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AN INVESTIGATION ON THE PHENOMENON OF JOB BURNOUT IN THE SALES PROFESSION

UDK / UDC: 159.944:658.8

JEL klasifikacija / JEL classification: J28, M31, M5

Prethodno priopćenje / Preliminary communication

Primljeno / Received: 30. ožujka 2013. / March 30, 2013

Prihvaćeno za tisak / 10. lipnja 2013. / June 10, 2013

Abstract

Job burnout leads to a number of negative consequences. Salespeople as boundary spanners are more susceptible to burnout. Despite these facts, there are not enough scientific researches on job burnout and its facets in the sales profession. The purpose of this paper is to measure the level of perceived burnout among salespeople in the Republic of Croatia and to investigate the influence of some personal characteristics such as demographic variables on the level of perceived burnout. Greater understanding of this multidimensional concept will allow sales firms and especially sales managers to manage the resources in order to combat its negative effects in a more efficient way. Study findings highlight that salespeople in the Republic of Croatia are not affected by high job burnout and that younger people are more susceptible to burnout than the older ones. This study found out that salesperson with more additional education (training, seminars, workshops) shows lower burnout than salesperson with less or without additional education. The conducted research also indicates that the gender, the years in sales profession, the type of employment agreement, the formal education and the marital status of the salesperson have no impact on the level of perceived burnout.

Keywords: Job Burnout, Salesperson, Sales profession

1. INTRODUCTION

It's an undeniable fact that chronic stress and job burnout have negative impact both on the employees' health and the organizations performance. According to the Eurostat data (Venema, Van den Heuvel, Geuskens, 2009) based on the results of the Labour Force Survey¹ conducted in 2007 by the respective national statistical institutes of the covered countries, whose objective was to investigate accidents at work and work-related health problems, 27% of workers in the EU-27, i.e. 56 millions workers, are exposed to factors that can adversely affect mental well-being. Therefore, 20 million of workers experienced one or more work-related health problems during the 12 months before the conducted survey. Stress, depression and anxiety are some of the most frequent and most serious health problems and they were present in 14% of workers with work related problems. According to the above mentioned survey, 16% of workers in the Republic of Croatia were exposed to factors that can adversely affect mental well-being and 8% of workers experienced one or more work-related health problems. Therefore, 62% of workers from EU-27 and 71% of workers from the Republic of Croatia had work-related health problems resulting in sick leave.

Stress at work place is a critical problem for employer, employee and the society. Prolonged exposure to stress leads to burnout (Hollet-Haudeberet, Mulki, Fournier, 2011; Lewin, Sager, 2008). Researches indicate that stress and job burnout is particularly high in occupation with strong interpersonal interaction (Jaramillo, Prakash Mulki, Boles, 2011) and for workers in client-centered profession such as personal selling (Shepherd, Taschian, Ridnour, 2011). Despite the fact that the sales profession is one of the most client-centered professions, relatively little research has explored job burnout in that field (Shepherd, Taschian, Ridnour, 2011; Snyder, Cistulli, 2011; Lewin, Sager, 2007).

Considering the multiple negative consequences that cause burnout (Rutherford, Hamwi, Friend, Hartmann, 2011), it is extremely important to measure this multidimensional construct. For a better understanding of a job burnout in personal selling context, it's important to understand how the demographic data influence the occurrence and the level of that syndrome. Greater understanding of the job burnout phenomenon will allow sales organizations and especially sales managers to better allocate resources and efforts in order to reduce burnout among their employees and to combat its negative effects.

The main purpose of this paper is to examine the level of perceived burnout among salespeople and to investigate the influence of certain demographic data, i.e. the age, the gender, the years spent in sales profession, the

¹ The Labour Force Survey (LFS) (Venema, Van den Heuvel, Geuskens, 2009) 2007 covered the 27 Member State of EU and Norway and Croatia. The LFS 2007 included an Ad Hoc Module consisting of 4 variables on accidents at work, 5 variables on work-related health problems, and 2 variables on factors that can adversely affect mental well-being or physical health. The module refers to a 12 months' retrospective period, relative to the date of interview.

education and the marital status, on the level of perceived burnout. The obtained results enhance the knowledge about job burnout in the sales profession.

