

# Relationship among Job Burnout, Organizational Commitment and Organizational Citizenship Behavior in Social Workers using Structural Equation Modeling

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## ABSTRACT

*Burnout is a severe psychological and physical syndrome that occurs in response to prolonged stress at work. It brings enormous costs to both organizations and individuals because it negatively impacts employees' job attitudes and leads to undesirable behaviors. The purpose of this study was to examine the negative effects of job burnout on the organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior of social worker. Organizational citizenship behaviors are efforts by employees above and beyond what is expected. For the research, burnout was consisted of emotional exhaustion(EE), depersonalization(PA) and diminished personal accomplishment(DP) by Maslach and Jackson's MBI. This study analyzed 342 social workers in private social welfare organizations by survey. The results of this study were summarized as follows: Social Workers had negative correlation to burnout on the organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. Especially, EE, PA and DP had a negative effect on the organizational commitment; PA and DP had a negative effect on the organizational citizenship behavior. This study finally discussed theoretical implications for future study and practical implications for burnout strategies on the results.*

**Keywords:** burnout, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, social worker.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Helping professionals of nonprofit human service organizations tend to face a variety of challenging personal and organizational issues while practicing on the job. When the responsibilities are burdensome and overwhelming, possibilities of finding solutions are somewhat low. In such a case, they often feel frustrated, disappointed, disempowered, and even guilty. Oftentimes these feelings lead to mental and physical exhaustion and can even cause mental health problems [1].

Burnout is a prolonged response to chronic job-related stressors. It has a special significance in health care, where staff experience both psychological-emotional and physical stress [2]-[5]. It is associated with decreased job performance and reduced job commitment, and predicts stress-related health problems and low career satisfaction [6]. Especially, unlike other professionals, helping professionals have unique attributes of using themselves as a direct tool of intervention. Therefore, protecting their well-being is more essential for social workers. Burnout in social work professions is increasingly responsible for high staff absenteeism and turnover, and low morale.

In general, however, the reality surrounding the helping professionals is very far from the expected professional life: they work under relatively poor working environments without appropriate support programs. Early detection of symptoms of burnout and early intervention are essential to reduce the impact it can have on staff, the people with intellectual disabilities in their care and the employing organization [7].

The value of emotional and physical load differs in the process of the professional activity. At low loads the body self-regulates, while at high loads it requires certain ways to restore health and work efficiency. It is established that specialists who experience intensive contact with other people as a part of their professional activity are primary subjects to the syndrome of professional burn-out.

Employees' burnout is generally recognized to have a negative effect on both employee health and organizational performance. Depersonalization can manifest itself as uncaring responses and a callous attitude toward coworkers and other individuals. Personal accomplishment represents individuals' confidence in their ability to accomplish jobs and meet goals. Since self-confidence is considered one of the key factors for effective performance [8],[9], personal nonaccomplishment can be detrimental to a social workers. Depersonalization and personal nonaccomplishment also can impact other critical variables, such as organizational commitment and turnover intentions [4],[10],[11]. A recent meta-analysis showed there is a strong positive relationship between organizational

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commitment and job performance [12].

Although researchers have documented that burnout negatively impacts task performance [10], few studies have examined the relationship between burnout and contextual performance of social workers. For example, only Cropanzano, Rupp, and Byrne [13] empirically investigated the effect of burnout on organizational citizenship behavior. However, Cropanzano et al. only focused on the relationship between a single burnout dimension (emotional exhaustion) and organizational citizenship behavior. This study aimed to investigate empirically the relationships of the three burnout dimensions—emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment—with organizational commitment (OC) and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior are one of the most frequently used variables for satisfaction and performance. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the relationship among burnout, organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior of social worker in private social welfare organizations using structural equation modeling.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1.1 Burnout

The term Burnout was introduced to refer to a phenomena observed among human service workers who had to deal with emotionally demanding individuals. Since then, the majority of burnout studies have been based on Maslach and Jackson's [14] conceptualization of burnout. Their definition of burnout has three components:

- (1) Emotional exhaustion (EE) : feelings of being overextended and depleted of emotional and physical resources. This burnout dimension is often considered to be the key aspect of the burnout syndrome [3][4]. Behavioral reactions (e.g. absenteeism, turnover) are often more strongly related to emotional exhaustion than to depersonalization or to reduced personal accomplishment.
- (2) Depersonalization or cynicism (DP) : negative or excessively detached responses to various aspects of the job. Depersonalized people may develop indifference or a cynical attitude when they are exhausted and discouraged. In the helping professions (e.g. social worker), depersonalization often signifies treating people like objects.
- (3) Diminished personal accomplishment (PA) : feelings of incompetence and a lack of achievement at work. It involves repeated efforts that fail to produce results, leading to an attitude of inefficacy and reduced motivation.

