

## Comparing Job Burnout and Quality of Life Among Active and Inactive Clerks

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**Abstract:** Employment is one of the most fundamental forms of human activity, the damages of which can cause job burnout and reduce quality of life. In recent years, dealing with this issue has been the main goal of most organizations. The present study aims to compare job burnout and quality of life among active and inactive clerks in one of Tehran universities. In the present causative comparative study, 100 clerks of the age range (mean and standard deviation  $40.93 \pm 8.63$ ) of the university which was chosen by access sampling. According to Sharkey's physical activity questionnaire, they were then divided into two active and inactive groups. Then, they filled out two Maslach job burnout and quality of life questionnaires. A multivariate variance analysis test was used with SPSS 20 for data analysis. The data and findings indicate that concerning job burnout and its subscales (Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization), physically inactive individuals had higher means; in contrast, people with more activity had higher means; also, physically active individuals showed higher mean scores in quality-of-life variable, in both physical health and mental health total scores and physical function, emotional wellbeing, social function, and general health subscales. Physically inactive individuals showed higher means concerning function disorder owing to physical health and function disorder owing to emotional health and pain. There was no significant difference concerning the subscale of energy/fatigue. Findings indicate that physical activity, as a strategy, improves the capacity of the clerks so they have a better quality of life and deal with job burnout. Thus, it is suggested that physical activity be used as a strategic plan to increase the clerks' efficiency.

**Keywords:** Job Burnout, Quality of Life, Physical Activity, Clerks.

## 1. Introduction

Human life is created in a productive society. Many aspects of human existence form through work and daily activities. Through working, a human being not only meets his material and external needs but also fills many of his inner voids and psychological needs. It seems that work activities are considered an essential activity in terms of mental health, and even for many people, it is a factor in life satisfaction (Rashidi et al., 2018).

Working is essential in terms of satisfying basic needs and improving social conditions. Sometimes, it may be the primary source of psychological pressure on humans; that is, a satisfactory job may become a source of dissatisfaction over time and lead to job demotivation (Khajepour, 2017). Accordingly, human resources development is considered one of the preoccupations of human resources planners in the modern industry. In addition to choosing the right human resources and assigning them, efforts should be made to provide a suitable platform for keeping them. Therefore, to increase the quality of human resources, job pressures are one factor that can endanger the general health of employees (Arizi et al., 2013).

About 50 years ago, a sociologist named Willard Waller investigated the importance of job position and its effect on social functions, marriage, and family relationships. He pointed out that the economic situation profoundly affects the social and psychological processes of the family (Khaje-Pour, 2017). One of the concepts that have attracted the attention of industrial and organizational psychologists in recent years is the exhaustion, lethargy, lethargy, laxity, and laxity of the job holder, which is called job burnout (Maslach et al., 2001).

Employment is one of the most basic human routines. Every person must spend many hours of the day working for his livelihood. Humans have always worked hard to meet their needs. The role of work in life goes beyond its obvious purpose, that is, the necessities of daily life. However, work is not only a source of income for a person but also fulfills many of a person's psychological needs. In the process of adapting to the social environment and his job, the modern man has to bear the restrictions and pressures that the job can sometimes be stressful due to various reasons such as heavy daily activity, limited time for rest, lack of description and understanding (Saatchi, 2008).

Vitman believes that everyone in any situation feels some degree of psychological pressure in the work environment, which is a tangible thing in modern organizations, quoted by (Amiri et al., 2019). Today, many organizations, in order to achieve their goals and plans, are looking for solutions for the optimal adaptation of employees. Paying attention to human beings as complex beings has generally changed the equations in business environments compared to the past. In every organization, human resource management is trying to prevent the early retirement of employees of organizations and industries by identifying destructive factors and providing solutions to improve work performance. Based on the multi-factor theory of productivity, optimal levels of organizational productivity can only be achieved in conditions where all these factors are aligned, synergistic, and optimal (Teymouri, 2019). Job burnout is one of the most important problems among employees and workers today, and it has attracted the attention of many human resource managers. For this reason, job burnout is defined as emotional fatigue and a continuous reaction to emotional and interpersonal stressors. Work is defined by the three dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of individual success (Maslach et al., 2001).

