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Occupational Burnout Levels of Turkish Imams

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Abstract The main purpose of this study was to examine the level of occupational burnout among Turkish imams. The study was a descriptive one in which the data was gathered through the "Maslach Burnout Inventory" and the "Personal Information Form", which were given to 124 imams working in Bursa, Turkey. For the 124 imams with the study population comprised, 11 variables were examined. These variables were, marital status, age, educational level, length of service, working district, occupational difficulty, using computer technology, occupational research, part-time job, Arabic language, and size of community. For the statistical analysis of the collected data Kruskal–Wallis, *t* test, ANOVA χ^2, and Fisher's exact test were used. The results indicated that although there was no statistical difference between the education level, marital status, Arabic, and computer knowledge variables among imams in any of the subscales, there were significant differences on emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment subscales ($p < 0.005$) on age, length of service, workplace, occupational difficulty, part-time job, occupational research, and size of the community variables.

Keywords Imams · Burnout · Islam · Turkey

Introduction

One of the most widespread concepts of modern life is depression. It is so common that nearly 121 million people throughout the world suffer from depression (WHO World Health Organization 2010). The effects of depression on people can occur in the form of occupational burnout. Maslach and Jackson (1986) described

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occupational burnout as a state of physical and emotional helplessness and hopelessness, and as the development of a negative self-concept and negative attitudes toward work, life, and other people, which can arise among individuals who do "people work" of some kind and has three central factors: emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and the absence of personal accomplishment (PA). Burnout produces feelings of powerlessness, cynicism, and failure as well as mirthlessness and reduced productivity. In EE, since their emotional resources are depleted, workers no longer feel to be able to give themselves on a psychological level. DP is the defense mechanism that puts some mental and emotional distance between workers and those around them. In PA, there is a reduced sense of accomplishment marked by a tendency to a negative self-evaluation, and workers feel unhappy about themselves and dissatisfied with their work accomplishments. By assessing the negative components of burnout EE and DP and the absence of the positive component PA separately, a comprehensive index of the burnout phenomenon is reached. Although different occupational groups are characterized by burnout symptoms, as the people in ministering positions are personally and intensely involved in people's problems day by day, the experience of burnout is more prevalent in the ministering professions (Coate 1989; Davey 1995; Evans 1997; Rutledge 1999; Musson 2000; Turton 2003; Louden and Francis 2003; Halbesleben and Buckley 2004; Randall 2005; Haley and Francis 2006).

In a Muslim society, as everyone expects the imams to be faithful, they are under the pressure of high moral expectations. This is because for most of the people in society, the imam works in a place where the religious themes, beliefs, and positive or negative attitudes toward different ideas are shaped.

Intense dedication is often evident among the imams who regard their ministry not as a vocational choice, but as a divine mandate to inform people about Allah's orders and worship. The imams, by fulfilling the orders of Allah, consider their job as a way of not only satisfying themselves but also a profession that enables them to earn their living. The missions of an imam never finish; they are continuous and they recur. There are Friday sermons every week, weddings, funerals, religious holidays, classes to teach, and also administrative tasks. As a result, an imam is never really free from his job. While in many occupations work can be left behind, this is not acceptable for someone in the position of an imam. Prayers—five times a day—and sermons occur over and over and people marry and die nonstop. Imams have been working for years and still are not sure whether they really accomplish something. This is because the job itself is primarily related to spiritual nourishment of people. Apart from all of these, as it is a duty which is done for the consent of Allah, the pressure on them is increasing. While most people can easily leave their job, it is not so easy for an imam to do so, as this requires the consent of Allah. An imam may not be charmed so much by desire for status or monetary gain but by the satisfaction of spiritual rewards. The imams invest much of their time into their work. They are not so concerned with economic benefits since their work is for "Allah".

