

Job Burnout Rate among Zahedan University of Medical Sciences Staff

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Abstract

In case the individual is not capable of resisting stressful conditions, s/he would be exposed to psychological-physical-behavioral symptoms and effects. One of the most important outcomes resulting from the long-lasting psychological pressures is the job burnout. The present study's objective is to survey the job burnout rate among Zahedan University of Medical Sciences staff. The present study is a descriptive-analytical cross-sectional research which has been conducted on 172 individuals among Zahedan University of Medical Sciences staff. To collect the required information a two-part questionnaire was used. Data were analyzed by the use of SPSS 19 software and descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, variance analysis, and independent t-test. The individuals' average age was 36.49 ± 9.85 ; 106 individuals were women, and 146 individuals were married. The job burnout mean score was 58.46 ± 10.17 , and the mean scores for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment were 23.21 ± 4.92 , 10.30 ± 3.56 , and 21.51 ± 4.68 , respectively. The relationship between gender and marital status with job burnout and each of its indicators and components was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). The relationship between age and job burnout ($p = 0.005$) and emotional exhaustion ($p = 0.05$), depersonalization ($p = 0.04$), and reduced personal accomplishment ($p = 0.003$) was statistically significant. The existence of varied levels of job burnout in Zahedan University of Medical Sciences staff makes it necessary to pay careful attention to staff health and the creation of supporting-system facilities to reduce job weariness and exhaustion.

Keywords: Job burnout; University staff; Zahedan

Introduction

In the work environment, five categories of physical, chemical, biological, ergonomic, and psychological factors threaten human lives. Stress is considered as the most important psychological factor affecting human health. In fact, stress is the sum of physical, psychological, mental, and behavioral reactions exhibited by the human body in response to the factors adversely influencing the natural balance and stability of the body, and every stimulus which causes tension is recognized as the stressing factor or stressor [1]. In case the individual is incapable of resisting the stressing factors, s/he would be exposed to various and numerous physical-psychological-behavioral symptoms. One of the most significant symptoms stemming from long-lasting exposure to stressing circumstances and factors is job burnout. Job burnout is a vocational disorder which has been taken into consideration during the recent years [2,3]. An individual's efficiency depends on various factors such as talent, motivational intelligence, the quality of the tools and machineries being applied, training and the required expertise, and work environment conditions and refreshing concerns. In surveying the job burnout symptoms, one should attend to the point that exhaustion and fatigue are the very outcomes of persistent, continuing, and monotonous working for the elimination of the effects of which there is a need for the individual to get rest, but the job burnout disease signs and symptoms are many, and this type of chronic fatigue should not be mistaken with transient and normal tiredness [4]. Job burnout was first expressed by an individual named Freudenberg; he made use of such an expression to explain the reasons behind mitigation of energy and strength which is caused by performing tiring and stressful jobs [5]. The most common definition

provided for job burnout has been offered by Maslach and Jackson who recognized it as a psychological syndrome comprised of the three dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishments [6,7].

Job burnout is a phenomenon in which the collective effects of work environment pressure gradually overwhelm the individual and force him/her to psychologically retreat [8]. Factors such as work shift, the insufficient use of one's capabilities, intensive work volume, discrimination in the amount of salary, ambiguity in job future, relationship with the peers and colleagues, the instruments' quality status, the physical danger and risk likelihood, and intensive work in a highly repetitive and monotonous environment intrigue job burnout [9]. Psychological pressures resulting from the job are among the stressing factors, and if they exceed a threshold level, they can be harmful by creating physical, psychological, and behavior symptoms [10]. Among the staff job burnout outcomes, one can point to economic problems including abundant absences from the work environment [11]. On the other hand, it has been estimated that 50-85% of the diseases are a result of psychological stresses and tensions. It has been estimated in England that four million workdays every year are lost due to disorders originating from stress [4].

Undoubtedly, the most fundamental and most effective group in the progress of the developing countries is the scientific institutions and particularly the universities [12], so it is really important to pay attention to the conditions and situations of their staff and employees. Because there is no study regarding job burnout among Zahedan University of Medical Sciences staff, we felt the need for such a research. Therefore, the present study aims at surveying the job burnout rate among Zahedan University of Medical Sciences staff.

