

# **Burnout Research on Junior Administrative Police Officers in the Police Department**

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## **Abstract**

The research is carried out through the face-to-face interview in a training program participated by 189 junior administrative police officers (commissioner and deputy commissioner) in charge in different provinces and branches of the police department in our country. The research aims to determine the burnout levels of police managers on the basis of different demographical variables.

In consequence of the research, no advanced level of burnout finding is determined in junior police managers in the general sense. However, meaningful differences are found in regard to “Emotional Exhaustion”, “Desensitization” and “Personal Accomplishment”, which are defined as the sub-dimensions of burnout.

**Keywords:** Burnout, Junior Administrative Officer, Police, Police Department

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## **Introduction**

Professional lives of individuals constitute a really important part of their daily lives. Therefore, employees’ attitudes towards this really important part of their lives are expected to have results both for the organizations they work in and for themselves. Normally, employees who maintain a positive attitude towards their job are happier and more pleased with themselves. On the other hand, those who maintain a negative attitude towards their job may encounter many emotional, mental and physical problems (Maslach and Leiter, 1997).

Burnout syndrome, which is one of the factors adversely influencing the professional life, is accepted as a phenomenon having both personal and organizational negative impacts. It is possible to define this syndrome, which is common today, as “physical and psychological burnout as a result of failure, exhaustion, loss of energy and power or unsatisfied desires”. Burnout syndrome consists of three main dimensions being emotional exhaustion, desensitization and personal accomplishment and these dimensions point out the changes in the life of the individual experiencing the burnout (Ardıç and Polatçı, 2008: 69 trns. Gökoğlan, 2010).

There are many problems in the individuals' professional life, which gain more and more importance, influencing both their professional lives and family lives. Job stress, extremely busy pace of work, fatigue, workaholism, psychological disorders arising from job stress may be given as examples. The constantly developing technology, intensive competition in international economies, the competition of taking market share among enterprises and the arising sense of individual competition bring to the employees different viewpoints or opinions about the professional life.

Today, professional lives of people make certain positive or negative impacts on other areas of life. The profession of policing is one of these areas. Various researches have been made on the police officers till the present. Police officers' work-family life balance, workaholism, professional satisfaction, emotional intelligence and leadership are some of the subjects researched (Azizoğlu and Özyer, 2010, Kaya, 2010, Delice and Günbeyi, 2013, Şişman and Topgöl, 2013, Zincirkıran, 2014). This research has been carried out in order to determine the burnout level of the police officers serving in an intense work pressure in our country.

### **1. Literature on Burnout**

Lexical meaning of the concept of burnout is "Exhaustion of energy, power or sources due to excessive demands, fatigue and failure". Burnout is sometimes used as a term expressing the decrease in mental and physical energy arising from work-related stress which sometimes reveals itself with physical impairments, remains unchanged and becomes chronic. (Otacıoğlu 2008: 104). In the dictionary of Turkish Language Society, burnout is defined as "losing power and not making any effort" ([www.tdk.gov.tr](http://www.tdk.gov.tr) 13/02/2010).

The concept of burnout was firstly used by Freudenberger in his research in 1974. Freudenberger defined burnout as a state of exhaustion in the individual's internal sources as a result of being unsuccessful, fatigue, loss of power and energy due to overload and unsatisfied desires (Freudenberger 1974: 159; trns.Öztürk et al. 2011: 85).

In a research made in the following years, Maslach et al. described burnout as a state which is observed in individuals working to serve for people and has the symptoms of emotional exhaustion, insensitivity towards the people to whom they provide service and decrease in personal accomplishment. Burnout is one of the factors that concerns both individuals and organizations and influences the productivity and activity of employees as a result of excessive use of existing power and sources and decrease in energy (Maslach, Schaufeli ve Leiter 2001).

