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BURNOUT SYNDROME IN HOTEL EMPLOYEES: CASE OF CITY OF KONYA*

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to find out the level of burnout of employees who work at the 4- and 5-star hotels in Konya (Turkey), and whether hotel employees' mean scores' of burnout sub dimensions vary according to their demographic characteristics. For this aim, a survey that consists of Maslach Burnout Inventory and personal information form is applied in 8 hotel enterprises. Data that are obtained from surveys are analyzed by using statistical software (SPSS 16.0). During the analyses, reliability analysis, independent sample t- tests and one- way ANOVA tests are performed. The findings of the study indicated that hotel employees' level of emotional exhaustion is medium, level of depersonalization is low, and, level of personal accomplishment is high.

Keywords: Burnout syndrome, hotel employees, burnout on hotel employees.

1. Introduction

In tourism and hospitality industry it is always been a challenge to provide clients high quality service to satisfy them (McClery and Weaver, 1982; Knutson et al., 1990; Ledgerwood et al., 1998). And to provide high quality service there is another challenge in tourism and hospitality industry called "Burnout Syndrome".

Originally, burnout was defined by Freudenberger's (1974) as a specific psychological condition in which people suffer emotional exhaustion, experience a lack of personal accomplishment, and tend to depersonalize others. Maslach et al. (1996) updated this definition stating that burnout is 'a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with people in some capacity'. And then, Maslach (1998) has refined the definition of burnout as 'prolonged responses to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job'. Emotional exhaustion refers to a lack of energy and a feeling that one's emotional resources are used up because of excessive psychological demands. Depersonalization is characterized by treating others as objects rather than people through cynical, callous, and uncaring attitudes and behaviors. Reduced personal accomplishment refers to a decline in one's feelings of competence and successful achievement. Each sub dimension of job burnout captures its unique aspect of job burnout (Maslach, 1993).

Burnout is a response to the chronic emotional strain of dealing extensively with other people, characterized by a loss of tolerance. Employees who exposed to burnout syndrome, feel drained and used up, and no longer able to give of themselves to others (Maslach, 1982). The feelings created by burnout can, therefore, have a significant effect on an employee's

* This research was derived from the master thesis of 'Burnout Syndrom on Hotel Employees: Case of Konya (Selçuk University, Institute of Social Sciences, Konya 2011)' written by Cagri Sacli.

ability to deliver quality service. Burnout has other costs for organizations, such as increased employee turnover, absenteeism, reduced productivity, and other human considerations (Jackson and Maslach, 1982; Gaines and Jermier, 1983; Jackson et al., 1986; Golembiewski and Munzenrider, 1988; Leiter and Maslach, 1988; Shirom, 1989). Burnout can also affect an individual's personal life; if stress cannot be resolved on the job, it is often unknowingly resurrected at home (Maslach, 1979). Due to the evidence that burnout has important and costly ramifications for organizations and individuals, it is important that management have a clear and accurate understanding of the construct as well as an understanding of the factors and conditions that contribute to burnout (Ledgerwood et al., 1998).

For decades, burnout phenomenon examined among different populations such as social workers, educators, medical and mental health workers, police officers, child care workers, lawyers, and customer service representatives (Maslach, et al., 1996). And burnout is also very important subject on hotel business and hotel employees. In service business it can be said that the most important think is service quality, and for the hotel business it is also same. Human services are performed by individuals who share three characteristics: performance of emotionally taxing work; certain personality characteristics that lead them to choose human services; and a client-centered orientation (Pines and Aronson, 1988). Historically, these three characteristics form the classic antecedents of burnout. Most authorities assume that job conditions are the primary cause of burnout, and that individual factors are relatively less important (Maslach and Pines, 1979), yet it was not until the late 1980s that job conditions and burnout were empirically linked (Jackson et al., 1987). Especially hotels' features such as hard working tempo, complex structures, long and exhausting working hours and intense human relations makes hotel employees an easy target for the burnout syndrome (Birdir and Tepeci, 2003; Altay, 2009). For that reason burnout syndrome should be taken into account for hotels in which service quality is a crucial issue. And it is also crucial for hotels to recognize the signs in advance to minimize and eliminate the negative effects of burnout syndrome which has negative subsequent on both organizations and individuals.