Methods

The present study is a cross-sectional descriptive-analytical research which has been conducted on 172 individuals from Zahedan University of Medical Sciences staff who were selected based on a random method in 2016. The entrance priority was given to those staff who had at least an MA degree or higher, and they had to provide an oral consent to participate in the study. To collect the required information, a questionnaire consisting of two parts was used, the first part of which was related to the demographic characteristics (age, gender, work history, and marital status), and the second part was related to Maslach's job burnout inventory which contained twenty-two items, and it dealt with the assessment of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization phenomena, and reduced personal accomplishment in the format of professional activities, and it has been particularly applied for the evaluation and prevention of the weariness and tiredness in professional groups, such as nurses and teachers. The method of scoring the questionnaire items was based on Likert's five-point scale. The test's options have been determined from "completely agree," "agree," "neutral," "disagree," or "completely disagree," and the individual reads through the questions and expresses his/her idea according to the available options. The minimum score obtained from this test is 22, and the maximum score can be 110. In emotional-exhaustion dimension, scores 27 and higher indicate a high level of emotional exhaustion, scores between 17 and 26 indicate intermediate level of emotional exhaustion, and scores equal to 16 and lower are indicative of a low level of emotional exhaustion. In depersonalization dimension, scores 13 and higher are reflective of high level of depersonalization, scores 7-12 indicate an intermediate level, and scores 6 and lower are indicative of a low level of depersonalization. In the dimension of reduced personal accomplishment, scores 39 and higher are suggestive of a high level of reduced personal accomplishment, scores 32-38 are indicative of an intermediate level of this dimension, and scores 31 and lower are suggestive of low level of reduced personal accomplishment. The questionnaire's reliability and validity have been evaluated by Beyrami, and they are at an acceptable level [13].

To gather data, after acquiring a letter from the research vice chancellorship of Zahedan University of Medical Sciences confirming the research plan's conformance to ethical standards and after obtaining a letter of recommendation and making the necessary coordination job with the university security office, the researcher referred to the administrative office of the university; firstly, the objective of the present research was explained to the participants, and after acquiring an oral consent from the respondents, the questionnaire was distributed in sufficient number. At the beginning of the questionnaire, to inform the participants of their conscious participation in the research plan, there was inserted a text which read "your cooperation with the present study means that you are fully and consciously aware of the terms and conditions of the research plan and also that the information provided by you in this questionnaire is confidential, and you are not exposed to any risks by any means." After the questionnaires were completed and reviewed by the researcher, they were returned to the participants in case there were incomplete parts, and after all of the distributed questionnaires were collected, the data extracted were analyzed by the use of SPSS 19 and descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, variance analysis, and independent t-test.

Results

The individuals average age was 36.49 ± 9.85 ; 106 individuals (61.6%) were women, and 146 individuals (84.9%) were married.

	Work history (years)	Mean	Standard deviation	p*
Job burnout	1-5	59.1379	10.21428	0.04
	5-10	58.7949	9.24571	
	10-15	63.4737	12.85979	
	15-20	54.1818	6.25366	
	>20	56.9118	10.59550	
Emotional exhaustion	1-5	23.4828	4.96387	0.21
	5-10	22.9487	5.17051	
	10-15	25.3158	6.03741	
	15-20	21.7727	3.29403	
	>20	22.8235	4.63498	
Depersonalization	1-5	10.6724	3.77614	0.39
	5-10	9.9487	2.85573	
	10-15	11.2105	4.17105	
	15-20	9.2727	2.94686	
	>20	10.2647	3.91043	
Reduced personal accomplishment	1-5	21.5862	4.43287	0.02
	5-10	22.3590	4.84761	
	10-15	23.6842	5.94468	
	15-20	19.6818	3.32933	
	>20	20.3824	4.41083	

*p value: significance level between work history and job burnout and each of its components: The relationship between work history and job burnout and each of its components was calculated by SPSS V.19. $p > 0.05$ was not significant and $p < 0.05$ was significant.

Table 1: The relationship between work history and job burnout and each of its components

Fifty-eight individuals (33.7%) had a work history of 1-5 years; 39 individuals (22.7%), 5-10 years; 19 individuals (11%), 10-15 years; 22 individuals (12.8%), 15-20 years; and 34 individuals (19.8%), above 20 years. Job burnout mean score was 58.46 ± 10.17 , and in each of the components of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, the mean scores were 23.21 ± 4.92 , 10.30 ± 3.56 , and 21.51 ± 4.68 , respectively. In the dimension of depersonalization, 36 individuals (20.9%) had a high score; in the dimension of emotional exhaustion, 41 individuals had a high score, in the dimension of reduced personal accomplishment, none of the participants obtained a high score. The relationship between gender and marital status with the job burnout and each of its components was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$), and in women, job burnout was in a lower level than men. The relationship between age and job burnout ($p = 0.005$) and each of the dimensions of emotional exhaustion ($p = 0.05$), depersonalization ($p = 0.04$), and reduced personal accomplishment ($p = 0.003$) was statistically significant.