The paper is composed of five chapters. After the introduction, the second chapter is dedicated to the theoretical backgrounds of job burnout. It points out the relationships between burnout and the sales profession, and the antecedents and the consequences of burnout. The third chapter outlines the theory and the related hypotheses. The fourth chapter presents the methodology of the empirical part of the research, and the analysis and interpretation of the obtained results. The research limitations and managerial implications are also presented. The conclusion summarizes the most important implications of the conducted research and provides directions for further research.

2. JOB BURNOUT: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This section presents the theoretical framework and discusses the theoretical issue with the aim to precisely define the terms analyzed in the paper. In addition, it outlines the already existing knowledge in the research area in order to provide better understanding of the interrelationship between job burnout and the sales profession, and to identify the antecedents – some of which are examined in this study – and highlight the important consequences of the burnout syndrome.

2.1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB BURNOUT AND SALES PROFESSION

Job burnout is a multidimensional construct that arises as a critical issue in today's business environment. It is important to fully understand each burnout component and its sequence. Moreover, the related literature highlights the predispositions of the sales profession to burnout. The next section defines the term of job burnout and outlines the evidence suggesting that sales professionals are more prone to burnout.

Snow, Swan, Raghavan, Connell, Klein (2003, 241) highlighted the changing nature of work, which is today more complex and requires greater and more technical skills, the changes are global and rapid, which means increasing work week hours for many. All this affects the occurrence of stress among the workforce and burnout is emotional reaction to stress in people-oriented professions.

Although the term "burnout" was coined in 1974 by Herbert Freudenberger (Fogarty, Singh, Rhoads, Moore, 2000; Shepherd, Taschian, Ridnour, 2011), Christina Maslach is typically credited as being the pioneer for modern-day researches in burnout (Rutherford, Hamwi, Friend, Hartmann, 2011).

Maslach and Jackson (1981) defined burnout syndrome as a chronic, negative psychological experience that consists of three dimensions (components); emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (cynicism) and low personal accomplishment, occurring among individuals who work with people.

The core of the burnout phenomenon - emotional exhaustion - is described as being emotionally overextended due to a worker's perception that their job's demands exceed available resources to do the job (Maslach, Jackson, 1981). It is characterized by a lack of energy and a feeling that one's emotional resources are used up, it can coexist with feelings of frustration and tension and common symptom is dread at prospect returning to work another day (Cordes, Dougherty, 1993, 623). The second dimension of burnout, depersonalization (also called cynicism), is a dysfunctional style of coping with work-related stressors (Snyder, Cistulli, 2011), employees in this situation distance themselves from others psychologically (i.e., depersonalization) (Sand, Myazaki, 2000). Depersonalization often manifests as cynical, negative attitudes toward clients, coworkers, or managers (Lewin, Sager, 2008). As some researchers suggested (Maslach, Schaufeli, Leiter, 2001), the relationship of inefficacy (reduced personal accomplishment) is more complex. It represents the tendency to evaluate oneself negatively, regardless of successful achievement on the job. Workers feel unhappy about themselves and dissatisfied with their accomplishments on the job (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). The lack of efficacy arises from a lack of relevant resources, whereas exhaustion and cynicism emerge from the presence of work overload and social conflict (Maslach, Schaufeli, Leiter, 2001).

There is a number of competing models to define the sequence of the burnout dimensions (Cordes, Dougherty, 1993; Snyder, Cistulli, 2011), but it's a generally accepted view that emotional exhaustion is the first step, followed by depersonalization, which leads to reduced sense of personal accomplishment (Shepherd, Taschian, Ridnour, 2011).

