

Investigation and Study on Job Burnout of Psychological Counselor

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Abstract-This paper chooses psychological counseling staff as the research object. When they invest a lot of emotions, use professional skills, engage in complex intellectual activities, and provide solutions to psychological problems for all kinds of visitors who need help, they also bear tremendous pressure from visitors, self and society, and there is a risk of job burnout. The Maslach Burnout Scale was used to investigate and study the status of job burnout of psychological counseling workers, and to analyze the correlation of various possible factors leading to job burnout of psychological counselors. This study used Maslach Burnout Scale to investigate and study the status of job burnout of psychological counseling workers, and analyzed the correlation of various possible factors leading to job burnout of psychological counselors. The job burnout of psychological counselors is not closely related to gender, education level and whether they are engaged in business because of their interests. The longer the working life is, the weaker the phenomenon of job burnout appears. The results of the study provide some data support and reference for the self-regulation and growth of psychological counselors, as well as for the training of psychological counselors and the problems they need to pay attention to.

Key words: psychological counseling; job burnout; Maslach Burnout Scale

I. INTRODUCTION

Job burnout, also known as “occupational exhaustion”, was first proposed by Freudengerger, an American clinical psychologist, in 1974. It refers to the state of over-fatigue and emotional exhaustion of service workers under work pressure due to long working hours, heavy workload and high work intensity [1]. People call the psychological syndrome caused by long-term emotional and interpersonal stressors at work as job burnout [2]. It is an extreme reaction when an individual could not cope with the pressure of work smoothly. The extended repetitive and mechanical work easily occur a kind of fatigue, even boredom gradually to a large extend. It is difficult to arouse interest in the work, unable to play the spirit, but relying on a kind of inertia to work.

Experiments have proved that the incidence of job burnout of psychological counselors is higher than the general level of the population. Research shows that most consultants are at a moderate or low level of exhaustion.

In 1992, the ILO report clearly pointed out that occupational stress was the primary cause of job-related health problems in

the 20th century. There are many research results abroad around this issue. Psychological development in China is relatively later than the western countries. People pay less attention to mental and occupational health. China’s psychological counseling industry has risen with the development of economy, society and culture. As the “trash can” of visitors, most of the psychological counselors are exposed to negative emotions [3]. Faced with visitors, they also need to invest a lot of energy and enthusiasm, which makes psychological counselors more prone to job burnout [4].

This paper shows a study, which through a questionnaire survey, to investigate the staff engaged in psychological counseling related work, to understand psychological counseling workers’ job burnout in-depth, to provide information to the public so that those people interested in joining this industry can get to know in advance [5].

II. RESEARCH OBJECTS AND METHODS

A. Research object

TABLE I. GENERAL SITUATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING WORKERS SURVEYED

Category	Tester	Person	(%)
Gender	male	19	31.67
	female	41	68.33
Age	20-30	11	18.33
	31-40	19	31.67
	Above 41	30	50
Education	Secondary specialized	0	0
	Specialt	2	3.33
	Undergraduate	31	51.67
	Postgraduate or above	27	45
Working life	Below 5 Y	17	28.33
	6-10 Y	23	38.33
	11-20 Y	18	30
	21Y above	2	3.33

Employees of psychological counseling were selected as the subjects of the survey. A total of 60 questionnaires were distributed and 60 were recovered through online collection.

The information structure of gender, age, education level and working years of the respondents is effectively studied as shown in Table 1.

B. Research methods

- Questionnaire on Basic Information of Subjects

The basic information questionnaire includes demographic characteristics of the subjects, such as gender, age, length of service, educational level, and whether they are interested in joining the psychological counseling industry [6].

- Table (Scale) of Maslach Burnout Inventory(MBI) (Chinese version)

This study is accomplished by means of the Chinese version of MBI table (scale) designed by American social psychologists Maslach and Burnout.

There are 22 items in the table from three dimensions, i.e. “emotional exhaustion”, “Depersonalization” and “Lack of Personal Accomplishment”, among which the first one-“emotional exhaustion” mainly evaluates the emotional response caused by work stress, “Depersonalization” or “job apathy” judges the attitude and feeling of the clients caused by work stress, and “Lack of Personal Accomplishment”, or “no job achievement” is the reverse scoring problem, which assess job perception induced by job stress. All items in this table are graded by 0-6, and the scores of each aspect are calculated by accumulation.

Analyzing the results, if the total score of the three scales is below 50, that means the working state is good; the score between 50 and 75 refers that there is a certain degree of job burnout, which requires self-psychological adjustment; when the score is between 75 and 100, it is suggested to take a vacation and leave the job for a period of time to adjust; and more severely, if the score is above 100, it is strongly recommended to find a supervisor immediately for personal experience or resignation.

