



CARRYING THE BURDEN OF THE PANDEMIC: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNAL MARKETING, BURNOUT, AND JOB SATISFACTION IN COURIER SERVICE INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT. Background: The main purpose of this study is to examine the effect of internal marketing practices applied in the courier services industry on the job satisfaction of employees and the moderating effect of burnout in this relationship.

Methods: To test the hypothesis, an online survey was conducted on a sample of 376 respondents from the Turkish courier industry. Research data was collected by a web-based survey distributed with the assistance of TUMTIS (All Transport Workers' Union) managers.

Results: The results show that internal marketing practices have a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction, and burnout has a moderating effect on this relationship. The most interesting finding is that, in the case of high level of burnout, the relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction is significant and negative.

Conclusion: This is one of the few studies that considers the courier service industry from the perspective of employees, not customers. The findings could offer an elaborate understanding of how burnout affects the relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction in the courier service that provides a bridge between companies and customers. The results of this study have a wide array of managerial implications for the courier service industry.

Keywords: Burnout, Courier Services, Internal Marketing, Job Satisfaction, Moderating

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, where traditional marketing has replaced relational marketing, internal marketing practices aiming to increase the satisfaction of both employees and customers have gained importance in both commercial and academic fields. According to the internal marketing approach, employee satisfaction is essential for the satisfaction and loyalty of external customers [George, 1990]. Therefore, organizations should inform, educate, train, reward, and motivate their employees, who are identified as internal customers, to satisfy the needs, requests, and expectations of their external customers [Doukakis and Kitchen, 2004]. In recent years, internal marketing research has concluded that internal marketing activities are effective in various concepts such

as service quality, corporate identity formation, competitiveness, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship, and customer satisfaction [Finney and Scherrebeck, 2010].

Today, the most important of the sectors where internal marketing practices gain importance is the courier service. A courier is a typical third-party logistics provider, and they help deliver packages. The growth of online sales and e-commerce and the growing habits of consumers to buy online have effectively changed the demand for such delivery services [Dablanc et al., 2017]. As a result of the fast and rapid growth of e-Commerce, the market environment in the courier services industry has changed dramatically. The bulk of the courier service industry is still reliant on manual labor-intensive processes. Consequently, human

factors play a crucial role in any process in this sector [Riyanto et al., 2019]. Additionally, store clerks, delivery drivers and warehouse workers are being pushed to be “ideal workers” in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, risking exposure to the virus in the public while leaving their families behind. They have continued to commute to work, taking the risk of exposure to the virus and transmitting it to their families [Thomason and Williams, 2020]. The workers in the courier sector, who must deal with excessive workload and stress, emerge as one of the groups most affected by this epidemic. However, several studies have been conducted specifically on internal marketing, job satisfaction, and burnout during the Covid-19 pandemic, and so far there have only been a few studies on courier workers [Riyanto et al., 2019]. On the other hand, studies on courier service have focused on the service of logistics services [Bienstock et al., 2008] and cargo services [Wang, 2007]. The researchers have reviewed the sector from the customer’s point of view, but neglected the employees. This one-sided perspective is one of the main constraints of the literature on the courier service industry. This study tries to fill this gap in the literature by considering the sector from the perspective of employees, not customers.

The main purpose of this study is to examine the effect of internal marketing practices implemented in the courier service industry on the job satisfaction of employees and the moderating role of burnout in this relationship. These findings could offer an in-depth understanding of how burnout impacts the relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction in the courier service that provides a bridge between companies and customers. The research provides suggestions for managers and marketing professionals on what kinds of internal marketing practices should be carried out to reduce the burnout levels of courier sector employees and increase their job satisfaction. The rest of the study is organized as follows. In the following section, the conceptual framework based on internal marketing, job satisfaction, and burnout is discussed, and the research hypotheses are developed. The researchers move on to the research methodology, data collection, and findings. Finally, the implications of the findings are explored taking into account limitations and foresight for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Internal Marketing

While the previous marketing strategies considered only external customers of organizations as a field of application, today's modern marketing strategies have also realized the importance of organization employees [Rafiq and Ahmed, 2000]. Internal marketing, which focuses on the relationship between the organization and employees, is seen as an important approach towards providing effective external marketing and service quality [Yang, 2010]. According to the internal marketing approach, employee satisfaction is essential for the satisfaction and loyalty of external customers [George, 1990].