Therefore the purpose of the study is to find out the level of burnout of employees who work at the 4- and 5-star hotels in Konya (Turkey), and whether hotel employees' mean scores' of burnout sub dimensions vary according to their demographic characteristics. For this purpose this research examined the following research questions:

1. To what degree does burnout occur in hotel employees?
2. Is there a statistically significant relationship between demographic characteristics and burnout level of hotel employees?

2. Methodology

2.1. Measures

Maslach's Burnout Inventory (MBI) survey and a demographic questionnaire were used in this study. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is the most widely known instrument used to measure burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). Adaptation, in Turkish, and validity and reliability analyses were made by Ergin (1992) MBI is consisted of 22 statements in which participants rate on a five-point Likert scale where responses can range from 0 to 4 (0=Never, 4=Every Time) The 22 items are broken down into three sub dimensions:

1. Emotional exhaustion (EE);
2. Depersonalization (DE); and

3. Personal accomplishment (PA).

These sub dimensions are categorized in three ranges (low level, average level, and high level). The first sub dimension, emotional exhaustion, consists of nine statements and measures the feelings of being overextended and exhausted in one's employment setting. The second sub dimension, depersonalization, has five statements and measures impersonal responses toward co-workers and clients. The third, personal achievement has eight statements measuring feelings of competence and success in one's work. The demographic questionnaire was designed to have informations such as hotel employees' gender, age, department, position, and request of changing job.

2.2. The Sample

Research population of the study is 4 and 5 star hotels' employees which located in Selcuklu and Karatay counties of city of Konya/Turkey. According to information received from the Directorate of Konya Culture and Tourism, between 18.04.2011–02.05.2011 dates which the study conducted, in Selcuk and Karatay counties nine hotel enterprises has been operating. According to information received from hotels human resources executives, 472 employees have been working between 18.04.2011–02.05.2011 dates. The authors contacted nine hotel's executives, such as general managers and human resource managers to discuss this study. After approval of eight hotels' executives, a table was established for surveys in hotels' cafeterias and research data's collected with the help of an interviewer. Totally 356 surveys collected from 472 employees which 344 surveys were usable. Consequently the response rate of the study measured 78%.

2.3. Information about Participants

A summary of the descriptive statistics can be found in Table 1. Of the employee participants, 73% (n=252) were male and 27% (n=92) were female. The respondents' ages ranged from 26 to 33 years were 48% (n=164), and ages over than 42 years were 8% (n=26). 24,1% (n=83) of the participants were working for Food and Beverage Departments, of 18,6% (n=64) were working for House Keeping Departments, 16,9 (n=58) were working for Front Desk, of 13,4 (n=46) were working for Kitchen and, of 27% (n=93) were working for other departments such as human resources, marketing, accounting, engineering, security and fitness. The majority of respondents (n=277, 81%) were coworkers, 48 respondents (14%) were supervisors, and the remaining participants (n=19, 5%) were either assistant managers or managers. Majority of respondents (n=307, 89%) were working 6 days per week and, the remaining 37 (11%) respondents were working 7 days per week. As daily working hours of respondents; 230 (67%) respondents were working less than 9 hours a day, and the rest of the respondents (n=114, 33%) were working more than 10 hours a day. Finally, for the request of changing job; half of the respondents (n=172, 50%) were say yes, and rest of the respondents (n=172, 50%) were say no.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

| | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Gender | | |
| Female | 92 | 26.7 |
| Male | 252 | 73.3 |
| Age | | |
| 25 years and down | 93 | 27.0 |
| 26-33 years | 164 | 47.7 |
| 34-41 years | 61 | 17.7 |
| 42 years and up | 26 | 7.6 |
| Current Department | | |
| F&B | 83 | 24.1 |
| Front Desk | 58 | 16.9 |
| Housekeeping | 64 | 18.6 |
| Kitchen | 46 | 13.4 |
| Others | 93 | 27.0 |
| Current Position | | |
| Coworkers | 277 | 80.5 |
| Supervisors | 48 | 14.0 |
| Managers | 19 | 5.5 |
| Work Day per Week | | |
| 6 days and less | 89.2 | 307 |
| 7 days | 10.8 | 37 |
| Daily Working Hours | | |
| 9 hours and less | 66.9 | 230 |
| 10 hours and over | 33.1 | 114 |
| Willingness to Change Job | | |
| Yes | 50 | 172 |
| No | 50 | 172 |
| Total | 100 | 344 |

3. Results

3.1. Burnout Level of Hotel employees' in City of Konya

Hotel employees' burnout scores on each of three burnout sub dimensions were computed following directions in the MBI. Reliability coefficients for emotional exhaustion (Cronbach's alpha= .87), depersonalization (Cronbach's alpha= .71), and personal accomplishment (Cronbach's alpha= .72) were all satisfactory (see Table 2.). According to scores of emotional exhaustion (M= 15.21), depersonalization (M= 5.9), and personal accomplishment (M= 21.86) hotel employees in the city of Konya had an average level of emotional exhaustion, low level of depersonalization, and high level of personal accomplishment.