The imams are the ones who attract the most attention in the world of Islam; the well-being of the imam is very important in the society because they carry out a

very important duty as spiritual leaders. Due to the missions and religious motives that are burdened on the shoulders of the imams, there has been a growing interest in the imams and the related concepts. More recent research and commentary suggest that clergy stress and burnout are very real phenomena, which may be increasing (Daniel and Rogers 1982; Sanford 1982; Coate 1989; Davey 1995; Hall 1997; Evans 1997). While widely used among professions engaged in other caring occupations and clergy within different religious denominations such as Anglican clergy (Rutledge 1999; Musson 2000; Randall 2001, 2005; Turton 2003); Catholic priests (Louden 1998; Louden and Francis 2003; Francis et al. 2004); and Methodist ministers (Haley and Francis 2006), not many empirical studies have been carried out to determine the burnout levels of the imams which have not received required attention. As a result of the increasing recognition of the demands of the religion, there has been a growing interest in work-related stressors for the imams. At present, the religion and the imam play a very important role in the lives of most people in Turkey. Especially for the last 10 years imams prescribe worldviews for the Turkish population. Religion in Turkey is mostly studied from macro perspectives such as the role of religion in politics or economy. Agents of religion primarily including the imams are definitely an understudied area. It is important to investigate the welfare of the imams so that they can carry out their duties as leaders of an ecclesiastical community where particular circumstances related to spiritual and religious leadership have a special and unique dynamic.

The main purpose of this study was to examine the level of occupational burnout among the Turkish imams. This study is expected to contribute to the field and accelerate and highlight future studies.

Methodology

This study was a descriptive one in which the data was gathered through the "Maslach Burnout Inventory" (MBI), which is a leading self-report measure instrument in the evaluation of the burnout syndrome among several human services and helping professions (Maslach and Leiter 1997) and the "Personal Information Form". The MBI was translated into Turkish by Ergin (1992) and applied to a sample group of 235 people (doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers, and police officers). Analysis of the findings from this group resulted in some modifications on the MBI made by Ergin. Instead of the original seven-point degree scale, a five-point degree scale was preferred because of the ease of interpretation. The MBI includes 22 questions that are divided into three subscales: The "Emotional Exhaustion" (EE) subscale includes nine items such as "I feel used up at the end of the work day". The "depersonalization" (DP) subscale includes five items such as "I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally". The "Personal Accomplishment" (PA) subscale includes eight items such as "I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job". For the subscales of EE and DP, high mean scores correspond to higher degrees of experienced burnout whereas lower mean scores within PA correspond to a higher degree of burnout. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients for the three subscales are reported as 0.82, 0.60, and 0.73, respectively, and were observed to be

compatible with the results reported by Maslach and Jackson (1986). As Tavşancıl (2006, 29) states, these coefficients are quite satisfactory for the social sciences.

Participants

The MBI and "Personal Information Form" were given to 124 imams working in Bursa (the fourth biggest city in Turkey, located in the western part of the country) by the researcher directly and accompanied by a set of specific instructions describing the study. For the 124 imams with the study population comprised, 11 variables were examined. These variables were marital status, age, educational level, length of service, working district, occupational difficulty, using computer technology, occupational research, part-time job, Arabic language, and size of community. A brief description of the research study, the rights of the individual to decline participation, as well as the assurance of confidentiality was introduced prior to filling out the questionnaire. The survey questions required 20–25 min to answer and were then collected. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. All identifying information was stored separately from the responses received.

Data Analysis

For the statistical analysis of the collected data, first, means, and standard deviations for all variables were calculated. The Shapiro–Wilk test was used to determine whether the data show normal distribution, then Kruskal–Wallis, t test, ANOVA, χ^2, and Fisher's exact tests were used. The significance level was defined as $\alpha = 0.05$. The small sample size renders it necessary to interpret the results with caution.

Findings and Discussion

Each variable on mean scores fall in "high" level for EE, DP and PA subscales. The burnout levels of the imams according to different variables are presented and discussed in different sections.

