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THE EFFECT OF EMPLOYEE AUTHENTICITY ON WORKPLACE LONELINESS(*)

ÇALIŞAN OTANTİKLİĞİNİN İŞYERİ YALNIZLIĞI ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ

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Abstract: *Authenticity is a widely studied concept in literature, with a strong emphasis on authentic leadership and its impact on organizational outcomes. However, research focusing specifically on employee authenticity remains limited, especially in the national literature in Turkey. The purpose of this research is to fill this gap by exploring the relationship between employee authenticity and workplace loneliness. In this study, the effect of employees acting consistently with their true selves at work on workplace loneliness was examined. Using a quantitative method, data were collected via an online questionnaire from 373 white-collar employees working in the private sector in Turkey. Findings revealed a significant, negative relationship between employee authenticity and workplace loneliness, indicating that higher authenticity levels result in reduced loneliness among employees. Among the aspects of employee authenticity, self-alienation was negatively correlated with emotional deprivation. Moreover, age and experience were positively correlated to employee authenticity. The results suggest that employee authenticity significantly predicts workplace loneliness. The study's insights may contribute to organizations and professionals, particularly People and Culture departments by highlighting the role of authenticity in enhancing employee well-being, reducing loneliness, and fostering workplace relationships.*

Keywords: *Authenticity, Employee Authenticity, Workplace Loneliness.*

JEL: *M10, M14*

Öz: Otantikliğin, literatürde yaygın olarak incelenen bir kavram olduğu, özellikle otantik liderlik ve örgütsel sonuçlara etkisine odaklanan çalışmalar yapıldığı görülmektedir. Ancak, özellikle Türkiye'deki alan yazında, çalışan otantikliğine odaklı araştırmaların sınırlı kaldığı görülmüştür. Bu araştırmanın amacı, çalışan otantikliği ile işyeri yalnızlığı arasındaki ilişkiyi inceleyerek bu boşluğu doldurmaktır. Bu çalışmada çalışanların işyerinde gerçek benlikleri ile tutarlı bir şekilde hareket etmelerinin işyeri yalnızlığı üzerindeki etkisi incelenmiştir. Nicel yöntem kullanılarak, Türkiye'de özel sektörde çalışan toplam 373 beyaz yakalı çalışandan online anket formu aracılığı veri toplanmıştır. Bulgular, çalışan otantikliği ile işyeri yalnızlığı arasında anlamlı ve negatif bir ilişki olduğunu ortaya koyarak, daha yüksek

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otantiklik seviyelerinin çalışanlarda işyeri yalnızlığını azalttığını göstermektedir. Çalışan otantikliğinin boyutlarından, kendine yabancılaşma ile duygusal yoksunluk arasında negatif yönlü ilişki görülmüştür. Çalışanların yaşı ve deneyimi ile çalışan otantikliği arasında pozitif yönlü, ilişki olduğu bulgular arasında yer almaktadır. Sonuçlar, çalışan otantikliğinin işyeri yalnızlığının anlamlı bir yordayıcısı olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu araştırma sonuçlarının, çalışanların refahını artırmada, işyeri yalnızlığını azaltmada ve işyeri ilişkilerini geliştirmede otantikliğin rolünü vurgulayarak örgütlere, profesyonellere ve özellikle İnsan ve Kültür departmanlarına katkıda bulunabileceği düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Otantiklik, Çalışan Otantikliği, İşyeri Yalnızlığı.

1. Introduction

Authenticity has been widely explored in psychological and organizational research, with a strong emphasis on authentic leadership. Originally used in art history, the concept has expanded across multiple disciplines (Theodossopoulos, 2013). However, research focusing specifically on employee authenticity remains limited, particularly within the national literature in Turkey. Defined as the consistency between one's true self and outward expressions in general, authenticity includes facets such as self-awareness, congruence with personal values, beliefs and genuine behavior, which are considered crucial for well-being and interpersonal relationships (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Deci & Ryan, 2000). At the workplace, authenticity extends beyond individual traits, it’s about employees being their true selves at work, and building meaningful connections (Harter, 2002; Song, Wang, & Zhao, 2020). Despite its significance, no research has been found studying the relationship between employee authenticity and workplace loneliness. This study seeks to bridge this gap by exploring this relationship, aiming to contribute a novel perspective to literature and offer valuable insights for professionals in the field.

Workplace loneliness is also an emerging concern in work life. It is defined by a subjective sense of social isolation, a sense of emotional or social disconnection at work often resulting in adverse outcomes such as a decrease in job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and an increase in stress. It encompasses both quantity and quality of relationships at work. (Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018; Wright & Silard, 2021).

A recent study examining the interaction between authenticity and employee relationships found that authentic behavior among employees leads to increased acceptance within their social environment, which, in turn, improves cooperative behaviors (Tang, Xu, Huang, & Pu, 2021). Similarly, a study by Ang, Jia, Long, Ren, and Pu (2022) investigated the moderating effect of relationship duration on the link between authentic behavior and workplace interactions. The findings indicate that relationship duration can influence employees' perceptions and, consequently, behaviors such as cooperation and exclusion. These findings suggest that employee authenticity significantly impacts the quality of relationships at work and experiences of exclusion. In light of these results, it is proposed that authenticity may influence the quality and quantity of workplace friendships, therefore affecting workplace loneliness.