Boundary spanners such as sales professionals must continually balance between the expectations of managers and customers, so the role-related stressor represents a problem for them (Arnold, Flaherty, Voss, Mowen, 2009). As Lewin and Sager (2008) suggested, role stress among salespeople can arise from a number of factors, such as: (1) clients indicating all is well but failing to move forward with a sale, (2) incongruent demands placed on the salesperson by the client and the firm, and (3) the firm's emphasis on incompatible goals such as significantly increasing both market share and profit margins simultaneously. Additionally, Cordes and Dougherty (1993) proposed that it is more highly likely that job burnout will occur in careers that (1) require significant direct client contact and (2) are client dependent. Cordes and Dougherty (1993) highlighted that positions in sales have a high potential for occurrence of burnout considering salespeople are often obliged to achieve some measurable and important outcomes (such as fulfilling quotas, achieving adequate earnings, or meeting the client requests) (Sand, Myazaki, 2000).

2.2. ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF JOB BURNOUT

Burnout is seen as an outcome of work-related stress. It has been shown to have a number of antecedents and it has also been linked to a number of negative consequences. Upon reviewing the extant literature on burnout, Cordes and Dougherty (1993) classified all the elements that represent the antecedents of burnout into three categories. The first category consists of job and role characteristics. Cordes and Dougherty (1993) highlighted that the most critical variables are the characteristics of the employee-client relationship. The role characteristics include role overload, ambiguity (Maslach, Jackson, 1981; Singh, Suar, Leiter, 2012) and conflict (Shepherd, Taschian, Ridnour, 2011; Singh, Suar, Leiter, 2012). The organizational characteristics, that represent the second category, include job context and contingency of reward and punishments (Cordes, Dougherty, 1993). The third category refers to the personal characteristics such as demographic variables (Maslach, Jackson 1981; Cordes, Dougherty 1993; Moncrief, Babakus, Cravens, Johnston, 2000; Leiter, Harvie, 1996, Khan, Riaz, Bashir, Iftekar, Khattak, 2011; Shepherd, Taschian, Ridnour, 2011; Sand, Myazaki, 2000), social support, personal expectations and career progress (Cordes, Dougherty 1993). Five personal i.e. demographic variables may be related to burnout: age, gender, professional seniority, family status and education level (Hamama, 2012). This paper will investigate the relationships between these antecedents i.e. demographic characteristics and burnout. Job burnout causes many negative consequences such as physical, emotional, interpersonal, attitudinal and behavioral consequences (Cordes, Dougherty 1993; Shepherd, Taschian, Ridnour, 2011). Therefore, physical and emotional consequences include anger (Jaramillo, Mulki, Boles, 2011), tardiness (Babakus, Yavas, Ashill, 2009) depression, irritability, helplessness, anxiety and also fatigue, insomnia and exhaustion (Maslach, Jackson 1981), headaches, gastrointestinal disturb, chest pain (Cordes, Dougherty, 1993). Interpersonal consequences include withdrawing from friends, non work (i.e. in family) conflict, changes in the nature and frequency of interactions with customer or co-worker (Jaramillo, Mulki, Boles, 2011; Shepherd, Taschian, Ridnour, 2011), less tolerance, impatience (Cordes, Dougherty, 1993; Jaramillo, Mulki, Boles, 2011). Attitudinal consequences denote negative attitude toward client, job, organization or oneself (Cordes, Dougherty, 1993), especially decrease of job satisfaction (Shepherd, Taschian, Ridnour, 2011) and organizational commitment (Hollet-Haudebert, Mulki, Fournier, 2011; Singh, Suar, Leiter, 2012). Finally, behavioral consequences include increase of turnover and decrease of job performance (Babakus, Yavas, Ashill, 2009; Jaramillo, Mulki, Boles, 2011; Shepherd, Taschian, Ridnour, 2011; Singh, Suar, Leiter, 2012) and also absenteeism (Cordes, Dougherty 1993; Babakus, Yavas, Ashill, 2009).

3. THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

As it was mentioned previously, sales is a highly client centered profession with multiple interpersonal contacts, hence particularly susceptible to development and occurrence of stress and high burnout. As it was also stated above, there is a number of factors specific for sales profession from which stress and job burnout can arise. Despite these facts, there is little research on job burnout in sales profession (Shepherd, Taschian, Ridnour, 2011; Snyder, Cistulli, 2011; Lewin, Sager, 2007). Most researches have been focused on job burnout in human-service jobs, such as teachers, nurses, and social workers (Snyder, Cistulli, 2011; Shepherd, Tashchian, Ridnour, 2011; Hollet-Haudeberet, Mulki, Fournier, 2011). Hollet-Haudeberet, Mulki, Fournier (2011) indicated that most of the researches related to salespeople burnout have been confined to USA, with only a few studies on Dutch and Australian salespeople. Eurostat data (Venema, Van den Heuvel, Geuskens, 2009) suggested that stress, anxiety and depression as work related health problems play an important role in wholesale, retail trade, repair sector. Based on this, and with the goal to advance the field's knowledge on this issue, the author hypothesizes:

Hypothesis 1: Salespeople in the Republic of Croatia are highly affected by job burnout

Cordes, Dougherty (1993) and Rutherford, Hamwi, Friend, Hartmann (2011) also highlighted the need for additional research concerning the correlation among antecedents of burnout and the burnout itself. Shepherd, Taschian, Ridnour (2011) and Maslach, Jackson (1981) indicated the need for further researches in order to investigate the relationships among individual demographic characteristics and incidences of burnout. Also Babakus, Yavas, Ashill (2009) emphasized that future researches should focus on the role of individual characteristics (i.e. gender) in the burnout process of the salespeople.

Although Leiter and Harvie (1996) suggested that in most studies, with some exceptions, no relationships were found between burnout and age, Jaramillo, Mulki, Boles (2011) indicated that the age has been associated with stress perception. In their research on human service workers, Maslach and Jackson (1981) noted also some differences, shown by the MBI subscales, depending on the age of the respondents. Younger people scored higher than old people on Depersonalization. Older people scored higher on Personal Accomplishment (for frequency), but younger people scored high (for intensity) on Emotional Exhaustion. The conclusion is that younger people are more susceptible to job burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli, Leiter, 2001; Shepherd, Taschian, Ridnour, 2011). This is confirmed by the research on job burnout in European family doctors conducted by Soler, Yaman, Esteva, Dobbs, Asenova, Katić, Ožvačić, Desgranges, Moreau, Lionis, Kotanyi, Carelli, Nowak, Azeredo, Marklund, Churchill, Ungan (2008). In addition, these findings showed that burnout is likely to occur in the early stage of someone's career (within the first few years), the older respondents are the workers that survived the early stress

stage and now have a stable career (Maslach, Jackson, 1981). Cordes and Dougherty (1993) stated that most of the researches point out that younger people are more disposed to burnout, but they also indicate that the Anderson and Iwanicki study showed that more experienced employee showed higher level of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Hamama (2012) indicated that burnout was significantly negatively correlated with age. Eurostat research (Venema, Van den Heuvel, Geuskens, 2009) showed that work related health problems increase with age. Accordingly, we state:

Hypothesis 2: The age of the salesperson influences the level of perceived burnout.

