

Investigating Relationship between Job Burnout and Organizational Commitment among Extension Workers in Kurdistan Province, Iran

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ABSTRACT: *In developing countries agricultural extension workers face many constraints such as poor working conditions and unfavorable government policy support for agriculture. This study aimed to identify the level of job burnout among extension workers and its relationship with organizational commitment. Using random sampling technique 55 extension workers were selected as sample, which represented 51.40% of the population. The research method was descriptive-coreational. In this research, Allen and Meyer's organizational commitment scale and Maslach's burnout inventory were used for data collection. The study found that extension workers experience moderate levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment in their work. Moreover, the results of Pearson's correlation coefficient test revealed that affective commitment and normative commitment was inversely correlated with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and positively correlated with personal accomplishment. In addition, continuance commitment was positively correlated with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. No significant relationship was observed between continuance commitment and personal accomplishment.*

KEYWORDS: *job burnout, organizational commitment, extension workers, Kurdistan province, Iran.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture sector in Iran is one of the most important economic sectors of the country [1]. During year 2004, this sector provided 14% of gross domestic product (in real prices), 25% of value of non-oil exports, more than 20% of employment, and providing 90% of industries raw materials [2]. Since agricultural extension services play important role in formulating and disseminating knowledge and helping farmers to be competent decision-makers, these services can highly contribute to effectiveness of the most projects aiming at agricultural development [3]. Nevertheless, in Iran, agricultural extension system has still not been able to reach and support all potential clientele [4]. In addition, this system is suffering from malfunctions in the area of human resource management and development [5, 6]. Nature of the activities in extension services is associated with activities in rural areas, which needs extension workers to show high levels of interest, motivation and organizational commitment. Extension workers are human service professionals who work in rural areas. The nature of extension workers activities in delivering services to farmers and other clienteles leads them potentially experience burnout.

Burnout is a problem for people who work in human service professions. It is a predicament, that affects not only the person experiencing it, but his or her co-workers, clients, family, and the organization in which the person is employed [7]. The burnout individual soon afflicts many of his/her colleagues with this problem. Burnout disturbs first the individual's balance and then the organizational balance, disrupting efficiency and productivity and as a result, effectiveness; thus, immediate diagnosis of this phenomenon and its indicators is of utmost importance in preventing its prevalence [8].

Numerous variables are related to a human service professional's experience of burnout in his or her career. These variables may be biographical aspects of the professional, aspects of his or her work, or aspects of his or her family. One of the most powerful variables to influence burnout is organizational commitment.

Job burnout and organizational commitment have received considerable attention and several studies have been devoted to explaining these two variables. Furthermore, the results of the studies examining the relations between these variables have been equivocal. One study that examined the impact of stress on individuals with varying degrees of commitment, found that individuals who have a high degree of commitment to their organizations experience greater amounts of stress than those who are less committed [9]. Alternately, other researchers [10, 11] argue that organizational commitment protects the individual from negative

consequences at work either because those individuals who are committed to the organization have connected more closely to the other individuals at work or because they have found meaning in their work.

Chuo studied the relationship between organizational commitment and job burnout as well as the predictors of these two variables for a better understanding of productive working environments. The results of this study showed that normative commitment is a better predictor of depersonalization in comparison with affective and continuance commitments. In addition, the results suggest that based on measurement of organizational commitment using responsibility and obligation, normative commitment plays an important role in contributing to burnout. Regarding various attributes and definitions of burnout, she concluded that despite differences, there are three major similarities between the studies. First, burnout is a response to emotional and situational stress. Second, burnout is physically, psychologically and emotionally destructive and since it diminishes enthusiasm and performance ability of the personnel, it hinders organization's progress. Third, burnout can become worse and worse unless there is an effective intervention in this regard [12].

Knoop studied the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment among cardiology experts. He extended the work of these two researchers to specialized doctors and studied the foresaid relationship in this group of specialists. The results showed that there is a significant inverse relationship between personal achievement and organizational commitment and that a large number of specialists are afflicted with depersonalization and reduced personal achievement [13].

The results of Bte Marmaya et al. research entitled "organizational commitment and job burnout among employees in Malaysia" showed that among three dimensions of organizational commitment, only affective commitment has the significant relationship with job burnout in the organization. While, there were no significant relationship between continuance commitment and normative commitment white job burnout [14]. In another research, Leiter and Maslach studied the effect of three subscales of burnout on organizational commitment of nurses in a small private hospital. Their results showed that there were a significant relationship between the increasing of burnout and decreasing organizational commitment pattern [15]. According to another research, job burnout has a negative influence on the organizational commitment [16].