Workplace loneliness can be shaped by both organizational environment and individual predispositions toward loneliness. Employees bring distinct traits to the workplace that shape their perceptions and experiences of the work environment. In addition, specific characteristics of the organizational context may affect employees' behaviors, causing them to act in ways that differ from their authentic selves. This misfit between an employee's core identity and the organization's values —referred to as a lack of person-environment fit— contributes to feelings of isolation and loneliness in the workplace (Wright, 2005). This research aims to explore the relationship between employee authenticity and workplace loneliness, hypothesizing that greater authenticity is associated with reduced loneliness. It is thought that the Person-Environment Fit Theory might provide a valuable framework for understanding this relationship.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Authenticity

Authenticity has been defined in numerous ways, but many definitions assume that authenticity involves knowing and acting in accordance with one's true self, reflecting thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and emphasizing nondefensive evaluative information, openness, trust, and fulfilling interpersonal relationships (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Other definitions include knowing oneself, being loyal to oneself, acting in accord with one's core values, beliefs, self-representations, consistency between actions and expressions of one's values, desires, and feelings (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Avolio & Garder, 2005; Harter, 2002), as well the degree to which one's values, beliefs, and characteristics fit his/her environment (Metin, Taris, Peeters, van Beek, & Van den Bosch, 2016), or "creating and holding cognitive and social space for several true versions of oneself that may change over time" (Caza, Moss, & Vough,2018).

Authenticity can be conceptualized as a person-centered construct (Barrett-Lennard, 1998). Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, and Joseph (2008) identify it with three aspects: self-alienation, authentic living, and accepting external influence. Self-alienation reflects the disconnection between one's conscious awareness and the actual experience of the true self, signifying a lack of inner alignment. It can be stated that the higher this disconnection, the higher the level of self-alienation of the individual. Authentic living is engaging in behavior aligned with one's awareness of the true self. This entails expressing emotions and actions that are consistent with one's physiological states, emotions, beliefs, and cognitions. Having a high level of authentic living, in other words, living in harmony with one's own values, supports authenticity. The third aspect, the acceptance of external influences allows individuals to integrate social norms and beliefs into their self-concept, facilitating a cohesive sense of identity. A harmonious fit between an individual's actual physiological states and perceived environment is positively linked to well-being. Social influence also plays a crucial role in shaping authenticity. A high level of self-alienation and acceptance of external influences leads to a distancing from authenticity (Wood et al., 2008; Metin, et al., 2016).

2.2. Employee authenticity

When applied to the workplace, authenticity at work is a cognitive-affective phenomenon that assesses the fit between one's true self and their work environment. It is often not immediately apparent, but it is beneficial for both the employee and the

organization, as employees spend a significant portion of their lives at work (Metin, et al., 2016). Within this framework, employee authenticity refers to the extent to which an individual can be their true self at work. It means being able to express one's genuine feelings, thoughts, and values freely in a professional setting (Harter, 2002). When employees feel a strong connection to their work and are not forced to suppress their true selves, they are more likely to experience a sense of fulfillment and well-being. This optimal level of employee authenticity is characterized by a low degree of feeling disconnected from oneself and a high level of genuine living (Song, Wang, & Zhao, 2020).

Being authentic at work has gained increased attention as organizations recognize the positive relationship between authenticity, job satisfaction, and performance, along with the benefits of enhanced morale and a healthier workplace culture (Goffee & Jones, 2015). However, there is limited research on the antecedents of employee authenticity, acting in an extraverted, agreeable, and conscientious manner, experiencing power, and being in a positive mood were reported as antecedents of authenticity (Hewlin, Karelaia, Kouchaki, & Sedikides, 2020). Recent research demonstrates organizational support, organizational justice, inclusive leadership, high-quality relationships with colleagues, job autonomy, and possibilities for development positively predict employee authenticity (Song, Zhou, Wang, Feng, & Xiang, 2024).

As a consequence, research shows that when employees feel free to express their authentic selves, they often experience an increase in resilience, motivation, engagement, and job satisfaction. This sense of belonging and acceptance can lead to higher job satisfaction and stronger organizational commitment (Van den Bosch & Taris, 2014; Hewlin et al., 2020). Additionally, employee authenticity is linked to improved well-being; employees who feel authentic report higher levels of life satisfaction and reduced stress and burnout (Goldman & Kernis, 2002) as well as promoting positive work attitudes and behaviors and inhibit negative ones (Song, Wang, & Zhao, 2020). In a study with 254 healthcare employees in Turkey, it was concluded that authentic living which is one of the aspects of authenticity has a positive and significant effect on career satisfaction, contextual performance, and job satisfaction (Yıldız, Uzunbacak, & Akçakanat, 2021).

