

# Mediating Role of Perceived Organizational Support on a Relationship between Job Burnout and Mental Well Being – A study of Private Hospital Nurses

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## Abstract

It is well documented fact that nursing is a stressful profession. The current study was undertaken to understand the impact of job burnout (JB) on mental well-being (MWB) and the role perceived organizational support (POS) plays to diminish negative impact of job burnout on mental well-being of nurses working in private hospitals. Perceived organizational support was expected to mediate between the relationship of job burnout and mental well-being. Data was collected through a survey of 150 nurses. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the mediation on POS. The results show strong correlation between job burnout (JB), perceived organizational support (POS) and mental well-being (MWB). POS partially mediates on the link between JB and MWB. These results focus on the importance of organizational support in ensuring the mental well-being of individuals. Hospital management must enact measures to provide support to nurses through proper compensation; acknowledgement and recognition of their efforts that will help protect their mental well-being.

**Keywords:** Job Burnout, Perceived Organizational Support, Mental Well- Being, Nurses

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## 1. Introduction

Job burnout occurs due to excessive job related stress typically in service providing occupations like nursing.

Chronic job burnout has harmful impact on daily function of employees (Bakker and Costa, 2014). Studies also suggest that factors related to structural environment of job like high job demands and low job resources lead to creation of job burnout among individuals (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Alarcon, 2011).

Extant research in the area of burnout shows that individuals who are at the risk of burnout i.e. who are exhausted and have cynical attitude towards work, demonstrate poor job performance and may have to deal with serious psychological and health related problems like depression, anxiety, sleep

disturbance and memory impairment (Bakker, Demerouti, & SanzVergel, 2014, Peterson et al., 2008).

Studies suggest that job burnout, particularly work related exhaustion may lead to overall survival risk for individuals (Ahola, Väänänen, Koskinen, Kouvonen, and Shirom, 2010)

When individuals are exposed to intense emotional stress for longer period of time they experience negative psychological state called job burnout. Conventionally, job burnout comprises of three dimensions called emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment (Lamb, 2009).

Emotional exhaustion occurs when individuals feel emotionally drained, extremely tired and experience lack of energy and necessary emotional resources to cope with continuing

demands of their work (Kang, Twigg and Hertzman, 2010; Martina, 2018). Due to acute exhaustion individuals tend to distance themselves emotionally from their jobs, it lessens their involvement with their work and may lead to individuals quitting their jobs.

Depersonalization is when individuals show negative and cold-hearted attitude towards others in job like towards co-workers, customers and others in the organization. It leads to uncaring, detached response to various aspects of job and people at work (Martina, 2018).

Reduced personal accomplishment is related to lack of efficacy and success related to job of individuals (Chiang, Birtch and Kwong Kwan, 2010).

Job burnout also is associated with negative psychological and organizational outcomes. Psychological outcomes of burnout include depression, lower physical health, pessimism, anger, alcohol and drugs abuse. Whereas, reduced job satisfaction, reduced productivity and motivation of employees, increased absenteeism, (Shukla and Trivedi, 2008; Kounenou, Koumoundourou, Makri-Botsari, 2010) are organizational outcomes of job burnout. All these outcomes negatively affects organizational performance and productivity.

The concept of well-being is very essential for service providing professions like nursing and can be understood as positive physical, social and mental state (Department of Health, England, 2010). Individuals are said to have mental well-being when they have ability to develop their potential, build strong and positive relationships with others, work creatively and productively and can contribute to their community (Beddington, Cooper, Field, Goswami, Huppert, Jenkins et al. (2008).

Mental well-being also includes areas like feeling of optimism, satisfaction, self-esteem, having

purpose in life, having sense of belonging and support and having certain degree of control over one's life (The Scottish Government Report (2012).

Perceived organizational support can be understood as a link between job burnout and mental well-being. Perceived organizational support is employee's perception that their contribution to the organization is being valued and organization cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Perceived organizational support satisfies emotional needs of employees and gives them sense of responsibility and belongingness towards the organization.

In general social support means people from social network of individuals upon whom they can rely for social, economic and /or instrumental help/support (Thoits, 1982). Social support individuals receive from supervisors, co-workers, family members and society plays crucial role when individuals is trying to deal with job burnout.

Perceived organizational support is one of the ways to help employees deal with unavoidable stressors and resulting burnout at the workplace.

Therefore, the major intention of the current study is to investigate the impact of job burnout on mental well-being of private hospital nurses and the role of perceived organizational support in minimizing this impact.

## 2. Literature Review & Hypothesis

Job burnout occurs when individuals are exposed to intense emotional stress for longer period of time (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001).

