Perception of Organizational Politics as Predictor of Job Burnout among High School Teachers

Irsa Fatima Makhdoom  
Dept of Psychology,  
University of Sargodha, Pakistan  
hawk.makhdoom@yahoo.com

Najma Iqbal Malik, PhD  
Dept of Psychology,  
University of Sargodha, Pakistan  
najmamalik@gmail.com

Mohsin Atta  
Dept of Psychology,  
University of Sargodha, Pakistan  
gotamabbasi@gmail.com

Abstract
Current study investigated investigating the role of general political behavior, go along to get ahead and pay and promotion policies in predicting emotional exhaustion, and reduced personal accomplishment among sample of high school teachers (N = 324). Constructs were measured by Perception of Organizational Politics Scale and Maslach Burnout Inventory-ES. Multiple regression analyses found that general political behavior and pay and promotion policies predicted emotional exhaustion while go along to get ahead and pay and promotion policies predicted reduced personal accomplishment positively.

Keywords: General Political Behavior, Go along to get Ahead, Pay and Promotion Policies, Emotional Exhaustion, Reduced Personal Accomplishment

I. Introduction
Job burnout has been found to be devastating for the progress of organization as it is harmful specially, the professions involving human service are more influenced by job burnout e.g., health professionals and teachers are at greater risk of developing symptoms of job burnout. Therefore, researchers have often been interested in studying burnout among teachers e.g. John (2007), and Lopez, Bolano, Marino, and Pol (2010) studied burnout among primary and secondary school teachers. Job burnout produces negative impacts for the employees as well as for the organization as a whole. It has been found associated with many psychological syndromes e.g., depression, anxiety, musculoskeletal, respiratory disorders and somatic complaints (Ahola, 2007) and/or change in health related behaviors e.g. alcohol consumption or poor sleep (Ahola, et al., 2006; Melamed, Shiro, Toker, Berliner, & Shapira, 2006; Sonnenschein, et al., 2007). Similarly, it decreases many positive work outcomes including organizational commitment, job satisfaction and work engagement (Matin, Kalali, & Anvari, 2012; Cole, Walter, Bedeian, & O’Boyle, 2012), and increases the likelihood of work outcomes
which are negative for the organizational development e.g., turnover intentions (Aslam & Safdar, 2012).

The response to chronic stress at work resulting in a psychological syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion (feeling of lack of emotions), depersonalization (detachment from one’s job) and reduced personal accomplishment (feeling of lack of personal success at work) is termed as job burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Burnout is detrimental for the employees therefore; researchers have been interested in exploring the causes of job burnout. For instance, lack of meaningful rewards on performance (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001), lack of job autonomy (Adebayo, 2011), and low control along with high job demands (Ahola & Hakanen, 2007) have been explored as predictors of job burnout. Among others, perception of organizational politics is an important variable which contributes to development of job burnout among employees.

The degree to which an organization is perceived as unfair and political is termed as perception of organizational politics (Kacmar & Ferris, 1991). It has been found negatively associated with many outcomes which are beneficial for the organization e.g., employee morale, OCB and job performance (Bodla & Danish, 2013; Haq, 2013), as well as positively associated with work outcomes which are harmful for it e.g., turnover intention and job stress (Jam, Khan, Zaidi, & Muzaffar, 2011), therefore, it has been a centre of research since many decades. It has been categorized into three categories (Kacmar & Ferris, 1991) including general political behavior (including all self-serving political behaviors with the aim of achieving one’s goals), go along to get ahead (including being silent to achieve one’s goals and taking no action) and pay and promotion policies (perception that organization is unfair with relevance to pay and reward procedure) (Chivakidakarn, Dastoor, & Mujtaba, 2009; Kacmar & Carlson, 1997).

II. Relationship between POP and Job burnout

One devastating outcome of POP is that it causes stress among employees which is the most common cause of job burnout (Maslach, et al., 2001). It causes role conflict, job conflict, stress quality concerns and responsibility pressure (Goodman, Evans, & Carson, 2011). Moreover, unfair structure of rewards also causes job burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001) and when employees perceive that the organization is unfair in its reward structure (i.e. high at politics) the employee is more likely to develop symptoms of job burnout. Further, the employees when perceive that there is an influential group which can devastate their interests for the sake of their own self-interest, they begin to experience stress and consequently develop the symptoms of job burnout.

POP has been found lessening affective commitment, satisfaction with one’s job and task performance (Rosen, 2006). It is safer to assume for an employee, who is less committed to the organization, is not satisfied with his job and does not show high level of task performance, that he will experience feelings of depletion of emotions, lack of competence at work, and will feel himself as alienated from his work. Huang, Chuang and Lin (2003) suggest that when employees have to work in an important which is high in politics, irrational tactics and policies produce discontent among employees which lead them to develop feeling of depletion of emotions, indifference from work, and lead them to feeling of less accomplishment at work. Previous researches also suggest a positive
relationship between POP and job burnout. For example, Vigoda-Gadot and Kapun (2005) found that there exists a strong positive relationship between POP and job burnout. Vigoda-Gadot and Talmud (2010) studied a sample of university faculty members and observed that POP was significantly and positively related with job burnout. Shahzad and Akbar (2013) studied a sample of teachers from Pakistan and observed that POP and job burnout are significantly and positively related.