Shirom believes that burnout occurs according to Hopeful's theory of conservation of resources (1989). The main idea in the resource conservation theory is that people have a primary motivation to acquire, keep, and preserve what is valuable to them, and whatever is considered valuable to the individual is called a resource. Work stress occurs when people are threatened with both the loss of resources and the failure to recover their invested resources. Therefore, burnout occurs when people experience a lack of resources over a long period at work (Shirom et al., 2005).

Understanding employees' quality of life plays a vital role in ensuring the dynamism and efficiency of any organization. Paying particular attention to the psychological condition of employees is not a new issue; however, in recent decades, the attention to occupational stress and the study of its consequences has expanded, including the effect of occupational stress on the occurrence of psychosomatic diseases (such as blood pressure and digestive problems) and also the reduction of mental health. In work, the phenomenon of mental pressure is inevitable, but in some jobs, due to the type of specific tasks and



responsibilities, it is associated with more psychological problems (Sharma et al., 2006). Decreasing quality of life and much less mental health will create many tensions for the individual, both in the family and in the environment outside the organization, considering the various consequences of reducing the quality of life in human life and the importance of knowing the intervening factors as much as possible today. By recognizing it, it is possible to take a step towards improving employees' quality of life.

Numerous research studies have shown that exercise and physical activity are valuable tools for maintaining physical health, and they have a close relationship with quality of life, especially the prevention of mental disorders. Physical activity refers to any activity in the form of walking, cycling, public sports, and aerobics (Sallis & Owen, 1992), which reduces chronic pain, anxiety, depression, and daily stress (Loef et al., 2012; Toker & Biron, 2013; Stavrakakis et al., 2015) and increases self-confidence and self-efficacy (Salmon, 2001; Byrne & Byrne, 1993).

During sports activities, the release of endorphins increases, so people feel particular pleasure and relaxation after doing exercises. In addition, continuous exercise increases the amount of blood flow in the brain, which increases the blood flow, causes better oxygenation and nutrition of the brain neurons, and prevents the narrowing of the brain vessels. These effects prevent dementia and deterioration of mental abilities (Salman, 2013).

Since the modernization of the workspace, researchers found adverse effects of job burnout by researchers, and the use of maximum human power has become a pervasive trend in the world and, especially in Iran; recognizing and monitoring the occupational problems of employees is considered a new method in human resource management in order to improve performance and achieve goals. (Arizi et al., 2011). The current research is also trying to investigate one of the solutions provided by industrial and organizational experts, whether physical activities in work environments can reduce job burnout and improve the quality of life (Amiri et al., 2012; Loef et al., 2012). Therefore, this research aimed to compare job burnout and quality of life in active and inactive employees of the university.

### **1.1. The Effects of Job Burnout**

Today, the link between work and health is emphasized worldwide (World Health Organization,

1985). The goal of health is a state of physical and mental wellbeing that creates harmony between abilities, needs, and expectations on the one hand and the necessity of environmental opportunities on the other hand. The quality of life includes a more comprehensive concept of mental health, which is affected by several variables, including income level, living conditions, mental and physical health status, the amount of physical pain, vitality, and social functions.

Work is a part of life that can affect the quality of every person's life; satisfaction from work brings vitality and energy and healthy relationships in the community and family. Dissatisfaction with work causes energy depletion and the gradual loss of every human being, which makes him feel that he has an unhealthy life. Accordingly, burnout brings many direct and indirect costs to every organization. Job burnout causes employees to be absent from the workplace, reduces the quality of work, causes personal conflicts with colleagues, causes physical and mental problems, and, finally, causes them to leave the service. This is why the European Union allocates 20 million euros and the United States about 350 dollars annually to design strategies to prevent job burnout (Amiri et al., 2019). Undoubtedly, paying attention to solutions and factors that reduce negative aspects in creating a suitable environment for employees' activities significantly helps to improve their lives (Saatchi, 2016).