The objective of this study was to identify the level of job burnout and investigate the relationship between job burnout and organizational commitment among extension workers in Kurdistan province, Iran.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Kurdistan province, Iran. The research population consisted of all extension workers (107) in the province. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 55 extension workers as sample. Burnout was measured using the Maslach's Burnout Inventory- Educator's Survey (MBI-ES) [17]. The MBI-ES measures three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, which measures feelings of being over extended and exhausted by one's work; depersonalization, which measures feelings of impersonal responses and responses without feeling toward one's farmers; and personal accomplishment, which measures feelings of competence and successful achievement as related to working with farmers. This instrument consists of 22 statements about personal feeling, attitudes and perceptions of self and recipients. Respondents were asked to indicate the frequency at which they experienced these feelings by selecting from six response choices that ranged from 0 (never) to 6 (everyday). Organizational commitment was measured by a scale developed by Allen and Mayer [18]. This scale has a three subscale (affective commitment, normative commitment and continued commitment). Each of the organizational commitment items used a 5 point scale ranging from 1 (strong disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Validity of the instrument was confirmed through a panel of experts in Jihad-e Keshavarzi organization specialists and faculty members in Tarbiat Modares University. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for job burnout and organizational commitment scale were 0.88 and 0.75, respectively. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software using frequencies, percentages, mean standard division and Pearson correlation.

III. RESULT AND DISSCUSSION

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of extension workers in Kurdistan province, Iran. Data contained in table 1 reveals that the extension workers in the Kurdistan province are male-dominated. It is however worthy of note that 27.3% of the respondents were female. The mean age for all respondents was 42.24 years. Approximately, 62 percent of the extension workers have age between 40 to 49 years. About 45.5% had the bachelor degree. The average of work experience as extension worker was 8.34 years. Shams [22] reported similar findings that extension specialists in East Azerbaijan province of Iran were mainly males, more than 50 years, and had bachelor as their educational qualification. Rezai et al. [19] also reported similar findings in

terms of the personal characteristics of extension specialists in Yazd province. In addition, this result is parallel with Karimi Goughari et al. [20].

Table1. Demographic characteristics of extension workers (N=55)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Standard deviation
Gender	Male	40	72.7		
	Female	15	27.3		
Marital status	Married	9	83.6		
	Single	46	16.4		
Age (years)	Less than 30	5	9.1	42.24	7.20
	30 – 39	7	12.7		
	40 – 49	34	61.8		
	More than 50	9	16.4		
Degree	Diploma	13	23.6		
	Bachelor	25	45.5		
	Master	17	30.9		
Years in current position	Less than 5	17	30.9	8.34	5.00
	5-9	13	23.6		
	10-15	23	41.8		
	More than 16	2	3.6		
Total years in organization	Less than 10	13	23.6	16.53	6.73
	10 – 19	18	32.7		
	20-29	24	43.6		

3.1 Level of Burnout Among Extension Workers

The study found that extension workers experience moderate levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization in relationships with farmers, organization and others, and a moderate degree of personal accomplishment in their work. Using Maslach's scale as described in Table 1, 45.5% of the extension workers reported a low degree of emotional exhaustion from their work. The mean score for respondents was 21.14 (SD=11.82) indicating moderate emotional exhaustion. Twenty percent of participants experienced moderate degrees of emotional exhaustion and 34.5% reported a high degree of emotional exhaustion. The overall mean score for respondents in depersonalization subscales was 7.05 (SD= 6.09) indicating a moderate degree of depersonalization. Sixty percent of respondents reported that they were experiencing a low degree of depersonalization in their relationship with farmers and others, while 27.3% reported high degrees of depersonalization and 12.7% reported moderate degrees of depersonalization.

For personal accomplishment subscale¹, the mean score for respondents was 32.60 (SD = 9.75) indicating a moderate degree of personal accomplishment. Almost 45% of extension workers experienced high degrees of personal accomplishment and about 29% reported a low degree of personal accomplishment. Mohammad Ahmad et al. [21] reported similar findings among extension supervisor in Egypt. Oladele and Mabe [22] found similar results among extension officers in North West province, South Africa.

