The Role of Work Stress in The Effect of Social Comparison on Social Anxiety: A Study on Aviation Industry Employees

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Sosyal Karşılaştırmanın Sosyal Kaygı Üzerindeki Etkisinde İş Stresinin Aracılık Rolü: Havacılık Sektörü Çalışanlarına Yönelik Bir Araştırma

Abstract

The aim of the research conducted in the aviation sector is to measure how effective stress is and whether it mediates social anxiety caused by the perception of social comparison experienced by individuals working in organisations. The research sample consists of ground service personnel working in the aviation sector in the Marmara Region. The study's findings revealed that social comparison and job stress significantly predicted social anxiety and that job stress had a mediating role. This study, conducted in the aviation sector, can be used to improve individuals' experiences in business life.

Keywords : Social Comparison, Social Anxiety, Work Stress, Mediation.

JEL Classification Codes : M10, M19.

Öz

Havacılık sektöründe yapılan araştırmanın amacı, örgütlerde çalışan bireylerin yaşamış oldukları sosyal karşılaştırma algısı ile meydana gelen sosyal kaygıda stresin ne derece etkili olduğunu ve aracılık edip etmediğini ölçmektir. Araştırmanın örneklemini, Marmara Bölgesi'nde havacılık sektöründe çalışan yer hizmeti personeli oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmanın bulguları sosyal karşılaştırmanın ve iş stresinin sosyal kaygıyı anlamlı olarak yordadığını ve iş stresinin aracı rolü olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Havacılık sektöründe yapılan bu çalışma bireylerin iş yaşamındaki deneyimlerini geliştirmek için kullanılabilir.

Anahtar Sözcükler : Sosyal Karşılaştırma, Sosyal Kaygı, İş Stresi, Aracılık.

1. Introduction

Social comparison is a central concept for societies' welfare levels and individuals' self-improvement. Individuals also determine their social position by comparing themselves with their social comparison. People support the progress of humanity with the desire to be more successful. Social comparison is a concept that evaluates human progress. It states that without objective criteria, we compare ourselves with others from different points of view to know where we stand (Festinger, 1954). Due to sociocultural body image and irregular eating habits, women may develop body dissatisfaction if they constantly compare their appearance with that of others. Studies have shown that women regularly compare themselves to others and change their appearance (Leahey et al., 2007). Social comparison theory was introduced to the psychosocial literature by Festinger (1954). Self-evaluation shows that people can effectively evaluate others and receive and shape feedback. According to Festinger (1954), human nature is programmed to assess itself. In the search for meaningfulness, one's abilities and ideas are under constant scrutiny. One must first look for objective criteria to evaluate the validity of talents and ideas. If there are no criteria, one can find an answer by comparing oneself to others. Due to the competitive nature of the aviation industry, it is expected that this environment will reflect social comparison and social anxiety in employees. Therefore, the anxiety and comparison levels of individuals working in this sector where stress is intense will also increase.

The problems people have when they compare themselves with others are very different. Many things can be compared: Education, appearance, ability, spirituality, lifestyle, mood, destiny, interests, job performance, etc. (Festinger, 1954; Greenberg et al., 2007; Kruglanski & Mayseless, 1990: 204; Locke & Nekic, 2000: 865). People regularly compare themselves to others, whether they want to or not. For example, someone who works as a model might fear being overweight and tend to compare their appearance. The effects of social comparison on the individual, competition among work colleagues and concern about performance cause social anxiety. The social anxiety they experience causes individuals to question their professional abilities. As a result of the social comparisons they experience, work stress arises.

When individuals open up to the world, they must communicate with the people around them and get involved in organisations instead of just fulfilling their duties. Learning and adapting to the rules of the environment play an important role in people coping with the psychological and physiological difficulties encountered in a new environment. Exposure to various stressors is inevitable, especially in the work environment. These stressors can come from multiple sources, such as workload, time pressure, performance expectations, and competition. People may react differently to different events; although some work harder under stress, this can lead to physical and psychological problems. The causes of work-related stress can be physical or psychological. While physical causes include an intense work schedule, poor work organisation, and hazardous working conditions, psychological causes are due to the person's work-related thought processes, mood, and perceptions. Stress affects not only physical and mental health but also the

individual. It can also positively or negatively affect the individual's attitude and daily behaviour. It is not always considered a negative factor in stressful situations; mild stress can stimulate and motivate the person. However, as the level of stress increases, the psychological, physical and behavioural problems of the individual also increase (Densley et al., 1994; Eryılmaz, 2009). Balancing workloads, setting appropriate and realistic performance expectations, addressing employee needs, supporting and creating a safe work environment, and providing resources for stress management can increase employee motivation and reduce the negative effects of work (Siegrist & Rode, 2006: 86). Providing resources for employees through stress management and increasing employee motivation will lessen the negative consequences of work.

