

# The Examination of Emotional Labor's Consequences on Employees: A Research in Nursing Occupation\*

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**Abstract:** The aim of the present study is to explore the impact of emotional labor behaviors of nurses on burnout and organizational commitment levels, working for a private and public hospitals. Also, in present study the effect of paternalistic leader and core self-evaluation on burnout and organizational commitment are examined. The data, consisted of 190 nurses, are analyzed using regression analysis. The findings pointed out that surface acting has no impact on burnout. Paternalistic leader and positive core self-evaluation are significantly and negatively correlated with burnout. Deep acting is positively correlated with organizational commitment. Paternalistic leader and positive core self-evaluation are significantly and positively correlated with organizational commitment.

**Keywords:** Nursing, Emotional labor, Burnout, organizational commitment, Paternalistic leadership, Core self-evaluation.

## Duygusal Emeğin Çalışanlar Üzerindeki Sonuçlarının İncelenmesi: Hemşirelik Mesleğinde Bir Araştırma

**Öz:** Bu çalışmanın amacı Eskişehir'de faaliyet gösteren devlet ve özel hastanesi olmak üzere toplam iki hastanede hemşireler üzerinde yapılan araştırmada, hemşirelerin sergiledikleri duygusal emek davranışlarının onların tükenme ve örgütsel bağlılık düzeyleri üzerindeki etkisini araştırmaktır. Bu araştırmada ayrıca paternalistik lider ve öz değerlendirme tükenme ve örgütsel bağlılık üzerindeki etkisi incelenmektedir. Toplam 190 hemşireden elde edilen verilere regresyon analizi uygulanmıştır. Bulgulara göre yüzeysel rol yapmanın tükenme üzerinde herhangi bir etkisi yoktur. Paternalistik liderlik ve olumlu öz değerlendirme ile tükenme arasında ise anlamlı ve olumsuz bir ilişki olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Derinden rol yapma ile örgütsel bağlılık arasında ise anlamlı ve olumlu bir ilişki ortaya çıkmıştır.

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\* Makale Geliş Tarihi:08.10.2018

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Paternalistik liderlik ve olumlu öz değerlendirme ile örgütsel bağlılık arasında ise anlamlı ve olumlu bir ilişki olduğu tespit edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Hemşirelik, Duygusal emek, Tükenme, Örgütsel bağlılık, Paternalistik liderlik, Öz değerlendirme.

## Introduction

In accordance with the development in service sector, customer satisfaction and service quality have become primary objectives. Employees, who have to cope with heavy pressure of employers seeking to reach these objectives, are thus forced to manipulate or manage their emotions. The situation of forced management and manipulation of emotional reactions in return for salary pays has been originally defined via emotional-labor concept in Hochschild's book (1983) titled as "The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Emotions". Publication of this book has brought forward the concept and utilization of emotions in work life.

Employees, who constantly try to act politely, nicely and warm to their customers, may experience, both physically and emotionally, negative effects of this forced behavior. Physical and mental disorders of employees may lead to a multitude of negative organizational outcomes viz. low work-performance, job dissatisfaction, job absenteeism (Shirom, 1989; Motowidloet al., 1986; Jourdain and Chênevert, 2009). One of these disorders, burnout, also manifests itself as a psychological syndrome in certain professions that require intense emotional labor (Maslach and Jackson, 1984; Maslach, 2003; Maslach and Leiter, 2008; Schaufeli and Enzmann, 1998); such as flight attendant, call-center employees, waitresses, nurses in which face-to-face communication is at great peak (Freudenberger, 1975; Maslach, 1976). In this study relationship between emotional labor and burnout with respect to organizational commitment have been examined among nurses. The effect of emotional labor consisting of two sub-dimensions, such as deep act and surface act, on burnout and organizational commitment has been explored. Within that context, the role of positive core self-evaluations, as one of the personal-level character premises and paternalistic leadership as one of the leadership types, on this relation has also been analyzed.

