

# The relationship between hardiness and burnout among the teachers of the universities and higher educational institutes - case study

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## Abstract

Burnout is the physical, mental and emotional collapse combined with the negative attitudes toward the job and lack of attention to the clients. The most significant signs of burnout include absence from work, successive delays and various psychosomatic complaints and conflict in the workplace. Hardiness is a personal characteristic adjusting the way to cope with the stressful situations. This study examines the relationship between burnout and hardiness of the teachers of a higher education institute. In doing so, there are three factors including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment which measure the burnout. Additionally, hardiness has three components of commitment, control and challenge. This survey aims at determining the relationship between the elements through correlation coefficient. The population is composed of all teachers of a higher education institute. The participants were 120 teachers. Given the unknown variance of the population, the variance ratio was equal to  $p(p-1)$  to specify the sample. The value of  $p$  was equal to  $q$ . The error ( $d$ ) was equal to 0.05 and the sample size composed of 53 persons. After sampling and analyzing the results by the correlation coefficient, it was found that any of the burnout components were correlated with the three elements of hardiness.

**Keywords:** Job Stress, Hardiness, Burnout

## Introduction

Those who work in the fields of human services (such as nurses, teachers, consultants, employees, polices, rescuers and so on) and especially the motivated and passionate individuals are subject to burnout. Burnout is generally used to describe the exhaus-

tion signs in the professions (Allen & Miller, 2002). Burnout is the physical, mental and emotional collapse combined with the negative attitudes toward the job and lack of attention to the clients (Skaalvik, & Skalvik, 2010). Burnout derives from stress and leaves many consequences in the organization, family and social and personal life of the people. The most important signs include the absence from work, successive delays, various psychosomatic complaints and conflict in the workplace and finally leaving the job. Hardiness is a personal characteristic adjusting the way to cope with the stressful situations. Burnout occurs when there is a lack of realism, low energy for continuing useful functions, the last philosophy of the life is missed and mental and physical disorders are emerging. In doing so, organizational factors such as uncertain role and conflict of roles are considered. Additionally, interpersonal factors such as little social support accompanied by intrapersonal factors such as age and personality are existing. For various personality traits such as hardiness, low self-esteem and sympathy, hardiness includes almost the characteristics and concepts.

Hardiness is a personal trait adjusting the way the individuals cope with the stressful situations (Kobasa, Maddi & Kahn, 1982) and helps them to convert the stressful situations into opportunities for improving the performance, leadership, health and mental growth (Maddi, 2007). Individuals high in hardiness tend to take the stressful situations and undesirable experiences as the natural aspects of life. Instead of capturing these positions as the threatening situations, everybody considers them as the opportunities for challenge. These individuals feel more committed to their work and life and believe in their ability to execute control over their life and evaluate the stressful situations as the potential opportunities for change (Eid, Jonsen, Bartone & Nissestad, 2007).

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Hardiness provides the courage and motivation to use social support and health cares. Confrontation is the attitude by which the people deal with the issues. A wider range of the issues is considered in Transformational coping and the threats are converted into the opportunities through the hopeful assessments of the issues. The individuals strengthen their relationships with their relatives through social support and by the encouragements and advancements received from the relatives, the individuals might feel as if the stressful events are less threatening (Maddi, 2007).

The findings associated with the influence of hardiness on confronting with the stress and preventing the disease in comparison with the impacts of social support and health care of the managers revealed that hardiness has a double influence (Maddi, 2002). Using health care functions (such as sports, meditation, nutrition and drug therapy), the pressure on the individuals is adjusted and directs individuals to endeavor to seek for social support.

### *Statement of Problem*

University professors confront with different stressful situations that lead to burnout. Various studies showed that low wages, high volume of work, conflict of roles, management style, organizational support and personality traits are different predictors of burnout. Obviously, all these factors are stressful and this leads to burnout. This does not mean that those who experience job stress will necessarily suffer burnout. However, this means that job stress is the necessary but not the enough prerequisite of burnout.

