

# Loneliness in the workplace: feelings and expressivity of hotel employees

Feelings and  
expressivity  
of hotel  
employees

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study investigates the relationship between feelings of loneliness in the workplace, life satisfaction, affect, hope and expressivity among hotel employees.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The research model was tested via structural equation modeling based on the empirical data collected from hotel employees in Antalya, Turkey.

**Findings** – The research findings suggest that emotional deprivation and social companionship have a significant impact on life satisfaction, that life satisfaction has a significant impact on positive and negative emotions, and that positive and negative emotions have the same impact on pathways and agencies.

**Originality/value** – The research findings should assist researchers and practitioners to understand the behaviors of hotel employees in continuous interaction and relationship with individuals to motivate them while providing more effective services.

**Keywords** Loneliness in the workplace, Life satisfaction, Affect, Hope, Emotional expressivity, Hotel industry, Employee behavior, Employee psychology

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

Individuals maintain their lives in specific social environments. Thus, they develop positive or negative relationships with many people of different social positions and characters (Yilmaz, 2011). Those isolated from this relationship pattern/network tend to feel lonely. In that sense, loneliness is a global reality of social relationship networks (Rokach, 2014), and may arise during any stage and at any moment of life (Shankar, McMumm, Banks, & Steptoe, 2011; Yang & Victor, 2011). Its impact will differ according to the individuals and incidents involved (Svendsen, 2017). Loneliness is distinct from one's preference to be alone. Therefore,

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it would be more logical to examine the term considering the weak social relationships it affects in the context of a stressful working life (Aytaç, 2015; Khan, Khalid, Abbas, & Khalid, 2022).

Similarly, workplace loneliness should not be confused with an employee's wish for solitude to maintain a deeper focus over a longer period (Akçit & Barutçu, 2017; Cheng, Wei, Zhong, & Zhang, 2021; McCartney, In, & Pinto, 2022). Unlike a personal choice, loneliness in the workplace is an emotional state (Peng, Chen, Xia, & Ran, 2017) with various ups and downs and areas of influence. For instance, this emotional state could affect life satisfaction in a negative way (Judge, Locke, Durham, & Kluger, 1998) to the point of being called a "health pandemic" (Murthy, 2017). Affect is another misunderstood dimension of work that connects with life satisfaction (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985; Kafetsios & Zampetakis, 2008), thus implying a cognitive and judgmental process in its relationship with loneliness (Chen & Chen, 2021; Chen & Qi, 2022; Lin, Wong, Lin, & Yang, 2021; Wright, 2005). On the other hand, hope levels are equally important in this process of emotional interaction, referring to humans' need for resolution in negative circumstances.

Considering all variables, ranging from loneliness in the workplace to hope levels, the expressivity of those feelings is of vital importance as a reflection of physical and spiritual health (Akm, 2011). According to Kring, Smith, & Neale (1994), emotional expressivity communicates meanings not easily articulated in words. Therefore, diverse behavioral situations triggered by emotional stimuli are observed in emotional expressivity (Gross & John, 1997). Emotions play a critical role in the formation of perceptions and attitudes and can direct individuals' behaviors (Odou & Schill, 2020). Emotional states affect our relationships and adaptation to surrounding social environments (Doğan & Özdevecioğlu, 2009). In this regard, while assessing the incidents and situations experienced in a workplace, it is crucial to examine the variables in relation to the emotions at hand (Özdemir, 2015).

The above topics beg further examination within the framework of hotel businesses, where interactions among them are intense (Ayazlar & Güzel, 2014) because of the hospitality industry's labor-intensive nature (Aynalem, Birhanu, & Tesefay, 2016). In addition to products and services, employees' feelings, behaviors, voices and attitudes play active roles in service delivery (Tsaour, Chang, & Wu, 2004). Moreover, close interactions between employees and customers create additional sensitivity challenges (Lewis & McCann, 2004). Emotions (Kim, O'Neill, & Cho, 2010) can provide insight regarding service and workplace quality. Despite being predictors of tourism experience and constituting an important backdrop for both theoretical and managerial applications, emotions have been underacknowledged in the hospitality and tourism industry. Moreover, there is no study examining the holistic interaction of these factors, which are very important in manager-employee and customer relations in these fields (Christoua, Avloniti, & Farmaki, 2019; Jung, Jung, & Yoon, 2022). The purpose of the present study is to determine the relationship between feelings of loneliness in workplace, life satisfaction, affect, hope levels and expressivity as essential variables for the relationships established by hotel employees.

