



**THE EFFECT OF THE DIMENSIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL  
PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL ON HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS'  
BURNOUT**

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**ABSTRACT**

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of organizational psychological capital dimensions on the burnout of teachers. The research design is quantitative and the research method is descriptive-analytical. The statistical population included all high school teachers of Behbahan city, Iran (N=450). Sample size (n=208) was determined using Morgan Table and the sample was selected using stratified random sampling method. Maslach Burnout Inventory (2002) and Luthans et al. (2007) psychological capital questionnaire were used for data collection. Simple linear and multivariate regression was used for data analysis. Data analysis showed that there is a negative and significant correlation between psychological capital and teachers' burnout (-0.682) and 46% of the variance of the variable of burnout is explained by the variable of psychological capital. Data analysis also showed that of the four dimensions of psychological capital, the component of resiliency with ( $\beta = -0.83$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) is the most capable component predicting burnout. Moreover the component of optimism with ( $\beta = -0.128$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) is in the second place and the two dimensions of hope with ( $\beta = -0.048$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) and self-efficacy with ( $\beta = -0.010$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) were not able to predict burnout. The results of this study indicated that by increasing teachers' psychological capital, their burnout reduces. Accordingly, in order to reduce teachers' burnout, educational authorities are required to strengthen different dimensions of psychological capital.

**Keywords:** Burnout, Organizational psychological capital, Teachers, Education, Iran

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## INTRODUCTION

Job operator's lethargy, weakness and exhaustion, the so-called "burnout", is one of the concepts that has attracted the attention of behavioral and management scholars in recent years (Saatchi, 2014). Burnout harms mental health that is formed in connection with the job. Burnout is a phenomenon that can often affect each individual's performance in an organization due to the organizational consequences that may follow. Burnout makes a sense of inability to do tasks, decreases efficiency, reduces interest, and leads to unwillingness to initiate a work (Ghodsi, 2007). The definition of burnout has been proposed by Maslach (2001). He believes that burnout is defined in terms of the three aspects of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduction of personal accomplishment.

It seems that burnout among teachers and nurses is more than any other social jobs; this is because of their initial enthusiasm to serve the community that quickly fades after starting the work and facing the reality of the world of work (Arizi et al., 2012). In addition to the adverse effects that burnout has on physical and mental health among teachers, it causes loss of productivity, academic failure, loss of educational vitality, academic burnout, increase of training costs and so on.

On the other hand, psychological capital is one of the constructs that can have a close relationship with burnout. In recent years, empirical and theoretical research orientations in the area of organization and management have been toward non-tangible issues such as emotional intelligence, emotional capital, intellectual capital, spiritual intelligence, psychological capital, social capital, spiritual capital, spiritual work environment and spiritual leadership.

Organizational psychological capital is seen as a driving force for personal progress, improving organizational performance, increasing revenue and creating competitive advantage for the organization. One of the major differences between psychological capital and other constructs in positive psychology and positive organizational study is that psychological capital is relatively malleable, flexible and can be developed (Luthans et al., 2007). Psychological capital, as a positive psychological state of the individual, reveals a new dimension of today's organizational development that is determined by the four following features: (1) having the confidence to succeed in challenging tasks (self-efficacy); (2) creating a positive attribution of success in the present and future (optimism); (3) Hanging on the way of goals and changing the path, if necessary, to achieve goals and success (hope); (4) greater attempts in achieving success in difficulties and taking more responsibility for development (resiliency) (Luthans et al., 2007). Because of its importance, the theory of psychological capital proposed by Luthans et al. (2007) is the basis of the present study.

