

## The Effects of Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization on Personal Accomplishment in Pharmaceutical Industry

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M. Çağrı Pehlivanoglu\*– Mustafa Emre Civelek\*\*

\*Dr., İstanbul Ticaret Üniversitesi, İşletme Fakültesi, Sütluçe / İstanbul / Türkiye

E-Mail: [cpehlivanoglu@yahoo.com](mailto:cpehlivanoglu@yahoo.com)

ORCID: [0000-0002-7519-3068](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7519-3068)

\*\* Dr. Öğr. Üyesi., İstanbul Ticaret Üniversitesi, İşletme Fakültesi, Sütluçe / İstanbul / Türkiye

E-Mail: [ecivelek@ticaret.edu.tr](mailto:ecivelek@ticaret.edu.tr)

ORCID: [0000-0002-2847-5126](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2847-5126)

### Abstract

*The purpose of this study is to investigate whether the personal accomplishment of the sales department employees working in pharmaceutical industry is affected by emotional exhaustion and depersonalization or not. Based on the internal dynamics of burnout syndrome, the mechanism that builds personal accomplishment feeling of employees is the research question of this study. In the extant literature, the relationship among the internal dimensions of burnout has not attained a consensus. This research provides an important contribution to the existing literature by explaining the statistically significant relationships among personal accomplishment, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. This research is a quantitative study. Research data were gathered from the sales employees working at pharmaceutical companies, by means of a questionnaire. All of the items are collected on a Likert-type 5-level measurement tool. Test of hypotheses was performed by means of partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) method. The findings designate a negative and significant relationship between emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment, and between depersonalization and personal accomplishment. In conclusion, this study recommends some practical managerial implications to increase the personal accomplishment feeling of employees.*

**Keywords:** Burnout Syndrome, Personal Accomplishment, Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, Pharmaceutical Industry

## İlaç Sektöründe Tükenmişlik Sendromu ve Satış Performansı Arasındaki İlişki

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### Öz

*Bu çalışmanın amacı, ilaç endüstrisinde satış departmanı çalışanlarının kişisel başarı hissiyatlarının duygusal tükenmişlik ve duyarsızlaşmadan etkilenip etkilenmediğini arařtırmaktır. Tükenmişlik sendromunun iç dinamikleri çerçevesinde, kişisel başarı hissini oluşturan mekanizma arařtırma sorusunu oluşturmaktadır. Mevcut literatürde tükenmişliğin iç boyutları arasındaki ilişkiye dair bir uzlaşmaya varılmamıştır. Bu arařtırma, kişisel başarı, duygusal tükenme ve duyarsızlaşma arasındaki istatistiksel olarak anlamlı ilişkileri açıklayarak mevcut literatüre önemli bir katkı sağlamıştır. Bu arařtırma nicel bir çalışmadır. Arařtırmada kullanılan veriler ilaç sektöründe faaliyet gösteren işletmelerin satış departmanı çalışanlarından elde edilmiştir. Ölçüm aracı olarak kullanılan anketlerde bulunan maddelerin tamamı beş dereceli Likert tipi ölçek ile katılımcılardan toplanarak istatistiksel analize ve deęerlendirmeye tabi tutulmuştur. Hipotez testleri kısmi en küçük kareler yapısal eşitlik modellemesi (PLS-SEM) yöntemi ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bulgular, duygusal tükenme ile kişisel başarı arasında, duyarsızlaşma ile kişisel başarı arasında negatif ve anlamlı bir ilişki olduğunu göstermektedir. Sonuç olarak, bu arařtırma çalışanların kişisel başarı hissini arttırmak için bazı pratik yönetsel öneriler ortaya koymuştur.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Tükenmişlik Sendromu, Kişisel Başarı Hissi, Duygusal Tükenmişlik, Duyarsızlaşma, İlaç Sektörü

## Introduction

Burnout is one of the popular research topics among academic researchers. Perhaps the most important reason why the concept is a matter of interest of many researchers is the fact that it reflects a reality that people face in their work experiences (Maslach, Schaufeli ve Leiter, 2001, p.398). In most studies on burnout, researchers have studied professional health care workers. In the present study, the research sample is obtained from sales people who are working in the pharmaceutical industry. It has been observed that the sales function has one of the most interactive roles with other people in companies, which is the reason for the selection of sales people. Additionally, sales force needs to be more customer-oriented than any other employee in companies. According to Saxe & Weitz (1982), sales people must spend time on collecting information about customer needs and demonstrate how their products satisfy these needs (p.348).