2.3. Workplace Loneliness

Workplace loneliness has become an increasingly relevant topic in organizational psychology, driven by shifts in work structures, including remote work and the digitalization of many job roles (Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018). Loneliness is generally defined as a distressing experience resulting from a perceived gap between desired and actual social connections (Peplau & Perlman, 1982). It is a subjective feeling of social isolation, where individuals perceive a lack of closeness or meaningful relationships, even when they may not be physically alone (Weiss, 1973). Therefore, loneliness is a perceived and subjective deficit in desired social relations, not only due to a lack of high-quality relationships. It is often misunderstood as a result of insufficient personal relationships (Wax, Deutsch, Lindner, Lindner, & Hopmeyer, 2022).

Referring to a sense of emotional or social disconnection, workplace loneliness may occur when employees feel isolated or unsupported, despite often being physically present among their colleagues (Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018). Wright and Silard (2021)

describe workplace loneliness as a lack of fulfilling interpersonal relationships at work, which may come from an environment that does not facilitate deep, authentic social connections or bonds. Importantly, loneliness at work is not only about physical isolation but rather a perceived lack of meaningful or supportive interactions, which can occur even in highly populated or collaborative environments (Ece & Gültekin, 2019).

Workplace loneliness is composed of two dimensions: emotional deprivation and social companionship. Emotional deprivation is defined as a lack of emotional connection with others. It can negatively impact workplace performance and citizenship behaviors. Social companionship is the connection and network of people, positively predicts organizational commitment, and negatively affects job-seeking intentions. Emotional deprivation can lead to negative workplace outcomes, while social companionship positively predicts organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Doğan, Çetin & Sungur, 2009; Wax et al., 2022).

Research indicates that loneliness at work has negative impacts both on employees and organizations, leading to decreased productivity, higher turnover rates, and compromised mental health (Lam & Lau, 2012). The psychological consequences of workplace loneliness are substantial, often leading to increased stress, burnout, and decreased life satisfaction, affecting employee well-being, job performance, and job satisfaction negatively (Basit & Nauman, 2022; Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018). A longitudinal study by Lam and Lau (2012) further emphasizes that workplace loneliness is associated with poor mental health outcomes, including heightened anxiety and sleep disturbances, which may contribute to increased absenteeism and lower work performance. In line with this, research suggests that lonely employees are at a higher risk of experiencing depressive symptoms and emotional exhaustion, which can undermine their job satisfaction and overall quality of life (Wright & Silard, 2021). This complex phenomenon is shaped by various factors including individual and organizational antecedents. Individual characteristics such as extraversion, emotional stability, and social intelligence have a significant negative correlation with workplace loneliness. Moreover, employees' shyness highlights deficiencies in their social abilities. Social avoidance may indicate limited engagement in social exchanges among employees. Shyness and social avoidance act as positive predictors (Zhou, 2018). A significant positive correlation was identified between workload and workplace loneliness. Workloads contribute to fatigue, burnout, and a lack of time and energy, which in turn create interpersonal relationships among employees, ultimately resulting in feelings of loneliness (Wright, 2005).

Besides individual antecedents, there are organizational factors that may predict workplace loneliness. The atmosphere of the organization acts as an antecedent, research shows that the atmosphere of solidarity has a significant negative correlation, while the climate of fear has a significant positive correlation with workplace loneliness. In an organization where rewards, penalties, and personal interest are prioritized, the formation of friendship among employees may be difficult (Wright, 2005). Furthermore, the interpersonal atmosphere supports interpersonal relationships in the organization, therefore employees experience less loneliness (Erdil & Ertosun, 2011). In addition to the organizational atmosphere, organizational support acts as an antecedent. Empirical research demonstrates that strong superior support and peer support have a crucial role in decreasing workplace loneliness, with both factors showing a significant negative correlation with workplace loneliness (Wright, 2005). Moreover, timely feedback and acknowledgment from leaders on employees' work

are found as important factors in reducing loneliness at work (Stoica, Brate, Bucuţa, Dura, & Morar, 2014).

2.4. The Relationship Between Employee Authenticity and Workplace Loneliness

Given that authenticity fosters meaningful workplace relationships, its potential effects on workplace loneliness remain an underexplored area of research and warrant further investigation. One route to explain this relationship is through Person-Environment Fit Theory, which emphasizes the alignment between personal needs and environmental conditions as a critical factor in well-being and performance. When this congruence between personal needs and environmental conditions is high, individuals experience satisfaction and fulfillment. Conversely, a mismatch can lead to dissatisfaction and unmet needs. Some researchers define person-environment fit as the similarity between various characteristics of the individual, such as values and goals, and such characteristics of the environment (Uysal Irak, 2012; Tatlı & Cakmak, 2019).

Research on Person-Environment Fit Theory has been significantly influenced by Holland's Theory of Careers suggesting that employees are more likely to experience job satisfaction and success when their jobs align their personal interests and abilities. Schneider (1987) proposed a model similar to Holland's, suggesting that individuals with similar personality traits tend to gravitate towards similar roles and exhibit similar behaviors. This perspective, often referred to as the Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) model, suggests that individuals are drawn to organizations that align with their personal characteristics. They are selected by these organizations based on perceived fit and are more likely to remain in these organizations if they continue to perceive a strong fit. On the contrary, when employees perceive a mismatch between their personal attributes and the organizational culture, they may choose to leave the organization, leading to turnover (Uysal Irak, 2012).