Main premise behind conducting this study on health-sector employed nurses is related to identifying in relevant national and international studies which point out that, compared to other professions, nurses are expected to exert more intense emotional labor while performing their tasks and communicating with patients (Diefendorff et al., 2011) and thus experiencing higher levels of burnout (Schmidt and Diestel, 2014; Tunç et al., 2013). The essential assumption of Work Demands-Resources Model is that although all professions have unique risks, any given imbalance between demands of a work (workload, lack of feedback, role ambiguity etc.) and resources of work (autonomy, social support, high-quality supervisor-employee relation etc.) would trigger work stress and burnout in every

profession (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Bakker, Demerouti and Euwema, 2005). The second premise behind this study is that in studies within national literature, professional and organizational commitment level of nurses were detected to be comparatively weaker (Benligiray and Sönmez, 2011; Cengiz, 2002).

## Emotional Labor

Emotional labor, as a concept, was first introduced by Hochschild (1983). Main hypothesis of emotional labor studies is that organization sets specific standards for employees' behaviors to help them reflect their emotions to serve to the best interests of customers. This approach also guided employees' relations with the organization. Hochschild (1983) drew a parallelism between actors and employees establishing direct communication with customers. Hochschild (1983) divided emotional control into two categories:

Surface act: Without changing felt emotion, adapting the provided answer/response.

Deep act: In this type of act, employee turns to inner self and this inner view enables to experience emotion to be demonstrated. In another saying, this emotion is truly and personally felt by the individual.

In Deep Act, there is a conscious effort to perform required behaviors by forming empathy with the communicated person. It is aimed to transform the experienced situation or the way it is perceived even before emotions are fully shaped. In the experienced situation one's objective is truly feeling emotions that can create positive results. Here, by evoking certain thoughts, enactments and memories, the person tries to awaken required emotions (Güngör, 2009). In Deep Act, an employee not only endeavors to meet work-related expectations but also looks sincere to the person/people that s/he interacts with (Tokmak, 2014: 138).

Surface act is in the form of role-personification and masking one's real emotions. Since deep act introduces with itself acting in line with real emotions, it may actually enable people to enjoy their job more and sense an increased level of organizational commitment. On the other hand, in surface act, as a consequence of suppression and manifesting fake behaviors, burnout for the acting person is likely to surface (Grandey, 2000). If the person purposefully tries to control his self via observing current situation, mental resources may deplete (Baumeister et al., 1998); memory may weaken and particularly for duties calling for challenging and complex decisions, mental performance may degrade (Richards and Gross, 2000). Burnout, job dissatisfaction, lower self-esteem, lower organizational commitment are some of the detrimental results stemming from surface act (Hoschild, 1983; Morris and Feldman, 1996; Nguyen et al., 2013; Goodwin et al., 2011; Yang and Chang, 2008).

In this regard following hypothesis are formed:

Hypothesis 1a: Surface act is in positive correlation with burnout.

Hypothesis 1b: Surface act is in negative correlation with organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 2a: Deep act is in negative correlation with burnout.

Hypothesis 2b: Deep act is in positive correlation with organizational commitment.

## **The Factors Affecting Consequences of Emotional Labor**

Core Self-Evaluation is a high-order personality type indicating four personality traits such as; self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, emotional stability and locus of control commonly analyzed in personality-related literature. Judge et al. (1997) considered that self-esteem, as one of the main manifestation in positive self-evaluation, represents the overall value that one places on oneself as a person. The second indicator, generalized self-efficacy is the belief one tries hard to cope with unexpected and difficult problems. As a third indicator, emotional stability is a tendency to stay calm, straight and confident. The last trait locus of control is the belief if the one person has the ability to control the events he/she faces with. Apart from external locus of control, internals believe they can control many factors that affect their lives. Those having high Core Self-Evaluation are individuals with positive self-construal thanks to high self-confidence and trust in their potential (Judge et al., 2003: 304). Judge and Bono (2001) provides the meta-analytic results of the relationship between core self-evaluations (four traits mentioned above) with job satisfaction and job performance. The results based on 274 correlations suggest that these traits are among the best dispositional predictors of job satisfaction and job performance (Judge and Bono, 2001). The study conducted on banking employees, in İstanbul (Turkey) revealed that organizational based self-esteem, stemming from the perception of one's self-worth in organizational setting, is closely related with organizational commitment. Also, this study found that internal work locus of control which indicates the belief to control the factors in organizational setting, has a positive effect on organizational commitment. People with a high self-esteem and internal locus of control are keener to develop commitment to their organizations (Minibaş-Poussard, Le Roy and Erkmen, 2017).

