



Perceived Work Stress Factors: A Study on Tour Guides**

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Abstract

Tour guides, who are important representative of destination, have to accomplish their tasks in a complex and changing environment and have to offer their best to satisfy customers due to the work stressors. Literature emphasizes that work stress cause psychological / physiological destruction, turnover, absenteeism, poor morale, performance and service quality among tourism employee. Reducing these outcomes is possible with right stress management approach and the first step is to identify perceived threats. The purposes of this study are to establish a framework in the field of work stress and tour guides, to identify perceived work stress factors among national and regional licensed, active tourist guides in Turkey. A total of 395 tour guides were surveyed and results indicate that the most important perceived work stress factor among tour guides was legal and organizational strain (low base pay/salary, illegal tour guides, lack of participation in decision making, excessive control) and it is followed by operational, psychological and social, sectoral, occupational, and finally work's nature strains. In terms of gender and marital status, the female and the single tour guides perceived work stress higher than the male and the married.

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INTRODUCTION

Turkey has a great potential of tourism supply. Tour guides are important component of supply side of tourism. In fact, they are known as a service provider in tourism (Arslantürk and Altunöz, 2012: 891), but it is more appropriate to name these professionals as knowledge service provider in tourism. They are the one who effectively and remarkably contribute to development and promotion of tourism by interpreting, informing, satisfying the tourists (Braidwood et al., 2000; Ham and Weiler, 2000) and awakening revisit intention. Literature supports strategic contribution of tour guides to tourist impression of a destination (Ap and Wong, 2001; Cohen, 1985; Holloway, 1981; Zhang and Chow, 2004). They are significant because of their essential role of communicating between local destination and visitors (Ap and Wong, 2001). As it is clear, they add value to tourist travel and this may depend on the service quality of tour guide. Service quality is highly related to healthy and problem free working environment. But it is impossible to describe a working environment without stress.

In the working environment, stress is highly related to the working conditions of an organization. Work stress disturbs the employee's adaptation to the environment and reduces capacity at work. Moreover, it creates health problems such as fatigue, blood pressure, depression, anger for employees and this can lead to low efficiency and performance, absenteeism, turnover, burnout in the organizations (HSE). In this manner, there are ways to overcome stress-related issues which are done by effective stress management. With a right stress management approach, it is possible to obtain positive outcomes both for employee and organization. Sun Tzu, who was a famous commander, philosopher, and military expert in 500 BC., once said, "Winning the battle without fighting is the greatest success" (Tzu, 2003). To sum up, as tourism stakeholders it must be important for tour guides to know the stress sources in the work environment and to take preventive measures to create a healthy work atmosphere instead of deal with its consequences.

The negative impact of stress, especially on business and social life, has led to conduct more research on stress and stress management. Despite the important role of tour guides in influencing service quality and revisit intention, there are limited studies on work stressors facing the tour guides. Literature mainly focused on giving advice to tour guides (Black and Weiler, 2005; Cross, 1991; Huang and Wang, 2007), education and training (Avcıkurt et al., 2009; Eker and Zengin; 2016; Köroğlu, 2009), analysis of current situation (Çetin and Kızıllırmak, 2012; Yazıcıoğlu, 2008), ethics (Yarcan, 2007), occupation law (Yenipinar et al., 2014; Zengin et al., 2017) occupational health (Köroğlu and Köroğlu, 2011), stress, emotions, quality of life (Mackenzie, 2013; Min, 2014), and describing their function and role (Cohen, 1985; Holloway, 1981; Salazar, 2005; Zhang and Chow, 2004). This study sets out an analysis of work stressors encountered by tour guides in Turkey with feedback from tour guides themselves, whereas the research is carried out by quantitative method.

Tour Guides

In Turkey, tourism industry has been regarded as an important industry. The total number of visitors have seen an increase from 27,2 million by 2003 to 38.2 million by end of 2017 (TURSAB). It is not simple to reach and sustain these figures among the very competitive Mediterranean geography where there is Greece, Italy, Spain and maintain

market share. A country such as Turkey, with a remarkable number of tourist arrival, quite a lot tour guides are needed. According to Tourist Guides Union in Turkey, the number of registered tour guides reached 10189 (TUREB) by end of 2017. Those, who, are Turkish Republic citizen, are at least 18 years old, have a certificate in fluency foreign language of their choice (YDS 75- Foreign Language Exam at least 75 point), graduate from tour guiding programme at university, complete practice-oriented tour; are able to apply for tourist guiding licence (in Turkey Tourist Guide Profession Law No: 6326, Item 2:I Accepted 07.June.2012). As it is obvious, the process to be accepted to the profession is quite difficult because process aims to prepare tourist guides to deal with various demands of the tourism industry.

