

The Relationship Between Burnout and Social Support for Iranian High-School Administrators

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Abstract

This paper investigates the relationship between job burnout and social support among high school administrators of Iran. Existence of social support in this study was assessed by three dimensions of burnout including the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment. A Sample including 212 high school administrators was studied via a questionnaire-based survey in order to collect the necessary data, based on Maslach and Jackson's theory about job burnout and a handmade inventory for use in evaluating the impact of social support. The results (obtained from hierarchical regression analyses) indicated that co-worker and organization supports have predictive value for burnout-diminished quality of work life. The increased levels of social support were associated with decreased staff emotional exhaustion. Also, the increase of supervisor support is related to decreased depersonalization. It was observed that there is a moderating role of social support from family members, colleagues and superiors for personal accomplishment. These findings have important implications for policymakers and researches with a solution-oriented approach to burnout prevention among educational administrators.

Keywords: job burnout, social support, emotional exhaustion, educational administrators, Iran.

INTRODUCTION

More recently, job burnout that has been increased could negatively affect employee productivity (Piko, 2005) and there are also several studies that have been performed for evaluating this in the workplace (Koustelios, 2005). Job stress causes several consequences for managers' performance (Salami, 2010) and afflicts their abilities with an increased risk for mental and behavioral disorders and thus cause irreparable loss to the company (Farahbakhsh, 2009). The negligence toward the job burnout symptoms has an influence on individuals and organizations with long-term results as a decrease of work dedication, diminished loyalty to the organization and finally the decline in effectiveness (Burke & Greenglass, 2001).

Job satisfaction caused a positive employee attitudes, is in an apparent reversal of the relationship with job burnout (Fenech, 2006). In other words, when some factors contributing in job burnout are intensified, job satisfaction decreases in the organization. Injustice and unfavorable work conditions include weak working condition, low-income, high workload, conflicts at work, and feeling out of control (Evans et al., 2006; Norlund et al., 2010).

The various levels of job burnout have been found in different jobs led to many side effects like high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization in radiation therapist, decreased job stress and burnout among dialysis nurses (Akroyd et al., 2002; Arikian et al., 2007), the moderate levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization as well high levels of personal accomplishment in pharmacist (Gupchup et al., 1998).

Also, women in developing countries undertake more responsibilities in different fields of work market and encounter some problems like gender-oriented job inequalities and discriminations implicated as a major factor in predicting job burnout (Birdsall & Sabot, 1991; Ashkar et al., 2010). Therefore, mental health issues by job pressures and the resulted job burnout should be noticed by policy makers and researchers (LaMontagne et al., 2010). According to a recent interactive model proposed for job burnout (Cherniss, 1992), social support received from superiors, co-workers and family could help to decrease the psychological effects of stress in managers (Asad & Khan, 2003; Burke & Greenglass, 1999; Kirmeyer & Dougherty, 1988).

In fact, the best level of social support is perceived from the reliable members of organization, colleagues, family and social group (Williams & Lancaster, 1988). The home/worksites support system prevents the occurrence of job burnout in a reversal manner (Farber, 1983) because the major part of stress is related to managers' work-life conflicts (O'Driscoll et al., 2003). Therefore, planning support systems included family, groups and organization is an effective way for moderating the effects of job burnout (Farber, 1983; Williams & Lancaster, 1988).

There are some more recent and limited studies that have tried to elucidate these serious problems among Iranian educational jobs (Farahbakhsh, 2009) and our designed research aims to investigate three dimensions of job burnout in Iranian educational administrators including the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Therefore, they are being assessed in related to the effects of social support.

Its importance underlies the strategies and policy making in order to manage Iranian education systems.

The following research questions were designed with respect to this goal:

Is there any significant relationship between social support and job burnout among High school administrators of Iran?

Is there any significant relationship between social support and the emotional exhaustion among High school administrators of Iran?

Is there any significant relationship between social support and depersonalization among High school administrators of Iran?

Is there any significant relationship between social support and personal accomplishment among High school administrators of Iran?

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A descriptive field survey was done with 212 high school administrators selected by stratified random sampling from Tehran Province, Iran according to Cochran formula. The data was collected through a questionnaire survey according to Maslach and Jackson (1981) for job burnout measurement and a hand-made inventory for evaluating social support. The latter included three sections:

Section 1 contained questions on the demographic and general characteristics.

Section 2 included a 50 item 5-point Likert (never, seldom, sometimes, often, always) scale instrument to examine the predictive power of perceived social support received from four resources. It defined as support behaviors with emotional, value, information, financial and nonfinancial helps perceived from the organization (15 questions), superiors (15 questions), colleagues (10 questions) and family (10 questions). A 22 item 7-point Likert (never, once per year, once per month, several times per month, once per week, several times per week, every day)

Section 3 examined burnout level among high school administrators. Burnout was assessed regarding three dimensions as emotional exhaustion (9 questions), depersonalization (5 questions) and perceived lack of personal accomplishment (8 questions).

