

## **EFFECTS OF PRESENTEEISM SYNDROME ON EMPLOYEES' BURNOUT LEVELS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Although employees in an organization are forced to go to work, they are sometimes unable to work due to the lack of their physical and psychological health. Being at work physically and taking part in that environment cannot be inferred as employees are actually ready for the organizational tasks mentally. This turns out the lack of efficiency and is defined as presenteeism. One of the other situations preventing efficiency is known as burnout syndrome of employees. This syndrome, frequently seen in all kinds of organizations, is a recognized disorder of employees which is referring to a long-term exhaustion. Therefore, organizations can only remain powerful as long as they provide a suitable work climate and recruit well-trained healthy employees. In this study, the effects of presenteeism syndrome on employees' burnout levels are analyzed. In order to collect the required data, Stanford Presenteeism Scale and Maslach Burnout Scale are used. 136 employees working in both public and private banks in Konya province have been included to the research. This study is thought to contribute to the new studies as the subject matters have only recently found a place in related management field.

**Key Words:** *Presenteeism, Burnout, Efficiency*

**JEL Classification:** D23

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Absenteeism in businesses is actually being absent from work. Presenteeism which is the counterpart of absenteeism is being at work despite the undesired physical or mental conditions. So in the case of presenteeism, workers are present at work but in absenteeism they are absent. Although absenteeism has a popular history in terms of management studies, presenteeism is a newcomer subject for the field and it has been in empirical literature since the late of 1990s. (Böckerman and Laukkanen, 2009:1007).

While presenteeism defines the employees who are unable to work due to their physical or mental conditions, burn out tendency which is a very popular term in every kind of business types explains the extensive job stress of a person. For example, an employee who fall into burn out tendency is expected to feel emotionally exhausted. Moreover, burnout is considered as a critical issue for organizations and has a very important affect on not only productivity but also sustainability (Kahn et al., 2006:794).

According to research dealing with stress pulse analysis, stressors such as workload, issue with people, problems about work-life balance and job insecurity result in losses in productivity at work and personal lives. When the results are taken into consideration, it is seen that for the daily productivity 55% of participants miss one or two days a year to stress, 41% of them lose 15 to 30 minutes of productivity a day and lose less than 30 minutes a day to personal tasks (Compensation & Benefits, 2013:2).

Consequently, presenteeism and burn out tendencies are vital terms for every kind of businesses so, managers should be careful about these issues. If the employees are struck by presenteeism syndrome, they are unable to work both physically and mentally. Managers who want to improve productivity for their organizations ought not to encourage employees to work while they are unable to perform the required tasks. So, in this study, presenteeism tendency and burn out syndromes of bank staff have been analyzed. Participants have been chosen from public and private banks located in Konya province.

For the research process, required data have been collected via data collection tool and data have been treated as private. First, participants have been informed about the study and then their answers have been collected through surveys. Main aim of the study is to find if there is a relationship between employees' burnout levels and presenteeism syndrome.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Presenteeism Tendency**

Managers generally want to increase productivity and they crack down on absenteeism and they want employees to work although they are sick. This makes the sharing personal feelings within colleagues increased. So, the number of absences and presenteeism syndromes are taken place. The reason why these matters occur is that feelings and ideas about losing their jobs are spread among the employees and both burn out and presenteeism are supplied (Compensation & Benefits, 2013:1). Presenteeism indicates losses in productivity. In absenteeism direct losses can be seen, but direct and indirect costs caused by presenteeism are much more difficult to estimate (Böckerman and Laukkanen, 2009:1008).

Productivity in organizations is a key element for sustainability and performance. So, the two vital terms absenteeism and presenteeism should be taken into consideration. That is, the former which can be analyzed through the ready data reduces individual level and workforce productivity. But, the latter is difficult to measure because employees are present at their workplaces although they experience decreased productivity (Koopman et al. 2002:14).

In organizational behavior field presenteeism is a popular research topic because people generally tend not to go to work when they feel sick or they go to work although they are not ready for the tasks of the work. So, their illnesses are related to their absenteeism and presenteeism tendencies. Presenteeism has been a common topic in medicine, but it is one of the most interesting subjects for organizations. In the light of employees' health conditions, migraines and other types of episodic pains, allergies, sinus trouble, anxiety and depression are the most common issues about presenteeism. (Ferreira and Martinez, 2012:4380-4381).

