

Comparing the Perception of the Environment and Burnout among Young and Middle-Aged Employees

Sama Sadat

Department of Psychology, Rudehen Branch, Islamic Azad University, Rudehen, Iran

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ABSTRACT

The aim of present study was to investigate the difference between the employees' perception of the work environment components and burnout in regard to age. The population of this study included all employees of Ministry of Roads and Urban Development whether contractual or official employees in 2011. In order to estimate the sample size, 132 individuals were randomly selected. In order to data collection, two work environment factors measurement (Mir Hashemi) and Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) questionnaires were used. Data were analyzed by descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (multivariate analysis of variance «MANOVA»). The findings results showed that there is no significant difference ($p < 0.01$) between perception of working environment components and burnout, according to age. Also There was no significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the staffs perception of burnout components with regard to age. However there was observed a significant difference ($p < 0.01$) between staffs perception of work environment components with regard to age.

KEY WORDS: the environment perception - burnout - employees (young and middle-aged).

INTRODUCTION

Work is a very important source of subsistence and social conditions obtaining at the same time it can lead to discontent, mental and physical stamina exhaustion. Work environment has consisted of physical, psychological and social stimuli that each one them could be considered as a stress factor. Some works are associated with a lot of tensions due to their nature, the type of duties and responsibilities of these professions. Work-related stress can cause employee's dissatisfaction and discontent which in its turn causes huge negative effects in other fields of life, including social and the individual and family issues (Dolah, 2001).

In recent decades attentions to study on occupational stress was increased. Among the reasons for that included the impact of job stress in psychosomatic diseases (such as blood pressure and digestive problems) as well as the prevalence of stress in large-scale in society. According to international organization announcement in 1987, half population of office workers are dissatisfied with their jobs and 90% of them believe that their job is not for the purpose of their lives and 75% of those are seeking Psychiatric help, believe the main reasons are lack of dissatisfaction and job inability (Dolah, 2001).

Scatt (2001) points out the role of environmental factors in the incidence of burnout.

In work environments that involve following characteristics burnout appears:

- Pressure caused by exposure to repeated demands and requests of others.
- Hard and breathtaking Competition.
- Financial needs and trying to gain money.
- Denial of what one deserves.

In today's society, there is a large prevalence of burnout. In various professions act contagiously and has affected all aspects of people's lives. This phenomenon on the one hand causes increasing addiction, divorce, turnover, physical and psychosomatic illnesses, and on the other hand, by reducing the productive forces of labor, damage the country's economy and production. This phenomenon, endanger all aspects of the society, is at risk (Honarpishe and Gharavi, 1997).

The emergence of human relations movement and time - motion study by Taylor (1900-1930) caused some organizations and companies pay attention to employees' welfare and social securing. Also, based on Hawthorne's scientific studies (1930-1950) that were conducted by Mayo et al, human and his behavior in informal groups, consequently psychosocial and group factors were considered. Lisberger, one of the Mio's colleagues reported that collaborative relationships and supporting by managers effects on employee's behavior and performance and impact their emotions, feelings and even their mind. (Mirkamali, 2004)

First time Herbert J. Ferudenberger (1974) defined the Burnout issue and others define more precisely it. Burnout is a general and comprehensive phenomenon that is aroused due to interactions between individuals unique personality with the environment (Rahimifar, 2001, p. 64).

Ferudenberger called this phenomenon syndrome of physical and mental exhaustion which arise in aid practitioners, while they feel immersed themselves in others difficulties. Burnout phenomenon is created due to the effect of stress factors in the work environment. The situation gradually changes to unbearable condition for environment employees and pushes them towards psychosocial isolation. In addition, burnout was described as mental-emotional fatigue in health care practitioners, which cause arising negative feelings and dissatisfaction with help seekers. In the long run appears in symptoms such as excitement, anger, frustration, disappointment, absence from work and loss of sense of responsibility (Daebash, 2003, p. 40).

The emergence and growth of burnout in addition of Ferudenberger owes to, Maslach, Pines, and Aronson studies in California. So that Maslach et al, in 1982, adopted a research-based approach for burnout and tried to clarify the circumstances leading to the burnout (Rahimifar 2001, p. 64). According to Pines and Aronson (1981), burnout is a consequence of job stress. In Job stress, the interaction between working conditions and employee's individual characteristics such a way that the demands of the work environment (and the pressures associated with it) is more than one can afford them (Ross and Altimer, translated Khajehpour , 2006).

