



## The Moderating Role of Social Intelligence in the Effect of Psychological Capital on Employee Performance

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the moderating role of social intelligence on the effect of psychological capital on employee performance. The study group of the research consists of 475 employees in the retail sector operating in Istanbul. Random sampling method was used to collect data in the study. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, factor analysis and structural equation modelling methods. Hypothesis tests, multiple regression analysis and path analysis were applied in the analysis process. The results of the study revealed that social intelligence plays a moderating role in the effect of increasing psychological capital perception on employee performance. In particular, it was determined that employees with high psychological capital perception showed an increase in employee performance when social intelligence was low. On the contrary, a stronger moderating effect was observed on the performance of employees with high social intelligence in the case of an increase in psychological capital perception. These findings suggest that social intelligence is an important factor shaping the effect of psychological capital on employee performance.

**Keywords:** Social Intelligence, Psychological Capital, Employee Performance

**JEL Classification:** M0, M1, M10.

## Psikolojik Sermayenin İşgören Performansı Üzerindeki Etkisinde Sosyal Zekanın Düzenleyici Rolü

### ÖZ

Bu çalışma, psikolojik sermayenin işgören performansı üzerindeki etkisi üzerinde sosyal zekanın düzenleyici rolünü incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu İstanbul'da faaliyet gösteren perakende sektöründeki 475 çalışan oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmada veri toplamak için rastgele örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Toplanan veriler, tanımlayıcı istatistikler, güvenilirlik analizi, faktör analizi ve yapısal eşitlik modellemesi yöntemleri kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Analiz sürecinde hipotez testleri, çoklu regresyon analizi ve yol analizi uygulanmıştır. Çalışma sonuçları, psikolojik sermaye algısının artmasıyla işgören performansı üzerindeki etkisinde sosyal zekanın düzenleyici bir rol oynadığını ortaya koymuştur. Özellikle, psikolojik sermaye algısı yüksek olan çalışanlarda, sosyal zekanın düşük olduğu durumlarda işgören performansının artış gösterdiği belirlenmiştir. Buna karşılık, psikolojik sermaye algısının artması durumunda, sosyal zekası yüksek olan çalışanların performansı üzerinde daha güçlü bir düzenleyici etki gözlenmiştir. Bu bulgular, sosyal zekanın işgören performansı üzerindeki etkisini şekillendiren önemli bir faktör olduğunu göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sosyal Zeka, Psikolojik Sermaye, Çalışan Performansı

**JEL Sınıflandırması:** M0, M1, M10.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Research to understand the effects of employees on employee performance has been increasing in recent years. These studies show that individuals' psychological capital, i.e., their personal resources at the workplace, significantly affects their performance (Aybas and Acar, 2017; Grover, Teo, Pick, Roche and Newton, 2018). Psychological capital refers to a combination of internal resources used in psychological processes such as coping with stress, coping with negative situations, maintaining motivation and maintaining emotional balance (Gan and Cheng, 2021). Psychological capital is also defined as the combination of positive psychological states, self-efficacy, hope and psychological resilience (Preston, Rew and Young, 2023). Psychological capital plays an important role in individuals' work life, personal relationships and overall quality of life. From the perspective of businesses, increasing the psychological capital of employees can increase employee performance, satisfaction and commitment, and thus positively affect business success. In this context, increasing employees' psychological capital levels stands out as a critical factor to improve employee performance.