Companies are affected by rapid changes occurring in social, political, and economic life. The most crucial representatives of companies on the field, namely sales force, often encounter high levels of stress. This stress arises both in the internal sphere and external sphere of the company. Internal stresses mainly include concerns such as daily – monthly – yearly target achievement pressures, emotional distress, role ambiguity, departmental conflicts, budget management and sales KPIs. External stress mainly results from factors that are outside the environment, costumers, safety and legal authorities. Excessive stress not only imposes a negative impact on salesforce, but also exposes them to the potential risk of burnout. John, Francis, & Innocent (2012) argue that salespeople have pivotal roles in organizations and overall success is dependent on the salesforce, therefore, their motivation is very important in companies (p.620). A salesman facing burnout syndrome must be detected at very early stages so that any possible decline concerning the quality of service and relationships with the customers could be prevented in due time.

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether the personal accomplishment of the employees in sales departments working in pharmaceutical industry is affected by emotional exhaustion and depersonalization or not. Based on the internal dynamics of burnout, the mecha-

nism that builds personal accomplishment feeling of employees is the research question of this study. In the extant literature, the relationship among the internal dimensions of burnout has not attained a consensus. Therefore, this research may contribute to the existing literature in this context.

## Conceptual Background

### *Burnout Syndrome*

Freudenberger (1974), who brought up the concept for the first time in academic literature, expressed "burnout" as the state of exhaustion in the internal resources of the individual because of failure, wear, energy and power reduction or unsatisfactory wishes (p. 159). Maslach (1976) stated that strategies to cope emotional stress had important effects on people's professional identity and work behavior (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001, pp.399-400).

According to Jackson, Schwab and Randall (1986), burnout is the emotional exhaustion caused by excessive psychological and emotional demands on individuals (p.630). Budak and Sürgevil (2005) define burnout as the depletion of energy in spiritual and physical terms of individuals (p.95). Emotionally, feeling of burnout can occur against life or work (Bakan & Tombak, 2014, p.682). This feeling, along with the stress in business life, affects individuals' all aspects lives adversely in (Akkoç & Tunç, 2015, p. 4). Burnout is more prominent, particularly in occupations where human relationships are intense (Doğan and Nazlıoğlu, 2010, p. 100; Kaya and Ariöz, 2014, p.90). Burnout is a syndrome that can cause harmful effects to the person's life if it is not diagnosed and treated at early stages (Güllüce and İşcan, 2010, pp.7-8).

Individual and organizational factors play a role in the occurrence of burnout in individuals. Burnout symptoms are examined physically, psychologically and behaviorally (Ardıç and Polatçı, 2008, pp.71-73). It also relates to individual factors such as age, education, marital status, number of children, personality traits, work commitment, expectation level, individual performance, work stress, motivation, personal relationships, communication; and organizational factors such as working

hours, managers, social support, organization, working environment, conditions of work (Yeniçeri, Demirel and Seçkin, 2009, p.88; Kayabaşı, 2008, p.193).

Burnout is a situation that creates negative results not only for individuals but also for organizations (Sağlam Arı and Çine Bal, 2008, p.132). According to Schaufeli, Leiter and Maslach (2009), workers with burnout lose their capacity to provide impacts for the organizations (p. 205). Therefore, burnout may weaken the contribution of the individual to the organization; thus, impair the job satisfaction of the employee (Emhan, Mengenci, Taşdöven and Garayev, 2014, p.81). Employee burnout is one of the important problems faced by human resources units in organizations (Helvacı and Turhan, 2013, p.59). Affecting the workers directly, burnout also deteriorates the quality of care or service, relationships between the individual and the customers, the coworkers, the family and the social life. Additionally, burnout appears to be a factor related to absenteeism from work, abandoning duties, job turnover and low morale (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Mohd Yunus, Bin Mahajar, & Yahya (2009) note that the nursing burnout results in poor patient care in healthcare sector (p. 56). Similarly, it might bring about a poor customer management for sales people.

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach Burnout Inventory) is one of the most frequently scales opted for to measure the hypotheses about whether individuals experience the burnout syndrome or not. In the scale, the concept of burnout is addressed in three dimensions: “emotional exhaustion”, “personal accomplishment”, and “depersonalization”. There is also a fourth optional factor which is mentioned as “involvement” (Maslach ve Jackson, 1981, pp.100-103).

