

## **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT AND EMOTIONAL LABOUR OF THE EMPLOYEES IN HOSPITAL SECTOR**

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### **Abstract**

*Emotions of the employees of especially the sectors like banking, tourism, and health care, in which the interaction with the customers is at utmost importance, are expected by the businesses to be properly managed. While the display of emotions by the employees according to the demands of the organization in respect to the payments made has positive contributions to the businesses, it might affect the employees in a negative way. In this study, the relationship between the emotional labour and burnout displayed by the nurses, the employees of one of the career groups in which high level of interaction with the human beings occur, while working in their organizations. In the study, emotional labour and burnout levels of 136 nurses, serving in a community hospital, have been measured by using "Emotional Labour Scale" which was developed by Çukur (2009), and whose validity and reliability studies have been done in Turkey, with Maslach Burnout Inventory. In the result of the study, it has been determined that there is a correlation between Emotional Labour with its sub-dimensions, and burnout with its sub-dimensions.*

**Key Words:** *Emotional Labour, Burnout.*

**JEL Classification:** M12, M54

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Human, as the most precious asset of all the organizations, directs the world. It can be said that one of the most important features of human which separates him from the other living beings is his mind, and the other is his emotions. Nowadays, especially the development of service sector and the increase in the level of interaction between the employees and the customers have made the emotions of the employees a part –even in some areas an important part– of the labour given for the job. The effort shown, while they serve, to regulate their emotions consciously is defined as “emotional labour”, and the job done is defined as “emotional labour job”.

Managers demand the display of the required emotions of the job always and under all conditions from their employees. This situation might affect the employees in the negative way. It has been discovered by the researchers that one of the negative aspects of emotional labour displayed by the employees in the organizations is burnout. Burnout emerges as a result of the stress experienced in the condition of being insufficient in meeting the requirements. Therefore the theme of this study is to examine, with the help of an empirical study, the relationship between the emotional labour – which means the management of the emotions of the employees, and the emotions being the part of the job, and the stress resulting from the dissonance with the real emotions, and thought to cause burnout afterwards– and burnout.

## 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1. Emotional Labour

In their daily lives, people display different emotions in different conditions accordingly with the social demands. People’s efforts in regulating their emotions in their daily lives according to the social norms are accepted as emotional labour (Karim 2009, quoting from Hochschild, 1990). The concept of “emotional labour” was brought to literature by a sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild (Seçer; 825) and was defined as “*the management of the feelings to create mimic and bodily displays that can be observed by everyone*”. In another study, Hochschild defined emotional labour as “*the job of showing the effort to feel the exact emotions required by the business*” (Hochschild, 1990: 118).

In the studies done by the researchers till today, it has been seen that the emotional labour behavior is considered in different dimensions. In this study, it has been considered in a total of four dimensions, determined by Çukur (2009), consisting of *Deep Acting*, *Surface Acting*, *Automatic Emotional Regulation* and *Emotional Deviance*. *Surface Acting*; is defined as showing the emotions which are not felt, but are required by the business, and suppressing or altering the emotions truly felt (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge and Lee, 2003, Hochschild, 1983); *Deep Acting*; is defined as regulating, in advance, the emotions felt, that is, the employees show effort beforehand to determine the emotions required to be felt instead of displaying fake behaviors like superficial role making (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge and Lee, 2003, Hochschild, 1983); *Emotional Deviance* is defined as reflecting the feelings without giving attention to follow the display rules (Çukur, 2009); and *Automatic Emotional Regulation* is defined as feeling the job related emotions whenever they are needed without making any preparation in advance, and reflecting them the way they are felt.

## **2.2. Burnout**

The issue of burnout was first mentioned by Freudenberger, in 1974, in his definition relating to a state of physical, emotional, and mental tiredness and its symptoms were listed as the decrease in achievement, depersonalization, and the decrease in the interest to the job (Tümekaya et al, 2009). This concept was defined as “*the alienation of the person to the genuine meaning and the purpose of his/her job and being truly not able to attend the people whom he/she delivers service to*” by Maslach (2001) who has done important studies and developed a scale on the issue of burnout. (Öztürk et al, 2008). Burnout is also seen to be addressed as chronic fatigue, desperacy, feeling hopelessness, physical, emotional and mental exhaustion reflected in the form of negative attitudes towards job and life. (Maslach, 1978; Maslach and Pines, 1979; Maslach and Jackson, 1981; Maslach, 1982)

Maslach and his friends (2001) defined burnout as a three-dimensional concept. *Emotional exhaustion dimension* refers to the stress related exhaustion of the emotional and physical power of the individual; *depersonalization dimension* refers to developing negative and rigid attitudes and behaviors against the people in the interaction; *personal accomplishment dimension* refers to falling into the emotions of failure and incompetence in the jobs and in the interactions with the people.

