

From Job Stress to Social Loafing: Can Job Instrumentality Exacerbate Employees' Perceptions of Both Phenomena?

Osman Seray ÖZKAN (<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5326-8930>), Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University, Türkiye; osmanserayozkan@gmail.com

Burcu ÜZÜM (<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8675-8952>), Kocaeli University, Türkiye; burcugokay@gmail.com

Leyla ŞENOL (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5780-9690>), Kocaeli University, Türkiye; senolleyla4@gmail.com

Müjde AKSOY (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2995-0371>), Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University, Türkiye; maksoy@bandirma.edu.tr

İş Stresinden Sosyal Kaytarmaya: İşin Araçsallığı Çalışanların Her İki Olguya İlişkin Algılarını Daha da Artırabilir mi?

Abstract

The literature has not sufficiently examined the effects of employees' perceptions of economic inequality on organisational behaviour. This paper investigates the impact of economic inequality on organisational behaviour. Drawing upon conservation of resources theory, we explore how job instrumentality influences employee social loafing in this study. We collected research data using a convenience sampling from 204 employees working in three- to five-star hotels in Kocaeli (Türkiye). Structural equation modelling revealed that job instrumentality increases job stress and leads to social loafing. Furthermore, job stress played a mediating role in the relationship between job instrumentality and social loafing. Findings show that employees' perception of work solely as a means to gain profit increases job stress, which fuels social loafing. This process can negatively impact individual performance and team effectiveness. Therefore, organisations must develop strategies that enrich and diversify the meaning employees ascribe to work. This paper improves our understanding of job instrumentality by showing how job instrumentality indirectly affects social loafing through job stress in the hospitality industry.

Keywords : Job Instrumentality, Job Stress, Social Loafing, Hotel Employees.

JEL Classification Codes : I12, J81, M10.

Öz

Çalışanların ekonomik eşitsizliğe ilişkin algılarının örgütsel davranış üzerindeki etkileri literatürde yeterince incelenmemiştir. Bu makalede, ekonomik eşitsizliğin örgütsel davranış üzerinde etkileri araştırılmaktadır. Kaynakları koruma teorisinden yararlanarak bu çalışmada, işin araçsallığının çalışanların sosyal kaytarmasını nasıl etkilediğini araştırıyoruz. Kocaeli'ndeki (Türkiye) üç ila beş yıldızlı otellerde çalışan 204 çalışandan, kolayda örneklem yöntemi kullanılarak araştırma verilerini topladık. Yapısal eşitlik modellemesi, işin araçsallığının iş stresini artırdığını ve iş stresinin de sosyal kaytarma yol açtığını ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca iş stresi, işin araçsallığı ile sosyal kaytarma arasındaki ilişkide aracı rol oynamıştır. Bulgular, çalışanların işi yalnızca kazanç aracı olarak görmelerinin iş stresini artırdığını ve bunun da sosyal kaytarmayı tetiklediğini göstermektedir. Bu süreç, bireysel performansı ve takım verimliliğini olumsuz etkileyebilir. Dolayısıyla, organizasyonların çalışanların işe yükledikleri anlamı zenginleştirerek ve çeşitlendirecek stratejiler geliştirmeleri önem taşımaktadır. Bu makale, işin araçsallığının konaklama sektöründe iş stresi

aracılığıyla sosyal kaytarmayı dolaylı olarak nasıl etkilediğini göstererek işin araçsallığı anlayışımızı geliştirmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler : İşin Araçsallığı, İş Stresi, Sosyal Kaytarma, Otel Çalışanları.

1. Introduction

Economic inequality, defined as the unequal distribution of income and wealth among individuals within a society, reflects disparities in access to economic resources (Wang et al., 2023). Moreover, economic inequality can exacerbate perceptions of injustice, which in turn may lead to lower levels of subjective well-being and life satisfaction, and ultimately have a detrimental impact on health outcomes. This disparity in economic resources not only contributes to a decline in individuals' levels of happiness and life satisfaction but also adversely affects their health status (Ugur, 2021a; Wang et al., 2023). Osinubi and Olomola (2021) highlighted that income inequality in specific countries, such as Mexico, Indonesia, Türkiye, and Nigeria, exacerbated unemployment, poverty, hunger, and crime rates, undermined public health, and led to political tensions. Individuals experiencing economic inequality tend to invest in lottery tickets in the United States (Payne et al., 2017) and exhibit a propensity for increased gambling in Canada (Fu et al., 2021). In developing countries, where income inequality is more acute, individuals must prioritise the financial resources necessary for a dignified living (Ugur, 2021b). The greater the perceived importance of financial resources, the more motivated individuals become to engage in work (Alexiou & Kartiyasa, 2020). Furthermore, the unemployment rates induced by economic inequality may create conditions allowing multinational enterprises to exploit individuals' labour more intensively, potentially deepening economic inequality (Amis et al., 2020). Despite acknowledging that organisational practices contribute to widening the economic inequality gap, the effects of employees' perceptions of economic inequality on organisational behaviour have not been sufficiently explored (Sinclair et al., 2024). In this context, the question of what potential effects economic inequality may have on organisational behaviour emerges as a significant area for research.

In countries where economic inequality is perceived as prevalent, employees tend to exhibit a propensity for competition, and work's material and financial aspects become increasingly significant (Zhang & Hirschi, 2021). In countries like Türkiye, where economic inequality is pronounced, income is one of the most critical determinants of personal well-being (Ugur, 2021b). This perspective views work merely as a means of earning money, a concept called job instrumentality (JI). JI is defined as "the degree to which work is perceived as a means of increasing economic resources" (Zhang et al., 2020). We posit that economic inequality motivates individuals to enhance their levels of financial well-being (Jetten et al., 2017), thereby placing JI at the centre of its focus. We seek to understand the effects of JI within an organisational context through the lens of conservation of resources (COR) theory.