Undoubtedly, paying attention to the phenomenon of job burnout in any organization and knowing the factors that create and reduce it can help significantly create a suitable environment and reduce the amount of psychological pressure on human resources. Recognizing employee job issues should be considered a new method of improving performance and achieving goals because the negative effects of adverse working environment conditions and the related psychological problems have been confirmed by many researchers (Lindblom et al., 2006; Mirdina et al., 2005).

Coping with job pressure and managing it is achieved when the clear demarcation between basic and applied research is removed. Research findings can be used as a scientific document in the development of human resources through strategic planning and taken as beneficial management actions based on the research.



The present research pursues several main goals in this field. First, it examines the precise knowledge of the quality of life and job burnout in the university and then tests one of the main solutions to deal with job burnout, i.e., providing sports conditions and facilities in the work environment.

Carrying out such research, which, on the one hand, identifies burnout and the quality of life of employees and, on the other hand, deals with coping strategies for this phenomenon, has become an essential need of every organization today. Since the sample university is a prestigious scientific environment at the country level and plays a vital role in the country's military productivity, implementing such research requires more sensitivity because improving the mental health of the employees of this honorable institution is critical. In this regard, knowledge of job burnout and quality of life provides essential data to the officials and planners of the university to provide them with the best possible service to this land by increasing the level of health and morale of their personnel.

## **1.2 The Research Objective**

The main objective of the research is to compare job burnout and quality of life in active and inactive employees of the sample university.

## **1.3 History of the Notion of Burnout**

Job burnout was initially raised as a social problem not based on a scientific structure among psychologists. Therefore, the initial concept of job burnout was formed by realism. In the preliminary stages, the focus was more on clinical descriptions of burnout. The next stage was formed by experimental stages, in which the emphasis was on systematic research on job burnout and especially the evaluation of this phenomenon, based on which the theory of job burnout and its hypothetical frameworks were integrated (Maslach et al., 2001).

## **1.4 Symptoms of Burnout Disorder**

Job burnout is formed from the three main dimensions of emotional deterioration, depersonalization, and decrease in personal progress.

Exhaustion is the main characteristic of job burnout, which is obvious in this set of syndromes. When people describe their own or others' experiences of burnout, they often emphasize their own experience. Job burnout is a continuous activity that makes a

person feel emotionally and cognitively distant from his work; it is a kind of adaptation to work pressure. The main problem of the victims of burnout is the breakdown of physical strength; they are often tired and weak, in addition to many physiological symptoms such as frequent headaches, nausea, sleep disorders, and changes in eating habits (such as loss of appetite), they suffer from work fatigue which is emotional exhaustion caused by continuous work. Depression, the feeling of helplessness, and the feeling of being trapped in one's job are part of the emotional problems of these people. One of the following problems these people face is depersonalization, which makes them suspicious of others, and they tend to treat others more like objects. People who suffer from job burnout tend to invalidate themselves, their jobs, their workplace organizations, and, in general, to invalidate their lives. In simpler words, these people wear dark and gray glasses instead of seeing the beauty of this world (Saatchi, 2008).

### **1.4.1 Components of Quality of Life**

Researchers generally agree that the structure of quality of life consists of objective factors (physical, mental, social functions) and subjective factors (inner well-being). Subjective factors emphasize life satisfaction more, while objective factors focus more on material needs and participation in interpersonal and social activities and relationships (Malkoe, 2011).

The objective indicators are literacy, income, working conditions, marital status, security and social status, general health, and ability to work. These indicators can be analyzed individually and in combination to determine the quality of life. Subjective indicators are obtained based on the evaluation and perception of the patient about the level of satisfaction, happiness, hope, and the like. In fact, objective indicators, at best, provide opportunities and facilities to improve the quality of life, but they cannot provide it alone. One of the best approaches to quality of life is a combined approach (objective and subjective factors). According to this view, the quality of life is determined based on the satisfaction of human needs in the cultural context and the individual's perception (Sarafino, 2002; Sharifi, 2017).

