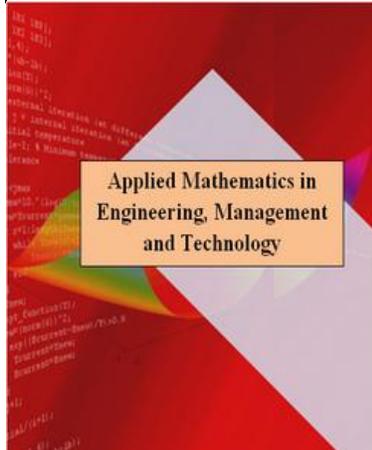


A Study on the Relationship between Job Stress and Job Burnout (At Headquarters Personnel of the Post Company)

Hosein Hoseinian¹
Ali Shirazi²

¹ PhD Candidate for organizational behavior management at Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran: Corresponding author;

² Associate Professor, Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran



Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to measure the degree of job stress and job burnout in the Post Company and identify the relationship between job stress and job burnout.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The paper presents an overview of the concept of job stress and job burnout. The research is descriptive, analytical and cross-sectional. It was conducted on 200 employees of the Post Company of I.R. Iran in 2010 using Osipow job stress questionnaire and Geldard job burnout questionnaire; a demographic questionnaire was also developed. Osipow job stress questionnaire consisted of six stress-inducing work roles including role overload, role insufficiency, role ambiguity, role boundary, responsibility and physical environment. The sample size is 200.

Findings: The amount of job stress was normal (194.20) in the sample, and job burnout had a moderate level (194.42). The research showed that the correlation

between the job stress of the Post personnel, and their job burnout in the sample was meaningful ($r= 0.58$) in a level of $P<0.0001$. Moreover job stress and job burnout had no meaningful relation to demographic specifications such as age, managerial record, sex, and education, and income. The results of the study confirmed direct and meaningful relation between job stress and job burnout. In addition to that, the highest job stress relates to role overload and the lowest belonged to physical environment.

Originality/ Value: The research measures the degree of job satisfaction and job burnout in the Post Company of I.R. Iran for the first time. The research is significant in that Elkin and Rosch (1990) estimated that in 1990, 54% of 550 million working days lost annually, could be attributed to stress.

Keywords: job stress, job burnout, Post Company

1.Introduction

Stress is a pattern of emotional (e.g. anxiety, depression), cognitive (e.g. poor concentration), behavioral (e.g. increased alcohol use) and physical (e.g. increased blood pressure, headaches) reactions to adverse conditions, and it is characterized by high levels of arousal, distress, and feelings of not coping (European Commission, Employment & Social Affairs, 1999). It is not usually classified as a mental disorder, although it can precipitate both physical and emotional problems. It is a set of physical, mental and behavioral reactions expressed by the human organism against internal and external factors disturbing natural balance and consistency (Mirzamani, 2000). Of course human should feel a few amount of mental pressure to work and try (Aghilinejad, 2001). Job stress is the result of accumulation of some job-related stress factors. If the motives and efforts of the person do not comply with his position, or if they are in conflict with it, the person will be under stress, and will not feel satisfied from his position (Curtis, 2003).

It is critical to understand the effects of stress on the mind and body in order to develop effective coping strategies for stress (Arden, 2002). Arden emphasized the importance of recognizing job stress and its impact on one's body, thoughts, emotions, and interactions with people. Stress has been studied and is known to affect the normal equilibrium in the human body. Many of us may not be able to understand the bodily processes involved in normal equilibrium but may know that bodily functions do work to maintain physiological equilibrium and integration in the body (Carson, Butcher, & Mineka, 1998). This process is described as homeostasis where mechanisms for ensuring normal blood chemistry, for maintaining constant body temperature, and for combating invading microorganisms strive to preserve steady states to

maintain physiological activity within a range essential to efficient functioning and survival (Caron, Butcher, & Mineka, p. 76). Environmental and physical stressors impact homeostasis in many forms. For example, a person injured in an automobile accident will have to adjust to the physical and psychological effects of that injury. Similarly, a person who loses a spouse in his or her later years will have to adjust to a different living environment.