Maslach studied the burnout issue widely. He found out an individual who suffers from burnout; owning negative self-concept, negative attitudes toward job, lack of interest and feelings toward the help-seekers and the patients (Brookings et al, 1992).

Farber (1983) in order to describe burnout conception, expressed: "Burnout is a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion that arise due to direct and long-term exposure to people in emotionally unbearable situations".

Researches have shown that this phenomenon can have different reasons. Regardless of its reason, the individual who is suffering from burnout cannot show appropriate responses against psychological pressures. Since too much stress can cause physical, mental, social and emotional problems; it can be concluded that stress and the burnout arising from it, are ones of the major health problems in work environment (Lancaster et al., 1988).

Regarding the mentioned subjects, in this study, the following question is considered: "Are there differences between employees' perception of work environment components and burnout, in terms of age?" according to the research question, the hypothesis arises: Employees Perception of the components of the work environment and job burnout may vary according to age.

Method

This research is based on causal-comparative research method.

The study population consisted of all contractual official etc. employees of The Ministry of Urban Development in 2011.

Sampling method

Using the Cochran's sampling formula at the $P=0.01$, the minimum sample size was estimated 132. In order to reach predicted percent of respondents, sample size was increase to 200. Simple random sampling was applied.

Measuring instrument

In order to measure the variables, the following tools were used:

- Evaluation of work environment Inventory: assessment of work environment factors questionnaire (Mir Hashemi, 2007) was applied to evaluate the perception of the environment. The dimensions and the number of each of its components are as follows:

- 1) Pressure role (occupational roles), components of role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload are included.
- 2) Employment characteristics involved of the components of autonomy, feedback, task identity, and challenges on the job.
- 3) Supervisory style involved only consideration base.
- 4) Organizational structure that consists of aspects related to the administrative hierarchy, partnership and formality.

In order to estimate of reliability through internal consistency coefficient between the materials (Cronbach's alpha) was applied, a preliminary form was administered on 32 members of the faculty of Islamic Azad University of Roodehen who were randomly selected.

The final amount of alpha coefficient after elimination of 3 following materials, the administrative hierarchy, partnership, and formality which had negative correlation, was calculated 0/887. Therefore it can be concluded that at this scale, all statements have appropriate correlation with the questionnaire.

Regarding 11 categories alpha coefficients of the work environment, the results show that alpha coefficients are located between 0.468 (administrative hierarchy component) and 0.722 (component of job challenge). Generally, the alpha coefficients of the 11 components are: Role Ambiguity, 0.679 (6 items), role conflict, 0.699 (6 items), role overload, 0.620 (6), autonomy 0.687 (6), task identity, 0.518 (6), feedback, 0.554 (6 items), job challenges, 0.722 (6), supervisory style, 0.690 (6), administrative hierarchy, 0.468 (5 items), participation, 0.525 (5 items), and formality, 0.635 (5 items). Finally, the questionnaire was prepared to measure work environment with 63 items (Appendix 1). The questionnaire was ranked in 7 scales from 1 = strongly disagree, somewhat disagree = 2, slightly disagree = 3, nor Disagree Neither agree = 4, slightly agree = 5, somewhat agree = 6, strongly agree = 7 scored (Mir Hashemi , 2007).

In the present study the expressions of the seven factors were used: role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, autonomy, feedback, task identity and employment challenges.

Maslach Burnout Inventory: (MBI) is the most common tool for measuring burnout.

The questionnaire consists of 22 items. It is known as a Gold Standard test for burnout measurement and included three independent measurement scales that are consisted of 22 separate items about feelings and attitudes which measure the different aspects burnout syndrome. Nine items related to emotional exhaustion, 5 items related to depersonalization and 8 items related to personal growth reduction. The frequency of these feelings is measured by scores, one (disagree) to five (agree). Each dimension of burnout statements total scores were calculated separately.

Internal consistency in all three dimensions of the Burnout Inventory in main sample (11,000 individuals) was achieved 0.71 to 0.9 by Cronbach's alpha test. Test-retest coefficients in short periods of time for one month were 0.6 to 0.8. Reliability was examined by 2 Test-retest within a year. Reliability coefficient in a sample of 700 teachers was 0.33 to 0.67 and in the other sample, including 46 people working in the human services was 0.34 to 0.62 (the Maslach & Jackson, 1993).