- Statistical Processing

In this study, 60 psychological counselors in Wuhan were tested [7]. The main statistical methods are: descriptive analysis (Frequencies) - frequency description of all basic data, including sample number, basic information such as age, gender, education level, working years, etc. and correlation analysis using SPSS [8].

III. RESEARCH RESULTS

A. Analysis of job burnout rate of psychological counselors

Since the statistical results did not score more than 100 points, so the mark area (above 100) does not participate in the calculation.

In Table 2, area 1 represents the statistical score below 50, area 2 is corresponding to the score between 50 and 75, and area 3 includes the ones scored between 75 and 100. It can be seen from the table that 48 of the 60 counselors scored below 50 points, accounting for 80% of the total number, indicating that they worked well and had not yet experienced job burnout. 11 psychological counselors (accounting for 18.3%) scored

between 50 and 75, who have a certain degree of job burnout and need self-psychological adjustment to better face the work. Only one counselor scored between 75 and 100, accounting for 1.7% of the total number, indicating that he had a moderate degree of job burnout, which may require a period of time to leave his job and make self-adjustment. Of the 60 counselors, none scored more than 100 points, indicating that there was no serious job burnout.

TABLE II. JOB BURNOUT RATE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING WORKERS

	Area	Frequency	%	Effective %	Cumulative %
Available	1	48	80.0	80.0	80.0
	2	11	18.3	18.3	98.3
	3	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Sum	60	100	100.0	

B. Analysis of the correlation between the working years of psychological counselors and their job burnout

TABLE III. THE CORRELATION BETWEEN THE WORKING YEARS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELORS AND THE TOTAL SCORES OF JOB BURNOUT

		Working life	job burnout Total score
Working life	Pearson correlation	1	-0.191
	Significance (bilateral)		0.143
	N	60	60
job burnout Total score	Pearson correlation	-0.191	1
	Significance (bilateral)	0.143	
	N	60	60

As shown in Table 3, the Pearson correlation coefficient between the length of work and the total score of job burnout of psychological counselors is -0.191, the significance is 0.143, which is greater than 0.005, so there is no statistical significance. However, according to the correlation coefficient, there is a weak negative correlation, indicating that the longer the working life, the weaker the phenomenon of job burnout. This is a strange phenomenon, but in psychological counseling work, it presents the typical psychological counseling characteristics.

C. Relevance between Interest and Job Burnout of Psychological Counseling Workers

As shown in Table 4, there is a weak negative correlation between whether psychological counselors are motivated by their interests and burnout. However, the significant level is 0.498, so the correlation is not statistically significant. Whether or not psychological counselors enter the profession because of their interests is not closely related to job burnout. But of the 60 counselors, only 2 chose not to be interested.

D. The correlation between sex and job burnout of psychological counselors

As presented in Table 5, the correlation coefficient between sex and job burnout is 0.009, while the significant level is 0.944, which has no statistical meaningfulness. It is concluded from those discussion above that the sex of counselors is not

related to job burnout. Among the 60 counselors, 41 were female and 19 were male. So it is inferred that in the psychological counseling industry, women are in the majority, while men are in the minority.

TABLE IV. RELEVANCE BETWEEN INTEREST AND JOB BURNOUT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING WORKERS

		Interested	Burnout
Interested	Pearson correlation	1	-0.089
	Significance (bilateral)		0.498
	N	60	60
Burnout	Pearson correlation	-0.089	1
	Significance (bilateral)	0.498	
	N	60	60

TABLE V. THE CORRELATION BETWEEN SEX AND JOB BURNOUT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELORS

		Gender	Bureout
Gender	Pearson correlation	1	0.009
	Significance (bilateral)		0.944
	N	60	60
Bureout	Pearson correlation	0.009	1
	Significance (bilateral)	0.944	
	N	60	60

E. The correlation between education level and job burnout of psychological counselors

TABLE VI. THE CORRELATION BETWEEN EDUCATION LEVEL AND JOB BURNOUT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELORS

		Education	Burnout
Education	Pearson correlation	1	-0.227
	Significance (bilateral)		0.081
	N	60	60
Burnout	Pearson correlation	-0.227	1
	Significance (bilateral)	0.081	
	N	60	60

Table 6 appears that the correlation coefficient between educational level and job burnout of psychological counselors is - 0.227, which shows a weak negative correlation; the significant level is 0.081. In the information collected, most of the psychological counselors have undergraduate education or above, of which undergraduate education accounts for a larger proportion.

IV. RESULT ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the results of the study, the prevention and intervention strategies for job burnout of psychological counseling workers are put forward from the individual and organizational perspectives.

A. Personal perspective

- Enhance professional awareness and face up to job burnout.

