

Investigating Occupational Commitment and Turnover Intention Relationship with Burnout Syndrome

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Abstract: *This study investigates burnout components impact on accountant's occupational commitment and occupational turnover intention interaction. The data used in this study was taken from randomly selected 162 accountants who are the members of Istanbul Chambers of Certified Public Accountants (ICCPA). The results reveal that only emotional exhaustion component of burnout has partial mediating effect between affective occupational commitment and occupational turnover intention.*

Keywords: Affective occupational commitment, Burnout, Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, Personal accomplishment, Turnover intention

JEL Classification: M10, M12

1. Introduction

The professional staff in institutions are often required to spend considerable time on intense involvement with other people. For the helping professional who works continuously with people under some circumstances, the chronic stress can be emotionally draining and poses the risk of 'burnout'. Burnout, a common reaction to job stress, reduces the motivation and effectiveness of many service providers. Thus burnout is related to individual, organizational and client outcomes (Maslach and Schaufeli 1993, Maslach and Jackson 1981) and it is important for professionals' groups who experience a lack of engagement in their work. Empirical evidence has shown that burnout has important dysfunctional ramifications, implying substantial costs for both organizations and individuals because of positive association with turnover, absenteeism, reduced productivity, and human considerations (Jackson and Maslach, 1982; Leiter and Maslach, 1988).

In related literature up to date studies concerning burnout mostly focused on service sector employees such as teachers, nurses, physicians etc. and they have been explored by individual or organizational antecedents (personal and environmental/organizational factors) and consequences of burnout components such as physical / psychological or behavioral outcomes, related with work or job related settings. However burnout would be observing all type of occupations (Pines et.al. 1981) and burnout will not be formed by uni or binary focal (personal or environmental factors) Thus, this study is concerned with the fact that burnout would be a factor which would lead with individuals' career progress and occupational attitude. Based on this assumption the aim of this research is to investigate individuals' occupational commitment and occupational turnover intention relationship with burnout component. In order to test our hypothesis it was implementing a field

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study on 162 accountants who were stand alone and the members of Istanbul Chambers of Certified Public Accountants (ICCPA). It was applied hierarchical regression analysis to test the specific hypothesis of the study. Before display the results of the analysis it is fundamental to give theoretical background of the variables and their interaction

2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis

Burnout: Freudenberg (1974) defined burnout as *“to fail, wear out or become exhausted by making excessive demand on energy or resources”*. Since Freunberg study there have been several definitions used for defining concept that definitions have been included (a) to fail, wear out, become exhausted; (b) a loss of creativity; (c) a loss of commitment for work; (d) an estrangement from clients, co-workers, job, and agency; (e) a response to the chronic stress of making it to the top; and finally (f) a syndrome of inappropriate attitudes toward clients and toward self, often associated with uncomfortable physical and emotional symptoms (Cordes and Dougherty 1993; 623). In the most widely used definition which was done by Maslach (1993), burnout is described as *“a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with other people in some capacity.”*

Despite the growing consensus surrounding the concept of burnout, it appears that, burnout is a type of stress-specifically. Most researchers define stress as an outgrowth of person-environment interactions or “fit” (French & Caplan, 1972) or as a result of dysfunctional role relationships (Kahn et.al, 1964). Burnout is a distinctive aspect of stress in that it has been defined and studied primarily as a pattern of responses to stressors at work (Shirom, 1989). Burnout represents a particular type of job stress, in which a pattern of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment (strains) result from a variety of work demands (stressors), especially those of an interpersonal nature (Cordes and Dougherty 1993; 626). Based on this according to Maslach (1993), there are three components of burnout. Emotional exhaustion refers to the depletion of psychic energy or the draining of emotional resources. Depersonalization refers to the development of negative, cynical attitudes toward the recipients of one’s services. Reduced personal accomplishment is the tendency to evaluate one’s own work with recipients negatively, an evaluation that is often accompanied by feelings of insufficiency. Individuals with high levels of emotional exhaustion report feeling psychologically drained. They have little energy or motivation left from themselves to give to others or to their job. Individuals with high levels of depersonalization report feeling cynical, pessimistic, and apathetic towards one’s clients. Low levels of personal accomplishment are associated with feelings of negativity towards oneself, especially in the context of one’s relationship to clients (Maslach 1993).