To fully understand the effects of psychological capital on employee performance, the role of social intelligence should also be considered. Social intelligence is the ability of individuals to be successful in social interactions (Zulmi and Tentama, 2024). This ability includes elements such as emotional awareness, empathy, effective communication and managing relationships (Praditsang, Hanafi and Walters, 2015). Social intelligence is an important factor that enables individuals to be successful in their personal and professional lives (Handa, 2018). Well-developed social intelligence provides advantages in many areas such as collaboration, leadership, problem solving and effective communication. Therefore, developing and strengthening social intelligence skills is an important step for personal and professional development (Rahim, Civelek and Liang, 2018). Employee performance is a concept that assesses how effectively an employee fulfills their responsibilities in the workplace and contributes to organizational goals (Tahsildari and Shahnaei, 2015). This concept is usually evaluated through a set of criteria and standards and is used to determine the level of success of the employee. Employee performance appraisal is usually conducted as part of an organization's performance management process. This assessment is used to identify employees' strengths, identify areas for development and help them achieve the employer's goals (Vuong and Nguyen, 2022). In this context, it is important to determine whether social intelligence plays a moderating role in the impact of psychological capital on employee performance. Research on this subject suggests that the effect of psychological capital on employee performance may vary according to the level of social intelligence (Hoseini and Ashrafi, 2020; George, Okon and Akaighe, 2023). The purpose of this research is to investigate the moderating influence of social intelligence on the impact of psychological capital on employee performance. For this purpose, first, an overview of the concepts of psychological capital, social intelligence and employee performance will be presented, then the relationship between these concepts will be examined in line with the literature, and finally, the moderating role of social intelligence in the relationship between psychological capital and employee performance will be discussed.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Psychological Capital**

Psychological capital, often abbreviated as PsyCap, is a construct that has received significant attention in organizational behavior and psychology (Story, Youssef, Luthans, BAARBUTO AND Bovaird, 2013; Luthans, Youssef, Sweetman and Harms, 2013; Avey, 2014). It is described as a positive psychological state of an individual, encompassing four key elements: self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience. Collectively, these components

contribute to an individual's ability to perform effectively at work, cope with challenges, and maintain a positive outlook in their professional and personal lives (Luthans et al., 2013).

Studies have shown that psychological capital plays role in improving employee performance and job satisfaction. A meta-analysis has shown that there is a positive correlation between psychological capital and various employee attitudes and behaviors, including job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Avey, Reichard, Luthans and Mhatre, 2011). Similarly, studies have shown that higher levels of psychological capital are associated with reduced burnout and improved job performance among employees (Rehman, Qingren, Latif and Iqbal, 2017; Asheghi, Asheghi and Hesari, 2020). These results suggest that improving psychological capital within organizations can lead to a more engaged and productive workforce.

## **2.2. Employee Performance**

The most important aspect of employee performance is the role of management in influencing and evaluating it. Cvetanovska (2019) emphasizes that effective human resource management practices are essential to improving employee performance because they help set clear expectations and provide the necessary support. This includes regular performance evaluations, feedback, and implementing strategies that align employee goals with organizational goals. McConnell (2004) further supports this view by emphasizing that ongoing communication and coaching are vital to maintaining high levels of employee performance, especially when challenges arise.

Employee performance is a multifaceted concept that encompasses the effectiveness and efficiency with which employees perform their job responsibilities. It is often defined as the result of a combination of various factors such as individual skills, motivation, work environment, and organizational support. Another critical aspect of employee performance is the role of motivation, which can be categorized as intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal drive to perform well due to personal satisfaction or enjoyment of the task itself, while extrinsic motivation includes external rewards such as compensation and recognition. Studies show that a positive work environment characterized by elements such as noise control, ergonomic office furniture, and adequate lighting significantly enhances employee performance by promoting comfort and safety (Serpian and Jusnawati, 2022; Yating, bin Arshad and Mengjigo, 2024). The importance of employee performance goes beyond individual contributions; it is essential to achieve organizational goals. High employee performance is associated with improved organizational outcomes, including productivity and profitability (Fithriyana, Maria and Hidayati, 2022). Organizations that prioritize employee engagement and satisfaction often witness increased levels of performance because engaged employees are more likely to be committed to their jobs and the organization (Gupta and Sharma, 2016). Additionally, implementing employee retention practices such as training and development programs are important to maintain high levels of performance as they contribute to employee satisfaction and loyalty (Chebet and Njoroge, 2019; Srimulyani and Hermanto, 2022).

