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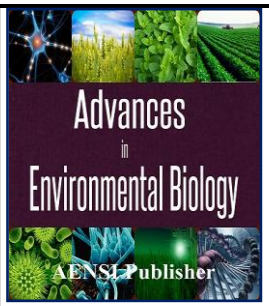

An Examination of the Occupational Burnout Levels of Academic Staff

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, burnout syndrome has been one of the frequently addressed issues in relation to working life. It can be alleged that burnout is an important issue for the occupation of academics which includes high level of human relations and face-to-face communication. In this respect, this study aimed to determine the occupational burnout levels of academicians and to detect if the burnout levels vary by certain socio-demographic variables (gender, age and educational level). The samples of the study included 830 academic staff members working in private universities located in the provinces of Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara and Bursa. For this purpose, a questionnaire was applied for the determination of participants' burnout levels. The first part of the questionnaire included questions about the demographic characteristics of the participants while the second part included questions to determine their occupational attitudes. PASW 18.0 software was used for the analysis of the data acquired in the research. Reliability coefficient of the measuring tool (Cronbach Alpha) was found to be 0.924. Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, ANOVA and Regression Analysis were used within the scope of the analysis. In consequence of the study, it was found that the variables about the participants (age, gender, education) differed in many of the sub-dimensions of the scale that was applied for measuring the burnout level. Furthermore, the regression analysis revealed that increases in the age did not cause occupational burnout in the participants, the participants responded less to the people due to their work, they were not pleased and satisfied with their jobs, and they approached positively to the problems they faced in their jobs. Besides, it was found that as the level of education increased, the participants were exhausted by their jobs, they behaved more harshly towards others, their job satisfied them, and they approached more positively towards problems.

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INTRODUCTION

Occupational burnout can be considered as one of the most important problems faced by employees from many different occupations in their work life. Occupational burnout should be regarded as a process that affects not only individuals but also organizations. The decrease in the performance and productivity of employees experiencing occupational burnout will inevitably influence the organization. In addition to the loss of productivity and quality, the negative influences of occupational burnout on employees can be also suggested to have an effect on the environment of the employees and the society. In this respect, occupational burnout is an important issue also for academicians, who are in constant communication with university students that will shape the future of the society, who assume important roles in their education, who work hard to contribute to science, and who therefore are the mirror of the society.

While there can be many causes within the organization that may drag academicians into occupational burnout, such as extreme course load, intensive work, communication, etc., demographic factors such as age, marital status and education can also cause burnout.

This research aims to examine the occupational burnout levels of academicians in terms of certain demographic variables. The study firstly provides the conceptual framework and then it examines the relation of certain demographic variables to the burnout levels of 830 academicians who are the samples of the study.

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Conceptual Framework:

Edelwich and Brodsky [6] defines burnout as "a continuously increasing loss in idealism, energy and purpose". Maslach *et al*. [12] made a widely accepted definition of burnout: "emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and low sense of personal accomplishment experienced by the individual as a result of the requirement to work with other people face to face and confronting intensive emotional demands in the meanwhile due to his/her job" [12]. Shirom [19] describes burnout as individual's negative emotional reaction resulting from job-related stress [19].

Today, individuals are faced with intensive pressures in every area of their working life. These pressures may disturb individual's psychological balance and make him/her desperate, defenseless and weak. Technological changes and the stress caused by the ambition to achieve speed and quality, which make today's working life difficult, drag employees into turnout in the end of the working day [4].

Possibility of burnout among academicians is increased by many problems such as the alleged decrease in the occupational interest among academic staff, the idea that occupational prestige is lost, intense workload, staffing problems, unsatisfactory wages, a working environment which requires constantly questioning personal competences, requirement of continuous efforts for development, insufficient support for academic works, unfavorable working conditions, lack of efficient working groups, etc. [4, 8, 21]. Burnout is also considered as one of the career obstacles of academicians [3]. Furthermore, burnout can be expressed as negative signs sensed by the individual in relation to his/her working environment [23].

Universities are among the institutions that have the biggest influences on a country's social change. Universities are educational institutions that strive to produce solutions for the problems of the humanity and the country by carrying out scientific research and that raise people that the country needs. Only academic staffs that are loyal to and enthusiastic about their work can enable the higher education institutions to successfully fulfill these duties. Therefore, it is clear that organizational goals cannot be achieved to the desired extent in a working environment where there is an intense sense of burnout with unfavorable results for the individuals and the organization, and in turn, the society will be damaged by this in the long run [17].

Since the importance of the phenomenon of burnout as a social problem started to be conceived, it has been a topic of study focused on by many researchers. Studies based on the assumption that burnout, which is most simply defined as "exhaustion of energy in spiritual and physical terms", is "a result of the interaction between the working environment and the individual" reveal the importance of this phenomenon for both individuals and organizations [3, 10].

