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# INVESTIGATION OF THE MEDIATING ROLE OF LIFE SATISFACTION IN THE EFFECT OF EMOTIONAL LABOR ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE

## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The aim of the research is to test the mediating effect of life satisfaction (LS) on the impact of emotional labor (EL) on work-life balance (WLB).

**Methodology:** The research tested the mediating effect of LS on the impact of EL efforts of taxi drivers on WLB. The quantitative research used a questionnaire-based methodology to collect research data.

**Results:** A positive and weak relationship has been determined between EL and LS. Additionally, the results also show a similar relationship between LS and WLB. However, no statistically significant relationship was found between EL and WLB. In addition, the impact of EL on LS and the impact of LS on WLB have also been determined. In a model without LS, it was observed that EL did not have a significant effect on WLB.

**Conclusion:** Research findings are limited only to the perceptions of taxi drivers in a city. To generalize the results, the research model could be repeated in different cities and sectors for comparative analysis. Measures can be taken to improve employees' life satisfaction. Thus, the EL efforts of employees will not be in vain, supporting them in maintaining and improving their WLB.

**Keywords:** Emotional labor, life satisfaction, work-life balance

## 1. Introduction

Many good effects are expected from vehicle automation and connected cars. These include improved road safety and fewer accidents due to the elimination of human error (Pakusch et al., 2020). Connected automated vehicles (CAVs) can be seen as one of the most annoying inventions in current

transportation systems. There are potential changes that can have a direct impact on congestion, trip costs, and modal splits with CAVs. Additionally, there are possible secondary impacts on land use or car ownership rates, as well as other repercussions for employment, energy consumption and public health (Duboz et al., 2022). Autonomous, self-driving vehicles are becoming an increasingly

common part of the current transportation system. Many car industry companies have started to use autonomous driving technologies, like emergency stops in the case of obstacles, in their new car models. However, a driver still needs to remain in charge (Hemmati & Rahmani, 2022).

Road accidents incur huge economic expenses for transportation companies and pose a severe safety risk to professional drivers and other road users (Useche et al., 2018). Several studies have been conducted to investigate the influence of personality and attitude toward traffic safety in predicting the driving behavior of different types of drivers. It is well acknowledged that driving a car is a difficult endeavor that necessitates the integration of cognitive, decision-making, and physical control skills in order to ensure road safety (Tanglai et al., 2022). Some psychological work variables, such as driving stress, work overtime, and job strain, have recently gained prominence in explaining occupational health and safety issues in the professional driver community (Useche et al., 2018; Rowden et al., 2011; Du et al., 2011). Work stress, in particular, is one of the factors most commonly related with workplace accidents or injuries (Useche et al., 2018; Greiner et al., 1998; Öz et al., 2010).

For taxi drivers, instant decision-making and flexibility are essential in the taxi industry, which is a type of transportation that operates almost everywhere in the world and provides employment for many (Varol, 2022). In large cities like Istanbul, rapid population growth, unplanned urbanization, inadequate transportation infrastructure, increasing travel demand, and lack of coordination between transportation modes have made transportation the primary problem (Kahya, 2018). To increase productivity in taxi transportation in Istanbul, Munzuroğlu (2005) studied the planning of taxi drop-off and waiting areas using Geographic Information Systems (GIS), which can help taxis operate more efficiently by picking up passengers regularly at designated locations.

On the other hand, Eryılmaz (2008) approached the taxi industry from a different perspective, aiming to better understand the commercial taxi drivers we encounter daily. The study examined whether their job satisfaction and anxiety levels vary depending on sociodemographic variables and working conditions. The study found that job satisfaction and anxiety levels of taxi drivers did not vary based on demographic variables such as age, working hours,

working hours, marital status, and working conditions. It was also found that university graduate drivers were more satisfied with their relationships with colleagues compared to those with primary education. The study also revealed that the level of anxiety increased with the length of time spent living in Istanbul. However, no significant difference was found between anxiety levels and job satisfaction (Kahya, 2018; Eryılmaz, 2008).