## **2.3. Social Intelligence**

Social intelligence is a multifaceted construct encompassing the ability to effectively understand and manage social interactions. It is often defined as the capacity to perceive, interpret, and respond to social cues, including understanding the emotions, intentions, and motivations of others. This ability is crucial for personal relationships and plays a particularly important role in professional settings, especially in fields where interpersonal dynamics are

paramount, such as education and psychology (Jayabharathi, Nirmala, Karthikeyan and Duraisamy, 2022).

In a widely cited article in Harper's Magazine in the early 20th century entitled "Intelligence and Its Use," psychologist Edward Lee Thorndike (1920) coined the term "social intelligence" to describe "the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls, to act intelligently in human relationships" (Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts, 2002, Lowman, 2022). Thorndike's conceptualization of social intelligence is important because it emphasizes the importance of interpersonal skills in various aspects of life, including education, leadership, and social interactions. He suggested that social intelligence is an independent construct separate from academic intelligence and that individuals may have different levels of social competence, independent of their cognitive abilities (Landy, 2005).

The definition of social intelligence has evolved over time to reflect its interdisciplinary nature. It intersects with a variety of fields, including psychology, sociology, and artificial intelligence. For example, Herzig and colleagues define social intelligence as the capacity to understand others and act rationally and emotionally in social contexts; this ability extends beyond humans to artificial agents (Herzig, Lorini and Pearce, 2017). This highlights the increasing recognition of social intelligence as a critical component in the development of artificial social intelligence (ASI), which aims to replicate human-like social interactions in machines (Fan, Xu, Cao, Zhu and Zhu, 2022; Williams, Fiore and Jentsch, 2022). Research has shown that social intelligence is not merely an abstract concept but is based on neurophysiological correlates. Studies suggest that differences in social intelligence can be associated with specific brain structures and that this form of intelligence has a biological basis (Myznikov, Zheltyakova, Korotkov, Kireev, Masharipov, Jagmurov, Habel and Votinov, 2020).

In summary, social intelligence is a complex, multidimensional construct that plays an important role in human interactions. It encompasses a range of skills needed to understand and manage social interactions, and its importance is recognized in disciplines ranging from psychology to artificial intelligence. As research continues to explore the intricacies of social intelligence, its implications for personal development, education, and technology are likely to expand.

### **3. METHOD**

The study group of the research consists of employees in the retail sector operating in Istanbul. In this quantitative study, simple random sampling method was used to collect data from 475 retail sector employees. Data were collected from the participants through questionnaire questions including demographic questions, social intelligence, psychological capital and employee performance scales. The social intelligence scale created by Yıldırım (2017) was utilized, while psychological capital was evaluated using the instrument designed by Fred Luthans et al. (2007) and translated into Turkish by Erkmén and Esen (2013). The scale used by Yılmaz (2015) was used to measure employee performance. Permissions were obtained for all scales used in the study. The questions of the scales in the questionnaire were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "1. Strongly disagree" ... "5. Strongly agree". The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, factor analysis and structural equation modeling. These analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS and AMOS programs. Hypothesis tests were conducted using multiple regression analysis and path analysis.

## 4. FINDINGS

### 4.1. Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis investigates whether the statements in the scale express a whole that shows a homogeneous structure. A coefficient ranging from 0 to 1 is determined. This coefficient is referred to as Cronbach's alpha. This coefficient is called Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Depending on the alpha coefficient, the reliability of the scale can be interpreted as follows (Kalaycı, 2008).

If  $0.00 \leq \alpha < 0.40$ , the scale is not reliable,  
If  $0.40 \leq \alpha < 0.60$ , the reliability of the scale is low,  
 $0.60 \leq \alpha < 0.80$ , the scale is highly reliable and  
If  $0.80 \leq \alpha < 1.00$ , the scale is highly reliable.