Foreman and Money [1995] dealt with internal marketing elements in three dimensions: (1) vision, (2) development, and (3) reward. Vision refers to the sharing of the desired image about the future of the organization to employees. The award refers to performance evaluation and rewarding the successful employees. Development refers to the training of employees to adapt to the developing internal and external environment. Yildiz and Kara [2017] argued that these dimensions are not sufficient and claimed that other characteristics will meet the needs and expectations of the employees. Some of these elements include career advancement opportunities, equal treatment, and the receipt of employee opinions. Studies have indicated that internal marketing has positive effects on the business attitude and behavior of employees in organizations [Wu et al., 2013].

Relationship Between Internal Marketing and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is described as an individual’s emotional state due to his or her job experiences [McAllister et al., 2017]. In the present world where knowledge is at the forefront, the most critical and costly resource to the owner is the human itself. One of the conditions for this costly and critical resource to contribute positively to the organization is that

individuals have positive feelings toward their job [Qu, 2021]. Although job satisfaction establishes positive relationships with positive concepts in many studies, it also constantly establishes negative and significant relationships with negative concepts [Soyer et al., 2009].

Job satisfaction should not be considered independent of the organization's structure, functioning, handling, and intensity of the work. In addition, job satisfaction not only makes the employee feel good, but also contributes to the performance of the organization. Many studies in the literature have investigated the relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction in various contexts [Wu et al., 2013]. The positive impact of internal marketing practices on employees' job satisfaction has been confirmed in the context of various sectors such as hotel employees [Hwang and Chi, 2005], teachers and academic staff [Ting, 2010] and healthcare workers in hospitals [Chang and Chang, 2009]. However, no study has examined the impact of internal marketing practices on the satisfaction of courier workers' jobs. Based on the aforementioned discussion, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: Internal marketing practices of businesses are positively related to job satisfaction.

Moderating Effect of Burnout

Burnout is described as a syndrome that features emotional exhaustion, cynicism, or self-alienation, and decreased professional efficiency [Maslach and Jackson, 1981]. Burned-out individuals can easily cry, experience situations such as not being able to control their emotions, feeling helpless, or hopeless [Kim et al., 2007]. Burnout can also show behavioral symptoms such as anger control problems and aggression. The burnout process does not always cover the same period for all individuals.

Burnout has a negative impact on organizational commitment, turnover intention, and work performance, in addition to adversely affecting an individual's physical and mental health [Parker and Kulik, 1995]. With burnout, individuals lose their excitement and stagnate

over time. This situation can interfere with the performance and career development of individuals [Eroglu, 2014]. When exposed to a long-term stressful work environment, burnout has a negative interaction with physicians' job and life satisfaction [Maslach and Jackson, 1981]. More broadly, there has been evidence of a connection between job satisfaction and burnout, with a sense of job dissatisfaction leading to burnout [Kim, 2012]. In this context, the effect of internal marketing activities on job satisfaction can be interrupted when burnout is activated. Based on the aforementioned discussion, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: Burnout has a negative effect on job satisfaction.

H3: Burnout moderates the relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample and Procedure

In this study, research data was collected by a web-based survey (because of the fatal condition of the COVID-19 pandemic), which was distributed with the help of TUMTIS (All Transport Workers' Union) managers. The distribution of the questionnaires and the data collection process were carried out in two phases. In the first phase, all participants and union managers were informed about the confidentiality of their information and the feedback of the survey. In the second phase, all participants and union managers were informed about the purpose of our investigation. The surveys were distributed by using a group chat board of different team communications applications. Moreover, to keep confidential, all surveys were coded. However, a link to a survey was distributed to union members who encouraged and informed them, and 472 people responded that data that were not fully or appropriately filled out were omitted from the analyses. Similarly, the results of participants were 376 including 335 men (89%) and 41 females (11%).