In line with these findings, the aim of the research is to test the mediating effect of life satisfaction on the impact of emotional labor on work-life balance.

## 2. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

### 2.1 Emotional labor

Emotion is a phenomenon experienced in relation to our encounters and interactions with others (Walby & Cole, 2019). Emotions, which each person experiences differently, play a significant role in human existence because they influence how people live their lives (Amisshah et al., 2022). People frequently use various strategies in both work and everyday life to deal with emotional occurrences (Gou et al., 2022). As a result, managing emotions is necessary in the majority of employee everyday tasks. Therefore, individuals' role performances depend on the expression and utilization of emotions to carry out their responsibilities (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003).

EL serves as a functional component of organizational communication (Mann, 1997), and according to Constanti and Gibbs (2004), EL is an emotional representation of responsibilities and tasks. The idea of EL was first used by Hochschild in 1983. Researchers like Ashforth and Humphrey (1993), Morris and Feldman (1996), and Grandey (1999), contributed to the evolution of the idea over time. Hochschild (1983, p. 7) defines EL as the process of managing emotions, both bodily and facially, performed by employees and observable by others. EL is described by Morris and Feldman (1996, p. 987) as the effort, planning, and control necessary to exhibit organizationally desired emotions during interpersonal interactions. Later, Grandey (1999) used a holistic perspective on the concept of EL and made inferences about the antecedents and consequences of the concept. EL includes every effort to change the voice and behavior of the person against the other person (Gulsen & Ozmen, 2019) and can also be expressed as the process of regulating the emotions of employees according to the requirements of their organizations (Lv

et al., 2012). Emotion management comes as a cost to the employee, but this situation can sometimes be ignored by organizations (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). Therefore, if this cost is addressed, emotion management turns into EL (Karaman, 2017).

EL is a job that requires special skills (James, 1992) and the display of EL may require both soft (feminine) and hard (masculine) emotions. For example, a prison guard and a constantly smiling flight attendant may represent the opposite extremes of EL (Basım & Begenirbaş, 2012). According to Hochschild (1983), EL consists of two dimensions: surface acting and deep acting. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) later added a third dimension to these—real role-playing.

The importance of EL has become an issue that is increasingly being considered by the service sector (Taylor, 1998). In the literature, there are studies developed to examine EL relations, especially media workers (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2008), call center workers (Başbuğ, 2010; Goodwin et al., 2011), store salespeople (Ikeler, 2016), hotel workers (Lv et al., 2012; Wu et al., 2017), nurses (Karimi et al., 2013; Liang et al., 2016), magazine staff (Soronen, 2018), coaches (Lee & Chelladurai, 2018), teachers (Bodenheimer & Shuster, 2019), and animators (Yağcı & Avcıkurt, 2020). Walby and Cole (2019), on the other hand, discussed the peer support among prison inmates in the context of EL and examined the management of both their own emotions and emotions of other prisoners.

## 2.2 Emotional labor and life satisfaction relationship

The concept of satisfaction refers to the state of meeting expectations, needs, demands, and wishes (Avçin & Erkoç, 2021). The concept of LS was first introduced by Neugarten et al. (1961). LS shows the difference between people's expectations from life and the ability to meet these expectations (Başpınar, 2021). Although business life is very important for individuals, it is not the only aspect of life. It can even be said that business life is not a goal but a tool (Bekmezci et al., 2021). At this point, LS refers to the degree to which an individual positively evaluates the overall quality of their life (Moran & Çoruk, 2021). At the same time, components such as health and social relations should be evaluated together when considering LS of individuals (Darling et al., 2011). It is also expected that individuals with high LS will be stronger under challenging conditions due to their positive evaluations (Avşaroğlu & Koç, 2019).