One consequence of long-term exposure to stress may be burnout. The use of the expression burnout has become increasingly popular around the world to describe the result of a long-term exposure to a work situation that is beyond the person's capacity to cope. The term was coined by Freudenberger (1974) to refer to exhaustion of aid workers; the notion that has now been broadened to include all types of workers. In fact, he borrowed the term from the illicit drug scene where it colloquially referred to the devastating effect of chronic drug abuse. He used the term to describe the gradual emotional depletion, loss of motivation, and reduced commitment among volunteers of the St Mark's Free Clinic in New York's East Village that he observed as a consulting psychiatrist.

The concept of burnout was introduced by Bradley (1969) in a research paper on probation officers. However, the term itself originated in 1974 by Freudenberger who was a practitioner at a community agency focusing on drug abuse (Skovholt, 2001). In the early 1980s, the topic of *burnout* became increasingly studied among human service professionals (Cherniss, 1980). Furthermore, it is estimated that 2,500 papers have been published on job burnout over a 20-year period, primarily among human service professionals (Schulz, Greenley, & Brown, 1995).

Burnout is characterized by feeling of intense fatigue, a sense of isolation and loss of control, as well as a feeling of accomplishing nothing at work. It is often accompanied by insomnia, headaches, gastrointestinal symptoms, a variety of muscular and joint pains and lapses in memory.

Burnout is a topic that is widely extensively in the areas of education, psychology, nursing, social work and therapy. Some literature focuses on professional burnout, particularly with regard to the helping professions. Miller (1998) and Sussman (1992, 1995) have written about the stresses of practicing psychotherapy and the prevalence of burnout in this field.

Job burnout is a psychological syndrome mostly seen in the occupations where the worker is closely in touch with other people (Maslach et al., 1993). Job burnout has some consequences; the most common are health disorders, disability in fulfilling tasks, vulnerability toward professional communications, attraction to alcohol, and ultimately dissatisfaction and quitting job (Curtis, 2003). Occupational job burnout is not fundamentally a mental disorder, but it progresses over time and it may turn into disability (Glass et al., 1993).

Various studies are done on job stress and job burnout. Soltani (2002) studied the practical solutions for decreasing job stress in Mobarakeh Steel Complex, he showed that the personnel and managers of industrial and production organizations can take steps to increase their tolerance as well as individual and organizational stress by knowing about their level of stress-taking and move toward healthier environment and promotion of psychological health and direct the energies, which are inadvertently spent on organizational tensions could be used for promotion of social responsibilities (9).

Zahra Kar et al. (2006).

Suran and Sheridan looked at burnout in the training of psychologists and concluded that it is a career risk inherent in professional development (1985). They advocate the value of self-care in preventing burnout.

In Ratliff's examination of stress and burnout in the helping professions, she attributes a major source of burnout to the fact that it is difficult to assess the degree of therapeutic success in the helping professions (1988). Other factors include performance of work that is emotionally demanding and draining; unrealistic expectations of therapists; and organizational and environmental factors in human services settings. Her article looks at various ways to prevent burnout including personal therapy, the setting aside of free time for exercise, non-work activities or contemplation and associating with well-adjusted, healthy individuals, including family and friends. She recommends separating the home and work environment by setting aside a period of relaxation that allows one to unwind from one set of stressors before facing another.

Cherniss (1980) defines burnout as a transactional process which comprises of three stages. First, there is an imbalance between resources and demand (stress). Second, there is an immediate, short-term emotional response to this imbalance, and there are feelings of anxiety, tension, fatigue and exhaustion. The third consists of changes in attitude and behavior, such as a tendency to treat clients in a detached and mechanical fashion.

Payne (2001) conducted a study on 89 female nurses in order to identify job burnout and compatibility factors. In this research, Maslach job burnout questionnaire, nurse stress index and demographic questionnaire were used. He found that the overall level of job burnout is low.

