

## Does Having A High Emotional Intelligence Prevent Burnout?

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**Abstract:** In this study, we investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and personal burnout. We applied the studies, “WLIE Scale” developed by Wong and Law (2002) and the “Copenhagen Burnout Inventory” developed by Kristensen et al., (2005) to public and private sector employees to collect data. Then, we accepted 490 questionnaires for analysis. We then performed Frequency and reliability analyses via the IBM SPSS 21.0 statistical program. Furthermore, we created Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via AMOS 21.0 to reveal the relationship between emotional intelligence and personal burnout. As a result of our analysis, we learned that emotional intelligence has a positive and significant effect on personal burnout.

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence, personal burnout, structural equation, modeling.

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## Yüksek Duygusal Zekâya Sahip Olmak Tükenmişliği Önler mi?

**Öz:** Bu çalışma, duygusal zeka ve tükenmişlik arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektedir. Wong ve Law (2002) tarafından geliştirilen “Duygusal Zeka Ölçeği” ile Kristensen et al., (2005) tarafından geliştirilen “Copenhagen Tükenmişlik Ölçeği” kullanılarak kamu ve özel sektör çalışanlarına 506 anket uygulanmış 490 anket verisi analiz için geçerli kabul edilmiştir. IBM SPSS 21.0 istatistik programı aracılığı ile frekans ve güvenilirlik analizleri yapılmıştır. Ayrıca, Yapısal Eşitlik Modellemesi (YEM) AMOS 21.0 programı aracılığıyla duygusal zeka ile tükenmişlik arasında pozitif ve anlamlı bir etkisinin olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Duygusal zekâ, tükenmişlik, yapısal eşitlik, modelleme.

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## **Introduction**

Work life is a very important part of individuals these days. Because individuals spend a big part of their time in the workplace and in making plans about business activities, individuals have stress in their working life. Researchers have studied burnout as a subject in different cultures and situations and have defined it as an exhaustion of energy, power, or other sources because of extraordinary demands; a progressive stress process; a loss of idealism, etc. (Budak & Surgevil, 2005, p. 95). Studies in this field have revealed that living with intense stress for a very long time threatens an individual's health and vitality (Özdoğan, 2008, p. 1). Stress can influence personnel at every level, causing low success and absenteeism at work, social and physiological diseases, and behavioral and psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, and exhaustion (Sabuncuoğlu & Tüz, 2001). Nowadays, studies aimed at solution increase to reveal or reduce reasons of burnout that become a fact that we can observe frequently in work life. Solutions for reasons of burnout are important both for individuals and organizations. In accordance with this purpose, studying the relationship between emotional intelligence and personal burnout increases the important of this research.

## **1. Conceptual Framework of Emotional Intelligence and Personal Burnout**

### **1.1. Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence is a new and growing field of behavioral research focused on public opinion, academics, businesses, and the scientific community (Anand & Udayasuriyan, 2010, p. 65). One of the concepts, or fields of research in the literature on emotional intelligence, has gotten great scientific attention in recent years. As a result of psychology and brain research, the interest in emotional intelligence has steadily increased after Aslan and Özata (2008) revealed that emotions contribute to ideas (p. 198).

Zeidner et al. (2004) explained that emotional intelligence is a structure that contains a range of competences including recognizing, understanding, and then managing emotions. One can also understand it as a combination of abilities that are specific to emotions (Frajo-Apor et al., 2017, p. 35). According to Goleman (1998), emotional intelligence is one's level of recognizing emotions in oneself and in others and then managing those emotions in oneself and in the relationships with others and revealing self-motivation (p. 8). In other words, emotional intelligence is the "utilization of emotions wisely" (Weisinger, 1998: 12-13).

Organizations' need to perceive their employees' emotions is important because it helps employers to understand their employees' reactions and behaviors toward their organization. Jobs that have too large a workload, too many working hours, and too much stress have negative influences on job performance and employees' job satisfaction level. Therefore, emotional intelligence plays an important role in managing and inspecting individuals' emotions and in increasing their abilities when they're under physical or psychological stress. As a result, emotional intelligence can lead to higher job performance and job satisfaction (Swarnalatha & Sureshkrishna, 2013, p. 46). The literature on emotional intelligence has many models. However, Goleman's (year) model of emotional intelligence is the best known. Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Model consists of five components: self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy, and social skills.

