

AN EXAMINATION OF EDUCATIONAL EMPLOYEES' ROLE AMBIGUITY AND ROLE CONFLICT AND BURNOUT LEVELS

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates educational employees' role ambiguity and conflict and burnout levels. The sample was composed of 206 female (52.5%) and 159 male (47.5%) educational employees (365 individuals in total) who were selected with the random sampling method. The Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Scale and Maslach Burnout Inventory were used in the research. Significant differences were found by educational employees' genders. Educational workers' role ambiguity and conflict and burnout levels also presented significant differences.

Keywords: Role conflict, role ambiguity, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment.

INTRODUCTION

Bearing the responsibility to raise the next generation, teachers must deal with several troubles in the occupational sense. The current circumstances do not allow teachers to serve under the same standards. Personal problems of teachers or troubles they experience about the job may cause them to go through a burnout phase. Just as a teacher experiencing burnout in his/her job may not love it or doing it, this may also affect the quality of education in a negative way. For school administrators and teachers not to go through role conflict, role ambiguity and the burnout syndrome, solutions need to be produced. The concept of burnout, according to Maslach (2003), is generally a state of reaction given for distressing elements in the working environments and occurs along with symptoms such as fatigue, exhaustion, and job dissatisfaction. Maslach and Zimbardo (1982) addressed burnout in three dimensions (Polatçı, 2007):

Emotional Exhaustion: It generally emerges in the cases of fatigue that occurs due to the multitude of demands among individuals who try to help others (Girgin and Baysal, 2005). Negative behaviors such as not being able to apply oneself to the job, absenteeism, going to work late, discontinuity to the task, quitting the job are observed among individuals experiencing emotional exhaustion (Baklacı, 2013).

Depersonalization: Individuals experiencing depersonalization, which is another dimension of emotional exhaustion, minimize their relationships with others to get rid of the emotional load. It manifests itself as cold, indifferent and negative behaviors. The individual under the influence of depersonalization exhibits rude and humiliating behaviors towards others and may ignore their requests. They desire to be alone (Aslan, 2009).

Personal Accomplishment: The fact that individual feels unsuccessful and incompetent in terms of job performance causes feeling of accomplishment at lower levels (Aslan, 2009).

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According to İkiş (2010), feeling of personal accomplishment at lower levels involves behaviors such as negative responds to others, depression, low spirits, conflict, failure at productivity, incompetence and low self-esteem. People who are engaged in humans in their jobs experience the burnout syndrome in an intense manner. Burnout also leads to role ambiguity of employees.

According to Ceylan and Ulutürk (2006), the phenomenon of “role ambiguity” is defined as a wage earner lacking knowledge to prove the efficacy expected from him/her in the job. It is emphasized what is expected from the wage earners is not clear in relation to the tasks they deliver in the organization and how they are not clearly informed of how they need to direct those expectations to their behaviors lead to role ambiguity and burnout (Topuz, 2006; Şimşek et al., 2011). Complex roles assumed by employees cause role conflicts (Çelik, 2013). According to Kundakçı (2003), role conflict is caused by large and complicated organizations, changes in the organizational environment and frequent repositioning of the wage earner.

Role conflict is a form of behavior that occurs where delivering a task makes it difficult or impossible for another one to be delivered when more tasks are demanded or expected from an employee (Sıgır, 2007; Simsek et al., 2011).

It is emphasized that severe conditions of role ambiguity and conflict may cause negative tensions, decreased confidence and morale; and role conflict may cause the individual not to exhibit the expected performance and others to consider him/her unsuccessful at his/her job (Tikici, 2005; Kılınc, 1991).

This research investigates the relationship between educational employees’ role ambiguity and conflict and burnout levels. To this end, answers to the following questions were sought for:

- 1-Is there a significant difference between educational employees’ role ambiguity and conflict and burnout levels by their gender?
- 2-Is there a significant relationship between educational employees’ role ambiguity and conflict and burnout levels?

METHODOLOGY

Istanbul province was set to be the research population to determine the relationships between role conflict, ambiguity and burnout levels of educational employees in this research using the relational survey method. The sample was composed of 206 female (52.5%) and 159 male (47.5%) educational employees (365 individuals in total) who were selected from the population with the random sampling method.

Data Collection Instruments

Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Scale: It is composed of 18 questions to identify the role conflict and ambiguity at hospitals. This section was formed with the questions in the Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict Questionnaire developed by Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman. Score average of the scale questions indicates the role conflict and ambiguity level. As the score average increases, level of role conflict and ambiguity increases. General reliability of the scale was found to be high at 0.862.

Maslach Burnout Inventory: The Maslach Burnout Inventory was adapted into Turkish language by Ergin (1992) and is composed of 22 statements. The statements cover three dimensions of Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (D), and Personal

Accomplishment (PA). The Maslach Burnout Inventory was preferred due its wide usage in burnout studies and high reliability. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients are 0.90 for Emotional Exhaustion, 0.79 for Depersonalization, and 0.71 for Personal Accomplishment.

