THE INFLUENCE OF SELECTED PERSONALITY AND WORKPLACE FEATURES ON BURNOUT AMONG NURSE ACADEMICS

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ABSTRACT
This study aimed to determine the influence of selected individual and situational features on burnout among nurse academics. The Maslach Burnout Inventory was used to assess the burnout levels of academics. The sample population comprised 94 female participant. The emotion exhaustion (EE) score of the nurse academics was 16.43±5.97, the depersonalization (DP) score was 4.83±3.62, and the personal achievement (PA) score was 22.27±4.27. Thirty years and below of the academics reported a lower level of PA than 31 and above of academics ($p < 0.05$). There were no significant differences in EE and DP according to age. Single academicians indicated a higher level of DP than married ($p < 0.05$). However, no significant differences were observed for EE and PA scores according the marital status. Professors and research assistans reported a lower level of PA than instructors ($p < 0.05$). There were no significant differences in EE and DP scores according to the academic position of nurse academics. There were no significant differences in three dimensions of burnout scores according to the weekly work hours and education model of nurse academicians ($p > 0.05$). Future studies should investigate the relationship between roles of the nurse academics and burnout.
Keywords: Faculty, academician, lecturer, burnout, problem-based learning

INTRODUCTION

The problem of burnout in academics is of great concern because it reduces worker health and productivity (Dorman, 2003; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Burnout stems from an individual's perception of the instability between demands and resources over a long period of time. Clinically-defined burnout is a multidimensional syndrome arising from chronic stress in the workplace (Maslach, 1976).

Burnout often afflicts workers in occupations requiring face-to-face communication (Dorman, 2003; Ergin, 1995; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Teaching involves intense, sometimes adversarial, interactions with students, coworkers, and administrators. Nurse educators carry great responsibility as teaching, counselling to students, working on committees and engage in clinical practice in their organizations. Therefore, nurse academics are a group that has the risk of being burnout.

Burnout reactions are graded along three dimensions-emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and sense of personal achievement (PA). EE is a chronic state experienced by the overstressed individual that is manifested as low physical energy and reduced emotional tolerance. DP is a state of detachment characterized by low emotional engagement in work; in this state, individuals perform duties mechanically. Sonnentag (2005) has argued that DP is an ineffective coping strategy used to fight EE. A sense of PA results from successfully coping with problems and challenges (Maslach, 1976); however, the person experiencing burnout tends to ignore PA. These states are self-reinforcing; DP directly decreases the sense of PA (Taris, Blanc, Schaufeli & Schreurs, 2005), while EE interferes with PA (Dorman, 2003; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach et al., 2001). A sense of low PA may, in turn, contribute to increases in DP and EE.

The case of an academic's being burnout is an important problem as besides him/herself, it will also affect the education and the results of the students. Because, being burnout not only causes inadequecies and illnesses in individuals, but also gives harm to the other workers and the foundation as a result of their underperformance, psychological destruction, resignation and retardation. (Hasting & Bham, 2003; Kaçmaz, 2005; Maslach et al., 2001). The consequences of burnout in nurse educators have serious implications for students, educational institutions and ultimately profession. For this reason, it is necessary to realise the case of being burnout, be aware of the risks and prevent them.