### **1.2. Burnout**

In the 1970s, the concept of burnout became a focus of study after researchers brought to light its importance as a social problem (Budak and Sürgevil, 2005, p. 95). In 1974, Herbet Freudenberger (1974) was the first person to suggest the concept of burnout, which he described as "losing of energy and power due to failure, fatigue, overload, or exhaustion in one's internal resources due to unfulfilled needs" (p. 159).

According to Maslach and Jackson (1981), burnout is a syndrome that occurs due to emotions and is observed in people exposed to emotional demands from working in face-to-face situations, and which consists of negative feelings such as physical exhaustion, fatigue, desperation, and hopelessness towards one's job, others, and life (p. 100).

Burnout is an event that frequently occurs in both social life and work life. When investigating factors affecting burnout, researchers have seen that a great number of factors, including factors divisible into two parts: those with individual causes and those with environmental (or business life) causes (Izgar, 2001, p. 11).

Maslach and Leiter (1997) revealed six important factors related to working life that causes employees to feel exhaustion: workload, control, reward, belonging, justice, and values.

Maslach also carried out widely accepted studies related to burnout, which he investigated in three sub-dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion means an individual's sense of exhaustion; depersonalization means interpersonal exhaustion and unresponsiveness; and reduced personal accomplishment means hopelessness in evaluating one's own success (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Budak & Sürgevil, 2005; Durr, 2008; Ergin, 1992; Gaines, 2011; Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

## **2. The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Personal Burnout**

Researchers of emotional intelligence have found a relationship between emotional intelligence and burnout in a great number of studies, using different variables. Öztürk (2006) found a significant relationship between emotional intelligence, job satisfaction, and burnout. Öztürk and Deniz (2008) found that preschool teachers' emotional intelligence skills, job satisfaction, and burnout levels differed according to some variables. Platsidou (2010) found that emotional intelligence has a significant relationship with job satisfaction

and burnout, and teachers who have high perceived emotional intelligence have less exhaustion and higher job satisfaction. According to Güllüce and İşcan (2010), there is a negative relationship between occupational burnout and emotional intelligence. Sulukaya (2012) showed that workers can have less exhaustion when managers have high emotional intelligence. Polatçı and Özyer (2015) determined that superficial behavior and intimate emotions, which are emotional labor strategies, have a partial mediating role in the effect of emotional intelligence on burnout, but in-depth behavior strategy does not have a mediating role.

Emotional exhaustion levels are also low for employees with high levels of engagement, as value conflicts are minimal (Barling et al., 2000, p. 160). In addition to this, managers who direct their attention to their employees by using their feelings contribute to increased productivity by giving priority to the problems that need to be solved. Managers who have emotional intelligence and try to distribute resources rationally, try to maintain a balance between employees. Managers can strive to achieve this by pulling the workload to optimal levels and by keeping employees at their lowest levels of exhaustion (Bass & Avolio, 1994, p. 235). Managers with high emotional intelligence develop critical thinking by using their feelings. The risk of managers' getting depression and burnout reduces when they have an increase in personal accomplishment (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000, p. 320).

Managers who can perceive their own their employees' feelings become more successful in their workplaces. Their employees have greater respect for them, which fact decreases their own emotional (Barling, Slater, & Kelloway, 2000, p. 158; George, 2000, p. 1035).

### **2.1. Aim of the Study**

In this study, we investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and personal burnout. Because burnout creates negative influences on individuals in their social and

work lives, the importance of the concept of burnout increases. In this context, the need to investigate the relationship between personal burnout and emotional intelligence increases the importance of the study.

## **2.2. Method**

We used literature review and survey as the techniques and methods in the study. We created the conceptual framework by a literature review. We collected data from 490 people using surveys. We then performed a reliability and frequency using the IBM SPSS 21.0 statistical program. After confirmatory factor analysis using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) AMOS 21.0 program, we tested the model showing the relationship between emotional intelligence and personal burnout.

## **2.3. Data Collection Tools**

In this study, we used the technique of survey for collecting data. Our survey consisted of three parts. In the first part were terms about the participants' demographic characteristics. In the second part, the terms were from the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory, which is used to measure participants' burnout. In the third part, we used terms from the Emotional Intelligence Scale, which we used to measure the participants' emotional intelligence levels.