### **1.4.2 Quality of Life Indicators**

The determining factors of quality-of-life indicators are located in three classes.



A) Individual characteristics, including demographic variables

b) Objective quality-of-life indicators are environmental conditions that affect quality-of-life variables. These indicators include economic, social, political, cultural, environmental and living conditions and facilities

c) Quality-of-life indicators include feeling satisfied with life, well-being, physical and mental comfort, and happiness (Bridegas et al., 2005).

Based on available sampling, 100 employees of Imam Hossein University were selected. They were divided into active and inactive groups by a participant questionnaire, and after completing the questionnaires, they were compared with each other.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### **2.1 Measuring tools**

#### **2.1.1 Sharkey Physical Activity Questionnaire**

Sharkey's standard physical activity questionnaire was used to determine people's level of physical activity. The questionnaire has five questions, and each question has five options. It was prepared and compiled based on the Likert scale. Each question is awarded a minimum of 1 and 5 points. Therefore, the total score of each person on the questionnaire is between 5 and 25. According to the fact that the target people in this research were divided into active and inactive people; the selected people active people were those who scored above five, and the inactive people were those who received a score of less than 5.

In order to measure the content validity of Sharkey's physical activity questionnaire, the face content validity method was used, and the questionnaire was given to expert faculty members. The content validity of Sharkey's physical activity questionnaire was confirmed. Mokaberian also measured its reliability with Cronbach's alpha method of 0.79, which was reported (2012). In order to determine the reliability coefficient in the present study, Cronbach's alpha was also used. With Cronbach's alpha obtained ( $r = 0.72$ ), it is at the optimal level from the point of view of psychometrics.

#### **2.1.2 The Maslach and Jackson Burnout Inventory (MBI)**

The job burnout questionnaire has 22 questions and measures three factors, which include the first

nine questions on emotional exhaustion, the second 8 questions on personal performance, and the third five questions on depersonalization. To score the scale in each question, two scores are considered for the individual (frequency and intensity scores). If the subject has never been marked at home, he will get a zero score in both frequency and intensity. Otherwise, according to the sign he has placed in the frequency section, he will get a score of 1 to 6 in frequency (from a few times a year to every day) and severity (1 to 7) from very little to very much. When the scores in each question are determined, the subscales can be calculated by summing the scores. Therefore, two scores are calculated for each subscale.

For the emotional exhaustion subtest, the total frequency score is 54, and the intensity is 63; for the personal performance subtest, the total frequency score is 48, and the intensity is 56; and for the depersonalization subtest, the total frequency score is 30, and the intensity is 35. The scores of these three subscales cannot be summed. In some scales, high scores indicate job burnout (such as emotional exhaustion), and in some scales (such as personal performance), low scores indicate job burnout. Using Cronbach's alpha, Maslach and Jackson calculated the job burnout questionnaire's internal consistency to 83% for frequency and 84% for severity. Also, the reliability coefficient of the whole questionnaire was calculated as 82% for frequency and 53% for severity (Kordi, 2018).

Several Iranian researchers have already used the Maslach job burnout tool, whose validity and scientific reliability are confirmed based on the available reports. According to Filian's reports, the level of internal stability of the job burnout scale shows a strong correlation ( $R: 0.69$ ) between the answers given in two stages (Filian, 1992). In a preliminary study conducted by Badri Gargari (1995), psychometric properties were obtained for the components of emotional exhaustion (84%  $\alpha$ ) and depersonalization (74%  $\alpha$ ). The validity of this questionnaire was calculated from the concurrent validity of Perifildort's Job Satisfaction Questionnaire by Gargari, which had an inverse relationship with the Maslach Questionnaire (Kordi, 2008). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability coefficient, which is optimal from the point of view of psychometrics.