COR theory emphasises that individuals develop behavioural and attitudinal strategies to retain their resources in the face of scarce resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Adopting a broad perspective on self-determination and motivation theories, COR theory encompasses the processes, conditions, and even cultures that motivate resource acquisition and preservation (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll et al., 2016). Halbesleben et al. (2014) argue that not everyone may assign equal importance to the same resource. For instance, while work may provide an opportunity for self-actualisation for one individual, it may merely serve as a means of economic gain for another. Hobfoll (2011) defined resources as "energy resources (e.g., money, income, promotion), personal resources (e.g., self-esteem, self-development, key skills), object resources (e.g., car, house), and condition resources (e.g., employment, marriage)." However, according to the researchers who developed COR theory, increasing the diversity of resources and classifying them differently is possible (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll et al., 2016; Hobfoll et al., 2018).

While Alexiou and Kartiyasa (2020) state that individuals who try to escape from a disadvantaged position by earning more income in the face of economic inequality devote more time to work, Warr et al. (2007) also state that the relationship between income and health (health worsens as income decreases) is very evident. COR theory highlights the sensitivity to resource loss through the "primacy of loss principle," which suggests that utilising other resources for resource acquisition makes individuals more vulnerable to resource loss (Hobfoll et al., 2018). If an individual expends sufficient resources but fails to obtain the expected amount, this situation can lead to stress (Hobfoll et al., 2016). According to COR theory, while energy resources (money) may increase (Hobfoll et al., 2018), depletion of personal resources can result in stress and burnout (Suárez & Vizcaíno, 2024). In such circumstances, it is believed that JI may contribute to job stress (JS). JS is "negative responses to situations perceived as threats in the work environment" (Suárez & Vizcaíno, 2024). Researchers demonstrated that threats to or losses of resources can create feelings of burnout and tension in the workplace (Halbesleben et al., 2014). However, COR theory also posits that measures can be taken against resource loss, potentially enhancing well-being. The foundation of COR theory is based on the optimal use of resources and, where possible, their conservation (Hobfoll et al., 2016). Individuals may likely exhibit "social loafing" (SL), defined as expending less effort in collective work settings to conserve resources (Edrees et al., 2023).

Hobfoll et al. (2018) addressed the role of "mechanisms through which resources are transferred in conjunction with social and organisational dynamics" in their crossover model and called for examining the impact of economic hardship, which they evaluate as a stress factor, on resource exchange. Within this framework, we aim to elucidate the mediating role of JS. Furthermore, investigating which resources employees utilise, which resources they deplete, and the organisational implications of these behaviours emerges as an essential topic.

It has been noted that the most significant resource in the hospitality industry is human (employee) capital (Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2018). Employee behaviours reflect job

performance, which determines service quality in the hospitality industry (Dai et al., 2016; Schwepker Jr & Dimitriou, 2021). However, excessive job demands and long working hours adversely affect employees, leading to JS (Choi et al., 2019; Dai et al., 2016). Due to this characteristic, the hospitality industry provides a conducive environment for SL (Dai et al., 2020; Ye et al., 2023). At this juncture, understanding the factors that influence employee behaviours will provide significant value to managers in the hospitality industry for developing vision and taking preventive measures.

In Türkiye, where the effects of income on quality of life are evident, important questions arise regarding the individual and organisational consequences of job motivation driven by monetary incentives (i.e., job instrumentality). We seek to answer the following questions: (1) Does JI create JS? (2) Does JS enhance SL? (3) Does JS mediate the relationship between JI and SL? This study utilises COR theory to explain how perceiving work as a source of income (JI) affects JS and how JS activates SL, thereby elucidating the mediating role of JS in this process. We integrate previously overlooked relationships into a single model by examining the impact of economic conditions on work behaviours in the context of Türkiye. By expanding the understanding of perceiving work as a source of income (JI) through the hospitality industry, we aim to theoretically and practically contribute to the literature. Figure 1 illustrates the proposed conceptual model of this study.

2. Hypothesis Development

2.1. Job Instrumentality and Job Stress

Zhang et al. (2020) indicated that the value assigned to work could be considered both instrumental and ultimate. Instrumental value views work as a means to achieve a goal, while ultimate value perceives work as a positive activity undertaken to reach that goal. If work is seen as a resource for improving an individual's economic position, the instrumental aspect of work is likely to gain significance.

Van den Broeck et al. (2021) proposed that the level of an individual's quality of life was associated with extrinsic motivation, while Locke and Schatte (2019) argued that instrumental value was contingent upon extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation aims to increase resources through the attainment of rewards or to reduce resource loss by transitioning to a defensive stance in the face of threats (Zhang & Hirschi, 2021). JI reflects a perception aimed at enhancing financial rewards but can also lead to concerns about job loss among individuals. The fear of job security threatens individuals (Meng et al., 2024), which generates stress (Sinclair et al., 2024). Allocating more time to work to obtain rewards (money) leads to the perception of work as a necessary means for earning income, increasing stress and burnout (Mitchell et al., 2020; Suárez & Vizcaíno, 2024). According to COR theory, when JI is exhibited to increase energy resources, it will result in greater depletion of personal resources (e.g., neglecting needs for competence and autonomy, and experiencing constriction in personal domains), thereby creating JS. Hence, based on the explanations and COR theory outlined above, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H1: Job instrumentality is positively related to job stress.