FINDINGS

Table 1. T-test results by educational employees' genders

	Gender		N	X	S	t	p
Role ambiguity	Role Conflict	Female	206	3.33	0.45	14.87*	.003
		Male	159	2.79	0.60		
	Role Ambiguity	Female	206	3.73	0.59	.156*	.042
		Male	159	2.83	0.51		
Burnout	Emotional Exhaustion	Female	206	3.98	0.66	.863*	.049
		Male	159	3.94	0.61		
	Depersonalization	Female	206	4.36	0.60	.477	.783
		Male	159	4.30	0.58		
	Personal Accomplishment	Female	206	3.53	0.85	12.21*	.044
		Male	159	3.44	0.76		

According to Table 1, when examining the educational employees' role conflict levels by gender, the female participants' mean was calculated to be 3.33 and the male participants' mean was calculated to be to be 2.79. As for the means, a significant difference ($t= 14.87$, $p>.05$) was found between the means. The female participants had higher levels of role conflict than the male participants did. Given the educational employees' role ambiguity levels by gender, the female participants' mean was calculated to be 3.73 and the male participants' mean was calculated to be to be 2.83. A significant difference ($t= 156$, $p>.05$) was found between the means. The female participants had higher levels of role ambiguity than the male participants did.

As for the educational employees' emotional exhaustion levels by gender, the female participants' mean was calculated to be 3.98 and the male participants' mean was calculated to be to be 3.96. A significant difference ($t= 863$, $p>.05$) was found between the means. Given the educational employees' depersonalization levels by gender, the female participants' mean was calculated to be 4.36 and the male participants' mean was calculated to be to be 4.34. A significant difference ($t= 477$, $p>.05$) was found between the means. Considering the educational employees' personal accomplishment levels by gender, the female participants' mean was calculated to be 3.53 and the male participants' mean was calculated to be to be 3.44. As for the means, a significant difference ($t= 12.21$, $p>.05$) was found between the means. The female participants' personal accomplishment levels were higher than levels of the male participants.

Table 2. Relationship between educational workers' role ambiguity, conflict and burnout levels

	1	2	3	4	5
1-Role Conflict	-	.280**	.400**	-.060	-.235**
2-Role Ambiguity		-	.266**	.259**	-.581**
3-Emotional Exhaustion			-	.289**	-.285**
4-Depersonalization				-	
5-Personal Accomplishment					-

.05

The relationship between the role conflict and role ambiguity levels of the educational employees was found to be significant ($r = .280, p > .05$). As their levels of role conflict increase, levels of role ambiguity increase, too. The relationship between the role conflict levels and emotional exhaustion levels of the educational employees was found to be significant ($r = .400, p > .05$). As their levels of role conflict increase, levels of emotional exhaustion increase, too. The relationship between the role conflict levels and depersonalization levels of the educational employees was found to be significant ($r = -.060, p > .05$). As their levels of role conflict increase, levels of depersonalization decrease. The relationship between the role conflict levels and personal accomplishment levels of the educational employees was found to be significant ($r = -.235, p > .05$). As their levels of role conflict increase, levels of personal accomplishment decrease.

The relationship between the role ambiguity levels and emotional exhaustion levels of the educational employees was found to be significant ($r = .266, p > .05$). As their levels of role ambiguity increase, levels of emotional exhaustion increase, too. The relationship between the role ambiguity levels and depersonalization levels of the educational employees was found to be significant ($r = .259, p > .05$). As their levels of role ambiguity increase, levels of depersonalization increase, too. The relationship between the role ambiguity levels and personal accomplishment levels of the educational employees was found to be significant ($r = -.581, p > .05$). As their levels of role ambiguity increase, levels of personal accomplishment decrease. The relationship between the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization levels of the educational employees was found to be significant ($r = .289, p > .05$). The relationship between the emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment levels of the educational employees was found to be significant ($r = -.285, p > .05$).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The female participants' levels of role conflict were found to be higher than the levels of the male participants. Previous research (Daft, 2010; Dogan, Demir, and Türkmen, 2016) seems to coincide with this finding.

No significant difference was found between female and male educational employees' depersonalization levels. Sucuoğlu and Kuloğlu (1996) and Sayıl et al. (1997) also concluded that there is no significant difference between gender and burnout. This finding achieved by the researchers is in parallel with this research finding related to depersonalization. However, it does not coincide with other findings of the research. A similar finding was achieved by Masclah et al. (2001) who made the most important contribution to the literature in the field of burnout.

On the other hand, Kaya et al. (2010) stated that gender is a key factor in experiencing burnout and women are more likely to experience burnout. This finding supports the findings of this research. A similar finding was observed in the research by Aryee (1993). Ergin (1992) stated that women are more likely to have emotional exhaustion while men experience personal accomplishment more and emphasized that the fact that women look out for and care about others more by the nature of their gender roles increase their emotional exhaustion levels. The female educational employees' levels of role ambiguity were found to be higher than the male educational employees' levels.

S. Yörükoglu (2008) put forth that the nurses experience role ambiguity at a low level and role conflict at a moderate level. Similarly, Kalkan (2015) concluded in the study on teachers

that they experience role ambiguity at a low level and role conflict at a moderate level. It seems that these research studies obtained coinciding data with our study.

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