Based on the definition of Maslach, burnout is a condition characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and loss of a sense of personal accomplishment (Skaalvik, & Skalvik, 2010). In the emotional exhaustion, the emotional force of the individuals collapses. The previous balance of the individuals with a high level of motivation gradually decreases by burnout and the job gets bored (Saatchi, 2008). Depersonalization means the extension of the negative attitudes that leads to apathy toward others. Finally, loss of a sense of personal accomplishment occurs when the individuals feel their functions are not successful. Stated another way, the performance is distorted by the perceived success but not the real performance or success (Saatchi, 2008).

In a concentrated organization such as higher education institutes, the lower level managers don't have the ability to involve the organizational factors that lead to burnout but may perfectly use their personal resources

such as ideas, opinions, personal traits, resources and challenge approaches. Hardiness is a valuable personal resource of the personality traits. Using the results of the studies about the university professors, higher education and other individuals and stakeholders, there is a chance to prevent the individuals suffer burnout, lower the job stress and improve the professional situations.

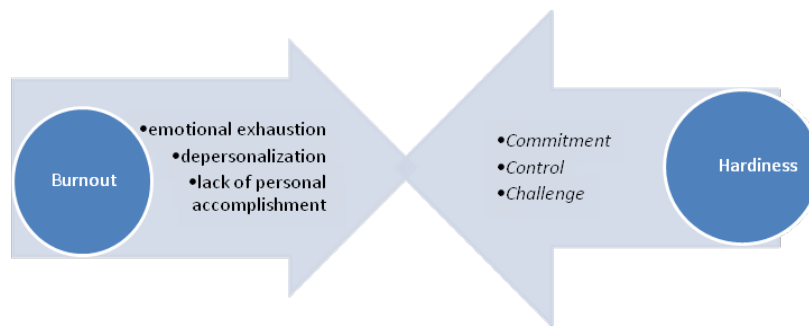
As a factor adjusting the influence of stress on the health, hardiness has received much attention in the recent years. The direct effect of the hardiness on increasing the resistance and its distinction from the other resources raises a question about the mechanism by which it is involved in the relationship between stress and injury?

Individuals high in hardiness experience their life events the same as others. However, these individuals do not evaluate the events as stressful situations and are optimistic about their ability in confrontation with the events. Accordingly, hardiness seems to change the two evaluation elements, mitigate the threat assessment and increase the expectation of successful confrontation with the threats (Florian, Miculincer&Taubman, 1995). Kobasa believes that hardiness reflects the individuals' response to life events both personally and professionally and considers three factors of commitment, control and challenge. Col, Bruch & Vogel (2006)

*Commitment:* Individuals high in hardiness have better feeling in their jobs and feel they can have more control over their life and believe that they might impact the possible undesirable events and consequences. Additionally, the positive or negative changes in the life are taken as the potential opportunities for growth and learning (Maddi, 2007).

*Control:* Those who have a strong sense of control over events have a significant and positive impact on their life events. These individuals believe that initiative and resourcefulness might help people to find solutions for the personal or professional problems to convert the stressful situations into an opportunity for learning new lessons (Maddi&khoshaba, 2001). They put more emphasize on their own responsibilities than the failures of the others in solving the problems (Kobasa, Maddi&Kahn, 1982).

*Challenge:* The individuals involved in the challenge (the opposite point of danger or fear) believe that the positive or negative events of life are the opportunities for enhancing the spirit and increasing health and this leads to continuous personal and professional growth (Maddi&khoshaba, 2001). In fact, the hardy people believe that change is the natural aspect of life and this is accompanied by the cognitive flexibility and one's response to the life events (Kobasa, Maddi & Kahn, 1982).



**Figure 1. Graph the relationship between Burnout and Hardiness**

According to the adjusting role of hardiness in the stressful situations and the fact that burnout is created in confrontation with the job stressors, this study examines the relationship between the burnout variables and hardiness among the university teachers.

### **Research Background**

An investigation has been carried out about the hardiness, job involvement and burnout among the university teachers. The findings revealed that the whole hardiness factors are negatively correlated with the emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, it was found that commitment and total hardiness are negatively correlated with depersonalization. Applying regression analysis, the results showed that commitment and total hardiness are the predictors of burnout among the university teachers (Kobasa, Maddi & Kahn, 1982).

