



Burnout Levels among Senior Students in Applied Sciences Faculties: An Empirical Analysis in Turkey

Ramazan Erturgut¹, Hasan Emin Gürler², Artuğ Eren Coşkun³

¹Akdeniz University, Faculty of Applied Sciences (TURKEY),

²Akdeniz University, Faculty of Applied Sciences (TURKEY),

³Akdeniz University, Faculty of Applied Sciences (TURKEY),

Abstract

Today, one of the most disputable topics of the business world is burnout. Burnout is mostly mentioned when it comes to stress, but it has more serious consequences than stress with regards to organizational structure. Students also experience burnout as much as the employees in the business life. Some of the students, who are employed in the business after their graduation from the university, both works in the business sector and continue their education as graduate or Phd students. This study aims to analyze the burnout levels of graduate students who study at Graduate Departments of Applied Sciences Faculties in Turkey. The study results showed that graduate students experienced a low level of burnout. In addition, it was found out that there were differences between the sub-dimensions of burnout based on students' gender. However, no difference was found between the levels of burnout and whether graduate students work in a profession.

Keywords: Burnout; Graduate; Students; University; Higher Education; Stress.

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1. Introduction

Burnout defines the situation of a person experiencing energy decrease, increased anxiety, negative feelings and thoughts about oneself, insufficiency and failure in addition to loss of motivation, interest, and ambition. A burnout person experiences this condition either by mental breakdown or desensitization or decreased motivation of success. Each of these conditions severely affects people's routine life, functionality and responses. They also result in insufficiency of people by gradually decreasing their desire, power, efforts, positive feelings and behaviors about their profession, school, family responsibilities, individual responsibilities, and the other occupations.

Having preferred to go back to being a student again after the graduation from 4-year university life, graduate and doctorate students usually have great potential to be researched regarding "students' burnout". In comparison with 4-year undergraduate students, these students are in a population who started working as professionals, have increased social consciousness, and position themselves with a more settled individual vision. Many studies were conducted about the burnout levels of 2-year or 4-year university students studying at different disciplines mainly including Medicine, Health Sciences, and Education Sciences (Erturgut and Soyşekerçi, 2010; Yang, 2004, Fares et al. 2016:177; Pala, 2012:1766). However, almost no study was done particularly about the burnout levels of graduate and doctorate students studying at Social Sciences. For this reason, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the burnout levels of graduate students studying at Graduate Degree of International Trade and Logistics in Applied Sciences Faculties.

2. Literature

According to Maslach (1982), burnout has three interrelated dimensions that include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a diminished feeling of personal accomplishment. During the past decades, various studies on student burnout have been carried out (Chang et al, 200:29; Yang, 2004:283-301;). These studies assessed "academic burnout" in students (Fares et al. 2016:177). Findings from a study carried out on educational faculty students in Turkey were not very high. (Pala, 2012:1774). Another study about university students claim that school engagement presented inverse and significant influence on burnout syndrome among pharmacy students (Lucindo et al. 2016). Research findings from Kristanto et al. (2016) evidenced partial associations between academic burnout and eating disorder among university students. According to Skodova and Lajciakova (2013) Psychosocial training positively influenced burnout among university students in health care professions. Skodova et al. (2016), aiming to reveal differences in levels of burnout syndrome among nursing/midwifery and psychology students, concluded that burnout levels of students who read nursing/midwifery were higher than those who read psychology. According to Silva et al. (2016), another study examining the burnout of nursing students, the burnout level was found to be higher in single, no children, non-sports and non-scholarship female students between 20-24 years of age. Tsarkova (2016), compared burnout levels of students-psychologists and professional-psychologists. In the study, it has found that the level of emotional burnout of the 30% of professional-psychologists is higher than average. As for students-psychologists, 10% of them are represented by high level of emotional burnout. Layth (2017), investigating whether there is any relationship between time management, personality, social support and burnout, found that the dimensions of time management and social support have correlation with burnout. On the other hand, it has been found that the burnout has no effect on gender differences or age groups. Indicating that the students who could not cope with the lessons left the school by being burnout, Arlinkasari et al. (2017) tried to analyze the psychological reasons of this situation. As a result of the study, it was stated that students with high academic engagement cause less burnout. Hernesniemi et al. (2017) examined the burnout levels of Finnish and Chinese students who have different cultures in the study. The results of the research showed that the factors affecting the burnout levels of the students of both countries were similar.

