

DEPRESSION AND TURNOVER INTENTION AMONG HOTEL EMPLOYEES¹

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ABSTRACT

This study explores depression and turnover intentions of employees in the Turkish hospitality industry. A survey with 104 hotel employees in Bodrum, Turkey has been carried out. The findings suggest depressed hotel employees have a higher tendency to have the intention to leave their jobs.

Particularly, hotel employees in the kitchen and service staff tend to be more depressed in their jobs. Employees working in kitchen and service have a relatively higher tendency to leave their jobs. The study has practical implications for the managers of hospitality establishments.

Key Words: Depression, Turnover Intention, Hotels, Hospitality, Tourism

JEL Classification: J63, L83, M10

KONAKLAMA SEKTÖRÜNDE ÇALIŞAN PERSONELİN DEPRESYON SEVİYELERİ VE İŞTEN AYRILMA NİYETLERİ

ÖZ

Bu çalışma Borum'da konaklama sektörü işletmelerinde farklı departmanlarda çalışan personelin depresyon seviyeleri ve işten ayrılma niyetlerini amaçlamaktadır. Bodrum'da yer alan 8 adet 5 yıldızlı otelde bulunan 104 otel çalışanı ile yapılan anket çalışmasının sonuçlarına göre tüm çalışanlar arasında depresyon ve işten ayrılma niyeti oldukça yüksek çıkmıştır.

Çalışmada özellikle departmanlar açısından bakıldığında mutfak ve servis personelinin depresyon ve işten ayrılma niyetlerinin yüksek olduğu görülmüştür. Çalışmanın bu işletmelerdeki insan kaynakları, departman yöneticileri ve üst düzey yöneticiler açısından önemli sonuçları olduğu tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Depresyon, İşten Ayrılma Niyeti, Oteller, Konaklama Sektörü, Turizm

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1. INTRODUCTION AND THE RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Service encounters distinguish services from manufacturing operations (Batt, 2000) and are interactions between customers and service staff. These interactions may be considered as social exchanges (Gruber, Szmigin, & Voss, 2009; Scott, Laws & Prindeaux, 2008; Patterson, Cowley & Prasongsukarn, 2006; Koc et al., 2015). The interaction during a social exchange is a significant element of satisfaction for the customer. As result of this interaction or exchange the customer may or may not continue to purchase service from the service provider (Koc, 2013). According to Doyle (2008) while products (goods / service products) themselves account for 14% of all switching behaviours, dissatisfaction during social exchanges account for 67 % of all switching behaviours. The social interaction between the service staff and the customer may be significantly influenced by the mood of service staff.

Stress, anxiety and depression as psychological mood disorders are among the top health related issues influencing not only employees working in organizations, but also the society as a whole. Depression, as one of the psychological mood disorders, was the fourth most prevalent health problem in the world, though it is expected to be the second most prevalent health problem in the world by the year 2020 (Murray and Lopez, 1996; Marcotte, Wicox-Gök, and Redmon, 1999; Lecrubier, 2001:4). Depression is estimated to be experienced by 5% and 9% of all people in the US and Europe respectively (Marneros, 2006:52; Kaya and Kaya, 2007: 4). In Turkey neuropsychiatric disorders and depression are experienced rather frequently too. According to Turkish Ministry of Health (Turkish Ministry of Health, 2014: 16) 5.6% of females and 2.3% of males in Turkey suffer from increased levels of depression.

Depression is an important issue from a business perspective too (Kessler, Greenberg, Mickelson, Meneades and Wang, 2001; Eaton, Anthony, Mandel and Garrison, 1990). Depression appears to be the third most common (%9.1) health problem among employees. According to Mintz, Mintz, Arruda and Hwang (1992), treating the depressive disorders of employees' would be expected to increase employee efficiency and effectiveness and reduce failures. Kessler et al's (1999) study with over eight thousand participants in the U. S. shows that for a business the monthly cost of depression per person may range from \$188 and \$395. It is estimated that the insufficient level of productivity emanating from depression may equal to the loss of 172 million labour days and costing as much as 40-60 billion dollars in the U.S (Riotto, 2001: 37; Adler et al., 2006: 1569). Lerner et al.'s (2004) study shows that there are significant levels of differences between staff who are depressed and staff who are not depressed.

The findings for the hospitality sector have bear resemblances to the findings of general findings described above. According to a study carried out by Shani and Pizam (2009; 452-453), the occurrence of e work-related depression was on average as high as 12.5%, while in some instances the

figure was as high as 24 %. A 24% depression rate for a hotel may have disastrous consequences in terms of productivity, service quality and service failures. In addition to lower levels of productivity an increase in problems relating to service quality and service failures, depression may also cause employees to leave their jobs and seek jobs elsewhere. This is an added cost of depression and this study aims to explore the relationship between depression and employee intention to leave.