Virtually all discussions of burnout have proposed that it is a product of both personal and environmental factors. Researches mentioned that gender, age, marital and family status and also personal experiences have an association with burnout components (Cordes and Dougherty 1993; 636). However, the bulk of the research evidence to date suggests that environmental factors, particularly characteristics of the work setting, are more strongly related to burnout than are such personal factors as demographic and personality variables (Burke et.al. 1984; Maslach and Jackson, 1985; Doğan and Nazlıoğlu 2010). For example, burnout has been correlated with a greater percentage of time in direct care of clients (Maslach and Jackson, 1981), more difficult client problems (Pines and Maslach, 1978), caseload (Maslach and Jackson,

1984b; Maslach and Pines, 1979), and a low degree of peer support (Burke et al., 1984), role ambiguity and conflict, role overload and job context (Maslach et.al 2001). The industrial-organizational approach, burnout was viewed as a form of job stress and links concept with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover. Thus generally, it has been assumed that burnout decreases job performance, job satisfaction, job commitment and quality of service, and increases absenteeism, low morale, and job turnover (Maslach and Jackson, 1984; Nowack et al., 1985; Schwab et al., 1986; Rocca and Kostanski, 2001; Ing-Chung et al., 2003; Marchiori and Henkin, 2004; Uskun et al., 2005; Piko, 2006).

Occupational commitment: Occupation was defined as individuals to be employed in a certain time in an identified work in order to provide money and maintain their living activities (Lee, Allen 2000; 800). Thus occupational commitment was defined as *“professional commitment”* by some authors and described as *“the relative strength of identification with and involvement in a particular profession as well as the willingness to exert effort on behalf of the profession and desire to maintain membership in it”* (Aranya and Ferris 1984:3, Lanchman and Aranya 1986). Blau preferred the term career commitment to defined occupational commitment and represented the concept as *“the strength of one’s motivation to work in a chosen career role”* (Blau 1985). Most prior research has defined occupational commitment as the *“psychological link between an individual and his/her occupation that was based on an affective reaction to that occupation”* (Lee et al., 2000:800). Thus, individuals with higher occupational commitment strongly identify with and have positive feelings about their occupation. Occupational commitment has positive influence on individuals’ attitudes toward their occupations. In this framework individuals who are committed to their occupation, have effort to improve their occupational talent and qualifications (e.g by subscribing to trade journals or attending conferences, join and participate in relevant associations and so on) and work hard to carry on their career (Lee et al., 2000:800, Meyer et.al., 1993:544). Thus it has been accepted that committed individuals have low turnover intention. In this sense turnover intention can be described as *“the probability of extending the individual’s membership of the occupation or organization”*. In related literature turnover intention is taken overall as withdrawn behavior of individuals and defined as *“individuals intent to withdrawn from their occupation/organization and looking for other job or career alternatives”* (Martin, 1979; Mobley, 1982; Moore, 2000; Marsh and Mannari, 1977; Blau 1987, 1988, 2007, Blau et. al. 2003). Based on those explanations it was reported and accepted that individuals who were highly committed to their occupation, have less turnover intention to their occupation (Meyer et.al., 1993:544; Vandenberg and Scarpello, 1994:536; Blau et.al., 2003:80; Cohen, 1998: 12; Carson et.al 1995:314; Snape and Redman, 2003:15; Chang et.al., 2006:176).

The turnover act-the leaving of an organization-is a time specific event marked by physical separation from the organization.(Mobley 1982: 111) Thus turnover behavior described by causal process and has been explained with a number of psychological concepts (Porter et. al 1974; Cotton and Tuttle 1986; Griffeth et. al 2000; Cohen 1993) Turnover intention is accepted as the main antecedents or stronger cognitive precursor of actual turnover behavior of individuals (Moore 2000; Lee and Mowday 1987; Tett and Meyer 1993).

