

### Relationship of Learned Resourcefulness and Burnout Levels: A Research in an Industrial Enterprise

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#### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this paper is to uncover the relationship between employee learned resourcefulness and burnout levels. The research data was collected from employees of an industrial enterprise in Çanakkale-Turkey with a questionnaire of 58 items from 406 respondents in July-August 2016. Frequency, factor and regression analyses were conducted, thus it is supported that learned resourcefulness level of employees is negatively related to burnout levels. As conclusion, it is expected that employees with higher learned resourcefulness to be more prone to organizational difficulties. Also, employee resourcefulness supporting applications in organizations are propound to be beneficial in terms of efficacy.*

## INTRODUCTION

In business, in various fields of work, managers consistently ask themselves the same question: why it takes too much of effort to motivate some employees when some others are ready to motivate themselves? More than that, why some employees know how to cope with problems when some others are more troubled affecting their performances. There are several variables effecting job performance and undesirable loss of effectivity in an organization. Learned resourcefulness is one of the concepts about employee ability to cope with difficult situations. In this research, it is aimed to uncover the relationship between learned resourcefulness and burnout levels of employees, to support the argument that level of resourcefulness of an employee provides protection against burnout levels. For this purpose, learned resourcefulness and burnout concepts and related research are addressed and findings in this research are presented in the following sections.

### 1. Conceptual Framework

#### 1.1. Learned Resourcefulness

As put forward by Meichenbaum (1977), learned resourcefulness is a concept explaining certain qualities an individual obtain to cope with problems and find ways to achieve goals. It is therefore a concept of managerial success and effectiveness concerning the employee motivation and behavior. In the management literature employee motivation is explained from different perspectives and different models were asserted. In self regulation model (Kanfer, 1970), self-regulation is introduced to have three phases: self monitoring, assessment and reinforcing behaviors. In Bandura's work (1978) cognitive factors were linked to behavioral processes, thus Rosenbaum (1980) focused on the cognitive dimension of human behavior and highlighted learning processes of different individuals to differentiate employee capabilities of success and problem solving.

Learned resourcefulness can be defined as accumulation of abilities and tactics individuals obtain in time and unique situations (Rosenbaum, 1983). Human behavior is mostly targeted to a specific goal and sensitive to potential flaws when concerning business context. Professional education on the other hand may be insufficient or slender in several situations. Sometimes some individuals are found to create more effective results than some others after having passed through similar professional education processes. It is then arguable that "an individual's experiences and acquired skills stand out" (Keleş, 2014: 181) as in a broader sense of learning outcome. Therefore learning process of an individual starting from birth includes both formal education and all types of physical and social interaction with the environment. Since experiences of individuals differ randomly, there is a huge range of learning outcomes as well as learned resourcefulness in this sense (Rosenbaum, 1988). The literature tends to discuss not only effectiveness or in-effectiveness issues but also possible trainings (Maslach et al., 2001: 418) also leading to cope with organizational mismatches.

Education literature leans on the topic to reveal relationships between learned resourcefulness and student external/internal control locus (Coşkun, 2007), students' family relations (Coşkun, 2008), students' smoking behaviors (Kennett et al., 2006) and teachers' emotional exhaustion (Yürür, 2011). In some other research scholars asserted that the same qualities help individual overcome chronic diseases (Braden, 1993), chronic pain (Lefort et al., 1998) and aging problems (Zauszniewski et al., 2006). Other previous research showed positive relationship between learned resourcefulness and self-sufficiency (Weisenberg et al., 1990), self-respect (Dirksen, 2000), self-care (Boonpongmanee et al., 2003), health status and well-being (Lucas, 2010); negative relationship with smoking and alcohol consumption (Carey et al., 1990), anxiety (Zlotogorski et al., 1995), depression (Kiefer, 2001), helplessness and submissiveness (Eroğlu et al., 2014).

Meichenbaum (1977) indicated that learned resourcefulness is directly related to the extent individuals' coping with the stressful situations and preventing negative results when it happened. Individuals with higher learned resourcefulness levels are found to be more successful in self-control (Rosenbaum, 1990), achieving success in difficult tasks (Rosenbaum

& Ben-Ari, 1985), self management and adapting (Dönmez & Genç, 2006) and dealing with the difficulties in life (Bekhet et al., 2011).

Stress due to job and self-control is related in the literature, and individuals with higher levels of resourcefulness are found to be more successful in self-control and coping with the stress (Rosenbaum & Rolnick, 1983; Rosenbaum & Jaffe, 1983; Rosenbaum & Palmon, 1984; Rosenbaum, 1990; Flett et al., 1991). Therefore, it is revealed in the literature that learned resourcefulness may be critically important in certain cases, for instance burnout levels.

## **1.2. Burnout**

In a working environment, an employee not only complete the tasks he is expected to, but also has to deal with the stressful conditions of, for instance interpretation, decision making, time management. When the conditions are off limits of bearing, the employee faces negative outcomes leading to job-inefficiency and even health risks.

