

## DOES POWER DISTANCE AT WORK MAKE EMPLOYEES LONELY?\*

### İŞ YAŞAMINDA GÜÇ MESAFESİ ÇALIŞANLARI YALNIZLAŞTIRIYOR MU?

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#### Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between perceived power distance and loneliness at work and whether these variables differ according to demographic characteristics. The Perceived Power Distance and Loneliness at Work scales were used as data collection tools. Descriptive statistical methods were used, as well as independent samples T, ANOVA, and Pearson correlation analysis. Research conducted on 422 employees working in Bolu Municipality, Mersin Metropolitan Municipality, and District Municipalities revealed a statistically significant relationship between employees' power distance perceptions and loneliness at work. In addition, a significant difference was found between the mean scores of loneliness at work and the emotional deprivation dimension according to age and educational status.

**Keywords:** Power, power distance, loneliness at work.

**JEL Classification:** M12, M14

#### Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, algılanan güç mesafesi ile iş yaşamında yalnızlık ilişkisinin ve bu değişkenlerin demografik özelliklere göre farklılaşp farklılaşmadığının incelenmesidir. Veri toplama aracı olarak algılanan güç mesafesi ve iş yaşamında yalnızlık ölçekleri kullanılmıştır. Verilerin analizinde tanımlayıcı istatistiksel metotların yanında Pearson Korelasyon, Bağımsız Örneklem T ve Anova testinden yararlanılmıştır. Mersin Büyükşehir Belediyesi ve Büyükşehir İlçe Belediyeleri ile Bolu Belediyesi'nde çalışmakta olan toplam 422 çalışanla gerçekleştirilen araştırma sonucunda çalışanların güç mesafesi algıları ile iş yaşamında yalnızlık düzeyleri arasında istatistiksel açıdan anlamlı bir ilişki olduğu, iş yaşamında yalnızlık duygusu ve duygusal

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yoksunluk boyutu ortalama puanları arasında ise yaşa ve eğitim durumuna göre anlamlı bir farklılık saptanmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Güç, güç mesafesi, iş yaşamında yalnızlık.

**JEL Sınıflaması:** M12, M14

## 1. Introduction

All human communities have applications of power, regardless of whether they are more or less powerful. As can be seen in history and today, this power is sometimes used on the basis of primitive and brutal coercion, but it can also be used in contemporary societies with its source, way of use, and conditions bound to rules. In short, power is a management concept that inevitably exists in communities of all types and sizes, whose subject is human and is present in every system in which humans exist (Koçel, 2015). As we know that they exist in societies, it is possible to encounter hierarchical power structures that always make a difference between people in organizations. Some authors, including Robbins and Judge (2013), have defined the concept of power as the variability in the behavior of individuals in an organization, while others have discussed power as the power of an organization (Dikili, 2014). In general, while power is defined as the ability of an individual to change the behavior of other individuals in the direction they want, power distance is defined as the degree to which individuals accept inequality in power distribution in societies and organizations.

In today's world, the high rate of innovation and the fact that social structures differ also reveal some inevitable problems. Individuals who want to make their lives more meaningful and of high quality are constantly struggling with the current difficulties. As social beings, humans tend to establish meaningful, satisfying, and regular relationships with the people around them. The historical formation, production style, and cultural structure of society and the organization of which the individual is a member of his/her physical environment and psycho-social development have a very decisive role (Özatça, 2009). The fact that the lifestyle brought about by urbanization emphasizes individuality and causes a decrease in solidarity exposes the individual who experiences these changes and contradictions through social relations to many problems and causes them to live their social relations in a more isolated way. Loneliness is a powerful, universal, and common emotional experience; however, it is a growing problem. Loneliness, which is somehow a part of our lives, is difficult to define in terms of how it is handled (Yaşar, 2007).

Loneliness has been the subject of many studies and has been defined differently. The common points of these definitions are that loneliness is a qualitative rather than a quantitative problem; second, it is a subjective experience; and third, it is related to undesired and avoided negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, sadness, and stress (Doğan et al., 2009).

Loneliness in work life occurs as a result of people experiencing loneliness in their daily lives in their workplaces. Wright (2005) states that loneliness in work life is related to environmental factors such as culture and family; organizational communication, perceived organizational support, organizational climate, workload, and individual factors such as pessimism, shyness and personality traits. Many

factors affect loneliness in both organizational and individual lives because loneliness is one of the strongest and most basic human experiences. The fact that loneliness is closely related to social variables can cause difficulties in revealing the cause-effect relationship in the loneliness process. In such a complex relationship, where concepts are interrelated, it becomes difficult to determine whether the variables mentioned are the cause or the result of loneliness (Yaşar, 2007).

The main purpose of this study is to examine the interaction between the power distance phenomenon that individuals perceive in their work environment and their sense of loneliness in their work life. As stated above, it is important to examine and reveal the antecedents, especially in the organizational dimension, to prevent the negative consequences of loneliness arising from environmental, organizational, and individual dimensions in working life.