## **2.3. EMOTIONAL LABOUR AND BURNOUT RELATIONSHIP**

Today, burnout seems to be one of the issues that most frequently come into question and studied by the researchers in the subject of the negative effects of emotional labour. Burnout occurs because of the stress experienced by the individuals, and anything causing stress and tension is thought to have an effect upon burnout (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002: 18). Burnout might occur because of the stress experienced by the employees who have to interact emotionally with the customers, and do not have the capabilities to start and continue this very interaction (Jackson et al, 1986).

Interaction with the people, besides the tiredness it caused, frequently requires the regulation of emotions, thus is thought to trigger burnout (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1989). In the studies conducted by Zapf (2002), it has been discovered that there is positive correlation between emotional labour and burnout. It has been determined by Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) that there is a correlation between emotional exhaustion and the need to prevent the negative feelings.

As it seems, depending on the conceptual facts and empirical researches, it can be said that there are different levels of relationships and influences between emotional labour displayed by the individuals in the organizations and burnout. In this study, under the light of these thoughts, an answer to the question “What can be the relationship between emotional labour –with its sublevels– and burnout –with its sublevels?” will be sought.

## **3. RESEARCH METHOD**

### **3.1. Research Sample**

The main group of the research consists of nurses who work in a community hospital in Ankara. In this hospital, there are 453 nurses working. Considering a 5% error margin out of the main group within the 95% reliability boundaries, the size of the sample group was calculated as 208 nurses (Sekaran, 1992: 253). In this respect, it was planned to apply questionnaire with convenience sampling method to randomly chosen 250 nurses working in the polyclinics. Of all the 250

questionnaires sent, 145 returned, 136 were found suitable for analysis. Of the participants, 64.7% (n=88) were married, 35.3% (n=48) were single. While the 58.8% (n=80) had no children, 16.2% (n=48) had a single child, 25.0% (n=34) had two children. 58.1% (n=79) had university degree, 35.3% (48) had master's degree and 6.6% (n=9) had doctorate's degree. Their job experiences are as follows: 15.4% (n=21) had 1-5 years, 39.7% (n=54) had 6-10 years, 29.4% (n=40) had 11-15 years and 15.4% (n=21) had 16 years or above.

### **3.2. Instruments of Measurement**

#### **3.2.1. Emotional Labour Scale**

The emotional labour scale used in the research was developed by Çukur (2009) on the basis of labour conceptualizations (Hochschild, 1983; Zapf, 2002), conceptual frame (Hochschild, 1983; Mann, 1999; Morris and Feldman, 1996; Rafaelli and Sutton, 1987; Zapf, 2002) and related measurement initiatives (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge and Lee, 2003; Diefendorff et al, 2005; Kruml and Geddes, 2000) introduced in the previous studies and its validity and reliability tests were done on teachers working in secondary education institutions. The scale measures the emotional labour under four sub-dimensions (automatic emotion regulation (ER), Surface Acting (SA), Deep Acting (DA), and Emotional Deviance (ED)). In the scale composed of 20 statements, the participants were asked to respond to what extent the behavior patterns shown under given specific circumstances identify or don't identify them in 5-point Likert scale (0 = Never, 1 = Little, 2 = Somewhat, 3 = Much, 4 = Very much).

In the validity and reliability tests done by Çukur (2009), Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient of the whole scale was determined as .79. Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficients of the sub-dimensions were calculated as: .74 for Automatic Emotion Regulation sub-dimension, .70 for Superficial Role Making sub-dimension, .80 for Deep Role Making sub-dimension, .81 for Emotional Deviation sub-dimension.

To test the structural validity of the scale, confirmatory factor analysis had been done and four dimensional structure of the scale was not confirmed. When each dimension was subjected to analysis, seven items were eliminated because of their low factor loads (ER2, ER4, SA4, SA5, ED2, ED5, DA4). Obtained four-dimensional scales factor loads varied between .49 - .71. In the result of the reliability test, Cronbach's alpha internal reliability coefficient was determined as .78, and the coefficients of the dimensions were as follows: .65 for ER, .50 for SR, .76 for DR, .59 for ED. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin analysis results were .50, .46, .69, .41 respectively and Barlett test was found meaningful ( $p=.000$ ) for all.

#### **3.2.2. Burnout Scale**

22-item, 3-subscale (Emotional Burnout, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment), Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), which were developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981) and adopted to Turkish by Ergin (1993), was used. The first subscale of Maslach Burnout Inventory is a 9-item (1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 13, 14, 16, 20) "Emotional Exhaustion (EE)", the second is a 5-item (5, 10, 11, 15, 22) "Depersonalization (DP)", and the third is an 8-item "Personal Accomplishment (PA)".

While the subscales are graded in the research, the responds given to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization sub-dimensions were scored as follows: 0 for "Never", 1 for "Rarely", 2 for "Sometimes", 3 for "Mostly", 4 for "Always". However, for the data acquired from the scale to measure the burnout generally, the subscale scores were acquired by grading the items composing

the personal accomplishment subscale the other way around as 4 for “Never”, 3 for “Rarely”, 2 for “Sometimes”, 1 for “Mostly”, 0 for “Always”.

