

Subjective Temporal Resources: On the Relationship Between Time Perspective and Chronic Time Pressure to Burnout

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Abstract : Burnout, conceptualized within the framework of stress research, is to a large extent a result of a threat on resources of time or a feeling of time shortage. In reaction to numerous tasks, deadlines, high output, management of different duties encompassing work-home conflicts, many individuals experience 'time pressure'. Time pressure is characterized as the perception of a lack of available time in relation to the amount of workload. It can be a result of local objective constraints, but it can also be a chronic attribute in coping with life. As such, time pressure is associated in the literature with general stress experience and can therefore be a direct, contributory burnout factor. The present study examines the relation of chronic time pressure - feeling of time shortage and of being rushed, with another central aspect in subjective temporal experience - time perspective. Time perspective is a stable personal disposition, capturing the extent to which people subjectively remember the past, live the present and/or anticipate the future. Based on Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources Theory, it was hypothesized that individuals with chronic time pressure would experience a permanent threat on their time resources resulting in relatively increased burnout. In addition, it was hypothesized that different time perspective profiles, based on Zimbardo's typology of five dimensions - Past Positive, Past Negative, Present Hedonistic, Present Fatalistic, and Future, would be related to different magnitudes of chronic time pressure and of burnout. We expected that individuals with 'Past Negative' or 'Present Fatalist' time perspectives would experience more burnout, with chronic time pressure being a moderator variable. Conversely, individuals with a 'Present Hedonistic' - with little concern with the future consequences of actions, would experience less chronic time pressure and less burnout. Another temporal experience angle examined in this study is the difference between the actual distribution of time (as in a typical day) versus desired distribution of time (such as would have been distributed optimally during a day). It was hypothesized that there would be a positive correlation between the gap between these time distributions and chronic time pressure and burnout. Data was collected through an online self-reporting survey distributed on social networks, with 240 participants (aged 21-65) recruited through convenience and snowball sampling methods from various organizational sectors. The results of the present study support the hypotheses and constitute a basis for future debate regarding the elements of burnout in the modern work environment, with an emphasis on subjective temporal experience. Our findings point to the importance of chronic and stable temporal experiences, as time pressure and time perspective, in occupational experience. The findings are also discussed with a view to the development of practical methods of burnout prevention.

Keywords : conservation of resources, burnout, time pressure, time perspective

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