Before entering this business, it is important for a person to fully understand the professional characteristics of

psychological counseling, which needs a lot of emotional input, to realize actively the related problems of occupational burnout and identify the possible sources of danger with the visitor community [9]. In the process of practicing, he should reflect and summarize the occupational troubles in order to avoid unnecessary occupational hazards as far as possible.

- Strengthen self-awareness and self-evaluation correctly.

The occurrence and spreading of job burnout is a process in which individual's cognitive, emotional and attitudinal behaviors show corresponding symptoms [10]. On the premise of fully understanding the relevant knowledge of job burnout, psychological counselors need to cultivate and improve the ability of self-awareness, self-examination, and to survey and analyze their own counseling ideas, strategies and behaviors, especially empathy and anti-empathy awareness in the process of counseling [11]. Once they find out that they have some psychological problems, it is urgent and requisite to make a timely reflection and fully considering of the possibility of burnout, so as to make targeted adjustments in order to stop it in the bud.

Meanwhile, psychological counselors should recognize the limitations of personal abilities, avoid the "savior" complex, find a balance between personal abilities and the needs of visitors, do not over-demand themselves, seek supervision and peer support in time when they realize that they cannot help visitors well, and when they find that their counseling style and visitors do not match, referral the visitor to other consultants and advisory institutions.

- Make clear the role orientation and learn to combine work with leisure.

Psychological counselors should distinguish the role differences between work and life, correctly understand the relationship between the two, and reasonably deal with them [12]. Since job burnout is mostly caused by sustained stress, it is better to try to avoid continuing high-intensity counseling work to prevent job burnout. Combining work with leisure, relaxing reasonably after work, taking part in physical exercise regularly, cultivating ones' interest in entertainment, or travelling on vacation, are all considered to be helpful to prevent job burnout.

- Pay attention to the promotion of professional skills and the improvement of themselves.

Psychological counselors should constantly strengthen the accumulation of professional knowledge and the practice of skills to enhance professional competence and professional ethics. Only in this way can we perceive and understand the needs, contradictions, expectations, confusion and pain of visitors and help them realize their problems.

B. Organizational Perspective

Attention should be paid to the physical and mental health of counselors and the supervision of counselors should be strengthened. Psychological counselors accept a lot of negative emotions in the process of solving problems for visitors.

The bad mood accumulated over a long period exerts definitely an influence on the physical and mental health of psychological counselors. Supervisors should help them out of trouble. In particular, novice counselors who have just entered the psychological counseling industry should be supervised by experienced counselors.

Special attention is needed to be paid to the mental health of psychological counselors, regularly investigate their burnout, provide effective psychological supervision services, and reduce the risk of job burnout are proved to be effective.

Strengthening the investigation of the competence of psychological consultants is important. Psychological counseling is a private, professional and scientific work [13]. It is vital to strengthen the supervision of the consultation process and the investigation of the competence of psychological consultants. In a sense, it can be said that lots of factors including clinical practice experience, case accumulation, personal growth experience and supervised experience, are absent in the identification of psychological counseling profession.

Foreign experience shows that the competence of psychological counselors mainly benefits from a complete professional training system, and the ability to apply theoretical knowledge to practice by examining licenses and certification links, so as to evaluate their competence [14].

Ameliorate the environment, improve the mechanism and strengthen the links between organizations. Psychological counseling is a constantly developing discipline, also known as "personal growth" in the industry, but is accompanied by high training fees, which is a greater pressure for every psychological counseling worker [15].

Management departments should increase support to the psychological consultation industry, realize resource sharing, and provide more opportunities for training, learning, supervision and personal experience. A systematic establishment and improvement of preventive and emergency measures could also achieve better results.

V. CONCLUSIONS

This paper draws the following conclusions:

1) Psychological counselors have a certain degree of job burnout, but it is not serious. Most of them can be alleviated by self-psychological adjustment.

2) Psychological counseling is a profession that needs long-term accumulation. In other words, psychological counseling needs rich experience. Therefore, in the early stage of psychological counseling career, due to lack of experience, newly recruited psychological counselors are likely to suffer setbacks in the process of learning and counseling, resulting in job burnout; and psychological counselors with longer working years, with their rich experience, can handle most of the problems freely, so they have less frustration and job burnout. The degree of idleness is also relatively light.

3) Whether psychological counseling workers enter the field because of their interests is not closely related to job burnout, but the vast majority of psychological counseling workers choose the field of psychological counseling because of their interests.

4) The sex and educational level of counselors are not related to job burnout. In the psychological counseling industry, women are in the majority, and most of the psychological counselors have undergraduate education or above, of which undergraduate education accounts for a larger proportion.

5) Intensifying the psychological construction and service of counselors from the perspective of individuals and organizations can effectively alleviate or even eliminate their job burnout and make them develop better.

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