In another approach, the concept is defined as "emotional exhaustion, desensitization and low personal accomplishment observed in individuals with intensive relationship with people as required by their job". The term "emotional exhaustion" in Maslach's definition identifies the dimension of personal stress of exhaustion and expresses "decrease in the emotional and physical sources of the individual". Another approach, "desensitization", represents the

interpersonal dimension of burnout and expresses adverse and harsh attitudes towards customers and irresponsiveness to the job. "Low personal accomplishment" expresses "individuals' tendency to assess themselves negatively" (Zincir Kiran and Tiftik 2013).

According to another approach, burnout is described as a "progressive loss of idealism, energy and goal experienced by people whose jobs are for serving people due to their work". Cherniss defines burnout as a "sickness of excessive commitment". In other words, he describes the concept as one's commitment to work and evaluates it as a sickness (Cherniss 1980; Sturges 1983).

Maslach defines burnout as a three-dimension syndrome revealing itself with emotional exhaustion, desensitization and lack of personal accomplishment in individuals having an intensive relationship with people by virtue of their work (Yıldırım 1996: 6).

The concept of "burnout" is identified as "occupational exhaustion" in some researches. According to these researchers, occupational exhaustion is individuals' setting great goals for themselves and not getting that they want, becoming disappointed and feeling tired and exhausted" (Cemaloğlu and Şahin 2007).

In burnout researches in our country, there are different groups of occupation and public opinion. Teachers, doctors, accountants, nurses, football coaches, students, psychological counselors, academicians, employees etc. constitute some of these groups. In these researches, generally the burnout levels of research groups are measured on the basis of demographical variables or associated with the concepts of job satisfaction, workaholism, organizational commitment etc. and different results are obtained (Çavuş et al. 2007; Havle et al. 2008; Güneş et al. 2009; Basım and Şeşen 2009; Karakelle and Canpolat 2010; İkiz 2010; Dikmetaş et al. 2011; Karahan and Gül den 2011; Öztürk et al. 2012; Bekir et al. 2012; Çapulcuoğlu and Gündüz 2013)

It is seen in the burnout researches on the police officers that associations with factors like job satisfaction, service perceptions, psychological symptoms, life satisfaction and demographical variables are made and also the burnout levels are examined. Different results are obtained in these researches carried out with different groups at the level of officers and chiefs (Torun 1996; Taşdöven 2005; Gündüz et al. 2007; Okyay 2009; Şeker and Zırhlioğlu 2009; Şanlı and Akbaş 2009; Soysal 2010; Kaya 2014).

In Şanlı's (2006) research on the police officers, it is understood that burnout level does not differ according to gender or marital status and exhaustion decreases as the age increases. In Torun's research of burnout, family structure and social support on 210 participants from different occupations, including 41 traffic police officers, it is determined that burnout is related to the family structure and social support. It is also found in the same research that demographical variables including age, working hours, income level, number of children, gender, marital status and title are related to dynamism, consistence and interest in others, which are dimensions of burnout.

In consequence of Sosyal's (2010) research, it is determined that variables of age, marital status, time of service in the occupation, educational background, working system, receiving certificate of appreciation and reward and economic favorableness of the profession have meaningful differences when burnout levels are statistically analyzed in terms of demographical variables (age, gender, marital status, degree, time of service in the occupation, educational background, working system, receiving appreciation and reward and economic favorableness of the profession), which are independent variables for the police officers.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

### **2.1. Purpose of the Research**

The research aims to determine the burnout levels of junior police managers in the police department, who spend much time in their working life and are supposed to be exhausted most in the professional sense. The research also aims to make comparisons with previous researches and put forth new approaches.

### **2.2. Data Collection Method**

The version of Maslach Burnout Inventory adapted to Turkish by Ergin (1992) is used in the research in order to measure the occupational burnout level. The inventory consists of 22 questions, reliability and "personal accomplishment, which are three sub-dimensions of burnout. 9 items are for Emotional Exhaustion, 5 items for desensitization and 8 items for Personal Accomplishment. The inventory is answered with 5-point Likert method. Items in the inventory are answered with one of the following options: 1. never, 2. rarely, 3. occasionally, 4. frequently and 5. always. High point of emotional exhaustion and desensitization and low point of personal accomplishment indicates burnout.

