

## Exhaustion Concept: Examining the Exhaustion Level of Karabük State Hospital Employees

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the exhaustion concept based on an experimental approach by considering the previous studies and researches and to take the average of the exhaustion level of the Karabük state hospital staff. The employee groups, who were above the average and observed to have their exhaustion levels increased, will be created and subjected to an exhaustion syndrome management program. After applying exhaustion syndrome management training, the data obtained from the result of the study, is aimed to be made a second scale in comparison with the control group.

**Keywords:** Burnout, Emotional Exhaustion, Job Satisfaction, Hospital Staff, Maslach Exhaustion Scale, Stress

JEL: I11, M10, M12, M54

### Introduction

Exhaustion as Freudenberg senfiedis (1974, p.159) "fail, wear, loss of power and energy demands due to overload or depletion state of an individual's internal resources as the results of unmet expectations". He has brought the Exhaustion concept in literature for the first time by an article he wrote in 1974. Maslach has been the first scientist who comes to mind after Freudenberg.

Maslach defined the exhaustion concept in 2003 as "long-term psychological syndrome that occurs in response to stress factors emerging workplace". According to the some authors exhaustion is a result of failure to cope effectively with stress (Torun, 1997, pp. 43-44; Kaçmaz, 2005, p. 29).

According to another definition, it is psychological problem that can create physical results because of not elimination of the stress that is experienced in the work environment (Tepeci & Birdir, 2003, p. 960). When the Physiological responses to stress are analyzed in literature, it consists of 3 stages. The first of these stages is "alarm" stage, and has two steps.

In the first stage, the organism is in a "shock". This is the stage that the balance system is corrupted and the "tension" is

experienced. In the meanwhile, the organism starts "fight or escape" reaction that starts resistance process as the second stage which is "reaction to the shock". In contrast to the negative effect of stress by activating the physical and emotional energy, and when problems are successfully solving after exiting the resistance period, the resistance stage is terminated by turning to the general level of compliance.

However, the burnout period will occur if the stimulus is too sever, cannot eliminate the negative effect and at the same time has been exposed to the stress factors (Torun, 1997, pp. 43-44).

The exhaustion concept consists of three sub-dimensions; emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, the feeling of fall in the personal accomplishment (Arı Sağlam & Bal Çına, 2008).

**Emotional Exhaustion:** the exhaustion symptoms such as fatigue in the individual, feeling herself emotionally exhausted, and observed as aspects of burnout, are named emotional exhaustion by researches and scientists. This is perhaps the most observable dimension of exhaustion that can be felt and observed. This is due to the inherent emotional exhaustion.

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The researchers arranged the emotional changes experienced by an individual while they are serving like these, to think less responsible towards the persons who provided services in the past, to get load of inhibited emotions and they did not want to go to work as keen as the past (Arı Sağlam & Bal Çına, 2008).

**Depersonalization**, defined as the process of individual's exposure continuously to the reaction and gradually shows reduction from the first reaction towards the last one. In this case, it can be seen that the employee of the business, ignore that they are serving to the individuals and serving insensitively and gradually without a humanitarian manner. Employees can show distant, nonchalant and ironic attitude towards both individuals and business they are working for and will not get irritate from these attitudes (Çımen, 2000, p.6).

"Companies everywhere are downsizing, outsourcing and restructuring, leaving workers at all levels feeling stressed, insecure, misunderstood, undervalued and alienated. The cost of unhappy workers is high, both for employees and organizations, because burned-out employees do the bare minimum instead of their very best" (Maslach, 1999).

Using a derogatory language, categorizing the people is among the symptoms of anxiety and desensitization is not in accordance with strict rules (Torun, 1997, p.47).

Individuals with exhaustion, draw a strict line between the people they are served to and their private lives, for example they are not exactly talking about their job in their home environment and they are not communicating as soon as possible with the people they are served to in order to put physical distance between themselves and them (Arı Sağlam & Bal Çına, 2008).

