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Job Burnout, Engagement and Turnover Intention of Dietitians and Chefs at a Contract Foodservice Management Company*

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ABSTRACT

The purposes of the study were to assess levels of burnout, engagement, and turnover intention of dietitians and chefs and to investigate the relationships among the antecedents and consequences of burnout and engagement. A total of 257 dietitians and chefs at a contract foodservice management company in Korea were surveyed using a self-administered questionnaire. Burnout (exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy) and engagement (vigor, dedication, and absorption) were measured with three dimensions each. The dietitians showed significantly higher exhaustion ($p < .05$) and significantly lower vigor and dedication than the chefs ($ps < .05$). The exhaustion and cynicism dimensions of burnout were negatively correlated with all three dimensions of engagement ($ps < .001$) and positively correlated with turnover intention ($ps < .001$). The professional efficacy was positively correlated with all three engagement dimensions ($ps < .001$), but not with turnover intent. In addition, turnover intention was positively correlated with negative affectivity and workload and negatively correlated with vigor, dedication, and absorption. A series of hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to assess the effects of the personal (positive and negative affectivity) and situational factors (workload, interpersonal conflict) and job stresses on turnover intention. After removing the effects of the personal and situational factors, cynicism ($p < .01$) was the only significant predictor of turnover intention. Based on the findings, suggestions for recruiting and retaining qualified and motivated employees were provided. (*J Community Nutrition* 7(2) : 100~106, 2005)

KEY WORDS : job burnout · engagement · turnover intention · dietitians · chefs.

Introduction

Work-related stress is now an epidemic in the workplace. Problems and loss of productivity resulting from job stress were estimated to cost $300 billion every year in the U.S. (Schwartz 2004). Job stress is an important issue for the health and safety of workers. Prolonged exposure to job stress results in psychological erosion, which is called as job burnout (Etzion 1987). Since first stated by Freudenberger in 1974, job burnout has been recognized as a threat to the work force due to its negative effects on job retention, involvement, and performance.

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Job burnout is defined as "a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do 'people-work' of some kind" (Maslach, Jackson 1981). Job burnout consists of three sub-constructs : emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment (Maslach 2000). Emotional exhaustion (EE) refers to a lack of energy and a feeling that one's emotional resources are used up due to excessive psychological demands. Depersonalization (DP) is characterized by the treatment of others as objects rather than people through cynical and uncaring attitudes and behaviors. Diminished personal accomplishment (DPA) denotes a tendency to evaluate oneself negatively due to the failure to produce results. Each subdimension of job burnout captures unique aspects of job burnout (Maslach 1993). EE is about the stress component, whereas DP is about interpersonal relations and DPA is a self-evaluation dimension.

Maslach, Jackson (1981) initially claimed that job burnout only occurs in the human services, which have a distinctive

feature of "direct customer contact" experiences. Their well-known job burnout measurement-the Maslach Burnout Inventory(MBI) - was originally developed for human service jobs(MBI-Human Services Survey or MBI-HSS) and educators(MBI-Educators Survey or MBI-ES). Since the concept of job burnout has been expanded to include a broad set of jobs, Schaufeli et al.(1996) developed a general survey version of MBI(MBI-General Survey or MBI-GS). The MBI-GS includes three job burnout dimensions : exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy, which parallel EE, DP, and DPA of the original MBI respectively.

A number of antecedents and consequences of job burnout have been investigated to understand fully workplace stress and its outcomes(Cordes, Dougherty 1993). Researchers suggested incorporating individual and situational factors into burnout models as antecedents of burnout(Iverson et al. 1998). Affectivity was identified as an individual factor related to perception of job stressors. Positive affectivity(PA) and negative affectivity(NA) refer to, respectively, "the disposition to perceive events and individuals in a generally positive and enthusiastic or negative manner"(Iverson et al. 2001).

Job burnout is also influenced by work itself and relationships at the workplace. Workload and time pressure are reported to increase burnout, particularly the exhaustion dimension. This result is found consistently with both self-reported measures of stress experience and objective measures such as working hours and number of clients(Maslach et al. 2001). Another situational factor to be considered is the social environment of the employees' work setting(Elloy et al. 2001). Supportive peer relationships were related to lower burnout levels(Savicki, Cooley 1987 ; Leiter 1988 ; Leiter, Maslach 1988 ; Lee, Ashforth 1996) and work group cohesiveness was negatively correlated with emotional exhaustion(Jackson et al. 1987). Informal contacts with colleagues also showed a negative relationship with emotional exhaustion and lack of personal accomplishment(Leiter 1988). With respect to supervisor relationships, similar results were found(Leiter, Maslach 1988).