2. DEPRESSION AND INTENTION TO LEAVE

As described above depression is one of the most important psychological mood disorders experienced by human beings. Depression may be defined as a decreased level of mood together with a continuing feeling of anxiety (Wells and Sturm, 1995: 80; Sandra, 1997: 14–16). According to a study by Haar and Roche (2011) in 367 companies in four countries, there is an inverse relationship between depression and job satisfaction of employees.

The main consequences of depression include, but not limited to, the following (Hotopf and Wessley, 1997; Stein, 2003: 16-18; Moor and Garland, 2003: 3-4; Grieco and Edwards, 2010: 34-35; Dobson and Dozois, 2008: 3-4; Wells and Sturm, 1995: 80; Monroe, Skowronski, MacDonald, and Wood, 2005; Schwartz et al., 2002);

- Thinking about committing suicide
- Feelings of weariness, loss of energy, nervousness, restlessness, guiltiness and shame, hopelessness
- Extensive consumption of alcohol
- Unexplained physical symptoms (lack of facial expressions, speaking undertone)
- Chronic fatigue
- Willingness to postpone (delay behavior)
- Lack of curiosity and interest in previously liked stuff
- Lack of decisive abilities, indecisiveness, restraining from making decisions, forgetfulness, difficulty in focusing
- Decline in self-confidence and self-esteem

One added negative consequence of depression is that it may cause employees to leave their jobs. Turnover intention is conscious and willing idea employees may have to leave their jobs (Tett and Meyer, 1993; Sousa-Poza and Henneberger, 2004:113). Turnover intention appears to be the precursor of the state of quitting the job (Lee and Mowday, 1987; Allen, Weeks and Moffit, 2005; Griffeth, Hom and Gaerthner, 2000). According to Shani and Pizam (2009), early diagnosis of depression in employees is essential both for the elimination of the turnover intention among employees and for the protection of the health of employees.

The research conducted by ISSP (International Social Survey Program, 2005) in 32 countries provides significant outcomes regarding turnover intention. The study suggests that the turnover intention of the employees in 32 countries is on average 9.95% in general. The average turnover intention rates of employees is 17.48% in France, 17.42% in Mexico, 15.08% in America, 14.47% in New Zealand, 14.26% in Australia, and 8.74% in Switzerland. According to the study, turnover intention appears to exist in as high as in one-fifth of all employees, even in developed countries. Employees tend to leave their jobs when they find suitable conditions or when they are dissatisfied in their current jobs. According to Waldman, Kelly, Arora, and Smith (2004) study, the cost of recruiting a new employee because a former employee quit her / his job may vary between \$276 and \$36.743. Simons and Hinkin's (2001) study of 105 hotels in the U, which monitored the performance of these hotels over a period of six months, showed that turnover had a significant influence on a hotel's profitability. The costs associated with an employee quitting her or his job are one and a half times more than the income the hotel would make of that employee had not quit (Chikwe, 2009).

Considering the fact turnover is a significant problem in the tourism and hospitality sectors, as turnover in these sectors may range from 26% and 300% a year (Chalkiti and Sigala, 2009; The Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council, 2011; Wood, 1997: 141; Tanke, 1990; Boella, 1988), a study of depression and employee turnover intention may have significant implications for the efficient and effective operation of hospitality establishments where customer contact is significantly high.

3. METHODS

This study explored the levels of depression and turnover intentions of 104 hotel employees in eight 5 star hotels in Bodrum region in Turkey. A questionnaire has been developed and administered in these eight 5 star hotels on a convenience sampling basis. The data collected have comprised of three parts. The first part included the Turnover Intention Scale, developed by Tak and Çitçioğlu (2009) and also used by Polat (2009). The responses to Turnover Intention Scale comprised of responses on a five-point Likert scale, 1 denoting completely agree and 5 denoting completely disagree).

The second part of the questionnaire comprised of 14 depression-related questions based on the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS), which was developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995) and tested for validity and reliability in Turkish by Akın and Çetin (2007). Participants have been asked to indicate their responses on a 4-point Likert scale. The "Does not apply to me at all" option has been appointed 0 (zero) points, the "Applies to me to a little bit" option has been appointed 1 (one) point, the "Applies to me to some extent" option has been appointed 2 (two) points, and the "Applies to me completely" option has been appointed 3 (three) points. According to the score evaluations of the scale, 0-9 points meant that the individual did not have depression, 10-13 points meant that the respondent was slightly depressive, 14-20 points meant that the respondent was

moderately depressive, 21-27 points meant that the respondent was highly depressive, and 28 and above points meant that the respondent was extremely depressive.

The third part of the questionnaire comprised of demographic questions to determine the gender, age, marital status, job duration, and job position of the participants.