In the literature review on perceived power distance and the feeling of loneliness in work life, which is the subject of this research, no study has discussed and examined these concepts together. The variable of loneliness in work life, which has fewer areas of study compared to the power variable, was generally examined by teachers (Kaplan, 2011; Karakurt, 2012; Nartgün & Demirer, 2012; Yılmaz & Aslan, 2013; Karaduman, 2013; Sezen, 2014) and academic staff (Mercan, et al., 2012; Çetin & Alacalar, 2016; Demirbaş & Haşit, 2016). From this point of view, the fact that high perceived power distance isolates individuals have not been addressed as a research topic emerges as the original value of this study. From this perspective, first, the concepts of power, power distance, and loneliness in work life are discussed in the study, the relationships between the variables are examined, and suggestions are made in line with the results.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Power and Power Distance**

Power is an indispensable element of social life and the center of human relations, but it is also a key concept in social sciences (Turner, 2005). Who has power in social life and how this power is used have been important subjects of social and political theories since the times of Plato, Hobbes, Machiavelli, Marx, and Weber. Understanding power relations and focusing on power also necessitates studies on who the power holders are, what effects power has, what the amount of power is, and how the concept of power is explained and measured (Cook et al., 2006).

According to the Turkish Language Association, power is defined as the ability to create physical, intellectual, and moral influence and resist it. Weber (1947) defined power as an individual's position in a social relationship to be able to do whatever he/she wants, even if he or she faces resistance from another or others (Grimes, 1978). Power is a relational concept as it is the ability to direct others to act in the direction of their choice. In other words, it can be said that one of the elements that make up interpersonal relations is the concept of power (Bayrak, 2000). According to Pfeffer (1992), when

an individual is considered as one, he or she can be evaluated as neither strong nor weak, and it is understood whether a person has power or not only when he/she communicates with others.

When we look at the definitions made to explain the concept of power, it is seen that some of them define power as a personal potential and some as an interaction in social relations. The differences in these definitions are mostly due to the differences in the methods of power. Some authors define power as the capacity to influence others, whereas others define it as an actual effect. For example, Robbins (2013) states that the existence of power does not mean its use, and he defines it as capacity. While Archer and Fitch define power as the ability to influence outcomes, according to French et al., power is the deliberate influence on people's emotions and behaviors (Walumbwa, 2006). According to the common point of all these definitions, power characterizes the relationship between people and social actors. In other words, it is not a one-way concept but is based on interaction. Individuals have power only in a social situation and as part of it. Power is related to other people, even if it is considered an individual difference. The need for individual power is associated with wanting to influence other people and using that influence in social situations (Tjosvold, 1990). In short, the basis of power is the ability to influence others and control their behavior.

As reported by Robbins and Judge (2013), there is a dependency relationship based on power, and to the extent that any B person is dependent on A, it is expected that A's power over B will be to the same extent in this relationship. An individual has power over that individual only if he/she can exercise control over anything that another individual cares about and needs. The importance, scarcity, and non-substitutability of resources constitute three indispensable elements of the dependency relationship. The abundance of any resource does not mean that the individuals who own it have power over other individuals. Another feature of the concept of power arising from its relationality is that it is intransitive; that is, the fact that person A has power over person B and person B has power over person C does not lead to the conclusion that person A has power over person C. Another feature of power is that it does not have a definite and unchangeable structure. Power relations vary according to time, people, conditions and environment. Specifically, it can be accepted that it is a dynamic structure that varies from culture to culture and from one power structure to another within each culture (Krause & Kearney, 2006).

The concept of power distance appears in Hofstede's cultural values model. Geert Hofstede's research in order to measure cultural differences has been widely used and applied in international management since it is considered the most comprehensive experimental study from past to present. Dutch researcher Hofstede identified differences in the values and attitudes of IBM employees operating in 56 countries through detailed interviews and surveys and classified these differences into four main dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism and collective behavior, masculinity, and femininity. Subsequently, by adding the long-short term focus dimension to this model, a five-dimensional structure was created (Eğİnli & Çakır, 2011). Hofstede's research stated that as a result of the fact that each society has its own culture and the values that individuals internalize are affected by the culture of the society to which they belong, there are differences in the solution proposals of the participants in the face of current problems (Gürbüz & Bingöl, 2007).

According to Hofstede's definition, power distance is the degree to which relatively weak members of organizations in a country accept the unequal distribution of power, or the state of individuals not being disturbed by this uneven distribution of authority and power (Çelik, 2007). As stated by Hofstede, although inequality in the distribution of power exists in all cultures, the degree of inequality varies from culture to culture (Şahin, 2012).

Power distance includes the feelings, thoughts, and behavioral tendencies of a society's members of an organization or a group about how they perceive inequality in the distribution of power among them (Akyürek, 2001). The level of power distance in a country is a measure of the extent to which members of the country expect and adopt an uneven distribution of power. Power distance is shaped by the value judgments of the powerless, and the distribution of power is based on rulers' perspectives (Şahin, 2012). The power distance describes the range of how individuals deal with the fact that they are unequal. Although it is not denied that people have equal conditions in the world and the existence of some universal rights is not denied, people in the society can be differentiated by variables such as their mental capacities, physical and personal characteristics, education levels, financial situations, professions, statuses and social class they are members of, family (Baltacı, 2011).