Burnout and Age

Test results showed statistically significant difference among the mean scores of imams from different age categories on EE [$F_{(3-123)} = 1.44$, $p < 0.05$] and on PA [$F_{(3-123)} = 0.729$, $p < 0.05$]. Although some cross-sectional studies have linked younger age with burnout in clergy (Schaufeli and Enzmann 1998; Kaldor and Bullpitt 2001; McKown 2002; Roberts et al. 2003; Rutledge and Francis 2004; Francis and Turton 2004; Francis et al. 2004; Hills et al. 2004; Randall 2004, 2007) young age did not predict burnout on any of the subscales in the present study. The elderly imams have higher levels of burnout on EE and PA subscales. Being an imam is quite a difficult profession. The ones who are over 50 may feel themselves

Table 1 Descriptive statistics related to burnout and age

Burnout subscales	Age	*n*	$\bar{X}$	*F*	*p* value	Significant difference
Emotional exhaustion	20–30 (A)	19	32.10	1.44	0.044	A − D
	31–40 (B)	50	32.00			
	41–50 (C)	46	34.10			
	51–over (D)	9	36.60			
Depersonalization	20–30 (A)	19	19.14	2.62	0.128	
	31–40 (B)	50	19.42			
	41–50 (C)	46	21.01			
	51–over (D)	9	19.22			
Personal accomplishment	20–30 (A)	19	23.05	0.729	0.020	A − D
	31–40 (B)	50	22.10			
	41–50 (C)	46	21.21			
	51–over (D)	9	19.33			

quite tired. On the other hand, the imams live the maturity period of their profession in the 50-and-over age bracket. The mosques located in central areas where those senior imams practise are respected by their communities and this makes them feel more successful in comparison to the young imams. Those imams who are between 31 and 40 may question their professional lives, what they gain, how much they earn, can usually achieve and feel less compared to the elderly (Table 1).

Burnout and Education Level

Although on education level mean scores for EE, DP, and PA fell in the "high" category, tests revealed that there is no statistical difference between the EE sub-scale [$t_{(119)} = 1.197, p > 0.05$], the DP sub-scale [$t_{(119)} = 0.567, p > 0.05$], and no statistical difference between the PA sub-scale scores [$t_{(119)} = -1{,}103, p > 0.05$] (Table 2).

In all subscales, high school graduates experience higher burnout levels. This result does not show consistency with those of Kayıklık (2007) and Schaufeli and

Table 2 Descriptive statistics related to burnout and education level

Burnout subscales	Education	*n*	$\bar{X}$	Significant difference	*t*	*p* value
Emotional exhaustion	High school	39	33.85	5.59	1.197	0.234
	University	82	32.46	6.10		
Depersonalization	High school	39	20.18	3.03	0.567	0.572
	University	82	19.82	3.40		
Personal accomplishment	High school	39	20.51	5.89	−1.103	0.272
	University	82	21.90	6.73		

Enzmann (1998) who have demonstrated that individuals who receive higher education also appear to be more vulnerable to burnout, which may be attributed to the finding that they run a fairly great chance that the high expectations about their professional career will not come to fruition. High school graduate imams earn less compared to university graduates. Furthermore, when compared to university graduates, high school graduates may have less theoretical knowledge about religion and religious affairs. These can be interpreted as some of the factors which may cause high school graduate imams to experience higher burnout. On the other hand, in a country like Turkey, where unemployment rates are quite high (15%), to have a profession as a high school graduate, to have a regular income and to make speech and to affect tens and thousands of people may lead imams to feel themselves personally more accomplished.

Burnout and Length of Service

Test results revealed that there is a statistically significant difference on EE among different seniority years of the imam [$F_{(3–123)} = 8.21$, $p < 0.05$]. However, on PA [$F_{(3–123)} = 2.20$, $p > 0.05$] and on the DP sub-scale [$F_{(3–123)} = 0.694$, $p > 0.05$] there is no statistically significant difference, respectively. The findings that while more experienced imams show higher levels of burnout when the EE dimension is considered, and that they feel themselves more successful on the PA dimension, are consistent with the findings of Kaldor and Bullpitt (2001) who found out that the clergy are more likely to experience burnout in the period of 20 years in ministry careers. In contrast to the present study on imams, other studies on clergy (Kilgore and Griffin 1998; Rutledge and Francis 2004; Randall 2007) have demonstrated that