4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The results have been analyzed through descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation and SPSS 22.0 and Factor 9.2 packages have been used. In order to determine the normality of the values in the Turnover Intention Scale and Depression Scale skewness and kurtosis intervals have been checked. Skewness and kurtosis intervals were sufficient (+3 and -3) for normal distribution (GroeneveldandMeeden, 1984; Moors, 1986; Hopkins and Weeks, 1990; De Carlo, 1997). The internal validity coefficient of the points in the first five items of the Turnover Intention Scale was $\alpha=.630$.

Table 1 shows that as hospitality employees get depressed their intention to leave / turnover intention increases. It is also important see that all employees (depressed or non-depressed) have a relatively high score of intention to leave (2,8385). This shows that turnover intention is relatively high among five star hotel employees. This may be attributed to that fact that as these hotels operate on an all inclusive basis and provide non-stop service for almost 24 hours a day, the staff may be quite often overwhelmed by the daily pressures of work.

Table 1: Depression and Turnover Intentions

	Level of Depression				Total
	Non-Depressed		Depressed		
	%	n	%	n	
	62,50%	65	37,50%	39	
Turnover Intention Mean		2,6954		3,0769	2,8385

Table 2 shows the level of depression of hospitality employees by gender. While 51,7 % of female employees appear to be depressed, only 32% of male employees appear to be depressed. This finding is in line with a number of studies (Saygın, Yaşar, Çetinkaya, Kayan and Özgüner, 2011; Demiral, Akvardar, Ergör and Ergör, 2006) which found higher levels of depression among female employees. This may be attributable to the fact that females have more communal (affiliation) orientation while males may have agentic (achievement) orientation (Koc, 2002). In general as males tend to be more achievement oriented they may tend to cope and endure struggle than their female counterparts. Additionally, due to gender inequality at work in Turkey, males may tend to occupy

higher positions and may hold more power than females, which in turn may enable them to cope better with stress and depression compared with their female counterparts.

Table 2: Depression and Gender

		Level of Depression				
		Non-Depressed		Depressed		Total
		%	n	%	n	n
Gender	Females	48,30%	14	51,70%	15	29
	Males	68,00%	51	32,00%	24	75
Total		62,50%	65	37,50%	39	104

An analysis of the results from the perspective of hotel employee's department of work (Table 3) shows that kitchen staff are most depressed hotel employees followed by service staff both of whom try provide non-stop food and drinks service to guests for almost 24 hours a day in all-inclusive hotels.

Table3:Depression and Department Worked for

		Depression Level				
		Non-Depressed		Depressed		Total
		%	n	%	n	n
Employee's Department	Front Office	65,20%	15	34,80%	8	23
	Kitchen	57,70%	15	42,30%	11	26
	Service Department (Food and Beverage)	61,50%	24	38,50%	15	39
	Other	68,80%	11	31,30%	5	16
Total		62,50%	65	37,50%	39	104

A further analysis of employees' emotional disorders by department worked for (Table 4) reveals erratic results. The highest level of turnover intention is among depressed females working in the F & B service department (3,27), followed by depressed males working in kitchen (3, 11), in the production of food and beverages, and non-depressed females working in the front office (3, 11). These findings may be interpreted as females may have a higher turnover intention, even though when they are not depressed. This may be due to the fact that in Turkey males are usually regarded as the breadwinner of a family, and they have to keep their jobs to look after the family no matter how bad the conditions may be. On the other hand, females may leave their jobs from time to time and seek other job opportunities.

Table 4: Turnover Intention and Department Worked For

		Front Office			Kitchen			Service Department (F & B)			Other Departments		
		%	n	Turnover Mean	%	n	Turnover Mean	%	n	Turnover Mean	%	n	Turnover Mean
Females	Non Depressed	63,60%	7	3,11	0,00%	0	0	40,00%	4	2,65	50,00%	3	2,33
	Depressed	36,40%	4	2,95	100,00%	2	2,7	60,00%	6	3,27	50,00%	3	3,27
Males	Non Depressed	66,70%	8	2,4	62,50%	15	2,93	69,00%	20	2,66	80,00%	8	2,43
	Depressed	33,30%	4	3,1	37,50%	9	3,11	31,00%	9	3	20,00%	2	3

A final analysis of results according to the position held (lower management / non-management, middle and upper management) and years of experience (Table 5 and Table 6) shows that employees working in non-management and lower management positions have a higher turnover intention rate compared with employees in middle and upper management levels. This is an expected result as people go up in the hierarchy, i) they may have more power to cope with stress and depression and ii) it may be difficult to find similar jobs with same sorts of benefits package, at least in the short run. In other words as people go up in the hierarchy they may have more to lose, which may prevent them from quitting their jobs. Moreover, as people stay longer in the same business and gain experience, their ability to cope with stress and depression increases, resulting in reduced levels of turnover intention.