Studies in the area of mentalwell-being claim that, experience of painful emotions such as grief; disappointments and failure are normal part of life. However, when individuals experience very intense, frequent stress of such emotions, it affects

their ability to function in daily life (Report by mental health foundation, UK, 2013)

Therefore we propose that,

*H1 - If job burnout is high, mental well-being will be low.*

There are evidences showing that due to excessive stress of job individuals experience job burnout. When there is a feeling of job burnout individuals tend to feel pessimistic about others and also develop a feeling of being less important or useless (Ahola, Kivimaki, Honkonena, Virtanen, Koskinen, Vahtera and Lonnqvist, 2008).

Furthermore, when employees feel burned out, they need more time to complete their tasks, and they make more mistakes (Bakker and Costa, 2014). In such condition they require more organizational resources like support from peers and supervisors to work effectively. However, due to higher level of exhaustion they are less likely to deploy these resources and less willing to receive help from others (Bakker et al., 2014), which may reduce their perception of the support they receive from their superiors as well as co-workers.

Therefore we propose that,

*H2 - If job burnout is high, perceived organizational support will be low.*

It is well documented that social support individuals receive from supervisors; co-workers within the organizational setting is highly correlated with better physical health, lesser psychological issues and better mental health and well-being (Pierce, Sarason, & Sarosan, 1990).

Therefore we propose that,

*H3 – If perceived organizational support is high, mental well-being will be high.*

Extant research in the area of job burnout and social support claim that the support that working individuals receive from superiors and co-workers

(known as work support) as well as from family, friends and people outside the work environment (popularly known as non-work support) have profound impact in reducing work related burnout of individuals. Many researchers (Ellis & Miller, 1994, Beehr, 1985) claim that the support coming from organizational sources like supervisors and co-workers has significant role to play rather than non-work support.

Previous research asserts that social support works as a key coping resource, as it reduces the job burnout by providing individuals with social, economic and instrumental assistance. This is provided in the form of affection, understanding, esteem as well as advice. Such support leads to enhanced mental well-being of individuals.

Therefore, it is proposed that,

*H4 – Perceived organizational support will mediate between job burnout and mental well-being such that if perceived organizational support is high negative impact of job burnout on mental well-being will reduce.*

## Methods

**Sample** – Survey method was adopted to study the impact of job burnout and perceived organizational support on mental well-being of nurses. Data was collected through a survey of 150 female nurses working in private hospitals in Pune city of Maharashtra state. Respondents were contacted personally and were explained the purpose of the questionnaire and assured confidentiality of responses. Of the 250 questionnaires that were distributed, 150 usable responses were received by the data analysis deadline.

The sample has an average age of 32 years. Approximately 55% of the respondents were unmarried. Average work experience was around 10 years.

### 3. Research Model

The proposed research model is presented in Figure 1.

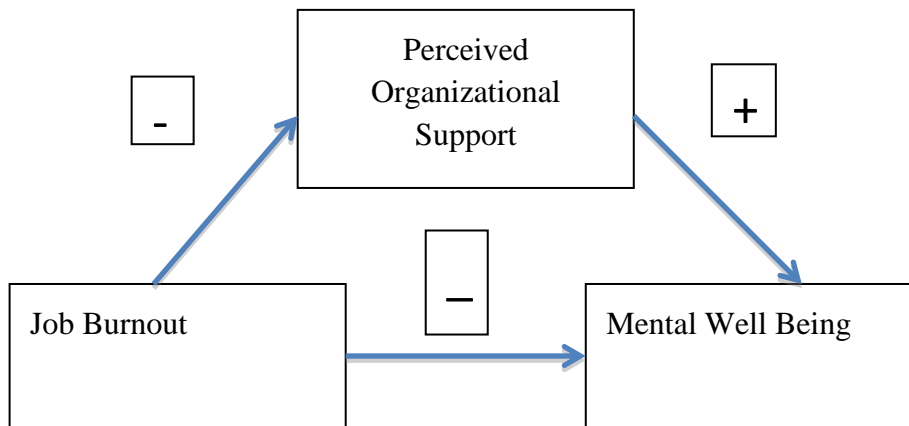


Figure -1: Research Model

### 4. Measures

**Job Burnout** –Job burnout was measured using the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI), a questionnaire with three sub-dimensions: Personal burnout, work-related burnout, and patient related burnout developed by Kristensen, T. S., Borritz, M., Villadsen, E., & Christensen, K. B. (2005). There were 19 items in this scale. Each item was rated on 5-point scale from “1=Always” to “5 = Never”. Sample items include “*Do you feel worn out at the end of the working day?*”, “*Does it drain your energy to work with patients?*” and “*How often do you feel worn out?*”

**Perceived Organizational Support** -Perceived Organizational Support was measured using scale developed by Eisenberger et al., 1986. The questionnaire comprises of 17 items. Out of these 17 items, 8 questions are concerning perceived degree to which the organization values employee’s contribution. Remaining nine questions focus on organizational actions for employee well-being. Each item was rated on 7-point scale ranging from “1 = Strongly Disagree” to “7 = Strongly Agree.” Example items include: “*The organization values my contribution to its*

*well-being,*” and “*Even if I did the best job possible, the organization would fail to notice.*”

**Mental Well-being**– Mental Well-being was measured using The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) that was developed by researchers at the Universities of Warwick and Edinburgh (2008). The scale contains 14 items. Each item is scored on 5-point scale ranging from 1 = none of the time to 5 = all of the time. Sample items include, “*I’ve been feeling optimistic about the future*”, “*I’ve been feeling useful*” and “*I’ve been feeling close to other people*”.

