

Modelling job burnout based on job exhaustion and personality traits among the employees of the Bastak County Department of Education

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Abstract

This study aims to model job burnout based on job exhaustion and personality traits among the employees. Burnout is a problem caused by workplace tensions. The present research was conducted on 100 employees. The statistical population of the research consisted of all the employees. For field data collection, the Maslach Burnout Inventory, developed by Maslach and Jackson, and NEO personality inventory were used. For data analysis, descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (correlation and regression) along with SPSS software were employed. The present research hypothesises that there is a significant relationship between job burnout based on job performance, job exhaustion and personality traits among the employees. According to findings, mental exercise, improving psychological satisfaction and experiential freshness can increase conscientiousness and agreeability and decrease neuroticism, which eventually leads to lower burnout.

Keywords: Job burnout, job exhaustion, personality characteristics;

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1. Introduction

In the present era, organisational staff face various internal and external organisational factors and their personality, mind and body are constantly affected by these factors. Sometimes, due to excessive work pressure, an individual feel fatigued, frustrated and stressed out. This unpleasant condition sometimes occurs due to overwork. It is a state and feeling that makes a person dislike everything, even being alive, and is called 'burnout'. The term 'burnout' has been appropriately chosen because it evokes the same feeling; a state in which everything becomes indifferent to a person. Under these conditions, a person experiences severe loss of motivation and gives up easily (Malek, 2009).

Physical exhaustion and tensions that affect individuals in organisations are evident and can be easily diagnosed and treated, but psychological tensions cannot be observed and hence they cannot be easily diagnosed and treated. Therefore, they have unfavourable impacts on the trained human resources of organisations and lead to their exhaustion (Soltani, 1998). Job exhaustion is a psychological process that occurs under severe mental occupational pressure and leads to emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and a decrease in motivation and progress (Alarcon, 2011). One of the harms associated with job exhaustion is physical exhaustion. People who suffer from this problem typically have low energy and feel extremely fatigued. In addition, those affected by this problem frequently report symptoms of physical pressure such as headaches, nausea, insomnia and changes in the diet. Another complication caused by job exhaustion is that the person also experiences emotional exhaustion. Depression, helplessness, the feeling of inefficiency in one's occupation and the like are all symptoms of job exhaustion (Mirabzadeh, Semii, & Faizzadeh, 2007). Negative attitudes towards oneself, one's job, organisation and life, in general, indicate attitudinal exhaustion, and ultimately, most sufferers report low personal progress. This type of exhaustion can be defined as an emotional, physical and mental exhaustion syndrome that is accompanied by a feeling of low self-esteem, low self-worth and the presence of severe and long-term stress (Meyer, Allen, & Gellatly, 1990).

In examining job burnout, the impact of personality and personality traits is very important. Personality can be defined as a durable and unique set of traits. Although there is still disagreement regarding the fundamental structure of personality traits, most researchers now have accepted the five-factor model (Chone & Musson, 2007). The Big Five personality model developed by Costa and McCrae introduces five basic dimensions of personality; each dimension contains some specific traits and together they comprise the Big Five personality model. The Big Five include neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Neuroticism is the tendency to experience negative emotions, such as sadness or anxiety; extraversion is the tendency to be social, warm, assertive, seek excitement, active and happy; openness to experience involves being imaginative, creative and emotional with an artistic sensitivity and unconventionality; agreeableness is the interpersonal dimension of relationships which is characterised by altruism, trust, humility and cooperation; and conscientiousness is the tendency to discipline, progress, persevere and be reliable and follow the ethical rules and principles (Cosby, Graber, & Hardeep, 2017).

It is studied by the personality traits and employees' job performance and the results showed that there is a significant relationship between all personality traits, including neuroticism,

conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness to experience and extraversion, and employees' job performance. The relationship between personality traits and job stress with the job burnout rate of faculty members of medical universities. The results of this study indicated that personal and organisational stress factors affect job burnout of the faculty members of medical universities of the country. This impact has nothing to do with demographic characteristics. Also, the personality traits of faculty members of medical universities affect their job burnout. In addition, female professors were more open to experience, agreeable and conscientious than male professors (Bohlooli & Paziriye, 2018). Garsio et al. (2014), in a study on 88 teachers in Spain, found out that both personality traits and contextual characteristics are associated with job burnout. They demonstrated that high scores on job burnout are associated with high degrees of neuroticism and extraversion. Also, this study showed that agreeableness has a negative relationship with depersonalisation and conscientiousness has a positive relationship with personal progress (Garcia & Herrbach, 2009). Ling et al. (2020), in their study, found that personality traits cause job burnout in young Chinese teachers. Personality not only has a direct effect on job burnout, but it is also a mediator between contact and career identity. As a result, young university professors should focus on using their strong personality traits to improve their contacts and relationships and consequently improve their career identity and decrease job burnout (Ling et al., 2020). Duan-Porter et al. (2018), in a study, examined depressive symptoms and coping with depression among nurses and its relationship with job burnout and personality. According to their study, personality affects depression, and job burnout intensifies nurses' depression (Duan-Porter et al., 2018). Durak and Saritepeci (2018) studied job burnout among teachers and analysed personality traits and individual and occupational status variables as predictors. Job burnout is associated with personality traits, and demographic variables are the most important models predicting teachers' burnout (Durak & Saritepeci, 2018). Khedhaouria and Cucchi (2019) studied the relationship between personality traits and job burnout in technicians. Their findings showed that the personality traits of technicians can lead to job burnout in various ways, and each of them has a different response to their jobs. These findings can help senior managers to devise 'personal' preventive measures based on different combinations of personality traits to prevent an increase in stress levels (Khedhaouria & Cucchi, 2019).

In a study, Ntantana et al. (2017) investigated job burnout and job satisfaction of intensive care personnel and their relationship with personality and religious traits in an observational, multicentre, cross-sectional study. In this research, it was observed that job burnout of nurses is much higher than doctors; the neuroticism personality trait affects job burnout; and anger is a negative predictor of exhaustion (Ntantana et al., 2017). However, the importance of research on job burnout and job exhaustion is that the organisation, society and individuals benefit from it. Because burnout is a kind of psychological phenomenon or quality of behaviour that occurs when a person has lost his initial efficiency, performance and quality, in the long run it brings the person to a standstill, which causes problems for the person as well as the organisation and society (Rostami, Mahdiz, Shalechi, & Gholami, 2009).

The present research seeks to study the relationship between personality traits and job burnout among employees of the Bastak County Department of Education and examine how personality traits can affect job burnout. Since employees of Bastak County Department of Education comprise a significant portion of the government employees, the quality of the services of this group of human resources can affect many aspects of society. Obviously, the exhaustion caused by the job and the

lack of sufficient motivation among employees in this organisation can impede its mission of providing efficient services to society. Presenting the results of this research to managers and officials of the Bastak County Department of Education can help them to take more effective steps in decision-making and determining the organisational policies in order to decrease the job burnout syndrome and enhance the quality of the services provided by the employees and, eventually, provide more opportunities for employees to succeed in their jobs. The present research examined job burnout based on job exhaustion and personality traits among the employees of Bastak County Department of Education. The present research sought to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a significant relationship between job burnout based on job exhaustion and personality traits among the employees of Bastak County Department of Education?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the dimensions of job burnout among the employees of Bastak County Department of Education?
3. Can personality dimensions significantly predict job burnout among the employees of Bastak County Department of Education?

2. Methodology

The present study was conducted with the aim of modelling job burnout based on job performance and personality traits among the employees of the Bastak County Department of Education. In terms of purpose, the present study is an applied study. Also, regarding the methodology and nature, it is a descriptive correlational study. The present study was conducted in Bastak County, Hormozgan Province, in 2017. The statistical population of the research consisted of all the employees of the Bastak County Department of Education. The statistical sample consisted of 100 employees of the Department of Education in this county. The age of the participants ranged between 36 and 40 years and they had 11–15 years of work experience. In this study, the required data were collected through library sources and the measurement tool (questionnaire). The measurement tool (questionnaire) was applied to the statistical sample and, finally, the collected questionnaires were statistically analysed. To examine the research variables, the Pearson's correlation coefficient test with SPSS 19 software was used.

2.1. Job burnout inventory

Maslach et al. (2001) believe that the only instrument that can measure the three dimensions of job burnout is the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). This instrument has been used in many studies on job burnout, whether in the country or abroad, the initial MBI form, which included 47 questions and had scales of frequency and intensity, was implemented on a sample of 605 people (56% male and 44% female). These people were service and healthcare sector employees, including police officers, nurses, social workers, psychiatrists, physicians and managers of institutions. After performing a factor analysis of the data, 10 factors were obtained for both frequency and intensity. Based on several criteria such as factor load and correlation of each question with the total test score, 22 weak questions out of 47 questions were removed and the number of test questions reached 25. The new test, which included 25 questions, was performed on a sample of 420 people (96% female and 29% male). These people were nurses, teachers, social workers, counsellors, mental health staff, service staff of departments and executive managers of institutions. The results of factor analysis of the data