Inequality in individual skills and power distribution is observed in almost all organizations. Inequalities arising from the positions of employees generally manifest themselves in areas such as reputation and power, and this inequality emerges in the form of superior-subordinate relations. Most people are in various environments, such as schools and families, during the development process, and they continue their relationship, which first started in the family as a parent-child, at school as a teacher-student, and at work as a boss-subordinate (Gümüştekin & Emet, 2007).

Power distance, which expresses the degree of adoption of inequality by individuals based on hierarchy and power, is classified into two categories: low and high. Cultures with low power distance take for granted practices that minimize privileges arising from having power, whereas cultures with high power distance adopt structures in which power is institutionalized (Terzi, 2004). Along with the imbalances in power distribution and inequality of opportunity are accepted in societies with high power gap; descriptive expressions such as title and status are very important and require respect. In workplaces, the distance between superior-subordinate is felt, and care is taken to protect it. It can be said that societies where it is easier to get closer by communicating with the powerful, to be involved in the process when important decisions are made, and to express ideas and thoughts comfortably are those that have low power distance, that is, the power gap is narrow. In such societies, inequality between opportunity and reward is less common (Ertürk, 2014).

High power distance describes situations in which the existence of inequality between superiors and subordinates is accepted from the beginning, the degree of centralization is high, the hierarchical structure is in the form of a pyramid, and communication weakens as one goes from the bottom up. While it is expected that the orders given in organizations of this structure are carried out without questioning, methods such as deprivation of rewards or punishment are used in other cases, and there are significant differences in pay systems (Çelik, 2007). Since managers are at a higher level in

the hierarchy, subordinates think that managers have more power than they do, so they follow their orders and do not see themselves at the same level (Yaman & Irmak, 2010). Similarly, white-collar workers are thought to have more status than blue-collar workers because in such organizations, it is clear who has authority over whom (Ertürk, 2014).

An autocratic system emerges in high power distance organizations. From a managerial point of view, the high-power distance in the areas of leadership, decision-making and authority mechanisms increases the loyalty of the employees to their managers and provides a more centralized structure. Employees have accepted that managers have privileges, and all decisions taken are correct. According to the opinions of individuals in these enterprises, the ideal manager is paternalistic and autocratic (Deniz, 2013). In this type of organization, the relationship between the boss and lower levels usually includes a strong emotional bond. In this context, Philippe d' Iribarne's work is important. In these studies, human relations in production enterprises in France, America and the Netherlands were analyzed. It was determined that hierarchical relations in France contain emotionality, and that the feelings fed to superiors can turn from great admiration to serious hatred. However, such a situation was not observed in the USA or Netherlands. As can be understood from here, there is serious polarization among people about addiction in France, which has a high-power range. In Peter Smith's research, it was observed that employees in high-power distance societies rely on managers and official rules instead of trusting themselves and their subordinates (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

High-power distance also prevents the establishment of open communication between subordinates and superiors, leading to the formation of asymmetrical communication systems. In contrast, symmetrical communication systems and participatory management approaches are encountered at low-power distances (Sepetçi, 2012).

In organizations with low power distance, despite the hierarchical structure, managers and other employees see each other as equal and know that their superior-subordinate roles can change. The hierarchical structures of organizations are flat, and few employees are responsible for supervision. Salary differentials are lower, workers are skilled, and a high level of manual labor is more valuable than a lower level of office work. Managers are not considered privileged and regardless of their location, all employees use the same cafeterias, restrooms and parking areas. Managers are available, and an ideal manager is a respected, resourceful, and knowledgeable democracy. Employees feel less dependent on their managers (Terzi, 2000); they can communicate more easily with their superiors and objects regarding the decisions taken by the managers. Additionally, employees expect to be consulted at the stages of important decisions (Jahangirov, 2012). However, they always accept that the final decision-maker is their manager (Hofstede et al., 2010). Managers also consult their subordinates before making a decision and express that they need support occasionally. Subordinates do not hesitate to contradict their managers, cooperate with other employees, and attach importance to their loyalty (Yeşil, 2012).

## 2.2. Loneliness at Work

Loneliness affects both the person him/herself and his/her life. If the person experiences a feeling of loneliness intensely, he/she feels alone in the world, thinks that his/her life has no purpose or benefit, and sees himself/herself as abandoned by other people. Loneliness, which affects a person's private life, is an inevitable situation in their work life. The extent of loneliness experienced by an individual in a work environment is defined as loneliness at work. Although many studies have been conducted on loneliness, the number of studies dealing with feelings of loneliness in work life is quite limited. The reason for this surprising situation stems from the fact that the concept of loneliness is considered by many as a psychological condition, which is the quantitative and qualitative deficiency of individuals in establishing social relations. The feeling of loneliness in an organizational life is not similar to the normal feeling of loneliness. Individuals who are happy in their life outside of work, who do not feel alone, who can establish satisfactory and healthy relationships with their friends in their social environment, may feel lonely and excluded because of the problems they encounter in organizational life (Doğan et al., 2009).