LITERATURE REVİEW

Burnout is an individual experience that is specific to the workplace. Individual and situational factors are predictor of burnout. Individual factors include demographic characteristics, personality characteristics and job attitudes. Situational factors include job characteristics, occupational characteristics and organizational characteristics (Maslach et al., 2001). In the literature regarding the burnout of academicians; the relations between individual and situational factors were examined and discussed. It is seen that are frequently discussed in these studies are individual factors such as age, gender, marital status, childbearing, academic position, professional experience and situational factors as stress, workload, support, job satisfaction and agreement with decisions (Alpöz, Güneri, Sürgevil & Çankaya, 2008; Ardıç, Polatçı 2008; Azeem & Nazir, 2008; Barut & Kalkan, 2002; Bilge, 2006; Budak & Sürgevil, 2005; Çam, 2001; Dericioğulları, Konak, Arslan, & Öztürk, 2007; Dick 1986; Dick 1992; Eker, Anbar & Karabıyık, 2007; Ergin, 1995; Gezer, Yenel & Şahan, 2009; Otero-Lopez, Santiago & Castro, 2008; Maslach & Jackson, 1985; Mo 1991; Sarmiento, Laschinger, & Iwasiw, 2004; Serinkan, & Bardakçı, 2009; Toker, 2011). In all of the studies individual and situational factors of academicians were assessed according to three dimensions of the burnout, which are EE, DP and PA. While it is observed in a study that a variable is related with three dimensions of the burnout, it is observed in other studies that it is related with 1-2 dimensions or none.

Considering the studies regarding the variable of age and burnout of the academician, different results are observed. While Alpöz et al. (2008), Barut & Kalkan (2002), and Toker (2011) indicate that young academicians experience more EE compared to older academicians, the relation between the age and EE was not found significant in other studies (Ardıç, Polatçı 2008; Dericioğulları, et al, 2007; Eker, et al, 2007; Gezer, et al, 2009). In a group of studies, the DP scores of young academicians were also found to be higher compared to older academicians (Alpöz, et al., 2008; Barut & Kalkan, 2002; Ardıç, Polatçı 2008). In majority of studies, it was determined that the PA perceptions of young academicians are significantly lower compared to other academicians (Alpöz, et al., 2008; Ardıç, Polatçı 2008; Barut & Kalkan, 2002; Dericioğulları, et al., 2007; Toker 2011).

In the studies, it is observed that female academicians generally experience higher levels of EE and DP compared to men, and their personal success perceptions are lower. In addition to this, there are also different findings. While Lackritz (2004), Budak & Sürgevil (2005), Dericioğulları, et al. (2007), Ergin (1995) and Gezer et al. (2009) indicated that gender is a factor related with the burnout of academicians, other researchers found that gender is not associated with experiencing burnout (Alpöz, et al, 2008; Barut & Kalkan, 2002; Bilge, 2006; Eker, et al., 2007; Toker 2011). While Dericioğulları, et al. (2007) and Eker, et al., 2007) indicated that women experience more DP, Lackritz (2004) and Bilge (2006) found that men experience more DP. The relation of the gender factor with PA was found significant only in two studies; personal success perceptions of men are higher compared to women (Barut & Kalkan, 2002 Dericioğulları, et al., 2007). In majority of studies, the PA score was found similar for both women and men (Alpöz, et al., 2008; Bilge, 2006; Budak & Sürgevil, 2005; Eker, et al., 2007; Ergin 1995; Gezer, et al., 2009; Toker 2011).

In studies performed in Turkey, marital status was approached as a factor related with burnout. Çam (2001) found that single academicians experience higher levels of EE and DP, compared to married academicians. While Barut & Kalkan (2002) and Toker (2011) indicated that single academicians experience more DP compared to married academicians, Dericioğulları, et al. (2007) found that married academicians experience more DP and single instructors experience more EE. Ardıç, Polatçı (2008) indicated that married academicians have higher levels of personal success perceptions. In majority of studies, PA perceptions of married academicians were found higher compared to single academicians (Barut & Kalkan, 2002; Dericioğulları, et al., 2007; Ardıç, Polatçı 2008; Toker 2011). Burnout levels of academicians with children were similar with the married academicians. While the DP levels of academicians with children were lower compared to those without children, their PA perceptions were higher.

Title or position is defined as one of the major factors affecting the burnout of academicians. In almost all of the studies, it is indicated that research assistants experience more EE and DP and have lower levels of PA perceptions, compared to professors (Alpöz, et al., 2008; Ardıç, Polatçı 2008; Azeem & Nazir, 2008; Barut & Kalkan, 2002; Bilge 2006; Eker, et al., 2007; Ergin 1995; Serinkan, & Bardakçı, 2009; Toker 2011). In addition to this, no relation was found between the academical position and burnout in the studies of Budak & Sürgevil (2005) and Dericioğulları, et al. (2007).