obtained from this study were the same as the previous study and, therefore, the data of both studies were combined and the sample data of a sample consisting of 1,025 people were analysed. The result of this analysis was four factors. These four factors include (1) emotional fatigue; (2) personal performance; (3) depersonalisation; and (4) involvement (Maslach & Jackson, 1993). Out of 25 questions, 9 were dedicated to emotional exhaustion, 8 to personal performance, 5 to depersonalisation and 3 to involvement. Here, test characteristics, which have been calculated by Abedi (2002), are described. In this 25-item questionnaire, each item includes sentences and in front of them, there are two scales. Questionnaire instructions are very simple. The subjects were asked to read each sentence and describe themselves in the front part based on the frequency of the symptom discussed in the item and its intensity.

To score the scale, in each question, two scores are considered for the respondents, frequency score and intensity score. If the respondent marks the option 'never', the score of both frequency and intensity will be zero. Otherwise, based on the option marked for frequency and intensity, he gains a score of 1–6 for frequency (from a few times a year to every day) and a score of 1–7 for intensity (from very little to very much). When respondents' scores for each item were determined, by adding up the scores, the scores of the four subtests may be calculated. In fact, by adding up the scores of nine questions related to emotional exhaustion in the two scales of frequency and intensity, two scores can be obtained for this subtest. Accordingly, in the case of the three other subtests, the same procedure is applied, and finally, eight scores (four frequency scores and four intensity scores) are obtained for each person. It is noteworthy that the scores of the four scales cannot be added, because in some scales (such as emotional exhaustion), higher scores indicate job burnout and in some other scales (such as personal performance), lower scores indicate job burnout.

2.2. NEO five-factor personality inventory

NEO-FFI was developed by McCrae and Costa in 1985 (McCrae & Costa, 1992). This inventory contains 240 items and includes two forms: S (rated by the individual) and R (rated by others). This five-factor personality inventory measures five traits in each factor and thus provides a comprehensive assessment of personality. This inventory is suitable for people who are over 17 years of age and in Iran; it has been translated, normalised and performed by the Garousi Group (2001). Its 60-item version, which has been used in the present research, is used when the research time is limited and general information about personality suffices. Questions are answered by respondents on a 5-point Likert scale. 12 questions are assigned to each factor. Each question has five options: 'completely agree', 'agree', 'have no opinion', 'disagree' and 'completely disagree', to which scores of 0–4 are assigned. Each factor has 12 items and a score range from 0 to 48. By adding the scores of each of the questions related to each item, five separate scores are obtained. The number of questions assigned to each item is given in Table 1.

Table 1.

Questions assigned to each personality item in NEO-FFI

No.	Item	Question numbers
1	Neuroticism	56-51-46-41-36-31-26-21-16-11-6-1
2	Extroversion	57-52-47-42-37-32-27-22-17-12-7-2

3	Openness to experience	58-53-48-43-38-33-28-23-18-13-8-3
4	Agreeableness	59-54-49-44-39-34-29-24-19-14-9-4
5	Conscientiousness	60-55-50-45-40-35-30-25-20-15-10-5

This inventory was originally developed by McCrae and Costa for the normalised population and during the last decade, it has been mostly used for research and clinical applications. Its original version was developed by McCrae and Costa in 1992 to measure the five-factor personality model (neuroticism, extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness) (Table 1).

Regarding the validity of NEO-FFI, the results of several studies indicate that the subscales of this five-factor model have good internal consistency. For example, McCrae and Costa (1992) reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient between 0.68 (for agreeableness) and 0.86 (for neuroticism). The reported alpha coefficient by them varied from 0.74 to 0.89, with a mean of 0.81. Whereas in the study conducted by Bencharad et al. (1999), this coefficient was 0.85 for neuroticism, 0.72 for extroversion, 0.69 for agreeableness and 0.79 for conscientiousness.

Holden (1999) also reported the alpha coefficient of these 5 factors within the range of 0.76 (for openness to experience) to 0.87 (for neuroticism). The results of the studies by Muradian and Nazlak (1995) also indicate that Cronbach's alpha coefficients for neuroticism, extroversion, openness to experience and conscientiousness are, respectively, 0.84, 0.75, 0.74, 0.75 and 0.83. Also recently, a study on personality and eating disorders reported an internal consistency of 0.69–0.90 for the test scales (Cooper & Pervin, 1998; Egert, Landowski, & Clamp, 2007).