Burnout has a bigger effect on employees who have set big objectives for themselves but get disappointed by the feeling that their expectations are not met in their occupational lives and who therefore feel tired and exhausted [24]. Burnout results from the inability to cope with stress and takes place in physiological, mental and emotional areas [20].

The burnout syndrome, which is especially widespread among employees from occupations requiring intensive communication with people [13], can be resulting from job and role characteristics, organizational characteristics, individual characteristics, etc. In this respect, the major factors that cause burnout include high workload or complexity of the work, time pressure, role ambiguity, role conflicts, leadership and cooperation problems, physical violence, insufficient control, problems and demands arising from insufficient flexibility, deficiency of autonomy, decrease in the resources necessary for the works, insufficiency of team works, non-organized working environment, and low job satisfaction [2]. In addition, individual characteristics such as gender, age, marital status, number of children, period of employment, personality, values, monthly salary and monthly household income can also cause the burnout level to vary [16, 22].

In this context, the general purpose of the study is to examine whether certain demographic characteristics with a potential effect on burnout syndrome cause any effects on the burnout levels of academicians.

Purpose, Scope and Method:

This study aims to reveal the occupational burnout factors of academic staff. For this purpose, 830 academic staff members working in private universities in the provinces of Istanbul, İzmir, Ankara and Bursa were included in the study. The questions in the first part of the questionnaire were related to the demographic characteristics of the participants, and the second part included 22 questions to determine their occupational attitudes. The reliability coefficient of the scale used in the study was found to be 0.924. Non-parametrical and parametrical statistical tests were applied to the data collected.

Data Analysis:

Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, ANOVA and Regression Analysis were used within the scope of the analysis. The PASW 18.9 software was used in the analysis of the data obtained in the research. A significance threshold of 0.05 was used in the relations and differences among the variables.

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Results:

48.4% of the participants were female, and 51.6% were male. 21.3% of the participants were between 23 and 33 years of age, 40.8% were between 34 and 44 years of age, and 37.8% were above 45. As for the education levels of the participants, 66.7% were graduates of faculties of education, and 33.3% were graduates of faculties of economics.

Table 1: Demographic statistics of the participants.

		Frequency	%
Gender	Female	402	48.4
	Male	428	51.6
Age	23-33	177	21.3
	34-44	339	40.8
	>45	314	37.8
Faculty	Faculty of Education	554	66.7
	Faculty of Economics	276	33.3

Factor Analysis:

Under the factor analysis, 22 expressions that were presented with a Likert scale were examined. In consequence, it was decided to continue the analysis with 4 factors that were created out of the 22 expressions. Results of the analysis are summarized below:

Table 2: Factor analysis and KMO and Bartlett's test.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy		,852
Bartlett's test	Approx. Chi-Square	6654,885
	Df	231
	Sig.	,000

A factor analysis was carried out to determine the suitability of the factor analysis, and the above results were obtained.

According to this, the KMO measure of the sampling adequacy for the factor analysis was found to be 0,8520>0,6. This shows that the sampling is adequate for the analysis. The Bartlett measure, which is a sphericity measure, was Sig (0,000)<0,05, which shows that there is correlation among the variables, and therefore the factor analysis can be applied.

The factor description tables shows the following 4 factors that were acquired.

Table 3: Factor analysis Transformed component matrix.

		Component			
		1	2	3	4
I think that my job exhausts me	2. I feel mentally exhausted after work.	.809			
	1. I feel alienated from my job.	.799			
	3. I feel that I will not be able to cope with this job any more when I wake up in the morning.	.754			
	8. I feel exhausted by my job.	.711			
	20. I feel that I have come to an end.	.612			
	13. I feel that my job restricts me.	.449			
	6. Dealing with people all the day is very arduous for me.	.326			
I behave more harshly towards people due to my job	10. I have become tougher towards people since I started doing this job.		.651		
	15. I do not care about what is happening to the people that I meet as part of my job.		.635		
	5. I notice that I behave towards some people that I meet as part of my job as if they were not humans.		.627		
	11. I am afraid that this job will make me increasingly harsher.		.617		
	16. Working directly with people creates too much stress for me.		.581		
I think that my job develops me	17. I create a comfortable atmosphere between myself and the people I meet as part of my job.			.731	
	19. I have gained many remarkable accomplishments in this job.			.624	
	9. I believe that I contribute to people's lives thanks to my job.			.624	
	12. I have the power to do many things.			.612	
	4. I immediately understand what the people I meet as part of my job feel.			.533	
	18. I feel refreshed after a close work with other people.			.509	
	7. I find the most appropriate solutions for the problems of the people I meet as part of my job.			.475	
I approach positively towards the problems I face in my job	22. I feel that the people I meet as part of my job act as if I have created some of their problems.				.663
	14. I feel that I work too much at my job.				.627
	21. I approach calmly towards emotional problems in my job.				.521

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Following factors were determined:

1. I think that my job exhausts me
2. I behave more harshly towards people due to my job
3. I think that my job develops me
4. I approach positively towards the problems I face in my job

Table 4: ANOVA test of the scale by the variable of gender.