Person-environment fit is conceptualized in two primary ways: supplementary fit and complementary fit. Supplementary fit occurs when an individual possesses characteristics similar to those of the environment, which promotes a sense of alignment and belonging within the setting. This is relevant where individuals seek environments that align with their values and goals. Variables like job satisfaction, performance, and tenure serve as indicators of this fit. In contrast, complementary fit arises when the individual and the environment possess characteristics that mutually fulfill each other's needs, establishing a harmonious balance. This form of fit emphasizes the alignment between an employee's talents and the specific demands of the organization, playing a vital role in organizations where employees are expected to leverage their unique skills and abilities to meet organizational goals (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987).

Building on the Person-Environment Fit Theory, when employees can be authentic at work, they achieve a stronger person-environment fit. Authenticity provides a sense of psychological alignment, where employees feel comfortable expressing their true selves, which reduces the need to expend additional energy on managing impressions or conforming to external expectations. This alignment allows employees to conserve emotional resources, leading to higher energy levels, reduced emotional exhaustion, and enhanced overall well-being (Emmerich & Rigotti, 2017). In a study about the mediating role of authenticity on the relationship between perceptions of congruence

with the work environment and workplace outcomes; facets of person-environment fit were positively related to authentic living, and negatively associated with self-alienation (Kuntz & Abbott, 2017). It was interpreted that employees who are given opportunities for self-expression in the workplace may demonstrate reduced motivation to engage in behavioral monitoring and self-presentation strategies. Furthermore, employee authenticity can reduce negative emotions and foster a sense of belonging, which may mitigate feelings of workplace loneliness by reinforcing social and emotional connections within teams. Therefore, Person-Environment Fit Theory might offer a valuable framework for examining the relationship between employee authenticity, emotional well-being, and social connectedness in organizations, suggesting that employee authenticity can help reduce workplace loneliness. This theory may provide a lens to examine the relationship between employee authenticity and workplace loneliness. Therefore, the following hypothesis is generated:

H1: Employee authenticity has a negative effect on workplace loneliness.

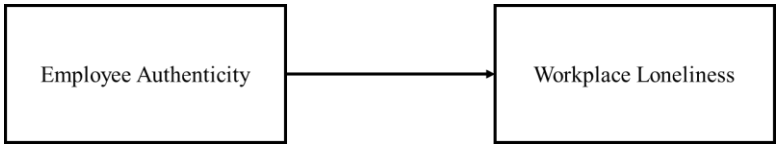

Figure 1. Research Model

3. Method

3.1. Sample and Procedure

The population of the study consists of white-collar employees working in the private sector in Turkey. Due to time and budget constraints, the convenience sampling method was preferred, and an online survey was conducted. The survey link was shared on various online platforms between January 12th, 2024 and December 7th, 2024, and 373 white collar employees working in private sector organizations in Turkey completed the survey. Demographic variables are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Variables

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Gender		
Male	172	46.1
Female	199	53.4
Doesn't want to express	2	0.5
Age		
21-25	20	5.4
26-30	78	20.9
31-35	70	18.8
36-40	76	20.3
41-45	79	21.2

46-50	27	7.2
51-55	14	3.8
55+	9	2.4
Education		
High School	11	2.9
Associate Degree	17	4.6
Bachelor's Degree	169	45.3
Master's Degree	144	38.6
Doctoral Degree	32	8.6
Total Experience (years)		
1-5	76	20.4
6-10	65	17.4
11-15	77	20.6
16-20	74	19.8
21-25	43	11.5
25+	38	10.2
Tenure (years)		
1 year and below	94	25.2
1-3	119	31.9
3-5	33	8.9
5-7	30	8.0
7-10	37	9.9
10+	60	16.1
Title		
Academician	14	3.8
Teacher	25	6.7
Specialist / Senior Specialist	115	30.8
Supervisor	43	11.5
Manager	78	20.9
Director	25	6.7
Senior Manager / Executive	34	9.1
Other	39	10.5
Working Model		
Office	248	66.5
Working from home	26	7.0
Hybrid	99	26.5
Availability of programs or applications		
Existing	112	30.0
Absent	236	63.3

Unaware of them	25	6.7

As shown in Table 1, among participants, 53.4% were female, 46.1% were male, 0.5% didn't want to express their gender. The mean of age was 37.3 years (SD =8.3), the mean of experience was 14.2 years (SD=8.9). Regarding their job roles, about 30.8% identified as Specialist or Assistant Specialist, 20.9% as Manager, and 11.5% as Supervisor, 9.1% as Senior Managers or Executive, 6.7% as Director, 6.7% as Teacher, 3.8% as Academician, and 10.5% were identified as Other. Regarding their working models, 66.5% of them stated they go to the office, 26.5% work in a hybrid model, and 7.0% work from home. Participants were asked about the availability of health, wellness, or well-being programs or applications in their workplace. Of the participants, 30.0% reported having access to such programs, 63.3% indicated their absence, and 6.7% stated that they were unaware of their availability.