In this framework turnover intention is taken overall as withdrawn behavior of individuals and defined as *“individuals withdrawn to the occupation/organization and looking for other job or career alternatives”* (Martin, 1979; Mobley, 1982; Moore, 2000; Marsh and Mannari, 1977; Blau 1987, 1988, 2007, Blau et. al. 2003).

3. Hypothesis Development

Several folk theories about the development of burnout emerged from the interviews of the earliest pioneering phase of research. One theory is individuals leading to exhaustion and eventual cynicism when their sacrifice has not been sufficient to achieve their goals. A second theory is that burnout is the end result of long exposure to chronic job stressors. Consequently, burnout may occur later in people's careers, rather than earlier, and it should be relatively stable over time if people stay in the same job (Maslach et.al 2001; 402). Thus one will assume that occupation type, professional exertion has an influence on individuals' burnout syndrome and individuals' occupational attitudes or feelings will provide occupational stress (or happiness) which will rise burnout.

Burnout has been associated with various forms of job withdrawal—absenteeism, intention to leave the job, and actual turnover (Leiter and Maslach 2009). However, for people who stay on the job, burnout leads to lower productivity and effectiveness at work. Consequently, it is associated with decreased job satisfaction and a reduced commitment to the job or the organization (Maslach et.al 2001:402). As similar approach in behavioral literature it was pointed out that high occupational commitment predicted low withdrawal cognition (Meyer et.al., 1993:544; Vandenberg and Scarpello, 1994:536; Blau et.al., 2003:80; Cohen, 1997: 12; Carson and et.al 1995:314; Snape and Redman, 2003:15; Chang et.al., 2006:176). Thus this research assumes that burnout components as a job stressors will play even full or partial role in occupational commitment and occupational turnover intention. Hence postulated;

H1: There is a negative association between occupational commitment and occupational turnover intention.

H2: There is a negative relationship between occupational commitment and burnout;

H3: Burnout has mediating role between occupational commitment and occupational turnover intention.

4. Method

4.1 Participants

The data used in this study was taken from randomly selected 162 accountants that are the members of Istanbul Chambers of Certified Public Accountants (ICCPA). 49 percent of participants were female, 88 percent of them have only BA degree; 8 percent of them have MBA degree. The mean age of respondents was 29, 56 percent of respondents' age was ranging from 26 to 35 and 21 percent were below 25 years.

4.2 Measures

Burnout: Accountants' burnout was assessed with the three dimensional "Burnout Inventory" scale which were developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981,1986) which one used by other Turkish researcher in related issues for measuring burnout (Ergin 1992, Eker and Anbar 2008, Doğan and Nazlıoğlu 2010). The inventory consists of 22 items forming three subscales. The emotional exhaustion subscale consists of nine items which describe feelings of being emotionally over extended and exhausted by one's work. The five items on the depersonalization subscale describe unfeeling and impersonal responses to co-workers or recipients of services. The personal accomplishment subscale consists of

eight items, describing feelings of competence and success about one's achievements. The items in the scale are scored on a five-point scale ranging from "never" (0) to "always" (5). In this study Cronbach alpha (α) of the emotional exhaustion scale was found 0,85, personal accomplishment was 0,686 and depersonalization subscale was 0,66 where personal accomplishment and depersonalization subscales Cronbach alphas' were low however they were acceptable in behavioral science. And confirmatory factor analysis of each scales were; for emotional exhaustion GFI= 0.93; AGFI= 0.88; CFI=0.95; RMSR=0.05; RMSEA: 0.04, for depersonalization subscale GFI= 0.95; AGFI= 0.84; CFI=0.88; RMSR=0.08; RMSEA: 0.08 and for personal accomplishment GFI= 0.93; AGFI= 0.87; CFI=0.84; RMSR=0.07; RMSEA: 0.05.

