



Causes and Countermeasure of Job Burnout of Funeral Workers from the Perspective of Public Management in Anhui Province, China

Honghui Li¹ and Watcharin Sutthisai²

¹Master of Education (Public and Private Management) Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University, Thailand

²Faculty of Public Administration (Public and Private Management) Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University, Thailand

E-mail: Honghuili2567@gmail.com, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-7263-0441>

Corresponding E-mail: wsutthisai@hotmail.com, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0562-5002>

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Abstract

Background and Aim: The purposes of this study were 1) to study the causes of job burnout of funeral workers from the perspective of public management in Anhui Province. 2) to study the countermeasures of job burnout of funeral workers from the perspective of public management in Anhui Province and 3) to study the recommendations of job burnout of funeral workers from the perspective of public management in Anhui Province. In this study, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 8 funeral practitioners from 4 funeral institutions in Anhui province (taking 4 funeral institutions in Hefei, Anhui Province as examples).

Materials and Methods: Through interviews with key informants who represented a range of roles within the funeral industry and a focus on four funeral agencies, the study carefully investigated the funeral industry in Anhui Province. Eight people—funeral directors, cremators, embalming surgeons, funeral attendants, and people who handle remains—provided insights between 2023 and 2023, offering a thorough picture of the dynamics and practices of the industry in the area.

Results: (1) The causes of job burnout of funeral workers from the perspective of public management in Anhui Province on the whole are under great pressure. The social prejudice against the funeral profession and the oppressive working environment. (2) In terms of personal characteristics, funeral workers have significant differences in their work stress responses due to differences in gender, age, working hours, and specific work content; In terms of education level, marital status, and position, there is no significant difference in work stress response of funeral workers. (3) From the analysis of various dimensions of work stress sources for funeral workers, the five dimensions of workload, colleague relationship, work environment, family relationship, and social influence have significant predictive effects on the overall work stress response.

Conclusion: Funeral workers in Anhui Province experience severe job burnout as a result of social prejudice, oppressive working conditions, and a variety of personal issues. Workload, colleague relationships, the work environment, family dynamics, and social influence all have a significant impact on work stress, and reactions vary by gender, age, and job type.

Keywords: Job Burnout; Funeral Workers all Mentioned

Introduction

At present, with the rapid development of the global economy, the role of human resources in promoting economic development is increasing. The normal operation of the service industry is closely related to the ability of employees. In such a process, the problem of employee pressure has become increasingly prominent, and at the same time, the excessive pressure on employees has brought great negative effects on both employees and enterprises. In foreign countries, the International Labor Workers Organization has data showing that in many Western developed countries, nearly one-tenth of the employees of enterprises are under relatively high pressure, and the psychological and physical problems common to employees mainly include depression and anxiety, suspicious, panic, etc. (Zhu, 2006).

In China, with the continuous deepening of economic system reform and the continuous development of the multi-ownership economy, the problem of job burnout has gradually become the focus of attention of society and enterprises, and it is also one of the universal hot issues in the current society. According to the research report on job burnout of China Human Resources Development Network, this problem has become an important factor in the field of work that affects the enthusiasm of employees and affects work effectiveness, and there are inconsistencies and significant differences in the problem of job burnout in different industries, for example, the service industry, education industry and other industries that serve people are more serious. (China Human Resources Development Network. 2018)

As a typical service industry, the funeral and interment industry serves the deceased and their families. The content of funeral services, in a broad sense, refers to the general term for various social services provided by people to deal with the remains of the deceased, mourn the deceased, and comfort



the bereaved. The main responsibility of the funeral and interment industry is to implement the national funeral reform guidelines, policies, and regulations, and provide society with funeral services such as body transportation, funeral services, funeral services, funeral services, cremation of remains, storage of ashes, burial in public cemeteries, and sales of funeral supplies. Since the implementation of the funeral reform in the country in 1956, the construction of the funeral legal system has been continuously improved, funeral management has been continuously improved, and the level of funeral services has been greatly developed. It has become increasingly prominent in the process and has become a new hot spot in the field of public management research. Due to the particularity of the funeral industry, the pressure on funeral workers comes from many aspects. In their work and life, employees of funeral enterprises face the physical and mental health brought about by work pressure, their own work ability, work relationship network, and the choice of future career planning. On the other hand, there is also pressure from bereaved families and the general public. The pressure on employees in the funeral industry has become increasingly prominent and will become a long-term social problem (Liu, 2021).