Entering a new environment occurs at different times and may require overcoming psychological and physiological challenges. First, various tensions in the workplace are unavoidable. The sources of stress related to personal characteristics depend on individual factors. The level of anxiety is the tolerance for uncertainty, excitement in business, emptiness, disappointments and high interest in work. Family problems, commuting, midlife illnesses, and financial problems affect the individual's social life (İlgar, 2001). Work life can be stressful. Therefore, many people struggle with anxiety caused by stress at work.

People with social anxiety do not want to over-communicate. They speak less often and more briefly, are less extroverted than they are, and sometimes withdraw from social relationships. Sufferers also have a history of anxiety due to non-social factors. Such social environments have little effect on them. When people suffer from social anxiety, it is mutual. Instead of making a better impression on others, they are content to maintain their current social image. They want to have a more superficial relationship with others. Social anxiety is a complex social responsibility. It can be difficult for people to identify the aspects of social anxiety they experience because many factors influence social anxiety. This situation reduces anxiety and causes stress when they compare themselves and their characteristics to the social environment.

Human labour is important in the aviation industry; therefore, this study aims to motivate individuals by revealing their negative emotional tendencies in business. The study's significance is that it sheds light on the industry and prompts managers to offer practical strategies such as staff training and workplace policies. In this way, work efficiency can be maintained at a high level, and employee satisfaction can be increased.

Social comparison theory states that social comparison and social anxiety decrease individuals' enjoyment of life and increase their stress levels. Therefore, the anxiety level of individuals who make comparisons increases, and it is known that work stress mediates this.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Comparison

In the 1950s, social comparison theory, which explains the ability to self-evaluate, emerged as a concept that allowed individuals to describe their self-concept. According to Festinger (1954), a universal theory is needed for individuals to evaluate their existing abilities. Regardless of an individual's abilities, misjudging their abilities often leads to negative consequences. Therefore, these assessments should be as accurate, objective, and factual as possible. This is because when making assessments, people look for physical standards and try to do so using non-social criteria. However, it is not always possible to obtain objective information.

According to Festinger (1954), people judge their thoughts and abilities. They select others who are like them for comparison. This comparison attempts to create the most accurate and objective assessment for everyone. My personal goal is to make a correct and valid assessment. Similarly, when a person's personality is very different, statements can be made about the accuracy of that person's view. The most logical solution here is personal beliefs or abilities. Festinger believes comparative bias in talent maps may be cultural because some communities, such as Native American communities, rely heavily on individual accomplishments, such as continuous improvement work.

2.2. Social Anxiety

Humans are social beings. Therefore, humans interact with other humans in society. If they can establish good relationships, they can live their lives meaningfully. Interaction and communication with other people are possible for various reasons. Those who have language difficulties, those who have difficulty expressing themselves, and those who suffer from social anxiety may find that social problems become a problem and increase their anxiety level (Sungur, 2000). This is referred to as social anxiety disorder. Social anxiety in society can be defined as the unwillingness to be a part of and participate in society. (Hamarta & Baltacı, 2013: 234).

Intentional anxiety, stress, discomfort, and fear should be avoided in social situations where others criticise them negatively. Social anxiety has become a disease characterised by fear (Watson & Friends, 1969). Social anxiety is a very persistent disorder that occurs during adolescence. Social anxiety affects the quality of life and functioning of those affected. They also have serious problems at work, in their families, and social lives.