3. Methodology

In this section, Research questions, the population and sample group of the study, data collection tools, and data analysis statistics are listed.

3.1 Research Questions of the Study

This study seeks answers for the following research questions regarding senior students' burnout levels.

1. What are the burnout levels of the students in a general sense?
2. Is there a difference between students' burnout levels based on the sub-dimensions of burnout?
3. Is there a difference between students' burnout levels based on their gender?
4. Is there a difference between students' burnout levels based on their employment status?

3.2 Research Population and Sample

The research population is consisted of graduate students studying at Applied Sciences Faculties of different universities in Turkey or students who applied to these programs. In this context, 37 of 42 questionnaires, which were distributed to students in August 2016, were considered valid and involved in the study.

3.3 Data Collection Tools

In this study, a Personal Information Questionnaire was used to determine the demographic variables related to students. Additionally, Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was used to determine the factors that lead students to burnout, which is also the main focus of the study. This inventory was developed by Maslach and Jackson in 1981, and it has a total of 20 statements. 8 of these statements are related to Emotional Exhaustion, 5 of them are about Depersonalization, and 7 of them are related to Reduced Personal Accomplishment. 5 Likert-type scale was used in order to measure burnout levels in Maslach Inventory.

Maslach Burnout Inventory was used in the previous studies conducted by İnce and Şahin (2015), Erturgut and Soyşekerci (2010), Yıldırım and İçerli (2010), Çapri (2006), Budak and Sürgevil (2005), and Çimen (2002), and factor analysis and reliability and validity analysis of this scale and its sub-dimensions were verified many times before.

3.4 Data Analysis Statistics

Data obtained through questionnaires was analyzed by “SPSS 16” Statistics Software, reliability analysis, demographic analysis, variance analysis and T test analyses were used in the study. Confirmatory factor analysis was done in the majority of the studies conducted about Maslach Burnout Inventory, and factor structure was investigated. Çapri et al. (2011), Deliorman et al. (2009), and Şıklar and Tunalı (2012) used confirmatory factor analysis in their studies about burnout and investigated factor structure. Therefore, factor analysis was not conducted again regarding the questionnaire questions, and only reliability and validity analyses were done.

4. Findings

4.1 Findings on the Reliability and Validity Analysis

In this part of the study, findings on the analysis of the collected data are studied. Firstly, reliability analysis for the sub-dimensions of Maslach Burnout Inventory was done, and Cronbach’s Alpha coefficients were calculated. In cases when Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient value is over 0,70, the scale is regarded as reliable (Bektaş and Akman, 2013: 128).

	Number of item		Cronbach's Alpha Value	
Emotional Exhaustion	8		0,80	
Depersonalization	5		0,75	
Reduced Personal Accomplishment	7		-0,148	

Reliability values regarding the sub-dimensions of burnout inventory are given in the table. Based on these figures, it can be concluded that while reliability coefficient values are sufficient for Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization sub-dimensions ($p < 0,70$), reliability value of Reduced Personal Accomplishment sub-dimension is below the normal values ($p < 0,70$).

4.2 Findings on Demographic Variables

Descriptive statistics were used in order to determine the demographic characteristics of study participants.

	Number of participants	Percentage %	Valid Percentage %	Cumulative Percentage %
Female	22	59,5	59,5	59,5
Male	15	40,5	40,5	100,0
Total	37	100,0	100,0	

Data on the gender statistics of the questionnaire participants are given in Table 5.1. Based on the figures in table, it can be seen that 59,5% of participants are female, while 40,5% of them are male. Moreover, it is understood that more than half of the students who responded to the questionnaire are female.

	Number of participants	Perc. %	Valid Perc. %	Cumulative Perc. %
Employed	14	37,8	37,8	37,8
Unemployed	23	62,2	62,2	100,0
Total	37	100,0	100,0	

Data on the employment status of the questionnaire participants are given in the Table 5.2. Based on these figures, it can be stated that 62,2% of participants are not employed, while 37,8% of them are employed.

