ANALYZING THE SOURCES AND AFTER-EFFECTS OF JOB BURNOUT

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Abstract

The present study aims to explain the phenomena of job burnout its determinants and consequences in the organizational context. Burnout is an unpleasant and dysfunctional condition that both individuals and organizations would like to change. Job burnout is a consequence of the perceived disparity between the demands of the job and the resources (both material and emotional) that an employee has available to him or her. The factors influential on burnout have been indicated in many studies over the years. Burnout has many negative effects on organization as well as on individual. Cynicism, job dissatisfaction, low organizational commitment, and quitting the job can be mentioned among the most important effects on organization. There are certain ways of preventing burnout. However, one needs to notice burnout in the first place in order to put into practice all these methods. In this regard, the first signs indicating the emergence of burnout are of vital importance. Colleagues, chiefs or subordinates may help an individual notice these signs. However, what is ideal is an attempt by organization to keep burnout under control consistently through an advanced detailed program, and to intervene through certain preventive methods when required. Finally, different methods are suggested for decreasing the burnout levels of employees.

Keywords: burnout, job burnout, organization

Introduction

The worker entered a job with positive expectations, enthusiasm, and the goal to be successful in the job. Over time, things changed – and now the worker has an overwhelming exhaustion; feelings of frustration, anger and a sense of

ineffectiveness and failure. The initial flame has burned out. The experience impairs both personal and social functioning on the job, and thus carries some real costs for the individual worker, the people affected by him or her, and for the organization as a whole. Burnout is an unpleasant and dysfunctional condition that both individuals and organizations would like to change; indeed, much of the major interest in burnout has been not simply to understand what it is but to figure out what to do about it (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998). Burnout is defined as a psychological response to job stress. Changes in what an individual wants and what he/she should do or, in other words, significant disharmonies between job nature and job owner's nature lead into burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2005). Burnout does not only affect job satisfaction negatively, but also brings about low organizational commitment (Ashil and Rod, 2011).

According to the famous structure defined by Maslach (1981), burnout stemming from continuous work pressures that are not effectively handled comprises the following three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Historically, burnout was thought to be separate entities and, as such, should be approached as distinctly different domains. The current study is an example of a growing problem that is multidimensional and multifaceted. Therefore, we will try to familiar job burnout and causes to create it.

This paper contributes to the existing knowledge of burnout in several ways. We examine the relationship of burnout with organizational and individual factors thus helping us to understand the core reason behind the job burnout of employees. Burnout is harmful not only to individuals but also organizations. The possible reduction, if not elimination, of burnout and job stress from organizations can help well-being and happiness of workers at work thus improving their quality of work life. Satisfied employees are cooperative, helpful, punctual and are likely to stay with the organization longer which helps in fostering positive employer-employee relationship (Judge, Thoresen, Bono & Patton, 2001). In this study we examine the relationship of individual and organizational factors with burnout. It is important to study the presence and nature of burnout so it can be tackled in best way.

JOB BURNOUT

Burnout is defined as a symptom of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment at work due to work activity (Maslach, 1982). Burnout is a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. The past 25 years of research has established the complexity of the construct, and places the individual stress experience within a larger organizational context of people's relation to their work. Recently, the work on burnout has expanded internationally and has led to new conceptual models. The focus on engagement, the positive antithesis of burnout, promises to yield new perspectives on the interventions to alleviate burnout. The social focus of burnout, the solid research basis concerning the syndrome, and its specific ties to the work domain make a distinct and valuable contribution to people's health and well-being (Maslach, et al., 2001). Now, many authors have achieved a relative concurrence on burnout aspects. These aspects 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 staffs who regularly communicate to other persons (such as teachers, students, customers, patients). (3) Diminished personal accomplishment by which the person comes to a negative selfassessment (Maslach & Leiter, 2005). So, job burnout is "a consequence of the perceived disparity between the demands of the job and the resources (both material and emotional) that an employee has available to him or her. When demands in the workplace are unusually high, it becomes increasingly impossible to cope with the stress associated with these working conditions." Its roots are found in the daily transactions stemming from the debilitating physical and emotional overload that arises from stress on the job. Job burnout is both an occupational hazard and a phenomenon induced by distress. It is generally characterized by: (1) Some degree of physical and emotional exhaustion;

(2) Socially dysfunctional behavior, particularly a distancing and insulation from individuals with whom one is working; (3) Psychological impairment -- especially strong, negative feelings toward the self; and (4) Organizational inefficiency through decreased output and poor morale (Maslach, et al., 2001). Currently, most researchers (Lee & Ashforth, 1993; Leiter, 1990) support the use of a threefactor conceptualization of the burnout construct. The first component of burnout, emotional exhaustion, is characterized by high frustration, irritability, low energy, and depleted emotional resources. The second component of burnout, depersonalization, encompasses a negative, dehumanizing approach to patients or clients, treating them like objects or numbers. Depersonalization exhibits itself through healthcare workers' extensive use of jargon, an overreliance on bureaucratic rules, and derogatory language in referring to clients. Finally, diminished personal accomplishment refers to feelings of decreased or insufficient progress toward job goals, and a sense a decline in personal job competency, leading to a negative selfcharacterization (Zellars, et al., 2004).