Positive core self-evaluation elevates individuals' well-being in light of goal motivation approach. If people pursue goals for intrinsic motives which represent a concordance between personal values or personal choices, and goals, they can have a higher degree of life satisfaction or well-being. People try hard to reach these goals which leads to life satisfaction (Judge et al., 2005). Lower degree of well-being has a positive relationship with burnout which is the outcome of depletion of emotional and physical resources to cope with stress (Maslach and Leiter, 2008). Burke, Koyuncu and Fiksenbaum (2010) found that Turkish nurses

who have reported higher level of burnout, also reported lower degree of life satisfaction and well-being. A study conducted among nurses in China reported that nurses who had higher self-evaluation characteristics, reported less emotional exhaustion and cynicism, and higher professional efficacy (Li et al., 2014).

In this regard following hypothesis are formed:

Hypothesis 3a: Core self-evaluation is in negative correlation with burnout.

Hypothesis 3b: Core self-evaluation is in positive correlation with organizational commitment.

Within the context of Work Demands and Resources Model, leader-employee relation is one of the main concepts analyzed with respect to work resources. An employee who maintains a high-quality relation with the leader may be less adversely affected by the negations of emotional and physical workloads once supported and appreciated by the leader (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Halbesleben, 2006). In this study, selecting paternalistic leadership as the variable stems from two causes. Firstly, paternalistic leadership is one of the most-frequently demonstrated leadership behaviors in Turkish study (Aycan and Fikret-Paşa, 2003; Pellegrini and Scandura, 2008). Secondly there is emphasis on the importance of social support to mitigate negative results caused by emotional labor. It is witnessed that a vast majority of studies investigating the relation between employees' state of well-being or stress level and leadership types mainly focus on transformational leadership and communication between leader & member (see Sosik, Veronica and Godshalk, 2000; Arnold et al., 2007; Tafvelin, Armelius, Westerberg, 2011; Hetland, Sandal and Johnson, 2007; Kelloway et al., 2012). As the results of reference studies show, commonly agreed ground in their findings is that a high-quality leader-member communication that conveys information, shows respect, invokes trust and emotional share would make coping with work demands easier and decrease disappointments due to breaching psychological contracts (Thomas and Lankau, 2009; Bolat, 2011). To illustrate in a study conducted in Australia among 239 nurses, it was detected that leader's social support was a regulating variable in lowering the power of emotional labor on burnout (Pisaniello et al., 2012).

In this context following hypothesis are formed:

Hypothesis 4a: Paternalistic leadership is in negative correlation with burnout.

Hypothesis 4b: Paternalistic leadership is in positive correlation with organizational commitment.

## **Research Methodology**

Questionnaires approved by the Ethics Committee of Anadolu University has been collected by obtaining required permission from Eskişehir State Hospital and Acibadem Hospital. Although 400 questionnaires were initially distributed, 210

questionnaire forms could be collected from the two hospitals mentioned. Of all the revised questionnaire forms, 20 forms were excluded from the evaluation. 20 forms were excluded from the evaluation due to having more than 20% missing values. 87 questionnaires from Eskişehir State Hospital and 103 questionnaires from Acibadem Hospital were included in data analysis. Since in State Hospital, data collection process was supervised by state authorities, a large number of nurses rejected completing the questionnaire form.