According to the "Statistical Bulletin of the People's Republic of China on National Economic and Social Development in 2022", the total population of the country at the end of 2022 will be 1.412 billion. In 2022, the total birth population will be 9.56 million and the death population will be 10.41 million, with a natural growth rate of -0.60‰, and a mortality rate was 7.37‰. It is worth noting that in recent years, the birth rate in my country has decreased year after year, while the death rate and the total death population have gradually increased. This is due to the obvious aging trend of the population in my country, which has gradually increased the number of deaths, which has greatly increased the number of funeral workers in cremation areas. Great work pressure. Since most of the public funeral homes are public institutions, the operating system is inflexible, and the personnel are fixed. While the workload increases, the number of staff changes little, which seriously affects the physical and mental health of funeral workers (Hao, 2009).

Research on funeral workers can be divided into two categories: one is to take funeral workers as the main body of funeral services, to study how funeral workers better provide services for the deceased; The other is undertakers themselves as the main body, concerned about their conditions. In the latter category, few studies are focusing on funeral workers themselves. In the early stage, there are mainly some non-academic studies, biographies, and reports, which highlight the situation that funeral workers suffer discrimination from others due to their dealings with "dead people", blocked love and marriage, and affected children's study and life. Wang Fuzi, Xiong Ying, et al. (2003 cited by Li and Shi, 2003) interviewed 32 funeral workers in Shanghai, Guangzhou, Wuhan, and Changsha to understand their identification status of self-prestige; on the other hand, they investigated the public's identification status of professional prestige of funeral workers through questionnaire survey. Finally, it is found that the professional reputation of undertakers is relatively low in both self-evaluation and public evaluation.

However, funeral workers have a special social status, special nature of work, and special work intensity in the post-epidemic period, and the general public has prejudices against their occupations which makes their job burnout particularly prominent. Managers must pay attention to this issue and introduce certain improvements and developments to this job shortly.

Objectives

1. To study the causes of job burnout of funeral workers from the perspective of public management in Anhui Province.
2. To study the countermeasures of job burnout of funeral workers from the perspective of public management in Anhui Province.
3. To study the recommendations for job burnout of funeral workers from the perspective of public management in Anhui Province.

Hypothesis

Students who learn using integrated learning activities in the modern Chinese history course have higher academic achievement after studying than before.

Literature Review



Ren (2014) Funeral workers, as practitioners of the service industry, the strengthening of service professional awareness, the improvement of professional literacy, and the improvement of professional technology are related to the quality and level of service in the industry, and the progress of social civilization and humanistic environment. The professional feelings of service providers will affect their choice and adherence to the industry

Zhong (2021) Create a good working environment. Since the workplace environment of funeral practitioners will directly affect their comfort level and work efficiency, the person in charge of funeral units should pay attention to collecting the needs of funeral practitioners to improve the working environment and take measures to improve the working environment for funeral practitioners. Due to the particularity of the funeral industry, the workplace environment of funeral practitioners is gloomier and more depressed, funeral units can set up special staff lounges for funeral practitioners, arrange warm and relaxed offices for office administrators, relieve the pressure of (her) in the work process, and help eliminate the sense of job burnout to a certain extent.

Su & Cheng (2016) Gradually changed the inherent Chinese traditional concept Although funeral work is an indispensable link to maintaining the normal operation of society, due to the influence of traditional Chinese culture, as well as people's fear and taboo of "death", it has been regarded as the most "inferior" work for thousands of years, casting a thick shadow on the funeral industry, so funeral practitioners have long been excluded from the mainstream society. Although the Party and the government have been doing a lot of work to this end, the general public is still reluctant to contact funeral workers, and even in some places, the marriage of funeral workers has become a problem.

Liu (2020) Funeral workers adjust their mentality to adapt actively funeral workers work around the deceased, in the process, a variety of emergencies, not only to adapt to the work environment, and work content but also to overcome psychological fear and mental pressure. Therefore, we should take the initiative to learn the necessary mental health self-care and psychological self-help methods to care for our physical and mental health; Learn some common ways to reduce stress and relax, so that your body can adjust to stressful events; Expand the interpersonal circle, establish healthy interpersonal relationships, and provide opportunities for them to know and communicate with each other.

Xiong et al (2006) In short, Improving the professional reputation of funeral workers is conducive to the improvement of their self-identification and social status. Xiong Ying believes that the current situation and the main problems of the professional reputation of funeral workers include the bondage of traditional concepts, the restriction of industry monopoly, and the backward "soft and hard" parts. Given these three problems, the author puts forward countermeasures and suggestions such as increasing public opinion publicity, changing traditional concepts, breaking industry monopoly, introducing competition mechanisms, improving working conditions, and improving cultural quality. To enhance the social status of funeral practitioners ". "The aging of our society is gradually increasing, and funeral workers play a certain role. They shoulder an important historical mission in human life," Xiong said. "But due to some influence of traditional Chinese culture, practitioners have long been excluded from the mainstream society, and social discrimination and prejudice are a kind of harm to funeral workers."

