

BURNOUT OF UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC STAFF IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to see how university academic staff burnout is related to variables characteristics such as status and gender. A total of 190 university academic staff responded to the survey. "Burnout Inventory" was used as one of research instruments to measure the subjects' burnout level. "the Maslach Burnout Inventory" was used to measure dimensions of teachers' burnout consisting of three sub scales: emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment and depersonalisation. The findings showed that all burnout dimensions were either positively or negatively related to independent variables. Males have less emotional exhaustion but higher depersonalisation than their female counterparts. Two variable, which are work years and academic status were revealed to be significantly predictive of depersonalisation and personal accomplishment.

Keywords: *University Academic Staff; Burnout, Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, Reduce Personal Accomplishment, Gender.*

1. Introduction

Most approaches to improving university education in Turkey appear to fail; some succeed in certain schools only to fail elsewhere. Various programmes to university reform fail because the chief administrators in Higher Education Council and University Education Authorities neglect to consider academicians' burnout and job satisfaction who are currently in post in universities. Their burnout and job satisfaction is of very importance because universities' achievements are highly related to the academicians' burnout and job satisfaction which are affected with work status, gender and work years.

2. Literature

'Burnout' refers to a cluster of physical, emotional, and interactional symptoms, including emotional exhaustion, a sense of lacking personal accomplishment and depersonalisation of clients. Maslach and Jackson's (1981) model of burnout has three factors; a) 'emotional exhaustion' which is described as feelings of being emotionally over-extended and exhausted, b) 'reduced personal accomplishment' which is experienced by teachers as decreased feelings of competence and achievement and a tendency to evaluate oneself negatively with respect to work, c) 'depersonalisation' which is the development of negative feelings and attitudes about profession.

University academicians are not exempt from problems associated with burnout (Lackritz, 2004: 714). University academicians are potential candidates for burnout syndrome due to their relationships with large numbers of students, personnel and administrators. In addition to this, university academicians with higher levels of burnout are more likely to consider job

changes (Blix et al., 1994: 157-159). As explained in Blandford and Grundy (2000), the work-related satisfaction in helping people, achieving change and improvement, and promoting their growth have important implications on educators' behaviours at work, on their desire to continue at work, and their involvement in the job (Maslach, 1982; Ratliff, 1988; Dinham and Scott, 2000).

Academics' dissatisfaction influences their job performance attrition and ultimately students' performance and achievement. Additionally, academics' burnout are pivotal link in the chain of the university reform, particularly in Turkey where education system urgently needs to be improved. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate Turkish academics' burnout in terms of their academic status, gender and years work-experiences.

3. Methodology, Findings, Analysis and Discussion

3.1 Methodology

In this study, quantitative approach was used because there was a need for the study to reach more academics and to draw generalizable conclusions. That approach was also used to receive a variety of responses from a number of subjects participated in this study.

Participants who were randomly selected from 2 universities for this study were 190 academics from all faculties in Konya city in Turkey. Each subject was sent instruction of the questionnaire describing the study, directions for completing the questionnaire. A total of 190 subjects responded to the survey.

Of the 190 subjects, 104 (56.6%) were males while 86 (43.4%) were females. The age range of the sample was 21 to 64 years old with a mean age of 43,8 years.

In this research, it was used Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI).

3.1a. Maslach Burnout Inventory – (MBI). The MBI, which was developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981) and was entitled 'Human Services Survey' measures the construct of burnout, defined as 'increased feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do 'people work' of some kind. The first subscale consists of nine questions and measures emotional exhaustion (EE). The five-item depersonalisation (DP) scale assesses the extent to which a respondent feels uncaring toward the respondent. The final scale, consisting of eight items, assesses feelings of personal accomplishment (PA) and success from work. The scale consists of 22 self-report questions answered on a Likert-type scale ranging from 0 to 6.

Maslach and Jackson (1986) administered the MBI on 3,372 social, medical, and mental health workers. Based on this norm group, EE scores between 19 and 26 are considered average, and scores over 26 indicate high EE. DP scores between 6 and 9 are average, and scores over 9 indicate high DP. Average PA is reflected by scores between 34 and 39, with PA burnout occurring when scores are below 34, Maslach and Jackson (1986) reported Cronbach's Alphas of .90 for EE, .79 for DP, and .71 for PA, and 2- to 4-week test retest reliabilities as .82 for EE, .60 for DP, and .80 for PA.

3.2 Analysis of Data

The data collected for this study were analysed by using *t* test and variance analysis (*F* test). The *t* test was used to compare between female and male academics' burnout. The *F* test was used to compare between work years and status of academics' burnout.

3.3 Findings

Gender and Burnout

Table I: Differences Between Females and Males Academicians on Burnout Dimensions

Burnout Dimensions	Female (N=86)		Male (N=104)		t	p
	Mean	Std.Dev.	Mean	Std.Dev.		
Emotional Exhaustion	11.98	5.10	9.89	5.29	3.07**	0.001
Depersonalisation	3.71	3.05	5.98	4.23	-3.89**	0.000
Personal Accomplishment	22.82	3.09	22.97	3.23	-1.72	0.073

There were significant differences on gender in relation to emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation ($t=3.45$; $p<0.01$). That is, female academicians had significantly more emotional exhaustion than their male counterparts. In contrary male academicians had significantly more depersonalisation exhaustion than their female counterparts. However, there was no significant difference between male and female academicians on personal accomplishment.