Table 2. Burnout Levels of Hotel Employees

| Sub dimensions | Items | Alpha | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------------------|
| Emotional exhaustion | 9 | 0.870 | 15.21 | 7.64 |
| Depersonalization | 5 | 0.717 | 5.90 | 4.24 |
| Personal accomplishment | 8 | 0.728 | 21.86 | 5.40 |

3.2. Differences between Demographic Characteristics and Burnout

For gender variables; independent sample t tests were used to compare differences between male and female hotel employees' job burnout measures. There were no statistical significant differences in any sub dimensions of burnout on gender of hotel employees.

For age variables; one-way ANOVA tests were performed. As shown in Table 3. there were no statistical significant differences in emotional exhaustion sub dimension ($p = .224 > \alpha = .05$). For depersonalization ($p = .012 < \alpha = .05$), and personal accomplishment ($p = .020 < \alpha = .05$) sub dimensions there were statistical significant differences between the age of 25-below and the age group of 34-41 hotel employees. The age of 25-below hotel employees ($M = 6.71$, $SD = 4.58$) experienced a higher degree of burnout on depersonalization sub dimension than did the age group of 34-41 hotel employees ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 7.74$). But age group of 34-41 hotel employees had higher degree of burnout on personal accomplishment ($M = 23.0$, $SD = 4.69$) than the age of 25-below hotel employees ($M = 20.56$, $SD = 5.47$). Personal accomplishment is the final sub dimension from the MBI. This sub dimension is measured in the opposite direction by which the higher score reflects a positive accomplishment.

Table 3. Burnout According to Age of the Hotel Employees'

| Age | | One-way ANOVA | | | | |
|-----|-------------------|---------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| | | N | M | SD | f | p |
| EE | 25 years and down | 93 | 16.46 | 8.067 | 1.465 | 0.224 |
| | 26-33 years | 164 | 15.06 | 7.751 | | |
| | 34-41 years | 61 | 13.93 | 6.413 | | |
| | 42 years and up | 26 | 14.69 | 7.847 | | |
| DE | 25 years and down | 93 | 6.71 | 4.589 | 3.711 | 0.012* |
| | 26-33 years | 164 | 5.74 | 4.147 | | |
| | 34-41 years | 61 | 4.64 | 3.746 | | |
| | 42 years and up | 26 | 7.04 | 4.005 | | |
| PA | 25 years and down | 93 | 20.56 | 5.474 | 3.330 | 0.020* |
| | 26-33 years | 164 | 21.96 | 5.653 | | |
| | 34-41 years | 61 | 23.08 | 4.699 | | |
| | 42 years and up | 26 | 23.04 | 4.257 | | |

* $p < \alpha$

For current department variables of hotel employees'; one-way ANOVA tests were performed. As shown in Table 4. there were statistical significant differences in all sub dimensions of burnout (emotional exhaustion; $p = .008 < \alpha = .05$, depersonalization; $p = .003 < \alpha = .05$, and personal accomplishment; $p = .001 < \alpha = .05$). Food and beverage ($M = 13.93$, $SD = 7.9$) and housekeeping ($M = 17.0$, $SD = 6.79$) departments workers had higher levels of burnout on emotional exhaustion sub dimension than front desk workers ($M = 13.24$, $SD = 7.59$). Similarly Food and beverage ($M = 7.0$, $SD = 4.46$) and housekeeping ($M = 6.5$, $SD = 4.22$) departments workers had higher levels of burnout on depersonalization sub dimension than front desk workers ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 3.58$). And housekeeping workers ($M = 22.61$, $SD = 4.07$) had higher degree of burnout on personal accomplishment than kitchen workers ($M = 19.17$, $SD = 6.46$).

