

# Relationship of Job Burnout and Type A Behaviour on Psychological Health among Secretaries

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## Abstract

The present study examines the relationship of Job burnout and Type A behaviour with Psychological health. The data was collected through three self-report questionnaires distributed among the Secretaries working in corporate offices. The questionnaires used in the study are Job Burnout Inventory, Behaviour Activity Profile – Type A Measure of Personality and the Cornell Medical Index Health Questionnaire (CMIHQ). Data was analyzed by correlation coefficient and stepwise multiple regression. The obtained results revealed that Anger have been found significantly related with Personal accomplishment and Overall job burnout. Tension was found positively and significantly related with Impatience, Job involvement and Type A behaviour. Overall job burnout emerged as a significant predictor of Anger. Emotional exhaustion and Depersonalization emerged as the significant predictors of Tension.

**Keywords:** Job burnout, Type A behaviour, Psychological health

## 1. Introduction

In the present day world scenario no profession is truly spared from the negative reaction in varied magnitude which we call burnout. The frequency of job burnout is on the rise for both men and women mainly caused by incessant change and development of mankind in all spheres of life, nature of job, job pressure and also job demand which has increased manifold. Innovation and advancement of technology has brought out tremendous changes amongst all levels of the employees working in diverse fields, widespread and bound up to develop personal efficacy in learning new skills, need to adopt new types of work, pressures of higher productivity and quality of work, time pressure and hectic job demands are increasing level of stress among all categories of the workforce. All these changes are likely to develop a hostile work environment and contribution to employee's emotional, physical and spiritual exhaustion. The outcome of such changes is likely to result in lower productivity, poor quality of end product, low morale, increased employees turnover rates, increased absenteeism, intention to leave, lower effectiveness, reduced job satisfaction, reduced commitment increased workers compensation claim, increased accident rates and later on there might be greater possibility that burnout employees can become addicted to intoxicants, alcohol and drugs depending upon the severity and frequency of burnout reaction.

When a person feels emotionally drained, helpless, hopeless and used up, showing stronger tendency to withdraw socially, deterioration in the quality of interpersonal relationships and development of negative self-concept with little desire to work with the people and reluctant to return on job. If so, he/she seems to show symptoms of job burnout, which consumes one's enthusiasm until his/her motivation goes dry. In fact skills and knowledge of the employee's remains intact, but the will to perform and the spirit within the employee is gone. The stressors leading to job burnout, which accumulates with time, can become debilitating if employees do not recognize and find out possible ways to cope with them.

Personality is the most important and most noticeable part of an individual's life. Almost each one of us in day-to-day life finds ourselves describing and assessing the personality of those around us. Earlier it was viewed that personality does not matter regarding the understanding of employee's performance, therefore management people in the organization puts greater emphasis on the reward structures in the corporate culture as important criteria for employee's performance. But now it is realized that the personality plays important influence on the

performance of an employee.

Although number of studies on job burnout, type A behaviour and psychological health have been conducted on the samples of participants working with other people such as managers, teachers, doctors, and nurses, it may be assumed that the nature of work that secretaries perform is relatively more demanding and challenging, as they usually perform routine, administrative or personal tasks for their superiors. They perform duties like they serve as information and communication managers for an office and send information through phone, mail services website and e-mail; plan and schedule meetings and appointments; organize and maintain papers and electronic files. In order to perform all these effectively they should possess adequate skills, abilities and knowledge about their job. Due to increased competition that is prevalent in this profession, they have to work hard to compete with their counterparts to prove their efficiency and effectiveness. So considering all these above mentioned facts, present study is conducted to examine the relationship of Job burnout and Type A behaviour with Psychological health among Secretaries. Secondly, to investigate the extent to which Job burnout and Type A behaviour influence the Psychological health. Finally, the study suggests recommendations and strategies that aim at enhancing the psychological health of the employees.