Working time was also determined to be one of the factors related with burnout. It is seen that as the working time increases in the profession, the experience of EE and DP decreases and the personal success perception increases (Ardıç, Polatçı 2008; Çam, 2001; Dericioğulları, et al., 2007; Eker, et al., 2007).

The burnout experiences of academicians are related not only with personal, but also situational factors. In the studies being performed, it was determined that factors such as stress, workload, support, job satisfaction and agreement with decisions are effective upon the burnout experiences of academicians (Ardıç, Polatçı 2008; Barut & Kalkan, 2002; Çam, 2001; Budak & Sürgevil, 2005; Dick 1986; Dick 1992; Otero-Lopez, et al., 2008; Ergin 1995; Sarmiento, et al., 2004; Eker, et al., 2007, Bilici, Mete, Soylu, Bekaroğlu & Kayakçı, 1998). It was determined that the inconsistency between the workload/workplace environment and academicians increases the burnout level (Bilge, 2006; Budak & Sürgevil, 2005). Bilge (2006) determined that the decrease in job satisfaction increases the emotional burnout. Schwab, Jackson, & Schuler (1986) found that the lack of organization, chaos of role, high expectations, career targets and rarity of support groups increase the risk of burnout. Lack or abundance of lesson load (Ardıç, Polatçı 2008) increased the experience of EE and DP (Budak & Sürgevil, 2005; Lopez 2008).

It is important to prevent the burnout. Because it not only causes inefficacies and diseases in the individual, but also harms the institution as a result of the low performance, depression, psychological destruction, job release and job failure of the individual (Kaçmaz 2005; Hasting and Bham, 2003; Schwab, Jackson, & Schuler, 1986). Burnout experience of academicians is an important problem, since it will influence her/him, the education and student outcomes.

It is observed in the relevant literature that the burnout of academicians are examined at universities, or different occupational groups or some professional groups. The studies regarding the burnout of nursing academicians are limited. In the studies, it was determined that factors such as being young, woman, single, research assistant, having no children, having a duty term of less than five years, abundance of workload, stress and disagreement with decisions generally increase the level of burnout. According to these results; nurse academicians, who are consisted of female and young groups, have a great number of students at the levels of bachelor's degree, post graduate and doctorate, and who constantly perform the studies of developing programs in parallel with the rapid changes in health services, have a higher risk of experiencing burnout.

Majority of factors causing burnout could be changed or removed and the burnout could be prevented. The first step of deciding on improvement studies on a subject is to determine the effectiveness of the available condition. Thus, the research objective is to determine the influence of age, marital status, academic positions, weekly work hours and educational models on burnout among nurse academicians.

METHOD

Participants: The research was conducted in two Turkish nursing schools, one applying PBL (for the past eight years), and the other offering more traditional instruction. There were 42 academicians and 346 students in the PBL school, and 73 academicians instructing 963 students in the traditional school. Both schools have undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs. We excluded senior administrative faculty (Deans and Assistant Deans; n = 8) and invited all 107 remaining academics to participate in the study.

Material and Instruments: The researchers prepared a questionnaire on personal information that contained basic questions like age, marital status, academic position, weekly work hours, and the instruction method of the school. Weekly work hours included classroom preparation and presentation, participation in the laboratory or practice sessions, student advising, and hours spent conducting and supervising research.

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was devised by Maslach & Jackson (1981) to quantify worker burnout. The MBI was adapted to Turkish schools by Ergin (1992) and Çam (1992). In this study, the Turkish version of MBI translated by Ergin (1992) was used. Test reliability was evaluated by analyzing the internal consistency of each of the three dimensions, and by the test/re-test method. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient values of the dimensions were 0.82, 0.60, and 0.80 respectively, and the test/re-test reliability coefficients, obtained from 99 subjects 2–4 weeks later, were 0.83, 0.72, and 0.67 (Ergin, 1992). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.76 for the total inventory, 0.86 for EE, 0.78 for DP, and 0.82 for PA.