In a research, Moreno et al. (2002) studied the impact of demographic factors on 247 Madrid hospital nurses. They found that there is a limited relation between job burnout and demographic factors such as age, sex, marital status etc., and other factors such as working conditions and degree of contract with the patient play more important role in creation of job burnout (15).

Parcelo et al. (2004) studied the impact of working condition and job stress on psychological health of 806 governmental employees; they found that job stress influences working condition, psychological health and welfare of the personnel (16).

Pines and Anderson (1981) note that burnout is characterized by physical depletion, by feeling of helplessness and hopelessness, by emotional drain, and by the development of negative self-concept and negative attitudes towards work, life, and other people.

Faber (1983) defines burnout as a negative adaptation to stress which includes a pervasive mood of alienation, with features of depression and a loss of idealistic spirit.

2. Population, Sample and Sampling Method

The population of the research consists of those personnel of the Post Company working in the headquarters. The researcher studies the relationship between job stress and job burnout in the Post Company, which is undergoing privatization. It seems privatization has led to an ambiguity in the occupational future of the staff working in state organizations, and it has resulted in job stress syndrome. The volume of the sample is determined by Krejcie & Morgan table (1970) and it is gathered by multistep cluster sampling method; the size of the population was 400, and the sample size was 196, which was rounded to 200.

3. Research Methodology

This correlation research is descriptive and cross-sectional; it studied the relationship between job stress and job burnout in the headquarter staff of the Post Company in 2010. Two questionnaires are used as research tools to gather data: Osipow job stress and Geldard job burnout questionnaires. A demographic questionnaire developed by the researcher was also used to collect demographic data.

Osipow job stress questionnaire consisted of 60 questions. The questionnaire was changed in order to enable it to measure the pressure of the employees. The questions are arranged in six dimensions; each dimension has 10 questions including role overload, role insufficiency, role ambiguity, role boundary, responsibility and physical environment (Khaghanizadeh, 2001).

3.1. Role Overload (RO) measures the extent to which job demands exceed resources (personal and work place), and the extent to which an individual is able to accomplish expected workloads.

3.2. Role Insufficiency (RI) measures the extent to which the individual's training, education skills and experience are appropriate to job requirements.

3.3. Role Ambiguity (RA) measures the extent to which the priorities, expectations, and evaluation criteria are clear to the individual.

3.4. Role Boundary (RB) measures the extent to which the individual has or feels, a great deal of responsibility for the performance and welfare of others on the job.

3.5. Responsibility (R) measures the extent to which the individuals ha or feels, a great deal to responsibility for the performance and welfare of others on the job.

3.6. Physical Environment (PE) measures the extent to which the individual is exposed to high levels of environmental toxins or extreme physical conditions.

Geldard burnout questionnaire: the questionnaire consists of 40 questions. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire are assessed frequently by different researches such as Khakpour (1997) in Tehran and Zareie (2000) in Qazvin.

Researcher Demographic Questionnaire: the questionnaire collects information such as sex and education.

To analyze data, descriptive statistical data (mean, variance, standard deviations) were used. Then one-way variance, t-test and correlation coefficient were used to see if the relationship is meaningful statistically. SPSS software was used to measure the above statistics and descriptive-analytical statistics are also used.

4. Research Findings

4.1. Descriptive Findings

Table 1: Distribution of the subjects by sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Female	88	44
Male	112	56

Table 2: Distribution of subjects by education

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary school diploma	20	10
Associate's	35	17.5
Bachelor's	98	49
Master's	28	14
PHD	18	9
Unanswered	1	0.5
Total	199	99.50

The findings indicate that some 20 persons (10%) of the sample hold secondary school diploma, 35 persons (17.50%) hold associate's degree diploma, 98 persons (49%) have bachelor's and 28 persons (14%) hold Master's and 19 persons (9%) hold PHD diploma. Therefore, bachelor's degree has the highest frequency and secondary school diploma, the lowest.