### **2.3.1. Copenhagen Burnout Inventory**

In the present study, we tested the effect of emotional intelligence on one dimension of the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory, the dimension of personal burnout, which Kristensen et al. (2005) defined, writing, "personal burnout is the degree of physical and psychological fatigue and exhaustion experienced by the person." We assessed personal burnout using six items, coded 1= "always" to 5= "never."

### **2.3.2. WLEIS**

We used the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS, Wong and Law, 2002), which is made up of 16

questions, measuring four dimensions to measure the participants' emotional intelligence. These dimensions include first, Others' Emotion Appraisals (OEA) (1,2,3,4); second, Regulation of Emotion (ROE) (5,6,7,8); third, Self Emotion Appraisals (SEA) (9,10,11,12); and fourth Use of Emotion (UOE) (13,14,15,16). Participants answered the 16 items on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree."

### 3. Research Findings

Table 1. Frequency Analysis of Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Frequency	Percent
<b>Age</b>		
18-25	105	21,43
26-30	114	23,26
31-35	93	18,98
36-40	76	15,51
41 ≥	102	20,82
Total	490	100,0
<b>Cender</b>		
Male	261	53,3
Female	229	46,7
Total	490	100,0
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	178	36,3
Married	312	63,7
Total	490	100,0
<b>Educational Status</b>		
Primary Education	101	20,6
High School	144	29,4
Undergraduate	228	46,5
Master	15	3,1



Doctorate	2	0,4
Total	490	100,0
<b>Work Experience (as year)</b>		
>1	75	15,3
1-5	141	28,8
6-10	122	24,9
10 >	152	31,0
Total	490	100,0

A total of 490 persons participated in the current study. The age distribution was as follows: 18-25 (n = 105), 26-30 (n = 114), 31-35 (n = 93), 36-40 (n = 76), and  $41 \geq$  (n = 102). Of the total participants, 53.3% (n=261) were male, 46.7% (n=229) were female, 36.3% (n=178) were single, and 63.7% (n=312) were married. Among the participants, 101 had obtained only a primary level of education, 144 had high school diplomas, 228 had undergraduate degrees, 15 had achieved the master's degrees, and 2 possessed doctorate degrees. Finally, the years of working experience is distributed as follows: <1 year (n = 75), 1-5 years (n = 141), 6-10 years (n = 122), 10 years > (n = 152).

In our study, the Cronbach's Alpha for personal burnout was 0.825 and the Cronbach's Alpha for emotional intelligence was 0.908. According to Cronbach's Alpha, the questionnaire had high reliability. The alpha coefficient ranged in value from 0 to 1 and may be used to describe the reliability of factors extracted from dichotomous (that is, questions with two possible answers) and/or multi-point formatted questionnaires or scales (i.e., rating scale: 1 = poor, 5 = excellent). The higher the score, the more reliable the generated scale is. Nunnally (1978) has indicated 0.7 to be an acceptable reliability coefficient, but some researchers have sometimes used lower thresholds.

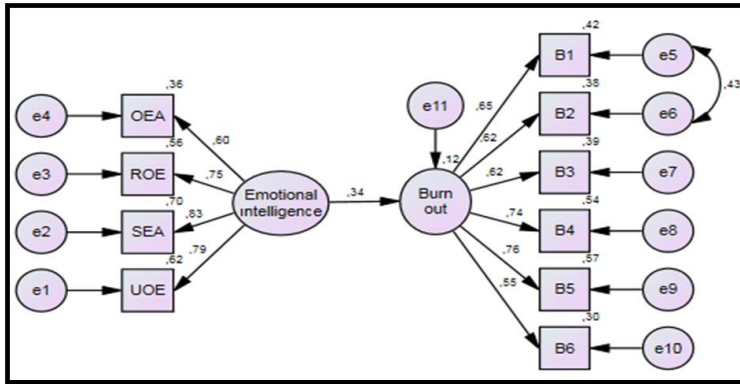
Table 2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Emotional Intelligence

Goodness of Fit Indexes	Best Fit	Acceptable Fit	Default model	Revised model
RMSEA	$0 < \text{RMSEA} < 0,05$	$0,05 \leq \text{RMSEA} \leq 0,10$	0,066	0,054
NFI	$0,95 \leq \text{NFI} \leq 1$	$0,90 \leq \text{NFI} \leq 0,95$	0,917	0,937
CFI	$0,97 \leq \text{CFI} \leq 1$	$0,95 \leq \text{CFI} \leq 0,97$	0,942	0,962
GFI	$0,95 \leq \text{GFI} \leq 1$	$0,90 \leq \text{GFI} \leq 0,95$	0,926	0,945
AGFI	$0,90 \leq \text{AGFI} \leq 1$	$0,85 \leq \text{AGFI} \leq 0,9$	0,898	0,922
$\chi^2/\text{df}$	$0 < \chi^2/\text{df} < 3$		304,331/9 8=3,105	230,768/96= 2,404

Schermelleh-Engel et al. 2003: 52.