3.2. Measures

This study used two measurement scales developed in previous research and questions regarding demographic information. Both scales were arranged to be answered according to the 6-point Likert scale.

3.2.1. Employee Authenticity

Employee authenticity was measured using a 12-item Authenticity Scale developed by Wood et al. (2008), adapted to the Turkish version by İlhan and Ozdemir (2013), (α = .784) comprised of three dimensions; self-alienation, authentic living, and accepting external influence. Responses of participants were recorded on a scale from 1 "does not describe me at all" to 6 was "describes me very well" (e.g. " I don't know how I really feel inside", "I always feel I need to do what others expect me to do", "I am true to myself in most situations", "I feel alienated from myself").

3.2.2. Workplace Loneliness

Workplace loneliness was measured using 16-item Loneliness at Work Scale developed by Wright, Burt and Strongman (2006), translated and adapted to Turkish by Doğan, Çetin, and Sungur (2009), (α = .908). Responses of participants were recorded on a scale from 1 "strongly disagree" to 6 was "strongly agree" (e.g. " I often feel abandoned by my co-workers when I am under pressure at work", "I feel satisfied with the relationships I have at work", "There is someone at work I can talk to about my day-to-day work problems if I need to", "I feel part of a group of friends at work").

4. Findings

4.1. Factor Analysis and Reliability

Initially, reverse items were arranged to maintain consistency in the direction of responses. The suitability of the dataset for factor analysis was assessed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The KMO value of the Authenticity Scale indicated 0.786 which demonstrates sampling adequacy, while the Bartlett's test resulted as $\chi^2 = 1150.716$, $p < .001$ confirmed the presence of sufficient correlations among variables for further analysis. Items with factor loadings less than 0.50 were removed from the analysis as recommended by Hair, Babin, Black and Anderson (2019), therefore first item in the scale ("I think it is better to be yourself, than to be popular") was removed from the

analysis. Items were grouped into three dimensions which align with the original structure (Self-alienation, Authentic Living, and Accepting External Influence), and the items were appropriately loaded under the expected factors. The reliability of scales was assessed by Cronbach's alpha, resulted as 0.787. The KMO value of the Loneliness at Work Scale indicated 0.907 which demonstrates sampling adequacy, while the Bartlett's test resulted as $\chi^2 = 2942.328$, $p < .001$confirmed the presence of sufficient correlations among variables for further analysis. Item 11 ("I feel included in the social aspects of work") was removed due to factor loading remaining less than 0.50. Items were grouped into two dimensions which align with the original structure (Emotional Deprivation and Social Companionship), and the items were appropriately loaded under the expected factors. Cronbach's alpha of the scale is 0.918.

Table 2. Factor Loadings of Authenticity Scale

Items	Factor Loading
Self-Alienation	
2. I don't know how I really feel inside*	.615
7. I feel as if I don't know myself very well*	.648
10. I feel out of touch with the 'real me'*	.776
12. I feel alienated from myself*	.815
Authentic Living	
8. I always stand by what I believe in	.815
9.I am true to myself in most situations	.645
11. I live in accordance with my values and beliefs	.781
Accepting External Influence	
3. I am strongly influenced by the opinions of others*	.696
4. I usually do what other people tell me to do*	.743
5. I always feel I need to do what others expect me to do*	.761
6. Other people influence me greatly*	.797

*Reverse items

Table 3. Factor Loadings of Loneliness at Work Scale

Items	Factor Loading
Emotional Deprivation	
1. I often feel abandoned by my co-workers when I am under pressure at work	.647
2. I often feel alienated from my co-workers	.717
3. I feel myself withdrawing from the people I work with	.615
4. I often feel emotionally distant from the people I work with	.753
5. I feel satisfied with the relationships I have at work	.711
6. There is a sense of camaraderie in my workplace	.652
7.I often feel isolated when I am with my co-workers	.733

8. I often feel disconnected from others at work	.800
9. I experience a general sense of emptiness when I am at work	.791
Social Companionship	
10. I have social companionship/fellowship at work	.574
12. There is someone at work I can talk to about my day to day work problems if I need to	.854
13. There is no one at work I can share personal thoughts with if I want to	.653
14. I have someone at work I can spend time with on my breaks if I want to	.839
15. I feel part of a group of friends at work	.692
16. There are people at work who take the trouble to listen to me	.697

*Reverse items

Descriptive statistics, correlations, regression analyses, and Cronbach's alphas were calculated using SPSS version 20. Skewness and Kurtosis tests were conducted to examine the normal distribution of the items. For the Authenticity Scale, skewness values ranged from -1.385 to -0.317, and kurtosis values ranged from -0.275 to 1.799. For the Workplace Loneliness Scale, skewness values ranged from 0.518 to 1.601, and kurtosis values ranged from -0.664 to 1.896, with two items showing a kurtosis value greater than 2. When Authenticity and Workplace Loneliness were considered as variables, skewness values resulted as -0.500 and 0.789, and kurtosis values were -0.080 and 0.496. The normality test values of scales and their dimensions are shown in Table 4. As the skewness and kurtosis values fall within the acceptable range of -2 to +2 (George & Mallery, 2010), it was assumed that the distribution was normal. Therefore, parametric testing methods were considered appropriate for the analyses. To investigate the relationships between two variables, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted.