Table5: Level in the Hierarchy and Intention to Leave

	Gender	Position / Hierarchy	Turnover Intention Mean	n
Non - Depressed	Females	Non-Management / Lower Managerial Positions	2,5333	3
		Mid-Level Management	3,0667	9
		Upper Level Management	2,1000	2
		Total	2,8143	14
	Males	Non-Management / Lower Managerial Positions	2,7000	12
		Mid-Level Management	2,6194	31
		Upper Level Management	2,7750	8
		Total	2,6627	51
	Total	Non-Management / Lower Managerial Positions	2,6667	15
		Mid-Level Management	2,7200	40
		Upper Level Management	2,6400	10
		Total	2,6954	65
Depressed	Females	Non-Management / Lower Managerial Positions	3,2500	4
		Mid-Level Management	3,3667	6
		Upper Level Management	2,6800	5
		Total	3,1067	15
	Males	Non-Management / Lower Managerial Positions	3,3000	8
		Mid-Level Management	3,0769	13
		Upper Level Management	2,3333	3
		Total	3,0583	24
	Total	Non-Management / Lower Managerial Positions	3,2833	12
		Mid-Level Management	3,1684	19
		Upper Level Management	2,5500	8
		Total	3,0769	39
Total	Females	Non-Management / Lower Managerial Positions	2,9429	7
		Mid-Level Management	3,1867	15
		Upper Level Management	2,5143	7
		Total	2,9655	29
	Males	Non-Management / Lower Managerial Positions	2,9400	20
		Mid-Level Management	2,7545	44
		Upper Level Management	2,6545	11
		Total	2,7893	75
	Total	Non-Management / Lower Managerial Positions	2,9407	27
		Mid-Level Management	2,8644	59
		Upper Level Management	2,6000	18
		Total	2,8385	104

Table 6: Experience and Turnover Intention

	Gender	Experience (Number of Years)	Mean	n
Non - Depressed	Females	Less than 1 year	2,8571	7
		1 year	3,0500	4
		2-3 years	2,4000	2
		4-6 years	2,4000	1
		Total	2,8143	14
	Males	Less than 1 year	2,5750	8
		1 year	2,7556	9
		2-3 years	2,6842	19
		4-6 years	2,6267	15
		Total	2,6627	51
	Total	Less than 1 year	2,7067	15
		1 year	2,8462	13
		2-3 years	2,6571	21
4-6 years		2,6125	16	
Total		2,6954	65	
Depressed	Females	Less than 1 year	3,2333	6
		1 year	3,0000	4
		2-3 years	2,8000	2
		4-6 years	3,2000	3
		Total	3,1067	15
	Males	Less than 1 year	3,0000	6
		1 year	3,0000	3
		2-3 years	3,7714	7
		4-6 years	2,5000	8
		Total	3,0583	24
	Total	Less than 1 year	3,1167	12
		1 year	3,0000	7
		2-3 years	3,5556	9
4-6 years		2,6909	11	
Total		3,0769	39	
Total	Females	Less than 1 year	3,0308	13
		1 year	3,0250	8
		2-3 years	2,6000	4
		4-6 years	3,0000	4
		Total	2,9655	29
	Males	Less than 1 year	2,7571	14
		1 year	2,8167	12
		2-3 years	2,9769	26
		4-6 years	2,5826	23
		Total	2,7893	75
	Total	Less than 1 year	2,8889	27
		1 year	2,9000	20
		2-3 years	2,9267	30
4-6 years		2,6444	27	
Total		2,8385	104	

Results from the correlation analysis reveal that the depression level (normal or depressed) of the employees and turnover intention are positively correlated ($r=0,31$), and the correlation is statistically significant ($p=0,001$). There is a medium level of correlation (Cohen, 1988) between these two variables. On the other hand, there is a negative significant ($p=0,001$) correlation ($r=0,31$) between the ages of the employees and turnover intentions.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study on the depression levels and turnover intentions of hospitality employees have a number of important implications for practitioners. Firstly, as all-inclusive hotels provide non-stop service for almost 24 hours a day, overall the levels of depression and intention to leave tend to be significantly high, though this study analysed five star hotels. Pushing employees to their limits may not only reduce service quality and increase service failures and wastage, but also may reduce profitability significantly and seriously endanger long term viability of a hotel business. Hotels are recommended to take measures to lower stress and depression among their employees. Food and Beverage production staff in the kitchen and service staff are at the centre of all-inclusive hotels, and their levels of depression and turnover intention are relatively higher. Hotel managers need develop strategies particularly to keep their employees continue working in these departments. Especially kitchen staff have more mobility as there is always a need for them and quick replacements may not be possible. The prevailing short-run view of employment recruitment practices should be avoided for the sustainability of hotels.

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