Some researchers argue that these dimensions occur within an order. At the beginning, job stress causes emotional exhaustion. Afterwards, the individual faces depersonalization and then moves to diminished personal accomplishment stage (Totawar & Nambudiri, 2012, pp.66-67). Later, Maslach & Leiter (2008) published a more universal concept of burnout. The dimensions were redefined as follows: “Emotional exhaustion” was replaced by “exhaustion”; “depersonalization” by “cynicism”; lack of personal accomplishment was modified as “inefficacy” at both social and non-social work (p.498).

### *Emotional Exhaustion*

For Maslach & Leiter (2008), "exhaustion" component represents "the basic individual strain dimension of burnout. It refers to feelings of being overextended and depleted of one's emotional and physical resources" (p.498). Emotional exhaustion is the burden of people due to excessive workload, individual disagreement and adverse working conditions (Deran and Beller, 2015, p.72). Under such circumstances, the person feels worn out, depleted and eventually may become insensitive. (Barutçu and Serinkan, 2008, p.546). An increased feeling of emotional exhaustion is the key aspect of the burnout syndrome. In this case, individuals psychologically feel that they are no longer able to commit themselves to work (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p.99). Individuals with high levels of emotional exhaustion have little energy or motivation left to concentrate on the job (Eker & Anbar, 2008, p.112).

### *Personal Accomplishment*

It is defined as the negative self-evaluation of the individuals' work, in other words, feeling insufficient and unsuccessful about the work performance (Maslach and Jackson, 1981, p.99). The individual feels that he cannot make any progress in his skills and work (Şıklar & Tunalı, 2012, p. 77). An employee with reduced personal accomplishment perceives that he or she cannot perform either at job as he or she once could (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004, p.860)

For Maslach & Leiter (2008), this component represents "the self-evaluation dimension of burnout and refers to feelings of incompetence and a lack of achievement and productivity in work" (p.498). In addition, self-perception insufficiency, feelings of failure in the interpersonal relationships in the workplace and guilt lower the motivation of the employee, preventing success (Kayabaşı, 2008, p. 195). In this case, individuals tend to evaluate themselves negatively, feel unhappy and dissatisfied with their accomplishments at job (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p.99).

## *Depersonalization*

According to American Psychiatric Association (1994), depersonalization disorder is “characterized by a persistent or recurrent feeling of being detached from one’s mental processes or body that is accompanied by intact reality testing” (p.477). In medical approach, depersonalization is a common clinical syndrome associated with “disembodiment, strangeness of the surrounding world and emotional numbing” (Graux, Lemoine, El Hage, & Camus, 2012, p. 43). For Maslach & Leiter (2008), this component represents “the interpersonal context dimension of burnout and refers to a negative, callous or excessively detached response to various aspects of the job” (p.498).

Depersonalization may initially arise in several ways. It might be related to some external psychological stressor, and it might also be a consequence of a change in mental state such as low mood, anxiety or drug use (Medford, Sierra, Baker, & David, 2005, p.98). Sugiura et. al. (2009) mention that depersonalization disorder has a high possibility of being misdiagnosed. Therefore, developing new scales which can estimate depersonalization accurately is important (p.315). In line with theory, Totawar & Nambudiri (2012) state that depersonalization negatively influences job satisfaction and organizational commitment. However, it needs to be empirically validated with researches (p.70).

## **Research Model And Hypotheses Development**

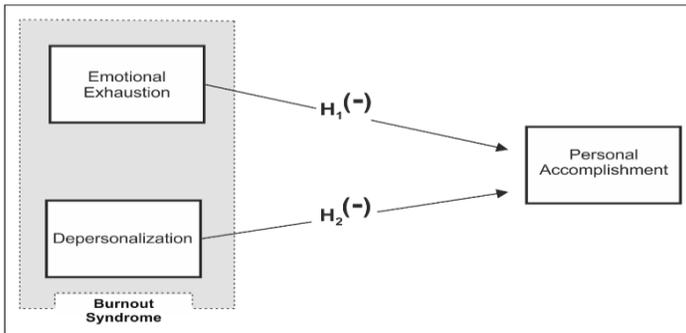


Figure 1. Conceptual Research Model

The conceptual research model is shown in Figure 1. Conceptual research model comprises two hypotheses which were put forward to clarify the effects of the emotional exhaustion and the depersonalization on the personal accomplishment.