The reliability coefficient of the scale, which was developed by Maslach and Jackson, was determined .88 for emotional exhaustion, .83 for personal accomplishment, 0.72 for depersonalization. In the reliability study of the Turkish version of the scale, which was applied on 276 nurses by Çam; according to Kuder-Richardson 20 formula, the reliability coefficients were; 0.89 for emotional exhaustion, 0.71 for depersonalization, and 0.72 for personal accomplishment. Following Spearman-Brown correction of the correlation coefficients, which were determined by dividing into halves, the acquired reliability was 0.84 for emotional exhaustion, 0.78 for depersonalization, and 0.72 for personal accomplishment (Öztürk et al, 2008).

To test the structural reliability of the scale, confirmatory factor analysis had been done and three dimensional structures were confirmed. However, three items were eliminated because of their low factor loads. (EE7, PA8, DP5) Factor loads varied between .51-.82. In the result of the reliability analysis, Cronbach’s alpha internal reliability coefficient for the whole scale was determined as .78, and the coefficients for the dimensions were as follows: .91 for EE, .87 for DP, .93 for PA. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin analysis results were .85, .77, .92, respectively and Barlett test was found meaningful (p=.000) for all.

#### 4. FINDINGS

To determine the levels of burnout the nurses’ experience and emotional labour they display, the averages and the standard deviations of the acquired data were calculated, and then, to examine the relationship between the burnout with its sub-dimensions with emotional labour with its sub-dimensions, their correlation analysis was done by SPSS 16.0. The values pertaining to analysis results (the averages, the standard deviations, and the correlation) are given in Table 1.

**Table 1. Averages, Standard Deviations, and Correlation Values Concerning the Data**

Variables	Ave.	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. BURNOUT	2,97	,29	(.54)								
2. EMO_LABOUR	2,21	,43	-,180*	(.78)							
3. EMO_EXH	3,27	,76	,849**	-,242**	(.91)						
4. DEPERSON	2,53	,72	,750**	-,316**	,850**	(.87)					
5. PER_ACCOMP	2,90	,73	-,365**	,283**	-,772**	-,795**	(.93)				
6. AUT_EMO_REG	2,34	,57	-,385**	,759**	-,504**	-,492**	,475**	(.65)			
7. SURFACE_ACT.	2,07	,56	-,236**	,833**	-,249**	-,264**	,197*	,444**	(.50)		
8. EMO_DEV	2,14	,51	,185*	,672**	,341**	,162	-,300**	,272**	,530**	(.59)	
9. DEEP_ACT.	2,29	,59	-,093	,841**	-,285**	-,347**	,449**	,612**	,619**	,347**	(.76)

\*p<.05 \*\*p<.01 ( ) Reliability

As seen in Table 1, while the level of burnout the nurses experienced was above average ( $X=2.97$ ), the emotional labour they displayed was below average. Nurses are seen to experience the highest emotional exhaustion ( $x=2.97$ ), and the lowest depersonalization. It has been determined that they displayed more automatic role regulation, and surface acting the least ( $x=2.07$ ) although the levels of displayed emotional labour dimensions were close to each other.

In the result of the correlation analysis applied to determine the relationship between the experienced burnout and the displayed emotional labour, there was determined a negative significant correlation between burnout and emotional labour. Moreover, there was determined a negative significant correlation among all the dimensions except Emotional Deviance-Depersonalization and Burnout-Deep Acting variables. The positive significant correlation between deep acting and –one of the sub-dimensions of burnout– personal accomplishment is notable.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the relationships between the burnout and the emotional labour displays of the employees were examined. For this purpose, an applied research was conducted on nurses working in a community hospital in Ankara, and the relationships between the experienced burnout and displayed emotional labour were tried to be explained. With the research, there has been findings acquired relating to the relationship between the emotional labour, which has been more on the agenda day by day, especially the emotional labour displayed by nurses and burnout.

The finding that the emotional labour displayed by nurses is low and especially the negative significant correlation (Çukur, 2009) between the nurses' displaying their emotions as they feel (automatic emotional regulation) and burnout with its sub-dimensions are consistent. The positive and significant correlation between the automatic emotional regulation sub-dimension and personal accomplishment sub-dimension of burnout is consistent through empirical researches conducted.

The negative and significant correlation found between deep and surface acting, and emotional exhaustion and depersonalization sub-dimensions of burnout is thought to be rooted in the nurses' internalization of the angel role, which is ascribed to them.

It was a limitation that the research was done only on the nurses of a community hospital in Ankara. It is interpreted that their level of emotional labour was low because the nurses working in a community hospitals are thought be less customer-oriented than the nurses working in private sector hospitals. It is thought that studying again with a larger sample group in both community and private sector hospitals hereafter would yield different results. Besides, studying also the effects of the emotional labour on the burnout of the employees might be helpful.

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