The literature includes studies exploring the relationship between LS and burnout (Avşaroğlu et al., 2005), workplace environmental conditions (García-Mainar et al., 2015), well-being (Becchetti & Conzo, 2018), distress tolerance (Avşaroğlu & Koç, 2019), psychological resilience (Durak, 2021), EL (Yeşil & Mavi, 2021), quality of life (Demir et al., 2021), happiness (Özavci et al., 2022), and mental health (Otaghi et al., 2023). In addition, the mediating role of LS in the relationship between EL and depression was tested by Başpınar (2021). Other studies have found statistically significant correlations between EL and LS (Atasoy & Turan, 2019; Moran & Çoruk, 2021; Palmer et al., 2002). Similar to EL studies, the sample selection in LS studies is often focused on store employees (Yeşil & Mavi, 2021), teachers (Demir et al., 2021), and nurses (Otaghi et al., 2023). Buser and Kearney (2017, p. 230) found that high stress levels reduce LS. All this information suggests that EL influences LS through similar variables. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H<sub>1</sub>: The relationship between emotional labor and life satisfaction is positive.*

## 2.3 Life satisfaction and work-life balance relationship

WLB is a concept that emerges as a human need in today's fast and variable living conditions (Şahin-Söylemez & Alpar, 2022). With changing living conditions, WLB has become increasingly important and a frequently studied topic in academic research (Akyaz & Boz, 2022). WLB refers to a state in which both an individual's work and personal life demands are in balance (Batur & Saylık, 2022). WLB is an element that affects one's LS, happiness and health (Allen et al., 2000). It can be said that the quality of work life, which plays an important role in WLB, reflects efforts to enhance employees' satisfaction with their work environment (Dere & Alkan, 2022).

In the literature, researchers have tried to examine the relationship between LS and WLB (Taşdelen-Karçay & Bakalim, 2017; Toker & Kalıpçı, 2020; 2023). Aslan et al. (2021) examined the relationship between remote work, WLB, and LS. On the other hand, Umer and Zia-ur-Rehman (2013) argue that especially women have difficulties in maintaining WLB due to responsibilities such as motherhood, spousal duties, and home care. Yusuf and Khan (2018) found in their research with police officers that WLB significantly affects the life dimension. Bouzari and Karatepe (2020) determined that when

salespeople achieve a balanced WLB, their LS increases significantly. In addition, Best and Chinta (2021) found that one of the important determinants of LS for self-employed individuals is WLB. Furthermore, it has been determined that the work sector (public/private) has a regulatory effect on the relationship between WLB and LS (Bekmezci et al., 2021). Kuzulu et al. (2013) also found that work-life imbalance reduces LS. Taking this set of information into consideration, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Life satisfaction has an impact on work-life balance.*

#### 2.4 Emotional labor and work-life balance relationship

The perception of WLB and the sense of LS have become mandatory for organizations aiming to increase employee performance (Chanderkant & Neeraj, 2016). Achieving WLB requires individuals to actively participate in their professional and personal social roles (Sirgy & Lee, 2017). Hofmann and Stokburger-Sauer (2017) found in their research that EL negatively affects WLB. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

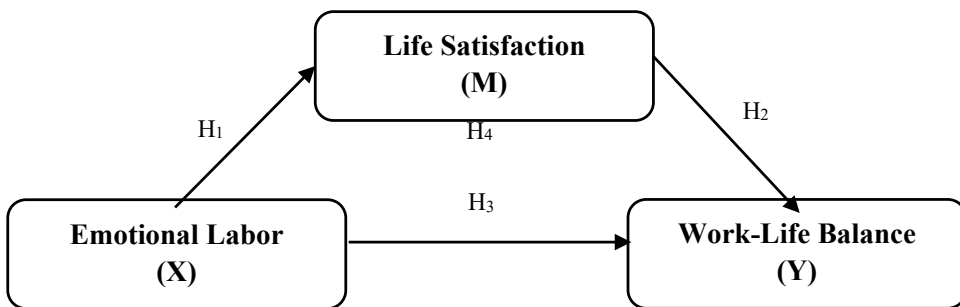
*H<sub>3</sub>: Emotional labor has an impact on work-life balance.*