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What causes job burnout?

It's a common misconception that burnout is simply a result of working too hard or for too long, according to Alexandra Michel, a science writer at the Association for Psychological Science.

"Ultimately," writes Michel, burnout results when the balance of deadlines, demands, working hours, and other stressors outstrips rewards, recognition, and relaxation."

SOME ORGANIZATIONAL CAUSES OF JOB BURNOUT ARE

Type and Sector of Organization

Type of organization included manufacturing and service providing firms. Services firms include banks, transport, etc. Presence of burnout was found in bank employees (Khattak et al., 2011; Schnorpfeil et al., 2002; Tripathy, 2002) as well as those working in manufacturing firms (Kitaoka-Higashiguchi et al., 2009). The sector in which organization operate in can be divided into public and private sector.

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) researched the presence of burnout to be higher in public sector than in the private sector. The possible explanation is that employee working in government organizations face limited resources and high accountability to higher officials as well as the general public which puts employees under pressure and hence susceptibility to burnout.

Level of Hierarchy

According to the burnout literature as the employees go up the organizational hierarchy burnout increases. Cordes & Dougherty (1993) have suggested that as employee move to higher management their responsibility and experience increased which have lead to burnout.

Reward

The rewards are composed of the social rewards (recognition), monetary rewards (raise in pay) and intrinsic rewards (pride in doing the job). These rewards are consistent with employee perception. Lack of recognition from colleagues, mangers, and supervisor who devalue work was found to promote the feeling of inefficacy in employees (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Maslach et al., 1996). High level of burnout was found in government employees who perceived existence of a poor rewards system (Gabris & Ihrke, 2001).

Anthony Cedoline (1982), offers the following causes of job burnout that have received the most attention in research findings:

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 Lack of Occupational Feedback and Communication:

Like other workers, educators want to know the expectations of the organization, the behaviors that will be successful or unsuccessful in satisfying job requirements, any physical and psychological dangers that might exist, and the security of the job. Education employees need feedback to develop job values, aspirations, objectives, and accomplishments. Lack of clear, consistent information can result in distress. If evaluation only happens once or twice a year without regular, periodic feedback, the possibility of stress increases the longer the employee works in a vacuum. Regarding communication, organizational structures that foster open, honest, cathartic expression in a positive and constructive way reap large dividends from employees. When management reacts to open communication on a crisis basis only, it reinforces negative communications.

Work Overload or Under-load:

Researchers have found high levels of stress among individuals who have excessive work-loads. Long or unpredictable hours, too many responsibilities, work at a too-rapid pace, too many phone calls, dealing directly with difficult people without sufficient relief, dealing with constant crises, and supervising too many people (e.g., large class sizes and overcrowding) or having broad multifaceted job descriptions are characteristics of a work overload. In addition, boring tedious jobs or jobs without variety are equally distressful.

Contact Overload:

Contact overload results from the necessity for frequent encounters with other people in order to carry out job functions. Some occupations (teaching, counseling, law enforcement) require many encounters that are unpleasant and therefore distressful. These workers spend a large proportion of their work time interacting with people in various states of distress. When the caseload is high, control over one's work and consequent job satisfaction is affected. Contact overloads also leave little occasion or energy for communication and support from other employees or for seeking personal and professional growth opportunities.

Role Conflict/Ambiguity:

Although role conflict and ambiguity can occur independently, they both refer to the uncertainty about what one is expected to do at work. Role conflict may be defined as the simultaneous occurrence of two or more opposing pressures such that a response to one makes compliance with the other impossible (e.g., mass education versus individualized instruction). The most frequent role conflicts are (1) those between the individual's values and those of the superior or the organization; (2) the conflict between the demands of the work place and the worker's personal life; and (3) the conflict between worker abilities and organizational expectations. In numerous studies, role conflict has been associated with low job satisfaction, frustration, decreased trust and respect, low confidence in the organization, morale problems and high degrees of stress. Role ambiguity may be defined as a lack of clarity about the job, that is, a discrepancy between the information available to the employee and that which is required for successful job performance. In comparison to role conflict, role ambiguity has the highest correlation to job dissatisfaction. Role ambiguity is especially common amongst school administrators.

