



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BIG FIVE PERSONALITY FACTORS AND JOB BURNOUT

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades, research about job burnout and its relationship with the personality factors has become increasingly important in domain of psychology and management. This study aims to investigate the relationship between Burnout as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory(Maslach, C, Jackson, S. E., and Leiter, M. P., 1996) and the Big Five Personality Factors(Costa, P. T., and McCrae, R. R. 1989). The Participants were 196 out of 400 workers from an automobile factory of Lahijan, Iran, who were chosen randomly to participate in this study. The data was collected through questionnaires, and then analyzed through SPSS by applying descriptive statistics, and Pearsons'Coefficient Correlation. The results revealed that extroversion, agreeableness, and openness of experience had negative relationships with job burnout. On the other hand, there were positive relationships between conscientiousness and neuroticism with job burnout.

Key Words: Big Five, personality, burnout, workers.

INTRODUCTION

Burnout term was coined by Herbert Freudenberger in 1974 to describe a special kind of job distress (Freudenberger,1974). He used the term to describe gradual emotional depletion and missing the motivation and commitment in young volunteer workers with high commitment who work in a clinic (Freudenberger, 1974; Maslach, and Leiter, 2005).

In 1976, Maslach mentioned to the phenomenon of indifference and disrespect of staff toward the organization's clients after long studies on the problems of social services staff (Maslach,1976).

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Job burnout is a negative emotional reaction to job, created through long attendance in high stress workplaces (Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter, 2001; Maslach, and Jackson, 1984) In other words, High disharmony between job nature and job holder's nature leads into burnout (Maslach, and Leiter, 2005).

The aspects of burnout include: (1) emotional exhaustion which means energy discharge and consumption of emotional resources. This dimension can be considered as the cornerstone of job burnout. (2) Depersonalization which separates workers from others and causes pessimism to colleagues, customers and organization. This dimension of the job burnout is prevalent among those staff who regularly communicate to other persons (such as teachers, students, customers, patients) to do their jobs. (3) Diminished personal accomplishment by which the person comes to a negative self-assessment (Maslach, and Leiter, 2005; Maslach, and Jackson, 1981; Pines, and Maslach, 1981).

Burnout is an important variable not only because that it is an index to show individuals' weak performance in workplace but also because that it influences on individual's attitudes, their physical and mental health and finally on their behavior (Cordes, and Dougherty, 1993; Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter, 2001; Lee, and Ashforth, 1996; Maslach, 2003; Maslach, and Goldberg, 1998).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Researches indicate that variables like self-efficacy, self-esteem, locus of control, emotional stability, extraversion, conscientiousness, positive affectivity, negative affectivity, optimism, proactive personality (Bateman, and Crant, 1993) and hardworking impact highly on burnout (Alarcon, attendance in high stress workplaces (Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter, 2001; Maslach, and Jackson, 1984) In other words, High disharmony between job nature and job holder's nature leads into burnout (Maslach, and Leiter, 2005).

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and mental health and finally on their behavior (Cordes, and Dougherty, 1993; Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter, 2001; Lee, and Ashforth, 1996; Maslach, 2003; Maslach, and Goldberg, 1998).

More specifically, burnout is usually defined as a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1993). *Emotional exhaustion* refers to the depletion of psychic energy or the draining of emotional resources. *Depersonalization* refers to the development of negative, cynical attitudes towards the recipients of one's services. *Lack of personal accomplishment* is the tendency to evaluate one's own work with recipients negatively, an evaluation that is often accompanied by feelings of insufficiency (Maslach, 1993).

Researches indicate that variables like self-efficacy, self-esteem, locus of control, emotional stability, extraversion, conscientiousness, positive affectivity, negative affectivity, optimism, proactive personality (Bateman, and Crant, 1993) and hardworking impact highly on burnout (Alarcon, said that many findings of the research are homogenous to previous researches; however, no relationship was determined between agreeableness/job performance and job burnout (Kim, 2007). Alarcon et al (2009) mentioned that structured studies on the relationship between personality variables and burnout are rare (Alarcon, Eschleman, and Bowling, 2009). Since authors confirm the lack of researches in this area, present study addresses to investigate the relationship between personality factors (big five personality model) and job burnout.