## 2. Conceptual framework and development of hypotheses

Emotions are intense cognitive experiences related to high levels of hedonism (Cabanac, 2002). Emotions refer to the set of complicated interactions between subjective and objective factors depending on the incidents in question. They have the potential to direct our behaviors regarding how we perceive and are affected by said incidents (Kleinginna & Kleinginna, 1981). Complicated emotions indicate different neurological states of being and behavioral patterns (Day, 1984). Hotel employees interact especially closely with their customers, and loneliness, as a consequence of their working conditions, may reflect negatively on their working lives (Jung *et al.*, 2022). Thus, the starting point of the present research is loneliness in the workplace as the locus for several negative emotions in employees (Sirbu & Dumbravă, 2019; Zhou, 2018).

Loneliness in the workplace is analyzed at the individual level (Öge, Çetin, & Top, 2018) across two dimensions. The first is *emotional deprivation*, which is about “being isolated and alienated” and indicates the quality of the relationship between employees and other individuals. In this case, the context resembles emotional loneliness. The second dimension is *social companionship*. It refers to being a part of a group, and capable communication with social connections. This dimension resembles social loneliness (Wright, Burt, & Strongman, 2006).

Workplace loneliness is characterized by weak social relationships and communication structures in a negative working environment. Said relationships could positively or negatively affect one’s emotions depending on the situation (Suh, Diener, Oishi, & Triandis, 1998) in cognitive and spiritual ways (Ayazlar & Güzel, 2014; Wright, 2007). Employees with high levels of loneliness suffer from a lack of satisfaction with their intrinsic and extrinsic needs. Consequently, they will be more willing to leave the organization (Ghadi, 2017). This state of affairs could affect individuals’ professional and personal lives in positive and/or negative ways (Adams, King, & King, 1996). Hence the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1. Employees’ perceptions of emotional deprivation affect their life satisfaction in a negative and significant way.
- H2. Employees’ perceptions of social companionship affect their life satisfaction in a negative and significant way.

Affect is deeply related to life satisfaction (Huebner & Dew, 1996; Wang, 2017), making it an important variable in organizational working environments (Agho, Price, & Mueller, 1992). As a reference to individuals’ general mood, affect can be positive or negative (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1984; Moardi, Salehi, & Marandi, 2016). Whereas positive affect indicates the tendency of an individual to feel enthusiastic, awake and active; negative affect is a state of distress and an inability to enjoy life (Watson *et al.*, 1988). Moreover, people with positive affect are extroverted and seek pleasure, reward and happiness, while people with negative affect are prone to violence, fear and anxiety (Salami, 2010; Van Yperen, 2003). According to Singh and Jha (2008), positive affect correlates positively and significantly with life satisfaction. Thus, life satisfaction is a crucial variable in the intensively competitive hospitality industry, where it affects the attitudes and behaviors of employees positively or negatively and can shape their emotional perceptions of their jobs (Ampofo, Owusu, Coffie, & Asiedu-Appiah, 2022). We predict that the high or low life satisfaction of employees influences their affect in working life positively or negatively. Hence the following hypotheses are developed:

- H3. Employees’ life satisfaction affects their positive affect in a positive and significant way.
- H4. Employees’ life satisfaction affects their negative affect in a negative and significant way.

Whereas positive affect is closely related to having objectives and striving to achieve those objectives, negative affect is associated with a low probability of future success, striving ambivalence and between-striving conflict (Emmons, 1986). Positive affect manifests hope through the motive for consistency in pursuit of a desired goal that may be hard or impossible to reach, thus serving as a basis for individual motivation (Wenzel, Anvari, de Vel-Palumbo, & Bury, 2017). Hope occurs when people are unsatisfied and require something to fill in the gaps (McGinnis, Gao, Jun, & Gentry, 2017). Because tourism has been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, it is vital for employees in the travel, food and beverage and hospitality sectors to maintain their psychological well-being and, of course, their levels of hope during and after this period (Mao, He, Morrison, & Andres Coca-Stefaniak, 2021). At this