The MBI evaluates three dimensions: EE is evaluated with nine items, DP with five items, and PA with eight items. The 7-point Likert type scale in the original instrument was changed to a 5-point Likert type scale by Ergin (1992). In the burnout inventory, the academicians were asked to state the frequency with which they were affected by the given statements and to choose one of the following options: "never," "a few times a year," "a few times a month," or "every day". The answers ranged between 0 (never)–4 (every day). High scores on EE and DP and low scores on PA are accepted as indicative of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

The questionnaire and the Maslach Burnout Inventory were distributed by the researchers to volunteer academicians and then collected on specified dates.

Data Analysis: Personality and workplace features were specified by calculating frequencies, burnout levels were determined by mean scores and standard deviations. The influences of marital status, weekly work hours and education models on the level of burnout were analyzed by student's t test because there were two independent group and each group size is more than 30. The influences of age and academic position on the level of burnout were analyzed by Kruskal-Wallis test because there were three independent group and each group size is fewer than 30. SPSS for Windows statistical package was used in analysis. In all statistical analysis, p was set as 0.05.

Ethics approval: We obtained consent from the ethics committees of both nursing schools. The individuals included in the study were informed about the research and all participants gave their oral consent.

RESULTS

Demographic Findings: The sample population comprised 94 female participants (88% response rate). The majority of the nurse academics were married (57.45%) and under 40 years of age (77.66%). All respondents were full-time faculty members. Most of them stated that they worked 51 hours and more in a week (58.51%). The majority of academics in both schools were working as Research Assistants (54.25%), wherein they were completing their masters /doctoral thesis and providing classroom and clinical instruction under the guidance of a professor. The second largest group was Professors (Assistant, Associate or Full) (32.98%). Professors provide classroom instruction to undergraduate and graduate students, participate in their own research, supervise graduate student research, and offer clinical instruction. The third category of academics was Instructors (12.77%), who have a master's degree, but are not pursuing doctoral education. They provide clinical and classroom instruction to undergraduate students. Of these, 37 were from the school applying PBL and 57 were from the school applying traditional instruction (Table 1).

Table 1. Personality and workplace features of nurse academicians

	n	%
Age		
30 and under	43	45.75
31–40	30	31.91
41 and above	21	22.34
Marital status		
Married	54	57.45
Single	40	42.55
Academic position		
Research Assistant	51	54.25
Professor	31	32.98
Instructor	12	12.77
Weekly work hours		
50 hours and less	39	41.49
51 hours and more	55	58.51
Eğitim yöntemi		
PBL	37	39.36
Traditional	57	60.64

Burnout Scores: The EE score of the nurse academics was 16.43±5,97, the DP score was 4.83±3,62, and the PA score was 22.27±4,27 (Table 2).

Table 2. Burnout scores of nurse academicians

	n	Mean±S.deviation
Duygusal Tükenme (EE)	94	16.43±5.97
Duyarsızlaşma (DP)	94	4.83±3.62
Kişisel Başarı (PA	94	22.27±4.27

There were no significant differences in EE and DP according to age ($p > 0.05$). However, 30 years and below of the academics reported a lower level of PA than 31 and above of academics ($p < 0.05$) (Table 3). Single academicians indicated a higher level of DP than married ($p < 0.05$). Whereas, no significant differences were observed for EE and PA subscale scores according to marital status ($p > 0.05$) (Table 3). The means of EE and

DP score for professors was higher than research assistans and instructors. But, there were no significant differences in EE and DP according academic position ($p > 0.05$). However, professors and research assistans reported a lower level of PA than instructors ($p < 0.05$) (Table 3). There were no significant differences in EE, DP and PA scores according to the weekly work hours and education model of nurse academics ($p > 0.05$) (Table 3).