In another study, Delahij, Gillrd & VanDam (2010) coping styles and the coping mechanisms of the individuals in response to the stressful situations have been investigated and the results showed that the relationship between hardiness and the response to the stressful situations are adjusted by the content of the personality traits such as coping efficacy and coping skills.

The findings of a study revealed that hardiness is more or less an acquired trait and it might be formed by a special parenting practice (Taghizadeh, 2005). This study aimed to examine the relationship between hardiness and parenting styles of the students of Alzahra University of Iran.

### **Research Questions**

The main objective of this study is to examine and compare the hardiness and burnout in addition to measuring the correlation between these variables among the teachers of the Imam Javad University Collage of Yazd. Hardiness is the variable measured by three factors of commitment, control and challenge. Burnout is also measured by the three factors of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and loss

of a sense of personal accomplishment. Based on the above mentioned points, this study contains one main question and nine subsidiary questions:

The main question:

1. Is hardiness related to burnout among the teachers of Imam Javad University College?

The subsidiary questions:

2. Is the emotional exhaustion related to the commitment among the teachers of Imam Javad University College?

3. Is the emotional exhaustion related to the control among the teachers of Imam Javad University College?

4. Is the emotional exhaustion related to the challenge among the teachers of Imam Javad University College?

5. Is the depersonalization related to the commitment among the teachers of Imam Javad University College?

6. Is the depersonalization related to the control among the teachers of Imam Javad University College?

7. Is the depersonalization related to the challenge among the teachers of Imam Javad University College?

8. Is the loss of a sense of personal accomplishment related to the commitment among the teachers of Imam Javad University College?

9. Is the loss of a sense of personal accomplishment related to the control among the teachers of Imam Javad University College?

10. Is the loss of a sense of personal accomplishment related to the challenge among the teachers of Imam Javad University College?

### **Methodology**

Since this study examines the hardiness and burnout of the teachers, this is a survey descriptive study. In a survey, the characteristics of the individuals are examined and the objective is to recognize the char-

acteristics, opinions, attitudes, behaviors and other issues related to the population. Hafeznia (2009). This study examines the hardiness and burnout. On the other hand, the relationship between burnout and hardiness and their components are investigated. Consequently, this is a correlation study which seeks to find whether there is a relationship and correlation between two things or two groups. That is, the correlation study examines whether the changes in an item lead to a change in the other item and it also determines the degree of this relationship (Hafeznia, 2009).

The reliability of the questionnaire is examined by re-measurement method. Initially, the questionnaire is distributed among a group composed of 15 individuals and the questionnaire is again distributed among them after two weeks. The findings showed that Chronbach's alphas of the population are 0.91 for the emotional exhaustion, 0.87 for the depersonalization and 0.84 for the loss of a sense of personal accomplishment. Furthermore, Chronbach's alpha is 0.87, 0.89 and 0.84 for the components of commitment, respectively.

### Population and Sample

The population of this study is composed of the teachers of a higher education institute. The total number of the teachers is 120 individuals. Due to the definite population, Cochran's formula is used and the variance is equal to  $p(p-1)$  because the variance of the population is not definite. The value of  $p$  is equal to  $q$  (0.5) and thus far the variance of the population is maximized. The percent of error is 0.05 and the sample size is determined to be 53 individuals.

Using random sampling, the questionnaires were distributed among the teachers. Generally, 70 questionnaires were distributed in the university and finally 60 of them were returned.

## Results

### Description of the sample and its characteristics

To describe the data, the frequency and relative frequency tables are applied. Generally, 37 percent of the population is constituted of the male teachers and this amounts to 63 percent of the female teachers.

**Table 1. Number of male and female teachers**

	Female teachers	Male teachers	Total
Number	38	22	60
Percent	63	37	100

According to table 2, it was found that the highest frequency of the employment status relates to the lecturers and the least frequency is for the official masters.