### **2.3. Data Analysis**

Data obtained from the questionnaire applied in the research are transferred to the electronic environment and analyzed by means of SPSS 16.0 package software. Independent samples t-test and One Way ANOVA tests are applied as analysis methods. Tukey's and LSD tests are used in the determination of differences found in consequence of One Way ANOVA. In the questionnaire, Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient is calculated as 0.88 for the dimension of emotional exhaustion, 0.78 for desensitization and 0.99 for personal accomplishment. This data proves that the questionnaire form is reliable. The margin of error is selected as  $\alpha=0.05$  in the tests.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Descriptive Findings

**Table 1.** Demographic Characteristics of Samples.

Demographic Characteristic	Value	Number
<b>Description of the line item</b>		
Month and year of survey	March-April 2012	
Sample size	189	
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	3.2%	6
Male	96.8%	183
<b>Age</b>		
20-30	50.8%	96
31-40	49.2%	93
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	90.5%	171
Single	9.5%	18
<b>Income Level</b>		
1100-2000TL	2.1%	4
TL 2100-3000	91%	172
3100 and over	6.9%	13
<b>Work Experience</b>		
6-10 years	83.6%	158
11-15 years	14.8%	28
16-20 years	1.6%	3

The research was carried out in March and April, 2012. Out of 189 police managers having participated in the research, 6 (3.2%) are women and 183 (96.8%) are men. 96 (50.8%) of participants are within the age range of 20-30 and 93 (40.2%) within 31-40. 171 (90.5%) of participants are married and 18 (9.5%) are single. 4 (2.1%) of the participants have an income of TL 1100-2000, 172 (91%) have an income of TL 2100-3000 and 13 (6.9%) have an income over TL 3000. In terms of work experience, it is determined that 158 (83.6%) of the participants are on duty for 6-10 years, 28 (14.8%) for 11-15 years and 3 (1.6%) for more than 15 years.

#### 3. 2. Findings on Burnout

Table 1 gives information regarding the gender, age, marital status and work experience which have statistically meaningful differences according to the analyses on the variables composing the sub-dimension of “*Emotional Exhaustion*” of junior police managers. The table also includes the sample findings which do not have meaningful difference.

In terms of the sub-dimension of emotional exhaustion, the item “I feel frustrated by my job” has a statistically meaningful difference according to the gender ( $p < 0.05$ ). The difference is caused by male junior police managers.

According to the age factor, there is no statistically meaningful difference in the item “I feel like I am at the end of my tether” ( $p = 0.97$ ). According to this factor, all other factors do not have a statistically meaningful difference. Only one item is shown in the table as an example.

It terms of marital status, the item “*I feel frustrated by my job*” have a statistically meaningful difference ( $p = 0.026$ ). According to the findings, single police managers do not feel frustrated by their job as much as the married ones.

It terms of work experience factor, the item “*I feel helpless due to my job*” do not have a statistically meaningful difference ( $p = 0.548$ ). According to this factor, all other factors do not have a statistically meaningful difference. Only one item is shown in the table as an example.