Although burnout is a personal coping outcome, it is also an institutional concern. Role clarity, authority, accountability and responsibility may have become blurred within the organization. High stress levels and negative attitudes among staff can affect the quality of the work performed unless addressed by

managers [15].

The financial cost of burnout to organizations and society is significant, but the consequences to the individual staff member can be severe, with the person struggling to retain some semblance of a normal life [13]. When staffs sense a decrease in their personal effectiveness at work, their dedication and commitment to their jobs may be affected [4],[5]. Rapid change in organizational policies and procedures can lead to loss of professional judgment, sense of autonomy and control over the work environment. Although contemporary management theory promotes decentralized power hierarchies to enhance empowerment and accountability at the lowest level of decision making, staff often feel more confined in their practice with each new directive issued [5]. Rose et al. carried out a quantitative study that showed that emotional reactions such as depression, anger, fear and anxiety were associated with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization [16]. On the other hand, in a study that explored the relationship between work stress, emotional competency and years of nursing experience [17]. This indicated that stress decreased as experience increased, with greater emotional competency allowing employees to cope more efficiently with work stressors.

### 1.2 Organizational Commitment and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Organizational commitment includes a strong belief and acceptance of organizational goals, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the company, and a strong desire to maintain membership in the firm [18],[19]. Mowday, Steers, and Porter defined organizational commitment as employees' identification with their firm and its goals [20]. This bond between the individual and the organization develops out of a person's attitudes about the work and the firm.

This study is based on Meyer and Allen's [21] three typologies of Affective, Continuance and Normative commitment. Affective typology was defined as 'the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization'. Continuous attachment has to do with 'an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization', whereas Normative commitment was defined as a feeling of obligation to remain in the employment of the organization. Meyer and Allen's [21] classification of organizational commitment reflects our definition of organizational commitment as an emotional, moral and rational phenomenon. This study focuses on affective and continuance organizational commitment, which is specifically defined as 'the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization'. Employees with a strong affective and continuance commitment tend to continue employment with the organization.

Mathieu and Zajac's meta-analysis summarized the results of more than 200 studies and reported that organizational commitment is correlated to several organizational variables, including job satisfaction, job scope, autonomy, and skill variety [22]. When employees have positive attitudes about their job, they are likely to have greater organizational commitment. Finally, depersonalization and personal non-accomplishment in employees can make employees feel alienated from the organization [23].

Meanwhile, organizational citizenship behaviors are behaviors by the employee that are not required by the job and are prosocial for other employees and the organization [24]. It refers to extra efforts from workers that are not directly or explicitly required by the job or always (officially) rewarded by the organization [25]. According to Organ's definition, OCB represents 'individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization,' [25]. Hence, this is a concept that involves one's spontaneous activities toward the organization in which one works without any formal incentive provided by the organization [26].

Examples of OCB include helping other employees, volunteering for things that are not required, making innovative suggestions to improve a department, not abusing the rights of coworkers, not taking extra breaks, and attending elective company meetings [25],[26]. This does not mean that organizational citizenship behaviors are not recognized or rewarded sometimes in an organization. They are not required as part of the job, and as such, are not always recognized in the evaluation of an employee [25]. Additionally, if the extra work behaviors are recognized, the 'the rewards are uncertain and the relationship is indirect' [27]. Thus, any possible organizational awards for organizational behaviors are not guaranteed and, if they do occur, they will do so at some unknown future date [25].

Organizational citizenship behaviors are a benefit to organizations and coworkers. It helps organizations to be both effective and efficient [28]. Organizational citizenship behaviors enhance the experiences of coworkers. Therefore, organizational citizenship behaviors not only enhance the organizational performance, but the psychological and social context of work as well [28],[29].

According to Organ [25], organizational commitment and OCB are conceptually different. The former is concerned principally with a psychosocial attachment to the organization, whereby the employee forms an 'attitude' toward that organization, whereas the latter is described as a concept that is related fundamentally to a 'behavior.'

It can be argued that exhausted social workers are too tired to invest time and effort in their work. For this reason, it is appealing to assume that emotional exhaustion will precede withdrawal of OCB: exhausted employees will also be too tired to invest in activities other than those that their work already requires them to do.

Depersonalization often signifies treating people like objects. In occupations other than the helping professions in which there are no recipients of professional help, the people one interacts with might be treated in a depersonalized way. Treating the people one works with in a depersonalized manner could be expected to go together with withdrawal of OCB towards them.