## 2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

The term “job burnout” gets its access in research literature from the care giving and service profession in which the relationship between provider and recipient is considered as the core of the job. Kulkarni (2006) in his writing describes that burnout is not a new syndrome, its existence can be traced back to the collection of poems attributed to William Shakespeare and published in 1599 as “The Passionate Pilgrim”. It is evident from research literature that Freudenberger (1974) though to be credited in using the burnout concept in a human services setting. The word was used colloquially in the 1960s to refer to the effects of chronic drug abuse. He changed the word’s meaning in order to characterize the psychological state of volunteers who worked in alternative health care agencies. He described “Staff Burnout” as syndrome of exhaustion, disillusionment and withdrawal amongst voluntary health workers. Later researchers inspired from his explanation concerning burnout syndromes of various categories of employees working in human services sectors including the social workers, nurses, teachers, lawyers, physicians, police personnel and people engaged in other professions, where more interpersonal interaction was required. However, Freudenberger’s clinical observations soon became overshadowed in academic literature by the work of a social psychologist, Christina Maslach. The theoretical and empirical work done by Maslach (1976) is prominent and very much popular and involved other researchers to this complex stress related syndrome of employees. Burnout is characterized by physical depletion, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, emotional drain and the development of negative self-concept and negative attitudes toward work, life, and other people (Pines *et al.*, 1981). Burnout is defined as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur amongst individuals who work with people in some capacity (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

- Emotional exhaustion refers to a feeling of being drained of emotional energy or all used up.
- Depersonalization refers to an increasing indifference about clients or excessively detached response to other people at work.
- Reduced personal accomplishment refers to feeling of decline in one’s level of competence and productivity and to one’s lowered sense of self-efficacy.

Job burnout is described in terms of negative effect of working conditions where job stress and sources of satisfaction, or relief seemed to be unavoidable (Moss, 1981). The symptoms of burnout were believed to result from the interaction between the helper and the person receiving help (Maslach, 1976). The emotional demanding situations concerning to the job are prevalent in the human service profession, and also in public service; and managerial and supervisory positions where client and employees both impose constant demand for attention (Farber, 1983). Those people who are constantly or intensively interacting with other people in an emotionally charged atmosphere are more susceptible to show the syndrome of burnout (Schwab, 1983). Burnout is more common amongst the professions where the person has to deal extensively with the customer while on the job such as service providers, accountants, lawyers, managers, nurses, police officers, teachers, social workers and doctors (Roger, 1984). Burnout not only occurs in people helping situations but is also experienced in other stressful jobs (Leiter & Robichaud, 1997; Posig & Kickul, 2003).

Freundenberger (1974) suggested multidimensional definition of burnout including biological and physical symptoms (exhaustion, fatigue, proneness to catch a cold, stomach complaints and headache) behavioral and emotional symptoms (irritability, depression, tendency to cry and shout) as well as cognitive, social and performance deficits (inflexibility of thinking, weak memory, loss of motivation and social isolation). Potter

(1980) describes that individuals suffering from burnout syndrome are more susceptible to develop health problems which may be noticed in the form of cold, headaches, insomnia, backaches, feeling of being tired, cardiovascular and gastrointestinal breakdown, frustration, tension, interpersonal conflicts and depression.

Breninkmeyer *et al.*, (2000) attempted to find out relationship between burnout and depression. The results showed that the burnout was closely related with depression.

Demir *et al.*, (2003) investigated the factors that influenced burnout levels in the professional and private life of nurses. Findings suggested that higher education level, work experience and higher status decreased burnout while working at night shifts increased it. In addition, nurses having problems in relations with the other team members and not satisfied with their work conditions had higher levels of burnout.

Jamal (2004) examined the relationship between non-standard work schedules (shift work and weekend work) and job burnout, stress and psychosomatic health problems. Results indicated that employees involved with weekend work and non-fixed day shifts reported significantly higher emotional exhaustion and health problems than other employees. Farahbakhsh (2009) investigated the level of job burnout among the top managers. The results showed that the participants had more frequency in depersonalization, lack of personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion dimensions of job burnout respectively.

Type A behaviour has long been implicated as risk factor for health. Type A behaviour personality as conceptualized by Friedman & Rosenman (1974) describes such type of people as impulsive, competitive, aggressive, impatient and more susceptible to develop the symptoms of coronary heart disease. Nevertheless, there seems to be little consensus as to why Type A behaviour are more susceptible to illness. Williams (1984) suggested that not all Type A behaviour were unhealthy but hostility and anger were the most damaging components of Type A in terms of coronary heart disease. Abush & Burkhead (1984) investigated the relationship between Type A personality, perceived job characteristics and feeling of job tension. The results revealed a significant relationship between job tension and linear combination of Type A personality and job characteristics.

Froggatt & Cotton (1987) observed that Type A people created more stress on themselves by increasing the volume of workload.