**Table 1:** Reliability Analysis Results

	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
<b>General psychological capital</b>	0,882
<b>Self-efficacy</b>	0,860
<b>Hope</b>	0,836
<b>Psychological resilience</b>	0,600
<b>General social intelligence</b>	0,775
<b>Social knowledge</b>	0,765
<b>Social awareness</b>	0,707
<b>General employee performance</b>	0,825

The overall reliability coefficient alpha value of the psychological capital scale shows that the scale is highly reliable. When the alpha values of the dimensions of the psychological capital scale are examined, it is seen that the general alpha values of self-efficacy and hope dimensions are highly reliable, while psychological resilience is highly reliable. The overall alpha value of the social intelligence scale shows that the scale is highly reliable. Social knowledge and social awareness expressions from social intelligence dimensions are calculated as highly reliable. The overall alpha coefficient of the employee performance scale shows that the scale is highly reliable.

### 4.2. Findings on Demographic Characteristics

Among the employees involved in the research, 61.1% are women, while 38.9% are men. 29.5% are in the 36-41 age group, 26.3% are in the 42-47 age group, 18.9% are 48 years and over, 17.9% are in the 30-35 age group and the remaining 7.4% are 29 years and under. 70.5% of the employees are married and 29.5% are single. When their education levels are evaluated, 82.1% are postgraduate graduates (master's and doctorate), 15.8% are university graduates, 1.1% are associate degree graduates, and the remaining 1.1% are high school graduates. When the duration of employment in the organization and the total duration of

employment are analyzed, 25.3% of the employees have worked in their current organization for 6-10 years, 23.2% for 11-15 years, 18.9% for 0-1 year, 16.8% for 2-5 years, and 15.8% for 16 years or more. When the distribution of the total working years of the employees is analyzed, 69.5% of them have 11 years or more experience and 30.5% have 10 years or less experience.

### **4.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

#### **4.3.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Psychological Capital Scale**

There are 13 statements and three factors in the first level multifactor model in which the observed variables of psychological capital, self-efficacy (PCSE), hope (PCH) and psychological resilience (PCR) are gathered under multiple, unconnected factors. In the original version of the scale, there are 24 statements and four factors. Since the optimism factor consists of two statements, it is not included in the model. In confirmatory factor analysis, each observed variable must have at least two statements while being included in the model (Meydan and Şeşen, 2011). As a result of the analysis, the observed variable of optimism could not provide optimism to the model. As a result of confirmatory factor analysis, 11 statements were removed from the scale because they did not fit the model well. The analysis continues with the remaining 13 statements.

Confirmatory factor analysis tests whether the sample data fit the original (constructed) factor structure. Confirmatory factor analysis findings for the scale are  $\chi^2=111,863$ ,  $sd=47$ ,  $\chi^2/df=2.38$ ,  $RMSEA=0.054$ ,  $NFI=0.963$ ,  $CFI=0.978$  and  $IFI=0.978$ . This information shows that the general model fit (3) result shows a good fit, and the result of RMSEA (5), which is the root mean square error of approximation, which is one of the comparative fit indices, indicates a good fit. According to the results of the normed fit index NFI (0.95) and incremental fit index IFI (0.95), which are other comparative fit indices, it can be stated that the model shows good fit, while according to the result of CFI (0.95), the model shows acceptable fit.

#### **4.3.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Social Intelligence Scale**

There are 11 statements and three factors in the first level multifactor model in which the observed variables of social intelligence, social knowledge (SISK) and social awareness (SISA) are gathered under more than one, unconnected factor. In the original version of the scale, there are 21 statements and 3 factors. As a result of confirmatory factor analysis, 10 statements were removed from the scale because they did not fit the model well. The analysis continues with the remaining 11 statements.

The confirmatory factor analysis findings of the scale are  $\chi^2=117,567$ ,  $sd=35$ ,  $\chi^2/df=3.36$ ,  $RMSEA=0.071$ ,  $NFI=0.917$ ,  $CFI=0.939$  and  $IFI=0.940$ . This information shows that the general model fit (4-5) result shows an acceptable fit, and according to the result of RMSEA (0.06-0.08), which is the root mean square of approximate errors, which is one of the comparative fit indices, it indicates an acceptable fit. According to the results of the normed fit index NFI (0.94-0.90), the incremental fit index IFI (0.94-0.90) and the comparative fit index CFI (0.95), it can be stated that the model shows acceptable fit.