Reduced personal accomplishment is prompted by a work situation with chronic, overwhelming demands that erodes one's sense of effectiveness. Feelings of personal accomplishment may elicit a sense of obligation to help others, resulting in OCB. Conversely, employees who have little faith in themselves (i.e. low on personal accomplishment) will also

feel unable to help others ('I cannot even help myself'). Additionally, personal accomplishment raises self-efficacy, thus providing more personal resources enabling engagement in OCB.

Therefore, organizational citizenship behaviors should be inversely linked with the three areas of job burnout among social workers.

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

#### 3.1 Research Questions

Based on the limited existing research conducted on social workers and few studies examining the variables proposed for this study, the following research questions were proposed;

Research Question 1) What is the level of burnout, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior perceived by social worker?

Research Question 2) What are the relationships among burnout, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior?

#### 3.2 Data Collection and Participants

A convenience sample of 342 social workers participated in this study. Questionnaires were used for the analysis. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The demographic variables included: (a) gender, (b) age, (c) marital status, (d) education level, (e) certificate level. Among the 342 respondents, 102 were male (29.2%), and 240 were female (70.2%). 34.2% of the participants' ages were between 30 and 39; 31.62% of the participants' ages were under 29; and 45 participants (13.2%) were over 50 years old. In terms of educational level, 56.7% of the respondents graduated from four-year university courses. 53.5% of the participants were married.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents

		(n=342)		
		n	%	Missing
Gender	Male	102	29.8	-
	Female	240	70.2	
Age (year)	20 ~ 29	108	31.6	1(.3)
	30 ~ 39	117	34.2	
	40 ~ 49	71	20.8	
	50 ≤	45	13.2	
Marital status	Not married	159	46.5	-
	Married	183	53.5	
Education	College	84	24.6	2(.6)
	Bachelors	194	56.7	
	Graduate course	62	18.1	
Certificate of qualification	1	136	39.8	2(.6)
	2.3	204	59.7	

### 3.3 Measurement

All the constructs used in this study were operationalized with published scales that have been used in previous research. And all variables were measured with multiple items through a Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 to 5 (1 represents strongly disagree, 2 represents disagree, 3 represents neither disagree nor agree, 4 represents agree, and 5 represents strongly agree).

**3.3.1 Burnout:** burnout was measured by a scale developed by Maslach and Jackson [14]. This scale has a three subscale (EE, PA and DP) and 9 items : three items representing exhaustion (e.g. ‘I feel used up at the end of the workday’), three items representing depersonalization (e.g. ‘I have become more cynical about whether my work contributes anything’) and three items representing diminished personal accomplishment (e.g. ‘I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job’). Because all of the items in this study were answered on a five-point Likert scale to achieve consistency, the MBI-GS was modified to use a five-point scale instead of the original seven-point scale. Exploratory factor analysis was carried out to prove the validity of the constructs. The factor analysis categorized, as expected, the three sub-scales like the original items. Data coding was done in such a way that a higher score indicated a higher burnout level. Internal consistency reliability scores were 0.87 for EE, 0.75 for PA and 0.71 for DP.

**3.2.2 Organization Commitment:** Of the three characteristics of organizational commitment, we used affective and normative organizational commitment (6-items) [21]. A sample item was, ‘I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization’. In this study, the reliability was .94.

**3.2.3 Organizational Citizenship Behavior:** Organizational citizenship behavior was measured by a scale developed by podsakoff et al.[26]. This scale has a three subscale (civic virtue, conscientiousness, altruism) and 9 items. The items exhibited internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) of .87 in our study.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Prior to investigating the research questions, factorial validity evaluations were conducted on the three instruments, using the structural equations modeling (SEM). The SEM were carried out with the AMOS package (ver. 19.0k) using the maximum likelihood estimation procedure. And the descriptive statistical analyses and pearson’s correlation analyses were carried out by using the SPSS (ver. 19.0k). Reliability analyses (Cronbach’s alpha) were conducted for the measures of all the major study variables.

To assess the fit of the analytic model to the data, several indices were considered. The Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistic measures the model fit to the sample used in the study. A good fit is generally understood to be a  $\chi^2$  with a probability greater than .05 and a  $\chi^2/df$  ratio of 2.0 or less [30]. Since the  $\chi^2$  is sensitive to sample size, the more robust root mean square error (RMSEA) index, was assessed to determine fit. Two other indices use comparison to determine model fit. The normed fit index (NFI) indicates the proportion of the improvement in fit over the null or independence model where all correlations

equal zero. The comparative fit index (CFI) controls for sample size and is the preferred index.