### *The Relationship between Emotional Exhaustion and Personal Accomplishment*

Emotional Exhaustion refers to feelings of emotional and physical exhaustion (Maslach & Leiter, 2008, p.498). Personal Accomplishment is defined as the negative self-evaluation of the individuals' work (Maslach and Jackson, 1981, p.99). It can be expected that there is correlation between emotional exhaustion and lack of personal accomplishment. Therefore, it means that personal accomplishment is negatively affected by emotional exhaustion. Thus, the hypothesis is suggested as follows:

H1: Emotional Exhaustion has a negative effect on Personal Accomplishment.

### *The Relationship between Depersonalization and Personal Accomplishment*

Depersonalization dimension represents the individual's negative or detached response to various aspects of the job (Maslach & Leiter, 2008, p.498). Moreover, a person feeling lack of personal accomplishment perceives that he cannot make any progress in his skills and work (Şıklar & Tunalı, 2012, p.77). It can be expected that there is correlation between depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment. Therefore, it means that personal accomplishment is negatively affected by depersonalization. Thus, the hypothesis is suggested as follows:

H2: Depersonalization has a negative effect on Personal Accomplishment.

## **Research Methodology**

In this research, test of hypotheses was performed by means of partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) method. This re-

search is a quantitative study. Research data were gathered by means of a questionnaire. In the questionnaire, five-point Likert scale was used. Firstly, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to determine the validity of the scales. To specify the reliability of the scales, composite reliability and Cronbach  $\alpha$  values were figured. Subsequently, PLS-SEM method was used to check the hypotheses suggested in the initial research model. PLS-SEM is a second-generation variance-based multivariate analysis method. In this method, measurement and structural models are to be analyzed together (Civelek, 2018). As a nonparametric statistical method, PLS-SEM is the most preferred method for the researches which have a small sample size. The sample size of this study is 110. Therefore, in this study PLS-SEM was preferred. This research was conducted by means of SPSS and SmartPLS statistics software.

### *Measures and Sampling*

Scale adopted from Maslach and Jackson (1981) was used to measure the burnout syndrome (pp.102-103). The questionnaire comprises three scales which are emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment and depersonalization. All of the items are collected on a Likert-type 5-level measurement tool. More than 200 questionnaires were distributed, with 110 valid gathered from 32 pharmaceutical companies in Turkey. 24 companies employ more than 250 people while 8 companies employ less than 250 people. The sample consists of sales persons. 82 of the respondents are male and 28 are female. 76 percent of the sample has more than 5 years of work experience. 54 percent of the sample has at least one child. 73 of the sample have at least a graduate degree.

### *Construct Validity and Reliability*

10 items were involved in the confirmatory factor analysis after purification process. CFA was conducted to examine the validity of the scales, (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). In Table 1, confirmatory factor analysis outcomes in SmartPLS are shown. The outer loadings of each item are larger than or close to the threshold level (0.7) and are significant. Convergent validity of the scales was specified according to the CFA results.

**Table 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results**

Variables	Items	Standardized Factor Loads
Emotional Exhaustion	Ee001	0.856
	Ee003	0.682
	Ee006	0.829
	Ee009	0.843
Prsonal Accomplishment	Pa012	0.753
	Pa014	0.811
	Pa015	0.966
Depersonalization	Dp018	0.753
	Dp019	0.776
	Dp021	0.719

*p*<0.05 for all items

Subsequently, average variance extracted values were ensued. Results were found larger than the threshold level of 0.5 (Byrne, 2010). The results additionally confirm the convergent validity of the scales. In order to determine the discriminant validity of the scales, the square roots of AVE values of each variable were also examined. In Table 2, the values in the diagonals refer to the square root of AVE values. Composite reliability and Cronbach  $\alpha$  values are also indicated in Table 2. These values were found beyond the threshold level (i.e. 0.7) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). AVE values, correlations, composite reliabilities and Cronbach  $\alpha$  values of each constructs are indicated in Table 2.

**Table 2. Construct Descriptives, Correlation and Reliability**

Variables	1	2	3
1. Depersonalization	(0.750)		
2. Emotional Exhaustion	0.344*	(0.806)	
3. Personal Accomplishment	-0.699*	-0.350*	(0.849)
Composite reliability	0.793	0.880	0.884
Average variance ext.	0.562	0.649	0.720
Cronbach $\alpha$	0.790	0.882	0.882
Mean	1.79	2.08	4.08
Standard Deviation	0.98	1.04	1.04

\**p* < 0.0

Note: Diagonals show the square root of AVEs.