Participating in an important or intimidating social activity triggers a normal anxiety response in the individual. Anxiety is born in the individual and begins and lasts throughout life. However, the level here is health. A certain level of fear of success: it has positive qualities such as work and self-improvement. However, excessive fear can prevent people from pursuing their lives. For people to continue their lives under these conditions, it is necessary to take some precautions. In this regard, anxiety is effective when it motivates

individuals to a certain extent, but excessive anxiety has a negative effect on people's lives (Eren, 2006).

2.3. Work Stress

For many people who fear death, stress is a part of their lives, especially in and around the workplace. Stress is a big problem because most people spend a lot of time in a work environment. Work-related stress and frustration can have lasting and significant adverse effects on your business. Long-term stress and dissatisfaction in the workplace can have serious consequences, including poor job performance. For this reason, stress management and job satisfaction are important issues that companies need to address in depth.

According to Beehr and Franz, the concept of work stress can be divided into four different categories. First, the health approach focuses on treating stress in the physical environment and aims to treat people with stress injuries that lead to stress and physical exertion. Second, the clinical counselling/psychology approach focuses on the psychological stress of the work environment and its psychological effects, such as depression and anxiety. Third, technical psychology examines the stressors and performance of employees in the workplace's physical environment. Finally, the organisational psychology approach focuses on resolving workplace stress through minor changes in an employee's organisational environment. Workplace stress can be defined as the emotional reaction that occurs when the job demands do not match the employee's needs, abilities, and resources. Another definition is that workplace stress is activating an employee's energy in conflict with organisational or job expectations (Beehr et al., 2002: 10; Malik, 2011: 3065; Atılgan and Dengizler, 2007: 64).

If there is no stress at work, the person loses his will to fight, and his work performance decreases. However, when the stress level increases, performance also decreases. However, when stress at work reaches a critical level, individuals find it difficult to make decisions, leading to negative consequences and adverse effects such as psychological and physical damage. Therefore, stress management is critical in the corporate environment (Yılmaz & Ekici, 2003: 3). For this reason, it is important to reduce and control stress in the work environment so that it has a positive impact on both the organisation and the employees (Rowshan, 2000).

Factors such as workload, job insecurity, lack of support, and insecure roles increase work stress (Leka & Jain, 2010). High workload and unrealistic job demands can lead to stress and burnout, but fear of losing one's job can also cause stress and anxiety. Lack of support from colleagues, supervisors, and the company can also increase work stress. Valid job descriptions should be clarified, and tasks should be defined to reduce workplace stress and anxiety. In today's world, most people's physical or mental ailments are stress-related. People who work hard, strive to achieve their goals and meet their expectations live their daily lives in tension, anxiety, conflict and anger. The fact that the sources of stress are diverse means that stress has different consequences for each person. In recent years,

workplace stress has become a significant and serious problem for many workers in the intense and demanding work environment. However, uncontrolled workplace stress has negative effects on physical and mental health. Therefore, understanding the causes and consequences of work stress and implementing effective stress management strategies can reduce the risk of employee burnout and increase well-being in the workplace.

2.4. Relations Between Concepts

People with social anxiety tend to interpret social feedback negatively and self-critically (Morrison & Heimberg, 2013). Overall, social comparison is important in reinforcing and maintaining social anxiety. By examining the relationship between these two elements, it is possible to determine the extent to which social comparison influences social anxiety and the impact that the tendency toward social comparison has on the level of social anxiety.

Social comparison theory emerged in the 1950s as a theory trying to understand the phenomenon of individual self-esteem. According to Festinger (1954), people have an innate need to evaluate their ideas and abilities. These evaluations should be objective; otherwise, they will have negative consequences. Whenever possible, they try to base their judgements on non-social criteria. However, it is not always possible to obtain objective information. Without objective standards, people get the information they need by comparing their views and abilities with those of others. This process is called the social comparison process, and the resulting knowledge is called social comparison knowledge (Festinger, 1954).

Social comparison refers to the tendency to compare oneself with others regarding traits or characteristics such as attractiveness, intelligence, and performance. Social anxiety, on the other hand, is identified with persistent excessive fear or anxiety when individuals are evaluated or scrutinised by others. People are more likely to be affected by social anxiety when compared to others who are more successful (Fardouly et al., 2015). The first hypothesis formed according to the studies and literature reviews is as follows;

H1: Social comparison affects social anxiety.