4.3 Findings on Burnout Levels

In general, “T Test” was used to determine students’ burnout levels in this study. Moreover, it was necessary to use “t-test” to identify the differences between the sub-dimensions of burnout levels of study participants (number of sample). For this reason, independent sample t-test was conducted as each of the samples in the study was independent of one another and each sub-dimension was given one test. This t-test is a parametric test which is used in studying the differences between the two groups and explains whether there is a statistically difference between the groups (Ural and Kılıç, 2005:172). According to the results of this test, when significance value (2-tailed) is over 0, 05, it is concluded that there is no significant difference between the groups, but when this value is below 0, 05, it is assumed that there is a significance between the groups (Altunışık et al., 2010: 189-192).

Table 4. Burnout in General in Terms of Sub-dimensions

Aritmathical mean, median and standart deviation of Maslach Burnout Inventory Scale has been given Table. 4. These burnout Scores suggest that students generally have low levels of Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization sub burnout level. This finding is in harmony with the research results conducted about burnout by May et al. (2016) on Medicine Faculty students. On the other hand, it has been understood that Reduced Personal Accomplishment dimension of participants was middle level score level.

Table 5. Burnout Levels Based on Gender Variable						
Statements in the Questionnaire	Gender	N	SS	AM	t	Sig.
Emotional Exhaustion	Female	15	0,567	1,72	-1,623	0,114
	Male	22	0,684	2,06		
Depersonalization	Female	15	0,831	1,72	-1,639	0,110
	Male	22	0,492	1,36		
Reduced Personal Accomplishment	Female	15	0,332	3,63	-1,171	0,249
	Male	22	0,267	3,51		

T-test was conducted with the aim of identifying whether there is a significant difference between the questionnaire statements of Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Reduced Personal Accomplishment based on the participant genders, and the test findings were given in the table. Considering these figures in the table, it was found out that female and male participants had close perceptions about burnout in all variables. As a result of t-test, no statistically significant difference ($p < 0,05$) between female and male participants (Emotional Exhaustion Sig.=0,114, Depersonalization Sig.= 0,110, and Reduced Personal Accomplishment Sig.=0,249) was found. Although there is no significant difference between these variables, it can be claimed that Depersonalization and Reduced Personal Accomplishment values of female participants are higher than those of male participants. Additionally, it was concluded that Emotional Exhaustion of male participants is partially higher than those of female participants.

All these findings are supported by the studies conducted about burnout by Arslan et al. (1996) and Ergin (1992) on health staff. Moreover, the findings concerning the gender variable are similar to the results of the study conducted by Erturgut and Soyşekerçi (2010) with the purpose of identifying burnout levels of Vocational School students.

	AM	M	SS	
Emotional Exhaustion	1,859	1,750	0,631	
Depersonalization	1,508	1,200	0,664	
Reduced Personal Accomplishment	3,560	3,571	0,296	

Table 6. Burnout Levels based on Employment Status						
Statements in Quest.	Are you employed?	N	SS	AM	t	Sig.
Emotional Exhaustion	Yes	14	0,550	1,81	-0,346	0,731
	No	23	0,685	1,89		
Depersonalization	Yes	14	0,617	1,63	0,857	0,397
	No	23	0,695	1,43		
Reduced Personal Accomplishment	Yes	14	0,348	3,52	-0,627	0,535
	No	23	0,265	3,58		

T-test was done to determine whether there is a significant difference between participants' employment status and the variables of Burnout, Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Reduced Personal Accomplishment, and the test findings were given in the table. Based on the figures in table, it was found out that employed and unemployed participants had close burnout levels in all variables. As a result of t-test, no statistically significant difference ($p < 0,05$) between employed and unemployed participants (Emotional Exhaustion Sig. = 0,731, Depersonalization Sig. = 0,397, and Reduced Personal Accomplishment Sig. = 0,535) was found.

5. Conclusion

The following conclusions were inferred as a result of this paper which studied the burnout levels of the graduate students of Applied Sciences Faculties in Turkey based on different variables.

- Graduate students studying at Applied Science Faculties generally have low levels of burnout in terms of Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization burnout sub-dimensions.
- Reduced Personal Accomplishment burnout dimension of students was on the middle degree.
- There is no difference between female and male students in total based on the gender variable.
- In the sub-dimensions of burnout, female students had higher levels of burnout in Depersonalization and Reduced Personal Accomplishment in comparison with male students.
- Male students had slightly higher levels of burnout in Emotional Exhaustion in comparison with female students.
- There is no difference between the employed and unemployed students regarding the sub-dimensions of burnout.

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