Studies in the literature have shown that there is a relationship between EL and WLB (Erebak & Tarhan, 2018), and that EL affects LS (Gümüş, 2020). There is also a relationship between EL and job satisfaction (Gulsen & Ozmen, 2019), as well as a positive correlation between work-life development, a sub-dimension of WLB and LS (Toker & Kalıpçı, 2023). In addition, Haar et al. (2014) and Noda (2020) found that employees who maintain WLB have high LS. On the other hand, Casper et al. (2018) found that WLB has strong relationships with job, family and LS. However, the relationship between LS and WLB has not been extensively studied yet (Toker & Kalıpçı, 2023, p. 80). Current research findings (Best & Chinta, 2021; Marks & MacDermid, 1996; Talukder & Galang, 2021; Žnidaršič & Marič, 2021) reveal a positive relationship between LS and WLB. At the same time, it has been determined that WLB positively affects LS (Çetinkaya & Dinçer, 2021). Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H<sub>4</sub>: Life satisfaction has a mediating effect on the impact of emotional labor on work-life balance.*

The research model tested in line with the hypotheses is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Conceptual model of the research



Source: Created by the authors

### 3. Method and measurements

The data collection form consists of four sections. The first section contains six demographic questions. The second and the third section include

the emotional labor scale (13 items) and the life satisfaction scale (5 items), respectively, while the fourth, i.e. the final, section includes the work-life balance scale (20 items).

### 3.1 Emotional labor scale

The emotional labor scale was developed by Diefendorff et al. (2005), and its Turkish validity and reliability of the scale were established by Basım and Begenirbaş (2012). The version of the scale adapted to the service sector was used by Yağcı (2020). The emotional labor scale consists of three sub-dimensions: surface behavior (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6), deep behavior (7, 8, 9, 10), and sincere behavior (11, 12, 13).

### 3.2 Life satisfaction scale

The life satisfaction scale was developed by Diener et al. (1985) as the "Satisfaction with Life Scale". Köker (1991) established its Turkish validity and reliability. The scale consists of one dimension.

### 3.3 Work-life balance scale

The scale used to measure WLB is the work-life balance scale developed in Turkish by Apaydın (2011). The scale consists of four sub-dimensions including work-life adjustment (7, 8, 9, 19, 6, 17), neglecting life (1, 4, 10, 5, 11, 2), taking time for oneself (13, 12, 20, 18), and only work (14, 15, 16, 3). Additionally, items 1, 4, 10, 5, 2, 13, 12, 20, 18, 15, 14, and 16 were reverse coded. The scales were measured using a five-point Likert type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

### 3.4 Universe and sample

The population of the research consists of officially registered commercial taxi drivers in Istanbul, Turkey. There are 17,395 commercial taxis operating in the city (Engin, 2022, p. 37). Using the simple random sampling method, the aim was to reach at least 376 individuals, based on a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. Within the scope of the research, taxi drivers registered at a particular taxi stand were interviewed face-to-face. After removing outliers or incorrectly coded forms from the data collected from 421 taxi drivers, the research was conducted using 394 valid responses.

## 4. Results

First, descriptive statistics were applied to the research data. As a result of the frequency analysis, it was observed that the majority of participants ( $N=394$ ) were between the ages of 31-40 (34.5%), male (94.2%), primary school graduates (47.5%), married (72.3%), had 4-6 years of work experience (29.9), and did not own the vehicle they used (97.2%). The results of the correlation analysis between the variables are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** Correlation analysis findings

	Mean	Std. Deviation	1	2	3
1-Emotional Labor	3.46	.549	(.77)		
2-Life Satisfaction	2.99	.882	.222**	(.87)	
3-Work-Life Balance	3.01	.564	.037	.574**	(.88)