2.2. Job Stress and Social Loafing

The length of working hours in the hospitality industry (Dai et al., 2016) can lead to stress by depleting personal resources (Suárez & Vizcaíno, 2024). Among the methods that employees in the hospitality industry can employ to reduce JS anxiety are engaging in distracting activities (shifting focus) and exhibiting avoidance behaviours (Ma et al., 2021). Individuals may display defensive behaviours to avoid further depletion of personal resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014), may engage in avoidance by shirking responsibilities, and may demonstrate SL behaviours by exerting less effort toward their tasks (Dai et al., 2018; Dai et al., 2020). For instance, increased role stress can promote SL (Akgunduz & Eryilmaz, 2018). Ye et al. (2023) noted that the direction of SL (+/-) could vary depending on leadership behaviours. The allocation of resources for group and organisational sustainability may lead to stress if it yields lower returns than expected. In department-based team tasks, the motivation to protect against resource loss (JS) is likely to encourage resource conservation (SL) (Hobfoll et al., 2016; Edrees et al., 2023). Consequently, we put forward the subsequent hypothesis:

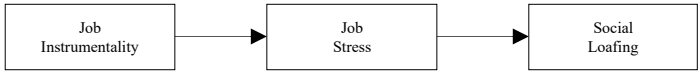
H2: Job stress is positively related to social loafing.

2.3. Job Stress as a Mediator

Focusing on money (JI) may lead to the neglect of personal development, with the primary aim being to overcome economic hardships and ensure survival by gaining economic power (increasing energy resources) (Halbesleben et al., 2014). It is known that extrinsic motivation is associated with outcomes that express rewards, bonuses, or money-based economic costs (e.g., commitment to stay) (Van den Broeck et al., 2021). At this juncture, the connection between extrinsic motivation and economic conditions can stress employees when the employment situation is perceived as a threat (Merino et al., 2021). Additionally, it is recognised that stress negatively affects organisational citizenship behaviours (OCB) (Chang et al., 2007). In other words, an emotional mechanism (JS) may play a significant role in the relationship between individual motivation (JI) and the behaviour of conserving personal resources (SL) (Meng et al., 2024). According to Hobfoll et al.'s (2018) "primacy of loss principle," resource loss is felt more acutely than resource gain. Under challenging economic conditions, JI, which creates energy resources (where work is viewed as a means to earn money), depletes personal resources (personal development and self-esteem), thereby generating JS (Merino et al., 2021), which can promote SL through resource conservation. Thus, the following hypothesis is put forth:

H3: Job stress mediates the relationship between job instrumentality and social loafing.

Figure: 1
Proposed Conceptual Framework



3. Methodology

Grounded in a positivist paradigm, we adopted a quantitative method and utilised a cross-sectional survey design to test the proposed hypotheses. (Pandey, 2019; Savitz & Wellenius, 2023).

3.1. Sample and Procedure

We conducted this study in Türkiye’s hospitality industry, specifically in Kocaeli's three- to five-star hotels, using a convenience sampling method during the fourth quarter of 2023. Our research sample consisted of employees from various departments, ensuring a broad representation of different roles and functions.

We contacted human resources managers via alumni networks to schedule the survey and to explain our research objectives and confidentiality protocols. With the approval of HR managers, one of the researchers personally visited each hotel participating in the study to collect data and distribute the survey on paper. The first section of the questionnaire explained the study’s purpose and duration, along with assurances of anonymity for participants’ responses. The second section gathered demographic information, while the third section comprised items measuring JI, JS, and SL. The survey randomly included attention check questions, such as “If you answer the questions sincerely, please select ‘Strongly Agree’,” to improve the quality of responses (Özkan et al., 2024). In addition, we provided adhesive envelopes with the questionnaire forms to ensure participants could submit their responses more securely. A total of 221 employees participated in the survey, with 204 valid responses received after excluding those that failed attention checks or contained missing responses, resulting in an effective response rate of 92%.

The size of a sample might influence the research analysis. The study, therefore, employed G*Power to determine the minimum sample size to obtain statistically significant results (Faul et al., 2009). Employing several statistical criteria, including a *p*-value of 0,05, a statistical power of 0,95, and an effect size of 0,15, we calculated a minimum sample size of 107.

The participants' mean age was roughly 31,64 years, with a standard deviation (SD) of 7,75. Their mean organisational job tenure was approximately 4,70 years, with an SD of 4,76. The mean number of rooms was 178,28 (SD=138.66). Table 1 shows more details on the sample characteristics.

Table: 1
Demographics

Participants' characteristics	Item	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	118	57,8 %
	Female	86	42,2 %
Marital status	Married	96	47,1 %
	Single	108	52,9 %
Education	High school	89	43,6 %
	Vocational	72	35,3 %
	Bachelor's	33	16,2 %
	Postgraduate	10	4,9 %
Position	Supervisor	29	14,2 %
	Employee	175	85,8 %
Department	Front office	39	19,1 %
	Food & beverage	79	38,7 %
	Housekeeping	46	22,5 %
	Other	40	19,6 %
Hotels' characteristics	Item	Frequency	%
Hotel star rating	Three stars	38	18,6%
	Four stars	78	38,2 %
	Five stars	88	43,1 %

3.2. Instrument

The survey instrument was conducted by adapting existing scales for the constructs under study, using five-point Likert-type scales ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. We translated the items from English to Turkish using Brislin's (1980) translation-back method to ensure accuracy and quality. Then, a panel including three professors specialising in organisational behaviour research and one industry expert assessed the questionnaire to ensure the face and content validity of the study measures (Anwar et al., 2023). Below are the details of the instrument's constructs, followed by a summary in Table 2.

Jl: We used an adapted version of Zhang et al.'s (2020) scale of six items related to JI. The reliability coefficient, Cronbach's alpha, was 0,88.