#### **4.3.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Employee Performance Scale**

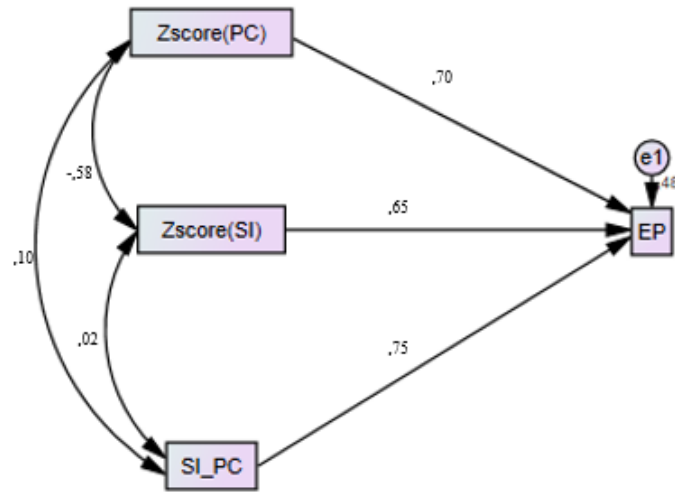
There are 4 statements and one factor in the first level multifactor model of the observed variable of employee performance (EL). The confirmatory factor analysis findings are  $\chi^2=0.748$ ,  $sd=1$ ,  $\chi^2/df=0.748$ ,  $RMSEA=0.01$ ,  $NFI=0.999$ ,  $CFI=0.998$  and  $IFI=0.996$ . This information indicates that the overall model fit (3) result shows a good fit, and the result of RMSEA (0.05), which is



the root mean square error of approximation, which is one of the comparative fit indices, indicates a good fit. It can be stated that the results of normed fit index NFI (0.95), incremental fit index IFI (0.95) and CFI (0.95) from other comparative fit indices show good fit.

## 5. REGULARIZATION TEST WITH AMOS

A moderating effect indicates the presence of a third variable that influences the relationship between a dependent variable and an independent variable. This third variable can increase or decrease the effect on the dependent variable by modifying or regulating the effect of another variable. The moderating effect can help researchers better understand and explain the effect of a variable (Baron and Kenny, 1986).



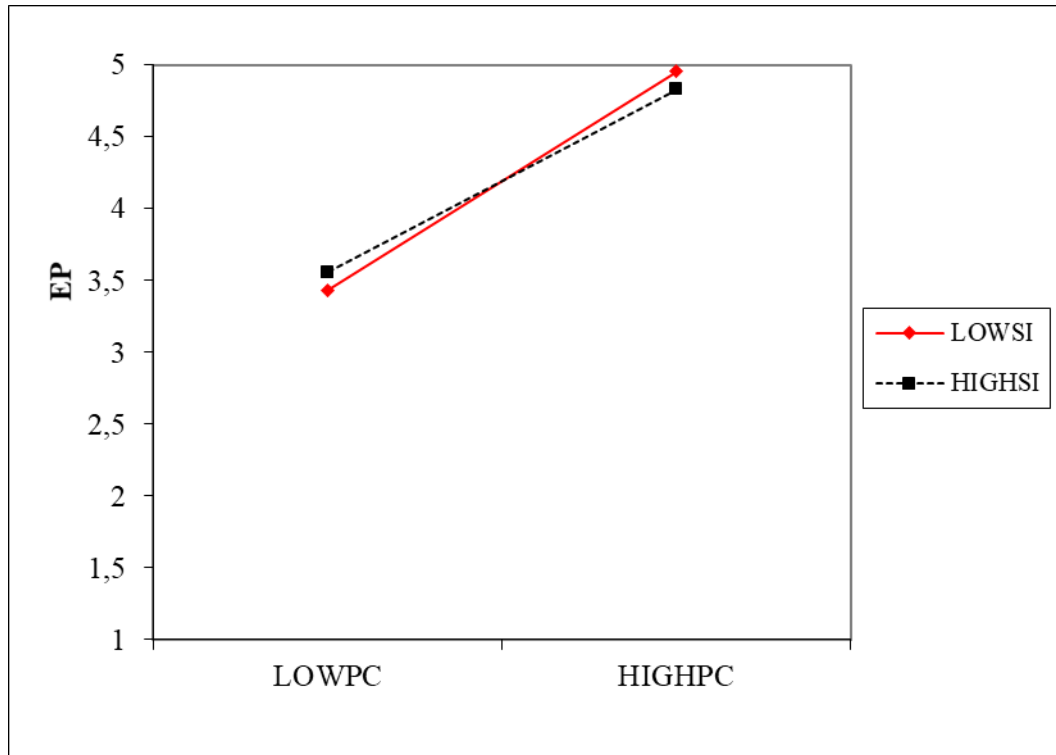
**Figure 1:** Path Analysis Test Result of the Model

