

Full Length Research Paper

Personality hardiness, job involvement and job burnout among teachers

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The study examined the influence of personality hardiness, job involvement and job burnout among teachers from one of the central universities in India. The findings of the study reveal that personality hardiness and job involvement resulted from job burnout of teachers. Job involvement are found to be negatively and significantly correlated with depersonalization and positively with personal accomplishment dimensions of burnout. Commitment, challenge, control and total personality hardiness are found to be negatively related with emotional exhaustion. Commitment and total personality hardiness are also found to be negatively related with depersonalization. Stepwise multiple regression analyses summarize that commitment and total personality hardiness are the predictors of burnout among teachers.

Key words: Job involvement, personality hardiness, burnout.

INTRODUCTION

Burnout syndrome occurs in response to prolonged stress at work place. Burnout is common among those who are unable to cope with extensive demands and pressure on their energy, time, and resources and those who require frequent contact with people. The term "burnout" originated during the 1960's as a description of the effect of drug abuse on an individual (Golembiewski, 1993). However, it lacked definitional clarity until the development of a widely accepted instrument for its measurement, the Maslach burnout inventory.

Maslach and Jackson (1981) defined burnout as a condition characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and loss of a sense of personal accomplishment. Similarly there has been diverse evidence from scholars on the occurrence of burnout. For example, Maslach and Leiter (1999) indicated that burnout occurs when work load is combined with lack of personal control, insufficient rewards, the absence of fairness, the breakdown of the working community, or conflicting values. Lee and Ashforth (1996) identified work load and time pressure as antecedents of burnout.

Numerous work related factors have been found to be associated with burnout among teachers, including excessive time pressure, poor relationships with colleagues, large classes, lack of resources, fear of violence, behavioral problems of pupils, role ambiguity

and role conflict, poor opportunities for promotion, lack of support, and lack of participation in decision-making (Abel and Sewell, 1999; Fimian and Blanton, 1987; Friedman, 1991; Wolpin et al., 1991).

Researchers found that burnout negatively impacts employees' job attitudes and leads to undesirable behaviors, such as lower job involvement, reduced task performance, and increased turnover intentions (Jackson and Maslach, 1982; Leiter and Maslach, 1988; Motowidlo and Packard, 1986; Shirom, 1989; Wright and Bonett, 1997; Wright and Cropanzano, 1998). This study intends to explore the relationship and effects of job involvement and personality hardiness on burnout.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HARDINESS AND BURNOUT

During the last few years, some personality variables have attracted the attention of researchers in correlation of job stress and burnout. Despite a common acknowledgement that personality factors play a critical role in mediating stress, these factors have been overlooked in majority of empirical studies on stress. A notable exception has been a series of studies carried out by Kobasa (1979; 1982a,). Kobasa et al. (1982)

explored the concept of “personality hardiness” as a resistance resource that mediates the negative consequences of high level stress.

Concept of hardiness focuses on the person that remains relatively healthy after experiencing high amounts of stressful life events. Kobasa argues that persons who experience high degree of stress without falling ill have a personality structure differentiating them from a person who becomes sick under stress. This personality difference is best characterized by the term “hardiness”. Hardiness reflects the individual’s response to life events both personally and professionally (Kobasa, 1979). Three factors, commitment, control and challenge measure hardiness (Kobasa et al., 1982). Commitment reflects a dedication to oneself and to one’s work. Control is the extent to which an individual influences life events to ensure a particular outcome. Challenge refers to life events and one’s response to those events. Individuals who are hardy cope with various stressors, both personal for example life cycle, family and professional for example occupational roles and relationships, are better than those individuals who are not hardy (Simoni and Paterson, 1997). Rush et al. (1995) found negative relations between hardiness and self-reported illness as a result of stress or burnout. Chan (2003) assessed hardiness and burnout among teachers and found that hardiness has significant impact on emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment. McCrainie et al. (1987) found out that hardiness has beneficial major effects in reducing burnout but does not prevent high level of job stress from leading to high level of burnout. Maslach et al. (2001) found out that people who display low levels of hardiness (involvement in daily activities, a sense of control over events, and openness to change) have higher burnout scores, particularly on the exhaustion dimensions.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB INVOLVEMENT AND BURNOUT

Individuals have been described as job involved if they view it as important to their life interest (Dubin, 1956) and perceive performance as central to their self-esteem (Gurin et al., 1960). Vroom (1962) describes a person as ego-involved in a job by the level of his self-esteem which is affected by his perceived level of performance.

Other conceptual way of describing job involvement is the “degree to which a person is identified psychologically with his work” or “the importance of work in his total self-image” (Lodahl and Kejner, 1965). Such a psychological identification with work may result partly from early socialization training during which the individual may internalize the value of goodness of work. Lodahl and Kejner (1965) emphasized that during the process of socialization, certain work values are injected into the individual that remains even at the later stage in the form of attitude toward job. Burnout may have negative effects

on employees’ job attitudes, for example a reduction in job involvement and job satisfaction (Kahill, 1988). Kahill (1988) in a longitudinal study found that burnout negatively affect job involvement. Elloy et al. (1991) demonstrated a negative relationship between burnout and job involvement. Su and Mioa (2006) affirmed the mediating effect of job involvement on emotional exhaustion, diminished personal accomplishment dimensions of burnout.