At this point it is useful to define presenteeism, so Johns (2009) in his study gives the table of various definitions of authors about presenteeism. For example, according to Smith (1970), presenteeism means attending to work as a counterpart of absenteeism. Also Sheridan (2004) defines presenteeism as being reluctant to work and Kivimaki et al (2005) explains it as being unhealthy but exhibiting no sickness absenteeism. Turpin et al (2004), indicates that reduced productivity at work due to the health problems identifies presenteeism syndrome (Johns, 2009:521).

Although it is a negative side of organizational effects, there are still some solution recommendations for the presenteeism tendency of employees. Firstly,

identification of the problem is important. Secondly, some employees don't trust their organizations so workplace should be designed as a safe place. Also, managers should activate the gentler management tactics for their employees. Another way to eliminate presenteeism is to train managers to intervene when their employees lose their productivity because deciding to show up at work instead of staying at home is a symptom of an employees' anxiety. Also, in workplace there should be flexible times for the employees. Moreover, managers should learn measuring the performance in terms of the results rather than the work hours. Other precautions can be such as broadening wellness program, measuring wellness program's efficiency and taking into consideration of employees' assistance program (Compensation & Benefits, 2013:2).

## **2.2. Burnout Syndrome**

Burnout which is thought to be a type of stress by some authors is a chronic affective response pattern to stressful work conditions that features high levels of interpersonal contact (Cordes and Dougherty, 1993:625). Also, as Maslach and Jackson (1981) define, "burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do 'people-work' of some kind." Burnout syndrome like presenteeism affects employees' productivity. Conceptualized burnouts in three dimensions are emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment and cynicism (Kahn et al., 2006:793). Burnout is believed to be frequently and intensely experienced because of the high level of aggravation due to direct, frequent, and intense interactions with clients, what is the reason why research has focused on the role of the client and the employee's caseload as contributing to burnout (Cordes and Dougherty, 1993:629)

Burnout process can be divided into 12 parts and as Freudenberger and North identify it is not necessary to follow sequentially. These parts are as follow Firstly, employees can have excessive ambition and this turns out desire to prove them. Secondly, in order to eliminate organizational problems, employees focus on working harder. Thirdly, while they work hard, they neglect their vital needs such as family, friends, eating or sleeping. Then, employees cannot be able to see what the problem is about their lives. So, they begin isolating themselves from any other people and they avoid all kinds of conflicts. Therefore, they become intolerant and this makes them unsocial. As a result of this lack of social interactions, the situation for them is like isolation. Their behaviors change and families, coworkers, friends cannot overlook their behavioral changes. Besides that in depersonalization stage, they don't see themselves as valuable and this

makes them feel empty inside. Depression is the next stage and they feel exhausted and hopeless. And the last stage is burnout syndrome. In this stage, they collapse not only physically but also emotionally (Kraft, 2006:31).

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Required data were collected from banking staff working in public and private banks in Konya province in December of 2012. Data collection tool that is survey form consisted of three parts. First part is about socio-demographical features of employees and 10 questions have been asked to the participants. These questions have been about gender, marital status, and age, position in organization, education level and experience. 136 participants have been included to the research. Some of the forms have been eliminated due to the missing or uncompleted fields. In order to measure presenteeism tendencies of participants Stanford Presenteeism Scale have been used. Also for the burn out syndromes Maslach Burnout Scale was preferred. Presenteeism scale consists of 6 questions and there are 22 questions in burnout scale. Every question in each scale has a scale system ranging from 1, “not all characteristics” to 5 “very characteristics” Besides that, during the data collection process ethical considerations have been observed. So the data have been treated as confidential. Participants have been informed about the reasons of collecting data and only required data have been collected.