Although workplaces are generally thought of as social environments that create opportunities for the development of social relationships, it cannot be said that relationships are always healthy and satisfying in work life. Loneliness in work life is generally perceived as a problem originating from the person and therefore it can be neglected by the organization. However, loneliness due to its nature can affect both the individual and the organization. The quality of social relationships they have in their work life affects the physical and emotional well-being of individuals, and as a result, their work performance is also affected (Wright, 2005).

Loneliness is a feeling that usually arises from the inadequacy and poor quality of one's relationships. It is very difficult to predict the loneliness levels of employees in the workplace as well as personality traits, feelings of dissatisfaction and introversion. Loneliness in work life is used not only to make sense of how individuals feel but also to reveal the effects on their work productivity levels (Özçelik & Barsade, 2011).

Loneliness in the workplace is mostly the state of being left alone by other employees or isolated from the group. In addition, loneliness in the workplace can be caused by a lack of quality relations expected in the workplace. If a person feels lonely at work, it is not because of the few people he/she communicates with but because of the lack of quality and desired communication (Wright et al., 2006). The sum of the relationships of employees in a workplace with each other constitutes the fulcrum of organizational events in that workplace. For this reason, it is of great importance to determine the extent to which feelings of loneliness in the workplace affect employees' behavior (Lam & Lau, 2012).

Having satisfying social relationships at work does not mean that employees will not experience loneliness. It should be noted that employees' loneliness at work may have situational, environmental, and personal dimensions (Perlman & Peplau, 1984). When employees go to their workplaces, they bring their mental states and behavioral, cognitive, and personality traits with them. Apart from

this, some standard rules that exist in the working environment restrict some of the unique features that employees have outside of their work life. The lack of harmony between the person and the organization, that is, a mismatch between the self and the values of the organization, can cause feelings of loneliness among employees, similar to other factors (Wright, 2005).

While some studies on loneliness at work attribute the cause of loneliness to situational reasons, others argue that environmental factors affect loneliness at work. At this point, the correct approach would be to accept that loneliness in the workplace may be affected by both environmental and personality factors. To measure more quantitatively whether loneliness in the workplace is affected by the mentioned personal or situational factors and to reveal the causal relationships, it is necessary to examine the variables in an experimental environment in a controlled manner. Since it is not possible to examine the variables in a controlled way, the studies conducted assumed that loneliness in the workplace is affected by both individual and organizational factors (Kaplan, 2011).

Studies on the dimensions of loneliness generally have commonalities. Thus, loneliness is mostly qualitative and has a subjective dimension. Another common feature is that loneliness is associated with unhappiness and anger, which are unwanted and unsettling emotions people try to avoid. Loneliness was dealt with in two dimensions by Weiss, however, since loneliness in work life is a different concept from loneliness in daily life, Wright, Strongman and Burt created the Loneliness at WorkScale (LAWS), which measures loneliness in two dimensions, social friendship and emotional deprivation, in order to measure these two types of loneliness in a distinctive way (Karaduman, 2013).

The social friendship dimension, which is one of the dimensions of loneliness in work life, is the quantitative perception of relationships developed in the work environment (Doğan et al., 2009). The social friendship dimension covers a situation in which an individual cannot enter the social network in his/her workplace or does not see himself/herself as a member of this social network. If an employee cannot establish a healthy communication channel with his/her colleagues; does not participate in events such as meals, picnics, and parties; and does not attend events such as births, weddings, and funerals, which will improve the strength of friendship, it can be stated that this employee suffers from loneliness in the dimension of social friendship. In addition, it can be stated that an individual who suffers from loneliness in the dimension of social friendship has difficulty in sharing his or her problems at work or expressing his or her own ideas, and has difficulty finding a friend to spend time in his/her free time; therefore, he/she does not feel himself a member of the group in the work environment (Mercan et al., 2012). In this way, people who experience loneliness may experience feelings such as bashfulness, shyness, and feelings of rejection (Şişman & Turan, 2004).

Employees of an organization are in the same social relations system and as a result, they are in production together. Individuals working in the organization must have perfect and trouble-free communication to carry out production in a quality and error-free manner. In such a communication environment, individuals are able to express themselves more easily and feel a sense of trust in their

colleagues by moving away from the feeling of loneliness (Asunakutlu, 2002). Cooperation and solidarity become difficult when individuals are not aware of the needs and feelings of their colleagues. Therefore, coordination in an organization is only possible through healthy communication (Demir, 2003). Friendship in the workplace is a value shared between individuals that requires mutual trust and commitment. It is known that this is effective in fulfilling tasks efficiently, reducing the feeling of stress about the job, increasing communication, and in the change process of organizations. For this reason, organizations should implement supportive practices to establish strong friendships in the workplace (Berman et al., 2002).

In his research, Weiss (1973) expressed the loneliness that occurs with the disappearance of emotional attachment in intimate relationships as emotional loneliness. While situations such as separation, death, and divorce can be given as examples of factors that pave the way for emotional deprivation, symptoms such as anxiety, indescribable fears, tendency to misinterpret behaviors, and extreme sensitivity can be interpreted as expressions of emotional deprivation (Demirbaş & Haşit, 2016).

