), is of utmost importance in the direction and motivation of employees' behaviors in an organizational context.

5.3. Limitations and Future Directions

One limitation of the study is the fact that the white-collar employees in Istanbul constituting the sample may not represent all the white-collar employees in Turkey. Another limitation of the study is that it is cross-sectional. The study is limited by a period and the number of



participants. Longer time and more participants could differentiate the results. Also, some biased answers may have been collected from participants since the data was collected with questionnaires with no control of the researchers. To avoid biased answers, the researchers collected online questionnaires and by doing so, the participants of the study were assumed to perceive questions in the right way. The analysis method used in the study was accepted as the most appropriate one for the study.

In the relevant literature, there are studies conducted on hotel and restaurant industries typically examining pink-collar employees. However, not many studies were observed by the researchers on white-collar employees. Further research can be done in different contexts (countries or industries) on white-collar employees to examine cultural effects. Further research can also be done with other mediating factors instead of self-esteem such as extraversion, which may decrease social loafing since social loafing is an introvert activity, or organizational commitment to find whether organizational commitment will lower social loafing or not. Another suggestion regarding future studies is that they could investigate job insecurity together with presenteeism, workplace satisfaction, happiness in the workplace, and mental well-being. These “positive” factors from the point of view of employees may be the factors that decrease social loafing in an insecure organizational environment.

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