The long-term validity of the NEO-PI test has also been assessed. A 6-year longitudinal study on NEO scales showed coefficients of 0.68–0.83. Validity coefficients of the two factors A and C with the interval of 3 years were 0.79–0.63 (McCrae & Costa, 1998). In a 7-year longitudinal study of peers in which the complete test had been used, validity coefficients were obtained between 0.82 and 0.51 for the 18 minor traits of NEO and between 0.63 and 0.81 for the 5 main factors in males and females (McCrae & Costa, 1997).

In Iran, Haghshenas (2008) obtained the same results for a sample population of 502 people in Shiraz. Cronbach's alpha coefficients equalled $C = 0.83$, $A = 0.71$, $O = 0.57$, $E = 0.71$ and $N = 0.81$, and the validity of the test–retest within 6 months obtained $N = 0.53$, $A = 0.6$, $O = 0.76$ and $E = 0.74$.

Studies so far conducted on NEO have yielded positive results (Wideger, 1992). The conducted studies consider this test to be the best representative of the Big Five and these studies have particularly reported its reliability and validity as desirable.

3. Findings

The present study was conducted on 100 employees of Bastak County Department of Education. The average age of female participants was 55% and the average age of male participants was 45%. Married participants comprised 76% and single participants made up 24% of the research sample. Participants' most frequent level of education was bachelor's degree with 65%. Most of the participants were married women with a bachelor's degree, were within the ages of 36 and 40, and had 11–15 years of work experience. In Table 2, the mean, standard deviation and percentage of subareas of the burnout questionnaire have been reported. Based on the table, depersonalisation

and lack of personal success, respectively, have the highest and lowest degrees of job burnout. The highest mean of burnout was 49.87 and the lowest mean was that of depersonalisation which equalled 16.79.

Table 2.

The mean, standard deviation and percentage of burnout subareas

	Mean	Standard deviation	Percentage
Emotional burnout	29.25	17.29	46.4
Depersonalisation	16.79	8.82	48.0
Lack of personal success	23.77	8.72	42.4
Burnout	49.87	15.89	45.3

To examine the normality of the data, the single-sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov test (data normality test) was used. The results of the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test indicated the normality of the data. For data analysis, parametric tests such as Pearson’s correlation coefficient and regression were used to investigate the modelling of job burnout based on job exhaustion and personality traits among employees of the Bastak County Department of Education.

In Table 3, correlation coefficients of the subareas of job burnout have been presented. There is a significant relationship between the dimensions of job burnout of the employees of Bastak County Department of Education ($p < 0.001$). In the subarea of emotional burnout, there is a positive and strong correlation; in the subarea of burnout, there is a positive and strong correlation; in the subarea of depersonalisation, there is a positive and strong correlation; and in the subarea of lack of personal success, there is a negative and average correlation.

Table 3.

Correlation coefficients of the subareas of job burnout

		Emotional burnout	Depersonalisation	Lack of personal success	Burnout
Emotional burnout	Correlation	1.000	0.732**	-0.349**	0.899**
	<i>p</i> -value		0.000	0.000	0.000
Depersonalisation	Correlation	0.732**	1.000	-0.493**	0.715**
	<i>p</i> -value	0.000		0.000	0.000
Lack of personal success	Correlation	-0.349**	-0.493**	1.000	-0.074
	<i>p</i> -value	0.000	0.000		0.466
Burnout	Correlation	0.899**	0.715**	-0.074	1.000
	<i>p</i> -value	0.000	0.000	0.466	

*Negative and average correlation***

According to Table 4, there is a significant correlation between job burnout based on job exhaustion and personality traits of the employees of Bastak County Department of Education. According to the table, personality traits of agreeableness and conscientiousness have a negative correlation with job burnout.

Table 4.

Correlation coefficients of the subareas of job burnout and personality traits

		Job performance	Job burnout	N personality trait	E personality trait	O personality trait	A personality trait	Personal ity trait C
Job burnout	Correlation	-0.141	1.000	-0.515**	0.319**	-0.143	0.387**	0.518**
	<i>p</i> -value	0.162		0.000	0.001	0.157	0.000	0.000
Neuroticism	Correlation	0.191	-0.515**	1.000	-0.273**	0.107	-0.479**	-0.512**
	<i>p</i> -value	0.057	0.000		0.006	0.288	0.000	0.000
Extroversion	Correlation	-0.082	0.319**	-0.273**	1.000	0.005	0.193	0.462**
	<i>p</i> -value	0.420	0.001	0.006		0.958	0.055	0.000
Openness to experience	Correlation	0.080	-0.143	0.107	0.005	1.000	-0.057	0.049
	<i>p</i> -value	0.427	0.157	0.288	0.958		0.576	0.625
Agreeableness	Correlation	-0.237*	0.387**	-0.479**	0.193	-0.057	1.000	0.430**
	<i>p</i> -value	0.017	0.000	0.000	0.055	0.576		0.000
Conscientiousness	Correlation	-0.198*	0.518**	-0.512**	0.462**	0.049	0.430**	1.000
	<i>p</i> -value	0.048	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.625	0.000	