**Low Personal Accomplishment:** It refers to "the tendency of a person to the negative assessment of himself" (Budak & Sürgevil, 2005). When a person feels the reduction due to his success, falls in the inadequacy feelings, thinks he is not a competent individual and appears to have a signiacfnt reduction in his motivation (Arı Sağlam & Bal Çına, 2008).

## Factors that Influence Exhaustion

Within the framework of classification proposed by Leiter, it was evaluated under the heading of workload, control, reward, loyalty, justice and values (Budak & Sürgevil, 2005). Workload can be defined as "the amount of work that must be done at a specific quality at a specific time" (Maslach & Leiter, 1997, pp.38-39). Control is "the possibilities of choice making, decision making, problem solving, and the ability to fulfil their responsibilities" that person have on his work"; Award refers "to appreciate a person both materially and socially due to his contribution to the organization in exchange of the individual, both material and expresses appreciation of the social aspects (Budak & Sürgevil, 2005).

Belonging is a sense of unity which refers to a property of the social environment of the organization. Accordingly, individuals engage in groups that provide positive gains such as social support and cooperation. For the employees who are working in a particular organization, the concept of justice which expresses the opinion of the organizational justice, dec-

ision or the correctness of the policy means "The fact that the organization has a consistent and equal rules for everyone" (Bilgin, 2003, p. 273; Leiter, 2003, p. 2). The value with its most austere form is "a belief related to what is good, what is bad" (Bilgin, 2003, pp. 80-81).

## Individual and Social Factors

The expectations of employees related to their institutions and professions have an increasing or decreasing role in their exhaustion. For example, the high exhaustion level of young and inexperienced employees in comparison to the experienced older employees are explained by differences in expectations (Çımen, 2000, p.13). Idealism in the first year of young employees' career, increases the susceptibility to exhaustion by facing adverse conditions in the workplace. In addition, not being able to build a balanced relationship between their business and private life, disappointment which is created by incoherence between their expectation and reality of their work life can cause to increase exhaustion. Also, among those people who are unrealistic about the personal adequacy in terms of the organization that they are working for and among those who have expectations that cannot be met, we can see more exhaustion feeling (Koyuncu, 2005).

## Factors Related to Business and Organisation

Exhaustion is a result of the individual's interaction with his work environment. The sources of exhaustion in the literature mostly are being considered situational rather than individual, and also the solutions related to the exhaustion had to be sought in the social environment. The factors related to the work and organization which affects the exhaustion of individuals are primarily determined as workload, control, reward, loyalty, justice, and values (Arı Sağlam & Bal Çına, 1998). These factors are covered by the above definitions. In terms of the dimensions of exhaustion, workload is a major cause of emotional exhaustion.

The amount and quality of interaction between individuals and the work environment is also seen as a factor that increases emotional exhaustion. Face to face, and a large number of long-term interaction creates more emotional exhaustion.

In contrast, if the problems experienced during these interactions are more routine, the less emotional exhaustion was created (Arı Sağlam & Bal Çına, 1998). The properties of the work itself, and also its context are also effective for exhaustion. The most important feature here is the nature of its relationship with the people or customers who they serve. For example, in the environment, the unit managers who have tasks such as border unit and also production managers who have less relationship with individuals cannot experience the exhaustion feeling at the same measure. Similarly, feeling of exhaustion for employees who work as limit unit and have more frequent interaction with customers, such as sale or service professional and those who are in charge of information processing will be different (Arı Sağlam & Bal Çına, 1998).

In summary, being satisfied in his work has an important role in the individual's life satisfaction and performance achievement (Ünal, Karlıdagö, & Yologlu, 2001). By examining the literature it was seen that exhaustion syndrome is widespread among health professionals (Ünal, Karlıdagö, & Yologlu, 2001; Ergin, 1992).

In terms of country conditions by examining theoretical knowledge related to the exhaustion, it can be expected to demonstrate a high exhaustion level between the health professionals. The exhaustion which is seen in the health personnel also will affect the ones whose service is offered to them and also entire service sector. In this context, this study aims to investigate the exhaustion level of health personnel with their certain demographic characteristics.

## Methods

### Sample

The sample of this study consisted of a total 202 health employees, 123 male and 79 female who work at the State Karabük Hospital.

