

## Chapter 5

# Psychosocial Health at Work: A Turkish Case in Service Industry

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### ABSTRACT

*In today's 24/7 work life, mainly productivity demands and increasing work hours affect negatively employees' health and well-being. The negative qualities are called as psychosocial hazards they are defined as "new" and "increasing" risks of work environment. The job-demand-resources model explains the behavioral interactions at work environment that lead to psychosocial hazards and risks. This study aims to determine the demands of the working environment together with the degree of control given to the employees, the level of social support and how all these related to burnout. The subjects are 144 private security officers in a Turkish bank. Study confirmed the positive relation between job demands and burnout; on the otherhand the mediator role of control and supports are not validated.*

### INTRODUCTION

In today's 7/24 client-centered society; productivity demands, information overload and increasing work hours influence employees' health and well-being quite negatively (APA, 2015). Globalization created devastating problems such as the precariousness of working conditions, liberalization of the industrial relations, inequality and unemployment. Mainly globalization resulted with a decrease in prioritisation of social aspects in many parts of the world (Houtman, Jettinghoff and Cedillo, 2007). Last Eurofound survey that reflects the opinion 44,000 workers from 34 European countries on the working and employment conditions, declares that 20% of workers report a poor mental well-being (Eurofound, 2012).

The high number of employees reporting poor mental health is an indicator of negative psychosocial climate at workplaces and this negative progress led European authorities focused on management of psychosocial climate at workplaces. European Commission declared that (European Pact, 2009); "... the mental health and well-being of the workforce is a key resource for productivity and innovation in the EU. The pace and nature of work is changing, leading to pressures on mental health and well-being. Action is needed to tackle the steady increase in work absenteeism and incapacity, and to utilise the

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unused potential for improving productivity that is linked to stress and mental disorders’’. PRIMA (Psychological Risk Management Excellence Framework) is an European initiative to address psychological hazards and risks at work. This initiative announces that protecting the psychosocial health of people is not only a legal obligation, it is also an ethical issue (Leka and Cox, 2008). Psychosocial hazards and risks are linked to the way work is designed, organised and managed, as well as to the economic and social context of work and result in an increased level of stress that can lead to serious deterioration of mental and physical health. The psychosocial risks are defined as “new” and “increasing” risks of work environment by an experts’ forecast (Brun and Milczarek, 2007). The reasons of this “increase” are both the number of hazards leading to risks and possibility of exposure to hazards are increasing while at the same time the seriousness of negative health effects are growing. These new and increasing risks of work life identified as one of the major contemporary challenges for occupational health and safety (Leka ve Cox, 2008).

ILO’s trends report (2015) projects that, the global employment will deteriorate in the coming five years, especially for emerging and developing countries. There is very insufficient data for emerging countries to monitor psychosocial health. According to research in industrialized countries it is known that 50% of workers judge their work as mentally demanding; so it might be assumed that this is higher for developing countries (Houtman, Jettinghoff and Cedillo, 2007). This chapter aims to explore psychosocial hazards for a service job in a developing country and at the same time to explain the relation between stress and burnout.

## **PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECT OF WORK LIFE**

World Health Organization’s constitution states that “*good health is a state of complete physical, social and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Health is a resource for everyday life, not the object of living, and is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources as well as physical capabilities*” (WHO, 2015). As a daily based activity working life influences our health and well-being either negatively or positively depending on the organizational and managerial conditions. There are serious changes at workplaces due to rapid scientific and technological advances and these changes resulted that workers have to deal with them more in compare to past (Houtman, Jettinghoff and Cedillo, 2007: 8):

1. Cognitive demands (increased demands of learning new skills, the need to adopt new ways of working, demands for increased quality of work),
2. Production and speed (the pressure of the demand for higher productivity, increased time pressure and hectic jobs),
3. Employment (higher job competition, increased job insecurity and less benefits),
4. Interpersonal relations (less time for co-workers and socialising).

As already mentioned, psychosocial factors are seen as new and emerging risks and they are grouped under five main issues: a) new forms of employment contracts and job insecurity, b) the ageing workforce, c) work intensification, d) high emotional demands at work, and e) poor work–life balance (Brun and Milczarek, 2007). Another study by a French expert group, *College d’Expertise de Suivi des Risques Psychosociaux au Travail*, made six clusters of psychosocial hazards as a) high demands and work in-

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