Table 4. Normality Test Values of Scales and Dimensions

Scale/Dimensions	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Authenticity	373	51.98	7.656	0.500	-0.08
Self-Alientation	373	19.48	4.011	-0.798	0.223
Authentic Living	373	15.01	2.29	-0.806	0.808
Accepting External Influence	373	17.49	3.914	-0.456	-0.262
Loneliness At Work	373	33.84	13.907	0.789	0.496
Social Companionship	373	12.39	5.937	1.154	1.421
Emotional Deprivation	373	21.45	9.446	0.859	0.409

4.2. Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted in order to understand the relationship between variables. Employee Authenticity was negatively related to Workplace Loneliness ($r = -.439$, $p < .01$), indicating that employees with higher authenticity experience lower

levels of workplace loneliness. The relationship was significant and at a moderate level.

When interpreting the correlations between dimensions, the effect of reverse items was considered. Among the dimensions of variables, Self-Alienation was moderately and negatively correlated with emotional deprivation ($r = -.494$, $p < .01$), which may suggest that experiencing Self-Alienation could make employees feel more emotionally deprived. As expected, Self-Alienation and Accepting External Influence have a significant correlation at a moderate level, employees who feel disconnected from their true selves may be more likely to be influenced by external factors. Emotional Deprivation and Social Companionship were strongly correlated ($r = .615$, $p < .01$), indicating that employees who experience emotional deprivation were likely to lack social companionship as well. Interestingly, Workplace Loneliness does not have significant correlations with dimensions of authenticity, which may indicate that these dimensions may not directly affect feelings of loneliness at work.

Table 5. Correlations Between Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Authenticity	1	-.029	.037	-.057	-.439**	.004	.029
2. Authentic Living	-.029	1	.266**	.150**	.013	-.125*	-.186**
3. Self-Alienation	.037	.266**	1	.458**	-.049	-.494**	-.333**
4. Accepting External Influence	-.057	.150**	.458**	1	-.015	-.273**	-.213**
5. Workplace Loneliness	-.439**	.013	-.049	-.015	1	.023	.047
6. Emotional Deprivation	.004	-.125*	-.494**	-.273**	.023	1	.615**
7. Social Companionship	.029	-.186**	-.333**	-.213**	.047	.615**	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Furthermore, a significant positive correlation was found between age and employee authenticity ($r = .207$, $p < .01$), as well as between experience and employee authenticity ($r = .251$, $p < .01$) as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Correlations Between Age, Experience and Employee Authenticity

Variables	Authenticity	Age	Total Experience
Authenticity	1	.207**	.251**
Age	.207**	1	.928**
Total Experience	.251**	.928**	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

No significant differences or correlations were found between employee authenticity or workplace loneliness in relation to the working model or the availability of health, wellness, or well-being programs.

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

To test the hypothesis, the effect of Employee Authenticity on Workplace Loneliness was examined through linear regression analysis. The results of the regression analysis indicate that employee authenticity has a significant negative effect on workplace loneliness, showing that employee authenticity explains 19.3% of the variance in workplace loneliness ($R^2 = .19$, F(df reg, df residual) = 88.551, $p < .01$). Furthermore, when other variables are held constant, one-unit increase in employee authenticity leads to a 0, 76 unit decrease in workplace loneliness. The analysis results are presented in Table 7. Based on these findings, the hypothesis was supported, employee authenticity significantly and negatively predicts workplace loneliness.

Table 7. Regression Analysis of Employee Authenticity on Workplace Loneliness

Variable	B	SE	β	t	p	R^2	F
Constant	71.221	4.243	-	16784	.000	.193	88.551
Authenticity	-0.76	0.081	-0.439	-9.41	.000		

To further analyze the effect of aspects of employee authenticity on dimensions of workplace loneliness (emotional deprivation and social companionship), multiple linear regression analyses were performed.

Table 8. Regression Analysis of Aspects of Employee Authenticity on Emotional Deprivation

Variable	B	SE	β	t	p	R^2	F
Constant	44.981	3.302	-	13.624	.000	.247	40.424
Authentic Living	0.035	0.193	0.009	0.182	.856		
Self-Alienation	-1.106	0.123	-0.469	-9.007	.000		
Accepting External Influence	-0.144	0.123	-0.060	-1.173	.242		

Table 9. Regression Analysis of Aspects of Employee Authenticity on Social Companionship

Variable	B	SE	β	t	p	R^2	F
Constant	26.159	2.237	-	11.693	.000	.125	17.593
Authentic Living	-0.266	0.131	-0.102	-2.027	.043		
Self-Alienation	-0.403	0.083	-0.272	-4.841	.000		
Accepting External Influence	-0.111	0.083	-0.073	-1.334	.183		

Among the aspects of Employee Authenticity, Self-Alienation has a significant negative relationship with Emotional Deprivation ($\beta = -0.469$, $t = -9.007$, $p < .01$), suggesting that employees who experience higher levels of self-alienation tend to

report lower emotional deprivation. Reversely, Authentic Living and Accepting External Influence ($p > .01$) don't have a statistically significant effect on Emotional Deprivation. However, the overall model seems to be statistically significant, with an R^2 value of .247, indicating that 24.7% of the variance in Emotional Deprivation can be explained by the independent variables.