### **4. FINDINGS**

As a common health problem, nowadays burnout syndrome is a very popular term in Turkey and it can easily be seen not only in researches but also in TV shows and Turkish television series. Although it has been one of the most common aspects of management studies, no one has had any idea about this term until famous people call their problem as burnout syndrome. Therefore, burnout is both a popular and a well-know topic in Turkey. At this point, it would be necessary to identify some prior researches dealing with presenteeism and burnout syndromes. When the literature is analyzed, it is seen that some researchers have dealt with burnout and its relations in the light of gender, age and other demographical features of research attendants. Thus, these studies indicate that age is related with burnout levels. On the other hand, as an example of presenteeism study, in the work of Aronson et al. (2000) it has been identified that there might be possible factors for presenteeism such as people who provide public services. Reliability results indicate that presenteeism Scale's Cronbach's Alpha is ,507 and Burnout Scale's is ,898. So, it can be inferred that burnout scale is highly reliable, but presenteeism can be accepted as good enough both for

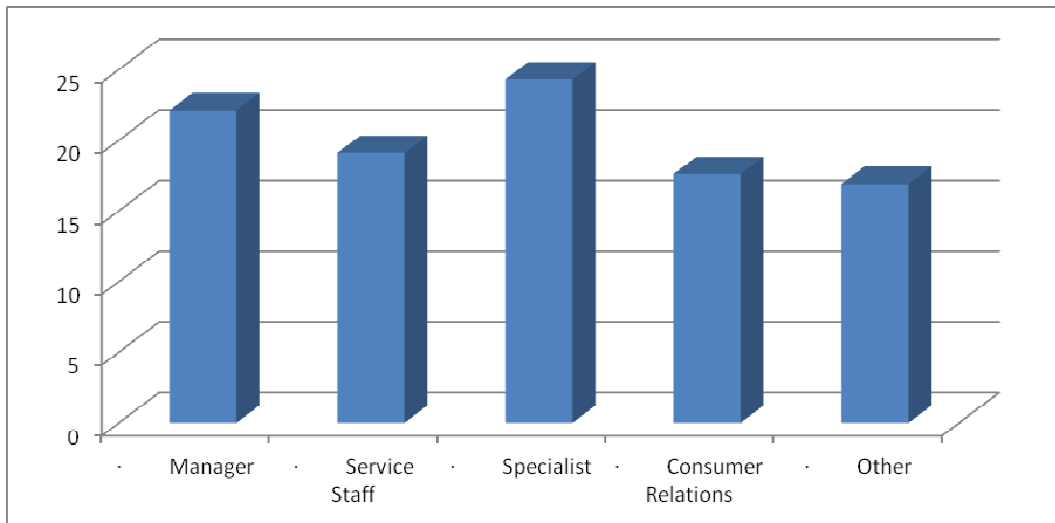
translated new scales and for the studies carried out in social sciences. In Table 1, demographical features of participants can be seen. Participants' age, gender, marital status, level of education, position and experience level are shown. Any employees working in banks have been included to the research and participants who joined voluntarily in this research are managers, service staff, specialists, consumer relations and other employees. Also, level of education is given below and it must be clarified that in Turkish National Education System levels are separated like short, first, second and third cycles. Short cycle expresses associate degrees in vocational schools. First cycles mean that faculties and second cycles are the graduation from master programs in graduate schools. Lastly, third cycles identify doctorate degrees in graduate schools.

**Table 1. Demographical Features of Participants**

<b>Demographical Features</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Age</b>		
• 18-25	24	17,6
• 26-35	86	63,2
• 36-45	22	16,2
• 46-55	4	2,9
<b>Gender</b>		
• Female	80	58,8
• Male	56	41,2
<b>Marital Status</b>		
• Single	58	42,6
• Married	74	54,4
• Divorced	4	2,9
<b>Level of Education</b>		
• High School	11	8,1
• Short Cycle (Associate Degree)	23	16,9
• First Cycle (Bachelor's Degree)	84	61,8
• Second & Third Cycle (M.D.-PhD Degree)	18	13,2
<b>Position</b>		
• Manager	30	22,1
• Service Staff	26	19,1
• Specialist	33	24,3
• Consumer Relations	24	17,6
• Other	23	16,9
<b>Experience Level</b>		
• <1 years	29	21,3
• 1-5 years	47	34,6
• 6-10 years	42	30,9
• 11-15 years	12	8,8
• 16 < years	6	4,4
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>100</b>

As it is seen in table 1, 63,2% of the participants (86) are between 26 and 35 years old. Most of the participants are female and their percentage is 58,8. This result is not generally seen in researches but this study is about the employees working in banks and it can be inferred that banking sector is preferred mostly by women in Konya province. In this study, participants' marital status is also given, so most of them are married. Level of education of participants is also mentioned and it is seen that most of the participants have at least associate degree. Only 8,1% of them graduated from high schools and the rest can be said to have higher education experience. In the study, in terms of the positions managers are the majority (30). Lastly, experience of the participants is given and most of them less than 5 years experience. This result is appropriate with the age of participants.