Tour guides in Turkey are protected by Tourist Guide Profession Law and it regulates standards such as acceptance to the profession and practicing the profession, but there are still existing problems; such as unlicensed tour guides. Previous studies admitted that unlicensed and uneducated tour guiding is a common problem in Turkey (Güzel et. al., 2014; Çetin and Kızıllırmak, 2012; Eker and Zengin, 2016) and worldwide (WFTGA, 2011; Chowdray and Prekash, 2008). Besides this, low remuneration (Chowdray and Prekash, 2008; Çetin and Kızıllırmak, 2012; Güzel et al., 2014; Nyahunzvi and Njerekai, 2013; WFTGA, 2011; Yazıcıoğlu et al., 2008) job insecurity (Güzel et. al., 2014; Nyahunzvi and Njerekai, 2013), lack of training or expensive training (Chowdray and Prekash, 2008; Nyahunzvi and Njerekai, 2013; WFTGA, 2011) lack of career development opportunity (Nyahunzvi and Njerekai, 2013) foreign tour leaders/guides, lack of social security, over number of guides, lack of mutual co-operation, late payments (WFTGA, 2011) seasonality (Yazıcıoğlu et al., 2008; Ahipaşaoğlu, 2001) were revealed as main problem of professionals. Mak et al. (2011) pointed out a different dimension as tour operators or travel agencies set shopping quotas that tour guides were instructed to ensure tourists to shop as WFTGA (2011) and Güzel et. al. (2014) revealed the similar finding. This led tour guides to change their role from intellectual person to salesperson which is money oriented mentality. Güzel et al. (2014) added the negatively affected private life, irregular life, restrictions in social life, necessity of working even on special occasions, physically depressing and exhausting profession, the emergence of health problems due to the physical performance, emotionally intense labor, seasonality, gender discrimination to the barriers of tour guides. Regarding gender discrimination in a study Nyahunzvi and Njerekai, (2013) mentioned about male domination nature of tour guiding and added that this situation is an international trend because working conditions are perceived as more suited to males. Çetin and Kızıllırmak (2012), mentioned the excessive number of tourist guides, lack of standardization in tourist guiding education, unclear working conditions, lack of insurance, inadequate controls as the problems of tour guides. Yazıcıoğlu et al. (2008) found a number of problems that tour guides confront with as lack of social rights, unskilled and inadequate employees in the hotels, restaurants and transportation companies, the neglected services promised by the hotels, irrelevant behaviors of the hospitality employees toward the tour guides and tourist groups, the problems resulting from tourists whose cultural level is low, and disrupter sellers.

Compare to other tourism employees, tour guides working environment is diverse and nature and content of the work is totally different. These professionals proceed the tour mainly in the open air (heat, cold, rain, snow), travel along many kilometers, flexible working hours (Güzel et. al., 2014; Chowdray and Prekash, 2008), meet guests from

many different cultures, fulfill their requirements. Tour guiding is densely human-oriented (Yarcan, 2007) and plays important role in the experience of tourists and affect the success of tour operators, travel agencies (Öter, 2007) and customer satisfaction. Tour guides work in an atmosphere where constant interaction with customers and they have to deal with customers demands in expected emotions which may contrast with their actual emotional state. Min (2014) stated that employees, who have high levels of personal contact with customers are more vulnerable than those in other fields.

Work Stress

Work stress exists if the abilities and the professional knowledge of an employee do not meet with requirements of a job (Chiang et al. 2010; World Health Organization, 2010). Related to work stress, there are variety of causes such as insufficient work conditions, poor social relations, work overload, lack of rewards, or lack of control (Karasek and Theorell, 1990). According to Cooper and Marshall (1978), lack of participation in the decision-making process, lack of a sense of belonging, lack of effective consultation, poor communication, restriction of behavior and office politics can be potential causes of work stress. Actually, in the literature, it was revealed that there are various types or categories for work stress sources and they do not fit to every occupation. Therefore, it is difficult to conclude that there are common work stress sources for every profession as each profession has its own dynamics and work stress sources are formed by these dynamics.