Sharpley *et al.*, (1995) studied the direct and relative efficacy of cognitive hardiness, Type A behaviour pattern, coping behaviour and social support as predictors of stress and ill-health among 1,925 staff of an Australian University. The collected data showed moderate levels of anxiety, fairly good average health and moderate job stress and daily hassles. High job stress, high type A behaviour scores, low social support, ineffective coping, and low cognitive hardiness predicted poorer physical and psychological health. Men appeared healthier than women. Cognitive hardiness most powerfully predicted overall good health and lower job stress.

Pradhan & Misra (1996) examined the relationship between Type A behaviour and burnout. The result indicated that the moderate level of Type A behaviour pattern subjects showed lower levels of burnout. Van den *et al.*, (1997) studied the relationships between the Type A behaviour pattern, work overload, role related stress and well-being in computerized office work among employees holding office jobs in a large insurance company, a library and a staffing organization. Path analysis showed that work overload partially mediates the relationship between Type A behaviour and well-being, and that role related stress and work overload strongly affect well-being in this type of work. Work overload did not moderate the relationship between Type A behaviour and well-being. Cassidy & Dhillon (1997) investigated the relationship amongst Type A behaviour and health in a sample of 79 middle managers. Type A reported significantly more illness than did Type B, males were the more confident problem solvers and that Type A females and Type B males felt less helpless in problem situations. On psychological well-being, self-rated healthiness and self rated health behaviour there was no significant difference between Type As and Bs. Multiple regression analysis showed that scores on TAB only accounted for a significant proportion of variance in self rated frequency of illness. Whiteman *et al.*, (2000) reported that individuals with Type A Behaviour pattern are more susceptible to develop health problems.

In the light of literature reviewed and realizing the significance of this study following research hypotheses have been formulated and verified to draw meaningful conclusions.

- H<sub>1</sub> There will be significant relationship between Job burnout and Psychological health among the Secretaries.
- H<sub>2</sub> There will be significant relationship between Type A behaviour and Psychological health among the Secretaries.
- H<sub>3</sub> Job burnout will influence Psychological health of the Secretaries.

H<sub>4</sub> Type A behaviour will influence Psychological health of the Secretaries.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

In the present study correlational research design was used to examine the relationship between Job burnout and Type A behaviour with Psychological health. The Job burnout and Type A behaviour have been studied as predictors of Psychological health.

#### 3.2 Participants

The participants comprising of 100 female secretaries were randomly selected from the employees list available in the various organizations which were similar in terms of infrastructure, policies and facilities at Delhi (India). Age of the participants range from 21-47.

#### 3.3 Research Instruments

The Questionnaire Method has been used in the present study to gather information from the respondents, as it is most convenient to administer. Three self-report questionnaires were selected for the present study.

**Job Burnout Inventory:** The Job burnout inventory developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981) was used to assess the degree of burnout of the subjects. The scale contains 22 items and each item is to be rated on 7 points Likert type rating scale, very mild 1 point, mild 2 point, somewhat moderate 3, moderate 4 point, somewhat strong 5 point, strong 6 point and very strong 7 point. The scale measures three dimensions of job burnout viz., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment. The item numbers 1-9 measures emotional exhaustion, the item numbers 10-14 measures depersonalization and the item numbers 15-22 measures personal accomplishment. Total scores on these items give total burnout of the participants. The reliability of the scale was found 0.56 as a whole and on all three dimensions i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment are 0.87, 0.77 and 0.77 respectively.

**Behaviour Activity Profile – Type A Measure:** Behaviour Activity Profile – Type A Measure of personality developed by Matteson and Ivancevich (1982) was used to measure certain types of behaviour and thought patterns of personal characteristics. The scale contains 21 bipolar statements and each statement to be rated on 7 points rating scale scored from 7 to 1. The best answer for each set of description is the response that most nearly describes the way subject feels, behaves or thinks. The scale measures the three components of behaviour pattern: impatience, job involvement and hard driving/competitive. Total scores on these items represents a global Type A behaviour. Present investigator tested the reliability of this scale by using test re-test method. The reliability of the dimensions was obtained as: impatience (0.64), job involvement (0.72) and hard driving and competitive (0.75) respectively. The reliability of Total score representing global Type A behaviour is 0.71.

**C.M.I. Health Questionnaire:** Second section (emotional distress) of the Cornell Medical Index Health Questionnaire (CMIHQ) developed by Wig, Pershad, Verma (1983) was used to assess psychological health status of the participants. The scale comprised of six dimensions such as: inadequacy, depression, anxiety, sensitivity, anger and tension. Each question is designed to have a response in 'Yes' or 'No'. The reliability of this section is 0.85.