According to social comparison theorists, it is stressful for individuals to compare themselves with others and see themselves in a lower position, which negatively affects the individual. If there is social anxiety and social comparison in individuals, stress levels increase with less enjoyment of life and more disturbing behaviour. (Gastorf & Suls, 1978; Pleban & Tesser, 1981; Pyszczynski et al., 1985, Major et al., 1993; Kink & Gump, 1997; Tyler & Feldman, 2005, İçağası, 2022). The second hypothesis formed according to the studies and literature reviews is as follows;

H2: Work stress mediates the effect of social comparison on social anxiety.

Social comparisons increase the comparison level between individuals, colleagues, or institutions and affect work stress. When people make social comparisons, they perceive

themselves as competitors concerning the tasks and promotions of others. When people who want to succeed professionally compare their friends' work performance with their own, their stress levels increase. Such a situation increases the feeling of competition and creates pressure, anxiety, and restlessness in the person. At the same time, social comparison generates feelings of jealousy, anger, and frustration. Thus, increasing job dissatisfaction negatively affects work motivation and increases work stress (Wong & Law, 2002). Social anxiety can lead to avoidance of social situations, including work tasks and interactions with colleagues and supervisors. Avoiding work tasks and communication decreases job performance, reduces job satisfaction, and increases work stress (Aderka et al., 2012). People who suffer from social anxiety perceive feedback as more negative and critical than intended, so their colleagues and supervisors criticise them more harshly. They feel they are being judged somehow (Morrison & Heimberg, 2013). This increases work stress and decreases job satisfaction. People with severe social anxiety experience stress at work, such as meeting deadlines or managing the demands of teamwork. This situation negatively impacts communication and decision-making problems (Glazier et al., 2018).

H3: Workload mediates the effect of social comparison on social anxiety.

H4: Skill utilisation mediates the effect of social comparison on social anxiety.

H5: Freedom of decision mediates the effect of social comparison on social anxiety.

H6: Social support mediates the effect of social comparison on social anxiety.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research and The Model

The primary significance of this research is to contribute to the literature by shedding light on the processes and concepts of social comparison in work stress and its impact on social anxiety, which have not yet been explored. It also aims to empirically examine whether work stress affects workers' social anxiety levels by examining the dimensions of workload, decision latitude, skill utilisation, and social support for each dimension separately. One of the study's objectives is to show that workers' emotions are at the forefront of business relationships and how they affect work stress in emotionally charged industries. Therefore, this quantitative study aims to find out how the level of social anxiety of workers in general is affected and how the four dimensions of work stress affect the social anxiety of workers;

3.2. Purpose and Scope of the Study

The study aims to determine whether social comparison mediates social anxiety in the aviation sector and how it affects individuals' work behaviour. The first research question was created to investigate whether social comparison affects individuals' social anxiety levels. The second research question is whether there is a mediating effect of work stress on the level of social anxiety that individuals experience when comparing themselves to others.

Figure: 1
Research Model
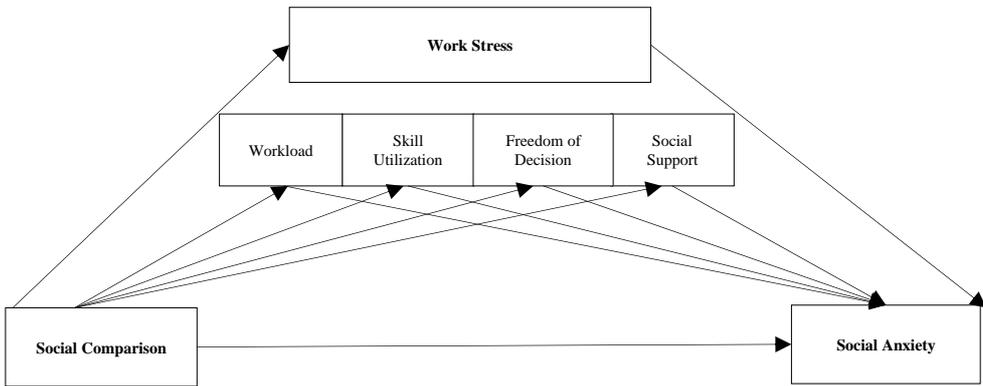
3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

This study aims to measure the mediating role of work stress in the effect of social comparison on social anxiety. The random sampling method was used as the sampling procedure. The prepared questionnaire was sent online to the people currently working at the airports in Turkey. The study was conducted by distributing the questionnaire to 400 people. Consequently, the final sample of the study was 400 people (194 (48.5%) women and 206 (51.5%) men.