In terms of tourism, negative effects of work stress are mutual both for employees and organizations. Pavescic and Brymer (1990) confirmed that young and qualified employees in tourism industry, quit their jobs in a short time because of the long and flexible working hours, low wages, inflexible work schedule, and workload. Faulkner and Patiar (1997) investigated work stress sources among front office and housekeeping employees and inadequate support from supervisors, wage shortages and under promotion were found to be as work stressor for front line officer. Housekeeping employees felt stress due to workload, abuse timing, being undervalued, lack of communication, and inadequate feedback. Sampson and Akyeampong (2014) examined the causes of work stress in front-line employees. Lack of support, role conflict, ambiguity, and poor relationship between employees and management in the organization were found to be as stress reasons. Kim et al. (2007) stated that hotel employees had a higher work stress experience because of the face to face communication and contact with customers and associates.

Consequences of work stress can be both personal (physiological, psychological illnesses) and organizational (turnover, burnout, ineffectiveness, absenteeism, productivity loss) (Manning and Preston, 2003; WHO, 2010; Nadiri and Tanova, 2009). Therefore the consequences of work stress may produce unwelcomed and costly damages both for the employee and the organization. O'Neill and Davis (2011) studied the impact of work stress on the hospitality industry and observed that productivity decreased and, because of the unhealthy employees, health care costs increased. Özcan et al. (2010), determined health outcomes and results of work stress among travel agency employees and found that work stress caused to absenteeism and lack of motivation. Mohamed (2015), found that hotel managers experienced significantly more stress than front-line employees. Female employees indicated significantly more stress than their male counterparts.

As it exists in every industry, in tourism industry, work stress causes a decrease in job performance and poor productivity (Gilboa, et al., 2008), an increase in fatigue, depressive mood and hostility (Lepine et al., 2004). These failures cost organizations and give financial harm (Law et al., 1995).

Methodology

Data collection tool used in this study is questionnaire. There has been a diversity of methods used by researchers to investigate work stress for service employee such as nurse, police, teacher, officer etc.. Because of the work content of the tour guiding these scales were not appropriate to evaluate work stress. Therefore, a questionnaire was developed which takes into account the dynamics of tour guiding and tourism considering studies of Akova and Işık, 2008; Aydın, 2004; Özcan et al., 2010; Saldamlı, 2000. Authorities on tour guiding as academicians, chamber presidents and senior tour guides were asked their opinions and contribution for questionnaire and the relevance of the items were confirmed through in-depth interviews. Additional work stress sources were determined in these interviews and were added to the questionnaire. In addition, 50 tour guides were asked to complete the questionnaire in a pilot test to correct unclear statements before it was finished.

“Work Stress Sources” (WSS), stressful events or situations were described which tour guides may encounter within their working environment and gender, marital status, age, education, and income were asked via close-ended questions. National and regional licensed and active tour guides in Turkey were focused on in this study. Based on the information provided by TUREB (Tourist Guide Union), the total number of active tour guides was 6504 by 2017. With 395 tour guides, the expected participant number was reached in the survey. The number of sample in this research was able to represent the population.

An online questionnaire form was prepared and published by Google Forms. This form was adapted to smart mobile phones and tablets for the participant to fill out easily on their tours. Contacting tour guides by e-mail and social media accounts and collecting data was done via TUREB and Tourist Guides Chambers. It was requested from TUREB and chambers to send the questionnaire link to the members by e-mail and to release the link on their social media account in January 2018. In February 2018, a reminder e-mail was sent to members. Totally, 395 questionnaires were collected. They were all usable data and filled completely as the digital form was designed to have participants fill in all questions.

Statistical Analysis

The data were collected and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS/version 20) software. The frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, arithmetic means, and chi-squared test were used for categorized parameters, whereas a numerical data t-test was used to compare quantitative continuous data between two independent groups. One way ANOVA test was used to compare quantitative continuous data between more than two independent groups. The Scheffe test was used as a complementary Post-Hoc analysis to determine differences after the Anova test. Pearson correlation and regression analysis were applied to the continuous variables in the study. The findings were evaluated at the 95% reliability interval and at the 5% significance level.

The scores of the scale dimensions were evaluated between 1 and 5. In order to calculate the distribution range, The distribution range = Maximum value - Minimum value / Number of degrees formula was used. This range was 4 points wide. This width, which was divided into five equal widths ranging from 1.00 to 1.79 "very low", between 1.80 and 2.59 "low", between 2.60 and 3.39 "medium", between 3.40 and 4.19 "high", and between 4.20 and 5.00 "very high", were determined as limit values and the findings were interpreted (Sümbüloğlu, 1993).