Researchers have opposed to use multidimensional constructs as single construct and suggest that such concepts (such as job burnout and POP) should not be treated as single constructs because their different dimensions are correlated differently to other constructs (Huang, Chuang, & Lin, 2003; Schneider, Hough, & Dunnette, 1996). Therefore, the present study aims at exploring the variance caused in different dimensions of job burnout by different facets of POP. Following hypotheses are formulated in order to achieve this goal of the study.

H1: General political behavior will positively predict depersonalization, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion.

H2: Go along to get ahead will positively predict depersonalization, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion.

H3: Pay and promotion policies will positively predict depersonalization, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion.

III. Method

The study was carried out in two phases. First phase of the study involved translation and tryout whereas second phase involved main study.

A. Sample

Sample of the study consisted of high school teachers \((N = 324)\) including male \((n = 150)\) and female teachers \((n = 174)\) also categorized as private \((n = 170)\) and public \((n = 154)\) from schools of Sargodha. The teachers having minimum qualification of Graduation along with B.Ed as professional teaching degree with one year teaching experience were recruited for the study. The age of the sample ranged from 21 to 50 years \((M = 30.21, SD = 9.2)\).

B. Instruments

Following instruments were used in the study:

Perception of Organizational Politics Scale

The scale developed by Kacmar and Carlson (1997) was used in the study. It includes 15 items and 3 sub-scales including General Political Behavior, Pay and Promotion Policies and Go along to Get Ahead scaled on five-point Likert format. Satisfactory reliabilities have been found for the sub-scales which are .77, .78, and .73 for General Political Behavior, Go Along to Go Ahead and Pay and Promotion Policies respectively (Danaeefard, Balutbzez, & Kashi, 2010). For the present study 3 items were removed from the scale on the bases of results of tryout.
Maslach Burnout Inventory-ES

For measurement of burnout, Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator Survey developed by Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter, (1996) was used. It consists of 22 items which measure emotional exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishment and depersonalization. Respondents are asked to mark the frequency of behaviors they indulged in during past year on a 7-point rating scale ranging from 0 = Never to 6 = Everyday. The reliabilities of Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and Personal Accomplishment are .90, .76, and .76 respectively (Maslach, et al., 1996). Based on the results of item-total correlation and alpha reliability found in tryout of the translation phase, Depersonalization sub-scale was not used in the present study.

C. Procedure

The study was carried out in two phases. First phase involved translation of the instruments from English into Urdu and a tryout of the translated instruments. The measures were translated through committee approach by following the suggestions of European Social Survey (2012). First of all three experts translated the scales independent of each other; the adjudicator along with two bilingual experts and a subject matter expert compared the three drafts and chose the most appropriate items which were used in tryout. Tryout brought the weaknesses of the translated drafts, and in a final meeting all members of the translation committee, reconciled, changed or removed the items with weak, non-significant or reverse item-total correlations.

Second phase of the study started with direct contact with the sample using purposive convenient sampling. Sample was taken from different public and private high schools for girls and boys in Sargodha. Inclusion criterion was minimum qualification of B.A/B.Sc along with B.Ed degree and one year teaching experience with age ranging from 20 to 50 years. The teachers were contacted in their classrooms and staff-rooms after seeking permission from the authorities. The translated scales were handed over to them along with written and verbal instructions. Some of the respondents filled up the questionnaires at that time; others were contacted again who returned the filled questionnaires during next visit to the school. Data were analyzed through SPSS and results were concluded.

IV. Results

Correlation and multiple regression analyses were run in order to study the relationship between variables. Table 1 suggests that all the pairs of constructs are significantly correlated except general political behavior and reduced personal accomplishment. Table 2 described the contribution in emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment caused by general political behavior, goes along to get ahead and reduced personal accomplishment. Table suggested that general political behavior, go along to get ahead and pay and promotion policies cause 8.2% variance in emotional exhaustion ($R^2 = .082$) where overall model was found to be significant with $F$ (3, 281) = 8.30, $p < .001$ and among the predictors, GPB ($\beta = .16$, $t = 2.57$, $p < .05$) and pay and promotion policies ($\beta = .16$, $t = 2.42$, $p < .05$) were significant positive predictor of emotional exhaustion. Table 2 also articulated the contribution of GPB, GATGA and PPP in predicting reduced personal accomplishment which caused 3.4 % variance in the outcome variable ($R^2 = .034$). Overall, the model was found to be significant $F$ (3, 281) = 3.33, $p < .05$ where GATGA ($\beta = .11$, $t = 1.74$, $p < .05$), and PPP ($\beta = .12$, $t = 1.84$, $p$
were found to be significant positive predictors of reduced personal accomplishment.