Table 3 Descriptive statistics related to burnout and length of service

Burnout subscales	Length of service	*n*	$\bar{X}$	*F*	*p* value	Significant difference
Emotional exhaustion	0–8 (A)	21	31.90	0.821	0.004	A − D
	9–16 (B)	34	32.08			
	17–24 (C)	48	33.10			
	25–over (D)	21	34.33			
Depersonalization	0–8 (A)	21	18.90	2.20	0.092	
	9–16 (B)	34	19.17			
	17–24 (C)	48	20.62			
	25–over (D)	21	20.33			
Personal accomplishment	0–8 (A)	21	22.19	0.694	0.557	
	9–16 (B)	34	22.50			
	17–24 (C)	48	21.22			
	25–over (D)	21	20.09			

less experienced ones are significantly more susceptible to the EE than the older clergy and as in many other professions which found the fact that as the length of service prolongs the positive attitude of service providers towards service recipients increases, and exhaustion level decreases, is not supported by the findings of the study with the imam. The older and more experienced imams may find easier and more practical ways to solve their problems, and thus may live their personal achievement at higher levels. As Randall (2007) stated, the longer a person works in a stressful people-related profession, the more they develop strategies and behavioral patterns to reduce the likelihood of burnout and feel higher PA. The more experienced imams are considered to be more successful at solving the problems related to the traditional fields, which can also be called "public Islam" (Table 3).

Burnout and Workplace

For all the subscales, the imams working in the urban areas have higher burnout scores. The imams working in rural areas may be better equipped to nurture and to maintain a smaller number of relationships in greater depth than to spread their religious knowledge and skills over a number of prayers, preaching, and sermons. Although there is no statistical difference between the EE sub-scale mean scores of the imams working in the urban and in the rural [$t_{(114)} = 0.234$, $p > 0.05$], there is a significant statistical difference between both the DP and PA sub-scales mean scores of the imams [$t_{(114)} = 1.819$, $p < 0.05$], [$t_{(114)} = 1.902$, $p < 0.05$], respectively. The imams who live in urban areas probably experience the feeling of being an ordinary person and the idea of anybody could do their jobs may cause them to be emotionally exhausted. On the other hand, the imams working in urban mosques are even involved in rivalry and competition with their colleagues, which may lead to extra stress. The imams who live in urban areas ultimately have more stress and bigger problems due to metropolitan life. The imams working in rural areas generally stay in the mosque lodge and most of them do not pay for electricity and water. These are met from the general expenses of mosques when they are compared to the imams working in urban areas who have quite cheaper expenses. The findings of this research agree with the conclusion of Rutledge and Francis (2004) who indicated that rural clergy have a lower sense of PA than clergy working in urban areas. This fact may be caused that the imams in rural areas meet only a little number of people. Their lives are simpler and their needs are primitive. There are no areas in the rural where the imams feel themselves more successful. The most important reason for this is that in Turkey, as the rural areas are distant from each other and due to the climate and geographical factors, many imams work alone and consequently have little contact with other professionals. However, it is taught that their ability to get by with a low salary and that they serve the community in the city makes the imams in urban areas feel more personally accomplished (Table 4).

Table 4 Descriptive statistics related to burnout and workplace

Burnout subscales	Workplace	*n*	$\bar{X}$	Significant difference	*t*	*p* value
Emotional exhaustion	Urban	46	32.98	6.13	0.234	0.815
	Rural	70	32.71	5.82		
Depersonalization	Urban	46	20.57	3.32	1.819	0.027
	Rural	70	19.44	3.20		
Personal accomplishment	Urban	46	20.37	7.49	1.902	0.001
	Rural	70	22.34	5.79		