As well as the reliability and validity of this instrument was examined in Iran. Momeni (1998) performed Cronbach's alpha test on the staff of a hospital in Esfahan and following Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated; emotional exhaustion 0/88, personal accomplishment 0/76, depersonalization 0/79.

RESULTS

Regarding type of data, variables and research hypothesis in order to data description and hypothesis test, different indexes of descriptive statistics and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were used.

Table 1: descriptive indexes score for participants in perception of working environment (7 components) and burnout (3 component) tests (N = 200)

Variables	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	k-s	Significance possibility
Role ambiguity	21.86	7.63	- 0.007	- 0.789	0.908	0.381
Role Conflict	24.57	7.75	- 0.006	- 0.182	0.788	0.564
Role Overload	26.44	6.49	0.253	- 0/391	* 1.439	0.032
Freedom	23.95	66.6	-0.234	-0.554	1.147	0.144
Task identity	24.00	6.29	-0.019	-0.142	0/962	0.313
Feedback	25.84	4.92	-0.211	0.158	1.259	0.084
Job Challenge	22.26	7.08	0.133	0.204	0.905	0.386
Emotional exhaustion	21.28	8.97	0.468	-0.690	1.208	0.108
Depersonalization	8.82	3.61	1.12	0.808	** 2.328	0.000
Personal growth	19/34	4.51	0.429	-0.193	1.158	0.137

** p<0.01 ; * p<0.05

According to table.1 distribution of participants scores in the components of the perception of the work environment (7 elements of role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, autonomy, task identity, feedback and job challenges), and 3 components of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal growth reduction) and descriptive indexes such as mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis show that the distribution of scores in the measured variables (except of role overload and depersonalization components) tend to normal distribution.

Table 2: Factors between participants

Groups	Number
Young employees	100
Middle-aged employees	100

Table 3: Box's Test for Equivalence of Covariance Matrices

F	Df1	Df2	Significance possibility
1.115	55	1.266	0.260

Regarding F value (1.115) and significant probability (0.260) can be concluded, data were not infringed on homogeneity of variance-covariance matrix.

Table 4: equality of variance Levene's test

Variables	F	Df1	Df2	Significance possibility
Role ambiguity	0.004	1	198	0.950
Role Conflict	0.250	1	198	0.618
Role Overload	0.467	1	198	0.495
Freedom	0.141	1	198	0.707
Task identity	0.112	1	198	0.738
Feedback	1.522	1	198	0.214
Job Challenge	0.682	1	198	0.410
Emotional exhaustion	0.023	1	198	0.880
Depersonalization	0.425	1	198	0.515
personal growth reduction	0.563	1	198	0.454

Regarding the F values and the possibility of significant in each 10 variables, variances consistency is confirmed.

Table 5: Summary of multivariate tests

Effects	Tests	Quantity	F	Degrees of freedom	Degrees of freedom Error	P	Eta squared
	Wilks lambda	0.913	1.790	10	189	0.065	0.087

Regarding Wilks lambda value (0.913), F (1.790) and degrees of freedom (189 and 10) null hypothesis cannot be rejected. In other words, there was no significant difference between young and middle-aged employees regarding mean scores of following components role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, autonomy, task identity, feedback, career challenges, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and cannot separate young and middle-aged employees with regard to 10 mentioned components.

Table 6 summary of effects among participants test

Variable	Dependent variables	SS	1 df	2 df	MS	F	Eta squared
Age	Role ambiguity	76.880	1	198	76.880	1.319	0.007
	Role Conflict	25.920	1	198	25.920	0.430	0.002
	Role Overload	361.805	1	198	361.805	*8.924	0.043
	Freedom	10.125	1	198	10.125	0.227	0.001
	Task identity	4.500	1	198	4.500	0.113	0.001
	Feedback	4.205	1	198	4.205	0.173	0.001
	Job Challenge	126.405	1	198	126.405	2.540	0.013
	Emotional exhaustion	109.520	1	198	109.520	1.361	0.007
	Depersonalization	48.020	1	198	48.020	3.715	0.018
	Personal growth reduction	5.120	1	198	5.120	0.250	0.001

* Significant at 0.01 level

According to table6 and calculated indexes, the following interpretations can be offered:

Regarding obtained F values from 10 components, only role overload (F=8.924) with degrees of freedom (1 and 198) had a significant difference ($p < 0.01$) between young and middle-aged employees. Eta squared value (0.043) represents a very weak relationship between the role overload component and age of employees.