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

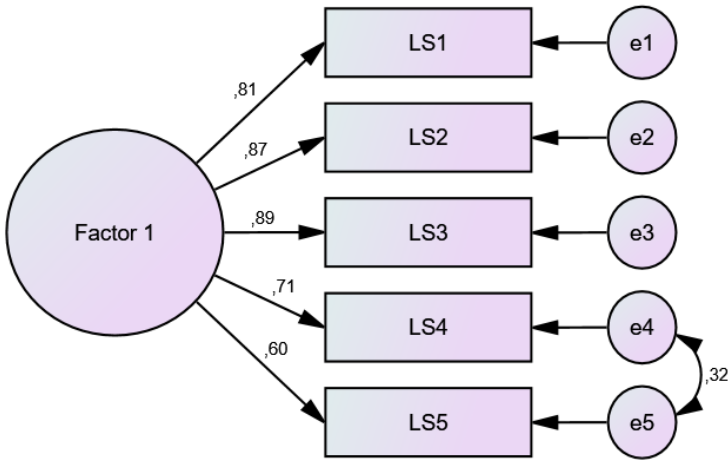
Note: The values in parentheses are Cronbach's alpha values of the scales.

Source: Created by the authors

According to the correlation analysis results presented in Table 1, it was found that EL has a positive and weak relationship with LS ( $0 < r \leq 0.3$ ). However, no statistically significant relationship was found between EL and WLB. On the other hand, there is a positive and moderately strong relationship ( $0.3 < r$

$\leq 0.7$ ) between LS and WLB. In addition, since the Cronbach's alpha values were at a reasonable level ( $\alpha > 0.70$ ), the data were accepted as valid. To test the construct validity of the scales, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted for each scale. Figure 2 shows the CFA model for the LS scale.

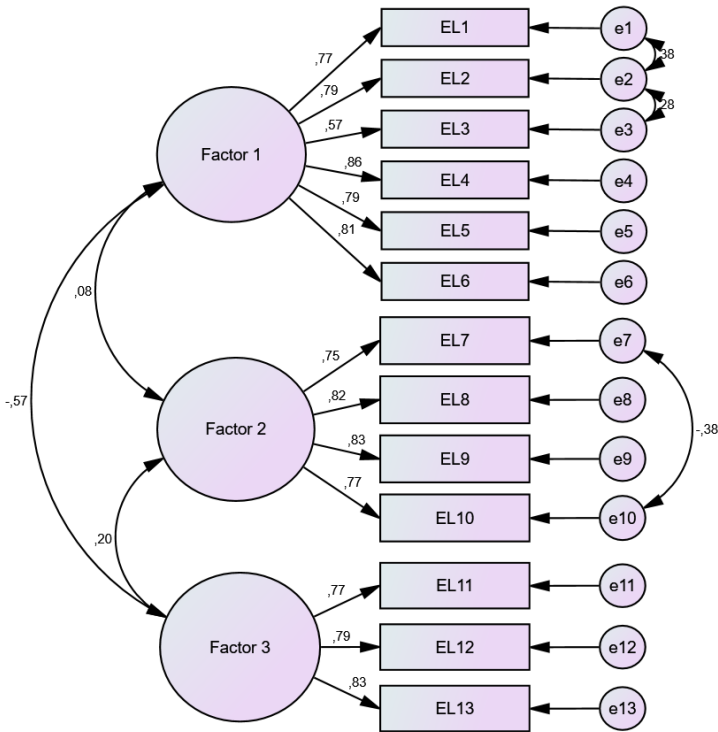
Figure 2 Satisfaction with life scale CFA model



Source: Created by the authors

As can be seen in Figure 2, the factor loading of each item belonging to the life satisfaction scale is above 40. Figure 3 shows the CFA model for the emotional labor scale.