### 5. Analysis & Results

**Cronbach’s Alpha** – The validity and reliability of the survey instruments used was tested with Cronbach’s Alpha. Past studies recommend using Cronbach’s Alpha to validate the survey instruments (Prosad, Kapoor and Sengupta, 2015; Wood and Zaichkowsky, 2004). Cronbach’s Alpha was tested for all the three variables, job burnout, perceived organizational support and mental well-being. The results in Table 1 show alpha reliability of job burnout as 0.92, perceived organizational support as 0.80 and mental well-being as 0.93. The alpha reliabilities of scales used

in the study are reported along the diagonal in the table. All scales have acceptable reliabilities.

**Table 1- Mean, Std. Deviation and Zero Order Correlations among study variables**

Variables	M	SD	JB	POS	MWB
Job Burnout	4.15	.73	<b>0.92</b>		
Perceived Organizational Support	3.80	.79	-.605**	<b>0.80</b>	
Mental Well Being	3.23	.79	-.472**	.652**	<b>0.93</b>

\*\*  $p < .01$

**Table 2 – Regression Results**

	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Unstandardized $\beta$	t	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
H1	Job Burnout	Mental well being	-.491	-8.329**	.126	.053**
H2	Job Burnout	Perceived organizational support	-.615	-3.976**	.282	.132**
H3	Perceived organizational support	Mental well being	.453	4.755**	.252	.188**
H4	Burnout Perceived organizational support	Mental well being	-.310 .262	-7.278* 4.742**	.275	.127**

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

Control variables – Age, Education, Gender

Mean, standard deviations and correlations for all variables are reported in Table 1. Strong correlations were found between job burnout (JB), perceived organizational support (POS) and mental well-being (MWB).

Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. Variables like age, education and gender were controlled for and were entered into model 1 to nullify any impact these variables may have in prediction of dependent variable. The results in Table 2 (Controlling for age, education

and gender) show complete support for H1 to H3 and partial support for H4.

While testing the mediation of POS on the relationship between JB and MWB, we regressed JB on MWB and added POS to the regression equation. When POS was added, the relationship between job burnout and mental well-being became weaker in this analysis, indicating partial mediation.



## 6. Discussion

As expected, it was found that job burnout significantly negatively impacts mental wellbeing of nurses.

This finding could be explained with the help of self-determination theory, which asserts that individuals have three intrinsic psychological needs namely need for autonomy, competence and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The need for autonomy indicates the urge to exercise one's will and be causal agent; the need for competence refers to individual's innate desire to be effective while dealing with their environment and the need for relatedness means a general tendency to connect, interact and experience caring for other people (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Past research claims that satisfaction of these needs on day to day basis leads to better performance and fosters mental well-being of individuals (Gagne & Vansteenkiste, 2013; Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000).

Studies have shown that burned out employees seem to spend excessive time on work related activities like administrative duties, core work tasks, meeting with clients etc. This in turn reduces their momentary need satisfaction and daily happiness. Burned out employees fail to satisfy their daily psychological needs (Bakker and Oerlemans, 2014) and hence experience lower level of mental well-being.

Further it was found that job burnout was significantly negatively correlated with perceived organizational support.

This interesting finding could be explained with the help of previous research that has provided evidences regarding negative relationship between job burnout and job resources (Bakker and Costa, 2014).

When job burnout increases, it leads to increase in job demands and decrease in job resources (Ten

Brummelhuis et al., 2011). Job resources are factors like job autonomy and information, participation in decision making and support from supervisor and co-workers. Research suggest that when individuals experience high degree of job burnout, they exhibit withdrawal behaviour, they are less open to new experiences (Bakker, Van der Zee, Lewig, & Dollard, 2006), have less access to job resources (Vein, De Beer, Pienaar, and Rothmann Jr., 2013) and hence are less likely to get benefitted from these resources.

Therefore, in current study it was found that higher level of job burnout led to lower perception of perceived organizational support which is one of the vital job resources.