On predicting Social Companionship, Self-Alienation is again a significant predictor ($\beta = -0.272$, $t = -4.84$, $p < .01$). Authentic Living also has a statistically significant but weaker negative effect on Social Companionship ($\beta = -0.102$, $t = -2.027$, $p < .05$). Conversely, Accepting External Influence doesn't have a significant effect ($\beta = -0.073$, $t = -1.334$, $p > .01$). The model explains 12.5% of the variance in Social Companionship, which has a weaker explanatory power compared to the previous model.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study may provide insights into the importance of employee authenticity on workplace loneliness. The negative and moderate correlation between employee authenticity and workplace loneliness and linear regression analysis revealed that employee authenticity is negatively related and significantly predicts workplace loneliness. It can be concluded that employees acting consistently with their true selves at work would experience lower workplace loneliness. Findings may be explained by theories and supported by prior research emphasizing the role of authenticity in improving meaningful relationships. In addition, by highlighting workplace loneliness as an outcome of authenticity, it can be beneficial for psychological needs and wellbeing of employees at their workplace.

This study expands Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by demonstrating that authenticity not only enhances workplace relationships but also serves as a protective factor against loneliness, an underexplored outcome in previous research. SDT focuses on the importance of fulfilling three basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) for optimal human functioning. In this regard, autonomy plays an important role in fostering authenticity, as it supports intrinsic motivation, enhances openness, self-expression, and willingness to connect with others (Deci & Ryan, 2000). These effects may improve meaningful interpersonal interactions, reducing the likelihood of workplace loneliness. Employee authenticity may make employees experience a sense of self-governance while satisfying their need for autonomy. In addition, when the need for relatedness, which is defined as the need to feel connected and valued by others, is unmet, individuals experience emotional distress, isolation, and a sense of detachment (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Authentic employees may experience stronger interpersonal connections because their true selves at work may make them feel connected and valued by others. This may reduce the feeling of loneliness by enabling deeper, more satisfying workplace relationships. By showing that authentic employees form stronger interpersonal connections at work, this study may advance SDT by adding a nuanced relationship between authenticity, autonomy, and relatedness, showing that employee authenticity is not merely a consequence of these needs, but an active facilitator of their fulfillment, which in turn reduces workplace loneliness and contributes to optimal human functioning.

Building on previous research which concludes that individuals are more authentic when they are accepted by others (Wood et al., 2008), this study extends this principle

to the organizational context. A supportive workplace environment, characterized by perceived value and acceptance may encourage self-expression. In other words, at workplace where employees perceive themselves as valued and accepted, they are more likely to engage in self-expression. This, in turn, may support the fulfillment of basic psychological needs as described in SDT.

Among the aspects of employee authenticity, self-alienation is the most effective predictor. Compared with other aspects of employee authenticity, self-alienation is the only aspect with a moderate correlation and a strong predictive influence on the dimensions of workplace loneliness. Correlation analysis revealed a moderate and negative correlation with emotional deprivation. Regression analysis also showed a significant negative relationship with emotional deprivation, and social companionship. It is important to state that the items regarding self-alienation and accepting external influence were coded reverse in the analysis. Therefore, it would be interpreted that the higher employees feel a lack of inner alignment, disconnected from their true selves, the more they feel a lack of emotional connection with others. It can be concluded that employees who feel disconnected from their true selves or conscious awareness may also feel detached emotionally and socially. This may lead them to have fewer social interactions at work as well. From the perspective of SDT, self-alienation can disrupt the fulfillment of basic psychological needs. The lack of inner alignment may weaken employees' sense of control over their actions and choices, undermining their autonomy. Also, struggling to form emotional bonds with colleagues may lead to unsatisfied relatedness needs, intensifying workplace loneliness. As a result, employees experiencing self-alienation may fail to satisfy two of the needs stated in SDT. This misalignment may prevent them from achieving optimal human functioning, increasing their feelings of loneliness in the workplace.

Authentic living and accepting external influence have weak negative correlations with emotional deprivation and social companionship. Results from regression analyses also show that they are not strong predictors. However, authentic living has a significant but weaker effect on social companionship compared to self-alienation. It can be interpreted that engaging in behavior aligned with one's awareness of the true self at work may not affect emotional deprivation, but it may slightly affect workplace social relationships, therefore employees living aligned with their true selves may form more connections and have more friendships at work.