#### 3.4 Data Analysis

Data obtained from the participants has been analyzed by means of SPSS package. The analysis has been carried out in two phases. In the first phase of the data analysis the correlation coefficients have been calculated to find out the relationship of job burnout and Type A behaviour with Psychological health. In the second phase stepwise multiple regression analysis was done to identify the significant predictors of Psychological health.

### 4. Results and Discussion

Results presented in the Table 1 indicates that the overall job burnout experienced by respondents is negatively and insignificantly related with their psychological health problems ( $r = -0.043$ ). Anger – one of the dimension of psychological health is found to have negative and significant relationship with overall job burnout, ( $r = -0.259$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and personal accomplishment ( $r = -0.258$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). However, positive significant association is observed between depersonalization and tension – one of the dimensions of psychological health ( $r = 0.281$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that those respondents showing the syndrome of depersonalization create more tension around themselves. Thus, proposed hypothesis H<sub>1</sub> is accepted with respect to these dimensions only. Earlier researcher support the finding of present study that individuals suffering from burnout syndrome are more susceptible to develop health problems which may be noticed in the form tension (Potter, 1980).

The obtained results as highlighted in Table 2 have shown positive significant relationship between tension and Type A behaviour ( $r = 0.209$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates that the respondents with Type A behaviour create more tension around themselves. The positive significant relation is also found between tension and two dimensions of Type A behaviour pattern, i.e., impatience ( $r = 0.206$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and job involvement ( $r = 0.231$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates that more the respondent shows impatience and job involvement more they are likely to develop the symptoms of tension and is attributed to their personality characteristics. Hence, proposed Hypothesis  $H_2$  is only accepted with respect to these dimensions. The results of research of Abush and Burkhead (1984) are consistent with the present finding.

As it can be seen from Table 3 that overall job burnout accounted for 5.8% of the variance (adjusted  $R^2 = 0.058$ ) in the criterion variable i.e. anger. It is observed from the findings that the predictor variable – job burnout significantly influence ‘anger’ as obtained value of  $F = 7.059$ ;  $p < 0.01$ . Obtained results give a very clear picture that job burnout ( $t = 2.657$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) has emerged as a significant predictor contributing to the symptoms of anger in this group of secretaries. As evident from the obtained findings that if job burnout is increased by 1 unit it will result to decrease the symptoms of anger by 0.259 units ( $\beta = - 0.259$ ); Thus, proposed hypotheses  $H_3$  is accepted pertaining to the influence of job burnout on anger.

The obtained findings as presented in Table 4 clearly show that the two dimensions of job burnout, i.e., emotional exhaustion and depersonalization emerged as the significant predictors of tension. Depersonalization and emotional exhaustion accounted for 14% of the variance (adjusted  $R^2 = 0.140$ ) in the criterion variable i.e. tension. Obtained finding clearly shows that the predictor variable – depersonalization and emotional exhaustion influence ‘tension’ ( $F = 9.077$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Findings clearly show that if ‘depersonalization’ is increased by 1 unit it will result to increase the symptoms of tension by 0.467 units ( $\beta = 0.467$ ); similarly, if ‘emotional exhaustion’ is increased by 1 unit it will result to decrease the symptoms of tension by 0.337 units ( $\beta = - 0.337$ ).

In the present research it is found that the depersonalization – the syndrome of job burnout has emerged as first significant predictor variable of ‘tension’ amongst secretaries. As it is already discussed that the nature of job that secretaries performed is mainly related to routine, administrative or personal tasks for superiors. These require interaction with people within the department, with people in different places and/or with clients. When they are unable to fulfill the expectations of others around them, may experienced stress because of the conflicting demands and as a result of which they may develop the syndrome such as withdrawing from others, critical interactions with other around them (depersonalization). Secretaries suffering from this syndrome seem to be in trouble as their nature of job requires working with other people directly and if caught in unavoidable conflicts may show the symptoms of tension – a dimension of psychological health. Earlier researcher Farahbakhsh (2009) also indicated that the participants had more frequency in depersonalization, lack of personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion dimensions of job burnout respectively.

Emotional exhaustion occurs when a person feels that he/she is unable to meet the constant demands and develops the feeling of completely overwhelmed and used up. The job of secretaries always involve emotionally demanding situations concerning to the nature of work assignment, work pressure, interactions with people posing diverse nature of problems and their expectations are most of the time more demanding. In such type of working conditions the burnout symptoms will increase especially the emotional exhaustion component of burnout. But the obtained results have shown the inverse relationship between emotional exhaustion and tension. The Secretaries have shown the syndrome of emotional exhaustion but it did not lead to tension.

