

Resource Loss and Secondary Traumatization among Police and Prison Officers: The Mediating Role of Job Burnout

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INTRODUCTION

Secondary traumatic stress (STS) results from indirect exposition to traumatic events and resembles effects of direct trauma exposure, such as PTSD symptoms (Bride, Robinson, Yegidis, & Figley, 2004). STS has been recognized as a **possible job-related condition** among occupational groups indirectly exposed to trauma. Specifically **police and prison officers are at high risk of STS** by witnessing drastic scenes, working with disturbing materials or traumatized individuals (Shakespeare-Finch, 2011). Conservation of Resources Theory (COR; Hobfoll, 1989) sets the **traumatic stress as a result of loss of valuable resources** (individual, material) during or directly after traumatic events (Dekel & Hobfoll, 2007; Luszczynska et al., 2009). Job-related **STS may come together with job burnout**—a condition conceptualized as physical and psychological exhaustion and disengagement from work (Demerouti, Nachreiner, Baker, & Schaufeli, 2001). Recent meta-analysis revealed strong job burnout–STS relationship among indirectly traumatized workers (Cieslak et al., 2014). **In this study we tested if job burnout mediated the relationship between resource loss and STS among police and prison officers.**

STUDY AIMS

- The aim of our study was to examine the indirect effect of resource loss—via job burnout—on secondary traumatic stress (STS).
- We hypothesized that resource loss would lead to STS by the increase in job burnout.

METHODS

Participants

144 Polish police and prison officers at risk of job-related secondary traumatization (51 police officers, 35%; gender: 120 males, 83%; age: 49% aged 20-30, 46% aged 31-40);

Measures

Conservation of Resources-Evaluation (Hobfoll, 2001) (modified): 31 items assessed on 4 scales: resource pool, resource value, resource gain/loss; response scale from 0 to 5 for resource pool and resource gain/loss and from 1 to 4 for resource value ($\alpha = .93$).

Secondary Trauma Stress Scale (Bride et al., 2004): 17 items, response scale from 1 to 5 ($\alpha = .97$).

Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI; Halbesleben & Demerouti, 2005): 16 items, response scale from 1 to 4 ($\alpha = .76$).

Statistical Analysis

Regression analysis with bootstrapping using PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013) with:

- predictor → Resource Loss
- outcome → Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)
- mediator → Job Burnout
- controlled → Resource Gain & Resource Pool

RESULTS

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, Pearson's Correlations Among Study Variables.

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Resource Loss	11.51	6.68					
2. Resource Gain	10.67	7.49	.56**				
3. Resource Pool	18.01	4.41	.14	.20*			
4. Job Burnout	2.33	.46	.15	-.10	-.27**		
5. Secondary Traumatic Stress	2.19	.89	.28**	.07	-.26**	.43**	

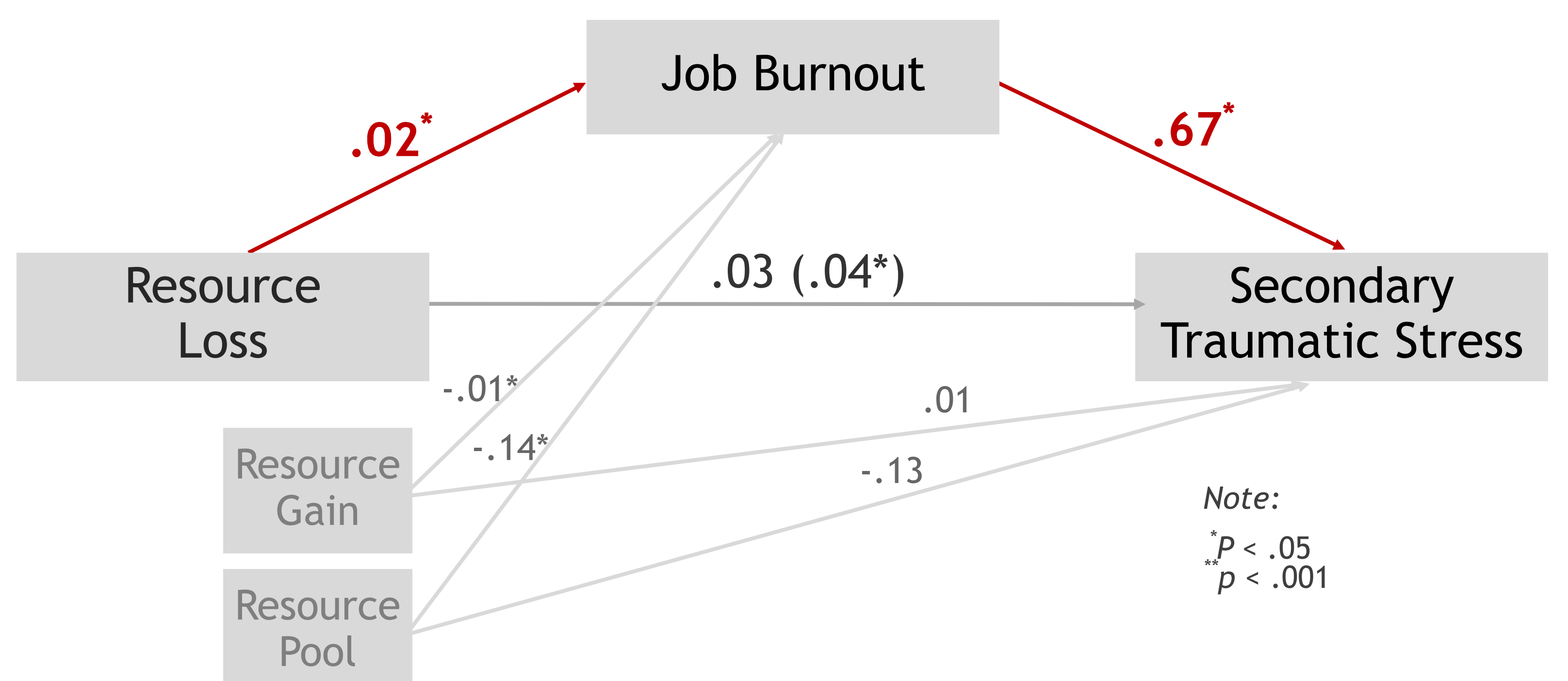


Figure 1
Results of mediation analysis testing mediating effect of Job Burnout on Resource Loss–Secondary Traumatic Stress relationship.

Table 2
Indirect Effect of Resource Loss on Secondary Traumatic Stress via Job Burnout.

Indirect Effect Pathway	B	SE	BC 95% CI	
			Lower Level	Upper Level
Resource Loss → Job Burnout → STS	.014	.001	.003	.029

CONCLUSION

Job burnout mediated the relationship between resource loss and secondary traumatic stress when resource pool and resource gain were controlled for (see Figure 1 & Table 2):

- greater resource loss was related to higher STS via the **increase in job burnout**
- our results support both: COR framing (Dekel & Hobfoll, 2007) for traumatization and job burnout–STS relationship hypothesis (Cieslak et al., 2014)
- ✓ **Job burnout may be a crucial mechanism responsible for development of job-related STS among police and prison officers**
- ✓ **Burnout-focused interventions may be a key strategy in STS prevention.**

References

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