Work years and burnout

Table II: Differences among Academicians Work Years on Burnout Dimensions

Burnout Dimensions	0-5 years (N=44)		6-10 years (N=54)		11-15 years (N=52)		16-20 years (N=69)		20 years- among (N=71)		F	P
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Emotional Exhaustion	10.17	3.45	10.63	4.83	11.17	4.76	11.19	4.93	10.92	44.89	0.79	0.74
Depersonalisation	4.40	2.50	3.77	3.45	4.32	2.92	5.41	3.24	6.94	2.43	5.34**	0.000
Personal Accomplishment	20.23	4.27	21.19	2.99	22.33	3.21	23.13	3.02	23.21	3.78	2.98*	0.027

P* <0.05

P** <0.01

Length of work experiences for academicians did not indicate significant difference on emotional exhaustion ($F=0.48$; $p>0.05$; see Table II). However, in terms of years work-experiences, depersonalisation of academicians were found significantly different from each other. ($F=5.34$; $p<0.01$; see Table II). Academicians who stayed in profession longer were higher depersonalized than the less experienced academicians. Moreover, there was significant difference on personal accomplishment of the subjects. 0-5 years group had the lowest mean of personal accomplishment ($F=2.98$; $p<0.05$). That is, more experienced academicians had more personal accomplishment than less experienced subjects.

Academic status and burnout

Table III: Differences among Academicians Work Status on Burnout Dimensions

Burnout Dimensions	Assistant		Assist. Prof.		Assoc. Prof.		Prof.		F	P
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Emotional Exhaustion	11.25	4.41	10.98	5.14	9.80	4.28	9.54	4.93	3.001*	0.018
Depersonalisation	9.97	2.50	3.77	3.63	4.11	2.87	4.27	3.04	1.09	0.47
Personal Accomplishment	21.76	4.33	21.92	3.25	22.23	3.21	23.01	3.27	1.75	0.093

Titles for academicians had indicate only significant difference on emotional exhaustion ($F=3.001$; $p<0.05$;). Assistant had the highest mean of emotional burnout. That is, less experienced academicians, assistants had more emotional exhaustion than experienced and status subjects. However, in terms of academic status, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment of academicians weren't found significantly different from each other.. Academicians who stayed in profession longer were higher depersonalized than the less experienced academicians.

3.4 Discussion

The researchers discussed the issues to compare burnout of Turkish academicians in relation to their status, gender and years work-experiences. The levels of depersonalisation and personal accomplishment of the three burnout dimensions are high among experienced academicians in Turkish universities. Those results concur with that of Capel et al. (1987) who reported that educators in schools had high level emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment. It can be deduced from those results that burnout among academicians is a normal phenomenon in the academic profession across different areas of specialization and job.

The study show that female academicians and residents had higher level of emotional burnout compared to their male counterparts. In contrary male academicians had significantly more depersonalisation exhaustion than their female counterparts. Higher emotional burnout in female could be explained by specific psychosocial profiles and warrant further investigation (Hojat et al. 1999).

The results indicated that assistants reported a higher level of emotional burnout than professors/associate professor and assistant professor. In contrary, Budak & Sürgevil, (2005), Gezer et al (2007) found that there were no significant differences in all burnout subscales among academicians according to the academic position, and Çam (2001),

This result may be explained that these groups of academicians can cope effectively with various problems in their academic life and this can also be related to having a tenured position for professors and associate professors at the universities of Turkey. Only professors and associate professors have tenured positions in Turkey. However, other academicians such as research assistants, assistant professors, and instructors are employed under contract and their contracts are renewed every 2 or 3 years in the universities of Turkey (Toker, 2011). Similarly, Lackritz (2004) found that female academicians have significantly higher mean scores on emotional exhaustion than males, while male academicians have higher scores on depersonalization.

Sari (2000) maintained that their teaching deteriorates when academicians are overloaded. This may contribute to lack of teachers' motivation causing their job dissatisfaction which may also arise from organisational factors particularly lack of fairness. According to Verdugo and Greenberg (1997), job content factors such as promotion can also affect academicians' achievement, responsibility and satisfaction. In addition to this, Dinham and Scott (2000) reported that job context related factors such as payment, job security and working conditions which involve nature of the job, administration and management, working facilities, student enthusiasm, freedom of life style, time flexibility in terms of working hours, secretarial and technical assistance may affect the academicians' satisfaction. Academicians also have lack of technical and secretarial support and have less payment compared to people who work for

the government in different governmental departments doing different jobs such as educational psychologist or worker.

Academicians may experience burnout at some point in their careers. Also, burnout is a costly and distressing phenomenon, which damages both individuals and organizations. The results from this study can help and guide to both university administrators and academicians. For decreasing burnout levels of academicians, firstly, a better understanding of burnout and factors that affect nature of burnout is needed.

4. Implications for Practice

The results of this research have implications for practice: These are;

- Intervention programs can be prepared in co-operation with the school advisers, counsellors, and executive administrators in universities to prevent academicians' burnout,
- Job burnout can be decreased if the governors concentrate on having better working conditions for academicians,
- Academicians should be involved in coping with burnout with the help of subscription to educational journals and magazines which not only widen their knowledge but also broaden their perspectives,
- Awareness of the symptoms of burnout can promote academicians' satisfaction provided that teachers feel that they are highly valued people, particularly on the amount of work they do,

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