Hypothesis 1

A negative relationship between burnout and job involvement was proposed.

Hypothesis 2

It was also proposed that personality hardiness will be negatively related to burnout.

Purpose

Investigations have been carried out to explore the relationship between personality hardiness and burnout among teachers at school level, health care professionals, corporate managers and so on but there are very few studies conducted on university teachers. The present study aims to investigate the effects of personality hardiness and job involvement on job burnout among university teachers.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

Sample was randomly selected from one of the central universities in India. It consisted of 300 teachers from different faculties of the university.

Tools used

Hardiness

The short version of hardiness scale developed by Kobasa and Maddi (1982) was used to assess the hardiness level of the subject. This scale contains 12, 16 and 8 items for measuring commitment, control and challenge, respectively. Kobasa and Maddi stated that the scale has a correlation of 0.89 with full scale and shows a reliability co-efficient alpha of 0.86. Hull et al. (1987) also reported a correlation of 0.76 between the 36 items revised using hardiness scale and its original form.

Job involvement

The job involvement of the subjects was assessed with the help of Indian adaptation of Lodahl and Kejner’s (1965) scale. Its reliability co-efficient (Split half) was reported to be 0.76. It is a 20 item 5-point rating scale. Sample items include “I will stay overtime to finish a job even if I’m not paid for it”, and “I live, eat, and breath my

Table 1. Mean and SD.

Variables	Mean	SD
Job involvement	71.15	10.39
Commitment	19.26	5.42
Challenge	19.35	2.66
Control	36.79	8.75
Total personality hardiness	50.35	22.04
Emotional exhaustion	11.05	8.53
Depersonalization	3.99	4.12
Personal accomplishment	39.48	11.49

SD= Standard deviation.

job”.

Burnout

The Maslach burnout inventory was used in order to measure the burnout among teachers in the present study (MBI et al., 1981). The MBI consist of 22 items. Each item is rated 1 (very mild) to 7 (very strong). A place is provided for the respondent to tick “never” if the feeling or attitude described is never experienced. According to Maslach and Jackson, a person with higher scores on the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization sub scales and with low scores on personal accomplishment sub scale would perceive himself as burnt out. Thus, a person is not classified as “burnout” or “not burnout” but rather placed on a continuum from “more burnout” to “less burnout”.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In looking at the mean of different variables used in the study, findings show that mean scores of the three components of job burnout are, 11.05 for emotional exhaustion (EE), 3.99 for depersonalization (DP) and 39.48 for personal accomplishment (PA). Here it is worth mentioning that for personal accomplishment, low score is indicative of high burnout and high scores show low burnout. The standard deviation of emotional exhaustion (EE) is 8.53, 4.12 for depersonalization and 11.49 for personal accomplishment (Table 1).

The mean for the three sub-scales of hardiness variable is 19.06 for commitment, 19.35 for challenge and 36.79 for control. For hardiness sub scales, the lower the scores the higher the hardiness one poses. Therefore, the below than average mean scores on all of these three sub scales show hardiness in somewhat high degree. The standard deviation of these sub-scales: commitment, challenge and control are 5.42, 2.66 and 8.55, respectively. The mean score of job involvement is 71.15 which is quite high and reveals that teachers have high levels of job involvement. The standard deviation score is 10.39. Results show that teachers have somewhat high level of hardiness. The obtained results supported the previous view that hardiness is a source of resistance to

the negative effects of stressful life events on health. Holt et al. (1987) found in their study on female elementary teachers that teachers with high stress and low burnout were less alienated.

Previous studies have suggested that personality characteristics of hardiness, a combination of commitment, challenge and control decreases the illness related effects of stressful life events. They reported that hardy individuals suffer from fewer illnesses because they are able to transform life events cognitively to make them less stressful (Kobasa et al., 1981, 1982a, 1982b). The subjects may have their own style of managing stressful situation occurring in their organization. They have high mean scores on all the three component of personality hardiness. Which make them to face the life stressors effectively without been stressed (Table 1). Results show that teachers have high level of job involvement and perhaps they are committed to their work and this facilitates to counter the stressful events. A high level of job involvement and hardiness profile may account for low burnout in this group (Table 2).