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
I think that my job exhausts me	Between groups	30.057	1	30.057	31.150	.000
	In groups	798.943	828	.965		
	Total	829.000	829			
I behave more harshly towards people due to my job	Between groups	10.897	1	10.897	11.029	.001
	In groups	818.103	828	.988		
	Total	829.000	829			
I think that my job develops me	Between groups	9.003	1	9.003	9.091	.003
	In groups	819.997	828	.990		
	Total	829.000	829			
I approach positively towards the problems I face in my job	Between groups	.084	1	.084	.084	.772
	In groups	828.916	828	1.001		
	Total	829.000	829			

H1: Participants' gender has no effect on the factors

According to the analysis of the factors by participants' gender, it is determined that only the 4th factor has a sig value that is higher than 0.05 and gender has no effect on this factor. It is found that other factors are affected by gender.

Table 5: ANOVA test of the scale by the variable of age.

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
I think that my job exhausts me	Between groups	.309	2	.154	.154	.857
	In groups	828.691	827	1.002		
	Total	829.000	829			
I behave more harshly towards people due to my job	Between groups	11.041	2	5.520	5.581	.004
	In groups	817.959	827	.989		
	Total	829.000	829			
I think that my job develops me	Between groups	19.922	2	9.961	10.181	.000
	In groups	809.078	827	.978		
	Total	829.000	829			
I approach positively towards the problems I face in my job	Between groups	43.319	2	21.659	22.798	.000
	In groups	785.681	827	.950		
	Total	829.000	829			

H2: Participants' age has no effect on the factors

According to the analysis of the factors by participants' age, it is determined that only the 1st factor has a sig. value that is higher than 0.1 and this factor is not affected by age. It is found that age has an effect on the other factors.

Table 6: ANOVA test of the scale by the variable of education.

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
I think that my job exhausts me	Between groups	86.656	3	28.885	32.140	.000
	In groups	742.344	826	.889		
	Total	829.000	829			
I behave more harshly towards people due to my job	Between groups	18.421	3	6.140	6.257	.000
	In groups	810.579	826	.981		
	Total	829.000	829			
I think that my job develops me	Between groups	17.120	3	5.707	5.806	.001
	In groups	811.880	826	.983		

	Total	829.000	829			
I approach positively towards the problems I face in my job	Between groups	45.608	3	15.203	16.029	.000
	In groups	783.392	826	.948		
	Total	829.000	829			

H3: Participants' education level has no effect on the factors

According to the analysis of the factors by participants' age, it is determined that values of all factors are higher than 0.05. It is found that education has an effect on all the factors.

Regression Analysis:

Table 7: Probit regression analysis of factor 1.

Variables						95% confidence interval	
		Estimate	Standard error	Z	Sig.	Lower bound	Upper bound
PROBIT[a]	Gender	.128	.348	.367	.714	-.554	.809
	Age	-.376	.224	-1.679	.093	-.816	.063
	Faculty	.229	.158	1.456	.145	-.079	.538
	Constant	.037	.546	.068	.946	-.509	.583

a.PROBIT model: PROBIT (p)= Intercept + BX.

Factors affecting the expressions I think that my job exhausts me:

1: Male participants agree more than female participants by a difference of 0,128 unit.

2: As the age group increases by one level, rate of agreement decreases by 0,376 unit. It means that as the age increases, the participants tend to think that their job does not exhaust them.

3: Change in education level increases the rate of agreement by 0,229 unit. It means that as the education level increases, the participants tend to think that their job exhausts them.

Table 8: Probit regression analysis of factor 2.

Variables						95% confidence interval	
		Estimate	Standard error	Z	Sig.	Lower bound	Upper bound
PROBIT[a]	Gender	-.145	.320	-.454	.650	-.772	.482
	Age	-.060	.177	-.339	.735	-.406	.286
	Faculty	.342	.117	2.917	.004	.112	.571
	Constant	-.545	.403	-1.353	.176	-.948	-.142

a.PROBIT model: PROBIT (p)= Intercept + BX.