point, it is thought that hope correlates with positive and negative affect (Özer & Tezer, 2008). Hope can be examined under two dimensions: pathways and agency. The pathways component refers to the sense of being able to generate successful plans to meet the goals at hand. The agency component refers to the sense of successful determination in meeting one's goals in the past, present and future. In this context, hope serves as a cognitive set based on a reciprocally derived sense of successful agency (goal-directed determination) and pathways (planning the ways to meet one's goals) (Snyder *et al.*, 1991). In this regard, it can be expected that individuals' hope levels would be positively affected by the positive affect they experience in the workplace and negatively affected by the presence of negative affect in the workplace. Hence the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H5. Employees' positive affect affects their pathways in a positive and significant way.
- H6. Employees' positive affect affects their agency in a positive and significant way.
- H7. Employees' negative affect affects their pathways in a negative and significant way.
- H8. Employees' negative affect affects their agency in a negative and significant way.

Employees may encounter various obstacles and fail while trying to complete their workplace tasks. Whereas some lose their motivation and give up, others maintain hope, create alternative plans and endure their present circumstances (Peterson & Byron, 2008). Focusing on a specific goal without losing hope leads to positive feelings. On the other hand, focusing on failure rather than success leads to negative feelings (Snyder *et al.*, 1991). Hope harmonized with positive and negative feelings are likely to affect employees' expressivity behaviors, which may differ according to the intensity of employees' emotions. For instance, highly emotional individuals can express their feelings more easily (Diefendorff, Croyle, & Gosserand, 2005). According to Halberstadt, Cassidy, Stifter, Parke, and Fox (1995), expressivity refers to how individuals show their feelings in response to stimuli (Deng, Chang, Yang, Huo, & Zhou, 2016). While the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the global life order, it has deeply affected individuals emotionally. Therefore, the expression of emotions and communication has played a critical role for employees in the hospitality industry, where remote work is not an option and employees must engage in one-on-one contact with customers (Guzzo, Wang, Madera, & Abbott, 2021). Therefore, hope is an antecedent that could affect employees' emotional expressivity. An increase in employees' hope levels would further encourage their expressivity behaviors (see Figure 1). On the other hand, because many hospitality industry employees now face low levels of hope, the likelihood of showing positive expressivity behaviors is minimal. Hence the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H9. Employees' positive expressivity regarding alternative pathways affects their positive emotional expressivity in a positive and significant way.

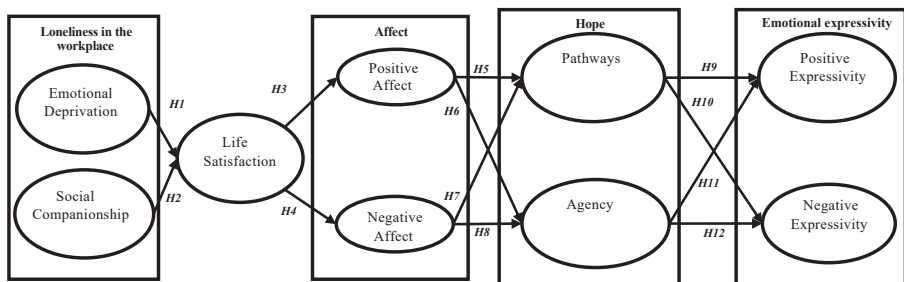


Figure 1.  
Research model

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- H10. Employees' negative expressivity regarding alternative pathways affects their negative emotional expressivity in a negative and significant way.
- H11. Employees' agency levels affect their positive emotional expressivity behaviors in a positive and significant way.
- H12. Employees' agency levels affect their negative emotional expressivity behaviors in a negative and significant way.

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### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Instrument

Different scales were used in this study. The loneliness in the workplace scale was adapted from [Wright et al. \(2006\)](#). The scale is composed of two sub-dimensions: emotional deprivation (nine items) and social companionship (seven items). The life satisfaction scale (five items) was adapted from [Diener et al. \(1985\)](#), while the positive and negative affect scale was adapted from [Watson et al. \(1988\)](#). The scale is composed of two sub-dimensions: positive (ten items) and negative affect (ten items). On the other hand, the hope scale, composed of pathways (four items) and agency (four items), was adapted from [Snyder et al. \(1991\)](#). Lastly, the emotional expressivity scale was adapted from [Gross and John \(1995\)](#) and is composed of two sub-dimensions: positive (four items) and negative (six items) expressivity. The scales were presented as a five-point Likert scale. The questions in the positive and negative affect scale were encoded from 1 = "Very slightly or not at all" to 5 = "Extremely." The other scales were encoded from 1 "Strongly agree" to 5 = "Strongly disagree."