As a “significant phenomenon of the modern age” (Maslach et al., 2001: 398), the term “burnout” was labelled by Freudenberger (1974), like the term referring drug abuse, reflecting emotional accounts of loss of motivation and commitment in working environment. He defined it as “a state of fatigue and frustration” due to failure, loss of energy and will to achieve expected rewards (Poghosyan et al., 2009). Being incapable of dealing with stress (Delay, 1979) and negative experiences and physical exhaustion during interaction with other individuals are asserted as grounds of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

In the 1980’s assessment of burnout entered a new phase and measures were developed (Maslach et al., 2001). According to Maslach (1982), there are three different sources of triggering factors of burnout as individual, organizational and job relatedness. Maslach et al. (2001: 414-416) expands the range of situations causing burnout with workload, control mismatch, lack of appropriate rewarding, weak office community, perceived unfairness and conflict between values; all related to communication and experience of an employee about these issues. Eventhough agreement of scholars on the classification of the antecedents is not a solid construct, three dimensions as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment are found acceptable in Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and in most studies (Lee & Ashforth, 1990; Poghosyan et al., 2009).

Emotional exhaustion is linked to more critical and explicit outcomes (Arı & Bal, 2008) arising from psychological and physiological pressure an employee faces such as anxiety, fatigue, insomnia (Perlman & Hartman, 1982; Lee & Ashforth, 1990). Depersonalization, on the other hand, is explained with distancing self from organizational and occupational settings and reduced personal accomplishment with inefficacy, whether casually linked to two other dimensions or not (Maslach et al., 2001: 403).

Learned resourcefulness is enounced to be an asset related to personal characteristics, conditions or energies against such distresses by scholars (Hobfoll, 1989; Yürür, 2011). Along with social and economical resources “which can be invested to aid the process of stress resistance”, personal resources are also referred to be effective against exhaustion (Hobfoll, 2001: 349).

As a personal trait, learned resourcefulness is empirically found negatively correlated to burnout in research conducted by Naisberg-Fenning et al. (1991), and suggested to “be taken into consideration in any attempt to predict an individual's proneness to burnout” (1991: 204). It is supported by empirical research conducted by Maraşlı (2005) that learned resourcefulness is negatively related to burnout, by providing ability and competence of coping with stress.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Research Model**

Based on the literature and mentioned theoretical assertions, in this research hypoteses are formed as follows and research model is shown in graphic.1:

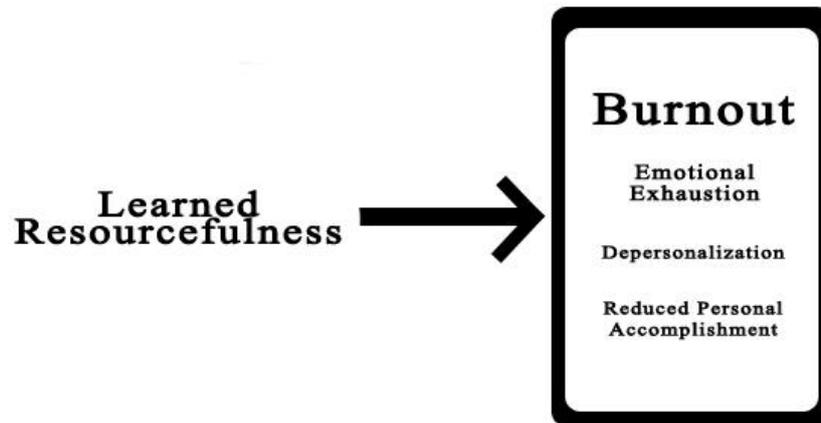
H1: Learned resourcefulness is negatively related to burnout.

H2: Learned resourcefulness is negatively related to burnout dimension emotional exhaustion.

H3: Learned resourcefulness is negatively related to burnout dimension depersonalization.

H4: Learned resourcefulness is negatively related to burnout dimension

### Graphic 1: Research Model



## 2.2. Measures

Following measures, which were previously tested and scored well in validity and reliability, are used to constitute the questionnaire. Rosenbaum Learned Resourcefulness Scale (Rosenbaum, 1980) adapted to Turkish context by Dağ (1991) was used to measure learned resourcefulness with 36 items in a 1-5 scoreboard. Therefore respondents can get scores between 36 and 180 depending on their self-evaluations of their learned resourcefulness. Maslach Burnout Scale, adapted to Turkish context by Engin (1993), is used to measure burnout in a three dimensions construct. Emotional exhaustion is measured with 9 items, depersonalization with 5 items and reduced personal accomplishment is measured with 8 items. All 22 items were directed on a scale from 0 (never) to 4 (always) to indicate higher burnout status with higher scores.