Emotional deprivation, one of the dimensions of loneliness in work life, explains the quality of relationships that develop in work life (Doğan et al., 2009). Individuals experiencing emotional loneliness at work close themselves to their colleagues and avoid sharing their feelings and thoughts with them. They think that their colleagues will not understand them and will feel uncomfortable and restless in the working environment. In addition, they find themselves in a constant sense of anxiety, worry, and emptiness at work, and they think that there is a distance between themselves and their colleagues and that they are excluded from the group (Kaplan, 2011).

Emotional deprivation is related to the quality of communication with these people rather than the number of people around them. Therefore, it is considered a qualitative dimension and, unlike the social friendship dimension, consists of the feelings and thoughts that the employee has about his/her relations with her colleagues (Mercan et al., 2015). The personality characteristics of individual, environmental, and situational factors in the work environment are effective in the formation of emotional deprivation. Problems experienced in the work environment, based on both physical deficiencies and lack of communication between employees, can cause employees to feel emotional deprivation. In addition, uncertainty in the organizational environment arises from the lack or absence of communication, and causes stress, dissatisfaction, insecurity, low levels of organizational commitment, inefficiency, absenteeism, increased turnover, and natural loneliness in organizational life (Schweiger & Denisi, 1991). In addition, uncertainty in the organizational environment arises from a lack of communication and causes stress, dissatisfaction, insecurity, low levels of organizational commitment, inefficiency, absenteeism, increased turnover, and natural loneliness in organizational life (Schweiger & Denisi, 1991).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Sample

The population of the research consists of 5800 people working as civil servants and permanent workers in Bolu Municipality, Mersin Metropolitan Municipality and Metropolitan District Municipalities (Yenişehir, Akdeniz, Tarsus, Toroslar, Mezitli, Erdemli, Silifke, Anamur, Mut, Bozyazı, Gülnar, Aydıncık, Çamlıyayla Municipality), which provide public services in Bolu and Mersin. The sample of the study consisted of 460 people selected according to the sample number required for the 95% reliability level, the acceptance that the population is not homogeneous, and the convenience sampling method. Before starting the research, ethics committee approval (protocol number 2022/89 and dated 06.04.2022) was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee of Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University and the questionnaires were hand-delivered to 460 people. 13 of the questionnaires were not returned, and 25 were canceled due to incomplete information. The remaining 422 questionnaires were found to be suitable for analysis, and the research findings can be generalized with a 95% reliability interval and a 5% sampling error.

Of the 422 participants, 217 (51.4%) were female and 205 (48.6%) were male. It is seen that 33.2% of the employees were in the 26-35 age range, 32% were in the 36-45 age range, 24.4% were in the 46-55 age range, 5.9% were in the 18-25 age range, and the other 4.5% were aged 56 and over. It was determined that 68.5% of them were married and the remaining 31.5% were single. Of the participants, 49.8% were undergraduates, 28.4% were high school graduates, 15.9% were college graduates, and 5.9% were postgraduates. Finally, it was determined that 27% of the participants had 20 years or more, 24.6% of 0-5 years, 20.9% of 6-10 years, 16.1% of 11-15 years of professional seniority, and the remaining 11.4% have years professional seniority of 16-20 years.

#### 3.2. Data Collection Tools

A three-part questionnaire was used as the data collection tool in this study. In the first part of the questionnaire, six questions were asked to collect the demographic information of the participants. The scales of the variables are included in other sections.

In the second part of the questionnaire, the power distance scale developed by Varoğlu et al. (2000) (Cronbach Alpha 0.87-0.91) was used to measure the perception of power distance. The scale consists of 10 items in 5-point Likert type. The Cronbach's Alpha value of the Perceived Power Distance scale was 0.714 after removing two items affecting reliability. The scale consists of a single factor; therefore, the analysis was performed according to the general average. It was concluded that as the scores obtained by the participants on the scale decreased, the perception of power distance was lower, and as the score increased, the perception of power distance was higher.

The scale used to measure feelings of loneliness in work life is a self-report scale developed by Wright et al., which subjectively evaluates loneliness at work. It was taken from Doğan, Çetin, and Sungur's (2009) article titled Validity and Reliability Study of the Turkish Version of the Loneliness at Work Scale, and its reliability (Cronbach's Alpha 0.91 for the whole scale, Cronbach's Alpha 0.83 for social friendship, Cronbach's Alpha 0.87 for emotional deprivation) and validity were tested. The scale consists of 16 statements, which were prepared using a 5-point Likert-type structure. When the KMO and Bartlett's test results are examined, the Sampling Adequacy Measure value is 0.861 (86.1%), and a p-value less than 0.05, indicating that the scale is suitable for factor analysis. When the results were examined, the first factor emerged as the social friendship sub-dimension (34.279%), which expresses the quantity of variables in the workplace, and the second factor was the emotional deprivation sub-dimension (15.899%), which measures the quality of the employee's relations with their colleagues, both of which explain 50,178% of the total variance. As a result of factor analysis, with two items removed from the scale, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the scale was 0.844; the items belonging to the emotional deprivation factor were 0.804, and the items belonging to the social friendship factor were 0.842, indicating that they are reliable.