Burnout and Occupational Difficulty

In contradictory to Turton and Francis (2007) who declared prayer carries positive benefits for the individuals Turkish imams do not think so. Individuals put praying in the center of their lives and who experience a close personal relationship with their God are likely to be motivated and energized by their belief system. Golden et al. (2004) who claimed that priests with more spiritual activities would have lower levels of burnout than those priests with less spiritual activities because spirituality might serve as an important variable in buffering the negative effects of burnout. However; on EE and DP subscales, the imams who resort to Allah when they face difficulty have the highest burnout scores. While occupational difficulty is taken into consideration on EE and PA, test results revealed that there is statistical difference among the mean scores of imams from different categories [$F_{(4–123)} = 0.894,\ p < 0.05$], [$F_{(4–123)} = 1.167,\ p < 0.05$], respectively. For DP sub-scale scores of imams, there is no statistical difference [$F_{(4–123)} = 1.634$, $p > 0.05$]. That the imams who share occupational difficulty with their colleagues have the highest PA is contradictory to the results of (Golden et al. 2004) who reported that discussions with peers will lead to greater cohesiveness and support, which will help create a new vision in one's life and support PA. The findings of this research are highly contradictory to the findings of Rodgerson (1996), who indicate that clergy who turn to God in the case of difficulties, suffer less from EE and DP than ministers who do not. The results of the present research are inconsistent with the results revealing that ministers who believe they can solve problems all by themselves without the help of God score higher on EE and DP (Rodgerson 1996). In Turkey, the imams meet in the Office of Mufti compulsorily once in a 15-day period. In these meetings, they are both informed about the new issues in the Presidency of Religious Affairs notified about their tasks and come together with their colleagues and find the opportunity to discuss their common problems and make suggestions. Although personality and situational factors were found to play important roles, spirituality and especially that quality of spirituality which relates the individual to God through prayer or meditation was also shown to be an important additional component in burnout (Golden et al. 2004), but for this research at EE and DP subscales, it is an interesting finding that imams who indicate that they turn to God in the case of difficulties experience the highest burnout scores. For PA, the researcher thought that what the Quran says "Their messengers

Table 5 Descriptive statistics related to burnout and occupational difficulty

Burnout subscales	Occupational difficulty	*n*	$\bar{X}$	*F*	*p* value	Significant difference
Emotional exhaustion	Resort to Allah (A)	13	34.23	0.894	0.002	A − D
	Try solve on my own (B)	21	32.16			
	Share with my family (C)	67	32.46			
	Share with my colleagues (D)	11	32.16			
	Refer to the theologists (E)	12	31.10			
Depersonalization	Resort to Allah (A)	13	21.03	1.634	0.170	
	Try solve on my own (B)	21	19.00			
	Share with my family (C)	67	20.40			
	Share with my colleague (D)	11	19.40			
	Refer to the theologists (E)	12	18.41			
Personal accomplishment	Resort to Allah (A)	13	19.00	1.167	0.017	A − D
	Try solve on my own (B)	21	21.30			
	Share with my family (C)	67	22.11			
	Share with my colleague (D)	11	25.03			
	Refer to the theologists (E)	12	21.00			

said to them: "True, we are human like yourselves, but Allah doth grant His grace to such of His servants as He pleases. It is not for us to bring you an authority except as Allah permits. And on Allah let all men of faith put their trust (Qur'an 2012, Al-Talaq,3)". "And He provides for him from (sources) he never could imagine. And if any one puts his trust in Allah, sufficient is (Allah) for him. For Allah will surely accomplish His purpose: verily, for all things has Allah appointed a due proportion (Qur'an 2012, Al-Ibrahim,11)" when the imams resort to Allah they feel themselves really successful. It is quite engrossing for the researcher that in any of the subscales only a few of the imams refer to the theologists when they have occupational difficulty. It is thought that these may have some reasons. Maybe the weak communication between the imams and the theologists, or the difficulty to reach theologists at any time cause the emergence of such a difference (Table 5).

Burnout and Part-Time Job

While having a part-time job is taken into consideration on EE and DP sub-scale scores of imams, the result revealed that there is no statistical difference $[F_{(3-123)} = 0.083,\ p > 0.05]$, $[F_{(3-123)} = 0.778,\ p > 0.05]$, respectively. However, there is a statistical difference among the mean scores of imams for PA $[F_{(3-123)} = 0.88,\ p < 0.05]$. The imams with part-time jobs, especially the ones who work at Quran courses, suffer higher burnout when compared to those who are going for mawlids and prayers. This can be because all of the imams are obliged to teach at a summer course for 9 weeks and take 2.50 dollars an hour in return, and this is not financially satisfactory for them (Table 6).