People with Type A behaviour more often shows the personality characteristics such as highly ambitious, energetic, impatient, competitive, hardworking, time urgent and high achiever. In this type of profession as we know that person with Type A behaviour are more successful but it is also true that due to their personality characteristics they become restless and their self satisfaction level reduces to a very low. So if they fail to achieve their targets in time they are more likely to create tension around them. The positive and significant relation is found between Type A behaviour and tension but this variable does not emerge as a significant predictor of tension – one of the dimensions of psychological health. Hence, proposed hypothesis  $H_4$  is rejected.

## 5. Conclusion

The results partially prove the research’s hypotheses. Author believed that Type A behaviour significantly influence the psychological health among the secretaries. However, only job burnout and its dimensions, i.e., depersonalization and emotional exhaustion emerged as a significant predictor of anger and tension respectively.

Considering the present study results it is important to mention that health of the employees plays an essential role in effective functioning of the organization, so it becomes imperative for employers to take care of their employee’s health by adopting suitable ways and means. It is important to mention that psychological health

problem is now considered more serious as compared to physical health because it is difficult to cure it but by giving suitable interventions can be alleviated, if remain unchecked then at a moment its treatment will take long time. In case when the psychological health problems becomes severe would have its ill-effect on interpersonal relations both in the family as well as on work and society thus disturb the whole environment. Therefore, it is necessary to develop possible prevention programs in order to mitigate the problems relating to psychological health of employees.

Management of the organization should take some preventive measures to protect employees with typical Type A behaviour so that they do not become victims of health hazards as at an early stage of life. It becomes difficult to change the personality of a person. However by setting guidelines on task related division of work such as time management policies, imposition of strict deadlines for completion of tasks and flexible working hours for certain types of jobs to be considered by the management of the organization, health risk of such employees may be reduced. In this way employees with Type A personality can be put to ease from overworking themselves, and to encourage employees to reduce the dysfunctional aspects of their Type A personality by taking out some time for themselves to refresh such as relax at weekends or have a refreshing vacation. Discussion about themselves with people close to them is a good way of letting out their feelings.

## 6. Scope for Further Research

Present researcher is of the view that much more information can be gathered from the study such as study of various other variables like social support, job satisfaction, job stress variables and demographic factors such as age, marital status, experience and education of the women employees to see their varied effects on the samples drawn from the organization as cited above.

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Table 1. Correlation between psychological health and job burnout

Dimensions	Emotional exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal accomplishment	Overall job burnout
Inadequacy	-0.040	0.040	-0.059	-0.051
Depression	0.047	0.081	0.062	0.090
Anxiety	0.139	-0.026	0.165	0.183
Sensitivity	-0.002	0.063	0.111	0.087
Anger	-0.125	-0.067	-0.258**	-0.259**
Tension	-0.076	0.281**	-0.109	-0.043
Overall Psychological health	-0.052	0.162	-0.083	-0.043

\*\* Significant at  $p < 0.01$

Table 2. Correlation between psychological health and type A behaviour pattern

Dimensions	Impatience	Job involvement	Hard driving/ competitive	Type A behaviour pattern
Inadequacy	-0.135	0.038	0.004	-0.041
Depression	0.057	-0.032	0.004	0.012
Anxiety	-0.007	-0.120	-0.072	-0.095
Sensitivity	0.090	-0.001	0.082	0.077
Anger	-0.019	0.004	0.004	-0.005
Tension	0.206*	0.231*	0.002	0.209*
Overall Psychological health	0.062	0.081	0.013	0.074

\*Significant at  $p < 0.05$

Table 3. Stepwise multiple regression analysis for the prediction of anger (dimension of psychological health)

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	β	t
Overall Job Burnout	2.59	0.067	0.058	7.059	-0.259	2.657**

\*\* Significant at  $p < 0.01$

Table 4. Stepwise multiple regression analysis for the prediction of tension (dimension of psychological health)

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	β	t
1. Depersonalization	2.81	0.079	0.070	8.417**	0.281	2.901**
2. Depersonalization Emotional exhaustion	0.397	0.158	0.140	9.077**	0.467 -0.337	4.182** 3.008**

\*\* Significant at  $p < 0.01$