Participants were asked 46 questions consisting of three different scales and demographic questions. All questions except the demographic questions were asked on a 5-point Likert scale (1: "strongly disagree", 5: "strongly agree").

3.3.1. Social Comparison Scale

The social comparison scale, the study's dependent variable, was translated into Turkish by Teközel (2000). It consists of 11 questions.

3.3.2. Social Anxiety Scale

The social anxiety scale, which is the outcome variable of the study, was adapted into Turkish by Avcıkurt, C. and Göker, S. (2022). The scale consists of a total of 20 questions.

3.3.3. Work Stress Scale

In all studies where the "work stress" scale, which is the mediating variable of the study, is measured quantitatively, the "work stress" scale developed by Karasek et al. (2000) and translated into Turkish by Demiral et al. (2007) was used in our country. It consisted of a total of 17 questions.

3.4. Data Analysis

First, descriptive statistics and correlations between variables are tested. Then, the PROCESS Macro (Model 4) developed by Hayes et al. (2017) was used to test mediation models. AMOS for confirmatory factor analysis, Programme 21, was used. The bootstrapping method obtained 95% confidence interval outputs based on large data sets recovered from the original data. This method allows regression equation modelling (Hayes et al., 2013: 2).

The SPSS 20.0 package analysis program and the Amos23 program were used to analyse the research data, and the SEM statistical analysis method was applied. First, statistical data expressing the demographic characteristics of the employees participating in the research were presented. Then, Cronbach's Alpha values were utilised for the reliability analysis of the study.

The Cronbach alpha value determined for all scale items reflects the reliability of the survey in the study. The generally accepted value is between 0.70 and 1 (Özdamar, 2004). The reliability values of the questionnaire scales are given in Table 1. It is seen that the statements in the scales have values between 0.70 and 0.92 with a margin of error of 0.05 in the 95% confidence interval.

Table: 1
Reliability Analysis Results of the Scales

Scales	Cronbach's Alpha Values
Work Stress	0.706
Workload	0,843
Skill Utilization	0,706
Freedom of Decision	0,702
Social Support	0,874
Social Comparison	0.829
Social Anxiety	0.921

4. Results

4.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The confirmatory factor analysis conducted for the "work stress" scale in the study confirmed the existence of four sub-dimensions: workload, use of skills, decision latitude, and social support, and it demonstrated the scale's construct validity.

Table: 2
Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Fit Indexes	RMSEA	NFI	CFI	GFI	AGFI	IFI	RFI	$X^{2/df}$
Values	0.05	0.94	0.94	0.93	0.91	0.96	0.93	2.28

The analysis of the results of the confirmatory factor analysis shows that the degree of freedom (x2/sd) is less than 3 (2.28). Therefore, it can be said that the result of the first goodness-of-fit statistic is reasonable. Furthermore, the "GFI" value of 0.93 is acceptable.

The "RMSEA" value is 0.05 and is at an acceptable level with a confidence interval of 90%. Furthermore, the values "NFI" 0.94, "CFI" 0.93, "GFI" 0.93, "AGFI" 0.91, "IFI" 0.96, and "RFI" 0.93 were found acceptable.

4.2. Correlation Analysis Results

Table 3 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlation results of all variables in the current study.