Table 6 Descriptive statistics related to burnout and part-time job

Burnout subscales	Part-time job	*n*	$\bar{X}$	*F*	*p* value	Significant difference
Emotional exhaustion	Do not have part-time job (A)	58	33.16	0.083	0.969	
	Engage in trade (B)	19	33.05			
	Teach at Quran course (C)	18	33.20			
	Go for prayers, mawlids (D)	29	32.40			
Depersonalization	Do not have part-time job (A)	58	20.01	0.778	0.508	
	Engage in trade (B)	19	20.47			
	Teach at Quran course (C)	18	21.00			
	Go for prayers, mawlids (D)	29	20.10			
Personal accomplishment	Do not have part-time job (A)	58	22.10	0.880	0.034	A − B
	Engage in trade (B)	19	20.03			
	Teach at Quran course (C)	18	21.10			
	Go for prayers, mawlids (D)	29	22.24			

It is thought that most of the imams know that to teach or read Quran for money is definitely forbidden in Islam "And believe in what I reveal, confirming the revelation which is with you, and be not the first to reject Faith therein, nor sell My Signs for a small price; and fear Me, and Me alone (Qur'an 2012, Al-Baqarah, 42)".

When the historical process is examined, it is observed that those carrying out the profession of imam were supported by foundations and all their needs (in kind and financial) were met by the people of the region where they served. However, with the establishment of republican administration, imams started to work as officials whose salaries are paid by the government by considering them as government officials. The average imam salary is around 1,700–1,900 Turkish Liras, without fringe benefits (TSI Turkish Statistical Institution 2011). However, the national poverty threshold for a family of four is around 2,900 Turkish Liras (TSI Turkish Statistical Institution 2011) for the year 2011. In this case, it becomes too difficult for the imams especially working at urban mosques to make a living. On the other hand, mawlids and prayer events are not religious obligations. Imams know what they do is wrong but if they do not, the community does not like it and they do not earn extra money. Also, as an official, it is forbidden to have extra work or to earn money by trading, according to Turkish law. Maybe due to these realities the imams feel themselves highly burned out. On the other hand, for PA, the imams who engage in trade feel more accomplished personally than the ones who do not have a part-time job. This may be because in Islam as Prophet Muhammad declared ("Trade because nine-tenths of your portion is in trade") engaging in trade is lawful and Allah permitted trade.)

Burnout and Marital Status

Marital status of the imams was found not to be a factor in determining the burnout levels of the imams. Tests revealed that there is no statistical difference between the

Table 7 Descriptive statistics related to burnout and marital status

Burnout subscales	Marital status	*n*	$\bar{X}$	Significant difference	*t*	*p* value
Emotional exhaustion	Married	112	32.60	6.10	−1.819	0.086
	Single	12	34.91	3.91		
Depersonalization	Married	112	19.82	3.31	−0.685	0.495
	Single	12	20.50	2.61		
Personal accomplishment	Married	112	21.41	6.62	−0.672	0.503
	Single	12	22.75	5.34		

EE, DP, and PA sub-scale scores of the imams $[t_{(122)} = -1{,}819,\ p > 0.05]$; $[t_{(122)} = -0{,}685,\ p > 0.05]$, $[t_{(122)} = -0,\ 672,\ p > 0.05]$, respectively (Table 7).

The findings obtained are consistent with the study of Kayıklık (2007) who researched imams in Adana, Turkey, whereas they are contradictory to the findings of Browning (1982), who stated that marriage was correlated with lower levels of burnout. Married imams feel themselves personally accomplished. Probably being married and continuing their marriage due to irregular working hours (that the dawn prayer is too early and nigh prayer is too late, etc.), being away from home for longer hours may cause them to feel successful. On the other hand, not to have a spouse to share their lives, good and bad parts of their professional careers, may direct imams to feel themselves emotionally exhausted and depersonalized.