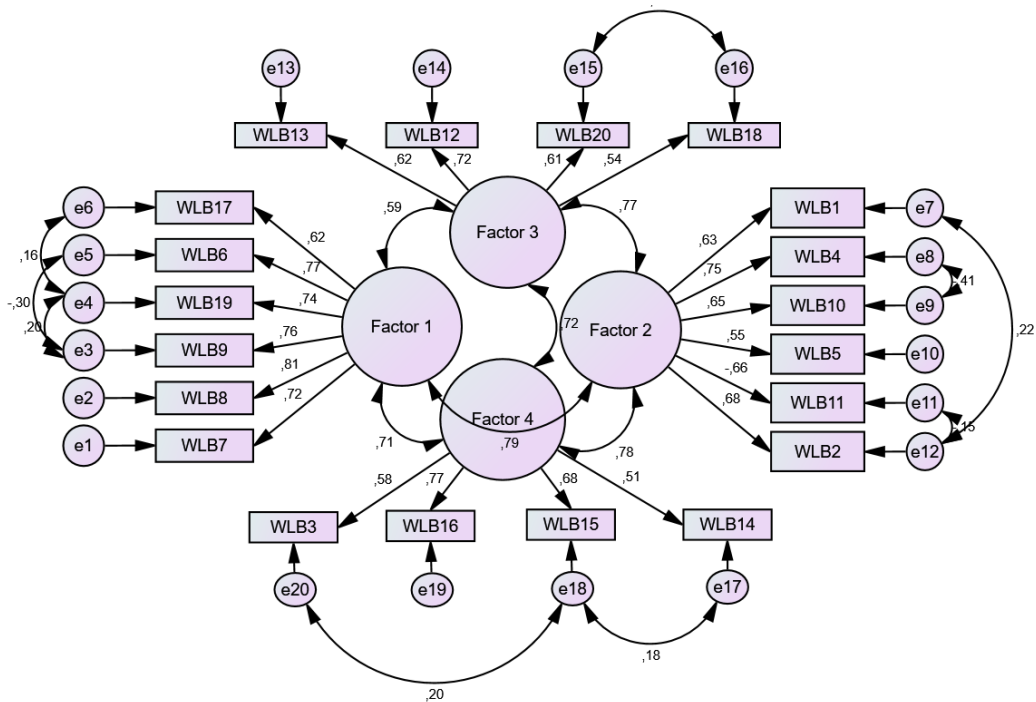
Figure 3 Emotional labor scale CFA model



Source: Created by the authors



Figure 4 Work-life balance scale DFA model



Source: Created by the authors

As can be seen in Figures 3 and 4, the factor loading of each item belonging to the EL and work-life balance scales is above .40. The goodness of fit index values of the scales are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 CFA model fit indices of scales

Index	Emotional Labor Scale	Life Satisfaction Scale	Work-Life Balance Scale	Good Fit Values	Acceptable Fit Values
$\chi^2/df$	2.643	2.611	3.01	$<3$	$3 < (\chi^2/df) < 5$
RMSEA	.065	.064	.072	$<.05$	$<.08$
SRMR	.04	.02	.05	$<.05$	$<.08$
CFI	.966	.994	.911	$>.90$	$>.80$
NFI	.947	.991	.873	$>.90$	$>.80$
GFI	.944	.990	.894	$>.90$	$>.80$
AGFI	.914	.962	.856	$>.90$	$>.80$

Note:  $\chi^2/df$  = Ki square / degrees of freedom, RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual, CFI = Comparative Fit Index, NFI = Normed Fit Index, GFI = Goodness-of-Fit Index, AGFI = Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit-Index.