Results

The study included 143 (36.2%) female and 252 (63.8%) male tour guides. Regarding gender discrimination in a study, Nyahunzvi and Njerekai, (2013) mentioned about male domination nature of tour guiding and added that this situation is an international trend because working conditions are perceived as more suited to males. According to the marital status variable, 227 (57.5%) participants were married and 168 (42.5%) were not married. The largest group consisted of tour guides aged between 36-45 (36.7%), followed by 35 years and under (34.2%), and tour guides between 46-55 (18%). The highest share was accounted for Bachelor’s degree (58.5%). In addition, 39.4% of tour guides participated in the study belonged to a group whose years of working at least 16 years and over.

Table 1. Distribution of Socio-Demographic and Work Characteristics

	Groups	Frequency(n)	Percentage(%)
Gender	Female	143	36.2
	Male	252	63.8
Marital Status	Married	227	57.5
	Single	168	42.5
Age	35 And Less	135	34.2
	36-45	145	36.7
	46-55	71	18.0
	56 And Over	44	11.1
Education Level	High School	30	7.6
	Associate Degree	57	14.4
	Bachelor’s Degree	231	58.5
	Master’s and Doctoral Degree	77	19.5

An exploratory factor analysis was applied to reveal the validity of the work stress sources scale and the result of the Barlett test ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$) showed that there was a correlation between the variables in the factor analysis. As a result of the test ($KMO = 0.779 > 0.60$), the sample size was found to be sufficient for factor analysis. In the factor analysis, the varimax method was chosen so that the structure of the relationship between the factors remains the same. The total explanatory variance of the variables was collected under 6 factors which were found in percentage to be 58.74%. The overall reliability of the scale was found to be very high at $\alpha = 0.894$. It was understood that the scale on tour guides’ WSS was both valid and reliable, based on the reliability of alpha and the variance explained. The factor structure of the scale is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Factor Structure of WSS

Dimension	Item	Factor Load	Explained Variance	Cronbach's Alpha
Work's Nature Strains (Eigenvalues= 7.743)	Difficult or Complex Task	0.731	11.805	0.875
	Workload	0.691		
	Poor Working Conditions	0.607		
	Customer Demands	0.607		
	Lack of Control	0.603		
Legal and Organizational Strains (Eigenvalues= .589)	Low Base Salary/Pay	0.733	11.406	0.811
	Illegal Tourist Guides	0.730		
	Lack of Participation in Decision Making	0.725		
	Excessive Control	0.585		
Operational Strains (Eigenvalues= 2.158)	Unfair Treatment by Organization	0.742	10.434	0.802
	Late Payment	0.652		
	Time Pressure	0.613		
	Transportation Problems	0.611		
	Health Risks at Tour	0.511		
	Accident Risks at Tour	0.501		
	Customer Health Problem	0.435		
Psychological and Social Strains (Eigenvalues= 1.955)	Work-Social Life Balance	0.829	9.673	0.783
	Work-Family Balance	0.787		
	Lack Of Career Development Opportunities	0.632		
	Long Work Hours	0.558		
	Emotional Exhaustion	0.507		
Sectoral Strains (Eigenvalues= 1.677)	Third Party Partners Problem	0.680	7.989	0.802
	Customer Dissatisfaction	0.542		
	Seasonality	0.535		
	Personality	0.483		
Occupational Strains (Eigenvalues= 1.503)	Feeling undervalued	0.781	7.439	0.790
	Lack of Professional Knowledge	0.686		
	Competitors	0.455		
Total Variance %58.74				

This study shows that there were six main factors of WSS for tour guides. An exploratory factor analysis reduced 34 descriptions of WSS to 6 main underlying factors which account for the causes of work stress. Considering the factors ranking, the most accepted stress factor is legal and organizational strain (low base pay/salary, unlicensed tour guides, lack of participation in decision making, excessive control) and followed by operational, psychological and social, sectoral, occupational, and work's nature strains. The most important work stressors under the legal and organizational strain factor with the highest arithmetic mean are low remuneration and unlicensed tour guides. Previous studies (Yazıcıoğlu et al., 2008; Çetin and Kızıllırmak, 2012; Güzel et al., 2014; Yenipınar et al., 2014; Eker and Zengin, 2016; Zengin et al., 2017) on tour guiding occupational facts, problems, barriers, indicated the similar

findings. The findings of this study showed that tour guides still perceived legal gaps in their professions as well as organizational strains and this is the reason for the work stress.