Since the scales were originally developed in English, the questionnaires were first prepared in English then translated into Turkish using the back-translation process ([Brislin, 1976](#)). Finally, a questionnaire was applied to 15 employees to determine the intelligibility of the questionnaire prepared in Turkish. Since no problem could be detected regarding the intelligibility of the expressions in the scale, it was applied verbatim.

#### 3.2 Sampling

The present sample is composed of employees working in five-star hotels. Convenience sampling was chosen to reach more employees. Questionnaires were distributed to employees working in hotels in the Belek and Kemer regions of Antalya, Turkey. During the data collection stage, the face-to-face method was used first. Employees were informed one by one about the purpose and content of the survey. Later, the questionnaires were conducted via face-to-face interviews by the trained employees with other employees staying in lodgments. Using the drop and collect method, trained employees delivered the questionnaires to other groups of employees staying at their houses. Thus, 553 of 850 questionnaires dropped by trained employees were collected. An additional 392 questionnaires were collected face to face, while 161 were collected via the drop-collect method. Since 57 out of 553 questionnaires were filled out incorrectly and 39 were not eligible for analysis, they were excluded from the data analysis process. Data obtained from the remaining 457 respondents were ultimately used for analysis (see [Table 1](#)).

#### 3.3 Data analysis

Structural equation modeling (SEM) and multiple group analysis were used to test the hypotheses in the present study. For the implementation of SEM, the two-step approach suggested by [Anderson and Gerbing \(1988\)](#) was adopted to examine the measurement and structural models. Since maximum likelihood was applied to the measurement and structural models, the normal distribution assumption of data was checked. However, before these

Concept	Definitions
The perception of emotional deprivation	Emotional deprivation is the perception of an individual that his emotional needs (affect, kindness, etc.) will never be satisfied completely (Schmidt, Joiner, Young, & Telch, 1995)
The perception of social companionship	Social companionship indicates that individuals spend more time together with their friends in the same social network (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Rook, 1987)
Life satisfaction	Life satisfaction refers to cognitive assessments regarding the factors influencing important parts of life such as family, environment, friends and identity (Schmidt <i>et al.</i> , 1995)
Positive/negative affect	Positive affect is the tendency of feeling eager, awake and active; on the other hand, negative affect refers to feeling distressed and an inability to enjoy life (Watson <i>et al.</i> , 1988). Positive affect is defined as to what extent an individual is eager and active, whereas negative affect measures how much an individual experiences problems and anxiety (Gloster <i>et al.</i> , 2008)
Pathways	The pathways component refers to a sense of being able to generate successful plans to meet goals (Snyder <i>et al.</i> , 1991)
Agencies	Agency refers to a sense of successful determination in meeting goals in the past, present, and future (Snyder <i>et al.</i> , 1991)
Positive/negative expressivity	Emotional expressivity is the capability of showing and expressing one's feelings (DiTommaso, Brannen-McNulty, Ross, & Burgess, 2003). In this regard, emotional expressivity refers to the reflection of emotions via gestures, facial expressions, or in verbal way (Kring <i>et al.</i> , 1994)

**Table 1.**  
Definitions of  
constructs

stages, a data screening process was followed to translate data into a viable format. In particular, the mean substitution method was used to replace the missing data. Next, the Mahalanobis distance was checked for outliers (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2009). No outliers were found. After these steps, the skewness and kurtosis values were checked for normal distribution assumption. Since the skewness (min  $-1.440$ , max  $1.374$ ) and kurtosis (min  $-1.543$ , max  $2.470$ ) values did not violate the recommended values (Kunnan, 1998), the normal distribution assumption was met. The validity of each scale was tested with confirmatory factor analysis before the measurement model was examined. Some items failing to reach standard factor loadings were removed from the scale before confirmatory factor analysis was re-examined. The final results for each scale are shown in Table 2. The measurement model was developed based on the structures obtained in Table 2.