Measures

The researchers used an online survey divided into two parts. Internal marketing, burnout, and job satisfaction are all variables of study measured in the first section. In the second section of the questionnaire, there are items related to demographic information. With the help of bilingual experts, all scales were adapted into Turkish and then retranslated into English to provide consistency. Participants responded to all items, apart from demographic variables, on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5).

The internal marketing scale was developed by Yildiz and Kara [2017], to incorporate the needs and expectations of the service sector employees. The scale has 11 items (e.g., "This organization provides attractive physical conditions to its employees", "This organization provides an achievable vision to its employees"), that measure the level of organizing the workload of employees, supporting career development, providing vision, improving their physical conditions, and treating them equally. In this study, Cronbach's α for the internal marketing scale was 0.95. The validity of the construct was evaluated using confirmatory factor analysis. The results demonstrated that the fit was acceptable ($\chi^2/df = 2.16$, RMSEA = 0.06, TLI = 0.98, CFI = 0.99).

The burnout scale used in this study was reorganized from the scale originally developed by Pines and Aronson [1988] with 21 items and modified by Malach-Pines [2005]. The modified version of the scale has 10 items (e.g., "Disappointed with people", "Difficulties sleeping", "Tired"), that measure an individual's level of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion about their job. In this study, Cronbach's α for the burnout scale was 0.96. The validity of the construct was evaluated using confirmatory factor analysis. The results showed that the fit was acceptable ($\chi^2/df = 2.19$, RMSEA = 0.06, TLI = 0.99, CFI = 0.89).

The job satisfaction scale used in this study was reorganized from the scale originally developed by Hackman and Oldham [1975] and modified by Basim and Sesen [2009]. The

modified version of the scale has 5 items (e.g., "I am proud of my job", "When I work intensively, I feel happy"), that measure an individual's level of job satisfaction. In this study, Cronbach's α for the job satisfaction scale was 0.93. The validity of the construct was evaluated using confirmatory factor analysis. The results showed that the fit was acceptable ($\chi^2/df = 1.96$, RMSEA = 0.05, TLI = 0.99, CFI = 0.89).

Cronbach's alpha values (which show good internal reliability when > 0.70) [Kline, 2005] were also analyzed and found good internal reliability. Average variance extraction (AVE; acceptable when > 0.50) [Fornell and Larcker, 1981] was calculated to assess convergence validity and composite reliability (acceptable when > 0.70) [Fornell and Larcker, 1981] to analyze construct reliability (see internal marketing, 0.68; burnout, 0.76; job satisfaction, 0.79). The relationships of all variables with each other were analyzed using Pearson's correlation analysis. Correlations between .30 and .50 are considered low, between .50 and .70 moderate and above .70 high [Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007].

Data Analysis

The analysis of data from this research was performed with PROCESS, which is an available SPSS computer macro. The PROCESS macro is based on bias-corrected bootstrapping to construct confidence intervals. This process deals with the issue of bias resulting from the asymmetric and nonnormal sampling distributions of an indirect effect [Preacher and Hayes, 2008]. The Hayes PROCESS is currently the most putative method in moderation tests in psychological research and management sciences.

Specifically, the first model of the templates for PROCESS for SPSS and SAS was used as recommended by Hayes [2017] in the current study. Further testing moderated the effects of burnout, Model 1 was used with bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals (BC; 95% CI) based on 5000 bootstrap resamples. The conceptual and statistical diagram of Model 1 is illustrated in Figure 1. Model 1 allows us to analyze with parameter estimates from a

moderation analysis of burnout in the effect of internal marketing on job satisfaction levels. The Johnson-Neyman technique, which determines the regions of significance of an association

when the moderator is a continuous variable, was used to examine significant interactions [Hayes, 2017].