## 2.3. Sample

The data was collected with the questionnaire from İÇDAŞ<sup>1</sup>, employees in July-August 2016. Convenient sampling method is used to gather data. The sample consists of 406 respondents and demographics are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Demographics**

Age	Freq.	%
18-25	70	17,3
26-33	163	40,1
34-41	146	36
42-49	26	6,4
50+	1	0,2
Gender	Freq.	%
Female	6	1,5
Male	400	98,5

<sup>1</sup> Found in 1970, İÇDAŞ is one of the biggest 500 companies in Turkey which has approximately ten thousand employees located in Çanakkale. The company operates on iron-steel, energy, dockyard and logistics.

<b>Marital Status</b>	Freq.	%
Married	301	74,1
Not-Married	105	25,9
<b>Education</b>	Freq.	%
Primary School	42	10,4
Mid-School	147	36,2
High School	178	43,8
University	39	9,6
<b>Years in The Same Work Area</b>	Freq.	%
1-5	154	37,9
6-11	125	30,8
12-17	94	23,2
18-23	33	8,1
24+	0	0
<b>Monthly Income</b>	Freq.	%
1500-2250 TL	212	52,2
2251-3000 TL	124	30,5
3001-3750 TL	53	13,1
3751-4500 TL	12	3
4501 TL and more	5	1,2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 2.4. Test of Normality

The data was tested for normality for both scales and found to be distributed normally. According to Kolmogorov-Smimov test null hypothesis, there is no significant difference between the distribution for the two samples, is rejected ( $p > 0,05$ ) as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Test of Normality**

		Learned Resourcefulness	Burnout			
N	valid	406	406			
	Missing	0	0			
Mean		3,1281	2,5773			
Median		3,1212	2,6340			
Mode		3,00a	3,00			
Skewness		,025	-,354			
Std. Error of Skewness		,121	,121			
Kurtosis		,994	-,455			
Std. Error of Kurtosis		,242	,242			
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>		Shapiro-Wilk			
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Learned Resourcefulness	,041	406	,101	,990	406	,006
Burnout	,056	406	,104	,980	406	,000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

#### 2.5. Test of Reliability

Reliability tests reveal high reliability for both scales, as  $\alpha = 0,866$  for learned resourcefulness and  $\alpha = 0,855$  for burnout scales.

**Table 3: Reliability**

	Burnout	Learned Resourcefulness
Cronbach's Alpha	,855	,866
Items	22	36

## 2.6. Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is the way to estimate the conditional expectation of the dependent variable given the independent variables (Hamarat, 2017: 293). Regression analyses are conducted to reveal the relationships between learned resourcefulness and burnout and dimensions of burnout. According to the results shown in table 4, learned resourcefulness has negative effect on burnout ( $R=-,289$ ,  $R^2=,051$ ,  $F=21,555$ ,  $p<,000$ ), H1 is supported. As shown in table 4, learned resourcefulness has negative effect on emotional exhaustion ( $R=-,358$ ,  $R^2=,028$ ,  $F=11,545$ ), H2 is supported. The results show that learned resourcefulness has negative effect on depersonalization ( $R=-,447$ ,  $R^2=,042$ ,  $F=17,557$ ,  $p<,000$ ), H3 is supported. Also, it is revealed that learned sourcefulness has negative effect on reduced personal accomplishment ( $R=-,566$ ,  $R^2=,087$ ,  $F=38,567$ ,  $p<,000$ ), H4 is supported.

**Table 4: Model Summary<sup>a</sup>**

Dependent Variables	B	Std. Error	F	t	R <sup>2</sup>	Sig.
Burnout	-,289	,062	21,555	-4,643	,051	,000
Emotional Exhaustion	-,358	,105	11,545	-3,398	,028	,000
Depersonalization	-,447	,107	17,557	-4,190	,042	,000
Reduced Personal Accomplishment	-,566	,091	38,567	-6,210	,087	,000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Learned Resourcefulness

## CONCLUSION

It is presented in the literature that employees with higher learned resourcefulness levels are more successful in coping with the work stress (Rosenbaum & Rolnick, 1983; Rosenbaum & Jaffe, 1983; Rosenbaum & Palmon, 1984; Rosenbaum, 1990; Flett et al., 1991) and specifically burnout (Naisberg-Fenning et al., 1991; Maraşlı, 2005). In this research, consistent with the literature it is found that employee learned resourcefulness level is negatively correlated to burnout levels. Also, when analyzed dimensionally, learned resourcefulness is found to have negative effect on burnout dimensions emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. It may be interpreted that employees with deeper knowledge and wider experience in certain situations are more prone to situations than others in coping with difficulties in job environments. Also, organizations investing in employee resourcefulness supporting applications would benefit in terms of efficacy.

Different constructs may be added to examine further in future research concerning other organizational and employee based research. Since coping with difficulties is related to many other phenomena in management literature, more research conducted by scholars would provide more insight into organizations.

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