

Chapter 44

Relationships Between Mental Workload, Burnout, and Job Performance: A Research Among Academicians

Meltem Akca

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5544-5929>

Alanya Alaaddin Keykubat University, Turkey

Mübeyyen Tepe Küçüköğlu

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3717-4165>

Trakya University, Turkey

ABSTRACT

Mental workload is a popular topic for ergonomics, psychology, and organizational behavior-related studies. Difficulties and differences in defining and measurement of mental workload engage the attention of scholars to the concept. Furthermore, the importance of mental workload on performance and burn out increases attention to the topic for empirical studies. In this chapter, the authors reveal the relations between mental workload, burnout, and job performance. Data were obtained from 144 academicians in Turkey. Results demonstrated that mental workload has a 1) positive impact on burn out and 2) negative impact on job performance of academicians. Moreover, it was found that burn out and job performance are negatively correlated. Finally, findings reported that there are differences among some demographic variables in accordance with mental workload, burn out, and job performance.

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INTRODUCTION

At the present time, the business work environment is becoming more volatile and competitive. The development of information technologies, rapid changes in organizational structures, changeable customer attitudes are more important for today's organizations. These features of the marketplace direct organizations to be in search of new methods to achieve and maintain sustainable performance. Leadership, employee's favorable work behaviors, technological investments are some of the interesting methods to provide continuity of the organization's existence. Moreover, today's work atmosphere is shaped with several elements of organizational behavior. These elements such as job satisfaction, organizational culture, organizational commitment, empowerment, organizational trust etc. have strong or weak relationships with each other. Furthermore, according to the results of studies in the literature these elements have positive effects on job performance or organizational performance (Akyol, 2014; Campbell et al., 1990; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Robbins & Judge, 2011; Spector, 1997; Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000). On the other hand, there exist some elements such as high mental workload, job stress or burnout that result with negative impact on organizational outcomes as productivity loss, reduced performance or lower organizational commitment.

In the last four decades, assessment of the mental workload also takes place in academic studies related with organizational behavior, occupational psychology and ergonomics (Wickens, 2017). Moreover, workload is considered as a major determinant for physical and psychological symptoms (stress, anxiety, sleep problems) occurrence in human's life that catches the scholars' attention to the concept.

In the literature, most part of the workload related empirical studies have been implemented in aviation, transportation, automation related samples (Demerouti et al., 2019; Keser & Yılmaz, 2014; Lee et al., 2015). In this study it is aimed to analyze high-education employees' mental workload, burnout and performance relations to fill the gap about academicians related studies based on mental workload.

It is well known that being an academician needs to show cognitive effort and attention in the work environment (Borghini et al, 2014). Academicians have a multitasking work structure. In addition to teaching courses in their professional areas, they have the duty of conducting academic researches and making the result of these researches useful publications. They also take on administrative duties in various positions in university. For research purposes academicians need to make long hours of search and reading. Moreover, they have to maintain a balance not only between all tasks but also work and life. Therefore, an academician's mental workload issue and circumstances of this subject are worth to investigate. For this reason, in this book chapter it is targeted to measure mental workload level of academicians. It is also aimed to investigate the differences of mental workload, burn out and performance accordance to the demographic groups. In the first part, workload, burnout and job performance were identified detailed. Moreover, studies in the literature related to these variables were summarized. In addition to these, academicians related studies were also evaluated reference to the literature. Then, research model, hypothesis and aims of the study were mentioned. Finally, findings were discussed with the perspective of similar results in the literature.

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