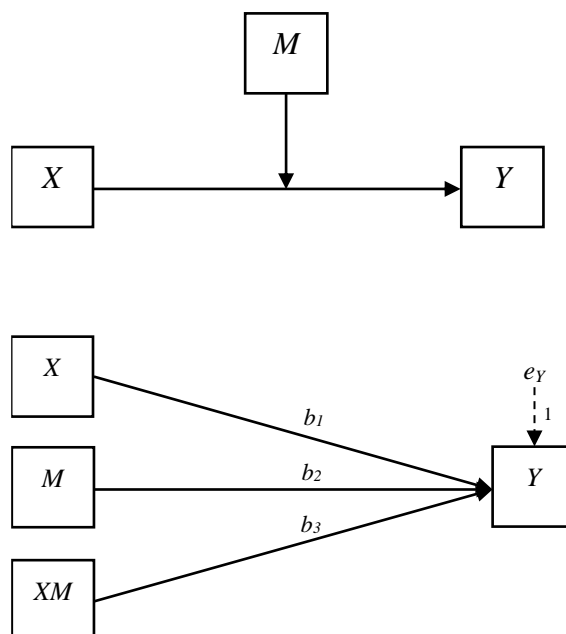


Fig 1. Conceptual and Statistical Diagram of Model 1. Conditional effect of X on Y = $b_1 + b_3M$. Source: Hayes (2017).

RESULTS

Descriptive Statics

The researchers reported the descriptive statistics for all study variables in Table 1. As expected, internal marketing was positively correlated with job satisfaction, and burnout was negatively correlated with both variables of this study.

Testing the Moderation Models

To explore whether the burnout experience moderated the relationship between internal marketing and the job satisfaction for cargo carrier workers, a moderation model was examined with a moderator of the effect of X (IM) on Y (JS) by M (Burnout), using PROCESS 3.5v (Command model 1).

The model pointed out that internal marketing was a significant and positive effect

on job satisfaction, and burnout was a significant and negative effect on job satisfaction. Therefore, to address Hypothesis 1 (Internal marketing positively and significantly affects job satisfaction), it was found that internal marketing practice had a positive and statistically significant effect on job satisfaction (95% CI: [0.0352, 0.2078]). Then, to address Hypothesis 2 (burnout negatively and statistically significantly affects job satisfaction), it was discovered that burnout of workers had a negative and significant effect on their job satisfaction (95% CI: [-0.8517, -0.6778]). Finally, to address Hypothesis 3 (burnout moderates the relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction), PROCESS Model 1 was performed. The results indicated a burnout that moderating the relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction (95% CI: [-0.3754, -0.2043]). The results of the moderating effect are depicted in Fig. 2. Additionally, the results of the hypothesis analyses were shown that Table 2.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Internal Marketing	3.30	1.03	-		
2. Job Satisfaction	2.95	1.21	.233**	-	
3. Burnout	3.10	1.24	-.228**	-.689**	-

**p<0.01

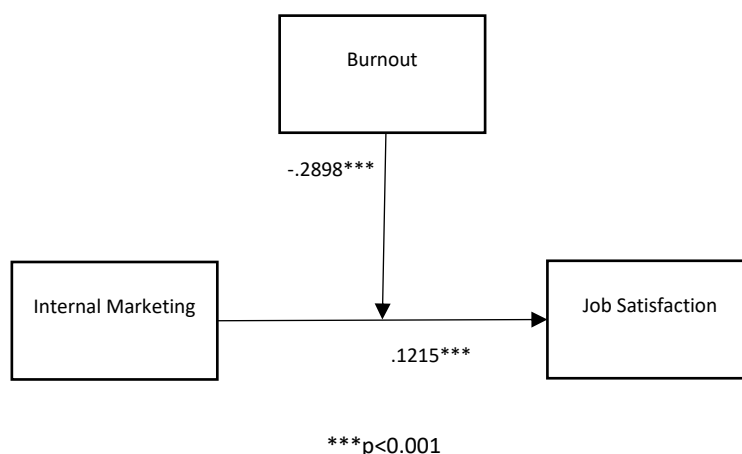


Fig 2. Results of moderation

Table 2. Moderation effect result

Variable	B	S.E	t	p	95% CI	
					LLCI	ULCI
IM	0.1215	0.0439	2.7670	0.0059	0.0352	0.2078
Burnout	-0.7647	0.0442	-17.2909	0.0000	-0.8517	-0.6778
IM x Burnout	-0.2898	0.0435	-6.6640	0.0000	-0.3754	-0.2043