The results of post hoc test showed that the mean score of role overload young employees is higher than middle-aged workers.

Table 7: Summary of Bonferroni post hoc test

Groups	Young	Middle-aged
		Role Overload
Young	-	* 2.690
Middle-aged	-	-

*Significant at 0.05 level

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In order to compare the results of present study with other researches, the results are as follows:

Seyed Qarainy and Seyed Abbas Zadeh’s research (2008), statistically there was not observed a significant relationship between age and burnout in Teachers.

Also Heidari (2001) concluded in his study, there is a significant relationship between burnout and source of control. In addition, in comparisons between men and women, married and single individuals, mean of groups did not show significant difference.

In the other hand, there was not a significant relationship between following components work experience, income, education, age and burnout.

Therefore, it was conclude that these factors cannot be considered as predictor variables for burnout. Baban Bahmani (1999) in a study entitled “Assessment of burnout among school principals” came to the conclusion; there is a positive and significant relationship between work experience and field of study with burnout in principals. However there was not a relationship between age and the principals’ burnout. The results of this research were compatible with the results of the present study.

The findings of Mozaffari’s study (2006/7) showed that, firstly burnout among social welfare employees was at a low level, in other words frequency of lack of burnout was higher than presence of burnout (72.5 vs. 27.5). Secondly, burnout variable had a significant relationship only with age of employees who work with children and teenagers in social welfare. As well as in the present study there was no significant relationship between age and burnout. Kilefir et al (2001) concluded that occupational and demographic variables cannot determine people with high burnout or low ones. This study associated with obtained results in the present study.

Kerkistra et al (1996) in their study concluded that the job characteristics and personal properties both are effective on job satisfaction and burnout, however job characteristic effects are mostly on job satisfaction and personal properties mainly impact on job burnout.

The results of Etzion’s study (1987) have shown that men and women perceive their occupational life in the same form and almost apply same contrastive mechanisms (in the case of burnout). However, the women who had a higher average of education in compare with women who were studied in research, they were less likely to marry and their burnout was more than men. In this study, it was found that men’s job prosperity and satisfactory did not prevent them from success in their private life. On the other hand there was observed a compensation model in women, success and progress in their job associated with dissatisfaction in their private life.

In a study, Russell et al. (1987) the age of subjects was considered as only variable that was significantly associated with the stressful incidents of work environment, which means that young teachers reported more job stress. As well as in this study, there was a significant difference between age of employees and perception of the work environment components.

Among all demographic variables that were studied, the age variable had strongest relationship with burnout. The burnout among young employees was more than individuals over 30 and 40 years old. Of course it’s notable to know that age range is associated with work experience. In other words, it seems that risk of burnout at the start of a person’s job is higher than the other times. The reasons were not examined in a careful study; also in this study the potential bias problem of researcher should be considered. Those who are disabled early may leave their jobs and not remain in jobs for later years. In this way, among the experienced people, less burnout is reported.

The people differ from one another in their ability to apply number and type of schemas in order to mental organizing of individuals, situations and its interpretations

Middle-aged people are cognitively more complex than young people, and it affects accuracy of their perceptions.

Researches had shown that complex minds are flexible in interpretation of complex phenomena and could integrate new information with previous ones in regard with different situations and people. However less sophisticated minds, ignore the information that is inconsistent with their previous incarnations or put aside their previous information and adopt new harvest (Wood, 2005).

It is acknowledged the hard work during the day reduces work efficiency because of fatigue.

This fact should be accepted. Maybe you're an active person, but certainly you have not extraordinary ability and you cannot do all works by own yourself (Abtahi, 2010).

Young people due to having less experience in compare with middle-aged people, less able to do their jobs and therefore experience more severity.

The results of present study are compatible with the theory of social-cognitive, because social cognitive theory focuses on the evaluation and use of human agency.

The concept refers to the idea of being able to exert influence on the behaviors by individuals (Mac.coach and Colbert, 2010). Social cognitive theory persists on the interactions between individual factors such as thoughts and behaviors and environmental conditions (Mac.coach and Colbert, 2010).

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1 Work Environment

2 Scatt

3 Taylor

4 Hawthorne studies

5 Lisberger

6 Freudenberger

7 Maslach

8 Pines

9 Aronson

10 Work demands

11 Brouking & et al.

12 Lancaster & et al.