In Table 5, the linear regression coefficients of the subarea of the five personality traits (NEO) on job burnout have been presented. The results presented in the table indicate that the two personality traits of neuroticism and conscientiousness have an impact on job burnout. Further results also show that 39.7% of the five personality traits explain job burnout.

Table 5.

Linear regression coefficients of the subarea of the five personality traits (NEO) on job burnout

Studied variables	Beta coefficient	Standard error	Test statistic	<i>p</i> -value	<i>R</i> ²
<i>y</i> -intercept	54.212	11.495	4.716	0.000	0.397
Neuroticism	-0.642	0.217	-2.955	0.004	
Extroversion	0.067	0.062	1.075	0.285	
Openness to experience	-0.064	0.059	-1.081	0.283	
Agreeableness	0.036	0.063	0.564	0.574	
Conscientiousness	0.190	0.059	3.196	0.002	

4. Discussion

The results of the study showed that there is a negative and significant correlation between the two variables of job burnout and job exhaustion in the employees of the Bastak County Department of

Education. The Pearson correlation coefficient equals 60.8%, which is significant at the 0.05% level. Thus, it could be stated that job burnout and job exhaustion in the employees of the Bastak County Department of Education have a significant relationship. Therefore, it could be stated that as employees' job burnout increases, their job exhaustion will also increase. In addition, comparing the mean of the dimensions of job exhaustion showed that among the dimensions of job exhaustion, depersonalisation has the lowest score and the dimensions of lack of personal success and job burnout rank second and third. However, all three dimensions have a mean score lower than average.

The results of the research were consistent with the results of the studies by Soltan Ahmadi et al. (2010), Behonedi et al. (2016) and Bohluli et al. (2017) in Iran, as well as the findings of Garcia et al. (2014), Ling et al. (2020), Duan-Porter et al. (2018), Durak and Saritepeci (2018), Khedhaouria and Cucchi (2019) and Ntantana et al. (2017). In the findings of Marmaya, Hanisah, Norsya, Hitam, and Mohd (2011), the emotional commitment had a negative relationship with job burnout. But the findings of Gemlik, Ayanoglu, and Unsal (2010) indicated the existence of a positive relationship between emotional and continuous commitment and job burnout.

Job burnout is one of the disorders that have been considered by psychologists over the recent years and the results of studies also suggest that a significant percentage of individuals in active organisations suffer from this disorder. This disorder has symptoms including physical, emotional, attitudinal and psychological exhaustion and is associated with a sense of low performance and lack of personal progress. In other words, those suffering from this problem feel that they have made no progress in their professional and personal life. In industrial and organisational environments, various factors and causes of job burnout can be identified, the most important of which is the supervisors' and managers' leadership style to control their staff and organisations. Organisations and work environments that use less considerate methods expose their employees to a higher risk of job burnout. In other words, job burnout syndrome takes most of its victims from organisations and institutions whose managers show less consideration, warmth and emotional behaviour. Managers and supervisors who are quote strict and formal in their treatment of the employees and deprive them of a peaceful and friendly environment must be aware that they will lead their subordinates to job burnout and their behaviour will not improve efficiency in the organisation. Although some individuals are more prone to this disorder due to their personality and personal traits, job burnout can be treated using some special methods and strategies. So far, various methods have been used to cope efficiently with job burnout, some of which include psychotherapy, chemical treatments, physical treatments and neurological treatments. If a person cannot get rid of job burnout using these methods and it becomes evident that the problem is not related to him or his personality traits, it is better for him to change his job or his place of work.

5. Conclusion

The results show that there is an indirect and positive relationship between personality traits of neuroticism and job burnout. However, a negative relationship was observed between the traits of conscientiousness and agreeableness. Changes in agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism can indirectly control job burnout. According to the conducted studies, mental exercise, improving psychological satisfaction and experiential freshness can increase conscientiousness and agreeability and decrease neuroticism, which eventually leads to lower burnout.

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