Tablo 3. Personality and workplace features and burnout scores of nurse academicians

		EE score±SD	Test/ p value	DP score±SD	Test/ p value	PA score±SD	Test/ p value
Age							
30 and below	43	16.46±6.34		5.39 ±4.07		20.86 ±4.37	
			*.965		*3.944		*9.534
31–40	30	17.30±5.98	.617	5.06 ±3.39	.139	23.26± 3.94	**.009**
41 and above	21	15.09±5.08		3.33±2.49		23.71± 3.73	
Marital status							
Married	54	15.92±5.44		4.00±3.18	**2.667	22.25 ± 4.36	**.018
			**.943		**.009**		.986
Single	40	17.10±6.60	.348	5.95±3.90		22.27± 4.18	
Academic position							
Professor	31	15.61±5.00		3.74±2.85		24.00 ±3.69	
			*.887		*3.67		*6.985
Research assistant	51	17.03 ±6.65	.652	5.49±3.95	.159	21.31±4.28	**0.030**
Instructor	12	15.91 ±5.19		4.83±3.45		21.83 ±4.50	
Weekly Hours of Work							
50 hours and less	39	16.00± 5.91		4,89±3.73		22.84 ± 3.55	
			**-.581		**.152		**1.112
51 hours and more	55	16.72 ±6.03	.563	4.78±3.56	.880	21.85 ± 4.69	.269
Education Model							
PBL	37	15.45±5.70				21.40±5.15	
			**-1.270	4.43±3.27	**-.857		**-1.589
Traditional	57	17.05±6.09	.207	5.08±3.82	.394	22.82±3.51	.116

*Kruskal Wallis H Test
**Student T testi

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study indicate that there were no significant differences in EE according to the personality and workplace features. However, single academics indicated a higher level of DP than married. Professors and research assistans reported a lower level of PA than instructors. Younger academics reported a lower level of PA than 31 and above. There were no significant differences in EE, DP and PA scores according to the weekly work hours and education model of nurse academics.

Previous studies have produced conflicting results about this issue. In a series of research studies conducted in Turkey, the academicians' marital status had no relationship with burnout (Alpöz, et al, 2008; Eker, et al, 2007; Gezer, Yenel & Şahan, 2009). Our result was congruent with studies conducted elsewhere, with single academics reporting a significantly higher level of DP than married ones (Barut & Kalkan, 2002; Çam, 2001; Ergin, 1992; Maslach & Jackson, 1985; Mo 1991) while married persons demonstrated a higher level of PA (Barut & Kalkan, 2002; Ardıç & Polatçı, 2008). In the previous studies, it was postulated that married academicians experienced a lower level of DP and a higher level of PA because of the social support provided by the family institution. This might also be the experience of the participants in our study, where married academics experienced a lower level of DP in comparison with the single ones.

We also found differences with regard to age among the nurse academics, with significantly lower PA scores in the younger academics. This finding is supported by other research. Alpöz et al. (2008) demonstrated that those aged 25–30 experienced a higher level of EE, DP and a lower level of PA when compared with the 31 and above age group. Barut & Kalkan (2002) also found that the 20–30 age group experienced higher levels of burnout than those in the 40 and above age group. PA scores of the academicians older than 30 are also lower when compared with those academicians who are older. Moreover, it is observed that academicians aged 30 and below experience higher levels of burnout when compared to older academicians in the areas of EE and DP. These results are compatible with the results of previous studies and this situation may be accounted for by the increase in experience with age, the development of internal capabilities, and coping (Ergin, 1995).