Table 4. Burnout According to Current Department of the Hotel Employees'

| Current Department | | One-way ANOVA | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------|---------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| | | N | M | SD | f | p |
| EE | F&B | 83 | 16.86 | 8.538 | 3.496 | 0.008* |
| | Front Desk | 58 | 13.24 | 7.591 | | |
| | Housekeeping | 64 | 17.00 | 6.794 | | |
| | Kitchen | 46 | 13.93 | 7.900 | | |
| | Others | 93 | 14.38 | 6.813 | | |
| DE | F&B | 83 | 7.00 | 4.467 | 4.019 | 0.003* |
| | Front Desk | 58 | 4.31 | 3.580 | | |
| | Housekeeping | 64 | 6.50 | 4.220 | | |
| | Kitchen | 46 | 5.57 | 4.257 | | |
| | Others | 93 | 5.68 | 4.165 | | |
| PA | F&B | 83 | 21.30 | 5.744 | 5.110 | 0.001* |
| | Front Desk | 58 | 21.78 | 5.106 | | |
| | Housekeeping | 64 | 22.61 | 4.077 | | |
| | Kitchen | 46 | 19.17 | 6.461 | | |

*p<α

For current position variables of hotel employees'; one-way ANOVA tests were performed. As shown in Table 5. there were statistical significant differences in all sub dimensions of burnout (emotional exhaustion; $p=.037 < \alpha = .05$, depersonalization; $p=.017 < \alpha = .05$, and personal accomplishment; $p=.000 < \alpha = .05$). Coworkers ($M= 15.47$, $SD= 7.66$) and supervisors ($M= 15.46$, $SD= 8.10$) had higher levels of burnout on emotional exhaustion sub dimension than managers ($M= 10.84$, $SD= 4.34$). Coworkers ($M= 6.08$, $SD= 4.30$) and supervisors ($M= 5.98$, $SD= 4.17$) had higher levels of burnout on depersonalization sub dimension than managers ($M= 3.21$, $SD= 2.39$). And managers ($M= 26.37$, $SD= 3.45$) had higher degree of burnout on personal accomplishment than coworkers ($M= 21.42$, $SD= 5.42$), and supervisors ($M= 22.67$, $SD= 5.10$).

Table 5. Burnout According to Current Position of the Hotel Employees'

| Current Position | | One-way ANOVA | | | | |
|------------------|-------------|---------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| | | N | M | SD | f | p |
| EE | Coworkers | 277 | 15.47 | 7.669 | 3.331 | 0.037* |
| | Supervisors | 48 | 15.46 | 8.103 | | |
| | Managers | 19 | 10.84 | 4.349 | | |
| DE | Coworkers | 277 | 6.08 | 4.303 | 4.134 | 0.017* |
| | Supervisors | 48 | 5.98 | 4.179 | | |
| | Managers | 19 | 3.21 | 2.394 | | |
| PA | Coworkers | 277 | 21.42 | 5.424 | 8.424 | 0.000* |
| | Supervisors | 48 | 22.67 | 5.100 | | |
| | Managers | 19 | 26.37 | 3.451 | | |

*p<α

Table 6. Work Day per Week, Daily Working Hours, Willingness to Changing Job and Burnout

| Work day per week | Sub dimension | 6 days and less (N= 307) | | 7 days (N= 37) | | t | p |
|---------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|-------|--------|--------|
| | | M | SD | M | SD | | |
| | EE | 14.64 | 7.463 | 20.00 | 7.546 | -4.126 | 0.000* |
| | DE | 5.55 | 3.984 | 8.84 | 5.177 | -3.731 | 0.001* |
| | PA | 21.86 | 5.410 | 21.89 | 5.461 | -0.034 | 0.973 |
| Daily working hours | Sub dimension | 9 hours and less (N= 230) | | 10 hours and more (N= 114) | | t | p |
| | | M | SD | M | SD | | |
| | EE | 13.94 | 7.101 | 17.84 | 8.047 | -4.624 | 0.000* |
| | DE | 5.36 | 3.810 | 7.01 | 4.840 | -3.188 | 0.002* |
| | PA | 21.92 | 5.416 | 21.75 | 5.413 | 0.263 | 0.793 |
| Willingness to change job | Sub dimension | Yes (N= 172) | | No (N= 172) | | t | p |
| | | M | SD | M | SD | | |
| | EE | 18.49 | 7.340 | 11.93 | 6.455 | 8.807 | 0.000* |
| | DE | 7.28 | 4.419 | 4.53 | 3.579 | 6.342 | 0.000* |
| | PA | 21.05 | 5.381 | 22.67 | 5.328 | -2.810 | 0.005* |