Burnout and Arabic

Although on proficiency in Arabic mean scores for EE, DP, and PA fell in the "high" category, the tests revealed that there is no statistical difference between the EE sub-scale $[t_{(122)} = -1.149,\ p > 0.05]$, DP sub-scale $[t_{(122)} = 0.809,\ p > 0.05]$, and PA sub-scale mean scores of the Arabic-speaking imams $[t_{(122)} = -0{,}037,\ p > 0.05]$ (Table 8).

However, it has been detected that not knowing Arabic enough to comprehend and translate what is read is considered to be a deficiency. Because the cornerstone of Islam, the Quran, is in Arabic, it is thought that knowing Arabic is vitally important to interpret verses and hadiths and to understand the interpreted ones or to answer the questions of the community on the Quran correctly.

Table 8 Descriptive statistics related to burnout and Arabic proficiency

Burnout subscales	Arabic	*n*	$\bar{X}$	Significant difference	*t*	*p* value
Emotional exhaustion	Arabic speaking	59	32.19	6.25	−1.149	0.253
	Not speaking	65	33.42	5.66		
Depersonalization	Arabic speaking	59	20.14	3.16	0.809	0.420
	Not speaking	65	19.66	3.34		
Personal accomplishment	Arabic speaking	59	21.53	6.30	−0.037	0.970
	Not speaking	65	21.57	6.73		

Table 9 Descriptive statistics related to burnout and occupational research

Burnout subscales	Research	*n*	$\bar{X}$	Significant difference	*t*	*p* value
Emotional exhaustion	Do research	113	32.60	5.98	−1.376	0.171
	Do not research	11	35.18	5.40		
Depersonalization	Do research	113	19.86	3.29	0.314	0.045
	Do not research	11	20.18	2.93		
Personal accomplishment	Do research	113	21.64	6.50	0.486	0.028
	Do not research	11	20.64	6.71		

Burnout and Occupational Research

Tests revealed that there is no significant statistical difference between the EE sub-scale [$t_{(122)} = -1.376$, $p > 0.05$]. However, there is a statistical difference between the DP and PA sub-scale mean scores [$t_{(122)} = 0.314$, $p < 0.05$], [$t_{(122)} = 0.486$, $p < 0.05$], respectively. Upon investigation to find out whether the imams make any use of research related to their profession, what the imams consider as research is reported to be reading books on religious knowledge, learning more hadiths and verses, developing the skill of interpretation by reading books on interpretation. Imams serve people who are from different educational and cultural backgrounds. For this reason, the imams should follow-up the recent research related to their profession. In this way they can communicate with different audiences easily and may feel less burnout as they help more people effectively. Since the Friday sermons are drawn up by a central unit and distributed by the Office of Provincial Mufti, the imams who use comments of their own or from other resources are not tolerated. Probably, the imams do not need to do research because of this reason (Table 9).

Burnout and Computer Skills

Tests revealed that there is no statistical difference between the EE sub-scale [$t_{(122)} = -0.349$, $p > 0.05$], between the DP sub-scale [$t_{(122)} = -0.095$, $p > 0.05$] and the PA sub-scale [$t_{(122)} = 0.512$, $p > 0.05$]. Although it was expected that the imams who use computer technology in their profession experience less burnout, the data did not reveal a significant difference. To keep pace with the contemporary age, the imams should use computer, Internet, and social media facilities in religious issues. In order to give the best service to the citizens as well as to feel personally accomplished themselves, the imams should use technology and other facilities to clarify and reinforce visual presentations and sermons, in short for the education of the society on religious matters. It is suggested that the imams detect the opinions and needs of the community within the religion, stated in various Web sites and forums, and serve in accordance with what they have detected may increase the PA levels of imams (Table 10).