A significant positive correlation was found among perceived organizational support and mental well-being of respondents. Extant research in the field of mental well-being asserts that social networks and relationships are the protective factors that promotes mental well-being of individuals (Report by mental health foundation, UK, 2013)

A partial mediation by perceived organizational support suggests that it may help nurses to deal with the job burnout and reduce its negative impact on mental well-being.

This finding is supported by previous research in this area which suggests that when employees are suffering from job burnout they need support from others in the organization (Bakker and Costa, 2014) which may help them to maintain their physical and mental well-being.

## 7. Recommendations

The present study suggests that higher level of job burnout leads to reduced mental well-being. Furthermore, it claims that perceived organizational support can help to reduce the negative impact of job burnout on mental well-being of employees. Thus, current study

highlights the need of perceived organizational support for enhancing mental well-being and performance of employees.

The principle of reciprocity mentioned in social exchange theory, applies when employees perceive higher level of perceived organizational support. As employees feel that organization care about their well-being, they also put best efforts while performing their job duties.

One of the key finding of this study is the role played by perceived organizational support to mitigate negative impact of job burnout on mental well-being of private hospital nurses. Organizational support comes from organizations acknowledging and compensating efforts of employees, addressing their complaints and caring about their well-being.

Management should develop policies in such a way that acknowledges and rewards individual employee's contribution to work. There should be appropriate compensation policies that consider competency as well as performance levels of employees. Policies regarding pay for overtime work should fairly reward the efforts of employees, so that they will be happy working beyond their call of duty.

Appreciation received from supervisors and co-workers plays crucial role in boosting motivation and performance of individuals. Exceptionally good performers should be rewarded not only in terms of money but many times non-monetary rewards like publicly praising the employee, displaying best performer's name on notice board and a simple pat on back also is perceived as great source of support.

There should also be a systematic grievance handling mechanism active within the organization. If employees have complaint regarding any job related issue, it should be channelized properly and resolved fairly. All this

will make nurses feel supported by their organizations.

Proper feedback system, whereby patients give feedback about nurse's performance will also help them put extra efforts in their performance and hospitals can also find out good performers and encourage them.

It is also evident from previous research that a profession like nursing attracts people who are emotionally more stable, extroverted and social than general population (Tyler and Cushway, 1992). This study has found higher rate of burnout and lower mental well-being among the study population. It is noteworthy that the study population consists of females who are young (with average age of 32 years) and many of them are unmarried (55%). This finding focuses the need that hospital management must pay attention to the substantial number of nurses who despite of their young age are submitting to higher level of job burnout which is affecting their mental well-being negatively.

The study reports higher level of job burnout ( $M=4.15$ ) in private hospital nurses. Previous studies argue that due to excess level of job burnout, individuals feel emotionally and physically exhausted, their performance gets negatively affected and as a result they stop caring. Nursing is a profession where caring is a fundamental aspect.

Burned out individuals also demonstrate withdrawal behaviour (Hanisch, 1995) which includes lateness, turnover and absence from work (Maslach et al., 2001). When, burned out employees continue to be at work, it leads to presenteeism (Cooper, 1996). Presenteeism is when individuals keep on working, when they should be on sick leave, either due to sickness or because they are no more effective (Cooper, 1996). In this case, their performance at work and collective performance of others working with them may suffer (Demerouti, Le Blanc, Bakker,

Schaufeli and Hox, 2009; Swider and Zimmerman 2010), which can affect their decision making and patient care quality.

When employees are burned out, they lack the concentration required to performance well and hence make more mistakes. They also find it difficult to process thoughts (Fredrickson,2001), which reduces their focus on new information (Derryberry& Tucker, 1994) and finally damages their quality of decision making. Due to job burnout, employees also feel detached from their work and are less willing to help others (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010).

Therefore, we highly recommend that hospital management should play active role in prevention and reduction of burnout of nurses.

Last but not the least, extant research suggest that factors like low nurse-to-patient ratio and more administrative duties given to nurses which leaves little time for them for patient care may also contribute towards higher level of job burnout and lower mental well-being among nurses, hospital management should have constructive dialogue with nurses and design their work profiles accordingly.

## 8. Conclusion

Many previous studies have shown that the factors causing higher level of stress or job burnout are inherent to the work of nurses. These factors may include physical structure or environment of work, excessive workload due to insufficient staffing, time pressures due to unsociable hours of work and scarcity of equipment and resources to complete the task efficiently, which ultimately gives rise to feeling of work overload and stress. Similarly, having to deal with suffering or dying patients and their relatives on daily basis may further aggravate the feeling of burnout (Tyler and Cushway, 1992). All these things negatively affect mental well-being of nurses and hamper their job performance. Nursing being care-giving

profession, lower mental well-being and higher job burnout impairs quality of patient care. Though, the profession of nursing is inherently stressful, the support provided by organizations plays crucial role in minimizing job related burnout and thereby protect mental well-being of nurses.

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