JS: In this research, we adapted a seven-item scale¹ from House and Rizzo (1972) to measure employees' JS. The reliability coefficient, Cronbach's alpha, was 0,78.

SL: The items for the SL were adapted from the four-item scale by Price et al. (2006). The reliability coefficient, Cronbach's alpha, was 0,86.

Control variables: We controlled the socio-demographic factors to mitigate their impact on the proposed associations, as demographic factors have been proven to impact employee attitudes and behavioural outcomes (Kim et al., 2023; Schaufeli et al., 2002).

¹ The original scale consists of seven items. However, we removed two items (JS6 and JS7) since their factor loadings were below the 0.50 threshold in confirmatory factor analysis (Channa et al., 2022; Karatepe et al., 2023).

Table: 2
Measurement Details

Constructs	Measure	Number of items	Indicator	Items
Job Instrumentality	Zhang et al. (2020)	6	J11	1. I do this job to make money.
			J12	2. This job is a means for me to earn money.
			J13	3. I took this job to earn money.
			J14	4. I will do it if I can earn more money through hard work.
			J15	5. Money is the only reason why I do this job.
			J16	6. To me, to work is to make money.
Job Stress	House & Rizzo (1972)	7	JS1	1. My job tends to affect my health directly.
			JS2	2. I work under a great deal of tension.
			JS3	3. I feel fidgety or nervous because of my job.
			JS4	4. My health would probably improve if I had a different job.
			JS5	5. Problems associated with work have kept me awake at night.
			JS6	6. I feel nervous before attending meetings in the organisation.
			JS7	7. I often "take my job home with me" because I think about it when doing other things.
Social Loafing	Price et al. (2006)	4	SL1	1. I loaf my share of tasks.
			SL2	2. I leave my work to others to do.
			SL3	3. I avoid work and responsibility.
			SL4	4. I claim there are other things to do when others need help.

3.3. Analytical Intent

We computed descriptive statistics using SPSS v25 and conducted the measurement model evaluation and hypothesis testing using *Mplus* v8.3. We performed the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate the measurement model and employed structural equation modelling (SEM) to test the research hypotheses and examine the relationships among the constructs.

4. Results

4.1. Tests of Measurement Model

We conducted the CFA to assess the measurement model's goodness-of-fit indices, multicollinearity, reliability, and validity. The findings of the three-factor CFA demonstrated an excellent fit of the model, as substantiated by the statistical index. The data showed a chi-square test of model fit (χ^2) value of 133,395, a *p*-value of 0,001, and a degrees of freedom (df) value of 81; $\chi^2/\text{df} = 1,64$. The other fit indices were: root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0,05; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0,96; Tucker-Lewis fit index (TLI) = 0,95; standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0,05 (Üzümler et al., 2024). We evaluated multicollinearity utilising the variance inflation factor (VIF), establishing a threshold value of 3 (Lin, 2008). All values calculated were below the advised threshold of 3 for all relevant constructs ($\text{JI} \rightarrow \text{JS} = 1,00$; $\text{JS} \rightarrow \text{SL} = 1,26$). Table 3 shows the details of the other results.

Table: 3
CFA Results

Constructs and indicators	(λ)	McDonald's omega ω	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	Items deleted
Job instrumentality		0,88	0,88	0,55	0,22	0,19	-
JI1	0,74						
JI2	0,72						
JI3	0,85						
JI4	0,71						
JI5	0,74						
JI6	0,66						
Job stress		0,79	0,79	0,44	0,17	0,14	2
JS1	0,58						
JS2	0,55						
JS3	0,75						
JS4	0,75						
JS5	0,65						
JS6	0,47 ^a						
JS7	0,26 ^a						
Social loafing		0,86	0,86	0,61	0,22	0,16	-
SL1	0,69						
SL2	0,81						
SL3	0,87						
SL4	0,73						

Notes: (λ) = Loadings; CR = Composite reliability; AVE = Average variance extracted; MSV = Maximum squared variance; ASV = Average shared square variance.

^a = Excluded items.

According to the standards set by Hair et al. (2014), all the constructs had McDonald's omega² and composite reliability (CR) values higher than 0,70, meaning there were no internal consistency problems. Factor loadings are 0,50, CR coefficients are 0,70, and average variance extracted (AVE) values are 0,50 (except for JS³), indicating the absence of convergent validity issues. There were no problems with discriminant validity because the AVE values were higher than the maximum shared variance (MSV) and the average squared variance (ASV) of shared variance (Hair et al., 2014).

4.2. Descriptive Statistics

Table 4 presents the statistical data, displaying the examined constructs' mean and SD values. The analysis identified a significant positive correlation between JI and JS ($r = 0,34$; $p < 0.01$). Additionally, the findings revealed a significant positive correlation between JS and SL ($r = 0,28$; $p < 0.01$). As for the control variables, we observed that position (coded as 0 = supervisor, 1 = employee) was positively related to SL ($r = 0,15$; $p < 0.05$). The correlations among the variables aligned with the hypothesis and did not present multicollinearity issues.

² Cronbach's alpha relies on strong assumptions and may yield deceptive reliability estimates (Sijtsma, 2009). Moreover, it fails to demonstrate internal consistency or unidimensionality, and often-used cut-off values of 0,70 or 0,80 are entirely arbitrary (Cho & Kim, 2015). We, therefore, used McDonald's omega instead of alpha in the study (Hayes & Coutts, 2020). It is superior to alpha in many ways, requiring fewer and more realistic assumptions (Cortina et al., 2020).

³ The AVE for JS was 0,44, slightly below the recommended threshold of 0,50. Fornell and Larcker (1981a) and (1981b), on the other hand, say that convergent validity may still be acceptable if the CR is higher than 0,70.

