

Research Article

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Milkintaitė Laima

The Relation Between Personal Traits, Organisational Commitment and Burnout at Work

DOI 10.1515/sigtem-2016-0006

Abstract: The aim of this article is to present relations between fire fighters' personal traits, organisational commitment and burnout at work. The results of quantitative research showed that fire fighters with lower emotional stability tend to burnout at work much more than those who have higher emotional stability. The lower agreeableness, conscientiousness and extraversion impact fire fighters' higher burnout at work. Fire fighters' higher organisational commitment links to lower burnout. Fire fighters' higher emotional stability links to higher organisational commitment. And the higher fire fighters' empathy, agreeableness, conscientiousness and extraversion links to higher organisational commitment.

Keywords: personal trait, organisational commitment, burnout at work.

Introduction

In contemporary world of work, the relation between an employee and an organisation is being more and more discussed. When selecting the employee, not only his/her qualification is important, but also the candidate's personal traits. It is believed that in every profession, certain personal traits are required that may enhance the work efficiency. It necessary to denote that organisations not only try to select the most suitable employee according to his/her traits and competences, but also more and more attention is being paid on how to make the most competent and best employees to stay at the organisation (Kliševskaja, 2000). In contemporary situation, the employees' organisational commitment is becoming one of the most important factors that influences the competitiveness of the organisation and work efficiency (Kumpikaitė, Rupšienė, 2008). All organisations in pursuit of competitiveness should think how to increase employees' organisational commitment, work efficiency and reduce their turnover. It is believed that employees with higher organisational commitment tend to stay at the organisation despite all the circumstances, they treasure organisational values, support organisational expectations, goals, objectives and are less likely to experience occupational burnout, they have greater work efficiency (Allen, Meyer, 1996).

On the other hand, employees' personal traits, certain work conditions, low organisational commitment may induce the emergence of occupational burnout, which is understood as the inconsistency between the personality and the work done. The greater the inconsistency, the greater the possibility of occupational burnout (Maslach, Leiter, 1997). Therefore, it is very important that employees' personal recourses (personal traits, physical health, competences, etc.) would match the set requirements, especially working under extreme conditions.

The phenomenon of occupational burnout is being widely explored, investigated (Leiter, Maslach, 1988; Burke, 1989; Maslach, 1993; Maslach, Leiter, 1997; Yperen, 1998; Ronginskaja, 2002, Raižienė, Endriulaitienė,

*Corresponding author: **Milkintaitė Laima**: Siauliai State College, Siauliai University, Siauliai, Lithuania, E-mail: laima.milkintaitė@gmail.com

2007), however, greatest attention is being focussed on the social sphere employees (nurses, teachers, social workers, etc.). Yet, it is believed that every second person is working in situations that are friendly to burnout and the risk group encompasses much wider spectrum of professions. One group of employees that could be mentioned is officials working at the fire and rescue departments. They belong to the category of employees working under extreme conditions whose job is related to the danger for personal safety (the safety of others as well as personal safety), incident situations, critical events, etc. Under conditions of frequent encounter with extreme situations, accidents, difficulties at work, some fire fighters have enough internal resources, skills, knowledge, family support to deal with these negative things whereas others have strong internal defence system that prevents from a successful life as well as working efficiently (Leiter, Maslach, 1988; Liao, Arvey, Butler, Nutting, 2001; Liang, Hsieh, 2008). A person becomes vulnerable, less emotionally resistant, his life quality suffers and this influences the burnout and thoughts about leaving the organisation.

The Aim of the Study

The aim of this work is to present relations between fire fighters' personal traits, organisational commitment and burnout at work.

Materials and Methods

There has been used the method of written survey for the purposes of this research.

There has been created a questionnaire to collect the general information about the target group, also the Big Five (NEO FFI) (Costa, McCrae, 1992), occupational burnout (Omdahl, O'Donnell, 1999) and organisational commitment questionnaires (Porter *et al.*, 1982).

Research data has been processed using SPSS 13.00 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) programme package and MS Excel.

During the analysis of the results for the comparison of two individual groups' average, the T criteria (Independent Samples T test) has been used, as well as Pearson's and Spearman's correlation coefficients, regression analysis. To test the hypotheses, the significance level has been chosen to be $p < 0.05$.