Occupational Commitment: Commitment to accountants' occupation was assessed with the six-item, affective occupational commitment instruments which were developed by Meyer et al (1993) which scale used by other Turkish researcher in related issues for measuring occupational commitment (Baysal and Paksoy 1999; Özmen et.al 2005; Özdevecioğlu and Aktaş, 2007; Şimşek and Aslan 2007; Tak and Çiftçioğlu 2008, Tak et al 2008). In this study Cronbach alpha of the total scale was found 0.74. Here by the confirmatory factor analysis results GFI= 0.93; AGFI= 0.84; CFI=0.91; RMSR=0.06; RMSEA: 0.08. All six- items are measured on five-point scale, ranging from 1= "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree".

Occupational Turnover Intention: Turnover intention is taken overall as withdrawn behavior of individuals and defined as "individuals withdrawn to the occupation/organization and looking for other job or career alternatives" (Martin, 1979; Mobley, 1982; Moore, 2000; Marsh and Mannan, 1977; Blau 1987, 1988, 2007, Blau et. al. 2003). The three-item scale by Meyer et al (1993) to measure accountants' turnover intention and Moore's (Moore 2000, 168) four-item organizational turnover scale were merged into a two-item scale with the items modified for accountants to "*I frequently think of quitting this occupation*" and "*I am seeking other career alternatives*". Turnover intention items are measured on five-point scale, ranging from 1= "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree". And Cronbach alpha of the total scale was .77 (GFI= 0.97; AGFI= 0.85; CFI=0.95; RMSR=0.05; RMSEA: 0.06)

The demographic variables were also examined in this study. The respondents were asked to indicate their age, gender, marital status and education level.

5. Results

Means, standard deviations and inter correlations among measures are presented in Table 1. As expected, Affective occupational commitment was negatively related to occupational turnover intention. ($-.28$, $***p < 0.001$), and emotional exhaustion ($-.18$, $*p < 0.05$) as expected it has positive correlation with personal accomplishment ($.27$, $***p < 0.001$) On the other hand occupational turnover intention has positive correlation with emotional exhaustion ($.56$, $***p < 0.001$) and depersonalization ($.24$, $**p < 0.01$) and negatively with personal accomplishment ($-.30$, $***p < 0.001$)

To test the specific hypothesis of the study, hierarchical regression analysis was applied (Table 2). Step 1 showed that while controlling demographic variable effects, Affective occupational commitment has significant negative effect on Emotional Exhaustion ($\beta = -.17$, $p < 0.05$) and Personal Accomplishment ($\beta = .26$, $p < 0.001$) however it did not have significant effect on Depersonalization; this partial result

supports the first condition of hierarchical regression analysis: “initial variable must be related to mediating variable”. In Step 2, AFFOCC has significant stronger negative association with occupational turnover intention of accountants ($\beta=-.26$, $p<0.001$) which have to meet second condition of analysis that “the initial variable should be related to the outcome variable”. Consequently, when Emotional Exhaustion and Personal Accomplishment was added to AFFOCC and the control variables, (Step 3) results showed that Emotional Exhaustion ($\beta=.484$, $p<0.001$) had a significant positive effect on turnover intention where Personal Accomplishment ($\beta=-.1$) had not have any statistically significant effect. And the effect of AFFOCC dramatically fell (Step 2, $\beta=-.26$, $p<0.001$, Step 3, $\beta=-.15$, $*p<0.05$) after including mediator variable into the model. Furthermore, addition of burnout dimension into the second equation produced a significant change in R^2 ($\Delta R^2 =0.26$, $p<0.001$). There for we concluded that Emotional Exhaustion has partially mediating effect on affective occupational commitment and accountants’ occupational turnover intention relationship.