In the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), the value that tests the statistical compatibility of the proposed model and data is  $\chi^2$  (Schumacker, 2004, p. 82). Since the  $\chi^2$  value (304,331) for the current sample was high for the model, we considered the corrected  $\chi^2$  value (230,768) with df. However, the values before revision are presented in Table I. Since the  $\chi^2/\text{df}$  value obtained was 2,404, which is suitable for 0-3, the model is statistically significant. However, in CFA and structural equation modeling, a single statistical significance test is not enough to accurately describe a model obtained from data, and it should be evaluated according to many criteria (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003, pp. 31-33). Therefore, we present other statistical significance tests (goodness of fit indexes) and acceptable limitations in Table 3.

Figure 1. Fundamental Model



**OEA:** Other's Emotion Appraisals **ROE:** Regulation of Emotion **SEA:** Self-Emotion Appraisals **UOE:** Use of Emotion.

Table 3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Model

Goodness of Fit Indexes	Best Fit	Acceptable Fit	Default model	Revised model
<b>RMSEA</b>	0 < RMSEA < 0,05	0,05 ≤ RMSEA ≤ 0,10	0,070	0,030
<b>NFI</b>	0,95 ≤ NFI ≤ 1	0,90 ≤ NFI ≤ 0,95	0,935	0,974
<b>CFI</b>	0,97 ≤ CFI ≤ 1	0,95 ≤ CFI ≤ 0,97	0,953	0,992
<b>GFI</b>	0,95 ≤ GFI ≤ 1	0,90 ≤ GFI ≤ 0,95	0,953	0,981
<b>AGFI</b>	0,90 ≤ AGFI ≤ 1	0,85 ≤ AGFI ≤ 0,9	0,923	0,969
<b>χ²/df</b>	0 < χ²/df < 3		116,632/34 = 3,430	47,675/33 = 1,445

Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003: 52.

Goodness of fit indexes (RMSEA, NFI, CFI, GFI, AGFI) for the current model are within acceptable limitations. In other words, the model is statistically acceptable.

According to the coefficients of standardized regression ( $\beta$ ), emotional intelligence has a positive effect on personal burnout ( $\beta=0.34$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). According to standardized values in the total effects, the predictive power of emotional intelligence on personal burnout is 0.34. Overall, emotional intelligence accounted for 12% of the variance in personal burnout.

### **Conclusion**

Today, burnout is one of the major problems facing organizations and employees. The fundamental changes and transformations experienced in the technology force both employees and organizations to change rapidly, thereby creating tension. Increasing employees' expectations leads to time pressure and stress, which leads to burnout. Burnout is a syndrome that can cause destructive effects on an individual's social-psychological and physical life. An event that removes people from close emotional relationships reduces their efficiency and most importantly reduces the pleasure they receive from life, also negatively affects the organizations they work for (Güllüce & İçsan, 2010, p. 7-8).

In a period of increased competition among organizations, many have seen the role of emotions as the fundamental condition in need of improvement and quality development. In this context, emotional intelligence has become an important factor for organizations' success. Thus, the perception, evaluation, understanding, and management of emotions in the workplace have become important requirements for organizations to survive in a competitive environment and to increase their market share.

In the study, firstly, we performed reliability and frequency analyses by IBM SPSS 21.0 statistical program. As a result of the reliability analysis, the study was highly reliable. Secondly, the AMOS 21.0 program established the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and then, we performed the confirmatory factor analysis. As a result of the study, we concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship

between emotional intelligence and personal burnout. This result supports the literature (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2000: 320; Barling, Slater & Kelloway, 2000: 158; George, 2000: 1035; Bass and Avolio, 1994: 235; Barling et al. 2000: 160; Öztürk, 2006; Polatçı & Özzer, 2015; Sulukaya, 2012; Görgens Ekermans & Brand, 2012; Güllüce & İşcan, 2010; Platsidou, 2010; Huang et al. 2010; Öztürk and Deniz, 2008).

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