The Application of Psychological Capital Theory in the University Teachers’ Job Burnout Intervention

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Abstract: China’s university teachers have been working under increasing pressure, and the phenomenon of job burnout has been very serious, which is not only a serious threat to the physical and mental health, but also affects the development of education. This article discusses the causes of university teachers’ job burnout, propose the countermeasure of intervention to university teachers’ job burnout from the point of psychological capital development, and strengthen psychological capital management to prevent and reduce job burnout.

Keywords: Job burnout, psychological capital, university teacher

1. Introduction

Research on burnout began in the 20th century 70s. Freuden Berger first proposed the concept of burnout in 1974. He thought burnout is a symptom of emotional exhaustion, which is most likely to appear at work; when the requirements of work itself on the individual’s abilities, energy and resources is overdone, thus leading to worker emotional exhaustion and exhaustion, the burnout phenomenon arises. In the past three decades job burnout has been a hot topic in the fields of organizational behavior and human resource management in the west countries. Recently, it is reported that job burnout has become one of the main topics in the United States Conference of Human Resources.

Teachers are the high risk group with rising job burnout. University teachers’ job burnout is the exhaustion condition of mood, attitude and behavior caused by the teacher who can not successfully cope with the pressure, and its typical symptoms are the loss of work enthusiasm and interest, low job satisfaction and the alienation and indifference of feelings. In China, the phenomenon is also very serious, which will not only damage the teachers’ physical health, but also affect their normal work. Therefore, it that how timely intervene in teachers’ job burnout, prevent and reduce burnout has become a serious problem.

2. The cause of university teachers’ job burnout

University teachers’ job burnout is not a timely response to a special time, but a low emotional intensity of the progressive reaction caused by the work pressures in a long period of time. The reasons causing job burnout are omnifarious, and through the specific analysis of the character, the nature and the environment of Chinese University teachers’ work, it is found the main reasons are the following areas.

2.1 The difference between ideal and praxis

The importance of education to society decides the teachers is a highly creative work, so the teachers have to bear the high social expectations. Each link of teaching is full of creativity, and it is a high demand whether the teachers can adequately exert the initiative and creativity, especially university teachers. For instance, from the content of teaching, it is always a dynamic and developing area, which requires university teachers to stand in the forefront of academic development, keeps learning and mastering the latest research of science and technology and thus update their knowledge configuration and capacity structure. In this sense, teachers should become a lifelong learner and learning-based model of the individual. From the perspective of university teachers' teaching object, the undergraduates is a unique group. They are in the most active stage of life and there is full of individuality, initiative, creativity, development and other characteristics in them. It also requires teachers to use individualized
teaching methods to ensure science and effectiveness of the teaching. However in reality, the fixity and circulative periods of the subjects and courses greatly limits the teachers’ creativity. The teacher who teaches certain subjects and courses is always fixed in these, and cycle to cycle continuously does this job. In this process, if he can not get sublimation and perfect in this cycle, then it will very easily produce job burnout.

2.2 Unscientific management mechanism within the university
Many studies have found that the people who fewer participate in decision-making has a higher burnout. Schwabetal and other scholars found that in the following cases it would reduce university teachers’ job burnout. Firstly, they felt they have greater freedom and more self-determination in teaching. Secondly, they believed that they could participate in school’s decision-making. Finally, they felt their university have a clearly incentive mechanism.
In Chinese universities, most teachers rarely participate in management and appraisal system. They always carry out all kinds of internal management systems, and the need to be esteemed is not met, with much less subjective initiative and weakening enthusiasm inherent, thus burnout will naturally rise. It is found that whether domestic or foreign teachers both have much complaint about lacking of concern and tendance from university. Unscientific management and incentive system not only increased the workload, but also interfere with the teachers’ objectives, which is easily leading to academic corruption and make them eager for quick success and instant benefit. Reduction of normal intercourse between teachers and increased pressure easily make individual teachers to create depression, loneliness, anxiety. All of these is prone to arise job burnout.

2.3 Heavy burden and long hours of work
Teaching is a creative work, unlike workers’ automatical working or a simple duplication. Even for a fixed curriculum, teachers still have to prepare lessons in advance. In addition, teachers have to perform the arduous task of research after they complete a certain number of teaching mission. At the same time, the pressure of evaluating the title of a technical post is also very tremendous. Teacher itself is a very heavy and intense career. Long working hours and the responsibility of striving for perfection easily lead to physical pain and psychological pressure, and all this easily makes teachers exhausted, physically and mentally exhausted.