Cordes, Dougherty (1993) and Maslach, Schaufeli, Leiter (2001) highlighted that there are mixed evidence concerning the differences in level of felt burnout between the genders. Leiter and Harvie (1996) stated that most of the researches found no significant relationships between burnout and gender. By examining the influence of the gender on the level of perceived burnout in sales organizations, Moncrief, Babakus, Craves, Johnston (2000) found no significant differences among male and female salespeople. Lent, Schwartz (2012) suggested that the gender had no significant effect on burnout of professional counselors. Liu, Spector, Shi (2008) indicated in their research among university employees that women reported more overall psychological strains and depression than men did. Soler, Yaman, Esteva, Dobbs, Asenova, Katić, Ožvačić, Desgranges, Moreau, Lionis, Kotanyi, Carelli, Nowak, Azeredo, Marklund, Churchill, Ungan (2008) reported in their research that the male sex is related to high burnout. Maslach and Jackson (1981) highlighted the fact that differences between males and females were found for each of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) subscales. Females scored higher than males on Emotional Exhaustion (Maslach, Jackson, 1981; Leiter, Harvie, 1996; Maslach, Schaufeli, Leiter, 2001), but males scored higher than females on Depersonalization (Maslach, Jackson, 1981; Leiter, Harvie, 1996; Maslach, Schaufeli, Leiter, 2001). Males also scored higher than females on Personal Accomplishment (Maslach and Jackson, 1981; Leiter and Harvie, 1996). Eurostat data (Venema, Van den Heuvel, Geuskens, 2009) reported women experienced stress, depression and anxiety more frequent than men. The preceding discussion suggests that:

Hypothesis 3: The gender of the salesperson influences the level of perceived burnout.

Experience can also affect the perception of stress (Jaramillo, Mulki, Boles, 2011), employees with less job tenure are more susceptible to burnout (Shepherd, Taschian, Ridnour, 2011). Caputo (in Shepherd, Taschian, Ridnour, 2011) indicated that employees over years gain life and work experience that can be very helpful for coping with stress and burnout. Lent, Schwartz (2012) suggested that the professional experience has no significant effect on burnout of professional counselors. Khan, Riaz, Bashir, Iftekhar, Khattak (2011) highlighted in their research on salesperson that employees with higher levels of job

experience and emotional commitment channeled stress more effectively into sales outcomes. Hamama (2012) indicated that burnout is significantly negatively correlated with seniority. Leiter, Harvie (1996) indicated that different authors highlight that years of experience seem to be differently correlated with burnout components. Based on the above, we state:

Hypothesis 4: The years spent in sales profession influence the level of perceived burnout.

Leiter and Harvie (1996) suggested that in most studies, with some exceptions, no relationships were found between burnout and level of education. Maslach and Jackson's findings (1981) indicated that higher education was associated with higher scores on Emotional Exhaustion subscales on MBI. The opposite is shown for Depersonalization, as the higher the education is, the lower are the scores on the subscale. Finally, in the Personal Accomplishment subscale postgraduate had the highest scores, followed by people who had not completed college and then by those who had. Maslach, Schaufeli, Leiter (2001) indicated that some researches showed that higher levels of education mean higher level of burnout. Shepherd, Taschian, Ridnour (2011) stated that higher level of education can induce higher expectations in an individual, and this explains the close relationship between formal education and burnout. Based on the discussion above, the following is suggested:

Hypothesis 5: The education of the salesperson influences the level of perceived burnout.

Leiter and Harvie (1996) suggested that in most studies, with some exceptions, no relationships were found between burnout and marital status. Gaines and Jermier (in Cordes, Dougherty, 1993), in their study on emotional exhaustion in police organizations, found no significant interactive effect between departmental context in police organization and years in position or marital status. Despite that, Maslach and Jackson (1981, 111) stated that marital status was significantly related to Emotional Exhaustion. People who were single scored higher than those who were married (for frequency and intensity). Maslach, Schaufeli, Leiter (2001) stated that unmarried are more prone to burnout than married. Based on this, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 6: The marital status of the salesperson influences the level of perceived burnout.