Table 3: Distribution of subjects by marital status

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	47	33.50
Married	89	63.5
Unanswered	4	2.80
Total	140	99.80

The results show that 63.5% of the subjects are married and 33.5% are single.

Table 4: The mean and standard deviation of the subjects in job stress examination of the sample

Dimension	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Role overload (RO)	196	35.57	8.79	17	50
Role insufficiency (RI)	200	34.32	7.96	15	50
Role ambiguity (RA)	200	31.72	7.78	16	45
Role boundary (RB)	200	33.12	7.67	14	49
Responsibility (R)	200	33.94	6.88	19	47
Physical environment (RE)	200	25.64	12.29	10	50

The table illustrates that the highest mean of job stress relate to role overload and the lowest relate to role ambiguity dimension.

Table 5: Distribution of subjects by job stress and job burnout of the sample

Constructs	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Job stress	196	194.20	37.078	130	265
Job burnout	200	104.42	28.543	59	171

The table shows that:

- The mean of job stress in the sample is 184.20; which is normal in accordance to Osipow pointing scale, therefore, the sample did not show job stress.
- The mean of the job stress is 104.42 in the sample; which is moderate level and therefore no job burnout is seen in the sample.

Table 6: The Results of Job Stress in the Sample

Stress level	Role overload		Role insufficiency		Role ambiguity		Role boundary	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
No	7	3.5	4	2	0	0	4	2
Normal	82	41	57	28.5	68	34	38	19
Moderate	62	31	49	24.50	24	12	61	30.5
High	45	22.5	90	45	108	54	97	48.59
Unanswered	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	200	100	200	100	200	100	200	100

Stress level	Responsibility		Physical environment	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
No	3	1.5	78	39
Normal	5	2.5	33	16.5
Moderate	150	75	32	16
High	42	21	57	28.50
Unanswered	0	0	0	0
Total	200	100	200	100

5.The results

In role overload of the sample, 7 persons (3.5%) have no stress, 82 persons (41%) have normal stress, 62 persons (31%) have moderate stress and 45 persons (22.5%) have high stress.

In role insufficiency of the sample, 4 persons (2%) have no stress, 57 persons (28.50%) have normal stress, 49 persons (24.50%) have moderate stress and 90 persons (45%) have high stress.

In role ambiguity of the sample, 68 persons (34%) have normal stress, 4 persons (12%) have moderate stress and 108 (54%) persons have severe stress.

In role boundary of the sample, 4 persons (2%) have no stress, 38 persons (19%) have normal stress, 61 persons (30.50%) have moderate stress and 97 persons (48.50%) have severe stress.

In the responsibility dimension of the sample, 3 persons (1.5%) have no stress, 5 persons (2.5%) have normal stress, 150 persons (75%) have moderate stress and 42 persons (21%) have severe stress.

In physical environment dimension of the sample, 78 persons (39%) have no stress, 33 persons (16.50%) have normal stress, 32 persons (16%) have moderate stress and 57 persons (28.50%) have severe stress.

Table 7: The results of job stress examination in the sample

	Frequency	Percentage
No stress	3	1.5
Normal stress	117	58.5
Moderate stress	64	32
Severe stress	12	6
Unanswered	4	2
Total	200	100

The results of the job stress examination of the sample show that 3 persons (1.5%) has no stress, 117 persons (58.5%) have normal stress, 64 persons (32%) have moderate stress and 12 persons (6%) have severe stress.

Therefore, the highest frequency belongs to those with normal stress.

6. Analytical Findings (Deductive)

6.1. Examination of Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis: There is a direct correlation between job stress of the individuals and their job burnout.

Table 8- The results of correlation for examination of hypothesis

Predictor	Criterion variable	Job burnout
Job stress	Correlation coefficient	0.58**
	Number	196
	Significance	<0.0001

** : $p < 0.01$

The distribution of subjects on the basis of the above table (correlation coefficient of 0.58, and significance of <0.0001) shows that there is a meaningful relation between job stress and job burnout in the headquarter staff of the Post Company. In other words, the more the stress, the more the job burnout. Therefore, the hypothesis of the research is confirmed.