**Table 2. Frequency and percentage of the employment status**

Employment status	Frequency	Percent
Official Masters	8	3/13
Contracted Masters	12	20
Lecturers	40	7/66
Total	60	100

### Inferential Statistics

According to the abnormal distribution of the variables, non-parametric correlation coefficient (Spearman) is applied which measures the significance level of the statistics at the level of 0.01. The results of each hypothesis are separately shown.

*The first hypothesis:* There is a relationship between emotional exhaustion and commitment of the teachers.

**Table 3. Correlation coefficient between emotional exhaustion and commitment of the teachers**

Variables	Correlation coefficient	Sig. level
Emotional exhaustion	419/0-	001/0
Commitment		

Based on the table above, the correlation coefficient between the commitment and emotional exhaustion is found to be 0.419. In addition, the significance level is lower than 0.01 and it rejects the null hypothesis. Stated another way, there is a relationship between emotional exhaustion and the commitment of the teachers.

*The second hypothesis:* There is a relationship between emotional exhaustion and the control of the teachers.

**Table 4. Correlation coefficient of emotional exhaustion and the control of the teachers**

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Sig.level
Emotional Exhaustion	343/0-	007/0
Control		

Table above indicates that the correlation coefficient between the emotional exhaustion and control

is 0.343 and the significance level (0.007) which is less than 0.01 rejects the null hypothesis proposing that there is no linear relationship between emotional exhaustion and control. In other words, there is a relationship between emotional exhaustion and the control.

*The third hypothesis:* There is a relationship between emotional exhaustion and the challenge of the teachers.

**Table 5. Correlation coefficient between emotional exhaustion and challenge**

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. Level
Emotional exhaustion	406/0-	009/0
Challenge		

As it is shown in the table above, the correlation coefficient between the two variables of challenge and emotional exhaustion (0.406) and the significance level (0.009), it is found that the null hypothesis is rejected. In other words, it is confirmed that there is an association between emotional exhaustion and the challenge of the teachers.

*The fourth hypothesis:* There is a relationship between depersonalization and commitment of the teachers.

**Table 6. Correlation coefficient between depersonalization and commitment**

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. Level
Depersonalization	402/0-	006/0
Commitment		

As the table above shows, the correlation coefficient between the two variables is 0.402 and the significance level is 0.006, then it can be concluded that there is a relationship between depersonalization and commitment.

*The fifth hypothesis:* There is a relationship between depersonalization and control of the teachers

**Table 7. Correlation coefficient between depersonalization and control**

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Sig.level
Depersonalization	505/0-	001/0
Control		

According to this table, it is shown that the correlation coefficient between the two variables is 0.505 and the significance level (0.001) is lower than

0.01 and therefore it can be concluded that there is a relationship between depersonalization and control.

*The sixth hypothesis:* There is a relationship between depersonalization and challenge.

**Table 8. Correlation coefficient between depersonalization and challenge**

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. level
Depersonalization	407/0-	002/0
Challenge		

The correlation coefficient (0.407) and the significance level (0.002) confirm the relationship between depersonalization and challenge.

*The seventh hypothesis:* There is a relationship between loss of a sense of personal accomplishment and commitment

**Table 9. Correlation coefficient between loss of a sense of personal accomplishment and commitment**

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. Level
loss of a sense of personal accomplishment	507/0	003/0
Commitment		

As shown in the table above, it is found that the correlation coefficient (0.507) and the significance level (0.003) confirm the relationship between loss of a sense of personal accomplishment and commitment.

*The eighth hypothesis:* There is a relationship between loss of a sense of personal accomplishment and control.

**Table 10. Correlation coefficient between loss of a sense of personal accomplishment and control**

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. Level
Loss of a sense of personal accomplishment	473/0	006/0
Control		

According to the table above, the correlation coefficient between the loss of a sense of personal accomplishment and control is 0.473 and the significance level is 0.006 which is less than 0.01 and it can be concluded that the null hypothesis is rejected. Stated another way, there is a relationship between loss of a sense of personal accomplishment and control.

*The ninth hypothesis:* There is a relationship between loss of a sense of personal accomplishment and challenge.