### Data Collection Tool

**Demographic information form:** the form was prepared by researchers, which provides information related to the research and consists of questions about age, gender, marital status, service unit, working length and income level.

**Maslach Exhaustion Scale:** It is five-point likeart scale with 22 items that its Turkish adaptation. Validity and reliability studies were done by Ergin (1992). Exhaustion was evaluated in three dimensions, emotional exhaustion, personal achievement, and depersonalization. There are 5 items for assessment of emotional exhaustion, 8 items for assessment of personal accomplishment and 5 items for assessment of depersonalization. Emotional and depersonalization dimensions include negative statement and personal accomplishment dimension includes positive ones (Ergin 1995; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993, p. 624; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 403; Maslach & Zimbardo, 1982). Therefore, the high scores related to the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions and low scores related to personal accomplishment are accepted as exhaustion.

### Research Design

This research is in the nature of an experimental research with pre - and post-test with control group. Based on the findings gained from the first stage of the research, a training programme will be developed and will be applied to the experimental group and final test scores will be compared to the experimental and the control group.

### The Data Collection Process

For the first stage of the research in October 2012 data collection tools, were applied to 202 personnel, working at Karabük State Hospital. Verbal confirmation was obtained from partici-

pants by giving information related to the study and it was clarified that, in the case of necessity, the collaboration with participants may be required again for the second phase of the study. Applications were done on each employee's own working environment, and data collection process took approximately 10 minutes for each participant. Statistical analysis of data was done by using "SPSS 15" statistical package program.

## Results

The demographic characteristics of health employees who participated in this research are shown in Table 1. 60.9% of respondents (N=123) are female and 39.1% are male (N=79). In this study 12.4% of health employees are 18-25 years old, 37.1% are 26-35 years old, 16% of them are 46-55 years old and only 1% of them are 56 and older. 70.8% of participant group consist of married ones and 71.8% have at least one child. By evaluating participants in terms of working period, 13.4% of them are in their first year. 8.9% of participants have been working for 1-5 years, 22.3% for 6-10 years, 19.3% for 11-15 years, 12.9% for 16-20 years. 23.3% of personnel have been working for 21 years and above.

As the numbers can be seen in Table 1, The number of respondents who are doctors is 2%, and 6.9% are administrative employees, 2% are administrators, 41.1% are nurses, 40% are auxiliary health personnel (psychologists, physical therapists, technicians, etc.) and 7.9% of them are in other categories. 65.4% of health personnel who participated in this study work in units such as emergency room, outpatient clinic service and, operating rooms, 33.7% of them work in administrative units and other units (cleaning, security, etc.).

By examining employees in terms of income levels, 37.6% of participants have 2000 TL and above income; 37.6% of them have 1000-2000 TL, and 16.3% of them have 1000 TL and under. By examining their exhaustion levels, the average of Emotional Exhaustion of the group (E.E.) is 16.06 (S=7.8), average of Depersonalization (D) is 5.6 (S=5.0) and the average of personal accomplishment (P.A.) is 21.96 (S=4.45).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants in terms of the distribution

Demographic Characteristics	N(202)	%100
Age		
18-25	25	12,4
26-35	75	37,1
36-45	66	32,7
46-55	33	16,3
≥55	3	1,5
Gender		
Female	123	60,9
Male	79	39,1
Marital Status		
Married	143	70,8
Single	59	29,2
Profession		
Doctor	4	2