Table2. Level of Burnout among Extension workers (N= 55)

Burnout Subscale	level of burnout	Frequency	%	Mean	Standard deviation
Emotional Exhaustion	High	19	34.5	21.14	11.82
	Moderate	11	20.00		
	Low	25	45.5		
Depersonalization	High	15	27.3	7.05	6.09
	Moderate	7	12.7		
	Low	33	60.00		

¹ The responses scale for personal accomplishment is different from the other two sub-scales, because the scoring is reversed. That is, a score of less than 32 on the personal accomplishment subscale means a high degree of personal accomplishment.

Personal Accomplishment	High	25	45.4	32.60	9.75
	Moderate	14	25.5		
	Low	16	29.1		

Note. Emotional Exhaustion: 0-16 = Low, 17-26 = Moderate, >27 = High; Depersonalization: 0-6 = Low, 7-12 = Moderate, >13 = high; Personal Accomplishment: >39 = Low, 32-38 = Moderate, 0-31 = High.

3.2 Organizational Commitment Among Extension Workers

Organizational commitment was another component that was studied among extension workers. There are many definitions regarding organizational commitment, but in a study carried out by two experts - Meyer and Allen [18] organizational commitment referred to three general concepts: affective, normative, and continuance commitment. Affective commitment is “the employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization,” whereas normative commitment is defined as a “feeling of obligation to continue employment.” Finally, continuance commitment occurs as a result of “an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization.” Each dimension is thought to contribute to an employee’s relationship with the organization, has implications for his/her continuing membership and may be affected by different antecedents or may have different consequences [18]. Table 3, depicts the results for the dimensions of organizational commitment as well as total organizational commitment. The results in table 3 indicate that the mean and standard deviation for the organizational commitment of the sample is 61.27 and 10.50, respectively. Karimi Goughari et al. [20] found similar results among agricultural extension experts in Kerman province, Iran. The finding of this study showed that majority of agricultural extension experts (71.5%) belonged to the moderate level of organizational commitment.

Table3. Descriptive statistics for the dimensions of organizational commitment (N= 55)

Organizational commitment dimensions	Mean	Standard deviation
Affective commitment	23.62	6.95
Normative commitment	18.85	6.23
Continuance commitment	15.40	3.68
Total organizational commitment	61.27	10.50

3.3 Relationship Between Burnout And Organizational Commitment

The next step in the analysis was to conduct a correlation analysis to determine the nature of the relationship among the variables. The results are shown in table 4. The results of Pearson’s correlation coefficient test revealed that, there were a positive significant relationship between the personal accomplishment subscale and affective and continuance commitment, while there were no significant relationship between the personal accomplishment and normative commitment. In addition, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization is negatively related to affective and continuance commitment, while there were positive significant relationship between the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization with normative commitment. Two burnout subscale which were negatively correlated with total organizational commitment were emotional exhaustion ($r = -.498$, $p < 0.01$) and depersonalization ($r = -.470$, $p < 0.01$).

It seems reasonable to postulate that the experience of burnout would lead employees to be less committed to the organization, and thus more likely to quit their jobs. If extension workers are feeling emotionally exhausted by their work, are developing depersonalized views of the farmers they serve, and are feeling that they are not accomplishing much, then they would probably become less enthusiastic and accepting of the organization’s goals, less dedicated to achieving them, and more prone to withdrawing from work.

Table4. Pearson correlations between job burnout and organizational commitment

Organizational commitment dimensions	Burnout Subscale		
	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal Accomplishment
Affective commitment	-.571**	-.366**	.483**
Normative commitment	.356**	.320*	-.100
Continuance commitment	-.420**	-.278*	.588**
Total Organizational commitment	-.498**	-.470**	.619**

Note. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level, **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

According to Rezaee Shirazi et al. [15] the results of Spearman's rank correlation coefficient test revealed that in the official teachers group, there were a significant relationship between the frequency and intensity of the depersonalization subscale and normative commitment. In addition, in the tuition teachers, there were a significant relationship between the frequency of depersonalization and continuance and normative commitments and there were a significant relationship between depersonalization and affective commitment. No significant relationships were observed between other organizational commitment components and job burnout.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study in hand examined the relationship between burnout and organizational commitment among the extension workers in one of the west provinces (Kurdistan) in Iran. Decrease in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and increase in personal accomplishment lead to increase in the extension workers' organizational commitment. Then, it is the duty of the governors to try to decrease in extension workers' job burnout. Delivering education for extension workers to improve their control on the situations for decreasing in work environment stresses, delivering opportunities for development in extension workers' self- efficacy, such as increase in their authority and job independency, and improving in relations between extension workers and farmers are some suggestion regarding to decreasing in job burnout and consequently increase in organizational commitment.

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