The scores for social support were categorized as follows: the organization and superiors: ≥ 20 as good, < 20 as weak; family and colleagues: > 15 as good, < 15 as weak. Also, the score for different dimensions of burnout were categorized as follows: the emotional exhaustion: ≥ 27 as high, 17-26 as moderate, 0-16 as low; depersonalization: ≥ 13 as high, 7-12 as moderate, 0-6 as low; lack of personal accomplishment: 0-31 as high, 32-38 as moderate, ≥ 39 as low.

Validity And Reliability

In this section we describe measure for validity and reliability of research.

Maslach & Jackson Burnout Questionnaire

The method of content validity was used in order to determine validity of the questionnaire. Maslach and Jackson rated internal reliability of each sub-scales as 0.90, 0.79, and 0.71 for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment, respectively. But before study, we obtained the Kronbach alpha for the questionnaire in a sample

of 20 people. In each dimension of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, lack of personal accomplishment and total burnout, it was obtained as 0.82%, 0.83%, 0.85 and 0.82%, respectively.

Made Social Support Questionnaire

The validity was studied by a group of investigators and verified. The reliability was assessed by a 30-sample with Kronbach alpha as 0.86, 0.84, 0.93, 0.92, 0.86 and 0.92 for whole questionnaire, organization questions, superiors questions, colleague questions, family questions and whole social support, respectively.

Statistical Analysis

The analytical and qualitative procedures were used to interpret the data. Prediction of job burnout via social support was examined using multiple regressions.

RESULTS

General characteristics of sample are presented in Tables 1 to 3. In order to answer the first question of the research, the scores of respondents were first calculated in three dimensions of job burnout, including: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment. Table 3 shows mean scores of job burnout dimensions.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of subjects

Variables	No(%)
Sex	
Female	85(56%)
Male	66(44%)
Age (yr)	
<30	5(3.4%)
31-35	25(17.1%)
36-40	19(13%)
41-45	38(26%)
45-50	42(28.8%)
≥ 51	17(11.6%)
Missing data	5(-)
Marital status	
Single	25(16.6%)
Married	126(83.4%)
No of children	
1	25(21.6%)
2	49(42.2%)
3	33(28.4%)
4	5(4.3%)
5	4(3.4%)
Missing data	35(-)
Education level	
Assoc. Diploma	20(13.2%)
Bachelor	112(74.2%)
Master	15(9.9%)
Doctorate	4(2.6%)
Majors	
Management	32(24.4%)
Literature, foreign language, theology	49(37.4%)
Behavioral sciences (training, psychological and social science)	37(28.2%)
Law and economics	9(6.9%)
Electrical engineering	4(3.1%)
Missing data	20(-)

Table 2. Job status of subjects

Variables	No(%)
School staff numbers	
<20	20(16.9%)
21-30	19(15.1%)
31-40	23(18.3%)
41-50	13(10.3%)
51-60	25(19.8%)
61-70	22(17.5%)
71-80	4(3.2%)
Missing data	25(-)
Student numbers	
<150	18(13.2%)
151-200	19(14%)
201-250	14(10.3%)
251-300	10(7.4%)
301-350	5(3.7%)
351-400	13(9.6%)
401-450	4(2.9%)
451-600	53(39%)
601-880	0
Missing data	15(-)
Years of service	
5-10	20(13.7%)
11-15	19(13%)
16-20	28(19.2%)
21-25	49(33.6%)
26-30	22(15.1%)
31-35	8(5.5%)
Missing data	5(-)
Suitable Income- family expenditure	
Yes	37(24.5%)
No	114(75.5%)

Table 3 clarifies that the respondents generally suffer from burnout according to score obtained from their responses as >50. Also, lack of personal accomplishment with a mean score as 35.13±12.91 is in the second place, but depersonalization obtained the lowest score. Results show that administrators had job burnout in the Lack of personal accomplishment dimension.

Table 4 shows the results obtained from the calculation of different social supports administrators perceived from different resources. The results indicate that the data structure is suitable for the use of analytical test.

According to Table 5, there is the highest score for organization support (56.26±7.76) and lowest score for family support (17.52±6.33) for administrators. Total social support they perceived was 139.36±25.33.

The results of the regression analysis test in Table 6 show a significant relationship between job burnout and social support. Then, social support was classified for familial, peer, superior, and organizational resources, respectively (Table 7). A significant negative relationship was found between colleagues and also organization with burnout ($P < 0.05$).