There is also a need for the consideration for distribution of gender skewness; thus, Model 1 processes also execute on a compromised male sample. The results for the male-only sample still indicated that the internal marketing practice had a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction ($B = 0.1364$, $SE = 0.0498$, $t(335) = 2.7388$, $p = 0.0065$, 95% CI: [0.0384, 0.2343]). Likewise, it was found that burnout of workers had a negative and significant effect on their job satisfaction ($B = -0.7561$, $SE = 0.0482$, $t(335) = -15.6756$, $p = 0.0000$, 95% CI: [-0.8509, -0.6612]), for the sample with only men. Finally, moderation analysis shows that burnout moderating the relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction ($B = -0.2842$, $SE = 0.0483$, $t(335) = -5.8898$, $p = 0.0000$, 95% CI:

[-0.3792, -0.1893]). These results indicated that the skewness of the gender distribution of the sample did not lead to bias in the results.

A simple slope analysis revealed that when burnout was low (16th percentile), a significant positive association was found between internal marketing and job satisfaction $b = 0.4730$, $SE = 0.0715$, $t = 6.6146$, $p = 0.0000$, 95%CI [0.3324, 0.6136]. Similarly, at moderate levels of burnout, a significant positive association was found between internal marketing and job satisfaction $b = 0.1445$, $SE = 0.0443$, $t = 3.2591$, $p = 0.0012$, 95%CI [0.0573, 0.2317]. On the other hand, when burnout was high (84th percentile), the relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction was significant and negative $b = -$

0.2309, SE= 0.0657, t= -3.5126, p= 0.0005, 95%CI [-0.3601, -0.1016].

Figure 3 shows the interaction effects. When the low level of burnout is, the relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction is significant and positive. When burnout is low and internal marketing is high, job satisfaction also increases. Furthermore, the relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction

is significant and positive at the moderate level of burnout. When burnout is moderate and the level of internal marketing increases, the level of job satisfaction increases slightly. However, when at the high level of burnout, the relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction is significant and negative. Job satisfaction decreases slightly, even though internal marketing increases when burnout remains high.

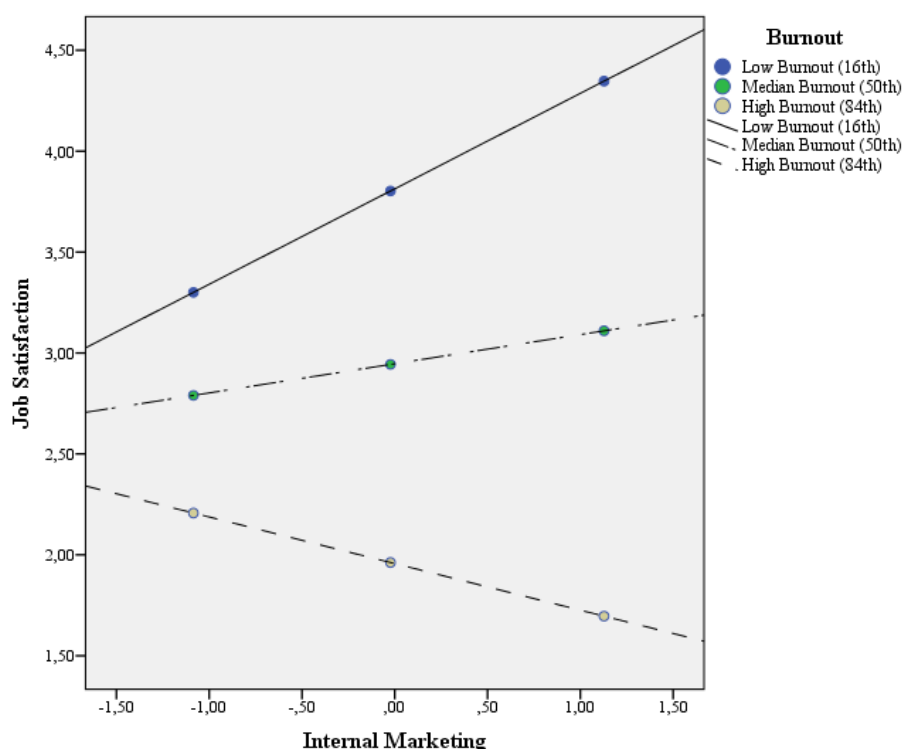


Fig 3. Burnout moderates the relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