Table: 3
Correlation Analysis Results

Variables	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Work Stress	3.37	0.34	1						
2. Workload	3.12	0.39	0.479**	1					
3. Skill Utilization	3.30	0.46	0.699**	0.308**	1				
4. Freedom of Decision	3.61	0.92	0.571**	0.047**	0.295**	1			
5. Social Support	3.53	0.56	0.779**	0.059**	0.337**	0.269**	1		
6. Social Comparison	3.41	0.68	0.322**	0.168**	0.225**	0.243**	0.210**	1	
7. Social Anxiety	3.51	0.66	0.488**	0.005**	0.340**	0.543**	0.378**	0.603**	1

*Notes: S.D. = Standard Deviation, N = 400, ** p < 0.01.*

The correlation analysis results show a significant positive relationship between social comparison and social anxiety and work stress [r=0.603, p < 0.01; r=0.322, p < 0.01]. There is also a significant positive relationship between the sub-dimensions of work stress and social comparison [r=0.168, p < 0.01; r=0.225, p < 0.01; r=0.243, p < 0.01; r=0.210, p < 0.01]. Furthermore, there is a significant positive relationship between the sub-dimensions of work stress and social anxiety [r=0.005, p < 0.01; r=0.340 p < 0.01; r=0.543 p < 0.01; r=0.378 p < 0.01].

4.3. Hypothesis Results

Table 4 presents the results of the current study, which sought to identify the mediating role of work stress in the relationship between social comparison and social anxiety.

Table: 4
**Results of The Mediation Analysis of Work Stress**

	Model 1 (SA)		Model 2 (WS)		Model 3 (SA)	
	B	T	B	T	B	T
Social Comparison	0.59***	15.09	0.16***	6.77	0.48***	12.79
Work Stress	-	-	-	-	0.62***	8.42
R^2		0.36		0.10		0.46
F		227.99		45.91		169.59

Notes: N = 400, SA = Social Anxiety, WS = Work Stress, *** p < 0.001.

In this table, three different sub-models were created by our model (Table 4). In model 1, the effects of social comparison on social anxiety were analysed. According to this, the impact of social comparison on social anxiety is positive (b = .59, p <.001). In model 2, the effect of social comparison on work stress was analysed. The impact of social comparison on work stress was also positive (b = .16, p <.001). Finally, Model 3 examined

the effect of social comparison and work stress on social anxiety. Social comparison (b = .48, p <.001) and work stress (b = .62, p <.001) had a positive effect on social anxiety.

Figure: 2
The Mediator Role of Work Stress in the Effect of Social Comparison on Social Anxiety
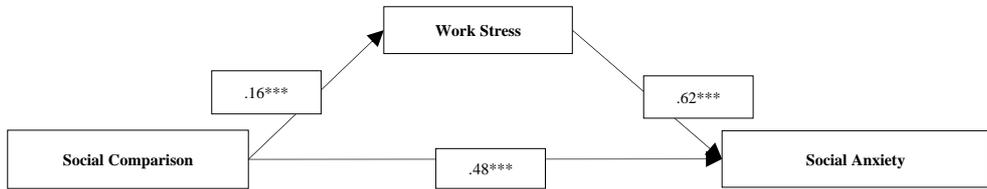
*** p < 0.001.

Table: 5
Direct and Indirect Effects of Social Comparison on Social Anxiety

The Total Effect of Social Comparison on Social Anxiety				Unstand.	SE	LLCI	ULCI
				0.5920	0.0392	0.5150	0.6691
Direct Effects of Social Comparison on Social Anxiety							
				0.4885	0.0382	0.4135	0.5636
Indirect Effects of Social Comparison on Social Anxiety							
Independent		**Mediating**		**Dependent**	**Unstand.**	**SE**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**
Social Comparison	>	Work Stress	>	Social Anxiety	0.1035	0.0263	0.0577	0.1626

As shown in Table 5, the mediating effect of work stress was statistically significant.

Table: 6
Testing The Mediation Effect of Occupational Stress Sub-Dimensions on The Impact of Social Comparison on Social Anxiety

	Model 1 (SA)		Model 2 (WL)		Model 3 (SA)	
	B	**T**	**B**	**T**	**B**	**T**
SC	0.59***	15.09	0.09***	3.40	0.61***	15.46
WL	-	-	-	-	0.18***	2.73
R²	0.36		0.02		0.37	
F	227.99		11.61		119.59	
	Model 1 (SA)		**Model 2 (SU)**		**Model 3 (SA)**	
	B	**T**	**B**	**T**	**B**	**T**
SC	0.59***	15.09	0.15***	4.60	0.54***	14.00
SU	-	-	-	-	0.30***	5.43
R²	0.36		0.05		0.40	
F	227.99		21.20		136.90	
	Model 1 (SA)		**Model 2 (FD)**		**Model 3 (SA)**	
	B	**T**	**B**	**T**	**B**	**T**
SC	0.59***	15.09	0.32***	4.98	0.49***	14.15
FD	-	-	-	-	0.30***	11.88
R²	0.60		0.05		0.53	
F	227.99		24.87		224.80	
	Model 1 (SA)		**Model 2 (SD)**		**Model 3 (SA)**	
	B	**T**	**B**	**T**	**B**	**T**
SC	0.59***	15.09	0.17***	4.28	0.53***	14.15
SS	-	-	-	-	0.31***	6.77
R²	0.36		0.04		0.43	
F	227.99		18.36		149.85	