The data in Table 8 showed the results of multiple regression for the effect of social support on emotional exhaustion. No significant relationship was found. But according to Table 9, the multiple regression showed a significant relationship between social support and depersonalization ($P < 0.05$). More analysis showed a negative significant relationship between superior support and depersonalization (Table 10). The data in Table 11 showed a significant relationship between social support and

Table 3. Mean scores of administrators' burnout and its different dimensions

Emotional exhaustion	Depersonalization	Lack of personal accomplishment	Total burnout
13.79±11.79	2.88±5.49	35.13±12.91	51.23±21.01

Table 4. Mean scores of administrators' perceived social support from different resources based on the quality of support type

Support resources	Perceived support for problems	Perceived Positive feedback for problems	Received help for problems
Family	1.88±1.01	2.16±0.88	1.80±0.90
Colleagues	2.04±0.61	1.83±0.86	2.33±0.88
Superiors	1.28±0.97	1.37±1.04	1.43±1.11
organization	1±0.91	1±0.73	1.09±0.73

Table 5. Mean scores of administrators' social support from different resources

Organization	Superiors	Colleagues	Family	Total Social support
56.26±7.76	38.43±12.18	26.41±8.86	17.52±6.33	139.36±25.33

Table 6. The predictive value of social support for job burnout

Analysis of variance	Sum of square	DF	Mean square	F	Signif F
Regression	7733.91	4	1933.47	6.75	0.001
Residual	16596.94	58	286.15		

Table 7. The predictive value of different resources of social support for job burnout

Constant variables	B	Beta	t	Sig.
Family	0.40	0.12	0.86	0.392
Colleagues	-1.58	-0.60	-3.41	0.001
Superiors	-0.52	-0.26	-1.64	0.106
Organization	-1.12	-0.36	-2.30	0.025

Table 8. The predictive value of social support for emotional exhaustion

Analysis of variance	Sum of square	DF	Mean square	F	Signif F
Regression	1106.33	4	276.58	1.73	0.153
Residual	10686.27	67	159.49		

Table 9. The predictive value of social support for depersonalization

Analysis of variance	Sum of square	DF	Mean square	F	Signif F
Regression	597.09	4	149.27	4.44	0.002
Residual	5732.21	97	33.58		

Table 10. The predictive value of different resources of social support for depersonalization

Constant variables	B	Beta	t	Sig.
Family	-0.165	-0.201	-1.837	0.069
Colleagues	0.093	0.195	1.738	0.085
Superiors	-0.272	-0.384	-3.575	0.001
Organization	-0.174	-0.177	-1.632	0.106

Table 11. The predictive value of social support for lack of personal accomplishment

Analysis of variance	Sum of square	DF	Mean square	F	Signif F
Regression	5312.288	4	1328.072	20.332	0.001
Residual	5617.470	86	65.319		

Table 12. The predictive value of different resources of social support for lack of personal accomplishment

Constant variables	B	Beta	t	Sig.
Family	-1.152	-0.808	-8.39	0.001
Colleagues	-0.159	-0.184	-1.96	0.053
Superiors	-0.240	-0.208	-2.37	0.020
Organization	-0.103	-0.055	-0.65	0.512

lack of personal accomplishment ($P < 0.05$). In dimensions of social support, a negative significant relationship was not found for only organizational support (Table 12).

DISCUSSION

One of the factors that may contribute to the consequences of stress is known to be lack of social support like family support and especially spouse support (Rollins & Feldman, 1970). The personal interaction in work environment as well as supports perceived from colleagues, superiors, and employees is correlated with the level of job stress (Payne, 1980). From this personal point of view, social support could be perceived from a network of family, friends, colleagues, and superiors making someone to feel respected, valued and paid attention to (Beehr & Jex, 2000; Branon & Feist, 2000). Caplan (1976) defined family support as a feedback and problem solution, direct and beneficial support (scientific and actual helps), emotional support (rest, sympathy and family welfare) and motivation.

In Sweden, 118 jobs were assessed for their features. Men with high strain jobs, low control and self-authorized, have a twice probable likelihood for heart attack compared to men with other jobs in the same range of age. Meanwhile, there is a probability that the psychological stress emerged from a source other than the job makes a change in employee attitude and behavior at work. That is true with the divorced men, or employed couples (Alfredson & Theorell, 1983). Support systems for managers are the most effective procedures in order to prevent the job pressures. In such support system,

they help each other, share their problems, and moderate their programs and tasks in respect to their individual needs. Also, they help people from all organizational hierarchical positions with solving their problems or diminishing their consequences (Kalimo et al., 1987).