Today, internal marketing practices aiming to increase the satisfaction of employees, as well as the satisfaction of customers, have become increasingly important. According to the internal marketing approach, employee satisfaction is essential for the satisfaction and loyalty of external customers [George, 1990]. Many studies have investigated the positive relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction in various sectors [Wu et al., 2013; Hwang and Chi, 2005; Ting, 2010; Chang and Chang, 2009]. However, no study has examined the impact of internal marketing practices on the

satisfaction of courier workers' jobs. Many studies on courier service have focused on the service quality of logistics and cargo services [Bienstock et al., 2008; Wang, 2007]. The researchers have reviewed the sector from the customer's point of view, but neglected the employees. The starting point of this study has been to break this one-sided point of view. The current research aimed to explore the association between internal marketing and job satisfaction and the moderating role of burnout on this relationship in the courier service that provides a bridge between companies and customers. Our findings contribute to the stream of research on burnout and specifically on its destructive effect on job satisfaction despite internal marketing practices.

The findings indicated that internal marketing was positively correlated with job satisfaction, which is consistent with previous studies [Wu et al., 2013; Ting, 2010; Chang and Chang, 2009]. As expected, the results indicate that burnout was negatively correlated with job satisfaction. Based on these results, it can be explained that while internal marketing positively affects the job satisfaction of courier service employees, burnout negatively affects it. In this case, managers should play an active role and provide the necessary conditions to meet the needs and satisfaction.

The most important result of this work is that the of employees of burnout level moderates the relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction. The relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction according to three different levels of employee burnout (low, medium, and high) is shown in Figure 3. When at the low level of burnout, the relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction is positively significant. When burnout is low and internal marketing is high, job satisfaction also increases. When burnout is moderate and the level of internal marketing increases, the level of job satisfaction increases slightly. Interestingly, when the high level of burnout is, the relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction is significant and negative. Job satisfaction decreases slightly, even though internal marketing increases, while burnout remains high. This may be because employees who encounter internal marketing practices during the pandemic period can interpret this as an increase in their workload or their expectations. However, the last thing employees want during the pandemic period is to increase their workload. Another possible reason for this interesting finding may be organizational cynicism. Organizational cynicism is a sense of dissatisfaction with the organization, and employees assume that the organization's management lacks justice, honesty, and transparency [Ozler and Atalay, 2011]. In employees with a high level of organizational cynicism, internal marketing practices may cause burnout by creating adverse effects. Moreover, it is considered that the concept of organizational dissidence explained within the framework of unobtrusive control theory [Tompkins and Cheney, 1985] may also help explain our intriguing findings. With this

dissent, employees can send indirect messages to the organization by doing the opposite of what the organization expects. In addition, employees may have negative assumptions about the reasons behind the organization's positive practices. They may also show dissent in this situation. Future studies are needed to test different factors such as organizational cynicism, organizational dissent, and organizational citizenship behavior.

Although it is beyond the scope of this study, the demographic characteristics of the participants showed that most of the courier industry are men (89%). In this case, managers should employ work women to encourage employment equality, and policymakers should play an active role in increasing the female labor force participation rate for the courier service industry.

When interpreting the conclusions of this research, there are some limitations to take into account. First, the researchers used a small convenience sample that might not have accurately represented the entire courier service industry. Second, most of the employees in our sample are male. This issue also limits the generalizability and external validity of the results. Third, our study mainly conducted a cross-sectional study. However, the pandemic process has changed everything from work conditions to their mood and economic situation. Thus, longitudinal research can provide more insights into the level of burnout and job satisfaction of courier service employees.

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