Demographic Characteristics	D.T	K.B					
Administered Personnel	14	6,9					
Manager	4	2	N	59	59	59	
Nurse	83	41,1					
Auxiliary Health Personnel	81	40,1	S	8.3	4.3	4.5	
Other	16	7,9					
Unit			Profession				
Emergency	11	5,4	Doctor	X	18.75	5.0	23.25
Polyclinic	50	24,8		N	4	4	4
Service	63	31,2		S	4.1	2.4	2.2
Surgery	10	5					
Administrative Unit	25	12,4	Manager	X	20.75	9.25	21.25
Other	43	21,3		N	4	4	4
Years of Working				S	9.8	6.7	3.7
≥1 years	27	13,4	Administrative				
1-5 years	18	8,9	Personnel	X	17.35	5.7	20.35
6-10 years	45	22,3		N	14	14	14
11-15 years	39	39		S	5.0	3.64	4.01
16-20 years	26	12,9					
≥21 years	47	23,3	Nurse	X	17.92	5.7	22
Income Level				N	83	83	83
500-1000 TRY *	33	16,3		S	7.4	4.03	4.7
1000-1500 TRY	21	10,4	Assistant				
1500-2000 TRY	71	35,1	Health P.	X	13.45	5.45	22.06
2000-3000 TRY	64	31,7		N	81	81	81
≥3000 TRY	13	6,4		S	8.0	6.3	4.2
Total	202		Other	X	16.73	5.12	22.56
*TRY: Turkish Lira				N	16	16	16
				S	8.3	4.2	4.7

Table 2. Demographic data related to exhaustion level and its dimensions

Demographic Characteristics	D.T	K.B	
Gender			
Female			
X	17.37	5.7	21.76
N	123	123	123
S	7.8	4.4	4.7
Male			
X	14.01	5.4	22.27
N	79	79	79
S	7.3	5.9	4.05
Marital Status			
Married			
X	16.26	5.6	21.8
N	143	143	143
S	7.6	5.3	4.4
Single			
X	15.43	5.4	22.27

By examining relationship between the exhaustion levels of participants and their socio demographic characteristics, there was a positive correlation between depersonalization dimension and their working length. While there is no relationship between personal accomplishment dimension and any demographic characteristics; emotional exhaustion shows positive correlation with gender ( $r = .210, p < 0.01$ ), the number of children ( $r = .190, p < 0.01$ ), working length ( $R = .201, p < 0.01$ ) and income level ( $r = .183, p < 0.01$ ). However, in the ANOVA analysis only emotional exhaustion dimension has a significant relationship with the income level ( $F = 1.58, P < 0.05$ ).

### Conclusion

Working in the sectors such as State Hospitals which has complex processes, the continuous and intensive working conditions a close and tight relationship with patients and also

empathy with them and their treatment process lasts too much and is, difficult therefore, it can start intense stressful and difficult process on the individuals mental world and bring a certain burden on the individuals and social relationships, that can be seen as the result of stress which can not be managed well. In this study by measuring the level of Karabük State Hospital employee's exhaustion, the participants who were above the average were compared in terms of different demographic variable.

### Due to Evaluation Results

1. According to the research findings, the feeling of personal accomplishment is increasing by increasing the length of service of participants.
2. By increasing the term of office of participants, a conspicuous decrease was observed in their depersonalization and emotional exhaustions.
3. The research showed that the exhaustion degree of participants is in a significant relationship only with income level.
4. In addition, in contrary to the other research, it has identified a positive relationship between the increasing level of income in the participants and their exhaustion.
5. When the data related to the sense of the personal accomplishment was analyzed, it was evaluated that this feeling was independent from the income level or it did not obtain significant data.

### Suggestions:

- ✓ Enhanced practical knowledge of staff increases their sense of personal accomplishment.
- ✓ Increment in depersonalization and emotional exhaustion which are according to staff period of service, shows that they are working under significant stress.
- ✓ This research demonstrates that increased income level of staff may reduce the degree of emotional exhaustion.
- ✓ Females are more emotionally exhausted than males as it is observed according to analyses in the study.
- ✓ Staff suffers from higher emotional exhaustion and this correlates with increase in number of their own children.

At this point, research group by evaluating the research results and taking advantage of the previous studies and literature regarding the reduction of the exhaustion syndrome, will be planned to apply a training program related to the control of exhaustion syndrome to the participants who are above the average. It will be planned to examine whether there is a meaningful difference between the participants who received exhaustion training and those who did not received it through a new measurement.

In the light of these findings of the study, the examination of different variables of exhaustion and approach to the variances which were examined up to now, from different dimensions; will contribute cumulatively and progressively to the exhaustion syndrome literature from both aspects: health sector and individual.

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