### 3.3. Research Hypotheses

The research question, which constitutes the starting point of the research, is "Is there a significant relationship between the perceived power distance and the level of loneliness felt in work life?" Therefore, the main hypothesis of this research is to examine whether there is a relationship between perceived power distance and the feeling of loneliness in work life. We investigated whether there is a relationship between the sub-hypotheses and the dimensions of these two variables, and whether the power distance perceptions of the participants and the average levels of loneliness in work life differ according to demographic characteristics. In this context, the hypotheses are as follows:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between employees' perceptions of power distance and their level of loneliness at work.

H<sub>1,1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between employees' perceptions of power distance and the levels of emotional deprivation felt at work.

H<sub>1,2</sub>: There is a significant relationship between employees' perceptions of power distance and their social friendship levels at work.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant difference between the mean scores of the dimensions of perceived power distance and the level of loneliness at work, according to gender.

H<sub>3</sub>: There is a significant difference between the mean scores of the dimensions of perceived power distance and the level of loneliness at work, according to marital status.

H<sub>4</sub>: There is a significant difference between the mean scores of the dimensions of perceived power distance and the level of loneliness at work, according to educational status.

$H_5$ : There is a significant difference between the mean scores of the dimensions of perceived power distance and the level of loneliness at work, according to age.

$H_6$ : There is a significant difference between the mean scores of the dimensions of perceived power distance and the level of loneliness at work, according to years of seniority.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Descriptive Statistics of the Scales

Within the scope of the descriptive statistics on the power distance scale, the mean, percentage, frequency, and standard deviation values of the expressions in the scale were calculated. When the perceived power distance scale averages are examined, the statement “A good manager should have an authoritarian fatherly structure” has the highest average value, and 48.3% of employees fully agree with this statement ( $(X) = 4.05$ ). The statement “Consulting subordinates is a natural behavior” also had the second highest average, and 44.8% of the employees stated that they completely agreed with this statement ( $(X) = 4.00$ ). The third statement with the highest average is “Getting the support of strong people is very important in social and work life” and 42.2% of the respondents completely agree with this statement ( $(X) = 3.95$ ). The statement “Developing children’s sense of obedience should be one of the important goals of families” has the lowest average and 29.1% of the employees strongly disagree with this statement ( $(X) = 3.00$ ). The general average of the scale is ( $(X) = 3.64$ ). This shows that employees respond positively to statements about perceived power distance.

When the averages of the sense of loneliness on the work-life scale were examined, it was seen that the expression “There is someone I can spend time with during breaks at work” had the highest average value, and 59.7% of them completely agreed with this statement ( $(X) = 4.27$ ). It is determined that the statement “There are people at work who take the trouble to listen to me” is the second highest average and 54% of the employees fully agree with this statement ( $(X) = 4.21$ ). It is seen that the statement of the scale “There is someone I can talk to about my daily problems at work when necessary” is the third highest average and 50.2% of the employees fully agree with this statement ( $(X) = 4.14$ ). It is seen that the statement “I feel a general sense of emptiness when I am at work” has the lowest average value and 55.2% of the employees do not agree with this statement ( $(X) = 1.99$ ). Considering the general average of the scale ( $(X) = 3.27$ ), it is concluded that employees are mostly undecided while responding to feelings of loneliness on the work-life scale.

### 4.2. Relationships Between Variables

Pearson’s Correlation test was used to examine the relationship between perceived power distance and loneliness in work life and its subdimensions, social friendship, and emotional deprivation.

When the results were examined, a statistically significant relationship was found between perceived power distance and feelings of loneliness in work life ( $r=0.297$ ,  $p=0.000\leq 0.01$ ). In this case, hypothesis  $H_1$  was supported. Regarding the sub-dimensions, no significant relationship was found between perceived power distance and the emotional deprivation dimension of loneliness in work life ( $r=-0.030$ ,  $p=0.542\geq 0.05$ ). In this case, hypothesis  $H_{1,1}$  was not supported. A statistically significant relationship was found between perceived power distance and social friendships ( $r=0.346$ ,  $p=0.000\leq 0.01$ ). In this case, hypothesis  $H_{1,2}$  was supported.

**Table 1:** Pearson correlation test results

	Perceived Power Distance	Feeling of Loneliness in Work Life	Emotional Deprivation	Social Friendship
Perceived Power Distance	r	1,000	0,297**	-0,030
	p		0,000	0,542
Feeling of Loneliness in Work Life	r		1,000	0,497**
	p			0,000
Emotional Deprivation	r			1,000
	p			0,000
Social Friendship	r			
	p			1,000

\* $p\leq 0,05$  \*\* $p\leq 0,01$

#### 4.3. Difference Analysis on Demographic Variables

To measure whether the power distance perceptions and loneliness levels of the participants changed according to the demographic parameters, the Independent Sample T-Test and Anova tests, which are parametric tests, were used. As a result of the analysis, no statistically significant difference was found between perceived power distance in terms of gender, marital status, seniority, loneliness in work life, and the mean scores of its dimensions. Therefore, hypotheses  $H_2$ ,  $H_3$ , and  $H_6$  were not supported.