Table: 4
Descriptives and Correlations

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	31,64	7,75	1								
2. Gender ^a	1,42	0,49	0,07	1							
3. Mrt. status ^b	1,52	0,50	-0,33**	-0,01	1						
4. Education ^c	1,82	0,87	0,04	0,05	0,18**	1					
5. Tenure	4,70	4,76	0,45**	-0,01	-0,17*	0,08	1				
6. Position ^d	1,85	0,35	-0,18**	0,12	0,09	-0,16*	-0,35**	1			
7. JI	3,33	1,02	0,03	-0,01	-0,01	-0,15*	-0,07	0,11	1		
8. JS	2,90	0,98	0,06	0,09	-0,07	-0,07	-0,02	0,11	0,34**	1	
9. SL	2,34	1,04	-0,02	0,07	0,02	-0,08	-0,02	0,15*	0,42**	0,28**	1

Notes: n = 204; * $p < 0,05$; ** $p < 0,01$; a, b, c, d = Dummy variable; JI = Job instrumentality; JS = Job stress; SL = Social loafing.

4.3. Tests of Common Method Bias

As common method bias (CMB) can change the research findings, we used Harman’s single-factor test and the one-factor CFA measurement model to see if CMB was present in this study (Fuller et al., 2016; Podsakoff et al., 2003). Harman’s single-factor test showed that the single factor only accounted for 32% of the total variance, below the 50% threshold, and indicated that a single factor does not explain most of the variance in all study variables. The one-factor CFA measurement model exhibited inadequate data fit: $\chi^2/df = 7,18$; RMSEA = 0,17; CFI = 0,61; TLI = 0,52; SRMR = 0,13, consistent with the findings of Harman’s single-factor test (Lee and Chon, 2021). Therefore, we determined that CMB was not a serious problem (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

4.4. Tests of Hypotheses

We conducted a comprehensive assessment in the first stage of our research to evaluate the measurement model. In the next stage, we examined the structural model to determine the relationships among the variables. Using 5,000 bootstrap and a 95% confidence interval (CI), we found this study's upper and lower limits, which helped us understand the significance level. The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in Table 5, detailing the statistical outcomes, and visually summarised in Figure 2 for better comprehension and interpretation.

Upon examining Table 5, the results indicated a positive relationship between JI and JS, supported by the standardised coefficient ($\beta = 0,34$; $p < 0,001$), thereby supporting H1. The findings also validated H2, hypothesising a positive relationship between JS and SL. The analysis revealed a significant positive effect, as indicated by the path coefficient ($\beta = 0,26$; $p < 0,001$), thus supporting H2. As Hayes (2018) suggested, we used bootstrapping⁴ to assess the indirect effect. The results showed that JS mediated the relationship between JI and SL ($\beta = 0,09$; $p < 0,05$; 95% CI [0,030; 0,169]), hence supporting H3.

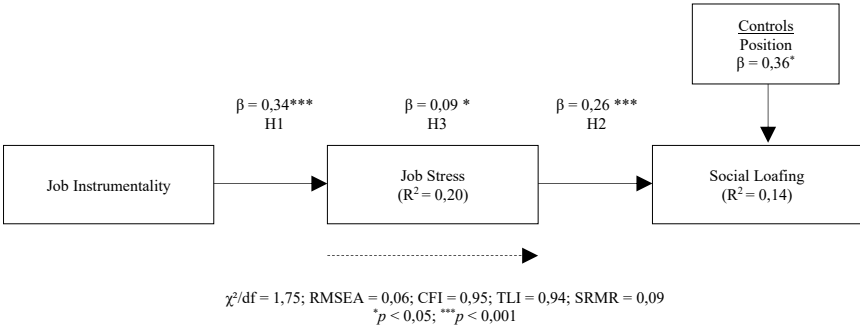
⁴ We chose this method because it is more reliable than Baron and Kenny’s (1986) causal steps or the Sobel test (Hayes, 2018).

Table: 5
Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses	Effects	Description of paths	β	t-value	p-value
H1	Direct	Jl \rightarrow JS	0,34	5,21	0,000***
H2	Direct	JS \rightarrow SL	0,26	3,78	0,000***
H3	Indirect	Jl \rightarrow JS \rightarrow SL	0,09	2,56	0,01*
Controls	Direct	Position \rightarrow SL	0,36	2,01	0,04*

Notes: * $p < 0,05$; *** $p < 0,001$; Jl = Job instrumentality; JS = Job stress; SL = Social loafing; Coefficients are standardized (β).

Figure: 2
Structural Model Results



The effect of position⁵ was included in the model as a control variable, and we found it to positively impact SL ($\beta = 0,36$; $p < 0,05$). Findings suggest that position impacts SL.

Our constructs also demonstrate sufficient nomological validity. Similar to hypothesis testing, nomological validity -one form of construct validity- assesses the strength and theoretical accord of relationships among constructs within a specified model (Straub & Gefen, 2004). As presented in Table 4, the correlations among the constructs were positive and consistent with our theoretical framework (Almasradi et al., 2024). Furthermore, evidence from construct validity (fit indices), internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega), convergent validity (factor loadings, CR, and AVE values), and SEM results (alignment of hypotheses with theoretical expectations) support the nomological validity (Mustaffa et al., 2018).

5. Discussion

We aim to elucidate the effects of economic inequality on individuals' propensity to work more (Alexiou & Kartiyasa, 2020) and its implications for organisational behaviour. In this context, it has been observed that perceiving work as a means to financial gain (JI) promotes JS, and JS plays a mediating role in the relationship between JI and SL. The COR theory illuminated the relationships among the variables addressed in the study. When

⁵ The supervisor was employed as the reference point in the analysis.

economic inequality is felt acutely, individuals' efforts to increase resources (wealth-status) (Wang et al., 2023) are reflected in their behaviours within the organisational arena (Sinclair et al., 2024).