4. RESEARCH ON THE PHENOMENON OF JOB BURNOUT AMONG SALESPEOPLE IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

4.1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The author has conducted research with the goal of determining the level of perceived burnout among salespeople in the Republic of Croatia and identifying the influence of the demographic characteristics on the experience of job burnout. Burnout was measured using a reduced version of Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach, Jackson, 1981) suitably modified to be relevant to salespeople, with the added questions about the subjects' age, gender, experience in sales, type of employment agreement, education, additional i.e. lifelong education, and marital status. Accordingly to the research by Rutherford, Hamwi, Friend and Hartman (2011), the author has used the 10-item reduced scale for measuring burnout for sales researchers. The abbreviated questionnaire including all three facets of burnout (Emotional exhaustion, Depersonalization, Personal accomplishment) and was aimed at salespeople on all levels within organizations. Every statement concerning burnout in the survey instrument was associated with the Likert scale with seven levels of intensity (from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). The sample included 480 small, medium and large business enterprises (classified in accordance with the Accounting Act, Official Gazette 109/2007). The single enterprises in the sample were chosen by random selection. The author prepared tables containing the lists of business enterprises that have submitted the Annual financial report for 2011 in the Republic of Croatia (universe = 103.000 small, medium and large business enterprises) and subsequently got random numbers by using computer programs. The questionnaire was designed in electronic format and distributed via e-mail. The research was conducted through October and December 2012. The data was analyzed using SPSS for Windows statistical package.

The questionnaire was properly filled in by 154 survey respondents. The effective response rate to the survey questionnaire was 32.08%, which is considered a satisfactory level of response. Major industry categories for respondents included trade (50.65%), manufacturing (18.83%), accommodation and food (7.14%), information and communications (3.90%), construction (3.25%), transportation and warehousing (2.60%).

4.2. RESEARCH RESULTS

The reliability of the scale was estimated by the *Cronbach-alpha coefficient* which yielded 0.85. The three components of burnout yielded an acceptable alpha coefficient, i.e. emotional exhaustion 0.85, personal accomplishment 0.71, depersonalization 0.703. It is generally accepted that a 0.7 or higher value of the Cronbach-alpha coefficient represents high reliability (Nunally, 1978). The collected data were subjected to a descriptive statistics and One-way ANOVA.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for the Burnout Construct and Value F-test

Samples		N	Arith. mean (M)	St. deviation (SD)	F - value	Significance
Age						
	17-29	40	3.34	1.10		
	30-39	63	3.22	1.02		
	40-49	32	3.00	1.01		
	50- and over	19	2.55	0.86	2.923	0.036
Gender						
	Female	94	3.19	1.01		
	Male	60	3.02	1.10	1.038	0.31
Years in sales						
	Less then a year-3	33	3.17	0.92		
	4-7	28	3.32	1.07		
	8-10	29	3.12	0.99		
	11-15	29	3.08	1.08		
	15-and more	35	2.95	1.16	0.514	0.726
Education						
	Lower and medium expertise	63	3.28	1.10		
	Higher, high, M.A. or doctorate degree	91	3.02	0.99	2.352	0.127
Marital status						
	Married	95	3.10	0.99		
	Single	58	3.16	1.14	0.108	0.743
Employment agreement						
	Fixed-term	26	3.42	1.05		
	Permanent	128	3.06	1.03	2.637	0.106
Average attendance of additional education per year						
	1	43	3.25	0.90		
	2	26	2.91	0.70		
	3-4	12	2.48	1.33		
	More than 4	13	2.18	0.74		
	No additional education	60	3.45	1.08	6.631	0.000

Source: Author.

Hypothesis 1, which predicted that salespeople are highly affected by job burnout in Republic of Croatia, can be rejected. Namely, it was established in literature that the job burnout construct is generally measured with the items used in the Maslach burnout inventory (MBI); hence the mean value was calculated for each item as the burnout indicator. Mean of all values obtained is 3.12 (st. deviation = 1.042). Given that the author used a bipolar scale with seven value intervals, a value over or equaling 4 indicates the existence of burnout according to the perceptions of the respondents. These are the reasons why the one-tailed t-test was used to verify the first hypothesis. As the value obtained with the test is greater than two, which is deemed the general limit of acceptance or rejection of a hypothesis at a 5% significance level, it was decided to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative.

