

A REVIEW OF THEORIES AND MODELS OF JOB BURNOUT IN EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper discusses about job burnout, one of the vital work-related problems, which has been studied for many years. Many people in both developed and developing countries might experience some degrees of burnout in their working life. This would have negative effect both for the individual and the organization the individual work for.

Introduction

Freudenberger (1974) was the first person who mentioned the term 'burnout' to define a syndrome that comprises of physical and mental weakness and low motivation towards clients (Somech, & Miassy-Maljak, 2003). Since then, job burnout has become a concept of debate in psychological literature and cultural discourse (Montero-Marín, García-Campayo, Mera, & López, 2009). There has been more motivation to do research about stress at work, especially in assisting professions as a result of burnout concept (Van Emmerik, 2004). Burnout syndrome is a long-term reaction to persistent emotional and interpersonal stressful factors in the job (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Exhaustion is when an individual feels he is unable to serve himself emotionally; cynicism is when an individual is aloofness towards his colleagues, people who receive service from him, and his job; and inefficacy is when an individual feels he is not carrying out the tasks properly and is incompetent at work (Montero-Marín, & Garcia-Campayo, 2010).

Development of Maslach Burnout Inventory made the concept of burnout popular (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). According to Maslach and Jackson (1981) three dimensions of depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and reduced personal accomplishment are the cause of burnout syndrome. A relatively identical entity in all individuals, with more or less constant etiology and symptoms is the traditional definition of burnout syndrome (Farber, 2000). Generally, when an individual fails to manage and cope with stressors in the job, burnout which is the body's reaction to this failure would be the result (Gil-Monte, & Moreno-Jiménez, 2005, cited in Montero-Marín, & Garcia-Campayo, 2010).

Theories and Models of Burnout

Numerous attempts have been made to postulate theories regarding burnout, however, till present, there is no a single unified theory of burnout (Morgan, 2008). Rather, burnout has been hypothesized from four different approaches, each of which comprises several theoretical bases (Schaufeli, 2003). These four approaches to burnout include; the individual approach, interpersonal approach, organizational approach and societal approach (Schaufeli, 2003; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

Individual Approach

Individual viewpoints on burnout stress the role of factors and processes within an individual (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Conservation of resources (COR) theory explained this perspective (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll & Freedy 1993; Hobfoll & Shirom, 2001). Even though the theory was mainly built as a general stress theory, it has been used for burnout as well (Hobfoll & Freedy 1993; Hobfoll & Shirom, 2001). The fundamental basic principle of the COR theory stresses that individuals are interested to achieve, maintain, and support what has value for them, such as their personal resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Resources in this sense are four types: personal characteristics, conditions, energies and objects (Hätinen, 2008). When an individual loses recourses, feels some threats for his recourses, or when an individual uses his resources but fails to recover the equivalent valued resources psychological stress, such as burnout, is expected to happen (Hobfoll & Freedy 1993; Hobfoll & Shirom, 2001). According to the COR theory, individuals place more weight on the effects of losses than those of gain and, therefore, struggle to protect themselves from loss of resources (Hätinen, 2008).



The COR theory further revealed that individuals who lack resources are more vulnerable to the cycles of resource reduction, whereas those rich in resources are less likely to be in stressful conditions (Hobfoll & Freedy 1993; Hobfoll & Shirom, 2001). Individuals with a strong resource pool are able to distance themselves from stressful situations (Hobfoll & Freedy 1993), or they are more capable of problem-solving and investing resources to improve their situation or obtain new resources (Hobfoll, 2002). The symptom and cause of burnout are described in terms of resources loss in the COR theory (Hobfoll & Freedy 1993; Hobfoll & Shirom, 2001), and burnout may result from unsuccessful coping from a perceived net loss of valuable personal resources that cannot be restored (Hätinen, 2008). The theory also stresses that perceptions should not be seen as products of personality differences, they should be seen as real, and thus objective factors that shape perceptions should be more emphasized (Hätinen, 2008). This is also in line with Maslach and Leiter, (1997), who argue that, because the antecedents of burnout are more probably to be situational than personal, this leads to particular need for organizational interventions which focus on changing the work situation (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

Interpersonal Approach

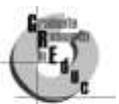
The interpersonal approach to burnout emphasizes that the emotional strain from interactions with demanding, difficult clients or coworkers are the causes of burnout (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). An example of the interpersonal approach is the process model of burnout (Leiter & Maslach, 1988), which was later improved by Leiter (1991, 1993). In this model, burnout is considered as a sequential process that starts with emotional exhaustion caused by human service works (Leiter & Maslach, 1988). When one tries to cope with or protect himself from exhaustion, depersonalization occurs (Hätinen, 2008). Depersonalization is seen as a dysfunctional coping strategy which, together with exhaustion, eventually harms individual's relationship with work associates. This resulting in weakening values and goals, and finally deteriorates individual's sense of accomplishment (Hätinen, 2008). This developmental sequence of burnout symptoms, exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, has been investigated using longitudinal studies (Taris, Le Blanc, Schaufeli, & Schreurs, 2005; Toppinen-Tanner, Kalimo, & Mutenen, 2002).