In Figure 1, participants' positions in their organizations can be seen.



**Figure 1. Position Distributions in Organizations**

Gender is the most prominent variable in this research because female participants are the major group in terms of the whole participants. So, gender difference should be analyzed in the light of education level, position and experience level. In table 2, cross tabs of gender and other demographical features can be seen. Female participants have mostly Bachelor's Degree like Male participants. Managers (17) and specialists (25) are mostly females. Also, in terms of the experience level, participants whose experiences are more than 16 years are only females.

**Table 2. Socio-Demographical Features of Participants - Cross tabulation**

		Level of Education					Total
		High School	Short Cycle	First Cycle	Second & Third Cycle		
Gender	Female	5	11	55	9	80	
	Male	6	12	29	9	56	
		Position					Total
		Manager	Service Staff	Specialist	Consumer Relations	Other	
Gender	Female	17	16	25	10	12	80
	Male	13	10	8	14	11	56
		Experience Level					Total
		< 1 years	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16 < years	
Gender	Female	13	27	25	9	6	80
	Male	16	20	17	3	0	56

In table 3, t-test results of the two scales can be seen. Statistical results of Presenteeism Tendency and Burnout Syndrome is given below.

**Table 3. Statistical Results of Presenteeism and Burnout (t test)**

Scales	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.
Presenteeism - Burnout	,39773	,91277	5,082	135	,000

When Table 3. is analyzed, it can be inferred that there is a significant difference in the scores of presenteeism tendency ( $X=3,3566$ ,  $SD=,55562$ ) and burnout ( $X=2,9589$ ,  $SD=,66607$ ) behavior;  $t(135)=5,082$ ,  $p=,000$ . Thus, if an employee is unable to work due to his/her physical conditions, he/she can't focus on the organizational tasks regularly. In table 4, Anova test results are shown. In this analysis, participants' positions in their organizations and burnout variables are compared. The aim of this analysis is to see if there is a relationship between positions and burnout tendency.

**Table 4. Position and Burnout Syndrome Relationship (Anova)**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2,211	4	,553	1,255	,291
Within Groups	57,682	131	,440		
Total	59,892	135			



Therefore, means of the participants have been analyzed and it is seen that means are; managers ( $X=3,0167$ ), service staff ( $X=3,1696$ ), specialists ( $X=2,9146$ ), Consumer Relations ( $X=2,7746$ ). As it is seen in Anova statistical results, there is no significant difference in terms of position in organization and employees' burnout syndrome. ( $F=1,255$ ,  $p=0,291$ ). Consequently, it can be said that position is not an effective variable on employees' burnout syndrome and any employee in different positions can fall into this syndrome in the organization.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

In this study, employees working in banks located in Konya province have been included to the research. The main aim of this study is to determine if there is a relationship between employees' presenteeism tendency and burnout syndrome. Therefore, data from 136 participants have been collected through survey and face to face interviews. In order to determine the presenteeism and burnout, two popular scales have been used. For presenteeism, Standford scale has been used and for burnout Maslach Scale has been preferred. Also, participants have been asked for their socio-demographical features in data collection tool. When data have been analyzed, it is seen that the most of the participants are female. Major group for the age variable is 26-35. There are 30 managers in the study and the rest are specialists and other bank employees. Moreover, participants' levels of education and experiences have been given in the study.

In order to find out relationships between burnout and presenteeism, some statistical tests have been given. T-test results have showed that there is a meaningful relationship between burnout and presenteeism. This makes the authors think about the results of presenteeism. Thus, it can be implied that presenteeism and burnout are on the same direction and they support each other. Besides that, gender variables have been analyzed in terms of the position, experience and education. It has been found that most of the first cycle graduations belong to females and most of the managers are females too. Then participants' positions in their organizations have been analyzed through Anova test and difference between positions and burnout tendencies have been determined and a meaningful difference between these two variables couldn't be found. Consequently, both burnout and presenteeism are vital terms for organizations. In order to increase productivity, these terms should be taken into consideration. For the next studies it can be recommend that a new sector with increased participants might be useful for comparisons and detailed comprehensions.

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