As presented in Table 2, the fit values of all scales, except emotional expressivity, are at acceptable levels. Although the expressivity shows that only the RMSEA value relatively

Construct	Dimension	Number of items	Factor loadings	$\chi^2/df$	CFI	RMSEA	AVE	CR	Cronbach
Loneliness in the workplace	Emotional deprivation	5	0.64–0.81	3.468	0.97	0.073	0.50	0.83	0.82
	Social companionship	4	0.73–0.88				0.67	0.89	0.89
Affect	Positive	3	0.69–0.91	3.884	0.98	0.079	0.59	0.81	0.80
	Negative	3	0.61–0.81				0.55	0.78	0.77
Life satisfaction	Life satisfaction	4	0.57–0.93	1.704	0.99	0.039	0.51	0.80	0.79
Hope	Pathways	3	0.72–0.84	3.625	0.99	0.076	0.64	0.84	0.84
	Agency	3	0.83–0.89				0.72	0.89	0.88
	Emotional expressivity	3	0.74–0.81	4.205	0.98	0.084	0.59	0.81	0.81
	Negative	3	0.75–0.85				0.66	0.86	0.85

**Table 2.**  
The results of scales' validity and reliability

exceeded the desired value, different researchers suggest 10 as an appropriate cutoff (Lai & Green, 2016). Thus, the validity of the emotional expressivity scale was also met.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Demographic findings

As presented in Table 3, the participation rate of male employees is 49.1%. While 37.6% of employees are high school graduates, only 20% have undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. It is observed that 53.3% of respondents are 34 years old or younger and 56.3% have been working for more than five years. A good portion of the participants (30.8%) work in housekeeping, and 42.2% have an income lower than 1500 Turkish Lira. In addition, 53.7% of the participants stay in lodgments.

### 4.2 Measurement model

Fit indices applied as the first step of structural equation modeling are acceptable ( $\chi^2 = 1041.997$ ;  $df = 398$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.618$ ; CFI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.060) (Mulaik *et al.*, 1989; Marsh & Hocevar, 1985, 1988). In addition, convergent validity, discriminant validity and construct reliability were examined for construct validity (Hair *et al.*, 2009). The findings are presented in Table 4. All standard factor loadings exceed 0.50, as do the AVE values. Thus, convergent validity was met (Hair *et al.*, 2009). Discriminant validity was measured by comparing the AVE and the squared latent factor correlation between each pair of constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Because the AVE values were greater than the squared correlations, discriminant validity was achieved. Also, Cronbach's alphas and composite reliability were greater than the recommended level of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Thus, these measures are internally consistent.

### 4.3 Structural model

Following the development of the measurement model, hypotheses developed within the scope of this study's first purpose were analyzed via SEM. Goodness of fit obtained as the result of SEM is acceptable (Mulaik *et al.*, 1989; Marsh & Hocevar, 1985, 1988). The SEM results for the hypotheses are presented in Table 5. As seen in Table 5, employees' perceptions of emotional deprivation affect their life satisfaction in a negative and significant

Characteristic	Category	f	Characteristic	Category	f
Gender	Female	235	Age	15–24	81
	Male	223		25–34	163
Marital status	Married	233	35–44	133	
	Single	225	45–54	52	
Tenure in tourism	Less than 5 years	200	55 and over	29	
	5–10 years	154	Education	Elementary	75
	More than 10 years	104	High school	172	
Income (Turkish lira)	0–1499	216	Associate's degree	117	
	1500–2499	175	Bachelor's degree	71	
	2500–3499	59	Postgraduate	23	
	3500 and more	8	Department	Front Office	92
Housing	Home	212	Food & Beverage	123	
	Lodging	246	Cuisine	53	
			Housekeeping	141	
		Other	49		