In the present study, we found that Research Assistants and professors had a lower level of PA than instructors. Lackritz (1994), Budak & Sürgevil, (2005), Dericioğulları (2007) found that there were no significant differences in all burnout subscales among academicians according to the academic position, and Çam (2001), Gezer et al. (2009) found no difference between the EE and DP scores in terms of academic position. However, in several studies conducted in Turkey, where the Research Assistant position is common, this group has the highest level of burnout (Alpöz et al 2008; Ardıç & Polatçı, 2008; Barut & Kalkan, 2002; Bilge (2006); Eker (2007); Serinkan, Bardakçı (2009), Toker (2011); Bilici et al. 1998). In these studies, the fact that research assistants experienced a higher level of burnout when compared to other faculty members were accounted for by the fact that they are inexperienced about both relationships with students and class management and at the same time, they attempt to pursue their academic studies, not to mention the high authority exerted over them. In this paper, unlike the results of other studies, the professor's experiencing low personal achievement like the assistants can be explained by the features, complexity and the workload of the nursing education program. In the both nursing schools where the study has been carried out, the professors are responsible for the practicing in the bachelor's degree, master's degree and doctor's degree programs in the fields of education, research, and practicing nursing with students. Due to multiple roles and responsibilities, their having difficulties in achieving their goals can cause the nurse academics to experience the sense of low personal achievement. Also Sarmiento et al. (2004) stated that nurse educators have multiple roles and responsibilities, and these broad expectations may increase the risk of burnout. In this study, the instructors whose sense of personal achievement is higher than the professors, don't have the responsibility to do graduate education and research; they have less workload than the professors and research assistants. These results support the relationship between the burnout and the workload and complexity, which was stated by Maslach & Leiter (1997).

In this study, the academicians' weekly work hours were not associated with the level of burnout. This finding is not compatible with the results of previous studies. Ardıç & Polatçı (2008) found that a work load greater than 36 hours per week leads to DP. Otero-Lopez, et al. (2008) and Budak & Sürgevil, (2005) found out that weekly work hours are associated with high levels of EE and DP. In the present study, the fact that burnout level did not differ in terms of weekly course load might be related to organizational factors like a positive work environment. In this survey, the working hours are decided by the nurse academics who set the sample, appropriate for their mission and values to be able to discharge their responsibilities and improve their personal achievement. The management does not impose an overwork span. This result supports the importance of an individual's controlling his own work in preventing the case of being burnout, which was stated by Maslak &Leiter (1997). Neither in Dick's (1986) survey, there is a relationship discovered between nurse academics' working hours and the level of their burnout.

In the present study, burnout scores of academicians were similar whether they were employed in PBL schools or schools offering traditional instruction. Prior to our research, it was anticipated that academicians who used PBL would experience more burnout. Previous researches demonstrated that role conflict, role ambiguity, extra work load, and job satisfaction are associated with academician burnout (Budak & Sürgevil, 2005; Çam, 2001; Dick, 1986; Otero-Lopez et al., 2008; Sarmiento 2004; Ergin 1995) and these factors have been described as issues for academics using the PBL approach in education (Berkson, 1993; Davis & Harden, 1999; Harden & Crosby, 2000). Research on the PBL process has revealed that educators often believe the approach is superior to traditional methods, resulting in increased satisfaction (Harden and Crosby, 2000; Neville, 1999; Rideout and Carpio, 2001). Kaufman and Holmes (1996) reported that the PBL academics are pleased with their role as a guide rather than lecturer, and that the new knowledge and skills acquired with this role increases their job satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

Academic burnout is a significant problem, since it has been shown to be associated with decreased work performance, increased health problems, and decreased job satisfaction. Consequently, the burnout awareness of university managers and academics is important.

We found that marital status affects DP, age and academic position affect PA among nurse academics. In this survey, "that the level of the personal achievement of the professors and the assistants are alike" is different from the results of the surveys that are made about the other academics' burnout and this difference is considered to be possibly related to classroom education and laboratory work of the nurse academics and their multiple roles like practicing in clinical environment. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that the burnout of nurse academics should be examined with the other variants of burnout in higher populations and qualitative studies should be made about the reasons of burnout.

There is a wealth of research examining studies of burnout among academics who work in schools delivering traditional instruction. However, this is the first reported study focusing on academician burnout in schools delivering PBL. Although we surmised that burnout levels of academics applying PBL would be higher, we found the PBL model does not exacerbate burnout, which lends support for the PBL approach to nursing education. A study incorporating academics providing PBL education in faculties other that from nursing would also be valuable.

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