**Test of Hypothesis**

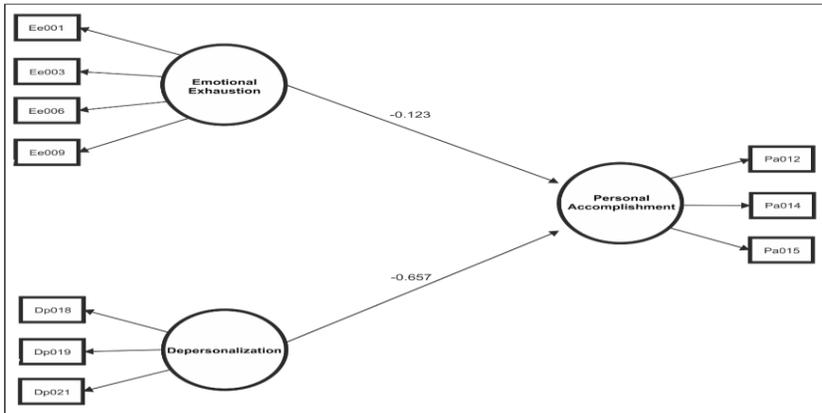
As mentioned above, for the test of the hypotheses, PLS-SEM method was used. PLS-SEM is a nonparametric statistical method and the significance of the estimates is calculated by means of bootstrap procedure (Civelek, 2018). Table 3 indicates the test results.

**Table 3. Hypotheses Test Results**

Relationships	Standardized Coefficients
Emotional Exhaustion → Personal Accomplishment	-0.123*
Depersonalization → Personal Accomplishment	-0.657*

\* $p < 0.05$

As shown in Table 3, H1 and H2 are supported and in Figure 2, path model in PLS-SEM is shown. These results designate a negative and significant relationship between Emotional Exhaustion and Personal Accomplishment, between Depersonalization and Personal Accomplishment.



**Figure 2. Results of PLS-SEM Analysis**

In PLS-SEM, an important indicator for the path models is the coefficient determination (R2). R2 value is used for the determination of the model’s predictive power. This value represents the combined effects of exogenous latent variables on a certain endogenous latent variable (Hair,

Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017). R2 values more than 0.20 are considered to be high. For this study, the value in Table 4 is regarded as high.

*Table 4. R2 Value of the Dependent Variable*

Variable	R <sup>2</sup>
Personal Accomplishment	0.503

The other indicator in PLS-SEM is effect size  $f^2$ . It is used to understand the impact of a latent variable on another. The latent variable that we try to understand its effect size is omitted from the model. Then, measure the change in R2. The values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 represent respectively following effects as small, medium and large effects (Cohen, 1988).

*Table 5. Effect Size( $f^2$ ) Values*

Relations	$f^2$
Emotional Exhaustion → Personal Accomplishment	0.027
Depersonalization → Personal Accomplishment	0.766

Another indicator in PLS-SEM is Stone-Geisser's Q2 value (Geisser, 1974). This value is calculated for each construct in the model. It also refers to the predictive relevance of a dependent variable. Blindfolding procedure is used to produce this value. Q2 values larger than 0 indicate enough predictive value. Regarding below zero, it can be said that there is no predictive relevance. Table 6 presents the Q2 value of dependent variable.

*Table 6. Q2 Value of the Dependent Variable in PLS-SEM*

Variable	Q <sup>2</sup>
Personal Accomplishment	0.264

## Conclusion

This research provides an important contribution to the existing literature by explaining the statistically significant relationships among personal accomplishment, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. The findings designate a negative and significant relationship between emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment, and between deperson-

alization and personal accomplishment. The practical managerial implications of this research can be suggested as follows: First, modifications in work environment may prevent the feelings of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization of individuals. Especially for the sales force, trainings, motivation activities, incentive programs, job design and social events may exert positive influence. Second, increased level of personal accomplishment feelings of individuals may create happy and satisfied employees for the company, which might have a positive effect on the overall presence of the company. Finally, there is a need to measure and evaluate the burnout level of employees and develop programs accordingly to reduce the risk of declining personal accomplishment level of individuals so that the costs of burnout to organizations can be minimized.

As for the limitations, sample size may be noted as the most important limitation of this research. With regard to Turkish pharmaceutical industry, it is considered as a constraint. Therefore, for the future researches, it can be recommended that this research can be conducted in larger samples and comparative studies between the countries might also be implemented.

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