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 Individual Factors:

Personal factors such as financial stability, marital satisfaction, as well as personality factors such neuroticism, excessive shyness, inflexibility, and poor stress management skills all contribute to how one is affected by stress on the job. The mutual interaction and accumulation of both personal and occupational stressors can certainly contribute to job burnout (Anthony, 1982).

Panis and Aronoson (quoted by Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001) declared that job burnout is caused by emotional and physical fatigue syndrome. In the other hand, burnout is the result of increasing negative trends of job and decreasing interest to colleagues. Several factors are effective in creating job burnout that includes environmental factors, individual factors and organizational factors. Organizational factors that can lead to job burnout are management style, inflexible rules of job, lack of job security and few opportunities for promotion (World Health Organization, 1998).

Maslach and Leiter (2005) identified two groups of factors which dominate the person before burnout. The first group called situational predictors which include six antecedents: (1) workload, (2) control, (3) award, (4) social network, (5) job fairness, and (6) values. The second group includes individual antecedents such as age, gender, marital status and experience. Cordes et al. (1997) categorized burnout-related factors into three groups: (1) job and role characteristics, (2) organizational characteristics and (3) personal characteristics.

Outcomes of burnout

Burnout has many negative effects on organization as well as on individual. Cynicism, job dissatisfaction, low organizational commitment, and quitting the job can be mentioned among the most important effects on organization (Ghorpade et al, 2007). Many other researchers indicate that those employees who suffer burnout are located in lower levels of job satisfaction which cause reduction in their motivation and performance (Bettina & Piko, 2006). Consumption behavior like smoking has also been mentioned by a doctor (Naveed & Saeed Rana, 2012).

Preliminary researches show that burnout consequences can emerge in various types such as commitment mitigation, increase in absenteeism and turnover, productivity decrease, morale reduction, and decrease in human consideration (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). The studies in the literature demonstrate that burnout is negatively related to performance, but positively related to the variables including absenteeism, leaving the job, etc. (Swider and Zimmerman, 2010). Maslach et al. (2001) expound burnout consequences in two job performance and health aspects. In terms of job performance, burnout accompanies with job withdrawal, absenteeism, intention to leave and turnover. Those people who keep their work despite of their burnout are facing with productivity and effectiveness decrease. Accordingly, burnout accompanies with job satisfaction decrease as well as job or organizational commitment mitigation. In terms of health, burnout can cause mental dysfunctions which lead into anxiety, depression and selfesteem decrease.

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However, these 7 tactics can help employers avoid the negative effects of employee burnout:

- **Learn to spot employee burnout-** all leaders should be able to spot key signs of employee burnout such as: lack of motivation, cynicism, frustration, impatience, or overt cognitive issues.
- **Check in with your staff-** If you notice signs of burnout in one of your employees, immediately schedule a one on one meeting to discuss it and identify the possible causes.
- **Look for causes-** As there are many different causes of burnout,, it's important to identify current and past causes of burnout in your organization to keep an eye out in the future.
- **Don't overload employees-** This can increase the chance of burnout if weight of responsibilities becomes too much which affects employee motivation and performance.
- **Allow room for creativity-** Creativity helps to maintain mental fitness, keep the mind sharp, and increases engagement and motivation.
- **Schedule conscientiously-** Manage employee attendance and monitor employees who do not use their vacation or personal time, who work overtime regularly, or are frequently missing work to monitor potential indicators of burnout.
- **Recognize top performers**– Recognizing accomplishments and top talent increases engagement and gives management an opportunity to provide meaningful feedback and guidance for an employee's growth and development.

Unchecked organizational norms insidiously create the conditions for burnout—but leaders can change them to make burnout less likely. Giving people back the time to do work that drives the company's success will pay huge dividends by raising productivity, increasing productive output and reducing burnout. Everybody wins.

Conclusion

Job burnout is considered an outcome of a long term of stress (Elit, et al. 2004), and as mentioned above, it is correlated with many job negative reactions. Obviously, the negative consequences of job

burnout are too costly for organizations. In context of individual perspective, burnout is related to issues like decreased self-esteem, depression, fatigue, anxiety and deterioration of physical health). In the context of organizational perspective, burnout is linked with job related tension and decreased level of job commitment. In light of both these perspectives, implementing effective individual and managerial strategies, to control this issue, are critical for organizations. Therefore, management needs to have clear and precise understanding of job burnout process and development of its various stages (Naveed & Saeed Rana, 2012). There are certain ways of preventing burnout. However, one needs to notice burnout in the first place in order to put into practice all these methods. In this regard, the first signs indicating the emergence of burnout are of vital importance. Colleagues, chiefs or subordinates may help an individual notice these signs. However, what is ideal is an attempt by organization to keep burnout under control consistently through an advanced detailed program, and to intervene through certain preventive methods when required. Finally, different methods are suggested for decreasing the burnout levels of employees.

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