Organizational Approach

The effect of work environment on burnout development is more emphasized in the organizational approach (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) have placed two approaches to burnout in the organizational category; burnout is an essential part of organizational life, or burnout emanates from a chronic imbalance between person and job. The second organizational approach on burnout is offered by Maslach and Leiter (1997), who expanded their initial view of burnout as an interpersonal problem. According to their more current approach, burnout occurs due to the chronic imbalance between the person and the job in the organizational context. Moreover, six areas of organizational life were identified, in which any mismatches between the worker and the workplace possibly can cause burnout: workload, value conflict, lack of reward, lack of control, lack of fairness and lack of community (Leiter & Maslach, 2000; Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Explaining burnout in terms of the interaction between the individual and the job offers a more complex framework for understanding burnout, as compared to approaches that consider personal and situational factors differently (Leiter & Maslach, 2003; Maslach & Leiter, 1997).

Societal Approach

The societal approach conceptualizes burnout as a wider societal concern that extends beyond the personal and organizational factors. Thus, burnout is viewed in relation to the societal and cultural level (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). According to Schaufeli and Enzmann, (1998), the three models that make up this approach include burnout as alienation (Karger, 1981), burnout as a discrepancy between surface and latent functions of organization (Handy, 1988), and burnout as a cultural product (Meyerson, 1994). Three recent models that have conceptualized burnout are the areas of worklife model (Leiter & Maslach, 2004), the job demands-resources model (JD-R; Demerouti et al., 2001) and the comprehensive burnout and engagement model (COBE; Schaufeli



& Bakker, 2004), which is a development of the JD-R model and incorporates engagement, health impairment and organizational withdrawal. The model argues that burnout and engagement exist at opposite poles to each other on a continuum of energy, involvement and efficacy (Leiter & Maslach, 2004).

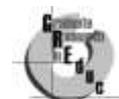
To conclude, no single theoretical explanation of burnout can give clear explanation on the complexity of burnout phenomenon (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). However, Schaufeli & Enzmann, (1998) offered an integrative model of burnout based on the common features offered by most models and theories. According to their model, burnout starts when an employee with a strong initial motivation is constantly faced with job conditions that are experiences as unfavorable (job-personal mismatch). The burnout process proceeds further when dysfunctional personal coping as adopted, resulting in negative individual and organizational consequences. This model is best described by Maslach and Jackson (1981).

Researches on burnout have begun to come up with new theoretical frameworks that more clearly integrate both individual and situational factors, rather than considering them separately (Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009). According to Maslach and Jackson (1981) burnout is a syndrome which is composed of three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion is defined as feeling overwhelmed and emotionally drained, depersonalization is defined as withdrawing from others and becoming negative, and reduced personal accomplishment is defined as feeling that one's work is not successfully achieved or feeling lack of accomplishment.

Previous Studies

The economical structure encountered substantial changes as a result of rationalization in production systems in modern societies (Montero-Marín et al, 2012). The new structures of the labor market, for instance the unstable recruitments and job contracts, may lead workers to be more vulnerable to stress, which has adverse effect on their health (Nakao, 2010). Approximately the reason of 50% to 60% of employees who take sick leave in the Europe is work-related stress (Montero-Marín et al, 2012). These days burnout syndrome is among the important work-related illnesses resulting from stress. It causes considerable detriment both socially and economically (Schaufeli, & Buunk, 2002). With regards to this, burnout is a psychosocial illness which has negative consequences for both an individual and his work place (Montero-Marín et al., 2012). Individual's mental and physical health may be threaded by burnout and this might leads to some psychopathological disorders. For instance, interpersonal sensitivity, anxiety, hostility, obsession-compulsion, paranoid ideation, depression, alcoholism and addictions (Montero-Marín et al., 2012). Burnout also has some adverse effects on organizations such as significant decrease in productivity, too many rotations, offering inappropriate services to customers, too much absenteeism, employees job quitting (Gil-Monte, & Moreno-Jiménez, 2005, cited in Montero-Marín et al., 2012). Consequently burnout may leads to reduction in occupational achievement, inadequate interest in work, corruption in family life and personal relations, absenteeism, and a desire to change occupation (Cherniss, 1980b; Gaines & Jermier, 1983; Maslach & Jackson, 1985; Perlman & Hartman, 1982; Pines Aronson, & Kafry, 1981).