**Table 1: Comparison of Emotional Exhaustion Variables by Demographical Characteristics**

Variables	Demographic Characteristics	n	Avg.	SD.	t	P
I feel frustrated by my job.	Female	6	1.1667	.40825	-3.510	<b>0.014</b>
	Male	183	2.5847	.98460		
I feel like I am at the end of my tether.	<b>Age</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Avg.</b>	<b>SD.</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>P</b>
	20-30	96	2.0625	1.0032	0.920	0.97
31-40	93	1.9247	1.0553			
I feel frustrated by my job.	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Avg.</b>	<b>SD.</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>P</b>
	Married	171	2.5263	0.9598	-0.564	<b>0.026</b>
Single	18	2.6667	1.3719			
I feel helpless due to my job.	<b>Work Experience</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Avg.</b>	<b>SD.</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>P</b>
	6-10 years	158	1.9304	1.0289	0.603	0.548
	11-15 years	28	1.8214	1.0559		
16-20 years	3.	1.3333	0.5773			

Table 2 gives information regarding the gender, marital status, age, educational background and work experience which have statistically meaningful differences according to the analyses on the variables composing the sub-dimension of “Depersonalization” of junior police managers.

In the dimension of depersonalization, the item *"I feel tired when I get up in the morning and have to face another day at work"* has a statistically meaningful difference according to the gender. The difference is caused by male junior police managers.

In the statistical analysis made on the basis of the ages of police managers, a statistically meaningful difference is found with the item *"I feel I treat some co-workers as if they were impersonal objects"* ( $p < 0.05$ ). According to the table, the police managers in the age range of 31-40 are more insensitive about treating their co-workers as if they were impersonal objects.

In terms of marital status, the item *"I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally"* does not have a statistically meaningful difference ( $p = 0.934$ ). According to this factor, all other factors do not have a statistically meaningful difference. Only one item is shown in the table as an example.

In terms of work experience, the item *"I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally"* does not have a statistically meaningful difference ( $p = 0.037$ ). The difference is caused by the beginning police managers with a work experience of 6-10 years.



**Table 2: Comparison of Depersonalization Variables by Demographical Characteristics**

Variables	Demographic Characteristics	n	Avg.	SD.	t	P
I feel tired when I get up in the morning and have to face another day at work	Female	6	1.1667	0.4082	-2.515	<b>0.040</b>
	Male	183	2.3880	1.1847		
I feel I treat some co-workers as if they were impersonal objects.	<b>Age</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Avg.</b>	<b>SD.</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>P</b>
	20-30	96	1.5104	0.8705	-1.854	<b>0.010</b>
	31-40	93	1.7849	1.1501		
I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Avg.</b>	<b>SD.</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>P</b>
	Married	171	2.3392	1.1889	-0.357	.934
Single	18	2.4444	1.1991			
I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.	<b>Work Experience</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Avg.</b>	<b>SD.</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>P</b>
	6-10 years	158	2.4304	1.1749	3.366	<b>0.037</b>
	11-15 years	28	2.0357	1.2013		
16-20 years	3	1.0000	0.0000			

As per the sub-dimension of personal accomplishment, the items “I feel I’m positively influencing other people’s lives through my work” and “I feel very energetic” do not have a statistically meaningful difference according to gender ( $p < 0.05$ ). It is seen in the table that the difference is caused by the female police managers, who are few in number.

According to the age factor, there is no statistically meaningful difference with the item *"I can easily understand how co-workers feel about things"* ( $p=0.99$ ). According to this factor, all other factors do not have a statistically meaningful difference. Only one item is shown in the table as an example.

As per the marital status, the items *"I deal effectively with the problems of the people I work with"* ( $p=0.036$ ), *"I feel I am positively influencing other people's lives through my work"* ( $p=0.009$ ), *"I make many important contributions to my work"* ( $p=0.001$ ) and *"I feel exhilarated after working closely with co-workers"* ( $p=0.012$ ) have statistically meaningful differences ( $p=0.026$ ). According to the table, the difference in the personal accomplishment is caused by the married police managers. When the analyses are generally examined, the highest difference is found in the sub-dimension of *"Personal Accomplishment"* among the sub-dimensions of burnout. This result is consistent with Soysal's (2010) research results.

According to the work experience, there is no statistically meaningful difference with the item *"I can easily understand the people I work with feel about things"* ( $p=0.465$ ). According to this factor, all other factors do not have a statistically meaningful difference. Only one item is shown in the table as an example.