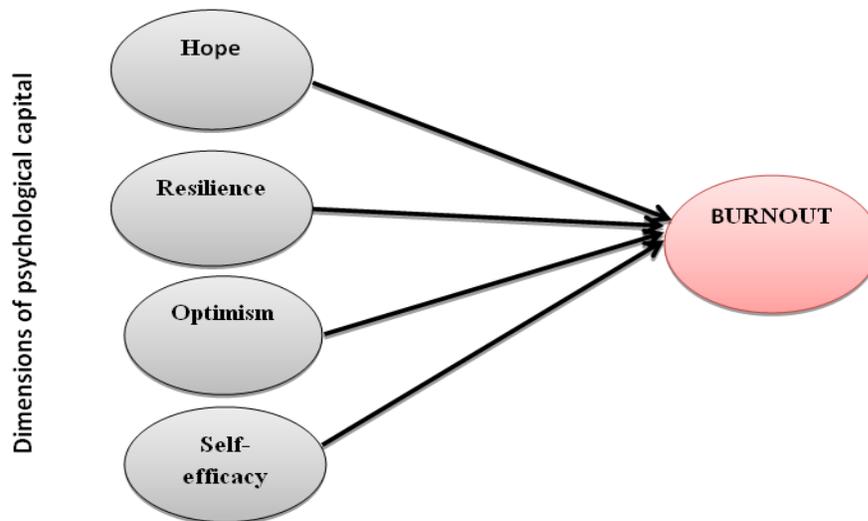
Retrospective studies have shown that psychological capital is correlated with a diverse range of variables such as performance in occupational and social status, commitment, satisfaction, anxiety, perceived stress, ability to cope with the pressures and problems, seeking behaviors, happiness and well-being (Golparvar, 2013).

In fact, Luthans et al. (2007) believe that psychological capital improves the value of human capital (individuals' knowledge and skills) and social capital (the network of relationships among them) and thus, reduces burnout in the organization by relying on positivism psychological variables such as hope and self-efficacy. Lots of studies have been conducted on the psychological capital of employees' working environment and other organizational variables as well as burnout and most of them have found that psychological capital is an important element in the organization and plays an effective role in reducing depression and burnout (Rahimi et al., 2012; Mortazavi et al., 2012; Mahmoodvand, 2013; Alipoor et al., 2013; Gu, 2011; Madden, 2013).



Therefore, taking into account that the educational system in Iran is focused, and schools and teachers have a significant role in improving the country's growth indices, and also given the focal role of education in the country's development, burnout reduction is of high importance. Also since the identification of ways to prevent or reduce burnout will promote individuals' mental health and improve the quality of education, the main objective of this study is to predict high school teachers' burnout in Behbahan city, Iran, through the dimensions of psychological capital. The importance of this research is that by identifying the level of teachers' burnout, necessary planning can be done to reduce its impact. It also reveals the extent to which psychological capital can be effective in reducing burnout. Therefore, one of the important factors of this study is to achieve the necessary knowledge to reduce burnout among high school teachers.

### THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



**Figure1: Conceptual framework of the study**

The above figure represents the conceptual framework of the study extracted by the researchers based on the theories and literatures in the field of subject matter. Moreover, description of each of these factors is expressed in the section of problem statement and theoretical foundations. Thus, according to the conceptual framework, the Researchers expect the four dimensions of psychological capital to affect teachers' burnout. Identifying the effect of these dimensions and its level is one of the objectives of this research.

### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the effect of psychological capital dimensions on high school teachers' burnout in Behbahan city, Iran
2. To identify the effect of organizational psychological capital dimensions on high school teachers' burnout in Behbahan city, Iran (self-efficacy, hope, optimism, resilience).



## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Burnout***

Burnout can be defined as a response to chronic stress and work or organizational pressures (Saatchi, 2014). Burnout is the inability to do the job effectively that is caused because of the extensive and long-term occupational stress (Ahmadi, 2002). This phenomenon can be seen more among the staff whose work requires close contact with other people (Azadeh & Salimi, 2014). Farber (2003) believes that job burnout is a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by direct and long-term confrontation with people under circumstances emotionally demanding. From the perspective of Paynes and Aronson (1981), burnout can be considered as physical and emotional fatigue syndrome that is the result of the development of negative occupational tendencies and loss of feeling and interest in the work (Nobakhat & Oliaiee, 2012).

Burnout describes a psychological state that is caused by dysfunctional coping strategies in the face of stress. This syndrome is gradually created after a period of experiencing occupational and emotional stressors and affects different aspects of individual's job and occupational quality (Pejuskevic et al., 2011).

From the perspective of Lloyd and Leslie (2008), burnout occurs when the work that is done becomes sounds inaudible after a short time and it can also be a result of anxiety, or a variety of tasks related to the individual or the result of individual factors. Maslach et al. (2001) believed that burnout has three main components, namely emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion (chronic fatigue, sleep disturbance, various physical symptoms) appears as loss of energy and carrying away mental power. Depersonalization: (negative reaction, devoid of emotion with extreme indifference to colleagues and clients, feeling guilty, isolation, loss of work and daily activity) means mental separation of a person from his/her job and reduction of feeling. Lack of personal accomplishment (reduced sense of competence and success in career, job dissatisfaction, feelings of failure, loss of judgment and understanding) is a permanent sense of extortion and exploitation and decreased job performance (Maslach et al., 2001).