Purpose and the Research Question

This study is an attempt to examine the relationship between the Big Five Personality Factors (extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, openness and conscientiousness) and Job Burnout.

Based on the literature review and the purpose discussed above, the following research question was addressed:

Q) Are there relationships between the Big Five Personality Factors and Job Burnout?

The Hypotheses of the Study

So, based on the research question of this study, the researchers formulate the research hypotheses as follow:

H1) There is a negative relationship between Extroversion and Job Burnout.

H2) There is a negative relationship between Agreeableness and Job Burnout.

H3) There is a negative relationship between Conscientiousness and Job Burnout.

H4) There is a positive relationship between Neuroticism and Job Burnout.

H5) There is a negative relationship between Openness to experience and Job Burnout.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 196 out of 400 workers from an automobile factory of Lahijan, Iran, who were selected randomly. They were both male and female with the age range of 25-60 years, and their

age average was 42 years and 5 months. After distributing demographic questionnaire (first questionnaire), we left 22 questionnaires, because they were incomplete. The complete questionnaires showed that participants were 74.7% male, and 25.3% female (Table 1). In the meantime, 74.7% of respondents were married, 23% were single, and 2.3% did not determine their marital status (Table 2). In terms of education, 58.6% were under diploma, diploma, and associate of arts, 34.5% were BA, 2.9% were MA, and 4% did not determine their educational level (Table 3).

Data Collection Instrument

The instruments designed were two questionnaires. The first one was a demographic questionnaire determining some aspects of participants' life (e.g. age, marital status, and educational status) and the second one was a combination of MBI questionnaire which was developed by Maslach in 1980, and the 44-item questionnaire of Big Five Personality Standard Model (Costa, and McCrae, 1989).

There are some scales to measure job burnout of which the most famous ones include MBI questionnaire. This questionnaire was developed by Maslach in 1980s and then was revised later (Halbesleben, Jonathon, and Buckley, 2004).

In this research, questionnaire is used to measure variables. It is a 66-item questionnaire with Likert's 5-point range. The first 22 items address to study job burnout and it is actually Maslach standard questionnaire (MBI) to measure job burnout. The items in the questionnaire measure three dimensions of job burnout including emotional exhaustion (9 items), diminished personal accomplishment (8 items) and depersonalization (5 items). In the second part, the 44-item questionnaire of Big Five Personality Standard Model (Costa, and McCrae, 1989) is provided which includes 8 items on extraversion, 9 items on agreeableness, 9 items on conscientiousness, 8 items on neuroticism and 10 items on openness. Cronbach's alpha is utilized to determine the questionnaire's reliability whose rates for three aspects of job burnout namely emotional exhaustion, diminished personal accomplishment and depersonalization are 78.2%, 80.5% and 72.5% respectively. For other five variables namely extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness and conscientiousness, these rates are 71.2%, 72.5%, 75.6%, 81.2% and 72.7% respectively which show high reliability of the questionnaire.

Data Analysis and Findings

The gathered data in this study (based on questionnaires) were analyzed through SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science). Based on research question and hypotheses, the researchers applied Pearson's Coefficient Correlation to show relationships between Big Five Personality Factors and Job Burnout. Tables 4, and 5 show the descriptive statistics of the study. Table 4 shows the mean and standard deviation of Big Five Personality Factors. Table 5 shows the mean and standard deviation of three aspects of Burnout.

The results of Pearsons' Coefficient Correlation (Table 6), shows negative correlation between extroversion and job burnout(-0.57), negative correlation between agreeableness and job burnout(-0.64), positive correlation between conscientiousness and job burnout(0.20), positive correlation between neuroticism and job burnout(0.47), and negative correlation between openness of experience and job burnout(-0.40). It should be noted that the amount of all of them were significant in $p < 0.05$.