Participants completed the questionnaires in their work space. Participation to the study was on voluntary basis and they were allowed to decide not to complete the form on their free will. Participants were asked not to give personal data and were assured that responses would be kept confidential.

All in all, 169 of participants are female, 21 are male. Age range varies from 18 to 52. 99 participants are single, 91 participants are married. With respect to education level, 83 participants are high school and equivalent graduates; 101 participants are university graduates, 6 participants have master's degree. 70% participants have been employed in their respective institution in less than 1 year or for 7 years.

## **Data Collection Tools**

### *Core Self-Evaluation*

The scale developed by Judge et al., (2003) consists of 12 items presented to measure positive-negative self-construal level. Every single item has been answered in 5 Likert type-scale (1=Strongly disagree; 5=Strongly agree). Sample items are such: "I am confident that I have already achieved the success I deserve in life"; "I, myself, decide what can happen in my life." High scores received from this scale indicate a positive self-construal. Reliability results of this scale of which Turkish validation had been made by Kisbu (2006) are in satisfactory level. High scores imply high levels of positive self-evaluation. Cronbach alpha value in this study is measured as .56. Cronbach's alpha,  $\alpha$  (or coefficient alpha), developed by Lee Cronbach in 1951, measures reliability, or internal consistency. "Reliability" is how well a test measures what it should.

### *Paternalistic Leadership*

The scale developed by Aycan et al., (2013) consists of 10 items. Every single item has been answered in 5 Likert type-scale (1=Strongly disagree; 5=Strongly agree). Sample items are such: "My director advises his/her employees like a senior member of the family."; "My director expects commitment and loyalty in return for the care and affection given to employees." High scores refer to high level of perceived paternalistic leader behaviors. Cronbach alpha value in this study is measured as .93.

#### *Emotional Labor Scale*

Originally employed by Grandey (2000), this 18-item scale was checked for its Turkish validation by Ünler-Öz (2007). Every single item has been answered in 6 Likert type-scale (1=Never; 6=Always). Sample items are such: "Even at times I feel deep down inside, I act warmly and put a smile on my face."; "As I try to pretend to be happy towards patients, soon after I begin to feel really happy indeed". High scores refer to high emotional labor. In this study Cronbach alpha value is measured as .79 for surface act; .77,5 for deep act.

#### *Maslach Burnout Inventory*

Developed by Maslach and Jackson (1986) this inventory's Turkish validation was conducted by Ergin (1992). The inventory has a total of 22 items and every single item has been answered in 5 Likert type-scale (1=Strongly disagree; 5=Strongly agree). Sample items are such: "When I wake up every morning, I feel like I cannot stand one more day to this job"; "I immediately understand the feelings of people I interact at work". High scores signal high level of burnout. Cronbach alpha value is measured as .86 in this study.

#### *Organizational Commitment Scale*

Developed by Meyer and Allen (1997) Turkish validation of this organizational commitment scale containing a total of 32 items was conducted by Wasti (1999). Every single item has been answered in 5 Likert type-scale (1=Strongly disagree; 5=Strongly agree). Sample items are such: "As time passes by, I feel like it becomes more difficult to quit my current institute."; "This institute deserves my loyalty." High scores refer to high level of organizational loyalty. Cronbach alpha value is measured as .92.5 in this study.

## **Data Analysis and Findings**

Findings obtained from the study were analyzed via SPSS 20. In Table 1, descriptive statistics of variables and correlation values between the variables are illustrated.