### ***Signs and Symptoms of Burnout***

Indicators and symptoms of burnout is included the following:

1. Emotional indicators: lack of interest in job, depression, feelings of helplessness and inability, feelings of not being accepted and encouraged, feelings of being detached from others and alienation, feelings of indifference, blame and hatred
2. Attitudinal indicators: skepticism, mistrust of management and their workplace, complain and suspicion;
3. Behavioral indicators: being biodegradable and aggressive, withdrawal from others, reduction of the ability to perform job duties, limiting social activities and increasing problems with the authorities, bosses and colleagues and family;
4. Psychological indicators: fatigue, muscle pain, infection, headache, sleep disorders, digestive disorders and recurrent cold;
5. Organizational indicators: decrease in handling client demands, decline in moral and spiritual dimensions, increasing the number of cases of misconduct, absenteeism, turnover and accidents at work (Hershenson & Power, 1987).

In some periods of life, a feeling of hopelessness, anger, depression, frustration and anxiety is normal. However, people in the state of burnout experience these negative emotions more than the usual. In the worst situation, people complain of a kind of fatigue or emotional impairment (Beverly Potter, 1998). As conclusion , burnout is



specified with a decline in job enthusiasm and brightness (Fooladband, 2006) That follows by complications and physical exhaustion (Saatchi, 1997).

### ***Organisational Psychological Capital***

Psychological capital refers to the positive psychological states that reflect employees' state of efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience (Bandura, 1997). Moreover, psychological capital is rooted in Positive Organizational Behavior and Positive Psychology (Luthans, 2002). Luthans et al. have proposed another form of capital as psychological capital, and claim that in addition to the social capital and human capital capabilities, this capital can also go beyond them and can be exploited as competitive advantage for today organizations (Luthans, Youssef & Avey, 2007; Luthans & Youssef, 2004). Luthans has proposed a new approach called positive organizational behavior toward human resource management by combining the two factors of positive psychological states and positive organizations. Positive Organizational Behavior refers to the positive study and application of psychological strengths and capacity of human resources (Luthans, 2002; Luthans et al., 2007; Luthans et al., 2007).

### ***Dimensions and Psychological Capital Variables***

Based on studies and expert opinions psychological capital has the following dimensions:

**Self-Efficacy:** Self-Efficacy in nature is something that can be learnt and is not a genetic gift and it begins from the period of breast feeding and will continue throughout life. According to the theory and extensive research done about self-efficacy, Bandura (1997) has defined self-efficacy or simply self-confidence as "firm belief in one's ability to mobilize the motivational and cognitive resources and strategies required to do specific duties on certain conditions successful" (Ghanenya, 2014). However, people with high self-efficacy have features such as setting high goals for themselves, taking risks, having high motivation, effort and perseverance to achieve their goals (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998, quoted in Nasr Esfahani et al., 2012).

**Hope :** Snyder et al. (1991) defines hope as a positive motivational state arising from the sense of achievement derived from two factors: 1) functionality (goal-directed energy), and 2) pathway (planning to achieve the target).

**Optimism:** optimism can be considered as a documentary style in which a person attributes positive events to overall and stable documents or herself and attributes negative events to external, unstable factors and specific situations. Optimists believe that adversity can be managed successfully, but pessimists expect miserably (Snyder & Lopez, 2002).

**Resilience:** Luthans (2002) considers resilience as the ability to return to a normal situation in the face of disaster, conflict, failure or positive events, progress and responsibility. Resilient individuals are those who accept the truth and firmly adhere to consistent and meaningful values and beliefs and have effective mechanism of adaptation that allows them to flexibly respond to unexpected situations (Hosseinpoor & Alizadeh, 2012) .

### ***The Relationship between Psychological Capital and Burnout***

People with high self-efficacy have features such as setting high goals for themselves, taking risks, having high motivation, effort and perseverance to achieve their goals and all of these goals somehow lead to the reduction of burnout (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998, quoted in Nasr Esfahani et al., 2012).