Based on the findings of present research, it is obvious that third statistical hypothesis on the negative relationship between conscientiousness and job burnout of mentioned factory workers is rejected. According to above findings, conscientiousness has positive relationship with job burnout. Finally the results of t-value(Table 7) revealed that all Big Five Personality Factors have significant relationships with Job Burnout, because their t-value are -10.83, -7.24, 3.55, 9.41, and -3.22 respectively. Based on the results of t-value model, it is obvious that more extroversion, leads to less job burnout. Such results are true on agreeableness and openness. It means that people with more agreeableness and openness experience less job burnout. More neuroticism leads to more job burnout. However, the hypothesis of conscientiousness was not supported. The findings indicate that people with higher conscientiousness experience higher job burnout. Therefore, first, second, fourth and fifth hypothesis are supported.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the relationships between Big Five Personality Factors and Job Burnout on Iranian factory workers. Through analysis of findings gotten from the questionnaires, the researchers come to the conclusion that the negative relationship between extroversion and job burnout(-0.57), negative relationship between agreeableness and job burnout(-0.64), positive relationship between neuroticism and job burnout(0.47), and negative relationship between openness to experience and job burnout(-0.40). Thus, the results on extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism are in line with previous researches (Alarcon et al., 2009; Costa, and McCrae, 1992; Bowling et al., 2004; Bono, & Judge, 2003) but in terms of openness, it is in contradictory to previous researches (Alarcon et al., 2009; Costa, & McCrae, 1992; Piedmont, 1993).

On the other hand, the results of Pearsons' Coefficient Correlation show the positive relationship between conscientiousness and job burnout (0.20). Hence, third statistical assumption on the negative relationship between conscientiousness and job burnout of the mentioned factory workers is rejected. It is concluded that more conscientiousness leads into more burnout; maybe because(a) high conscientiousness do not allow a person to be indifferent toward his job, so he/she is more exposed to job stress and burnout, and (b) conscientious people have not properly awarded despite of their more efforts.. Therefore, the results revealed positive relationship between conscientiousness and job burnout. This finding is in contradictory to previous researches (Alarcon et al., 2009; Costa, and McCrae, 1992).

So, it is concluded that extrovert individuals experience less job burnout, Agreeable and open persons also experience less job burnout and neurotic and conscientious individuals have higher job burnout (Maslach, and Leiter, 2005). In terms of positive and significant relationship , among personality factors, neuroticism has the highest relationship (0.47) and conscientiousness has the lowest relationship (0.20) on job burnout.

IMPLICATION

At the end of this study, we as researchers could assert that by using these findings, managers can prevent the intensification of job burnout through being aware of their employees' personality traits. The results of previous researches(Maslach and Leiter, 2005) show that factors like workload, control, award, social interactions, fairness and values are correlated with job burnout. By enforcing happiness creating factors and job burnout mitigating factors, managers can control job burnout and prevent its serious consequences which hurt employees mentally and physically. In the meantime, interventional plans are useful in this regard. Used interventional plans in organizations to decrease job burnout involve a wide range. Such plans can have individual and organizational orientation or a combination of both. One can, points out individual interventional plans such as job competency improvement, individual confronting skills enhancement, social support or relaxation exercises. There are various organizational interventional plans like reengineering, job control increase and involving staff in decision-making. Creating and enhancing job advising plans in organizations are among the most effective mechanisms to decrease job burnout (Gorter et al., 2001).

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Due to its' own particular features, this study has certain limitations:

First, this study was restricted to workers from an automobile factory of Lahijan, Iran, therefore the findings of the present research cannot be generalized to apply to all Iranian workers in all factories and companies, although the sample was representative of the population under the study due to its random nature. So the future research should include workers and staffs in different companies and offices.

Second, the researchers didn't consider the relationships between variables such as age, gender, marital status, education, and with job burnout in order to control internal validity, so the future research should include the relationships between the mentioned variables with job burnout.