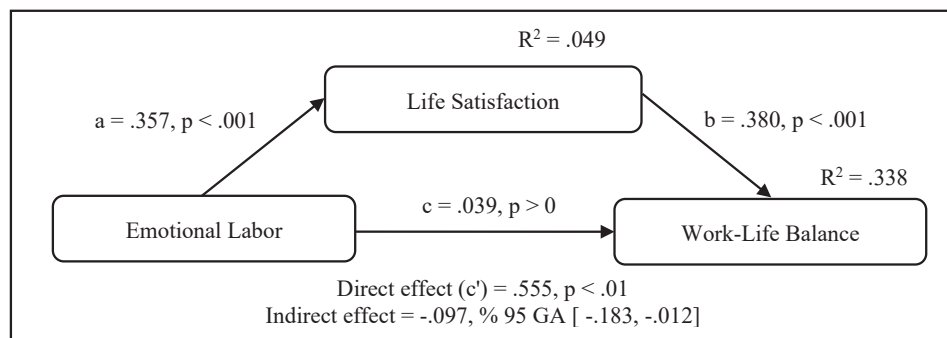
Source: Chow et al. (2001, p. 407) and Schermelleh-Engel et al. (2003, p. 52)

In Table 2, it is shown that EL and life satisfaction scales showed a good fit, while the work-life balance scale exhibited an acceptable fit. Since the item factor loadings of the scales were above .40 and the model fit was confirmed through the index values, it was concluded that the construct validity of the

scales was ensured. Following this, hypothesis testing began. The SPSS Process Macro 4 developed by

Hayes (2018) was used to test the proposed hypotheses. The analysis results are shown in Figure 5.

**Figure 5** The mediating role of life satisfaction in the effect of emotional labor on work-life balance ( $N=394$ )



Note: Non-standardized beta coefficients have been reported. CI=Confidence interval. R2 values show the explained variance.

Source: Created by the authors

In path  $a$  of Figure 5, the regression analysis results show the effect of predictive variable EL (X) on the mediating variable LS (M). Accordingly, it can be seen that EL has a significant and positive effect on LS ( $b = .357$ , 95% CI [.2009, .5125],  $t = 4.5023$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The significance of the non-standardized beta value  $b$  is understood because both the  $p$  value is less than 0.001 and the confidence interval (CI) values do not include the zero value (Gürbüz, 2021, p. 68; MacKinnon et al., 2004, p. 113). Thus, it can be said that EL explains about 5% ( $R^2 = .049$ ) of the change in LS. In this case, the  $H_1$  hypothesis is accepted. In addition, based on the effects of mediating variable LS (M) and the EL (X) on the result variable WLB (Y), it has been determined that LS has a significant and positive effect on WLB ( $b = .380$ , 95% CI [.3274, .4334],  $t = 14.1073$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In this case, the  $H_2$  hypothesis of the research is accepted. EL did not seem to have a significant effect on WLB ( $b = -.097$ , 95% CI [-.1825, -.0119],  $t = -2.2404$ ,  $p > 0$ ). EL and LS explain about 34% ( $R^2 = .338$ ) of the change in WLB.

In Figure 5, the effect of EL (X) on WLB (Y) ( $c$ ) is shown in a model without the mediating variable (M), representing the total effect. Accordingly, the results indicate that EL did not have a significant effect on WLB in the absence of LS ( $b = .039$ , 95% CI [-.0635, .1405],  $t = .7421$ ,  $p > 0$ ). In this case, the  $H_3$  hypothesis is rejected.

Finally, an indirect effect of EL (X) on WLB (Y) through the mediating variable LS (M) is shown in Figure 5. Considering the confidence intervals obtained by the bootstrap technique, the indirect effect of EL on WLB is significant; in other words, LS appears to mediate the relationship between EL and WLB ( $b = .136$ , 95% CI [.0761, .1961]). In this case, hypothesis  $H_4$  is accepted, as the values of the confidence interval (CI) do not include the value of zero (0). In the bootstrap method, GA values related to the distribution were calculated using percentile bootstrap confidence intervals (Gürbüz, 2021, p. 78). The partial standardized effect size of the mediation effect is .241, indicating a high effect (Gürbüz, 2021).