Notes: N = 400, SC = Social Comparison, SA = Social Anxiety, WL = Workload, SU = Skill Utilization, FD = Freedom of Decision, SS = Social Support, *** p < 0.001.

The results of the analysis regarding the mediating role of the sub-dimensions of work stress in the relationship between social comparison and social anxiety are presented in Table 6. The effects of social comparison on social anxiety were analysed in Model 1. According to this, the impact of social comparison on social anxiety is positive. In Model 2, the impact of social comparison on the sub-dimensions of workload was analysed. The effects of social comparison on work stress (b = 0.09, p < 0.001), skill utilisation (b = 0.15, p < 0.001), decision latitude (b = 0.32, p < 0.001) and social support (b = 0.17, p < 0.001) were also positive. Finally, social comparison and the sub-dimensions of work stress positively affected social anxiety (model 3). Consequently, social comparison and work stress sub-dimensions had a positive impact on social anxiety.
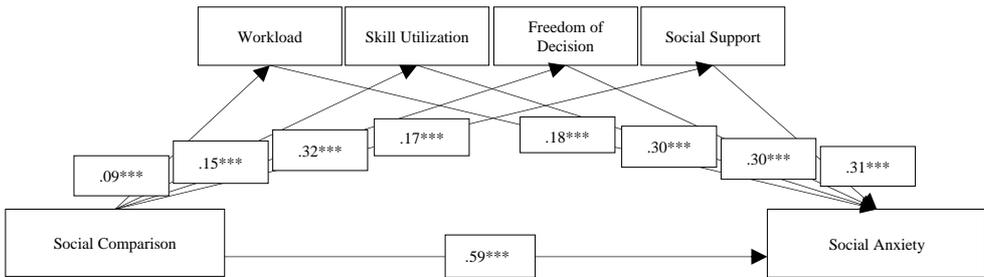
Table: 7
Direct and Indirect Effects of Social Comparison on Social Anxiety

Independent		Mediator		Dependant	Unstand.	SE	LLCI	ULCI
SC	>	WL	>	SA	0.0182	0.0088	0.0377	0.0035
SC	>	SU	>	SA	0.0475	0.0169	0.0197	0.0846
SC	>	FD	>	SA	0.1002	0.0250	0.0550	0.1529
SC	>	SS	>	SA	0.0552	0.0197	0.0217	0.0989

*Notes: N = 400, SC = Social Comparison, SA = Social Anxiety, WL = Workload, SU = Skill Utilization, FD = Freedom of Decision, SS = Social Support, *** p < 0.001.*

As shown in Table 7, the mediation effect of the sub-dimensions of work stress was statistically significant.

Figure: 3
The Mediating Role of Work Stress Subscales in the Effect of Social Comparison on Social Anxiety

*** p < 0.001.

Tablo: 8
Hypotheses Result

Hypotheses	Mediator	Outcome
H1: SC → SA	-	Accepted
H2: SC→ WS → SA	WS	Accepted
H3: SC→WL→SA	WL	Accepted
H4: SC→ SU → SA	SU	Accepted
H5: SC→ FD → SA	FD	Accepted
H6: SC→ SS → SA	SS	Accepted

Notes: N = 400, SC = Social Comparison, SA = Social Anxiety, WS = Work Stress, WL = Workload, SU = Skill Utilization, FD = Freedom of Decision, SS = Social Support.

Table 8 shows the results of the hypotheses. According to the table, H1, H2, H3, H4, H5 and H6 are accepted.