The table reveals that job involvement is associated negatively and significantly with depersonalization ($r = -0.22$, at 0.05 level) and positively with personal accomplishment dimension of burnout ($r = 0.24$, at 0.05 level). A significant negative relation is observed between commitment and emotional exhaustion ($r = -0.49$, at 0.001 level). Commitment also shows a positive and significant relation with depersonalization ($r = 0.62$, at 0.001 level). Challenge dimension of personality hardiness is found to be negatively related with emotional exhaustion ($r = -0.23$, at 0.05 level) only. Control is associated negatively and significantly with emotional exhaustion ($r = -0.26$, at 0.05 level). Total personality hardiness is found to be negatively and significantly associated with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions of burnout ($r = -0.45$ and -0.32 at 0.01 level). Correlation analyses indicated significant relationships between hardiness dimensions and job involvement. Emotional exhaustion was found to be significantly and negatively related to all personality hardiness dimensions. Other dimensions are not found to be consistently significant with other burnout dimensions except commitment and total personality hardiness with depersonalization. Commitment has positive relation with depersonalization: as commitment increases people start becoming impersonal and having cynical feeling towards the recipient of their services. Total personality hardiness shows negative relationship with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization which shows that high hardiness prevents the teachers from being burnt out in the sample. These findings partially confirm our second hypothesis that hardiness has beneficial main effects in reducing burnout (Tables 3, 4 and 5).

The multiple “ r ” provides an indication of the amount of variance in a set of variables that is accounted for by another set of variables. A minimum variance of 10% is considered significant and meaningful. Three stepwise

Table 2. Correlation between various independent variables and dependent variables in the sample.

Variables	Emotional exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal accomplishment
Job involvement	-0.13	-0.22*	0.24*
Commitment	-0.49**	0.62**	-0.19
Challenge	-0.23*	0.16	0.04
Control	-0.26*	-0.09	0.08
Total personality hardiness	-0.45**	-0.32**	0.01

Table 3. Stepwise multiple regression analysis (emotional exhaustion as criterion variable).

Predictors	Multiple r	R ²	F	P
Commitment	0.76	0.59	5.16	0.0254*
Job involvement	0.78	0.61	2.82	0.0962
Control	0.80	0.64	1.37	0.2440

Table 4. Stepwise multiple regression analysis (depersonalization as criterion variable).

Predictors	Multiple r	R ²	F	P
Commitment	0.61	0.38	60.96	0.0000**
Total personality hardiness	0.67	0.45	13.21	0.0005**
Control	0.83	0.68	1.73	0.1912

Table 5. Stepwise multiple regression analysis (personal accomplishment as criterion variable).

Predictors	Multiple r	R ²	F	P
Job involvement	0.45	0.20	4.32	0.0405
Control	0.47	0.22	2.67	0.1055
Commitment	0.49	0.24	2.22	0.1392

regression analyses were conducted. In the first, emotional exhaustion was the criterion variable, and the predictor variable were job involvement, commitment, challenge, control and total personality hardiness. Table 3 indicates a significant overall multivariate effect: multiple $r = 0.76$. The r^2 indicated that 64% of the variance in emotional exhaustion was accounted for by the commitment, job involvement and control. Commitment was the first variable entered and it explained 59% of the variance ($P < 0.05$), followed by job involvement which accounted for an additional 2% of the variance, which was not significantly explained. Control was the final construct to enter the equation, and the variance was raised 3% to a cumulative r^2 of 64%.

A significant amount of emotional exhaustion was explained only by commitment dimension of personality hardiness. The second stepwise multiple regression analysis used the depersonalization dimension of burnout

as the criterion variable and similar predictor variables (Table 4). The multiple r was significant: $r = 0.61$ and 0.67 , $F = 60.96$ and 13.21 . Commitment entered into the equation first and accounted for 38% of the variance, followed by total personality hardiness, which added 7% ($P < 0.0001$). Job involvement and control were not significant variables in this analysis.

The third stepwise multiple regression analysis used the personal accomplishment dimension of burnout as the criterion variable and job involvement, commitment, challenge, control and total personality hardiness as the predictor variables. The multiple " r " was not found significant. Although job involvement entered into the equation first followed by control and commitment (Table 5). A significant amount of burnout was explained by commitment and total personality hardiness. Specifically, lower level of burnout was predicted by high level of commitment and high level of personality hardiness.

Conclusion

The findings of the study show that university teachers have lower level of burnout. They have low feeling of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and high feeling of personal accomplishment, which reflects a low burnout in them. They have a stronger feeling of being capable of attaining their goals and therefore, not becoming much depersonalized and emotionally exhausted. It can be said that these teachers have lower burnout because of their ability to deal with the multifarious problems of students and other type of problems effectively and efficiently. Due to these feelings, they do not feel bad about themselves, others and their jobs. Thus the feeling of competence and self-worth are high enabling them to counteract burnout. In the present study it has been found that personality hardiness is negatively related to job burnout. These teachers feel that behavior and action are in their control and believe that changing events are natural outgrowth of their actions and behavior. The stepwise multiple regression analyses summarize that commitment and total personality hardiness are the significant predictors of job burnout among university teachers.

Finally, one may draw the conclusion that university teachers feel low burnout due to high level of hardiness and job involvement.

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