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Hope requires a high degree of independence. If the employee has a narrow and meticulous manager, he will be easily discouraged and disappointed, since he has not control over his work. Hopeful staff has a strong need for growth and success and is motivated primarily by rich jobs. Hopeful staff tends to be creative and does not care for problems and takes risks.

Also, an organization that has a realistic optimism, does not allow a success to cause a false satisfaction and organizational rigor, but also reinvests on the subsequent successes and continues its way. This is something that binds optimism and resilience (Hosseinpur & Alizadeh, 2012).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Research design***

The present study is quantitative in terms of its research design. Quantitative studies deal with numbers for data analysis and usually use questionnaire for data collection. This study is also an applied study in terms of its objective and it is a descriptive - survey study in terms of data collection and analysis methods. (Sarmad et al., 2013).

### ***Population and Sampling***

The statistical population consisted of all high school (second grade) teachers of Behbahan city, Iran (N = 450). Sample size (n=208) was determined using Morgan Table through stratified random sampling method and taking into account participants' gender. From among the selected sample, 93 are female (44.7%) and 115 are male (55.3%).

### ***Instrumentation***

In the present study, two standard questionnaires of burnout and psychological capital have been used for data collection. Maslach (2002) burnout questionnaire has been used to measure burnout, which consists of three components (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduction of personal accomplishment) and 22 items (9 items on emotional exhaustion, 5 items on depersonalization, and 8 items on reduction of personal accomplishment). Malekara (2009) has reported the reliability of the above questionnaire to be 0.86 in his study.

Luthans et al.'s (2007a) questionnaire on psychological capital was used to measure employees' psychological capital. The questionnaire consists of 24 items and 4 subscales of hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy; questions 1 to 6 are related to the subscale of self-efficacy, questions 7 to 12 are related to the subscale of hope, questions 13 to 18 are related to the subscale of resilience, and questions 19 to 24 are related to the subscale of optimism and all of them developed based on 5 Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = disagree 3= No idea; 4= agree; 5= Strongly agree) ,and the reliability of the questionnaire in Iran has been estimated by Bahadori Khosroshahi et al. (2012) as 0.97.

In order to determine the reliability of the questionnaire of psychological capital, Cronbach's alpha was used and the results are presented in the following table.



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Table 1

*Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the questionnaires of burnout and psychological capital*

Questionnaires	Components	Cronbach's alpha
Burnout	emotional exhaustion	0.89
	depersonalization	0.76
	reduction of personal accomplishment	0.77
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0.89</b>
psychological capital	Self-efficacy	0.80
	Hope	0.84
	Resilience	0.714
	Optimism	0.70
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0.90</b>

### **Data Collection Process**

The first step in collecting data is obtaining relevant licenses. After obtaining permission from the Ministry of Education, the questionnaires were distributed among teachers and completed questionnaires were returned to the researcher to analyze the data.

### **Data analysis**

According to the nature of the study, Analysis of this study is consisted of descriptive Statistic and inferential Statistic. Indicators of mean and standard deviation (SD) have been used in descriptive level and Pearson correlation coefficient and multivariate regression have been used in inferential level.

### **FINDINGS**

In this section, descriptive statistics is presented in terms of gender and education.

Table 2

*Descriptive statistics of respondents in terms of gender*

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	93	44.7
Male	115	55.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>100</b>



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Table above shows the frequency distribution and the percentage of respondents in terms of the gender variable. The study subjects consisted of 208 people, of which 93 (44.7%) were female and 115 (55.3%) were male.

Table 3  
*Demographic variables related to respondents' education*

Education	Frequency	Percentage
Diploma	1	0.5
Associate degree	8	3.8
BA	157	75.5
MA and higher	42	20.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>100</b>

Table above shows the frequency distribution and the percentage of respondents in terms of the education variable. One person (0.5%) had a diploma and lower, 8 people (3.8%) had an associate degree, 157 people (75%) had a BA degree and 42 people (20.2%) had an MA degree or higher.

Table 4  
*Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) of the research variables*

Research variables	Number	Mean	SD
Job Burnout	208	2.57	18.8886
psychological capital	208	4.9371	0.61727

The results of the above table shows that the average teachers participating in the study, their average job burnout 2.57, and 4.937 is psychological capital. The above table shows that the standard deviation of teachers in psychological capital index is much less of job burnout.