Since there were four categories belonging to the educational status factor, an ANOVA test was performed. The average of the perceived power distance scale is higher at all educational levels, and the average of loneliness on the work life scale is 3.38, which is higher in postgraduate employees. There was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the loneliness scale in work life ( $p=0.004\leq 0.01$ ) and the emotional deprivation factor ( $p=0.001\leq 0.01$ ), according to educational status. Based on this result, hypothesis  $H_4$  is partially supported.

According to the pairwise comparison results of the Post Hoc tests, it is seen that the employees who are high school graduates experience more loneliness than the employees with a bachelor's degree. When the results of the comparison are examined in terms of employees experiencing emotional deprivation according to their educational level, it is seen that those who are high school graduates experience more emotional deprivation than those who have a bachelor's degree.

**Table 2:** One Way ANOVA test results regarding education status

		n	$\bar{x}$	Standard Deviation	F	p	Pairwise Comparison
<b>Perceived Power Distance</b>	High school	120	3,57	0,857	0.866	0,459	-
	College	67	3,73	0,871			
	Undergraduate	210	3,66	0,662			
	Postgraduate	25	3,56	0,754			
	Total	422	3,64	0,761			
<b>Feeling of Loneliness in Work Life</b>	Highschool (1)	120	3,36	0,575	4.466	<b>0,004*</b>	(1-3)
	College (2)	67	3,35	0,556			
	Undergrad (3)	210	3,18	0,423			
	Postgrad (4)	25	3,38	0,519			
	Total	422	3,27	0,504			
<b>Emotional Deprivation</b>	Highschool (1)	120	2,61	1,006	0.905	<b>0,001*</b>	(1-3)
	College (2)	67	2,32	1,019			
	Undergrad (3)	210	2,17	0,923			
	Postgrad (4)	25	2,56	0,864			
	Total	422	2,34	0,976			
<b>Social Friendship</b>	High school	120	3,93	0,851	5.703	0,437	-
	College	67	4,12	0,897			
	Undergraduate	210	3,94	0,780			
	Postgraduate	25	4,00	0,785			
	Total	422	3,97	0,820			

\* $p \leq 0,01$  \*\* $p \leq 0,05$

ANOVA test was performed for age. The average of the perceived power distance scale was 3.73 with the participants between the ages of 26-35, and the average of the loneliness in work life scale was 3.31 with the participants between the ages of 36-45. It can be said that individuals between the ages of 46-55, who have an average of 2.49 in terms of emotional deprivation, experience more emotional deprivation than individuals between the ages of 18-25. There was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of loneliness in work life and the emotional deprivation sub-dimensions according to age ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). In this case, hypothesis  $H_5$  was partially supported.

**Table 3:** One Way ANOVA test results for age

		n	$\bar{x}$	Standard Deviation	F	P
<b>Perceived Power Distance</b>	18-25 years old	25	3,64	0,755	1.251	0,289
	26-35 years old	140	3,73	0,623		
	36-45 years old	135	3,59	0,786		
	46-55 years old	103	3,63	0,818		
	56 years and older	19	3,38	1,119		
	Total	422	3,64	0,761		
<b>Feeling of Loneliness in Work Life</b>	18-25 years old	25	3,22	0,531	0.533	0,712
	26-35 years old	140	3,23	0,440		
	36-45 years old	135	3,31	0,507		
	46-55 years old	103	3,30	0,562		
	56 years and older	19	3,23	0,582		
	Total	422	3,27	0,504		
<b>Social Friendship</b>	18-25 years old	25	4,20	0,689	0.796	0,529
	26-35 years old	140	4,01	0,732		
	36-45 years old	135	3,93	0,822		
	46-55 years old	103	3,91	0,921		
	56 years and older	19	4,00	1,003		
	Total	422	3,97	0,820		
<b>Emotional Deprivation</b>	18-25 years old	25	1,92	1,056	3.355	<b>0,010**</b>
	26-35 years old	140	2,20	0,955		
	36-45 years old	135	2,47	0,957		
	46-55 years old	103	2,49	0,998		
	56 years and older	19	2,21	0,761		
	Total	422	2,34	0,976		

\*p≤0,01 \*\*p≤0,05

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, it was tried to determine what kind of a relationship exists between the perceived power distance and the feeling of loneliness in work life. According to the results of the analysis, it is seen that there is a positive relationship between power distance and loneliness in work life. It can be said that as the perceived power distance level increases, the increase in the sense of loneliness can be explained by the power of many phenomena of social sciences and power differences between the parties of the relationship can shape social relations. If the power distance is high in a society or culture, individuals, groups and organizations will also act in line with the characteristics of the society in question. It can be said that in the high-power distance culture, elders have more influence in the family and seniors have more influence in the workplace. In such organizations, since the subordinates cannot speak to their superiors, they keep their mistakes, different perspectives and creative ideas to themselves, and thus the decisions are limited to the perspective of those at the higher levels in the hierarchy and the experience they have. It can be said that when the individual

feels the power distance in the organization and accepts this, he/she will avoid sharing his/her thoughts and will obey the decisions and orders without question. As a result, a communication problem that arises based on the psychological communication deficiencies of the employees in the horizontal and vertical hierarchy can cause uncertainty in the organizational environment, stress, insecurity, an increase in turnover and naturally loneliness in organizational life.