## 4. RESULTS OF ANALISES

### 3.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 shows the means values and SDs of the major variables in this study. The level of the overall burnout was 2.84(SD=.59) out of 5. It’s a lower than medium. But, emotional exhaustion (mean=3.39, SD=.97) was very high than any other sub-scale of burnout, indicating that the respondents were experiencing emotional exhaustion. And the level of organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior had a higher than medium (mean=3.59, 3.89). All of the variables had skewness and kurtosis values lower than 1 (in absolute value).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the major variable

Variable	Mean±SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Burnout	2.84±.59	1.11	4.44	.25	.08
Emotion exhaustion	3.39±.97	1.00	5.00	.43	-.29
Depersonalization	2.49±.80	1.00	5.00	.01	-.19
Diminished personal accomplishment	2.42±.71	1.00	4.50	.01	-.19
Organizational Commitment	3.59±.90	1.00	5.00	-.39	-.16
Organizational citizenship behavior	3.89±.58	2.00	5.00	-.21	-.12

### 3.3 Correlation Analysis

Burnout was negatively related to the organizational commitment ( $r=-.47$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and organizational citizenship behavior ( $r=-.35$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Furthermore, all factors of burnout showed statistically significant negative correlation with organizational commitment: emotional exhaustion ( $r=-.32$ ,  $p=.000$ ), depersonalization ( $r=-.39$ ,  $p=.000$ ), diminished accomplishment ( $r=-.45$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Also, organizational commitment was significantly positively correlated with the organizational citizenship behavior ( $r=.51$ ,  $p=.000$ ), as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3. Pearson's correlation Matrix

Variable	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
① Burnout	1					
② Emotional exhaustion	.78***	1				
③ Depersonalization	.74***	.38***	1			
④ Diminished personal accomplishment	.42***	.35*	.57***	1		
⑤ Organizational Commitment	-.47***	-.32***	-.39***	-.45***	1	
⑥ Organizational citizenship behavior						1

⑥ Organizational citizenship behavior	-.35 ***	-.10	-.34 ***	-.43 ***	.51 ***	1
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\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

**3.4 Measure Model Analysis**

A measurement model was estimated with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) through the use of the maximum likelihood estimation method for raw data. The  $\chi^2$  value of 208.27 (df=54, p=.000) was statistically significant. As the  $\chi^2$  value is generally excessively conservative and biased against large sample sizes, the model fit should be evaluated in conjunction with the examination of several disparate indices that are available [31]. In the context of indices of absolute fit, the goodness-of-fit-index (GFI) and the adjusted goodness-of-fit-index (AGFI) were 0.89 and 0.87, respectively. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) evinced a reasonable value of 0.07. Incremental fit indices included: Bentler's [32] comparative fit index (CFI) (0.94), Bentler [32] normed fit index (NFI) (0.97), and the non-normed fit index (NNFI) (0.96). The results indicated a reasonably good fit of the model with the data.

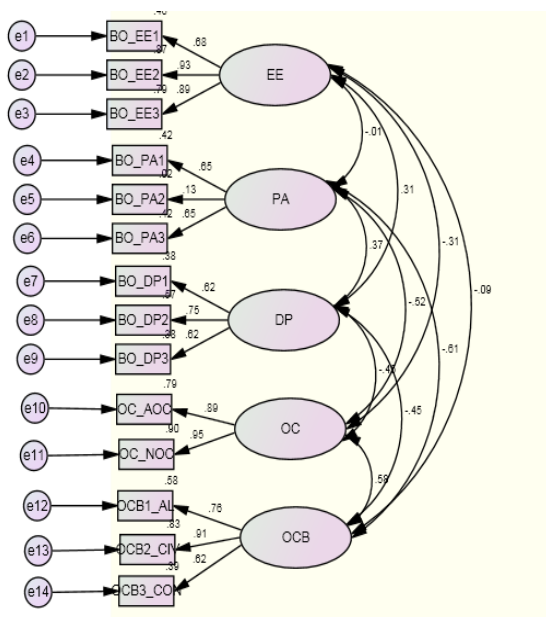


Fig. 1. Measure model

**3.5 Construct Model Analysis**

The results of the serial tested structural models relating the three burnout components, organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior are summarized in Table 4. Six out of the seven structural paths between the constructs were statistically significant and they were also in the expected direction. The only non-significant path was the effects on organizational citizenship behavior from EE. The standardized parameter estimates of the research question model are depicted in Figure 2.