**Table 1:** Mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficients of the variables

Variables	Mean	S.D.	1.Burnout	2.Surface act	3.Deep act	4.PL	5.OC
1.Burnout	2.58	.51	---	.11	-.27**	-.40**	-.56**
2.Surface act	3.33	.75		---	.55	.122	.11
3.Deep act	3.87	.74			---	.29**	.32**
4.PL	4.03	1.03				---	.47**
5.OC	3.17	.60					---
6.C.S.E.	3.43	.40					

**Note:** PL: Paternalistic leadership, OC: Organizational commitment, C.S.E.: Core Self-Evaluation, \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$

As it can be seen in Table 1, while there is no relationship between burnout and surface act, there is a weak yet statistically significant relationship between burnout and deep act ( $r = -0.27$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Burnout and paternalistic leadership has a positive and statistically significant correlation ( $r = -0.40$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Burnout and core self-evaluation has a negative and statistically significant correlation ( $r = -0.26$ ,  $p < .01$ ). There is a moderate statistically significant negative correlation between burnout and organizational commitment ( $r = -0.56$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Surface act has no relationship with any variable. Deep act has positive and statistically significant correlation with paternalistic leadership ( $r = 0.29$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and core self-evaluation ( $r = 0.15$ ,  $p < .05$ ). There is a moderate statistically significant negative correlation between deep act and organizational commitment ( $r = 0.32$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

Within the context of Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2, no correlation was witnessed between surface act and variables; hence surface act was not included in the next step, which regression analysis was realized. Hence the 1a and 1b hypotheses of this study were rejected.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was employed to analyze effects of deep act, paternalistic leader and self-evaluation on burnout. In the light of information provided in Table 3, it is evident that results of multiple regression analysis are statistically significant  $F(3, 186) = 17,638$ ,  $p < .001$ . Corrected  $R^2$  value is 0.21. This finding shows that 21% variance ratio in burnout level is explained by both deep act and paternalistic leader and self-evaluation. Deep act ( $\beta = -0.15$ ,  $p < .05$ ), paternalistic leader ( $\beta = -0.33$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and self-evaluation ( $\beta = -0.19$ ,  $p < .01$ ) significantly contribute to burnout level. In accordance with these results in this research; Hypothesis 2a, Hypothesis 3a and Hypothesis 4a were accepted.

**Table 2:** Multiple Linear Regression Analysis for Burnout

Variables	B	S.D.	$\beta$
Deep act	-.101	0.47	-.15*
PL	-.163	0.34	-.33**
C.S.E.	-.244	0.84	-.19**
Constant	4.469	.318	

**Note:** PL: Paternalistic leadership, C.S.E.: Core Self-Evaluation, \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was employed to analyze effects of deep act, paternalistic leader and self-evaluation on organizational commitment.. In the light of information provided in Table 4, it is evident that results of multiple regression analysis are statistically significant  $F(3, 186) = 22,428$ ,  $p < .001$ . Corrected  $R^2$  value is 0.25. This finding shows that 25% variance ratio in organizational commitment level is explained by both deep act and paternalistic leader and self-evaluation. Deep act ( $\beta = -0.19$ ,  $p < .01$ ), paternalistic leader ( $\beta = 0.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ) significantly contribute to organizational commitment level. In accordance with these results in this research; Hypothesis 2b, Hypothesis 4b are accepted. Hypothesis 3b is rejected.

**Table 3:** Multiple Linear Regression Analysis for Organizational Commitment

Variables	B	S.D.	$\beta$
Deep act	.151	0.54	.19**
PL	.232	0.38	.40**
C.S.E.	.163	0.96	.11
Constant	1.094	.365	

**Note:** PL: Paternalistic leadership, C.S.E.: Core Self-Evaluation, \*\* $p < 0.01$

## Conclusion and Discussion

In the past, the very first studies (Freudenberger, 1975; Maslach, 1976) focusing on professions that require intense face-to-face communication such as health and care services drew attention to the effects that individuals experience as challenges in their professional relations due time on their reactions to work and their mental state. In the ensuing years, not only in health or care sectors only but in all professions where chronic exposure to emotional and interpersonal stressors is seen, it was supported by studies conducted now and before that burnout, being a

psychological syndrome, got stronger than ever before (Maslach and Jackson, 1984; Maslach, 2003; Maslach and Leiter, 2008; Schaufeli and Enzmann, 1998).

