

Chapter 8

A Grounded Theory Approach for the Study of Organizational Burnout: Particularly for Caregivers in the Workplace

ABSTRACT

Burnout is a kind of psychological withdrawal as a particular response to stress. As a costly coping mechanism, it can have adverse impacts on the motivation, performance, and personal wellbeing of special service providers. Ineffectiveness of direct and active problem-solving efforts gives rise to the burnout response. The professions dealing with high levels of stress, including healthcare, social work, police work, teaching, and customer services are regarded as the occupations most at risk of burnout. There is limited qualitative research and in particular grounded theory (GT) on a subjective definition of job burnout by employees. The present study is organized to contribute more qualitative studies to concentrate more on the application of GT approach in the field of occupational burnout. Since it examines current studies of occupational burnout that focused on GT, it is of particular value.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-4252-1.ch008

INTRODUCTION

Organizational burnout is a state of fatigue or frustration caused by one's self-sacrifice as well as one's lifestyle or relationships that do not lead to the desired outcome (Vahdani et al., 2013). Organizational burnout is defined as the psychological response to chronic job stress (Zarei et al., 2012). The inconsistency between the nature of the job and the nature of the job holder results in negative consequences; For example, teacher burnout leads to depression, fatigue, and a severe decline in performance that causes illness and early retirement (Zarei et al., 2012). Occupational burnout is an occupational hazard that reduces the employees' physical and mental energy (Tabarsa et al., 2011).

An exploratory-qualitative research started the initial basis of studying burnouts. The social and clinical psychology-based ideas composed the topics of studies conducted mostly by the researchers involved in these fields. The concepts involving interpersonal relations, i.e. how people perceive and respond to others, were utilized in studies based on a social perspective. These concepts included detached concern, dehumanization in self-defense, and attribution processes. Moreover, concepts such as motivation and emotion (and especially coping with emotional arousal) were investigated. These two concepts were the topics of studies with a clinical perspective as well, but the difference is that these concepts, in clinical perspective, were examined more in terms of psychological disorders, such as depression. The subsequent studies with a perspective of industrial-organizational psychology emphasized on work attitudes and behaviors. Burnout, at this point, was conceptualized as a form of job stress, primarily focused on the organizational context rather than on the physical characteristics of the experienced stress (Maslach and Leiter, 2016).

Though all jobs dealing with human health can be stressful, it is of great importance and sensitivity how the caregivers cope with occupational burnout. In addition, generating theory in behavioral and social sciences can be resulted from using grounded theory (GT) in these fields. This chapter is aimed at examining application of GT in the field of job burnout and in particular for caregivers in the workplace.

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