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, Alpha Reliabilities, and Correlation Matrix for All the Scales Used in the Study (N = 324)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.24***</td>
<td>.36***</td>
<td>.23***</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>2.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.38***</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>10.57</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>11.68</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>9.83</td>
<td>8.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>7.37</td>
<td>6.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. 1 = General Political Behavior; 2 = Go Along to Get ahead; 3 = Pay and Promotion Policies; 4 = Emotional Exhaustion; 5 = Reduced Personal Accomplishment
*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis for General Political Behavior, Go Along to Get Ahead, and Pay and Promotion Policies predicting Emotional Exhaustion, and Reduced Personal Accomplishment (N = 324)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Emotional Exhaustion</th>
<th>Reduced Personal Accomplishment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPB</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>.072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GATGA</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>8.30***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>.12*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. GPB = General Political Behavior; GATGA = Go Along to Get Ahead; PPP = Pay and Promotion Policies, *p < .05, ***p < .001, df = (3, 321)

V. Discussion

The present study was aimed at finding out how much dimensions of POP contribute for job burnout. The study observed that general political behavior and pay and promotion policies positively predict emotional exhaustion (see Table 2). It is not surprising to find that when teachers perceive that there is politics played in the organization and that the reward structure, the pay and other policies of the organization are unjust and unfair, they feel themselves as emotionally exhausted and find their jobs as emotionally loading. The results can be explained in terms of Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) which suggests that certain workplace characteristics (such as high level of general politics and PPP) are responsible for some events which bring affective response (e.g. negative affects about workplace) which might result in development of emotional exhaustion. Similarly, POP causes stress among employees (Goodman, Evans, & Carson, 2011) which results in job burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). Therefore, present results are not surprising where GPB and PPP have been found to be positive predictors of emotional exhaustion.

GATGA and PPP were found to be positive predictors of reduced personal accomplishment. It was found that when others remain silent in order to achieve their goals (i.e. GATGA) and the organization is perceived as unfair in promotion and reward policies (i.e. high level of PPP); the teachers are at risk to develop the feelings that they
are not successful at their jobs. Generally, the rewards, pay increase and promotions are considered to be based upon one’s struggles, achievements and inputs. When employees perceive that they are not rewarded on the bases of their inputs, rather, some unjust, politic measure describe how they will be promoted, they begin to feel themselves as less successful at work. The results are similar to earlier researchers, e.g., Vigoda-Gadot and Talmud (2010), Sowmya and Pachanatham (2011), and Shahzad and Akbar (2013) who found positive relationship between POP and job burnout.

GATGA was not found to be a good predictor of emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion is representative of stress people have at work but it does not show the aspects of relationships at work (Maslach et al., 2001) or in other words, social relationships are not manifested in emotional exhaustion; whereas, GATGA includes the perception of politics from the side of some influential group of people who remain silent in order to maximize their interests, therefore, it is not surprising to find that GATGA failed to predict emotional exhaustion. Moreover, Jawahar, Stone, and Kisamore (2007) noted that perceived organizational support mitigate the relationship of role conflict and emotional exhaustion such that when employees perceived high level of organizational support, their role conflicts did not increase the level of emotional exhaustion. As GATGA is a relatively covert and indirect form of POP (Byrne, 2005), in situations where GATGA is perceived as high, perceived organizational support is not found as low as in case of other more direct forms of POP.

GPB was not found to be a predictor of reduced personal accomplishment. General political behavior involves the perception that some influential group is playing politics in the organization in order to maximize their self-interest, whereas, reduced personal accomplishment is something that is more related to lack of resources than to social conflicts at work (Maslach et al., 2001). Therefore, the present results suggesting that GPB produces no impact on feelings of reduced personal accomplishment.

VI. Conclusions
The present study was interested in exploring the predictability of job burnout by dimensions of POP. Results elucidated that GPB and PPP positively predicted emotional exhaustion and GATGA and PPP were found to be positive predictors of reduced personal accomplishment. The current study suggests that when employees perceive high politics they are vulnerable to develop symptoms of burnout. Therefore, the authorities of schools should attempt to minimize politics in schools settings. On theoretical grounds, the study adds to the literature by finding that the employees who perceive politics with regards to pay raises and promotions are at risk of becoming emotionally exhausted at work. When the employees perceive more overt actions of politics (i.e. GPB) they are emotionally exhausted but this perception does not produce effects on their feelings of efficacy. When more covert and indirect form of politics is perceived as high (i.e. GATGA), the employees develop the feelings of inefficacy and lack of accomplishment while it is irrelevant with regards to emotional exhaustion. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the dimensions of burnout are independent of each other and should be treated as separate constructs.

VII. Limitations and Suggestions
The variables studied are vulnerable for the effect of demographic variables including age, education, designation, pay, work experience, and atmosphere of the
organization etc but these effects were not controlled for the present study. Similarly, self-report measures were used which might have resulted in social desirability. Further researches should use multi-method approach including observer report measures, observation and sophisticated statistics in order to control social desirability. Finally, in order to ensure more generalizability, larger sample, from diverse institutes across the province should be considered.

References