The consequences of job burnout are important organizational issues. Job burnout has been found to be closely related with reduced organizational efficacy and work-related problems such as high turnover and absenteeism and low job involvement and job satisfaction(Cordes, Dougherty 1993). The high employee's turnover is one of the most challenging issues for the hospitality industry, which is characterized as a chronic labor shortage, long and unsociable working hours, and work under pressure for extended time periods(Ghiselli et al. 2001). The high turnover rate of part-time workers is problematic but turnover among managers is more concerning in the hospitality industry since their turnover not only results in loss of labor but also causes the disruption of management. The turnover rate among the middle managers in the hospitality industry is reported to be significantly higher than in other service industries(Vallen 1993 ; Ingram, Brown 2000). The positive relationships among job burnout and turnover and absenteeism are supported by empirical studies(Maslach et al. 2001).

A recent emerging trend on burnout research is shifted interest to the positive aspects of employees' well-being. From this perspective, burnout is supplemented by its positive opposite pole of job engagement and described as "an erosion of engagement with the job"(Maslach et al. 2001). Schaufeli et al.(2002) defined engagement as "a persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment in employees that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption." Vigor represents "high levels of energy and resilience, the willingness to invest effort in one's job, the ability to not be easily fatigued, and persistence in the face of difficulties" and dedication refers to "a strong involvement in one's work, accompanied by feelings of enthusiasm and significance, and by a sense of pride and inspiration." Absorption is characterized as "a pleasant state of total immersion in one's work, which is characterized by time passing quickly and being unable to detach oneself from the job"(Maslach et al. 2001). Researchers found that engaged employees have a sense of energetic and effective connection with their work activities and see themselves as able to deal completely with the demands of their jobs.

Foodservice corporations invest significant time and money on training chefs and dietitians, who usually take responsibility of managing unit operations. Their turnover results in a shortage of professional employees and quality problems as well as costs companies. Even when they remain in operations, high turnover intention prohibits employees from developing commitment to organizations, which may decrease productivity. The purposes of the study were to assess levels of burnout, engagement, and turnover intention of dietitians and chefs employed by a contract foodservice company and to investigate the relationships among antecedents and consequences of burnout and engagement.

Subjects and Methods

1. Participants and Procedure

The research population was dietitians and chefs employed by a contract foodservice management company in Korea. Researchers contacted a human resource(HR) director of the company and obtained cooperation for a survey. The HR director provided contact information of the unit managers. A packet of a cover letter explaining study purposes, questionnaires accompanied with small envelopes, and a postage-paid returning envelope were mailed to the unit managers, who distributed questionnaires and envelopes to dietitians and chefs at each unit operation. A follow-up email from the HR director was sent two weeks after the questionnaire mailing. The unit managers collected completed questionnaires and sent them to the researchers. A total of 834 questionnaires were distributed and 257 were returned(a response rate : 30.5%). Excluding responses with significant missing data, 254 responses were analyzed.

2. Measures

The questionnaire comprised five sections. Section 1 determined PA and NA with 20 items developed by Lee et al. (2003) for Korean settings. Coefficient alphas for the PA and NA were .87 and .91, respectively. In section 2, workload and interpersonal conflict were measured using 5 items each adopted from Spector and Jex's scale(1998). A sample item of the workload scale was "I often have to do more work than I can do well" and a sample of the interpersonal conflict was "I often get into arguments with others at work." Coefficient alpha reliability estimates of the workload and conflict were .88 and .78, respectively.

In section 3, job burnout and engagement were measured. Burnout was assessed with the MBI-GS of 18 items(Maslach et al. 1996). The scale consisted of three subscales : exhaustion(a sample item : "I feel emotionally drained from my work"), cynicism(a sample item : "I just want to do my job and not be bothered"), and professional efficacy(a sample item : "In my opinion I am good at my job"). Internal consistencies for the exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy dimensions were .87, .68, and .85. Engagement was assessed with 15 items adopted from Schaufeli, Enzmann (1998). Sample items were "I can continue working for very long periods at a time"(vigor), "I am proud of the work that I do"(dedication), and "Time flies when I am working" (absorption). Internal consistencies for the vigor, dedication, and absorption dimensions were .82, .91, and .84.

The respondents were also asked about their intent to leave. The turnover intention was measured using 3 items developed by Cummann et al.(1979). A representative item was "I will likely actively look for a new job in the next year." A coefficient alpha for the turnover intention was .76. Finally brief information was obtained about the respondents. A 7-point Likert scale was used ranging from 1(strongly disagree) to 7(strongly agree) for the all measures.

3. Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were calculated for the study constructs. T-test was performed to compare means of the constructs between dietitians and chefs and Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated among the study constructs. A series of hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to examine effects of job burnout and engagement on intention to leave. The analyses were performed with SPSS Win(10.0).

Results and Discussion

1. Respondent profile

The demographic information of the respondents is presented in Table 1. A strong gender bias was shown for the

Table 1. Descriptive characteristics of respondents

Variables	Dietitians(N = 64)	Chefs(N = 87)
Gender		
Female	63(98.4%)	10(11.8%)
Male	1(1.6%)	75(88.2%)
Educational background		
High school or less	0(0%)	21(25.0%)
Colleges/universities	61(95.3%)	61(72.6%)
Graduate schools	3(4.7%)	2(2.4%)
Age		
25 years or younger	18(31.0%)	8(9.9%)
26 - 30 years	32(55.2%)	32(39.5%)
31 - 35 years	6(10.4%)	23(28.4%)
36 - 40 years	2(3.4%)	6(7.4%)
41 years or older	0(0%)	12(14.8%)
Tenure		
24 months or less	11(18.6%)	27(31.4%)
25 - 36 months	15(25.5%)	20(23.3%)
37 - 48 months	17(28.8%)	19(22.1%)
49 months or longer	16(27.1%)	20(23.3%)

professions. All responding dietitians except one were females (98%) and the majority of the chefs were males(88.2%). Three fourths of the chefs had a college degree or higher. The respondents were generally a young group. Mean ages of the dietitians and chefs were 27.2 and 32.2 years, respectively. An average period of employment at the current company was 42 and 39 months for the dietitians and chefs.

2. Personal and situational factors of job stress

Statistics of the PA, NA, workload, and interpersonal conflicts are summarized in Table 2. The PA level was higher in the chef group and NA was higher in the dietitian group ; the differences were not statistically significant. Based on the 7-point scale where the higher score meant higher workload, both groups reported means higher than 4. High workload perception is not uncommon in the foodservice industry considering the demanding work conditions. The dietitians showed significantly higher workload than the chefs(p <.001). The higher workload perception in the dietitian group may be explained in part by qualitative workload. The dietitians should conduct a wide range of tasks including menu planning, purchasing, financial/accounting management, and nutrition and food safety management. In addition, they are responsible for scheduling employees, handling paperwork, and attending to customer needs. Mental stress created from switching from one mode of thinking to another may contribute to the dietitians' workload perception(Krone et al. 1989). Work mismatch can be another cause of work overload. Employees may feel work overload when they lack the skills or inclination for their work even when the quantity of work is reasonable(Maslach et al. 2001).

Table 2. Comparison of the study constructs by job group

	Dietitians (N = 64)	Chefs (N = 87)	p value
Positive affectivity	4.56 ± 0.81	4.63 ± 0.90	.62
Negative affectivity	3.70 ± 0.84	3.44 ± 0.79	.06
Workload	5.27 ± 0.90	4.72 ± 1.07	.001
Interpersonal conflict	2.85 ± 1.17	2.75 ± 1.01	.59
Job burnout			
Exhaustion	4.60 ± 1.05	4.20 ± 1.24	.04
Cynicism	4.03 ± 0.92	3.79 ± 0.85	.10
Professional efficacy	4.98 ± 0.73	5.01 ± 0.92	.81
Engagement			
Vigor	4.11 ± 0.83	4.45 ± 0.95	.02
Dedication	4.47 ± 1.09	4.88 ± 1.08	.03
Absorption	4.35 ± 0.91	4.59 ± 0.98	.13
Turnover intention	3.89 ± 1.32	3.49 ± 1.33	.07

A 7-point Likert scale was used ranging from 1(strongly disagree) to 7(strongly agree)

Interpersonal conflict levels were relatively low in the both groups. Dietitians' perceptions of the interpersonal conflict were higher than that of the chefs ; a significant difference was not found. As part of tasks, the dietitians have contacts with diverse people including foodservice staff, vendors, and customers, who have conflicting demands and needs. Therefore, they seem to be exposed to potentially high interpersonal conflict.

3. Job stress and intent to leave

Burnout and engagement, the two direct antecedents of turnover intention, are presented in Table 2. A significant difference between the dietitians and chefs was found only in the exhaustion dimension of burnout. The dietitians reported the higher exhaustion level than the chefs(p <.05). The cynicism and professional efficacy levels were not significantly different between the groups; the dietitians showed higher cynicism whereas the chefs showed higher professional efficacy.