To investigate the issue that psychological capital can predict high school teachers' burnout in Behbahan city (iran), simple regression analysis has been used. The results of this test are shown in the following table.

Table 5  
*Pearson correlation coefficient between psychological capital and Burnout*

Model	Correlation coefficient	The square of correlation coefficient	The square of the adjusted correlation coefficient	Standard error of estimation
1	0.682 <sup>a</sup>	0.466	0.463	13.84069

a. Predicting psychological capital (constant)

The above table shows the correlation coefficient, the square of correlation coefficient or coefficient of determination of psychological capital and burnout, so that the correlation between the above variables is 0.682 and it is in a high level. The coefficient of determination indicates that 46 percent of the changes in the dependent variable of burnout are covered by psychological capital. In addition, Multivariate regression has been used to



determine the contribution of each dimensions of psychological capital in predicting teachers' burnout and the results are provided below.

Table 6  
*Predicting burnout based on the dimensions of psychological capital*

Model	Non-standard Coefficients		Standard Coefficients	T	Sig.
	Standard error	B	Beta		
Constant value	6.155	149.622		24.309	0.000
Self-efficacy	-0.310	1.378	-0.010	-0.255	0.822
Hope	1.167	1.205	-0.048	0.869	0.334
Resiliency	-15.204	0.725	-0.831	-20.969	0.000
Optimism	0.998	-2.911	-0.128	-2.917	0.004

As can be seen in Table 6, of the four dimensions of psychological capital, the component of resiliency and optimism can predict burnout; the beta coefficient of each of them is -0.83 and -0.128, respectively. The highest capability of predicting burnout is at the significance level of 0.01 for the component of resiliency. This means that the greater the resilience of teachers is, their burnout will be reduced to the same degree.

It should be noted that, the two components of self-efficacy and hope don't have a role in predicting burnout; in other words, the two variables are not capable of predicting burnout. The beta coefficient of these two variables is shown in the above table.

## DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of psychological capital dimensions on high school teachers' burnout in Behbahan city, Iran. The results showed that psychological capital is able to predict burnout among teachers. Interpretation of the results suggests that strengthening psychological dimensions among teachers is one of the important and affective factors in reducing burnout. Using psychological capital, mental strength can be eliminated and defense against stress can be strengthened. Thus, since stress is the main cause of burnout, increasing level of psychological capital can reduce its level. This finding is consistent with the results of Rahimi et al. (2012), Mortazavi et al., (2012), Mahmoodvand (2013), Gu (2011), and Madden (2013).

In other section, Data analysis also showed that of the four components of psychological capital, the two components of resiliency and optimism can predict burnout. In explaining this finding, it should be noted that, as Dyer et al. (1996) have pointed, the component of resiliency is a perseverance-oriented dimension and is based on flexibility that has oncoming of dominance and coping skills, which can be a factor for reducing burnout. Optimism is considered as an attribution style that the person attributes positive events to general and stable documents or his self and attributes negative events to external, unstable factors and specific situations. As a result of these different expressive and attribution styles, optimists create positive expectations in themselves that encourage them to achieve the goals and to adopt flexible behaviors in dealing with problems (Luthans et al., 2007); therefore, optimists and people who have higher levels of resilience experience burnout less than others.



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Another result of this review, the findings of this study also showed that the two components of self-efficacy and hope cannot predict burnout. In explaining this finding, it can be said that although self-efficacy and hope are important components of psychological capital and psychological capital is so important in increasing mental health, organizational health and thus, in reducing burnout, but there was a limited relationship between these factors and reduction of burnout among teachers in this study. This result is more likely due to the status of this job in Iran; teachers may consider limited correlation between self-efficacy and hope and reduction of burnout and consider this job as an efficient and promising one, in which other factors are more related to burnout. This is consistent with the results of Rahimi et al. (2012), Mortazavi et al. (2012), Mahmadvand (2013), Gu (2011) and Madden (2013).

## CONCLUSION

As a concluding remark, it can be said that since the concept of psychological capital and intervention model of Luthans are so new and are just recently raised in scientific texts, more researches are needed to draw stronger conclusions in this context. In general, the results of this study provided evidence that organizational psychological capital affects reduction of teachers' burnout. Therefore, through improvement of psychological capital (self-efficacy, hope, optimism and flexibility) officials can help teachers learn the ways of dealing with burnout and move toward more efficiency.

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