Maslach and Leiter (2005) identified two groups of factors which dominate the person before burnout. The first group is called situational predictors consist of six antecedents: (1) workload, (2) control, (3) award, (4) social interactions, (5) fairness and (6) values. The second group or

individual antecedents include such factors as age, gender, marital status and experience. One can guess that unfair award distribution mitigates the relationship between conscientiousness and job burnout. Researchers can examine this assumption in future studies.

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Table-1. The percentage of participants according to gender

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | male | 130 | 74.7 | 74.7 | 74.7 |
| | female | 44 | 25.3 | 25.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 174 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Table-2. The percentage of participants according to marital status

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|---------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | married | 130 | 74.7 | 74.7 | 74.7 |
| | single | 40 | 23.0 | 23.0 | 97.7 |
| | missing | 4 | 2.3 | 2.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 174 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Table-3. The percentage of participants according to education

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | diploma and below | 102 | 58.6 | 58.6 | 58.6 |
| | BA | 60 | 34.5 | 34.5 | 93.1 |
| | MA | 5 | 2.9 | 2.9 | 96.0 |
| | missing | 7 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 174 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Table-4. Descriptive Statistics of Big Five Personality Factors

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|-----|---------|---------|-------|----------------|
| P1 | 174 | 16 | 26 | 21.47 | 2.062 |
| P2 | 174 | 29 | 31 | 29.74 | .515 |
| P3 | 174 | 37 | 43 | 39.87 | 1.073 |
| P4 | 174 | 20 | 22 | 21.00 | .430 |
| P5 | 174 | 24 | 28 | 26.12 | .907 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 174 | | | | |

Table-5. Descriptive Statistics of the three dimensions of Burnout

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|-----|---------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Total.Burnout | 174 | 53 | 97 | 74.72 | 7.875 |
| B1 | 174 | 17 | 33 | 24.92 | 3.421 |
| B2 | 174 | 0 | 18 | 10.16 | 3.223 |
| B3 | 174 | 32 | 48 | 39.65 | 3.216 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 174 | | | | |

Table-6. Pearsons' Coefficient Correlation of Big Five Personality Factors and Job Burnout

| | | Total.Burnout | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 |
|---------------|---------------------|---------------|---------|---------|--------|--------|---------|
| Total.Burnout | Pearson Correlation | 1 | -.572** | -.644** | .200** | .473** | -.404** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 | .000 | .008 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 174 | 174 | 174 | 174 | 174 | 174 |
| P1 | Pearson Correlation | -.572** | 1 | .253** | -.054 | .000 | .279** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | .001 | .477 | 1.000 | .000 |
| | N | 174 | 174 | 174 | 174 | 174 | 174 |
| P2 | Pearson Correlation | -.644** | .253** | 1 | .169* | -.131 | .675** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .001 | | .025 | .086 | .000 |
| | N | 174 | 174 | 174 | 174 | 174 | 174 |
| P3 | Pearson Correlation | .200** | -.054 | .169* | 1 | .413** | .413** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .008 | .477 | .025 | | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 174 | 174 | 174 | 174 | 174 | 174 |
| P4 | Pearson Correlation | .473** | .000 | -.131 | .413** | 1 | .237** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | 1.000 | .086 | .000 | | .002 |
| | N | 174 | 174 | 174 | 174 | 174 | 174 |
| P5 | Pearson Correlation | -.404** | .279** | .675** | .413** | .237** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .002 | |
| | N | 174 | 174 | 174 | 174 | 174 | 174 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table-7. The results of regression model

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|---------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 127.322 | 26.431 | | 4.817 | .000 |
| | P1 | -1.583 | .146 | -.414 | -10.832 | .000 |
| | P2 | -5.928 | .818 | -.387 | -7.248 | .000 |
| | P3 | 1.123 | .315 | .153 | 3.558 | .000 |
| | P4 | 7.377 | .783 | .403 | 9.416 | .000 |
| | P5 | -1.609 | .500 | -.185 | -3.221 | .002 |

a. Dependent Variable: Total.Burnout