In the model obtained as a result of path analysis, the independent variable is standardized psychological capital (PC), the dependent variable is employee performance (EP), the moderator variable is standardized social intelligence (SI), and the variable formed by the product of standardized social intelligence moderator variable and standardized psychological capital independent variable is the interaction variable of social intelligence (SI) and psychological capital (PC).

**Table 2:** Path Coefficients of the Model

Path			Standardize $\beta$	Standard error	p
ZscorePC	▼	EP	0,70	0,024	0,000
ZscoreSI	▼	EP	0,65	0,024	0,000
SI_PC	▼	EP	0,75	0,016	0,050

As shown in Table 2, the independent variable of standardized psychological capital affects the dependent variable of employee performance and the moderator variable of standardized social intelligence affects employee performance. The variable formed by the product of standardized social intelligence moderator variable and standardized psychological capital also affects the dependent variable of employee performance. Figure 2 below shows the results of whether and to what extent the social intelligence variable has a moderating effect on the effect of psychological capital on employee performance and the graph is interpreted.



**Figure 2:** Figure Indicating the Direction of the Regulatory Role of Social Intelligence in the Effect of Psychological Capital on Employee Performance

There is a low moderating effect of social intelligence on the effect of increased psychological capital perception on employee performance ( $t=17.039$ ,  $p=.000 \leq 0.01$ ). The effect of psychological capital perception on employee performance is significantly related to the low moderating effect of social intelligence. This result is supported by the findings from the analyses. For example, (Nguyen and Ngo, 2020) found that there is a positive relationship between increased psychological capital and employee performance. Similarly, in another study, it was observed that the low moderating effect of social intelligence was ignored when examining the effect of psychological capital on employee performance (Usman, Kowalski, Andiappan and Parayitam, 2022).

As the perception of psychological capital increases, employee performance increases if an employee has low intelligence. As the perception of psychological capital increases, social intelligence has a high moderating effect on employee performance ( $t=14.177$ ,  $p=.000 \leq 0.01$ ). The effect of psychological capital perception on employee performance may differ depending on the intelligence level of employees. The findings obtained from the study support this



situation. For example, (Huang, Yu, Shao, Yu and Li, 2021) found that with the increase in psychological capital, employee performance increased more significantly among employees with low intelligence levels. In addition, it was also emphasized that social intelligence has a high moderating effect on the effect of psychological capital perception on employee performance. This result is in line with some previous studies. For example, in a study conducted by (Boohene, Gyimah and Osei, 2020), it was observed that the high moderating effect of social intelligence increased the effect of psychological capital on employee performance.