## 5. Conclusion and discussion

Many research studies are being conducted in the fields of public health, LS, and reducing traffic accident risks. Technological advances in autonomous and connected vehicles have the potential to reduce these risks and offer numerous other benefits. However, there is still a need to further develop and fully integrate these technologies into our transportation systems. In the meantime, human error remains one of the main reasons for traffic accidents, and this is closely linked to the drivers' physiological state and health. The main reason that motivated this research is the growing need to con-



duct empirical studies that shed light on the factors influencing driver behavior, physiological health, and WLB.

The research, which tested the mediating effect of LS on the impact of EL efforts of taxi drivers on WLB, was conducted with 394 respondents. First of all, the majority of the participants were aged between 31 and 40 (34.5%), male (94.2%), primary school graduates (47.5%), married (72.3%), had 4-6 years of work experience (29, 9), and did not own the vehicle they used (97.2%). According to the correlation analysis results, it was found that EL has a positive and weak relationship with LS. Other studies also identified statistically significant correlations between EL and LS (Atasoy & Turan, 2019; Moran & Çoruk, 2021; Palmer et al., 2002). Yeşil and Mavi (2021) also found a positive relationship between EL and LS. The research findings align with the existing literature, confirming the relationship between EL and LS in the sample of taxi drivers. The strong and positive relationship may indicate that EL plays an important role in increasing employee LS. However, no statistically significant relationship was found between EL and WLB. On the other hand, Erebak and Tarhan (2018) argue that EL and WLB are related. This may be due to sector differences. In addition, there is a positive and moderately strong relationship between LS and WLB. Findings from many studies (Best & Chinta, 2021; Marks & MacDermid, 1996; Talukder & Galang, 2021; Žnidaršič & Marič, 2021) also reveal a positive relationship between LS and WLB. Moreover, Haar et al. (2014:362) and Noda (2020:1346) also determined that the LS of employees who maintain WLB is high; in other words, the relationship between the variables is positive. Similarly, Casper et al. (2018) have found that WLB has a strong relationship with LS. These findings are consistent with the research findings. Thus, it can be said that the relationship between LS and WLB was confirmed in the sample of taxi drivers.

According to the regression analysis results, EL had a significant and positive effect on LS. In this case, the  $H_1$  hypothesis was accepted. Gümüş (2020) also obtained a similar result in his research. Thus, it can

be concluded that EL can be used to increase LS. Similarly, it has been determined that LS has a significant and positive effect on WLB. In this case, the  $H_2$  hypothesis of the research was accepted. It has been determined in the literature that WLB positively affects LS (Çetinkaya & Dinçer, 2021). Yusuf and Khan (2018) found in their research with police officers that WLB significantly affects the life dimension. Bouzari and Karatepe (2020) determined that when the WLB of salespeople is well-managed, their LS tends to be higher. Best and Chinta (2021), on the other hand, found that one of the important determinants of LS for self-employed individuals is WLB. Both the research findings and the given variables obtained from the literature reveal that they influence each other. In this case, it can be said that employees who are able to establish a WLB experience increased LS, and conversely, employees with high LS are likely to contribute positively to their WLB. According to the regression analysis results, EL did not have a significant effect on WLB in a model without LS. In this case, the  $H_3$  hypothesis was rejected. Hofmann and Stokburger-Sauer (2017) found that EL negatively affects WLB, which may be due to industry differences. In addition, since EL is a demanding process, it can be expected that it does not contribute to WLB. Finally, it was determined that LS mediated the relationship between EL and WLB. In this case, the  $H_4$  hypothesis was accepted. No study has been conducted testing this model. Moreover, Başpınar (2021) claims that LS plays a mediating role in the relationship between EL and depression. In this case, while EL does not directly affect WLB, it can affect WLB through LS. This can provide valuable insights into contributing to WLB.

In conclusion, measures can be taken to enhance employee LS, ensuring that their EL efforts are not in vain. This will, in turn, support employees in maintaining and improving their WLB. Research findings are limited only to the perceptions of taxi drivers in a city. To generalize the results, it is recommended that the research model be applied in different cities and sectors to be able to compare the results.

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