#### **2.1.3 Quality of Life Questionnaire (SF-36)**





This questionnaire is one of the most well-known general tools for measuring quality of life. It has been translated into many languages, including Persian. The aforementioned questionnaire was prepared by the International World Health Organization and the Quality-of-Life Review Committee. It contains 36 questions in two main dimensions, physical and mental, measuring eight health-related domains.

While applicable in different cultures, the quality-of-life questionnaire can distinguish between different groups in terms of age, gender, socioeconomic status, and clinical status. Also, in the field of patient screening, differentiating the effects of using different treatments in patients and the economic evaluation of medical care interventions have been shown as a guide for allocating resources at the social level (Brown et al., 2000).

## 2.2 Data Collection Method

The design of the current research was descriptive and comparative post-event. Causal-comparative or post-event methods refer to research in which the researcher examines the possible causes of its occurrence about the dependent variable. In other words, causal-comparative research is retrospective and tries to discover the possible cause of the effect (Biyabangerd, 2008). In post-event research, manipulation, and control are not applied, and it is simply a comparison of two or more groups to find possible causes of variables. In this research, a questionnaire was used to collect and analyze information.

## 2.3 Implementation Process

The method of implementation was such that after sampling and coordinating with the officials of Imam Hossein University, the questionnaires were distributed among all employees in the morning and office areas in the complex of university, and after explaining the completion of the questionnaires, employees were asked to complete the personal information and items of the questionnaires without entering their names. In order to avoid the bias of social desirability or sociability among the respondents, they were informed that the research results had no effect on the relevant job process and no response.

## 3. Results



## 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of data analysis for the burnout variable showed that active and physically inactive employees have significant differences in burnout and its three sub-components. Inactive employees have a higher average in burnout, mental fatigue, and depersonalization. However, in the sub-component of personal performance, the physically active group has a higher average.

In explaining the results of job burnout, lack of activity and excitement create monotony in employees who regularly engage in the same activities at certain hours. Doing anything to conform to the norms carries a certain amount of stress to carry it out. Workload, role ambiguity, and various job stresses confuse a person. This causes the feeling of being under pressure and losing physical resources, which makes the person unwilling and indifferent to his job, and doing work does not create any passion and motivation in him (emotional fatigue). The constant reaction to these stresses profoundly separates a person from everything, including his personality and character. It causes him to lose his role and activity, which causes a separation from the job (depersonalization). For this reason, many experts today recommend considering all the components of the working environment, both internal and external, to improve employees' conditions.

Research has shown that performing aerobic activities for less than twenty minutes every day of the week or 30-45 minutes of more intense exercise for three days of the week significantly reduces anxiety and stress (Hamer et al., 2008).

In terms of physiology, physical activity benefits the human body and mind by releasing endorphins and serotonin. Therefore, endorphins, which are a natural drug, increase with physical exercises and increase pleasant feelings. On the other hand, physical activity plays a crucial role in increasing the level of serotonin (effective in mood), and it seems that much exercise can increase these two and decrease the level of cortisol hormone (anxiety hormone) (Rahimi et al., 2014). Employees who have less physical activity experience lower levels of endorphins (analgesic effects) and serotonin (pleasant feelings) and are more likely to experience psychological and physical pain, depression, and mood disorders (Stavarakas et al., 2015). In this context, Burdick et al. (2015) conducted an extensive study on the impact of physical activity on people's lives with a survey of



health nurses, doctors, and the Mental Health Organization employees. They emphasized that all experts emphasized the impact of physical activity on preventing coronary artery disease.

In explaining the subcomponent of personal performance, it can be said that physical activity is related to a higher level of arousal and alertness (Hamer, 2008). According to the theory of Yerkes and Dodson (inverted U theory), the requirement for the optimal performance of an activity is to achieve a level of arousal that is proportional to it; according to this theory, at the optimal level of arousal, we witness the best performance of people (Franken, 1998). Employees whose physical activity is an inseparable part of their lives have a higher level of motivation for work activities. When these people start working in work environments that have a low level of arousal, the level of optimal performance of these people decreases. The disproportion of activity with the level of people's arousal causes a feeling of failure and reduced performance, which is associated with absenteeism, reduced energy, and failure to satisfy psychological needs caused by the job (personal performance).