It has been found that JI increases JS, supporting the conclusion that monetary (extrinsic) motivation (Van den Broeck et al., 2021) leads to overworking for money (Suárez & Vizcaíno, 2024) and long working hours (Dai et al., 2016), which generate stress. Hobfoll et al. (2016) noted that excessive resource expenditure beyond resource acquisition created tension and stress for individuals. When individuals possess fewer resources, they become more vulnerable to resource loss (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Halbesleben et al. (2014) indicated that resource loss led to stress. The results obtained are consistent with the existing literature.

Our model demonstrated that JS has a significant positive impact on SL, confirming the findings of Akgunduz and Eryilmaz (2018). Similarly, Dai et al. (2018) found that avoiding responsibility enhances SL. These results suggest that stress -a factor that depletes personal resources- triggers SL behaviours as a resource-conservation strategy, consistent with previous literature.

If an individual assigns instrumental value to work, their objective becomes to obtain rewards, money, and promotions (Locke & Schatte, 2019). Individuals motivated by this goal perceive rewards (energy resources) as resources that need to be increased (Hobfoll, 2011; Zhang & Hirschi, 2021). However, the excessive use of personal time in the pursuit of growing energy resources leads to the depletion of individual resources and elevated stress levels (Mitchell et al., 2020; Suárez & Vizcaíno, 2024). While increasing the energy resource (JI), the JS resulting from using personal resources leads to greater SL to prevent further resource loss. The enhancement of SL through JS due to JI is consistent with the literature and provides evidence consistent with Hobfoll et al.'s (2018) "primacy of loss principle."

While Karau and Wilhau's (2020) meta-analysis found no evidence for an effect of position on SL, our study showed that position, used as a control variable, affected SL. Research findings reveal that employees exhibit higher levels of SL than supervisors. This can provide an important indicator of how hierarchical structures affect individuals' sense of responsibility. While supervisors might focus on job performance with a more strategic approach aligned with their career goals, employees may prioritise short-term benefits and prefer to avoid workload, exhibiting SL by attributing instrumental value to work.

6. Implications

This research has established itself in the literature as a rare example investigating the reflections of economic inequality on organisational behaviour, responding to the call made by Sinclair et al. (2024). We focus on the perspective of economic inequality in work (JI) and examine JS as a consequence of JI. The relationships presented in the study are supported by COR theory. We define JI as an energy resource and JS and SL as personal resources (Hobfoll, 2011), demonstrating that JI is positively associated with JS.

Furthermore, while it is known that SL is prevalent in the hospitality industry (Dai et al., 2018), it has been observed that JI increases SL within this sector.

The results obtained are explained by Hobfoll et al.'s (2018) "primacy of loss principle." Moreover, evidence has been provided that JI enhances SL through JS. Based on Hobfoll et al. (2018)'s "crossover model," an approach has been developed that explains the role of economic hardship (JI) in resource transfer (SL) through JS, making significant contributions to the literature on organisational behaviour.

This research explains how JI exerts an enhancing effect on JS and identifies when JI may increase SL through JS in the hospitality industry context. Additionally, the study has determined that a financial-focused perspective (JI) predominates in Türkiye, one of the developing countries (Ugur, 2021b), and has identified the organisational outcomes (JS-SL) that may arise as a result (Zhang & Hirschi, 2021).

In this regard, it is recommended that policymakers reconsider their perspectives on economic conditions and develop policies that promote equity in resource distribution (Osinubi & Olomola, 2021). This would enable societal welfare to be distributed equitably among individuals and create "resource gain spirals" from an organisational behaviour perspective (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

To reduce the extrinsic motivational element of JI, implementing human resources support programs that activate individuals' intrinsic motivations may be suggested (Van den Broeck et al., 2021). It can be argued that recognising and discarding JI-focused candidates during recruitment would be more advantageous for the organisation. To mitigate JS, psychological support can be provided to individuals, and guiding programs that facilitate coping with stress can be developed based on individuals' personal expectations (Merino et al., 2021). If individuals exhibiting JS and SL reduce their work efforts, practices can be implemented to foster collegial relationships or leader support that will compensate for their deficiencies (Karau & Wilhau, 2020; Merino et al., 2021). On the other hand, human resource management or managers may recognise and convey employees' contributions to their work, which may be an important factor in reducing SL (Karau & Wilhau, 2020). Motivational rewards such as "certificates of appreciation" or "individual contribution awards" can be introduced to manage this process.

7. Limitations and Future Suggestions

This study investigated the effects of JI on organisational behaviour, based on the assumption that economic inequality can lead to JI. By centring on JI, the study has focused on the variables of JS and SL, providing empirical evidence regarding the mediating role of JS. Future research models could include organisational culture, leader support, and peer support. We constructed the research model using COR theory (Hobfoll, 2011; Hobfoll et al., 2018). Future studies may employ motivation theories or social comparison theories. We obtained the research data from a single source (employees). Future research could

incorporate a mechanism such as responsible leadership, which has the potential to reverse the relationships among the variables addressed. Data could be collected from the leaders, employing a multi-source approach. We designed this research as cross-sectional, and it is recommended that future studies be longitudinal to mitigate concerns regarding CMB (Özkan et al., 2023). We focus on hospitality employees within the service sector, who are relatively low-paid. Therefore, perceptions of JI and its relationship to JS and SL will likely vary in technology-intensive sectors (e.g., software, telecommunications). Human capital is especially significant in these sectors. Consequently, similar analyses should be carried out on samples of employees in technology-intensive sectors to examine the generalisability of our findings.