Table 1 : Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Research Variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Age	1.94	.71	1								
Gender	1.45	.49	.21**	1							
Marital Sta.	1.63	.48	-.3***	-.17*	1						
Education	2.07	.33	-.09	-.05	.13	1					
AFFOCC	3.02	.47	.1	-.02	-.13	-.18*	1				
TI	2.21	.76	-.68	.16*	.01	.14	-.28***	1			
Emo	2.57	.72	.09	.16*	-.03	.08	-.18*	.56***	1		
Peracc	3.62	.50	.26**	.11	-.47	-.01	.27***	-.30***	-.32***	1	
Deperson	2.04	.65	-.01	.13	.06	.07	-.01	.24**	.58***	-.23**	1

* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$, 1-female, 2-male, Affective Occupational Commitment (AFFOCC), Emotional Exhaustion (Emo), Personal Accomplishment (Peracc), Depersonalization (depersomn), Occupational Turnover intention (TI)

Table 2: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis

	Step1 Emo	peracc	deperson	Step 2 TI	Step 3
<i>Control variables</i>					
Age	.086	.21*	-.02	.08	-.1
Gender	.142	.07	.15	.17*	.11
Marital Sta.	-.02	-.04	.07	.03	-.02
Education	.074	.06	.06	.09	.06
<i>Independent variable</i>					
AFFOCC	-.17*	.26***	.015	-.26***	-.15*
<i>Mediator variable</i>					
Emo					.484***
Peracc					-.1
ΔR^2					
Total ΔR^2	.07	.14	.03	.12	.38
Adjusted R^2	.38	.11		.09	.34
F	2.23***	4.84***	0.91***	4.036***	12.538***

standardized beta weights are shown. * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$, Affective Occupational Commitment (AFFOCC), Emotional Exhaustion (Emo), Personal Accomplishment (Peracc), Depersonalization (depersomn), Occupational Turnover intention (TI)

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This research investigates burnout roles in occupational commitment and turnover intention relationship. Results of regression analysis showed that there was a negative relationship between occupational commitment and occupational turnover intention ($\beta = -.26$, $p < 0.001$). whose result supports our first hypothesis. (H1). Findings also showed that occupational commitment has statistically significant and negative association with emotional exhaustion ($\beta = -.17$, $p < 0.05$) on the other hand results infer a positive association with personal accomplishment ($\beta = .26$, $p < 0.001$) which result was expected. In related occupational commitment literature authors mentioned that individuals who were committed their occupation, have effort to improve their occupational talent and qualifications (e.g. by subscribing to trade journals or attending conferences, join and participate in relevant associations and so on) and work hard to carry on their career (Meyer et. al 1993). Thus our findings confirmed these theoretical judgments. However we could not find statistically significant relationship between occupational commitment and Depersonalization. ($\beta = .015$) thus results could partially support our second assumption (H2). Based on those sub findings we could say that accountants who were affectively committed their occupation have low emotional exhaustion and have high personal accomplishment.

Our results also indicated that burnout has a role between occupational commitment and occupational turnover intention relationship (H3). Findings showed that Emotional Exhaustion has partial mediating role between occupational commitment and occupational turnover intention where other dimensions of burnout were not have statistically significant effect on this model. $R^2 = 0.38$, $F = 12.538$, $p < 0.001$) where we compare this results to other model it was clear that adding emotional exhaustion variable into the model, produced significant differences in model adjusted score ($\Delta R^2 = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$). Based on findings, we could only say results partially support H3.

In burnout studies several personality traits have been studied in an attempt to discover which types of people may be at greater risk for experiencing burnout. It was mentioned that burnout particularly on the exhaustion dimension is higher among people who have an external locus of control (attributing events and achievements to powerful others or to chance) rather than an internal locus of control (attributions to one's own ability and effort)(Maslach et.al 2001). And also it was mentioned that occupational type or profiles has an impact on burnout syndrome. Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) reported that different occupational groups have dissimilar burnout levels. Sample of this research formed with accountants professionals which were have higher external locus of control by managers or owners of companies and have more job stress because of financial reports. Thus these traits of sample concern as the reason of only emotional exhaustion component of burnout have mediating role between occupational commitment and turnover intention relationship.

It was believed that finding would contribute to the related literature on burnout syndrome has an influence on individuals occupational turnover intention. And also results showed that occupational commitment has negative effect on individuals emotional exhaustion which finding thinking as unique research in this context. To be validated these relationships we have identified, need to be repeated in various different samples. This study was aimed at specific population's only one professional group thus; this speciality of sample would affect the results. Therefore one should consider the effect upon this condition while interpreting the findings of this study.

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