Significant differences between the dietitians and chefs were found in the two dimensions of job engagement. Vigor and dedication levels were significantly higher in the chef group(ps <.05). The dietitians' turnover intention was higher than that of the chefs but the levels were low for the both groups. The turnover intention did not differ significantly by group.

4. Correlation among the study constructs

Results of the correlation analysis are summarized in Table 3. As expected, PA and NA showed opposite directions in correlations with the other constructs. PA was positively correlated with workload, professional efficacy, and all three dimensions of engagement and negatively correlated with the cynicism dimension of burnout. The correlations between PA and interpersonal conflict, exhaustion, and turnover intention were negative but insignificant. NA was positively correlated with workload, interpersonal conflict, the exhaustion and cynicism dimensions of burnout, and turnover intention and negatively with the vigor and dedication dimensions of engagement. Iversion et al.(1998) reported that NA predicted high emotional exhaustion and depersonalization(corresponding to cynicism in the study) and PA showed the reverse pattern.

Workload perception has significantly positive correlations

Table 3. Correlation coefficients among the study constructs

	(-) affectivity	Workload	Interpersonal conflict	Exhaustion	Cynicism	Professional efficacy	Vigor	Dedication	Absorption	Turnover intention
(+) affectivity	.102	.373***	-.088	-.149	-.253**	.493***	.460***	.528***	.485***	-.118
(-) affectivity		.290***	.330***	.486***	.276***	-.050	-.239**	-.171*	-.100	.297***
Workload			-.025	.342***	-.013	.307***	-.054	.070	.075	.203*
Interpersonal conflict				.225**	.333***	.056	-.180*	-.149	-.042***	.274
Exhaustion					.477***	-.079	-.465***	-.373***	-.293***	.444***
Cynicism						-.101	-.397***	-.458***	-.329***	.441***
Professional efficacy							.450***	.480***	.414***	-.130
Vigor								.694***	.635***	-.373***
Dedication									.702***	-.347***
Absorption										-.313***

* : p <.05, ** : p <.01, *** : p <.001

with exhaustion, professional efficacy, and turnover intention. The finding of the study is partially consistent with the literature reporting that emotional exhaustion is associated with higher levels of effort and work overload increases personalization(Jackson et al. 1987 ; Lee, Ashforth 1996). Depersonalization was known to develop as a coping response to work overload(Maslach, Jackson 1984), but the relationship was not confirmed in the study. A survey with foodservice managers revealed that long work hours were one of the most important reasons for leaving(Ghiselli et al. 2001).

Interpersonal conflict showed significant correlations with exhaustion(+), cynicism(+), vigor(-), and absorption(-) but were not significantly associated with turnover intention. From a study with foodservice employees, Lee, Kim(2002) reported that job stress was positively correlated with work overload and negatively correlated with support from peers and supervisors.

The exhaustion and cynicism dimensions of burnout were negatively correlated with all three dimensions of engagement and positively correlated with turnover intentions. The professional efficacy was positively correlated with all three engagement dimensions but was not significantly correlated with turnover intent. Lee, Kim(2002) reported that Korean foodservice employees' job stress was very strongly associated with turnover intention. The three engagement dimensions were negatively correlated with turnover intention. In summary, turnover intention of the dietitians and chefs was positively correlated with NA of the personal aspect and workload perception. All dimensions of engagement were negatively correlated with turnover intention and the exhaustion and cynicism dimensions of burnout were positively correlated with turnover intention.

Table 4. Prediction of turnover intention using a hierarchical regression model

Variables	*B*	*SE B*	β
Step 1			
Positive affectivity	-0.20	0.12	-0.13
Negative affectivity	0.49	0.13	0.31***
Step 2			
Positive affectivity	-0.28	0.13	-0.18*
Negative affectivity	0.31	0.14	0.19*
Workload	0.27	0.11	0.22*
Interpersonal conflict	0.23	0.10	0.19*
Step 3			
Positive affectivity	0.12	0.15	0.08
Negative affectivity	0.04	0.14	0.03
Workload	0.23	0.11	0.18*
Interpersonal conflict	0.16	0.10	0.13
Exhaustion	0.15	0.11	0.13
Cynicism	0.43	0.14	0.29**
Professional efficacy	-0.22	0.15	-0.14
Vigor	0.02	0.17	0.01
Dedication	-0.02	0.15	-0.02
Absorption	-0.20	0.15	-0.15

Step 1 : R^2 = .11(p <.001) ; Step 2 : R^2 = .17(p <.001) ; Step 3 : R^2 = .32(p <.001). * : p <.05, ** : p <.01