Conceptual Framework

The causes of job burnout of funeral work in Anhui Province, China

1. The countermeasures of job burnout of funeral work in Anhui Province, China
2. The recommendations for causes and the countermeasures and public management of job burnout of funeral work in Anhui Province, China

Methodology

Area Scope: There are many funeral agencies in Anhui Province. The selection of the survey site is concentrated in 4 funeral agencies in Anhui Province. There are 1) Hefei City Funeral Agency, 2) Feidong County Funeral Agency, 3) Feixi County Funeral Agency, and 4) Chaohu City Funeral Agency.

Time Scope: This study will be carried out from 2023 to 2023

Key Informants: The key performants or the interviewees were 8 persons from 4 funeral parlors in Anhui Province, 2 persons who received the remains, 2 persons who were embalming and cosmetic surgeons, 2 persons who were funeral attendants, and 2 persons who were cremators. The key informants or the reviewers consisted of 8 persons from 4 funeral parlors in Anhui Province, China, and performed the different duties as follows



1. The first group is from Hefei City Funeral Agency, Anhui Province, and selected 2 funeral practitioners, who are from the post of body pick-up and connect with embalming and plastic surgery.
 2. The second group is from Feidong Funeral Agency, Anhui Province, and selected 2 funeral practitioners who are from the cremation post and connected with the embalming and plastic surgery post respectively.
 3. The third group is from Feixi Funeral Agency, Anhui Province, and selects 2 funeral practitioners, who are from the funeral service post and the body receiving post.
 4. The fourth group is from Chaohu Funeral Agency, Anhui Province, and selects 2 funeral practitioners, who are from the funeral service post and connect with the cremation post
- Population and sample:** The key informants or the reviewers consisted of 8 persons from 4 funeral parlors in Anhui Province, China.

Results

This independent study “Causes and Countermeasures of Job Burnout of Funeral Workers from the Perspective of public management in Anhui Province China” is qualitative. The interview of 8 persons is used to collect data. The results of the interview were analyzed as follows;

1. Physiological exhaustion and somatic symptoms are prominent

Overload, high intensity, and strong pressure work make funeral workers long-term mental tension, easy to produce dizziness, fatigue, loss of appetite, eyes, endocrine disorders, gastrointestinal discomfort, and high blood pressure, some basic funeral workers appear as physical diseases and occupational diseases are prominent. Including high blood pressure, migraine, myocardial ischemia, arrhythmia, and other diseases. Emotional exhaustion, loss of enthusiasm for life, and the longer the backlog of psychological negative energy, the more likely it is to cause adverse emotional reactions, such as prominent anxiety, reduced positive emotional experience, and decreased happiness index, etc., resulting in complaints, inferiority, fluke, guilt, and other psychological problems, and severe cases may further lead to more serious mental illness. Such as anxiety, depression, and so on.

2. Emotional numbness and lack of passion for work

Too long working hours, too much workload, and too high work intensity led to physical and mental fatigue and emotional exhaustion of funeral workers. Working in a highly stressful environment for a long time, funeral workers experience the psychological exhaustion of energy exhaustion and physical and mental exhaustion and are subjected to emotional and environmental factors, resulting in emotional decline and emotional closure. Emotional exhaustion at work is also called burnout, work in long-term high intensity, high pressure or repetitive monotonous work content, always suffering setbacks and blows and other circumstances, will gradually produce a feeling of disappointment, fatigue, fatigue, and even aversion to the psychological resistance. During the interview and investigation, it was learned that all 8 people had varying degrees of occupational emotional exhaustion, and this occupational emotional exhaustion was mainly related to the work of the funeral profession, of course, there was also a relationship with personal and social factors.

Individuals exhibit negative and insensitive self-evaluation, perceiving their actions as meaningless with a low sense of accomplishment. They lack direction, motivation, self-efficacy, honor, and career satisfaction. Funeral workers interviewed expressed a dearth of professional fulfillment and recognition due to environmental influences, limited social resources, and the nature of their service recipients. Consequently, they tend to disassociate from and undervalue their occupation leading to reduced feelings of achievement. Such diminished sense of accomplishment manifests in negative energy issues like poor performance in funeral work and low mood levels resulting in adverse consequences such as decreased internal motivation

3. Role's conflict and social relationships fail

People possess social attributes; each individual maintains various social relations and assumes diverse social roles. When conflicts arise between different social roles or when the pressure from multiple roles becomes overwhelming, individuals may struggle to cope, leading to a range of psychological problems including stress, emotional turmoil, and internal contradictions. Given the unique nature of funeral services, funeral parlors, and cemeteries are typically situated far from urban areas. Additionally, due to the seasonal demand for funeral services during holidays, funeral workers often lack opportunities to enjoy a normal personal life during their spare time. Furthermore, being constantly immersed in an environment filled with grieving families exposes these workers to sorrowful expressions and heart-wrenching cries daily. Prolonged exposure to such an environment can easily lead to mental depression if not promptly released or relaxed. Consequently, this gradually widens the gap between funeral workers and their external surroundings while fostering indifference towards their



immediate surroundings. This detachment hinders their understanding of new concepts as well as exploration of knowledge acquisition and personal growth potential; consequently, resulting in rigid thinking patterns with limited perspectives that prevent them from keeping pace with societal advancements thereby causing disconnection from society at large. Awareness of these issues further discourages proactive communication efforts among funeral workers which subsequently leads them to withdraw from engaging in social activities, thus impacting their emotional well-being as well as work efficiency.