7. Research Questions

7.1. First questions: Is there a meaningful relation between job stress and job burnout of the headquarter staff of the Post Company?

The answer to the above questions is the answer given to the research hypothesis i.e. there is a meaningful relationship between job stress and job burnout.

7.2. Second question: Is there job burnout disorder among headquarter staff of the Post Company?

In accordance to job burnout table, the moderate job burnout in the sample is 104.42, which is in the range of 83-122; therefore, no job burnout is seen among them.

7.3. Third question: What is the impact of stress on job burnout?

In accordance to the argument provided for research hypothesis, it can be said that stress has direct impact on the job burnout of the employees. In other words, the more the stress, the more the job burnout.

8. Discussion and Conclusion

Job stress and job burnout, and their impact on the organization are one of the topics of concern in the organization behavior. Nervous pressures assimilates employees as a plague and confutes efforts and activities; so that, each year significant amount of capital is lost as a result of lack of physical and psychic health, efficiency degradation, job quits and change due to stress.

During privatization, some stress factors are inevitable; therefore, it is necessary for the managers to take measures in order to prevent behavioral and psychic impacts of stress on employees and improve the working conditions and teach counter measures.

The finding of the research is significant. Many proofs show that job burnout has server consequences on the organization and employees; it leads to frequent job chances, absence, decline in the quality and quantity of the job as well as severe impacts on personnel psychic health. Encountering job stress and job burnout needs particular interference among which we can refer to motivating group work, involving personnel in decision-making, job protection in the time of change and transformation such as privatization, reducing conflicts and job ambiguities and increasing control over job events. Many researchers believe that those interference should be done both in the working environment and they must also be included in training programs. Of course, it seems a group deeply engaged in job stress and job burnout, there is a need to specialized individual interference.

Burnout is important for several reasons; burnout influences the morale of the staff members. It seems to affect the quality of care and treatment provided to clients. It may have a strong influence on administrative functioning and ultimately, it is important in community settings because it helps prevent job stress and promotes mental health (Chemiss, 1980).

In a study of licensed professional counselors in Virginia, RO scores were in normal ranges (Ryan, 1996). Trivette (1993) reported moderate range for Role Overload scores in a study of elementary school counselors as well. However, for counselors who reported higher stress scores overall, RO scores were significantly higher and correlated to the elevated stress scores. In this study, the RO score for 41 percent of the respondents was normal, and it was moderate for 31 percent of the respondents.

Clemons (1988) found RI has a significant impact on job satisfaction of LPCs. This factor explained the largest amount of variance in his model. While in our study, RI stood in normal range.

Clemons (1988) found that as Role Ambiguity increased, overall job satisfaction decreased. Furthermore, Clemons (1998) report this subscale was the major factor in the variance in satisfaction with supervision. Our study also indicated that a majority of respondents (54%) referred to role ambiguity as a significant cause of stress and subsequently burnout.

Clemons (1988) reported RB had no significant effect on job satisfaction for LPCs. Trivette (1993) found RB scores increased significantly for those counselors reporting higher levels of overall job stress. In our study, role boundary resulted in moderate to high stress level in over 78% of the respondents.

Responsibility positively and significantly influenced overall job satisfaction for LPCs (Clemons, 1988). When school counselors served more than one type of school setting, their R scores were significantly higher than those serving one type of school setting (Trivette, 1993).

Clemons (1988) reported the PE subscale as both negative and positive variance based upon the facet of job satisfaction to which it was applied.

Generally, our study showed that the mean of job stress in the sample is 184.20; which is normal in accordance to Osipow pointing scale, therefore, the sample did not show job stress. And the mean of the job stress is 104.42; which is moderate level and therefore no job burnout is seen in the sample. Moreover, the table illustrates that the highest mean of job stress relate to role overload and the lowest relate to role ambiguity dimension.