#### 4.1 Research limitations

Since no research is free of limitations, the current research is not exempt from this. Among the limitations of the current research include:

1. Limitation in space and time
2. The small size of the sample and lack of random selection reduce the power of generalizing the findings to other communities.
3. The use of paper-pencil tools can be affected by several factors, including the possibility of participants giving unrealistic answers due to misunderstanding of the questions, indifference, fatigue, mood, weather, workload, etc., and distorting the results.
4. Protection and information restrictions in providing materials by employees
5. Lack of proper cooperation of several employees to complete the provided questionnaire, wasting time and increasing research costs
6. High research costs and lack of financial assistance from the following authorities
7. Existence of social, economic, and family factors and problems that are outside the researcher's control.
8. There is a lack of control over individual characteristics and differences according to the type of research that can affect the research's results.

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## مقایسه فرسودگی شغلی و کیفیت زندگی در بین کارمندان فعال و غیر فعال

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**چکیده:** اشتغال یکی از اساسی ترین شکل های فعالیت انسانی است که آسیب های آن می تواند باعث فرسودگی شغلی و کاهش کیفیت زندگی شود. در سال های اخیر پرداختن به این موضوع هدف اصلی اکثر سازمان ها بوده است. پژوهش حاضر با هدف مقایسه فرسودگی شغلی و کیفیت زندگی در بین کارمندان فعال و غیر فعال یکی از دانشگاه های تهران انجام شده است. در مطالعه علی-مقایسه ای حاضر، ۱۰۰ کارمند در محدوده سنی (میانگین و انحراف معیار ۴۰/۹۳ ± ۸/۶۳) دانشگاه به روش نمونه گیری در دسترس انتخاب شدند. بر اساس پرسشنامه فعالیت بدنی شارکی، آنها به دو گروه فعال و غیر فعال تقسیم شدند. سپس دو پرسشنامه فرسودگی شغلی و کیفیت زندگی ماسلاخ را تکمیل کردند. برای تجزیه و تحلیل داده ها از آزمون تحلیل واریانس چند متغیره با SPSS 20 استفاده شد. داده ها و یافته ها حاکی از آن است که از نظر فرسودگی شغلی و خرده مقیاس های آن (خستگی عاطفی، مسخ شخصیت)، افراد غیر فعال فیزیکی از میانگین بالاتری برخوردار بودند. در مقابل، افراد با فعالیت بیشتر از میانگین بالاتری برخوردار بودند. همچنین، افراد فعال جسمانی میانگین نمرات بالاتری را در متغیر کیفیت زندگی، هم در نمرات کل سلامت جسمی و سلامت روان و هم در زیرمقیاس های عملکرد جسمانی، بهزیستی عاطفی، عملکرد اجتماعی و سلامت عمومی نشان دادند. افراد غیر فعال فیزیکی به دلیل سلامت جسمانی، اختلال عملکرد و به دلیل سلامت عاطفی و درد، میانگین بالاتری را در اختلال عملکرد نشان دادند. در مورد خرده مقیاس انرژی/خستگی تفاوت معنی داری وجود نداشت. یافته ها حاکی از آن است که فعالیت بدنی به عنوان یک استراتژی، ظرفیت کارمندان را بهبود می بخشد تا کیفیت زندگی بهتری داشته باشند و با فرسودگی شغلی مقابله کنند. بنابراین پیشنهاد می شود از فعالیت بدنی به عنوان یک برنامه استراتژیک برای افزایش کارایی کارمندان استفاده شود.

واژه های کلیدی: فرسودگی شغلی، کیفیت زندگی، فعالیت بدنی، کارمندان.

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این نماد به معنای مجوز استفاده از اثر با دو شرط است یکی استناد به نویسنده و دیگری استفاده برای مقاصد غیر تجاری.