5. Factors influencing turnover intention

A number of studies have reported that intent to leave is a significant indicator of future turnover action. To assess the influences of burnout and engagement on turnover intention, a hierarchical regression analysis was performed(Table 4). In the first step, PA and NA, the personal aspects, were entered into a regression model. The R^2 of the model was .11(p

<.001) and NA was the only significant variable to predict turnover intention. The result was congruent with Chen, Spector(1991) ; they found NA was positively correlated with employee turnover intention. In step 2, work-related stressors, workload and interpersonal conflicts were entered into the model. An explanatory power of the model improved significantly($\Delta R^2 = .06$, $p < .01$). In the second model, all variables were significant in predicting turnover intention. That is, workload and interpersonal conflicts were identified to increase turnover intention. In the final stage, the direct antecedents of the turnover intention, burnout and engagement, were entered into the model. The explanatory power of the model improved to $R^2 = .32$($p < .001$). After removing the effects of the personal and situational factors, cynicism was a significant predictor of turnover intention.

Finding qualified and motivated employees have been cited as one of the biggest challenges in the foodservice industry. Foodservice companies should focus on keeping employees and managers already on staff. Although it is not clear in the study, burnout seems to be more important than engagement in predicting turnover intention. To decrease turnover intention, organizations should focus their efforts on managing burnout rather than engagement. Maslach et al.(2001) stated that burnout is more related to job demands such as work overload and emotional demands but engagement is related to job resources such as job control, availability of feedback and learning opportunities. Flexible schedules, computerization of repetitive tasks, and proper training could reduce workload perception of the dietitians and chefs. Supportive environment such as proper and timely feedback on performance from the headquarters and cooperative relationships with client organizations would improve dietitians' interpersonal conflict perceptions.

The personal characteristics(PA, NA) were related to job stress perception and turnover intention. Employees with higher NA are likely to have higher turnover intention and leave organizations. To reduce the employees' turnover, foodservice operations should recruit and select the right people. A Realistic Job Preview(RJP) can be used for recruiting and selection. The RJP provides job applicants with positive and negative aspects of the jobs, which make them have reasonable expectations in their future jobs. It is known to be very effective in reducing turnover in the human service-related industries. On the recruiting stage, corporations should provide clear description and vision of the jobs and possibilities and limits of career development, especially for reducing dietitians' turnover.

Summary and Conclusions

The purposes of the study were to examine the levels of burnout, engagement, and turnover intention of dietitians and chefs and to investigate the effects of job stress on turnover intention. A total of 254 dietitians and chefs employed by a contract foodservice management company were surveyed. PA and NA were not significantly different between the dietitian and chef groups. However the dietitians perceived significantly higher workload than the chefs. The dietitians also showed significantly higher exhaustion and significantly lower vigor and dedication.

PA and NA showed opposite directions in correlations with the burnout dimensions. Workload was positively correlated with exhaustion and professional efficacy but not significantly correlated with any dimensions of engagement. Interpersonal conflict was associated with exhaustion and cynicism. The burnout dimensions were significantly correlated with the engagement dimensions. Turnover intention was positively correlated with NA, workload, exhaustion, and cynicism and negatively correlated with vigor, dedication, and absorption. A hierarchical regression analysis revealed that workload and cynicism were the significant predictors of turnover intention.

The dietitians and chefs usually take managerial responsibilities at unit operations of many contract foodservice management companies. The findings showed that the dietitians and chefs have different levels of job stress and turnover intention. The two significant predictors of turnover intention, workload and cynicism were higher in the dietitian group than in the chef group. It may be due to the differences of their task characteristics and work environments. The differences should be considered in developing job stress management strategies. Considering the difficulties in finding qualified and motivated employees and high selection and training costs, first, foodservice companies should try to retain current staff by focusing on burnout management.

There are strategies that foodservice corporations can implement to reduce turnover intention on a recruiting and selecting stage. Since NA seems to be related to stress perception and turnover intention, job applicants' personal characteristics could be evaluated as a selection criterion. The findings of this study seem to justify the use of personality tests in the

foodservice industry by demonstrating a significant impact of individual personality on job burnout. The RJP can also be used in a recruiting process. By taking realistic views and expectations on a given job, applicants will be more likely to stay on the job after hired. It will be useful in decreasing recruiting and selection costs as well.

The findings of the study can be used for HR to understand job stress and its antecedents and consequences and to develop strategies to recruit and retain qualified employees in foodservice organizations. The study was conducted with the dietitians and chefs working at a contract foodservice management company. Future research that will involve larger samples from various work settings such as schools, hospitals, and businesses and industry will enrich our understanding of job stress and its outcomes in the foodservice industry.

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