For this research, the target group of officials working at the fire and rescue departments has been chosen for several reasons. First of all, the choice has been influenced by the factor that there are too little researches concerning this target group. Second, there has been implemented a reform in internal affairs system: there have been established fire and rescue boards that unite departments that lost their independence. It is obvious that reforms bring something new, changes and instability in the organisation as well as among employees. It may change the attitude towards organisation, work place. Third, the majority of officials working there (fire fighters, administration) are officials of internal service system, that is, civil servants whose work is regulated by the statute (The statute of the internal service, Žin., 2003). However, there is also another group of officials who have work agreements (non-statutory officials). They have different social benefits (salary, retirement period, etc.) in comparison to statutory officials. To add more, the changes in Lithuania affected statutory officials as well: wage cut induced protests all over the country. All these factors may contribute to employees' burnout, attitude towards organisation, the system.

Results

In order to determine the relations/links between the occupational burnout and personal traits, the method of correlation has been used (Pearson's coefficient). As it may be observed from the results (see Table 1), there have been set links between burnout and personal traits.

Statistically significant, positive link between burnout and neuroticism has been observed ($p < 0.001$), that is, the higher scores of neuroticism, the higher scores of burnout and vice versa. Therefore, it is possible to say that officials that have more expressed neuroticism feel more exhausted at work.

Also, statistically significant, negative link/relation has been obtained between burnout and agreeableness ($p < 0.001$). This evidences that those who have higher score of agreeableness have lower scores of burnout at work. Thus it is possible to claim that there is a tendency to experience the occupational burnout by those officials whose agreeableness is less expressed.

Table 1. Relations between occupational burnout and personal traits

Variables	Occupational burnout	
	r	p
Neuroticism	0.471	0.001
Agreeableness	-0.504	0.001
Conscientiousness	-0.376	0.001
Extraversion	-0.307	0.001

To add more, the results have also proved that fire fighters who have less expressed conscientiousness feel more tired, exhausted because there has been noticed the statistically significant, negative link ($p < 0.001$) between occupational burnout and conscientiousness. So it could be stated that burnout at work is more typical of officials who are less conscious (see Table 2).

When the relation between occupational burnout and extraversion has been investigated, it turned out that there is a statistically significant, negative link ($p = 0.001$), that is, the occupational burnout tend to weary those fire fighters who have less expressed extraversion.

The research also aimed at investigating the occupational burnout and organisational commitment. It is clear from the results that there is a statistically significant, negative link between occupational burnout and organisational commitment ($p < 0.001$), that is, little commitment results in greater burnout possibility.

Table 2. Relations between occupational burnout and organisational commitment

Variables	Occupational burnout	
	r	p (2-sided)
Organisational commitment	-0.544	0.001

It is possible to claim that fire fighters who are more committed at work feel less tired at work. On the other hand, officials who have greater occupational burnout expressed are less committed to their organization (see Table 3). The hypothesis has been confirmed.

The work also investigated the relations between organisational commitment and personal traits (neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness and extraversion).

Table 3. Relations between occupational burnout and organizational commitment

Variables	Organisational commitment	
	r	p
Neuroticism	-0.269	0.001
Agreeableness	0.285	0.001
Conscientiousness	0.262	0.001
Extraversion	0.213	0.001

The results revealed that fire fighters who distinguish themselves with greater neuroticism are less committed to their organisation and vice versa - the more emotionally stable the fire fighter is, the more committed to the organisation he is. The statistically significant, negative link between organisational commitment

and neuroticism ($p < 0.001$) has been identified, that is, the higher the score of neuroticism, the lower scores of organisational commitment. When another assumption between personal traits (agreeableness, conscientiousness and extraversion) and organisational commitment has been investigated, there has been observed statistically significant, positive relation ($p < 0.001$) between agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion and organisational commitment. It is possible to state that fire fighters who are more honest, extravert, get along with others are more committed to the organisation than officials whose earlier mentioned personal traits are less expressed.