Factors affecting the expression I behave more harshly towards people due to my job:

1: Male participants agree less than female participants by a difference of 0,145 unit.

2: As the age group increases by one level, the rate of agreement decreases by 0,060 unit. It means that as the age increases, the participants tend to be less harsh towards people due to their job.

3: Change in education level increases the rate of agreement by 0,342 unit. As the participants' education level increases, they tend to behave harsher towards people due to their job.

Table 9: Probit regression analysis of factor 3.

Variables						95% confidence interval	
		Estimate	Standard error	Z	Sig.	Lower bound	Upper bound
PROBIT[a]	Gender	.042	.293	.144	.885	-.532	.616
	Age	-.028	.173	-.163	.871	-.367	.311
	Faculty	-.165	.098	-1.687	.092	.358	.027
	Constant	.230	.441	.521	.602	-.211	.671

a.PROBIT model: PROBIT (p)= Intercept + BX.

Factors affecting the expression I think that my job develops me:

1: Male participants agree more than female participants by a difference of 0,042 unit.

2: As the age group increases by one level, the rate of agreement decreases by 0,028 unit. As the age increases, the participants tend to be displeased and dissatisfied with their jobs.

3: Change in education level increases the level of agreement by 0,230 unit. As the education level increases, the participants tend to express that their job satisfies them.

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Table 10: Probit regression analysis of factor 4.

Variables						95% confidence interval	
		Estimate	Standard error	Z	Sig.	Lower bound	Upper bound
PROBIT[a]	Gender	-.455	.286	-1.589	.112	-1.016	.106
	Age	.172	.152	1.133	.257	-.126	.470
	Faculty	-.138	.134	-1.030	.303	-.402	.125
	Constant	.342	.673	.508	.611	-.331	1.016

a.PROBIT model: PROBIT (p)= Intercept + BX.

Factors affecting the expression I approach positively towards the problems I face in my job:

1: Male participants agree less than female participants by a difference of 0,455 unit. Male participants approach less positively towards problems in their job than the women do.

2: As the age group increases by one level, the rate of agreement increases by 0,172 unit. As the age increases, the participants tend to approach more positively towards the problems they face in their jobs.

3: Change in education level decreases the rate of agreement by 0,138 unit. As the education level increases, the participants tend to approach more positively towards problems.

Conclusion and Assessment:

- Majority of the participants are male and between 34 and 44 years of age. Most of them are graduates of the faculties of education.
- As a result of the factor analysis, 4 factors were determined:
  - I think that my job exhausts me
  - I behave more harshly towards people due to my job
  - I think that my job develops me
  - I approach positively towards the problems I face in my job

In a study about the relation between gender burnout level, it was concluded that the burnout level of women were higher than that of men [15]. Furthermore, Ghorpade, Lackritz and Singh [7] found that female academicians had higher levels of burnout than the male academicians. Various studies about the burnout levels of male and female academicians yielded different results. For example, Olorunsola [14] and Yoleri and Bostancı [25] found that male academicians had higher levels of burnout than the female academicians did. In this study, the gender of the participants had no effect only on the item "I approach positively towards the problems I face in my job". It had an effect on others. The burnout level of women was found to be higher than that of men.

As for the relation between age and burnout, Konakay and Altaş [11] suggested that younger academicians had higher levels of emotional exhaustion. In another study, Helvacı and Turhan [9] found that emotional exhaustion increased as the age increased. Budak and Sergevil [3] and Yoleri and Bostancı [25] found that the level of burnout did not vary by age. In our study, the only item that the participants' age had no effect on was "I think that my job exhausts me". It was determined to have an effect on the others. It was found that as the participants' age increased, their job did not exhaust them, they behaved less harshly towards others due to their job, they were not pleased and satisfied with their job, and they approached positively towards the problems they faced in their job.

Another factor with an effect on individuals' burnout level is education. Although there are different results in the literature in relation to this issue and the majority of the studies have assumed that higher education levels would have higher success in coping with burnout and that there would be an inverse relation between education level and burnout, the results show that burnout increases as education level increases. This result can be also explained by the increased possibility of stressful situations and responsibilities with increased education level [1, 5, 12]. Our study found that the participants' education level has an effect on all the factors. It was determined that as the participants' education level increased, they tended to express that their job exhausted them. It can be suggested that this situation is caused by academicians' intensive working life and the significant responsibilities they assume.

Other results obtained in the study are as follows:

- Age is the most important factor affecting the expression "I think that my job exhausts me".
- Education is the most important factor affecting the expression "I behave more harshly towards people due to my job".
- Education is the most important factor affecting the expression "I think that my job develops me".
- Gender is the most important factor affecting the expression "I approach positively towards the problems I face in my job".

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