Table 4. Structural Paths

Variable	Estimate	SE	Standardized Estimate	C.R(t)
EE --- > OC	-.22	.05	-.25	-4.33***
PA --- > OC	-.69	.13	-.45	-5.09***
DP --- > OC	-.29	.11	-.21	-2.73**
EE --- > OCB	.03	.03	.06	1.08
PA --- > OCB	-.33	.09	-.37	-3.80***
DP --- > OCB	-.16	.06	-.19	-2.64**
OC --- > OCB	.19	.05	.32	4.14***

\*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

Although the  $\chi^2$  value of 325.87 (df=45, p=.000) was statistically significant, the model fit was deemed acceptable, given the relatively large number of observed indicators for the constructs and the other indices (GFI=.91, AGFI=.92, RMSEA=.06, CFI=.93, NFI=.94, and NNFI=.92). The analysis of the direct effects of the burnout constructs on organizational commitment revealed that each of these constructs had a significantly negative influence on organizational commitment. Also, PA and DP were negatively related to organizational citizenship behavior.

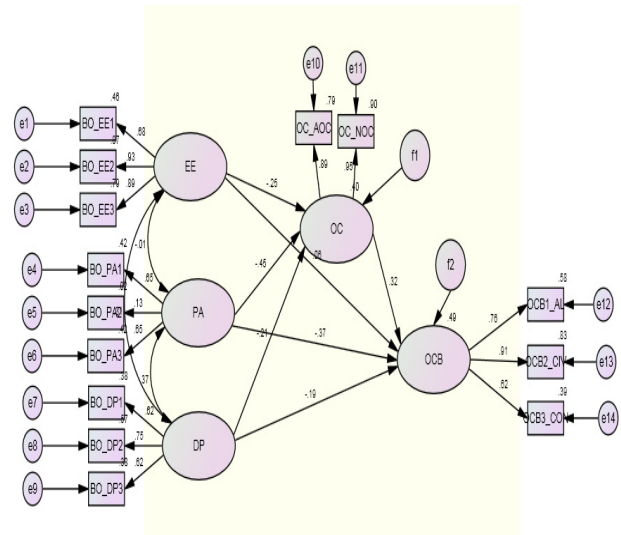


Fig. 2. Construct model analysis

**5. DISCUSSION**

In recent years, interest in the topic of burnout has increased because we have begun to understand the significant negative impact that it has on employees, service client, and organizations [10],[13]. The results of this study demonstrate negative relations among social workers' burnout, their organizational commitment and organization citizenship behavior. This study found that burnout negatively and significantly affected the level of social workers' organizational commitment and organization citizenship behavior. And social workers' organizational commitment positively and significantly affected the organization citizenship behavior.



Detailed findings are discussed below.

The level of the overall burnout was a lower than medium. But, emotional exhaustion was very high than any other sub-scale of burnout, indicating that the respondents were experiencing emotional exhaustion. Respondents indicated that they experienced more emotional exhaustion than depersonalization and diminished personal accomplishment. Researchers have argued that emotional exhaustion is the key factor among the three components of burnout because persistent emotional exhaustion could lead to depersonalization, which is indifference or a distinctly negative attitude toward one's work in general. Therefore, emotional exhaustion is a potential threat to employees' morale and confidence.

As it has been cited, job burnout has an inverse influence on the organizational behavior of social workers. It implies that by the increase of job burnout level, the level of organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior of these people would be reduced. Based on what has been cited, organizational commitment has positive influence on the organizational citizenship behavior. The more social workers members are committed to organization, the more organizational citizenship behavior is expected.

Considering the factors that influence the degree of burnout, favorable working conditions such as reasonable work hours and organizational support for an autonomous and innovative culture must be adopted. In particular, work overload contributed to exhaustion by depleting the capacity of people to meet the demands of the job. The critical point occurs when employees are unable to recover from the demands of their work; that is, when overload becomes chronic, there is little opportunity to rest and recover [33]. At the same time, because job dissatisfaction also causes burnout, strategies for building good relationships with co-workers and supervisors, suitable work assignments, promotion opportunities and higher salaries should be implemented.

## 6. LIMITATIONS

This study has certain limitations that are partly the nature of behavioral research but need to be taken into consideration. First, data for the analysis were collected using subjective scales and self-reports that can distort the correlation among constructs. And self-reported data is subject to common method variance [34]. Steps were taken during the data collection to minimize the common method bias by guaranteeing anonymity.

Second, as we used a cross-sectional design, we could not arrive at a definitive conclusion about causality. Although we built upon previous studies and argued for the causal precedence of burnout practice, there was a possibility of reverse causation because we measured only perceived burnout practices.

A third potential limitation was that the sample in this study was taken from a Kangwon-do, thereby limiting the generalization of the findings. Finally, the results of this study are based on responses. This study's findings need to be replicated and generalized using samples from other area and other industries.

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