**Table 3.**  
Demographic findings  
of the respondents

Dimension and items	SFL	<i>t</i> values	CR	AVE
<i>Emotional deprivation</i>				
I often feel abandoned by my coworkers when I am under pressure at work	0.65	*Fixed	0.84	0.51
I often feel alienated from my co-workers	0.79	13.345		
I feel myself withdrawing from the people I work with	0.76	12.996		
I feel satisfied with the relationships I have work with (R)	0.67	11.796		
There is a sense of camaraderie in my workplace (R)	0.68	11.976		
<i>Social companionship</i>				
There is no one at work I can share personal thoughts with if I want to	0.80	*Fixed	0.89	0.67
I have someone at work I can spend time with on my break if I want to (R)	0.72	16.486		
I feel part of a group of friends at work (R)	0.87	20.663		
There are people at work who take the trouble to listen to me	0.88	21.051		
<i>Life satisfaction</i>				
I am satisfied with my life	0.58	*Fixed	0.80	0.51
In most ways my life is close to my ideal	0.72	11.925		
So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life	0.61	10.603		
If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing	0.91	13.564		
<i>Positive affect</i>				
Interested	0.70	*Fixed	0.81	0.60
Enthusiastic	0.71	13.9		
Active	0.89	16.53		
<i>Negative affect</i>				
Alert	0.61	*Fixed	0.78	0.55
Hostile	0.75	11.996		
Scared	0.85	12.631		
<i>Pathways</i>				
I can think of many ways to get out of a jam	0.72	*Fixed	0.84	0.64
There are lots of ways around any problem	0.83	15.909		
I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are most important to me	0.84	16.095		
<i>Agency</i>				
I energetically pursue my goals	0.79	*Fixed	0.88	0.71
My past experiences have prepared me well for my future	0.94	22.682		
I've been pretty successful in life	0.79	18.597		
<i>Positive emotional expressivity</i>				
Whenever I feel positive emotions, people can easily see exactly what I am feeling	0.81	*Fixed	0.81	0.59
I laugh out loud when someone tells me a joke that I think is funny	0.74	14.294		
When I'm happy, my feelings show	0.75	14.323		
<i>Negative expressivity</i>				
People often do not know what I am feeling (R)	0.79	*Fixed	0.85	0.65
I've learned it is better to suppress my anger than to show it (R)	0.70	15.656		
Whenever I feel negative emotions, people can easily see exactly what I am feeling	0.92	20.822		
<b>Note(s):</b> Goodness-of-fit statistics $\chi^2 = 1041.997$ ; $df = 398$ ; $\chi^2/df = 2.618$ ; CFI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.060				

**Table 4.**  
Results of the  
measurement model

way ( $\beta = -0.32$ ;  $t = -6.816$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), and their social companionship perceptions affect their life satisfaction in a positive and significant way ( $\beta = 0.67$ ;  $t = 12.109$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). On the other hand, life satisfaction levels affect their positive emotional state in a positive way



Hyp	Relation	$\beta$	$t$ value	Result
H1	Emotional Deprivation → Life Satisfaction	-0.32	-6.816*	Supported
H2	Social Companionship → Life Satisfaction	0.67	12.109*	Supported
H3	Life Satisfaction → Positive Affect	0.82	11.963*	Supported
H4	Life Satisfaction → Negative Affect	-0.73	-9.925*	Supported
H5	Positive Affect → Pathways	0.19	2.594**	Supported
H6	Positive Affect → Agency	0.17	2.445***	Supported
H7	Negative Affect → Pathways	-0.23	-3.064**	Supported
H8	Negative Affect → Agency	-0.17	-2.429***	Supported
H9	Pathways → Positive Emotional Expressivity	0.32	5.505*	Supported
H10	Pathways → Negative Emotional Expressivity	0.07	1.904	Not supported
H11	Agency → Positive Emotional Expressivity	0.10	2.017***	Supported
H12	Agency → Negative Emotional Expressivity	-0.84	-15.180*	Supported

$R^2$  Life Satisfaction: 0.55; Positive Affect: 0.68; Negative Affect: 0.53; Pathways: 0.14; Agency: 0.10; Positive Emotional Expressivity: 0.12; Negative Emotional Expressivity: 0.69

**Note(s):** Goodness-of-fit statistics  $\chi^2 = 1238.126$ ;  $df = 422$ ;  $\chi^2/df = 2.934$ ; CFI = 0.90; RMSEA = 0.065

\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.05$

**Table 5.**  
Results of the  
structural model

( $\beta = 0.82$ ;  $t = 11.963$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) and their negative emotional state in a negative way ( $\beta = -0.73$ ;  $t = -9.925$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). Employees' tendencies toward alternative pathways are positively affected by positive emotions ( $\beta = 0.19$ ;  $t = 2.594$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and negatively affected by negative emotions. Positive and negative emotions direct agency in a similar way with alternative pathways. Lastly, agency and alternative pathways positively affect positive expressivity ( $\beta = 0.10$ ;  $t = 2.017$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ;  $\beta = 0.32$ ;  $t = 5.505$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), whereas negative expressivity is negatively affected only by agency ( $\beta = -0.84$ ;  $t = -15.180$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ).