Those who manage their emotions and feelings show better performance, absorb more social support and feel more satisfaction (Ciarrochi & Deane, 2001). People who are able to cope with stress and job burnout in a better way protect themselves from their negative results due to a higher accessibility to social support (Ciarrochi et al., 2000). In a study, an relationship of 0.31 was obtained between work-based support and staff's characteristics (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Bahmani (2002) found the levels of social support as 40.52%, 48.64%, 38.15% and 41.98% received from organization, heads, colleagues and family, respectively for administrators in Ramhormoz, Iran. There was a reversed correlation between social support and job burnout. Also, colleague support was more important for predicting job burnout among administrators.

Zomorodi (2003) found a significant relationship between the quality of work life and job burnout of administrators in Meshad, Iran. The diminished job burnout is significantly correlated to job security, conformity, and suitable social conditions. Mahdavi (2004) assessed three dimensions of job burnout including the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal performance in Iranian high school administrators in Kerman. Men were affected by job burnout more than women in all three dimensions. The demographic variables and job features like age, number of students, and years of service

were the predictive factors for job burnout. He could not find a significant relationship between income and home distance from work place with job burnout.

In addition, a close relationship is observed between job stresses and occupational burnout. Social workers, nurses, teachers, police officers and physicians are very susceptible to job burnout due to remarkable energy and time consumed to help others (Barry & Farber, 1985). Burke and Greenglass (2001) addressed that exhaustion is not a personal problem but emerges in work environments with adverse condition and inappropriate income. Also, low incomes cause thought disturbances and job burnout (Ay & Avsaroglu, 2010). The job burnout is a state of the emotional and physical exhaustion due to current condition in work environment (Farber, 1983). People affected by job burnout suffer from interpersonal problems, emotional outbursts, health issues, withdrawal, substance abuse and declined performance (Potter, 1987). Babelibahmei (1999) showed a non significant relationship between managers' years of service and ages with job burnout. Also, he found that preventive procedures have a significant effect on their job burnout.

The independence of practice is a strong predictor for job satisfaction. The individuals feel lower job burnout with adopting a positive attitude to their jobs (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005). The decrease of job satisfaction causes psychological pressure, and in turn, lead to anger, unhappiness, virulence and other passive responses like blaming, exhausting, depression, low self-confidence, and low self-esteem (Holroyd & Lazarus, 1982). Evans et al. (2006) found that high labour load causes high emotional exhaustion and low job satisfaction like 47% of employees in England showed it. They found job satisfaction as a predictor for job burnout. Also, Arikan et al. (2007) showed a significant relationship among job stress, exhaustion and job satisfaction in nurses of dialysis unit. Also, the quality of their communication with superiors and other nurses has a significant relationship with job satisfaction and stress.

One of the potential sources of stress is rush accessibility to upper social ranks (Lundberg & Frankenhaeser, 1999). Job stress and tension are interactive factors. Also, in exhaustion phase, there is a relationship between tension and disease because of the susceptibility of body to disease incidence (Bosma et al., 1998). Hetherington et al. (1982) believes that high level of self-respect leads to low level of anxiety, high personal endurance, low tension and high adaptability to problem. The importance of effective and correct communication for managers cannot be neglected because of release from psychological pressures of routine work and continue to work with satisfaction (Cranwell-Ward, 1990). One of the procedures in managing tension is adaptability with the cause of tension and remaining satisfied even with no resolved problem (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978).

CONCLUSION

This paper investigates the relationship between job burnout and social support among high school administrators of Iran. Existence of social support in this study was assessed by three dimensions of burnout including the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment. A Sample including 212 high school administrators was studied via a questionnaire-based survey in order to collect the necessary data, based on Maslach and Jackson's theory about job burnout and a handmade inventory for use in evaluating the impact of

social support. Our hypothesis was designed in Glemblewski model.

This model proposes that initially depersonalization emerges, then follows by lower succession and pessimism toward oneself and others, and finally leads to emotional exhaustion (Angerer, 2003). Our results showed a negative significant relationship for social support perceived from colleagues and organization with job burnout. Depersonalization was in a reversed relationship with superiors support. Lack of personal accomplishment showed a reversed significant relationship with support received from family, colleagues and superiors. In addition, social support was related significantly with the emotional exhaustion ($P < 0.05$).

The research results show that it is essential to focus on the mentioned social resources to diminish burnout. It would be useful to hold training courses and forums for educational administrators about social support process to prepare them sufficiently for responsibility acceptance shown a meaningful relationship with reduction of job burnout.

1. We could not control interfering variables of study. As this work was not experimental, there were any factors to threaten internal and external validity of the research.
2. Some information was missed in our sample because subjects did not collaborate with us due to some negative feedbacks from previous studies or lack of job security.
3. The bias in subjects was observed due to their tendencies, prejudices, and experiences.
4. There is a limitation in generalization of results because the assessment of qualities traits is difficult with quantitative patterns.

An integrated model should be designed for organizational, social and family support of educational administrators regarding to social and cultural background of Iranian education.

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