Summarising the obtained results, it is possible to claim that personal traits, organisational commitment and burnout of officials working at the fire and rescue departments are interrelated. The relations of officials' working at the fire and rescue department, occupational burnout and personal traits confirmed other authors' (Edelwich, 1980; Iverson, Buttigieg, 1998; Orel, 2001; Suchodolska, 2008) results that employees (in this case officials) who have more expressed neuroticism feel more tired than those whose neuroticism is not so expressed. This may be explained by the fact that fire fighters' work under extreme conditions requires emotional stability, which is necessary for appropriate evaluation of critical situation and decision making. It is more likely that officials with more expressed neuroticism tend to panic and lose their balance in collision with unexpected situations, therefore, use their personal recourses and feel more tired. It is possible that those results are influenced by the fact that only men work at the fire and rescue department. Neuroticism is associated with negative emotions and irrisistance to stress. It is known that for the majority of men it is difficult to express emotions, they are less resistant to stress. The work under extreme conditions, critical situations demands a quick reaction and adaptation to changing situations. All these factors influence tension and burnout.

Officials' occupational burnout is also related with less expressed conscientiousness, extraversion and agreeableness. The obtained results proved the results of other researches (Matarazzo, Allen, Saslow, Wiens, 1964; Johnson, 1965; Mountain, Barrick, Stewart, 1998; Clarke, Zak, 1999; Liao, Arvey, Butler, Nutting, 2001).

It is believed that the most important thing at fire fighters work is the team work. Therefore, fire fighters have to cooperate with each other in order to perform tasks effectively (Matarazzo, Allen, Saslow, Wiens, 1964; Johnson, 1965; Liao, Arvey, Butler, Nutting, 2001). Cooperation is based on mutual understanding, communication with each other, good interpersonal relations, etc. It is necessary to have those traits or at least to develop them. Officials who want to start their service have to participate in the selection process. The attention is paid not only on physical health, but also on personal traits. If the mentioned traits are weakly expressed and officials have to work under extreme conditions, it is more likely that it will be more difficult for them to work in a team, understand others, thus this results in occupational burnout.

During the analysis of the results, it was confirmed that more committed officials feel less tired/exhausted at work. Results confirmed the results of previous investigations (Leiter, Maslach, 1988; Raižienė, Endriulaitienė, 2007). Fire fighters that identify themselves with the organisation, have positive attitude towards it, its culture and values, try to be useful for their organisation and want to stay there as long as possible. If the official's aims, goals, attitudes conform to those of the organisation, if he feels a part of it, gets along with colleagues, feels satisfied with his work, then occupational burnout is less likely to express. On the other hand, due to the work under extreme conditions at fire and rescue departments, the employees are being taken care of: their workload is strictly planned so that they would have enough time to rest. They also retire earlier than others.

After the analysis of the results, it has been proved that officials who have less expressed neuroticism are more committed to the organisation than those whose neuroticism is more expressed. This means that more emotionally stable, resistant to stress officials who also tend to control themselves under difficult conditions and stay calm in critical situations more identify themselves with the organisation, its aims.

It has also been confirmed that officials with more expressed conscientiousness, extraversion, empathy, who get along with others are more committed to the organisation than those whose relations with others are not so good, whose conscientiousness, extraversion and empathy is not so expressed. Research results coincided with the results of other researches (Iverson, Buttigieg, 1998; Foote *et al*, 2005; Omdahl, O'Donnell, 1999; Raižienė, Endriulaitienė, 2007). Officials who are able to understand, help, sympathise, support others, plan, organise and set tasks for others and themselves, work in a team, want to cooperate

are more committed to the organisation. These traits are very important working under extreme conditions and are desirable because their manifestation increases the organisational commitment.

Conclusions

Officials who have more expressed neuroticism feel more tired, exhausted at work than those whose neuroticism is not so expressed.

Officials who have less expressed conscientiousness, extraversion and weaker relations with others tend to have occupational burnout more than officials whose agreeableness, conscientiousness and extraversion are more expressed.

More committed officials feel less tired, exhausted at work. Officials whose neuroticism is less expressed are more committed to the organisation than those with more expressed neuroticism.

Officials who have more expressed relations with others, conscientiousness and extraversion are more committed to the organisation than those who have less expressed conscientiousness, extraversion and relations with others.

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