Hypothesis 2 stated that the age of the salesperson influences the level of perceived burnout and the results support it. Statistically significant differences emerged from the analysis ($F = 2.923$, $p < 0.036$), statistically significant differences were observed also for depersonalization ($F = 4.646$, $p < 0.004$) and for personal accomplishment ($F = 3.415$, $p < 0.019$). Namely, older people indicate lower burnout tendencies. Young people scored higher than old people on the all subscale of burnout. These findings are in line with the Maslach, Jackson (1981) research that highlighted that older people with lower burnout can probably be those who have survived the early stress in job and now have a stable and successful career.

Results of the analysis did not provide support for Hypothesis 3 that stated that the gender of the salesperson influences the level of perceived burnout. Therefore the female scored higher (mean = 3.19) than male (mean = 3.02) on burnout and on all of the three burnout facets, there is no statistically significant differences either for the entire construct or for the individual facets.

The results did not provide support for Hypothesis 4 which claimed that the years in sales profession influence the level of perceived burnout in the salesperson. Although the employees with the most experience in sales show lower burnout (mean = 2.95) than the employees with less sales experience, the statistical differences are not shown. More experienced employees showed higher score on depersonalization (mean = 2.56) and personal accomplishment (mean = 3.05) than those with less experience. The emotional exhaustion facet showed almost the same score for the most experienced salesperson (mean = 3.59) and the less experienced salesperson (mean = 3.56). Additionally, the employment agreement did not influence the level of perceived burnout, namely employees with the fixed-term employment agreement showed more burnout (mean = 3.42) than those with permanent employment agreement (mean = 3.06); the same is shown for all the three burnout dimensions, but there are no significant statistical differences.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that the education of the salesperson influences the level of perceived burnout. Findings did not support this hypothesis. Although

salesperson with higher level of education showed lower level of burnout (mean = 3.02) than those with less education (mean = 3.28), there are no significant statistical differences. Statistically significant differences were found for the personal accomplishment dimension, ($F = 7.354$, $p < 0.007$). Those with lower school degree showed higher score (mean = 2.93) than those with higher school degree (mean = 2.67) in the personal accomplishment subscale. But, it is interesting to highlight that it showed significant difference ($F = 6.631$, $p < 0.000$), depending on the quantity of in-service further education the salesperson received. Namely, the salesperson with on average more than four additional education events (training, seminar, workshop) per year showed the lowest burnout (mean = 2.17); the highest is shown by the salesperson without additional education (mean = 3.45). Significant differences among groups are shown for all the three burnout dimensions; Emotional exhaustion ($F = 3.910$, $p < 0.005$), Depersonalization ($F = 3.705$, $p < 0.007$), and for Personal accomplishment ($F = 5.527$, $p < 0.000$).

Hypothesis 6 stated that the marital status of the salesperson influences the level of perceived burnout. Results did not support this hypothesis. Although the single scored higher (mean = 3.16) than the married salesperson (mean = 3.10), there are no significant statistical differences. The married salesperson showed higher emotional exhaustion (mean = 3.74) than the single one (mean = 3.46), whereas for the other burnout component the single ones scored higher than the married ones.

4.3. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The salespeople in this study were taken from multiple industries and the survey was anonymous, so it can be possible that the questionnaire was predominantly filled in by salespersons from one or few larger firms. In addition, in order to achieve sample representativeness and to allow comparison of the results obtained from different strata and identification of the significant differences, in a future research the sample should be structured in two strata. One stratum would cover small business enterprises, whereas the second stratum would include medium and large business enterprises. The latter will require a larger sample because of the small share of medium and large enterprises in the universe. A larger sample, the distribution of the questionnaire via e-mail directly to individual salesperson in order to assure full confidentiality, and a sample structured more proportionally with regard to the number of salespersons from an individual firm, might reinforce the reported findings.