3. The university teachers’ job burnout intervention

3.1 Psychological capital theory
The concept of psychological capital first appeared in economics, investment science and sociology literature. Luthans and other scholars explicitly defined psychological capital for the first time as the generally positive psychological factors of individual in 2005. Its idiographic representation is the mental state of positive organizational behavior. It exceeds the human capital and social capital, and it can make individuals gain a competitive advantage by a investment and development. In 2007, Luthans, Youssef and Avolio revised the definition of psychological capital, and considered that it is the positive psychological development states of individual and its characteristics include: (1) confidence or self-efficacy: perform and pay the necessary efforts to have successfully completed the challenging task; (2) optimism: positive attribution to the current and future success; (3) hope: adhere to objective and if necessary, re-select the line to achieve target; (4) resilience: when facing problems and difficulties, insist, resume quickly and take other ways to the success.

3.2 The application of psychological capital theory
Psychological capital is based on positive organizational behavior theory. It is an important personal positive mental energy, a positive state in specific situations of individual treatment tasks, performance and success. It can have a significant positive effect on the individual cognitive processes, job satisfaction and performance. Psychological capital emphasizes the individual initiative and merit and the focus is the individual's mental state. Therefore, by developing psychological capital, the universitise
can strengthen psychological capital management, and prevent and reduce job burnout, as shown in Figure 1.

### 3.2.1 Participation in management
Self-efficacy refers to the confidence about individual accomplishing their task or overcoming some challenges. It is not the real ability or skills in individual, but their ability to self-evaluation and subjective judgment. Bandura emphasized that these people who only believe that they achieve the desired effect and could prevent undesirable results would have the motivation to act. Research shows that the impact of self-efficacy on job performance is stronger than other factors, such as goal setting, feedback, and personality factors. Self-efficacy also has positive correlation with job satisfaction and organizational commitment, while negative correlation with turnover intention and indolence. Blanc thought that people who higher participate in management have stronger sense of identity with the work and could enhance self-efficacy, so they would ultimately enhance organizational commitment, have positive job involvement and significantly lower burnout inventory. Therefore, it will improve their self-efficacy and reduce job burnout by enhancing participation in management

### 3.2.2 Cognitive restructuring
Hope is a positive and motivated state, which is based on the interaction between target-oriented initiative and the plan to achieve the goal. It not only reflects the individual's determination to achieve goals, but also include the confidence for individual to develop the perfect plan and determine an effective way to achieve the target. It is found that hope has a positive effect of job performance. Schaufeli and Co-hen-Katz believed that cognitive training could be effective in reducing burnout inventory. It changes the bad perception by influencing the method of the thinking and behavior to eliminate bad mood and behavior. Hence, it will prevent job burnout on account of cognitive restructuring by impacting the bad perception of their own work and developing a positive and active hope.

### 3.2.3 Relaxation training
Psychologists defined optimism as a cognitive characteristic of positive result expectation and causal
attribution. Optimist makes external, unstable and specific attribution on the negative events, and considers they can overcome difficulties and get the ultimate success with their own effort. The research of Kanji shows that it can reduce the burnout inventory by using laughter therapy. The purpose of this training is to lower the level of the whole body, preserve balance and stability of the inner environment, eliminate tension and keep optimistic.

3.2.4 Psychological counseling

Resilience refers to the good adaptation of individual facing adversity, ravage, threat and other fatal life stress; it means the capacity to rebound facing life stress and frustration. Sternberg, the President of the American Psychological Association, pointed out that the difference between the success and general people is the resilience when they face the failure and frustration. Dierendonck considered that psychological counseling is a process to help people accurately know themselves, accept themselves and appreciate themselves to overcome obstacles, change their bad consciousness and the negative tendency, fully exert their personal potential and achieve self-realization. Therefore, when teachers face the pressure and frustration, it takes certain psychological counseling for them to improve their resilience, to help them overcome obstacles and resume as soon as possible.

4. Summary

University is the last stage for most youngsters into the society, and the professionalism of university teachers will affect the students’ intending career development. Paying attention to university teachers is concerned about the society and the future. Only the society, universities and teachers themselves are all cognizant of the ponderance of job burnout, and take effective measures, the phenomenon of university teachers’ burnout can be expected to be prevented and relieved.

References