*p<α

For number of working day per week variables; independent sample t tests were used to compare differences between employees who works 6 days of week and employees who works 7 days of week job burnout measures. As shown in Table 6. there were statistical significant differences on emotional exhaustion ($p=0,000<\alpha=.05$) and, on depersonalization ($p=0,001<\alpha=.05$) sub dimensions of burnout. Employees who works 7 days of week (M= 20.0, SD= 7.54) had higher levels burnout on emotional exhaustion than employees who works 6 days of week (M= 14.64, SD= 7.46). And employees who works 7 days of week (M= 8.84, SD= 5.17) had higher levels burnout on depersonalization than employees who works 6 days of week (M= 5.55, SD= 3.98).

For daily working hours variables; independent sample t tests were used to compare differences between employees who works 10 hours and more a day and employees who works 9 hours and less a day job burnout measures. As shown in Table 6. there were statistical significant differences on emotional exhaustion ($p=0,000<\alpha=.05$), and on depersonalization ($p=0,002<\alpha=.05$) sub dimensions of burnout. Employees who works 10 hours and more in a day (M= 17.84, SD= 8.04) had higher levels burnout on emotional exhaustion than employees who works 9 hours and less in a day (M= 13.94, SD= 7.10). And employees who works 10 hours and more in a day (M= 7.01, SD= 4.84) had higher levels burnout on depersonalization than employees who works 9 hours and less in a day (M= 5.36, SD= 3.81).

Finally, for the willingness to changing job variables; independent sample t tests were used to compare differences between employees who want to change his/her job and employees who don't want to change his/her job burnout measures. As shown in Table 6. there were statistical significant differences on emotional exhaustion ($p=0,000<\alpha=.05$), on depersonalization ($p=0,000<\alpha=.05$), and personal accomplishment ($p=0,005<\alpha=.05$) sub dimensions of burnout. Employees who want to change his/her job (M= 18.49, SD= 7.34) had higher levels burnout on emotional exhaustion than employees who don't want to change his/her job (M= 11.93, SD= 6.45). Employees who want to change his/her job (M= 7.28, SD= 4.41) had higher levels burnout on depersonalization than employees who don't want to change his/her job (M= 4.53, SD= 3.57). And don't want to change his/her job (M= 22.67;

SD= 5.32) had higher levels of burnout on personal accomplishment than employees who want to change his/her job (M= 21.05, SD= 5.38).

4. Conclusion

For hotel business in which service quality is a crucial issue, burnout is an important concept and it is also crucial for hotels to recognize the signs in advance to minimize and eliminate the negative effects of burnout syndrome which has negative subsequent on both organizations and individuals.

The results of this study have several implications for researchers. First, Table 2. revealed that hotel employees had an average level of emotional exhaustion, low level of depersonalization, and high level of personal accomplishment. The overall results show that hotel employees' level of burnout is low. This result considered as a positive outcome for the tourism industry in city of Konya.

Hotel employees' burnout levels according to their demographic characteristic results as sited in Table 3., 4., 5. and 6. show that while there were no statistical significant differences in any sub dimensions of burnout between female and male employees, there were statistical significant differences between burnout sub dimensions and employees' demographic characteristics such as age, department, position, working day per week, daily working hours, and willingness to change job.

As sited in Table 3. younger hotel employees had higher degree of depersonalization and lower degree of personal accomplishment than their older coworkers'. This result can be explained with having low average of payment, and doing low level of utilities in their early career.

As shown in Table 4. workers of F&B and housekeeping departments had higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization than front desk workers. And housekeeping workers had higher degree of personal accomplishment than kitchen workers. These results can be explained with front desk workers have shorter working hours than F&B and housekeeping departments.

As shown in the Table 5. hotel employees in the low stairs of their career had higher levels of emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization and had lower levels of personal accomplishment than high level workers. This result can be explained with having low average of payment and low dignity of their work.

As shown in Table 6. employees which work longer hours and which work with no off day had higher degree of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization than others. This result has shown the negative effects of long working hours and working with no day off.

Finally, further research should investigate the relation between hotel employees' service orientations and burnout. Because of service orientation is an important issue in service business, and it could effect of the hotel employees' levels of burnout.

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