The relationship between work history with job burnout and each of its components have been inserted in Table 1.

Discussion

In the present study, none of the individuals had a high score in the reduced personal accomplishment dimension, but in the studies performed by Arab *et al.* [4], 24.5% of the individuals had a high score; in the studies conducted by Talae *et al.* [14], 6.7%; in the studies performed in Australia [15], 36%; and in the other studies conducted in Tehran University [7], 21%. The highest mean score percentage was obtained in the dimension of emotional exhaustion which is approximately in the level of the results obtained in the studies performed by Talae *et al.* and the study which was conducted

in Australia [14,15]. Also, a considerable percentage of the individuals had a high score in the depersonalization dimension which is a lot higher than the percentages obtained in the studies performed and conducted by Arab *et al.* [4,14]. According to the definition presented for the depersonalization dimension which defines a negative reaction devoid of feelings accompanied with extreme reluctance towards peers and clients, a sense of guilt, isolation, reduction in the daily activity and work, it is clear that the university staff do not bother to respect the clients and the persons referring to the university. The differences between the results obtained in the present study and the results of the studies conducted on the other study populations and groups are likely to be a result of work pressure, stress, and variations in the feeling of unsafety and insecurity which differs from work to work. The academic, cultural, and social levels can be other factors causing a decrease in the reduced personal accomplishment in our study in comparison to the other studies. Maybe, one another factor that can be enumerated here for the differences in the results obtained is the difference in the nature of stress which varies in degree and is of different types based on the nature of the job.

Among the recognized reasons behind job burnout are the low progress in one's life and limited opportunities for reaching higher positions and the low level of salaries and benefits, as well. According to the results obtained in the present study, it is suggested that the managers and the officials should take serious measures for improving the status quo of the affairs. Studies have indicated that factors such as increase in salaries and benefits, reduction in work hours, arrangement of recreational programs, holding workgroups during training sessions, establishment of sport and physical activity classes, training workshops for teaching the methods for counteracting psychological tensions can be effective for job burnout [16,17]. Another factor which can exert a positive influence on improving job weariness is the lack of supervision and education. Supervision is of great importance since it allows the staff to observe the reflections of their work, or the staff can appreciate themselves or the tasks and jobs they have performed, and supervision can identify and discover more effective treatment methods.

In the present study, there was no significant relationship between job burnout dimensions and marital status. The results of our study conform to the results obtained in some of the other researches regarding the aforementioned dimension [18]. Also, the relationship between gender and job burnout was not statistically significant, and job burnout was in a lower level in women in contrast to the men. But, in the study conducted by Talaee *et al.*, a significant relationship has been observed between job burnouts in both genders [14]. The possible reason for such a low level of job burnout in women can be due to the fact that men have to take family responsibilities which expose them to a higher rate of psychological-social pressure in addition to the problems related to their jobs [19].

Also, the results obtained by the current study indicated that there is a significant relationship between age and work history, and the individuals having longer work history and experience are less exposed to higher levels of job burnout. In the studies performed by Talaee *et al.* [14] and the study performed by Lin *et al.*, the positive effect of age on the job burnout rate has been proved [20]. In the study performed by Pourreza *et al.*, the younger nurses reported lower levels of job burnout [21].

Less experienced individuals, especially those that have not had enough education or training regarding their occupation, are faced

with problems regarding vocational stress due to not knowing the necessary strategies. Such individuals will be exposed to lower levels of job burnout with the passage of time and through acquiring the contrastive skills and also getting experienced in their related specific vocational field and becoming adapted to the work-related environment and factors.

Based on the current study, job burnout, though in its mitigated and low-intensity form, exists prevalently among the Iranian employees and staff. And this situation is more serious and severe among the staff and the individuals who have recently started their jobs as employees. Such individuals are somehow the youngest workforce employed to perform their duties, and it seems that emphasizing on the educational programs and preparing the individuals for starting their vocational activities and confrontation with likely future problems is really necessary. One of the effective factors on the high level of job burnout is the low level of job satisfaction among the staff, and future studies underscoring the survey of the factors affecting the rate of job satisfaction of staff can offer strategies to increase the job satisfaction rate and to decrease job burnout rate among the university staff accordingly. Limiting the study to one university, the psychological situation and status of the participants at the time of responding to the questions presented in the questionnaire brings about another constraint on the study's results.

Conclusion

The existence of various levels of job burnout among Zahedan University of Medical Sciences staff makes it important to pay attention to staff health and the establishment of supportive-system facilities in order to reduce the job burnout.

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