Gorgin (2011) believes that burnout occurs when an individual encounters stress at work and due to this his behaviors and attitudes altered in a negative direction. As people spend more time on their job, burnout increases. As a result, the individual becomes exhausted emotionally, he feels and behaves negatively in his workplace and experiences weak self-efficacy when doing his duties (Gorgin, 2011). According to Whitebook, Howes, Darrah, and Friedman (1981) "to burn out" is "to fail, wear out, or become exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources" (p. 2.) Burnout is the feeling of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). Taking Maslach and Jackson's definition of burnout into consideration Manlove (1993) believes that burnout occurs as a result of continuous persistent stress and not enough job satisfaction in people who work in emotionally charged environments. In this process, not enough job satisfaction and stress reinforce burnout and as a result after a while stress would be increased and job satisfaction would be decreased.

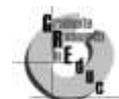


According to Demerouti et al. (2001), a burnout risk occurs if the occupational demands are much higher than the current conditions and resources. However, a reduction in workers' performance and interest also takes place when occupational resources are limited and conditions are poor (Demerouti et al., 2001). Numerous studies about employees in developing countries confirm that job stress has destructive effects on individual's health (Jamal, 1999; Lu, Tseng & Cooper, 1999; Parker & Baba, 1996; Wong, Baba & Jamal, 2004). In addition, according to Parker and Baba (1996), in their study on flight attendants in a developing country, overall depression and burnout was positively related to the job stress. Moreover, Mutiu (2011) also found that, there is significant negative correlation between reduced stress with job satisfaction in workers.

In the study conducted by Sarros, it is found that, school-based administrators tended to experience less burnout compared with counselors, psychiatrists and teachers. The result showed that over 90% of administrators have low to moderate levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and about 66% were reported to have similar levels for personal accomplishment. Devos et al. (2007) found that there is significant relationship between self-efficacy and job satisfaction ($r = -0.46$, $p = 0.001$), and personal accomplishment ($r = 0.45$, $p = 0.001$) among the school-based administrators. This means that, if an administrator has a low self-efficacy, he is expected to have pessimistic feelings and attitudes towards his teachers and students. In addition, there is a strong relationship between low self-efficacy and low personal accomplishment (Devos et al., 2007). The study further revealed that, self-efficacy is negatively related to emotional exhaustion ($r = -0.36$, $p = 0.020$), which means a school-based administrator with low self-efficacy is more prone to encounter burnout. Previous researchers who studied on educational employees found some common characteristics among them. Those were burnout characteristics such as rigidity, negativism and cynicism, which could decrease positive energy, resourcefulness and flexibility (Seiderman, 1978, cited in McClelland, 1986).

From the perspective of burnout as a stress-related response, it is concluded that working in helping professions such as teaching, nursing, medicine or administration is usually associated with stress. The daily interactions with people often are rewarding and frequently stimulating, but over time these interactions may contribute to the feelings of stress (Blasé, 1986). Many of the major causes of stress in education, such as work overload, poor interpersonal relationships, role ambiguity, lack of job autonomy, and negative public recognition have been found in researches worldwide (Sarros, 1988). Several studies of work environment in relation to burnout have been conducted, among which deFrias and Schaie (2001) realized that there were significant differences based on occupation type, gender and age in individuals' perceived of work environment. The research further revealed that, the highest level of perceived innovation, control and autonomy were related to employees between 50 and 56 years in the organization (DeStefano, Clark, Gavin, & Potter, 2005). Furthermore, the higher level of work environment perception was related to male employees in different occupations (DeStefano et al., 2005). In mental health professionals Savicki and Cooley (1987) found the relationship between items of work environment and burnout. Mukundan and Ahour (2011) revealed that, there were significant relationships between workload and dimensions of burnout among female teachers in Malaysia. Similarly, Mukundan and Khandehroo (2010) reported that they found significantly high level of reduced personal accomplishment, depersonalization and emotional exhaustion for teachers. Another study conducted by Jamal (2010) in Malaysia, Pakistan, China, and Canada determined that there were significance relationships between job stressors like conflict, ambiguity and work overload with lack of accomplishment, depersonalization and emotional exhaustion. The relationship between factors of work environment and dimensions of burnout was supported by Jamal (2010) findings. This study is also in line with the study among developed industrialized countries by Lee and Ashforth (1996).

The process of burnout is affected not only by external variables such as working loads (Sarros & Sarros, 1987), social support (Cheuk & Wong, 1995), lack of managerial support (Brissie, Hoover-Dempsey, & Bassler, 1988), age and years of teaching experience (Tümekaya, 1996 cited in Tümekaya, 2006), but also by personal attributes such as the way of coping with stress (Chan & Hui, 1995) and locus of control (Lunenburg & Cadavid, 1992; Tümekaya, 2001 cited in Tümekaya, 2006).



Conclusion

To conclude burnout is affected by various demographic variables, external variables and personal attributes, and brings about psychosocial illnesses which have negative consequences for the individual and the organizations. Therefore, when studying job burnout syndrome for better prevention of its occurrence, there is a need to have a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, the reasons and drawbacks.

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