8. Conclusion

The findings show that when individuals see work only as a way to earn money (JI), they face a threat of losing resources, which increases JS. Higher stress levels then lead to resource-conserving behaviours, reinforcing SL. These dynamics suggest that viewing work solely as an economic tool can weaken employee performance and team effectiveness. Therefore, organisations must develop strategies that enrich and diversify the meaning employees assign to their work. Although we did not directly measure macro-level economic inequality, our findings on JI's influence on JS and SL suggest a plausible mechanism by which perceptions of economic inequality may impact work-life.

References

- Akgunduz, Y. & G. Eryilmaz (2018), "Does turnover intention mediate the effects of job insecurity and co-worker support on social loafing?", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 68, 41-49.
- Alexiou, C. & A. Kartiyasa (2020), "Does greater income inequality cause increased work hours? New evidence from high income economies", *Bulletin of Economic Research*, 72(4), 380-392.
- Almasradi, R.B. et al. (2024), "Authentic leadership and socially responsible behavior: Sequential mediation of psychological empowerment and psychological capital and moderating effect of perceived corporate social responsibility", *Sustainability*, 16, 6508.
- Amis, J.M. et al. (2020), "The organizational reproduction of inequality", *Academy of Management Annals*, 14(1), 195-230.
- Anwar, M.A. et al. (2023), "Unconventional green transport innovations in the post-COVID-19 era. A trade-off between green actions and personal health protection", *Journal of Business Research*, 155, 113442.
- Brislin, R.W. (1980), "Translation and content analysis of oral and written materials", in: H.C. Triandis & W.W. Lambert (eds.), *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology* (349-444), Allyn & Bacon.
- Chang, C.H. et al. (2007), "Emotional strain and organizational citizenship behaviours: A meta-analysis and review", *Work & Stress*, 21(4), 312-332.
- Channa, N.A. et al. (2022), "Capturing customer's store loyalty through relationship benefits: Moderating effect of retail innovation", *European Business Review*, 34(1), 20-40.

- Cho, E. & S. Kim (2015), "Cronbach's coefficient alpha", *Organizational Research Methods*, 18(2), 207-230.
- Choi, H.M. et al. (2019), "Understanding hotel frontline employees' emotional intelligence, emotional labor, job stress, coping strategies and burnout", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 82, 199-208.
- Cortina, J.M. et al. (2020), "From alpha to omega and beyond! A look at the past, present, and (possible) future of psychometric soundness in the Journal of Applied Psychology", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 105(12), 1351-1381.
- Dai, Y.D. et al. (2016), "Moderating effect of work-family conflict on the relationship between leader-member exchange and relative deprivation: Links to behavioral outcomes", *Tourism Management*, 54, 369-382.
- Dai, Y.D. et al. (2018), "TMX, social loafing, perceived accountability and OCB", *The Service Industries Journal*, 40(5-6), 394-414.
- Dai, Y.D. et al. (2020), "The 'if-then' rules matter more? The roles of regulatory focus and leader-member Exchange", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 90, 102602.
- Edrees, H.N. et al. (2023), "The influences of procedural justice on turnover intention and social loafing behavior among hotel employees", *Journal of Risk and Financial Management*, 16(2), 75.
- Faul, F. et al. (2009), "Statistical power analyses using G*Power 3.1: Tests for correlation and regression analyses", *Behavior Research Methods*, 41(4), 1149-1160.
- Fornell, C. & D.F. Larcker (1981a), "Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error", *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39-50.
- Fornell, C. & D.F. Larcker (1981b), *Structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error: Algebra and statistics*, Sage Publications, Sage CA, Los Angeles, CA.
- Fu, H.N. et al. (2021), "Relationships between socio-economic status and lottery gambling across lottery types: Neighborhood-level evidence from a large city", *Addiction*, 116(5), 1256-1261.
- Fuller, C.M. et al. (2016), "Common methods variance detection in business research", *Journal of Business Research*, 69(8), 3192-3198.
- Hair, J.F. et al. (2014), *Multivariate Data Analysis*, Pearson, Upper Saddle River, NJ.
- Halbesleben, J.R.B. et al. (2014), "Getting to the "COR": Understanding the role of resources in conservation of resources theory", *Journal of Management*, 40(5), 1334-1364.
- Hayes, A.F. & J.J. Coutts (2020), "Use omega rather than Cronbach's alpha for estimating reliability. But...", *Communication Methods and Measures*, 14(1), 1-24.
- Hayes, A.F. (2018), *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis: A Regression-Based Approach*, Guilford Press, New York, NY.
- Hobfoll, S.E. (2011), "Conservation of resources theory: Its implication for stress, health, and resilience", in: S. Folkman (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Stress, Health, and Coping* (127-147), Oxford University Press.
- Hobfoll, S.E. et al. (2016), "Chapter 7 - Conservation of resources theory applied to major stress", in: G. Fink (ed.), *Stress: Concepts, Cognition, Emotion, and Behavior* (65-71), Handbook of Stress Series Volume 1, Academic Press.