It is seen that the power distance perceptions of the employees are above the average. It has a cultural structure in which the institution, position and status of the research are important and the relationship between employees and managers is distant. This result is in parallel with many previous studies. In their research, Basım (2000), Turan, Durceylan & Şişman (2005), Gürbüz & Bingöl (2007), Macit (2010), Sargut (2010), Yayık (2017) found the power distance at medium level and above. In Hofstede's research, Turkey was counted among the countries with a high-power distance level with 66 points. In this case, it can be said that this study shows parallelism with Hofstede's study when it is looked at the general average of the perceived power distance scale.

From an administrative point of view, if the organizational power distance is high and the power distance perception of the employees is low, democratic management styles and participatory management approach should be adopted, and a strong communication and feedback system should be established between the employees and the management. If the organizational power distance is low and the power distance perception of the employees is high, the rules should be made stricter in the conduct of the work, centralization of the organizational structure and a paternalistic management approach should be adopted. Thus, employees will have positive thoughts as they will encounter a desired power distance.

It is concluded that the employees remain undecided while responding to the statements of the loneliness scale in work life. Studies have shown that some groups are more prone to loneliness. However, everyone has felt lonely at some point in time. Considering that the characteristics of the individual, life experiences and situational variables are effective on loneliness, which is a subjective experience, it can be said that the intensity of loneliness will be felt differently in different social groups. Loneliness can be related to different reasons due to its changing nature from individual to individual and may lead to various results. However, regardless of the duration, it affects the majority of people negatively. The fact that loneliness cannot be shared or that it is a concept that belongs to those who do not share their feelings also makes it more difficult to understand.

Difference analyzes were performed to measure whether there were statistically significant differences between perceived power distance and demographic variables. As a result of the analyzes made on the variables of gender, age, marital status, education level and seniority, no significant difference was found for the perceived power distance scale. A statistically significant difference was found for the variables of age and education level in the tests performed for the mentioned variables for the loneliness in work life scale.

Many studies have been conducted to determine the relationship between demographic variables and loneliness, and the results of these studies have also shown differences from each other. The

findings of our study show parallelism with the findings of the study conducted by Green et al. in 2001, which is one of the studies emphasizing the increase in the level of loneliness experienced with the advancement of the individual's age, with the social networks of individuals and their social and emotional loneliness levels. As a result of the research, the emotional and social loneliness levels of the older individuals were found to be higher than the young ones. It can be said that these findings may be due to general differences related to life stages.

When examined from an organizational perspective, loneliness affects the performance of the organization. For this reason, it is necessary to determine the causes of loneliness in a solid way and to find ways to deal with it. Creating a supportive environment for working together such as invitations, ceremonies, celebrations, joint tasks and shared activities outside of work that increase sincere interpersonal relations in the workplace, uniting employees around the goals of the organization, creating shared values and goals will ensure individuals to have quality and satisfying relationships at work and in this way, it will prevent loneliness.

It will be effective to provide trainings such as conflict resolution and communication skills to improve the relations between employees and increase interaction, which will enable individuals who experience loneliness in work life to express their feelings more easily. In addition, applying practices to increase the motivation of the employees will protect the resistance against the difficulties in the workplace and make it difficult to catch the feeling of loneliness. Therefore, recommendations can be made to organizations for the effective use of motivational tools.

Workplace friendship is an institutional value that connects employees to each other and to the organization, reduces stress levels, increases communication, enables tasks to be fulfilled more efficiently and helps organizational change process. For this reason, organizations should implement supportive practices towards establishing companionship and friendship in the workplace. The social support that the employee receives from the management and his/her colleagues improves the sense of trust and belonging within the organization however, an employee who does not receive sufficient social support becomes anxious and may experience loneliness. Because of all these, social support, which is considered as an opportunity to help relationships of different quality and strength, should be integrated with work life and used a lot in order to cope with loneliness in work life.

As a suggestion for future studies; it can be re-studied in the future with a larger sample size and using different scales. In addition, the concepts that are the subject of the research can be examined by associating them with other organizational behavior and management issues. Sectoral comparisons can be considered in future research on variables. Similar and different aspects can be compared with the results of this research carried out in the public sector by conducting a similar study in the private sector.

### Author Contribution

CONTRIBUTION RATE	EXPLANATION	CONTRIBUTORS
Idea or Notion	Form the research idea or hypothesis	Gözde BATMAZ YILDIZ Ayla Zehra ÖNCER
Literature Review	Review the literature required for the study	Gözde BATMAZ YILDIZ
Research Design	Designing method, scale, and pattern for the study	Gözde BATMAZ YILDIZ Ayla Zehra ÖNCER
Data Collecting and Processing	Collecting, organizing, and reporting data	Gözde BATMAZ YILDIZ
Discussion and Interpretation	Taking responsibility in evaluating and finalizing the findings	Gözde BATMAZ YILDIZ Ayla Zehra ÖNCER

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