Above all, tudies have provided evidence that personality to be an important factor for job satisfaction and burnout. Staw and Ross (1985), as cited in Spector (1997) find that job satisfaction is due to personality. Spector (1997) goes further by identifying two particular traits which has significant correlations with job satisfaction. The two personality traits are: (1) the individual's locus of control and (2) negative affectivity. Therefore, we suggest the researchers to study the impact personality traits on job stress and burnout in the future studies.

References

- Abdi, H. 1994. A Research on the Burnout Resulting from Environment and its Relation to the Burnout of Nurses Working in Sanandaj Hospitals in Emergency Ward of Yazd in 1994. Dissertaton (Master's). Iran University of Medical Sciences. (1994). P61-163.
- Aghilinejad, Mashallah et al. 2001. Occupational Medicine and Diseases. Second volume- Tehran: Samarang, 2001, P230.
- Anthony D., Lamontagne, Amber M., 2007. A Systematic Review of the Job-stress Intervention Evaluation Literature, 1990-2005. International Journal of Environment Health. 3(2007). P268-280.
- Azad Marzabadi, E., Salimi, S.H., 2004. A Study on the Job Stress of a Military Unit. Martial Science Journal. 4(2004). P4.
- Bee Ean, L., 2007. Study on the Job Satisfaction and Burnout among Medical Social Workers in Government Hospitals in Malaysia. Thesis for Master's in Social Work. University of Sains Malaysia. 2007.
- Curtis Antony J..Health Psychology (Reoutledge Modular Psychology). Sydney: Reutledge;. 2000.
- Esfandiari, Gholamreza. 2001. A Study on the Job Burnout in Nurses Working at Sanandaj Hospitas in 2001. Kurdistan University Scientific Journal. 21 (2001). P 31-36.
- Etkinson, Rita. Etkinson, Richard C., Hilgard Ernest. Introduction to Psychology. 15th ed. Australia: Harcourt Publishers Group; 1983.:
- Jackson, A.D., 2004. A Survey of the Occupational Stress, Psychological Strain, and Coping Resources of Licensed Professional Counselors in Virginia: A Replication Study. Dissertation for Doctor of Philosophy. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. 2004.
- Khaghanizadeh, M., Salimi, S.H., 2001. A Study on the Job Burnout and Influential Factors in Nurses. Research Project. Baghiyatollah Medical Sciences University, Faculty of Management (2001). P26.
- Mirzamani, Seyed Mahmoud. Applied Psychology in Military Forces: Golban Publications, (1999), P49.
- Moreno Jimenez, B. 2002. Professional burnout in hospitals. Influence of sociodemographic variables. Rev Enferm. Nov(2002); 25(11):p:18-26.
- Najafi, M., Solati Dehkordi, S.K., Forozbakhsh, F, 2000. The Relationship between Job Burnout and Psychological Health in Esfahan Nuclear Fuel Production Center. Journal of Medical Sciences of Shahrekord University. 2(2000). P34-41.
- Parslow R.A; Jorm A.F; Christensen, H. Broom DH, Strzdins L. 2004. The impact of employee level and work stress on mental health & GP services use: an analysis of a sample of Australian government employee. BMC Public Health. Sep(2004), 304:(4):p:41
- Payne, N. 2001. Occupational stressors and coping as determinants of burnout in female hospice nurses. J Adv Nurs. Feb(2001),33(3):p:394-405.
- Pourafkari, Nosratollah. 1994. Comprehensive Psychology Dictionary. Second Volume- Tehran: Nobahar Publications, (1994), P1449.
- Soltani, I., 2002. Scientific Methods for Reducing Stress among Mangers and Employees. Tadbir Journal. 129(2002). P22.
- Srivastova A.X. 1991. Moderating effect of coping on the relationship between (1991) p:43
- Zahrakar, K., Shafiabadi A., Delavar, 2006. A., Review on the Efficiency of Stress Infusion in Decreasing Psychological Disorders (Depression, Anxiety, Job Burnout, Job Dissatisfaction) Originating from Job Stress in Iran Khodro Company. Consultancy News and Researches. 17(2006). P27.