Table 10 Descriptive statistics related to burnout and computer skills

Burnout subscales	Computer	*n*	$\bar{X}$	Significant difference	*t*	*p* value
Emotional exhaustion	Skilful	83	32.70	5.88	−0.349	0.727
	Unskilful	41	33.10	6.17		
Depersonalization	Skilful	83	19.87	3.30	−0.095	0.9.24
	Unskilful	41	19.93	3.19		
Personal accomplishment	Skilful	83	21.76	6.58	0.512	0.610
	Unskilful	41	21.12	6.41		

Burnout and Size of Community

There is a lack of previous research according to which to compare the findings of the relationship between burnout levels and the number of people in a community. For this research, the median (85) is taken as cut point and the results of the imams working in rural and urban areas are analyzed according to their community size. The more people they serve, the more problems, demands, dissatisfaction or critics they have to deal with, and this is thought to cause imams to feel more exhausted. Although not included within the official job definition, imams performing such tasks as a soldier sending-off ceremony, naming a baby, and bathing the deceased, are very frequent at mosques which are crowded, and make the imams feel overwhelmed. Despite such a heavy workload, imams are on leave only 1 day a week, have free time only between prayer times, have little time but a lot to do at the mosque, and the lack of burnout compensation may cause imams to feel emotionally exhausted. On the other hand, due to such spiritual reasons as leading a lot of people and enabling them to develop religiously and spiritually and acquiring more merits by influencing more people, or due to the fact that a mission of spreading the religion of Islam all over the world is very important among religious duties, the imams with more people feel themselves personally more successful. The community goes to mosques not just for prayers but also for such reasons as to learn about the views and opinions of imams. Reading sermons in front of several people and teaching and guiding them about the religion and behaving as real religious leader are considered to make an imam feel the sense of PA personally (Table 11).

Suggestions

Imams live in a pressured and stressful position. Some of the pressures are similar to those experienced by other professionals in similar caring professions while others are specific to the nature of being an imam. As younger imams are more resistant to burnout, imams should be chosen among the young. Burnout seems to increase with age. For this reason, senior imams should get some help to recover burnout syndrome during their in-service trainings. Also, extra benefits or "worn-out

Table 11 Descriptive statistics related to burnout and size of community

Burnout subscales	*n*	$\bar{X}$	Significant difference	*t*	*p* value
Emotional exhaustion					
Urban					
≥85	27	33.51	5.61	1.23	2.73
<85	19	32.21	6.87		
Rural					
≥85	35	32.42	6.43	1.97	0.164
<85	43	33.00	5.47		
Depersonalization					
Urban					
≥85	27	20.92	3.11	0.515	0.477
<85	19	20.05	3.62		
Rural					
≥85	35	19.71	3.08	0.011	0.917
<85	43	19.30	3.25		
Personal accomplishment					
Urban					
≥85	27	19.57	8.23	1.94	0.170
<85	19	20.92	6.41		
Rural					
≥85	35	23.34	6.26	1.18	0.281
<85	43	20.88	5.16		

indemnities" should be paid to imams who are working in urban areas, as a lower level of income could severely affect imams' performance.

The relation and cooperation between the imams and theologists should also be strengthened. They should come together frequently to solve occupational difficulties.

Financial positions of the imams should be improved in order to stop them part time jobs. Also, the Presidency of Religious Affairs should create a better auditing and supervising mechanism for those having part-time jobs.

To know Arabic at least at an intermediate level should be compulsory for all the imams to fulfill their job properly.

As high school graduate imams feel high burnout levels, they should have some courses both during their pre-service and in-service education periods including stress training, time management, assertiveness training, training in interpersonal and social skills, relaxation, and team-building, which will help them to avoid burnout.

The empirical research on psychological issues of the imam is not widespread. In light of the findings from the present study, it is vital to have more scientific studies in this field to help the imam grow stronger in their spiritual and emotional maturity.

Replication studies are needed to establish the generalization of the findings. In those replications discussions about the relationship between their income levels and sizes of congregations they serve should be provided. Conducted in Bursa, which is one of the biggest cities in the western part of Turkey. The population of the city has been steadily increasing due to waves of internal migration in the last several decades. In order to clarify the generalizability of the research, similar studies should be conducted at different parts of the country.

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