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

Humankind is under the influence of countless emotions and opinions (Çeçen, 2002). Considering the fact that the human factor is the most important element in service-oriented organizations (Ghadi, 2017), employees' emotions significantly influence the survival and success of such organizations (Cardon, 2008). In the present study, the complex relationship between loneliness in the workplace, affect, life satisfaction, hope levels and emotional expressivity was analyzed. The research findings help us understand the behaviors of hotel employees in continuous interaction and relationship with individuals to motivate them and provide more effective services. Hotel employees' feelings and emotional behaviors are crucial variables influencing their evaluations of products and services (Tsaour et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2010). The research findings in this study provide specific theoretical and practical implications.

### 5.1 Theoretical implications

This study investigates the relationship among loneliness in the workplace, life satisfaction, affect, hope levels and expressivity of hotel employees and highlights interactions between these factors. In this context, the study offers several specific theoretical implications. First, as understood from the research findings, employees' perceptions of social companionship affect their life satisfaction in a positive way and their emotional deprivation perceptions in a negative way. Emotional deprivation is defined as the feeling of being alienated, abandoned and unsatisfied because of personal relationships in the working environment (Wright et al., 2006). Beyond any doubt, emotional deprivation affects employees' life satisfaction in a negative way. Loneliness in the workplace has an impact on the quality of employees'

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professional and personal lives (Erdil & Ertosun, 2011; Kaymaz, Eroğlu, & Sayilar, 2014). On the other hand, employees' life satisfaction levels affect their positive affect in a positive way and their negative affect in a negative way. It should be noted that employees' good feelings reflect how they assess their life satisfaction and positive affect from a cognitive perspective (Headey, Kelley, & Wearing, 1993). The research findings imply that positive affect is an important emotional baseline for employees. It encourages them to do what needs to be done while motivating them to benefit the current situation in the best way. The research findings further suggest that pathways and agency are positively affected by employees' positive affect and negatively affected by their negative affect. Components of hope refer to the existence of a goal or objective and lean toward that goal or objective. In this regard, positive emotions should flow from perceptions of successful goal pursuit. Perceptions of successful goal pursuit based on positive emotions also act as tools for coping with problems and overcoming obstacles on the path to the goal at hand. By contrast, negative emotions can be evaluated as products of unsuccessful goal pursuits in the face of obstacles (Snyder, 2002; Rowe & Fitness, 2018).

Finally, the research findings suggest that agency and pathways positively affect positive expressivity, whereas negative expressivity is negatively affected only by agency. Agency makes it necessary to account for the social and cultural context and other individuals while working toward the defined objective. In other words, agency is a motivation on the path toward the defined goal that requires being sensitive and responsible (Tarhan, Bacanlı, Dombaycı, & Demir, 2011). Agency embraces an individual's perception of fulfilling a duty by focusing on the duty in question. Encountering problems on the path toward success could create stress and result in negative incidents (Bhui, Dinos, Galant-Miecznikowska, de Jongh, & Stansfeld, 2016) like depression or deprivation (Gustafsson, Skoog, Podlog, Lundqvist, & Wagnsson, 2013; Pascoe, Hetrick, & Parker, 2019).