- Hobfoll, S.E. et al. (2018), "Conservation of resources in the organizational context: The reality of resources and their consequences", *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 5(1), 103-128.
- House, R.J. & J.R. Rizzo (1972), "Role conflict and ambiguity as critical variables in a model of organizational behavior", *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 7(3), 467-505.
- Huertas-Valdivia, I. et al. (2018), "Achieving engagement among hospitality employees: A serial mediation model", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 30(1), 217-241.
- Jetten, J. et al. (2017), "A social identity analysis of responses to economic inequality", *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 18 (December 2017), 1-5.
- Karatepe, O.M. et al. (2023), "Test of a serial mediation model of Machiavellian leadership among hospitality and tourism employees", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 111, 103462.
- Karau, S.J. & A.J. Wilhau (2020), "Chapter 1 - Social loafing and motivation gains in groups: An integrative review", in: S.J. Karau (ed.), *Individual Motivation within Groups* (3-51), Academic Press.
- Kim, J.Y. et al. (2023), "An empirical study of social loafing behavior among public officers in South Korea: The role of trust in a supervisor, perceived organizational support, and perceived organizational politics", *Behavioral Sciences*, 13, 498.
- Lee, Y. & M.-G. Chon (2021), "Transformational leadership and employee communication behaviors: The role of communal and exchange relationship norms". *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 42(1), 61-82.
- Lin, F.J. (2008), "Solving multicollinearity in the process of fitting regression model using the nested estimate procedure", *Quality & Quantity*, 42(3), 417-426.
- Locke, E.A. & K. Schattke (2019), "Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: Time for expansion and clarification", *Motivation Science*, 5(4), 277-290.
- Ma, C. et al. (2021), "Coping with stress: How hotel employees fight to work", *Sustainability*, 13(19), 10887.
- Meng, L. et al. (2024), "How family motivation affects Chinese hotel employees' extra-role behaviors: A serial mediation model from an instrumental perspective", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 116, 103625.
- Merino, M.D. et al. (2021), "What makes one feel stress or distress in quarantine? An analysis from conservation of resources (COR) theory", *British Journal of Health Psychology*, 26(2), 606-623.
- Mitchell, R. et al. (2020), "Gamification and the impact of extrinsic motivation on needs satisfaction: Making work fun?", *Journal of Business Research*, 106, 323-330.
- Mustaffa, W.S.W. et al. (2018), "Testing nomological validity of customers' cognitive levels in evaluating higher education service experience", *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 8(10), 12-31.
- Osinubi, T.T. & P.A. Olomola (2021), "Globalisation, income inequality and poverty relationships: evidence from Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey", *Journal of Economic and Administrative Sciences*, 37(2), 179-208.

- Özkan, O.S. et al. (2023), "Could unlocking employee resilience be considered a potential path to achieving workplace success?", *Current Psychology*, 43, 11772-11784.
- Özkan, O.S. et al. (2024), "Enhancing prosocial behavior in the aviation industry through responsible leadership and importance of ethics and social responsibility: Examining a moderated mediation model", *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 45(2), 208-230.
- Pandey, J. (2019), "Deductive approach to content analysis", in: M. Gupta et al. (eds.), *Qualitative techniques for workplace data analysis* (145-169), IGI Global.
- Payne B.K. et al. (2017), "Economic inequality increases risk taking", *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114(18), 4643-4648.
- Podsakoff, P.M. et al. (2003), "Common method biases in behavioural research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies", *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879-903.
- Podsakoff, P.M. et al. (2012), "Sources of method bias in social science research and recommendations on how to control it", *Annual Review of Psychology*, 63(1), 539-569.
- Price, K.H. et al. (2006), "Withholding inputs in team contexts: Member composition, interaction processes, evaluation structure, and social loafing", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91(6), 1375-1384.
- Savitz, D.A. & G.A. Wellenius (2023), "Can cross-sectional studies contribute to causal inference? It depends", *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 192(4), 514-516.
- Schaufeli, W.B. et al. (2002), "The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two sample confirmatory factor analytic approach", *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 3(1), 71-92.
- Schwepeker Jr, C.H. & C.K. Dimitriou (2021), "Using ethical leadership to reduce job stress and improve performance quality in the hospitality industry", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 94, 102860.
- Sijtsma, K. (2009), "On the use, the misuse, and the very limited usefulness of Cronbach's alpha", *Psychometrika*, 74(1), 107-120.
- Sinclair, R.R. et al. (2024), "Economic stress and occupational health", *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 11(1), 423-451.
- Straub, D. & D. Gefen (2004), "Validation guidelines for IS positivist research", *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, 13, 380-427.
- Suárez, J. & A. Vizcaíno (2024), "Stress, motivation, and performance in global software engineering", *Journal of Software: Evolution and Process*, 36(5), e2600.
- Ugur, Z.B. (2021a), "How does inequality hamper subjective well-being? The role of fairness", *Social Indicators Research*, 158, 377-407.
- Ugur, Z.B. (2021b), "Does money buy happiness in Turkey?", *Applied Research Quality Life*, 16, 1073-1096.
- Üzümlü, B. et al. (2024), "Analysing crab syndrome through the perspective of life history theory", *South African Journal of Business Management*, 55(1), a4592.
- Van den Broeck, A. et al. (2021), "Beyond intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: A meta-analysis on self-determination theory's multidimensional conceptualization of work motivation", *Organizational Psychology Review*, 11(3), 240-273.
- Wang, Z. et al. (2023), "Restless in an Unequal World: Economic Inequality Fuels the Desire for Wealth and Status", *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 49(6), 871-890.

- Warr, D.J. et al. (2007), "'Money, stress, jobs': Residents' perceptions of health-impairing factors in 'poor' neighbourhoods", *Health & Place*, 13(3), 743-756.
- Ye, Y. et al. (2023), "Why do they slack off in teamwork? Understanding frontline hospitality employees' social loafing when faced with exploitative leadership", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 109, 103420.
- Zhang, C. & A. Hirschi (2021), "Forget about the money? A latent profile analysis of calling and work motivation in Chinese employees", *Career Development International*, 26(2), 105-118.
- Zhang, X.A. et al. (2020), "Playing it safe for my family: Exploring the dual effects of family motivation on employee productivity and creativity", *Academy of Management Journal*, 63(6), 1923-1950.