**Table 11. Correlation coefficient between the loss of a sense of personal accomplishment and challenge**

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. Level
Loss of a sense of personal accomplishment	506/0	001/0
Challenge		

According to the above table, the correlation coefficient between the loss of a sense of personal accomplishment and challenge is 0.506 and the significance level is found to be 0.001 which is lower than 0.01. As a result, it can be concluded that there is an association between the loss of a sense of personal accomplishment and the challenge.

According to the findings, it is concluded that burn out and the hardiness of the teachers are associated.

## Conclusions

The present study examines the relationship between burnout and hardiness. Based on the prior literature, there are three factors of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and loss of a sense of personal accomplishment for burnout. Furthermore, hardiness has been measured by the three factors of commitment, control and challenge.

In relation to the second, third and fourth hypotheses, the statistical findings reveal that the commitment, control and challenge are correlated at -0.419, -0.343 and -0.406, respectively. Accordingly, it is found that the commitment, control and challenge are inversely correlated with the emotional exhaustion. In terms of the relationship between commitment and emotional exhaustion, Loonstra, Brouwers & Tomic (2009) believes that an individual with strong characteristics accepts the intrinsic limitations and does not need the authentication of the others. These individuals will not suffer the early emotional exhaustion because they spend less energy for making others satisfied. They also have internal motivations instead of the external motivations and dynamics which will lead to less emotional exhaustion (Loonstra, Brouwers & Tomic, 2009)

In terms of the inverse relationship between the control and emotional exhaustion, it is concluded that the control is similar to the scope of internal control. Furthermore, Akca & Yaman (2010) indicates that there is a negative association between the scope of internal control and emotional exhaustion because the individuals find themselves dominant over the affairs and they look at the issues in a positive manner.

This would cause the individuals to spend less energy for involving in the subjective matters.

Considering the inverse relationship between challenge and emotional exhaustion, it is found that the strong challenge causes individuals to accept the changes and become very successful and have significant improvement. According to (Garrosa, Moreno-jimenez, Liang & Gonzalez, 2008) increasing the personal success decreases the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

In terms of the fifth, sixth and seventh hypotheses, it is found that there is a relationship between commitment, control and challenge. The statistical findings reveal that they are correlated at -0.402, -0.505 and -0.407 levels, respectively.

Given the inverse relationship between commitment and depersonalization, we found that depersonalization derives from the job failure. Those individuals who have low commitment tend to be encouraged and appreciated by the others and lack of appreciation of the others makes them pessimism and suffer job failure. When one's job does not provide more opportunities for his encouragement, it might be proposed that his talents exceed the job requirements and this leads to disappointment and frustration which will finally strength the depersonalization.

In relation to the inverse relationship between control and depersonalization and consistent with the findings of Grousa et al (2008), high conflicts in interaction with the others leads to depersonalization. Confrontation of the individuals with much conflict or volume of works, resolve the organizational problems by time management and will not suffer job failure or depersonalization because of the delays in the jobs.

In terms of the inverse relationship between challenge and depersonalization, it is found that the strong challenging individuals become more successful in their life and jobs. Therefore, these individuals will not suffer the job failure and depersonalization.

Additionally, the remaining hypotheses explain that there is a relationship between commitment, control and challenge. The statistical findings indicate that the correlation between the commitment and loss of a sense of personal accomplishment is 0.507, the correlation between control and personal success is 0.473 and the correlation between challenge and personal success is 0.506.

Based on the findings, it is concluded that there is a relationship between the hardiness and any of the dimensions of the burnout. It is found that the hardy individuals have positive attitudes toward the changes and consider them necessary for their improvement, gain

more success in their life and job and this means that burnout decreases in terms of the loss of a sense of personal accomplishment. It must be mentioned that the loss of a sense of personal accomplishment is measured inversely. Consistent with the increases in the personal success, the individuals receive more incentives and this increases coping with the problems. This characteristic of the hardy individuals involved in their operations and activities causes an increase in the motivations and finally the reduction in the emotional exhaustion.

The hardy individuals believe that they have control over their jobs and are capable of finding solutions for each problem and this leads them to overemphasize on their own responsibilities and do not blame others for the deficiencies. Therefore, they are not involved in pessimism and this directs to reduced depersonalization.

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