**Table 3: Comparison of Personal Accomplishment Variables by Demographical Characteristics**

Variables	Demographic Characteristics	n	Avg.	SD.	t	P
I feel I am positively influencing other people's lives through my work.	Female	6	3,8333	0.4082	0.475	<b>0.040</b>
	Male	183	3.6339	1.0230		
I feel very energetic about my work.	Female	6	4.0000	0.6324	1.730	<b>0.037</b>
	Male	183	3.2787	1.0130		
I can easily understand how the people I work with feel about things.	<b>Age</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Avg.</b>	<b>SD.</b>	0.129	0.99
	20-30	96	3.7812	0.9426		
	31-40	93	3.7634	0.9600		
I deal effectively with the problems of the people I work with.	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Avg.</b>	<b>SD.</b>	0.723	<b>0.036</b>
	Married	171	3.7836	0.9235		
	Single	18	3.6111	1.2897		
I feel I am positively influencing other people's lives through my work.	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Avg.</b>	<b>SD.</b>	1,359	<b>0.009</b>
	Married	171	3.6725	0.9630		
	Single	18	3.3333	1.3719		
I make many important contributions to my work.	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Avg.</b>	<b>SD.</b>	1.123	<b>0.001</b>
	Married	171	3.7602	.8649		
	Single	18	3.5000	1.4652		
I feel exhilarated after working closely with my co-workers.	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Avg.</b>	<b>SD.</b>	0.878	<b>0.012</b>
	Married	171	3.9357	0.9276		
	Single	18	3.7222	1.4061		
I can easily understand how the	<b>Work Experience</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Avg.</b>	<b>SD.</b>	F	P
	6-10 years	158	3.8101	0.9317		

people I work with feel about things.	11-15 years	28	3.5714	1.0690	0.77 0	0.465
	16-20 years	3	3.6667	0.5773		

Apart from the findings specified in the tables, Xavg is calculated as **2.5846** for “Emotional Exhaustion”, as **1.9523** for “Depersonalization” and 3.6640 for “Personal Accomplishment”, which are the sub-dimensions of burnout of police managers having participated in the research. Xavg is calculated as **2.8453** for answers given to the entire questionnaire.

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND ASSESSMENT

The following conclusions are reached in the burnout research on 189 junior police managers (commissioners and deputy commissioners) working in different provinces and branches of the police department in our country. The results obtained are consistent with the results of the researches previously made with the police officers and other occupational groups.

✓ When the research is generally examined, no advanced level of burnout finding is determined in junior police managers. This result is consistent with the results of the researches carried out by Zincirkiran and Tiftik (2013) in a different occupational group in our country.

✓ “*Emotional Exhaustion*”, one of the sub-dimensions of burnout, is generally low; however, male and single junior police managers think that they are more frustrated by their job when compared to the married ones. This result may be caused by the fact that the number of male participants is higher.

✓ The lowest findings are obtained for “depersonalization”; however, it is determined male participants feel tired every morning because they have to face another day at work and participants in the age range of 31-40 treat some co-workers as if they were impersonal objects. This may be construed as that police managers become more insensitive as they progress in their profession with the influence of their age.

✓ In the research, the highest burnout findings are obtained in “*Personal Accomplishment*”. In this regard, it is determined that female police managers positively influence other people’s lives through their work and feel energetic with their work. Moreover, married police managers expressed that they deal effectively with the problems of the people they work with, they make many important contributions to their work and they feel exhilarated after working closely with their co-workers. From this point, it is possible to say that police managers have high level of occupational self-confidence and they are professionally pleased with themselves. However, this may lead to a higher level of burnout in the future.

The fact that the level of burnout in police managers is not found high in the research does not mean that it will not get higher. In this extent, it will be better if the research is carried out with members of the occupation at different levels and results are evaluated together.

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