Next to burnout, another problematic attitude for organizations is organizational non-commitment. In the light of work ethics of generation Y in particular, it can be argued that their organizational commitment may be weaker when compared to generation X. Specifically for nursing profession that is an emotion and labor intense occupation, both professional commitment and organizational commitment are likely to be weaker than other professions.

In professions like nursing emotion control, always smiling to patients and patient relatives, trying to act kindly and affectionately are highly demanded qualities. Being quite a novel concept defined as emotional labor in literature, the notion is related to suppressing of real emotions by the employed professionals; hiding the feelings; personification the desired models. Such a performance that calls for deep efforts may herald, among concerned employees, psychological syndromes such as aforementioned burnout and alienation in addition to organizational consequences that relate to negative results like weakened commitment and job satisfaction. Based on these data, effect of emotional labor on burnout and organizational commitment has been investigated in this study. Surface act, being one of the dimensions of emotional labor, was reported to have no correlation with burnout as well as organizational commitment. It was also detected in this study that another dimension, deep act, fueled burnout among nurses. This finding is not in parallel with literature review in which obtained findings underlined that individuals in deep-role acting preserved their positive emotions and since they received positive interactions and feedback in return, they were less severely affected by the sadness or burnout caused by emotional labor (Grandey et al., 2005). On the other hand, a positive correlation was measured between deep act and organizational commitment. In fact, this finding is in parallel with relevant literature. That is because employees, who sincerely form empathy and feel positive emotions, can cultivate greater organizational commitment since they receive positive feedback from either the organization or the leader.

As the effects created by a paternalistic leader on burnout and organizational commitment are examined it became evident that relational leadership that offers protection not only lower burnout but also heighten organizational commitment level. In an organization managed via paternalist approach, employees expect their leader to care for their health, education, personal happiness and family life while employees, in return, are expected to be committed and attached to their leader. Paternalist director builds authority via caring for employees' family needs and mentoring in accordance with their personal experiences (Yetim and Yetim, 2006).

As the effect created by the personal premise, Self-evaluation, on burnout and organizational commitment is investigated it was reported that positive self-evaluation with no effect on organizational commitment would diminish burnout. Even more in the regression analysis the comparison between the coefficients of

deep-act and positive self-evaluation revealed that positive self-evaluation turned out to be much stronger /effective.

Based on the findings in this study, we basically aim to draw attention to the utmost significance of paternalistic leadership at most. In Turkey this leadership style is of high demand as also necessitated by our cultural dimensions (see Hofstede, 1986) and also led by the needs of audience and as seen in this project too, it would eventually provide positive results. In Turkish culture depicted on the dimensions of collectivist and high power distance (Kabasakal and Bodur, 2002; Fikret-Paşa, Kabasakal and Bodur, 2001), any leader playing the role of a parent can help the audience to meet values such as approval, security and harmony by forming close relations. This hypothesis can also be supported with the research finding of Karakitapoğlu-Aygün and Gümüşlüoğlu (2013). In a study on the perception of information workers on transformational leadership, as the most vital component of this leadership, it surfaced that benevolent paternalism being unique dimension of Turkish culture emerged. To put this differently, employees desire and highly value forming a sincere and agreeable relation with their director. The truth is, at the core of leadership-audience relation, there is “effect” and creating this effect is closely linked to meeting the needs of an audience. In relevant literature, need for leadership is defined as employees’ desire to be guided by a leader who can facilitate the roads that lead to success in line with personal, group and organizational objectives (De Vries, Roe and Taillieu, 2002); yet this may be something disregarded by directors of organizations. At this point it is of utmost important not to be misconceived. One should also take into account all the potential negative effects that a paternalistic leader could trigger. Due to the family atmosphere and fatherly attitude that a leader with paternalist traits attempts to create in a workplace, employees most of the times adopt a positive approach and yet it is a general conception that such type of leaders would favor certain employees and would cater more for those employees whom they deem to be more loyal to the leader.

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