Table 3. A Comparison of Mean Scores for WSS By Gender

	Group	N	Mean	Std	t	p
Work's Nature Strains	Female	143	2.783	0.856	1.593	0.101
	Male	252	2.629	0.958		
Legal and Organizational Strains	Female	143	3.813	0.878	3.638	0.000
	Male	252	3.452	0.983		
Operational Strains	Female	143	3.378	0.821	4.808	0.000
	Male	252	3.007	0.683		
Psychological and Social Strains	Female	143	3.214	1.014	2.028	0.043
	Male	252	3.008	0.945		
Sectoral Strains	Female	143	3.215	0.739	3.008	0.003
	Male	252	2.985	0.725		
Occupational Strains	Female	143	2.870	0.932	1.694	0.079
	Male	252	2.688	1.073		
WSS in Total	Female	143	3.227	0.648	4.167	0.000
	Male	252	2.966	0.567		

A *t-test* was applied to determine whether or not the mean score for the perception of WSS factors showed a significant difference in terms of gender. The mean score for legal and organizational, operational, psychological and social, sectoral strains were found to be higher for female than for male. In the literature, works stress-related studies show that females tend to perceive more work stress pressure than males (Wilhelmsson et al., 2002; Mesler and Capobianco, 2001).

Table 4. A Comparison of Mean Scores for WSS By Marital Status

	Group	N	Mean	Std	t	p
Work's Nature Strains	Married	227	2.596	0.935	-2.248	0.025
	Single	168	2.806	0.898		
Legal and Organizational Strains	Married	227	3.590	0.848	0.178	0.864
	Single	168	3.573	1.098		
Operational Strains	Married	227	3.052	0.705	-2.748	0.007
	Single	168	3.262	0.806		
Psychological and Social Strains	Married	227	2.956	0.904	-3.033	0.003
	Single	168	3.254	1.041		
Sectoral Strains	Married	227	3.015	0.717	-1.662	0.097
	Single	168	3.140	0.761		
Occupational Strains	Married	227	2.692	1.098	-1.396	0.164
	Single	168	2.837	0.918		
WSS in Total	Married	227	2.987	0.552	-2.830	0.006
	Single	168	3.161	0.668		

A *t-test* was applied to determine whether or not the mean score for WSS dimensions mean scores showed differences in terms of marital status. The mean score for work's nature, operational, psychological and social, WSS in total strains were found to be higher for singles than for married. This finding supported Zhao et al. (2009)'s research, as work stress was found to be lower for married police officers than unmarried ones. On the contrary, in

the literature married individuals experienced higher levels of stress due to work-family conflict (Vokic and Bogdanic, 2007), working married women experienced higher stress than unmarried women (Parveen, 2009; Vanagas et al., 2004), and in addition, Preston (1995) found that the highest rate of work stress was observed in married females.

Conclusion

This paper analyzed perceived work stress sources of tour guides in Turkey. Compare to other service employees in tourism, work stress factors found to be different for tour guides because of work content. While stressors are different for tour guides, the consequences can be similar to other employees in general such as physical and psychological health problems, burnout, turnover, absenteeism, low productivity, poor performance and low service quality. These can be direct consequences to those who may be exposed to high levels of work stress. Indirectly, a low level of service quality may affect customer satisfaction and revisit intention negatively. Bartoluci and Budimski (2010) stated that in order to provide high-quality tourist service, the most important resource is the individuals who will be direct contact with tourists (Lovrentjev, 2015). Therefore, the attempts to understand the reasons that cause work stress are vital in helping to decrease work stress among tour guides.

Although the Tour Guiding Profession Law has entered into force and after the establishment of professional chambers, controls have become more widespread, but tour guides still regarded unlicensed guides as the most important work stressor. Unlicensed guides neglect the time tour guides spent on education, steal their tours and hence their profits, and destroy their professions prestige. The efforts of registered tour guides to improve the profession should not be ignored and institutions should shun unlicensed guides with more stringent and effective measures. Removal of these stressors can only be possible with effective enforcement of the profession's legislation, increased controls, and tight monitoring of the profession's chambers.

It is clear that occupational problems of tour guides are basically similar in diverse geographies of world even if it shows little differences. A well-developed curriculum in training, establishing local and national professional organizations or chambers, legislations which meet all the requirements of the profession must be the basics of tour guiding. In this sense, responsible institutions in Turkey have managed these issues as well planned. But problems are still continuing, as conclusion the issues that concern tour guides are actually external factors. In elaborate, even if educational, legislative and organizational regulations are necessary the threat such as is out of the profession. Responsible institutions must perceive work stress factors in this study as external threat for profession and must take measurements and regulate the legislation.

This study provides an opportunity to advance the knowledge on work stress sources of tour guides. The findings should make a contribution to the field of tour guiding and work stress. This study is limited to active national and regional Turkish licensed tour guides. For future research, it is recommended that licensed tour guides from different countries can be added to the research and a comparison between nationalities can be made to identify situations across countries. In addition, future research should pay attention to consequences of work stress.

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