These findings may be consistent with the findings of Ang, Jia, Long, Ren, and Pu (2022), and can be supported with the Person-Environment Fit Theory. The research examined the effect of relationship duration on the relationship between authentic behavior at the workplace and employee interactions. The results indicate that the duration of workplace relationships can affect employees' perceptions and, consequently, behaviors such as cooperation and exclusion. It was observed that as relationship duration increased, employees' authentic behaviors helped reduce doubts and increase trust, cooperative behaviors and a reduction in exclusion. Conversely, when employees feel disconnected from their true selves in the workplace, their relationships with colleagues may fail to deepen, and mutual exchanges may weaken. In other words, a lack of authenticity may limit the development of deep, meaningful workplace relationships, leading to emotional deprivation and social isolation. This can negatively impact relationships at work both in quality and quantity, resulting in increased feelings of emotional deprivation and social companionship. Supported by the Person-Environment Fit Theory, employees who work in environments aligned with their values, beliefs, and authentic selves are more likely to achieve person-

environment congruence. Consequently, they may experience reduced stress, tension, discomfort, and loneliness often associated with a lack of alignment. By linking the effect of authenticity on workplace loneliness to the principles of Person-Environment Fit, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how psychological needs interact with organizational environments to influence employee well-being.

In addition, the findings can be linked with Kernis and Goldman's (2006) study. They emphasized authenticity's multifaceted nature and its importance in well-being and interpersonal relationships. They claimed that higher levels of authenticity increase emotional and intimate self-disclosure, improving closeness, trust, and relationship satisfaction. As stated, "when authenticity is high, meaningful and honest self-disclosure emerges and presumably facilitates intimacy that is rooted in feeling accepted by one's relationship partner for being who one really is", individuals with higher authenticity tend to have higher levels of relationship satisfaction and trust in their partners, reducing barriers to form meaningful relationships and creating a supportive social environment. While this study primarily focused on authenticity in personal relationships, authenticity's universal nature may be extended to the workplace as well. Employees with higher levels of authenticity may have stronger connections with coworkers may experience supplementary fit with their organization and this may improve workplace interactions by reducing social barriers, increasing trust, and encouraging interactions. These findings may encourage organizations to prioritize authenticity-promoting strategies to improve workplace relationships.

Findings may also be led by Rogers' (1961) theory of self-concept. According to self-concept theory, the individual is psychologically healthy when there is congruence between the true self and experience. The discrepancy between self-perception and experience may lead to anxiety. In a study with outpatients seeking counselling, it was found that self-alienation is a strong predictor of clinical distress increasing the risk of mental health problems (Naumova & Naumov, 2022). As a consequence, the discrepancy between self-perception and experience, individuals may engage in defensive mechanisms to reduce this incongruity. Therefore, as a result of efforts to reduce the incongruity, employees may have adverse emotional outcomes, including emotional disconnection with coworkers and a sense of loneliness. This may also explain the moderate and negative relationship between self-alienation and emotional deprivation, as well as the effect of authentic living on social companionship.

The positive correlations between age and experience with authenticity suggest that age and professional experience may enhance employees' ability to align their actions with their values. In line with Erikson's lifespan theory, findings related to age can be supported with a study on the adult life stage and authenticity. The study found that older adults report feeling more authentic than younger adults (Robinson, Demetre, & Litman, 2016). Findings related to experience can be supported by a quasi-experimental intervention study in Switzerland over an eight-month period finding that intervention on career and personal development increased authentic living, while acceptance of external influence had decreased naturally (Kipfelsberger, Braun, Fladerer, & Dragoni, 2022). With increased age and professional experience, individuals may develop greater authenticity.

6. Implications, Limitations and Future Research

The findings of this study have both theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, they enrich the understanding of how authenticity influences

workplace dynamics and employee well-being. Practically, the results underline the importance of having an authentic work environment which can be supported by leadership, organizational culture, or self-awareness training programs.

While this study offers valuable insights into the relationship between employee authenticity and workplace loneliness, there are several limitations. First, the sample of this research is white-collar employees working in the private sector in Turkey. This sampling approach limits the generalizability of findings to other populations, such as blue-collar employees, the public sector, or expatriates. Future research should aim to include more diverse and representative samples.

Second, the cross-sectional design and correlational studies fail to explain causal relationships between variables. Longitudinal studies can offer more insights into dynamic relationship between two variables.

Third, the reliance on self-reported data carries the risk of social desirability bias, where participants may have overrated or underrated their levels of authenticity or loneliness to conform with societal norms. Future studies may benefit from multi-method approaches, such as peer evaluations or behavioral assessments.

Given the limited study on the topic, this research aimed to explore the relationship between two variables, therefore moderating or mediating variables weren't included.

Future research may build on these findings by exploring longitudinal designs to establish causality. In addition, examining additional moderating variables is recommended, such as organizational climate, organizational culture, intention to leave, leadership styles, or personality traits. Moreover, qualitative studies could provide deeper insights into the mechanisms underlying the relationship between authenticity and workplace loneliness.

While Person-Environment Fit and Self-Determination Theory have provided a solid foundation to explain the relationship between variables, alternative theories such as Social Exchange Theory or Job Demands-Resources Theory may offer complementary insights. Future research can integrate these theories to explore additional justifications associated with employee authenticity to workplace outcomes.

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