4.4. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This research provides sales companies with a better understanding of the impact of individual characteristics of the salesperson on perceived burnout. Moreover, the managers, especially the sales managers, can better understand and

manage job burnout in order to allow the salesperson to perform better and avoid negative consequences of burnout. The managers have to take into account the fact that younger people are more prone to burnout. The conducted research also indicates that, in order to avoid burnout, firms have to invest on additional trainings, seminars and workshops for their salespeople

5. CONCLUSION

Considering the multiple negative consequences of job burnout, especially in a client-centered profession such as the sales profession, it becomes important to study the influence of the antecedents like demographic characteristics on the occurrence of the syndrome. The paper provides further clarification concerning the burnout level among salespeople and the influence of demographic dimensions on perceived burnout.

This study shows that salespeople in the Republic of Croatia are not highly affected by job burnout, i.e. the job burnout is at a low level. Additionally, the conducted research shows that younger people are more susceptible to burnout than the older ones. Results also indicate that the gender, the years in sales profession, the type of employment agreement, the education and the marital status of the salesperson have no impact on the level of perceived burnout. It should be noted that this study found significant influence of additional education (trainings, seminars, workshops) of the salesperson on the level of burnout. Salespeople with more additional education show lower burnout than salespeople with less or without additional education.

The conducted research provides additional evidence to the currently limited empirical evidence regarding this phenomenon in the sales context, and especially outside the U.S.A. Furthermore, this study contributes to the literature by demonstrating the effects of the demographic data i.e. the age, the gender, the years spent in sales profession, the education and the marital status on the perceived burnout of salespersons. Previous researches obtained mixed results. In addition, the results of the study reveal the effect of additional education on burnout. This is an important finding that provides further clarification concerning the antecedents of burnout. According to the author's knowledge, the said item (i.e. additional education) has not received enough attention in literature as the element that can influence the occurrence and the level of burnout. Furthermore, the results show that the salespeople in Croatia have not experienced high job burnout. These results are unexpected and not consistent with the current thinking that indicates that salespeople have a high potential for occurrence of burnout.

The obtained results may be a basis for further verification on larger sample. It would also be appropriate to measure the possible differences in the obtained results among salespeople in the B2B or retail context. Finally, it would also be relevant to investigate the relationship between burnout and its

dimensions and the job satisfaction and the relationship between sales manager's support and the perceived level of burnout.

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**ISTRAŽIVANJE FENOMENA SAGORIJEVANJA NA
POSLU U PRODAJNOJ PROFESJI****Sažetak**

Sagorijevanje na poslu dovodi do niza negativnih posljedica. Prodavači su zbog same prirode svojega posla vrlo podložni sagorijevanju. Usprkos tome, ne postoje mnogo radova kojima je cilj istražiti sagorijevanje na poslu i sve njegove aspekte u prodajnoj profesiji. Svrha ovog istraživanja je izmjeriti razinu doživljenog sagorijevanja i istražiti utjecaj demografskih varijabli na doživljenu razinu među prodavačima u Republici Hrvatskoj. Bolje razumijevanje ovog multidimenzionalnog koncepta omogućit će prodajnim organizacijama i osobito menadžerima u prodaji učinkovitije upravljanje resursima kojima raspolažu s ciljem uspješnijeg suočavanja s negativnim posljedicama sagorijevanja. Rezultati istraživanja otkrivaju da prodavači u Republici Hrvatskoj ne doživljavaju visoku razinu sagorijevanja na poslu i da su mlađi zaposlenici podložniji sagorijevanju od starijih zaposlenika. Ovaj rad upozorava da prodavači s većim brojem dodatnih edukacija (treninga, seminara, radionica) pokazuju nižu razinu sagorijevanja od prodavača s manje, odnosno, bez dodatnih edukacija. Provedeno istraživanje pokazuje i da spol, godine provedene u prodajnoj profesiji, vrsta ugovora o radu, obrazovanje i bračni status ne utječu na razinu doživljenog sagorijevanja.

Ključne riječi: *sagorijevanje na poslu, prodavači, prodajna profesija*

JEL klasifikacija: *J28, M31, M5*