As the perception of psychological capital increases, if an employee has high intelligence, employee performance increases again. Hypothesis 1 (Psychological capital has an effect on employee performance) is accepted. The findings that the employee performance of employees with high intelligence increases with the increase in psychological capital perception are supported by the analysis. At this point, a finding consistent with other studies in the literature has been obtained. For example, (Paliga, Kozusznik, Pollak and Sanecka, 2022) found that with the increase in psychological capital perception, employee performance increased more significantly among employees with high intelligence levels. This finding, consistent with the results of the current study, shows that employee performance increases with an increase in the psychological capital perception of employees with high intelligence levels. Similarly, in a study conducted by (Darvishmotevali and Ali, 2020), it was found that employee performance increased as the psychological capital perception of employees with high intelligence increased. This study is in line with the results of the current study and supports that the positive effect of psychological capital perception on employee performance is also valid for employees with high intelligence levels.

Hypothesis 2 (Social intelligence has a moderating role in the effect of psychological capital on employee performance) is accepted. The results of the study support that social intelligence has a moderating role on the effect of psychological capital on job performance. The results of the related analyses revealed the importance of this moderating effect. This finding can be considered in line with other studies in the literature. For example, in a study conducted by (Aryani, Wirawan, Saman, Samad and Jufri, 2021), it was found that social intelligence has a moderating role on the effect of psychological capital on employee performance. This study is in line with the results of the current study and helps us to better understand the moderating role of social intelligence on the effect of psychological capital on employee performance. Similarly, in a study conducted by (Liao, Hu and Huang, 2022), the moderating role of social intelligence on the effect of psychological capital on employee performance was emphasized. This study can be evaluated in line with the results of the current study by emphasizing the importance of social intelligence on the effect of psychological capital on employee performance.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This study aimed to examine the moderating role of social intelligence on the impact of psychological capital on employee performance. The results of the study provide evidence that employee performance increases with an increase in psychological capital. In addition, another finding of the study is that social intelligence affects this relationship as a moderating factor. In conclusion, understanding the effects of psychological capital and social intelligence on employee performance is an important step to develop effective management strategies in the business world.

## **7. LIMITATIONS**

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the sample size of 475 employees from the retail sector in Istanbul limits the generalizability of the results to other industries and regions, highlighting the need for future research with diverse samples. Second, the cross-sectional research design captures data at a single point in time, which restricts the ability to infer causality or observe changes over time; thus, longitudinal studies are recommended for deeper insights. Additionally, the use of self-reported questionnaires introduces the possibility of social desirability bias, suggesting that future studies could benefit from incorporating objective performance metrics or supervisor evaluations. Lastly, while social intelligence was measured using a standardized scale, this approach may not fully capture the complexity of the construct in real-world contexts. Combining qualitative methods with quantitative analysis in subsequent research could provide a more comprehensive understanding.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Future research can build upon this study by addressing several key recommendations to expand understanding of the interplay between psychological capital, social intelligence, and employee performance. Exploring the moderating role of social intelligence across diverse sectors, such as healthcare, education, or technology, could provide insights into the broader applicability of the findings. Additionally, organizations could benefit from training programs aimed at enhancing psychological capital and social intelligence among employees, given their positive impact on performance. Investigating how these relationships evolve under dynamic workplace conditions, such as during crises or organizational changes, would further enrich the understanding of these constructs. Examining other mediating or moderating factors, including organizational culture, leadership style, or team dynamics, may offer a more comprehensive framework for employee performance. Finally, combining qualitative methods like interviews or focus groups with quantitative analyses could provide deeper insights into the mechanisms driving these relationships, enabling a richer and more nuanced exploration of the subject.

### **Ethic Statement Acknowledgement**

This study was prepared in accordance with the rules of scientific research and publication ethics. Ethics committee approval for this study was obtained from .... Ethics Committee/Committee with the decision numbered E53938333-050-26997 at its meeting dated 24/04/2023 and numbered 2023/04.

### **Authors' Contribution**

The outline of the study, conceptual framework and literature review were prepared by the 1st author. The 'Findings' section was reported by the 2nd author. The research process was carried out jointly by two authors. Author 1 contributed 60% to the article and Author 2 contributed 40% to the article.

### **Declaration of Interest**

There is no conflict of interest for the authors or third parties arising from the study.

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