### *5.2 Practical implications*

Articulating how employees express their feelings (Staw, Sutton, & Pelled, 1994), life satisfaction (Iverson & Maguire, 2000) and hope levels (Peterson & Byron, 2008) is crucial to establish a strong network among employees while ensuring success and high performance. Emotions can also be influenced by incidents in one's private life and working environment. The consequences of those emotions influence not only employees' well-being but also individual, group, and organizational performance (Kaplan, Cortina, Ruark, LaPort, & Nicolaidis, 2014). Emotions could act as a key variable, particularly for enterprises operating in service industry. Service-related experiences are finalized by emotion. Any service industry employee is in continuous communication and interaction with customers. Employees should demonstrate positive emotions and be able to hide negative emotions when interacting with customers (Gong, Park, & Hyun, 2019). In this context, emotions could provide clues into how an employee would react in an unexpected situation with a customer. The consequence of employees' emotion will also influence long-term customer outcomes, including purchase amounts and customer loyalty (Chi & Chen, 2019). This study discusses the widely neglected topics of loneliness in the workplace, life satisfaction, affect, hope levels, and emotional expressivity as vital phenomena in business life. The findings point out that managers and leaders should give more attention to the feelings of all employees. Managing the emotions of employees, especially those who interact with customers one on one, constitutes a strategic approach. In this regard, it is necessary to organize leisure activities and psychological support programs for hotel employees. It is also important to implement a mentoring system through experts that employees can trust (Jung *et al.*, 2022). To overcome the emotional problems that have deepened especially after COVID-19, it is essential to create an effective communication flow and, ultimately, a healthy organizational climate between

employees with effective human resources management (Kloutsiniotis, Mihail, Mylonas, & Pateli, 2022). Considering the variable emotional moods of employee is also critical in the recruitment phase. In addition, the monitoring of negative emotional states and timely detection and solution of problems is necessary to prevent vicious emotional cycles (Xu, Martinez, & Van Hoof, 2021).

The manner in which employees express their emotions has a great potential impact on everything from organizational commitment to relationships between customers and employees (Seger-Guttmann & Medler-Liraz, 2016; Chi & Chen, 2019). Playing a central role in various phases of organizational life, emotions interlace with cognition and behaviors and could affect numerous organizational situations successively (Bailey, Gremler, & McCollough, 2001; Wang *et al.*, 2017).

Accordingly, routine or unexpected interactions among employees could affect employees' emotional worlds from cognitive and behavioral perspectives. For instance, employees' deprivation of colleagues in the workplace has a negative impact on life satisfaction. The present study confirmed that this situation causes negative affect in employees. On the other hand, employees' positive affect has a positive impact on two components (agency and pathways) of hope, meaning an employee in a positive emotional state would move toward the defined goal in a planned, eager and consistent manner. Thus, emotional expressivity provides a remarkable clue regarding trust and empathy among individuals (Boone & Buck, 2003). In this regard, however, managers should be able to provide a flexible working environment where employees can frankly express their negative *and* positive feelings because a disguised emotion not only prevents understanding the problems of employees but also renders resolution impossible (Vuori, Vuori, & Huy, 2018). As a result, true emotional expression should be encouraged, and managers should react to negative emotional expression from employees to build up a friendly and supportive working environment. Managers should also strive toward a working atmosphere in which negative emotions of employees are not suppressed.

The emotions observed or experienced in a workplace are of high importance for their causative implications (Vecchio, 2000). In addition, the analysis of emotions and behaviors provides notable information to understand customer–employee interactions and employee relationships (Van Dolen, De Ruyter, & Lemmink, 2004). Managers at hotel enterprises should recalibrate their actions to manage employees' emotions, particularly before adopting a particular leadership style. For example, spiritual leadership with transcendent vision and altruistic love that encourages employees to take care of each other's personal and professional needs can provide necessary support and reduce feelings of loneliness and hopelessness in employees while fostering better organization outcomes in the hotel industry (Ali, Usman, Pham, & Agyemang-Mintah, 2020).

## 6. Limitations and future directions

This study has several limitations. First, it was carried out within the scope of hotels (and, within that category, five-star hotels specifically). However, hotels are environments where employees themselves must closely interact. In working environments with intense human relationships, employees could experience radically different emotional states. Therefore, the research subject could be examined in sectors where employees have less frequent interaction. Second, today's intense working conditions and the more isolated working environments for employees encourage different emotional states. Which behavior results from which emotion or how those emotions affect the working environment could act as important clues for determining the quality of today's working life. The terms expected to influence employees' behaviors and performance were limited to loneliness in the workplace, life satisfaction, affect, hope and emotional expressivity. Future studies might include

different variables and/or sub-variables in this kind of research to increase the clarity of the results. Finally, the fact that the research was carried out during a specific time period is another important limitation. For this reason, carrying out the same research on different periods could be beneficial to yield more explanatory results.

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