

The Effect of Organizational Size on Sport Centers' Employees Burnout

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Abstract

Organizational size and its relation with burnout were examined among 163 sport centres employees in Greece. Findings showed that there is a significant difference on employees' burnout between small and large sport organizations. Particularly, it was found that employees in small sport organizations experienced lower level of Emotional Exhaustion ($p < .05$) and higher level of Personal Accomplishment ($p < .005$).

Key Words: *Organizational size, burnout, sport centre, Greece.*

Although the concept of burnout is relatively new, it has been incorporated rapidly into our life. Our knowledge of job burnout has increased considerably over the last three decades. Although there have been a lot of studies to approach the concept of burnout it seems that the most widely accepted definition is the one suggested by Maslach & Jackson (1986): 'burnout is a tridimensional syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment'.

Mainly, burnout has been associated with the helping professions, such as education, health, and social services (Alexander & Hegarty, 2000; Bedini, Williams, & Thompson, 1995; Gold, 1985; Jayaratne & Chess, 1985; Maslach, 1976; Maslach & Jackson, 1984; Sarros & Sarros, 1987; Schaufeli, Daamen, & Van Mierlo, 1994; Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982; Whitaker, 1996). However, as Maslach & Schaufeli (1993) pointed out, burnout is not necessarily restricted to the human service professions and might be found in other types of occupations. In the recent years, the concept of burnout has also begun to appear frequently in the sports world. Research on burnout in sports mainly focuses on coaches and athletes (Caccese & Mayerberg, 1984; Dale & Weinberg, 1989; Kelley, 1994; Kelley, Eklund, Ritter, & Taylor, 1999; Martin, Kelley, & Dias, 1999; Pastore & Judd, 1993), sport centre employees (Koustelios, 1999; 2001), physical education teachers (Koustelios, 2003; Koustelios & Tsigilis, 2005).

As Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) pointed out, the main factors correlated with burnout are: a) situational factors, such as, job characteristics, occupational characteristics and organizational characteristics, and b) individual factors, such as, demographic characteristics, personality characteristics and job attitudes. As they pointed out, research regarding relationship of burnout and organizational characteristics is fairly new. Previous research focus on the immediate context in which work occurs, however, this work often takes place within a larger organization that includes hierarchies, structure, operating rules, resources, etc. One of the most important factors that influences the structure and the processes of an organization is organizational size (Slack, 1997). Research about the impact of size on elements of organizational structure was contradictory. The majority of researchers supported the relationship between size and structure. They found that increased size result in increased complexity, increased formalization and a decentralized decision making structure. Others believe that factors, such as technology and ownership influence the relationship between size and structure (Slack, 1997, p.127). In some cases the increasing size of an organization may be related with greater role conflict and role ambiguity which in turns may be the cause of low job satisfaction and high burnout levels among employees.

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of organizational size on sport centers' employees' burnout. It is hypothesized that employees in large size sport centre will experience higher lever of burnout.

Method

Participants

A convenience sample of 163 employees from public sport centres participated in the present study. One hundred and one were males and 62 were females. Their ages ranged from 22-65 years. The total number of job experience ranged from 1-30 years.

Instrument

Job burnout.- Job burnout was measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). The Maslach Burnout Inventory contains three subscales: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment.

Each respondent is requested to indicate the frequency of the feeling represented by each item on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (every day). Low scores on the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization with high personal accomplishment score indicate a low degree of burnout.

Organizational size.- Probably, the most difficult task is to find a way to measure the size of a sport organization. Kimberley (1976), in a very comprehensive study, proposed four ways to measure the size of a sport organization. The first of these is the physical capacity of the organization, the second is the personnel available to an organization, the third is the volume of organizational input or, occasionally the volume of its output and the fourth is the resources available to an organization. The most common measure of size, used in over 80 percent of studies on this topic is available personnel (Kimberley, 1976). For the purpose of the present study, sport centers divided into two groups (small and large), according to available personnel.

Procedure

The method chosen to measure burnout was that of self-completed questionnaires. Researchers informed all subjects that their participation was completely voluntary and the individual responses would be held in confidence and they will be used only for academic purpose. Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Descriptive statistics and independent t-test were chosen as the most appropriate method for purposes of this study.

Reliability

The reliability of the MBI subscales was measured with Cronbach's alpha coefficients. It was found that the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were, .85 for emotional exhaustion subscale, .77 for depersonalization, and .75 for personal accomplishment subscale.

Results & Discussion

Means, standard deviations and Pearson correlation coefficients for the variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations and Correlation Matrix of Variables

Subscales	Mean	SD	1	2	3
Emotional Exhaustion	10.90	6.43	–		
Depersonalization	4.36	3.42	.42**	–	
Personal Accomplishment	29.17	8.02	–.16	–.33**	–

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level

Results suggest that the level of burnout experienced by the Greek sport centers' employees of this study was relatively low. In order to examine our hypothesis a t-test was conducted. The results showed that there is a significant difference on employees' burnout between small and large sport organizations. Particularly, it was found that employees in small sport organizations experienced lower level of Emotional Exhaustion ($t = 2.23, p < .05$) and higher level of Personal Accomplishment ($t = 3.01, p < .005$). No significant differences were found in the Depersonalization subscale.

Large sport organizations have more complex structure than small sport organizations. This complexity may be the cause of bad communication in the organization, greater role conflict or lower degree of peer support in the work. Results from other studies showed that burnout has been correlated with the certain factors in the job setting mentioned before. However, there are many other job characteristics that are potentially important for burnout in sport organizations and that have not been studied. Also, although personnel is the most common way to measure organizational size, caution should be exercised in applying this approach to some sport organizations because many of them are seasonal and employ part-time employees (Slack, 1997).

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