5. Concluding Remarks

This study aims to show the consequences of stress due to social comparison and social anxiety in working life. To this end, a correlation analysis between variables was first performed. To this end, a correlation analysis between variables was first conducted. As a result of this analysis, significant relationships were found between the variables "social comparison", "social anxiety", and "stress at work".

The correlation analysis showed a positive and significant relationship between social comparison and the sub-dimensions of work stress, such as workload, competence use, decision latitude and social support. This result shows that it is consistent with previous studies. For example, a study by Buunk et al. (1994) examined the role of social comparison processes in the relationship between occupational stress and mental illness. The results showed that as work stress increases, so do social comparison processes and that these processes are associated with mental health problems. In their study, Neale et al. (1991) examined the relationship between social comparison processes and occupational stress in paramedics. The results indicate that social comparison positively correlates with occupational stress, but social support moderates this relationship. Another study by Michinov (2005) examined the relationship between work stress and social comparison processes in administrative employees. The results showed that social comparison positively correlates with work stress and influences job satisfaction.

The study also found a positive and significant relationship between work stress and its sub-dimensions and social anxiety. According to a study by Eng, Coles, Heimberg, and Safrend (2005), individuals with social anxiety have adverse effects on their social performance and activities, which affects life satisfaction. In addition, Diener, Eid, and Larsen (2008) state that the satisfaction people derive from life events, especially those they enjoy, is interpreted individually, influencing life satisfaction. Events such as relationships, health, work life, activities, and leisure are defined as events that individuals enjoy. Satisfaction of the need for social relationships is considered an indicator of life satisfaction. However, social anxiety interferes with the comfort one desires in social relationships. Therefore, life satisfaction and social anxiety influence each other (Ledley & Heimberg, 2006).

Another important finding is a positive and significant relationship between social comparison and social anxiety. In one study, it was found that individuals with social anxiety focus more on negative outcomes when they compare themselves to others in the process of social comparison and, therefore, see themselves as having a lower social status (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). In another study, it was found that individuals with social anxiety make more comparisons and that these comparisons usually lead to negative outcomes (Suls et al., 2002). In another study, individuals with high levels of social anxiety were found to

experience more shame and guilt because of negative comparisons, which in turn led to more social anxiety (Turk et al., 2005).

In a meta-analysis, it was found that people with social anxiety tend to compare themselves to others and that this process increases their social anxiety (Buhrmester & Prager, 1995). According to Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory, people determine a certain social status by comparing themselves to others and evaluating themselves based on that social status. This theory is often used to explain the processes underlying social anxiety. In another study, it was observed that people with social anxiety experience more stress during social interactions and, therefore, enjoy social interactions less (Mansell & Clark, 1999).

Considering the mediation analyses conducted by the study's primary objective, occupational stress mediated the effect of social comparison on social anxiety. In addition, the current study found that the sub-dimensions of occupational stress mediated the impact of social comparison on social anxiety.

This study examines the mediating role of work stress in the effect of social comparison on social anxiety and targets workers in the aviation industry. This study represents a theoretical contribution to the literature, as many previous studies have focused on the effect of social comparison on social anxiety. Still, this study identified the mediating effect of work stress on this relationship.

The study results show that social comparison mediates work stress and social anxiety. In other words, social comparison increases work stress by increasing social anxiety. These findings suggest that work stress is a factor that influences the relationship between social comparison and social anxiety. This study also provides a unique perspective for understanding the relationship between work stress and social anxiety in the aviation industry due to this group of workers. Therefore, this study also contributes to developing stress reduction strategies for aviation workers. Limitations of the study: the generalizability of the results is limited because the data were only collected from workers in the aviation industry.

This study used cross-sectional data to determine the mediating effect of the relationship between work stress and social anxiety. Therefore, causality could not be conclusively established. In a study that examined the mediating role of work stress on the effect of social comparison on social anxiety, only one scale was used. Therefore, the influence of other factors (personality traits, workload, job satisfaction, etc.) may be necessary. In this study, only social comparisons with peers were considered. However, other social comparisons may also influence social anxiety (e.g., family members, friends, community, etc.). Finally, this study only examined the effect of social comparison on the relationship between work stress and social anxiety. However, it should be noted that other factors may also influence this relationship (emotional intelligence, self-confidence, emotional exhaustion, etc.).

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