Conclusion

The independent study “Causes and countermeasures of job burnout of funeral workers from the perspective of public management in Anhui Province, China” Of the eight people who were interviewed in depth can be concluded as follows:

1. The funeral industry has higher work requirements for funeral workers because the service object is the deceased or the deceased's family, funeral workers in the work once there is a mistake cannot be remedied, which also makes funeral workers work maintain a high-tension state, these invisibly will also cause psychological pressure to funeral workers.
2. Some basic funeral workers appear physical diseases, and occupational diseases, including high blood pressure, migraine, myocardial ischemia, arrhythmia, and other diseases.
3. Too long working hours, too much workload, and too high work intensity led to physical and mental fatigue and emotional exhaustion of funeral workers.
4. Funeral workers often lack opportunities to enjoy a normal personal life during their spare time which role conflict happens and social relationships fail.
5. The reasons for job burnout are many, funeral workers face social prejudice, working environment, mate selection, salary, etc., leading to their job burnout.
6. In terms of working environment, most funeral homes are built in the suburbs, far from the urban area, and travel is inconvenient. Funeral workers think that they are under greater pressure, mainly because some funeral workers think that the working environment is relatively poor.
7. Their salary is low and the salary system is unreasonable compared with other workers, and they are under great pressure to survive at present.
8. Some employees never or rarely talk about their work with their families, their work cannot be understood by their families, and they think that their work affects the normal life of themselves and their families.
9. This job made them less in contact with friends, and nearly half said they never or rarely talked about their work with friends.
10. The main reasons for funeral workers' pressure on family relations and friends are: influenced by Chinese traditional culture, people still have a certain prejudice against the funeral industry, believing that it is unlucky to deal with dead people and discriminating against funeral workers.
11. Most funeral workers are "contract workers", which means that there is a two-way choice relationship between employees and funeral units, their work is no longer the "iron rice bowl" in people's eyes, and it is reasonable for units to have unclear development plans for "contract workers."
12. Job promotion and selection mechanisms are not perfect, and occupation allocation is unreasonable. Funeral institutions lack a long-term scientific vocational training system.
13. The job burnout of funeral workers is also related to individual factors. Since the sources of funeral workers are multi-channel, the quality of funeral talent teams is uneven using family relations, military transfer, funeral graduation, enrollment examinations, etc., which is easy to cause obvious individual differences in the group.
14. If the psychological expectations of individual personnel are high, they are prone to emotional ups and downs when they are hit by external shocks, leading to job burnout

Discussion



In this independent study “Causes and countermeasures of job burnout of funeral workers from the perspective of public management in Anhui Province, China” the discussion was presented as follows:

Li and Shi (2003) the first scholar proposed that job burnout is a synonym of so-called stress, which refers to "a non-special response of the body to its needs" or that the living environment is difficult to meet people's needs, which makes it difficult to match the experience with the real life, and eventually leads to a tension of physical and psychological imbalance. Therefore, the special work and the funeral industry service object is the deceased or the deceased's family, the average person has a fear of it, many people hear "funeral home", or "cemetery" or encounter funeral staff, often associated with unpleasant things, such as the body, death, crying and so on. The most important is that this work is influenced by traditional Chinese culture, people superstitiously believe that it is unlucky to deal with the dead, and many people "look at" or discriminate against funeral workers.

Yardley and Rice (1991) analyzed the generation and impact of job burnout from the perspective of resource acquisition and demand.

Therefore, the resource conservation theory points out that everyone tends to preserve, protect, and acquire resources when dealing with labor resources. Therefore, whether it is the loss and reduction of potential resources or the loss and reduction of actual resources, it will cause people's job burnout with tension and stress.

The resource conservation theory further points out that under great pressure, people will protect current resources to prevent resource loss, and to prevent future energy loss, people will try their best to build resources and maintain resource reserves. In real life, the psychological resources we have cannot bear the challenges of reality, and pressure will arise. To relieve and cope with the pressure, people will constantly seek new resources.

Due to the particularity of the funeral industry, the pressure on funeral workers comes from many aspects. In their work and life, employees of funeral enterprises face the physical and mental health brought about by work pressure, their own work ability, work relationship network, and the choice of future career planning. On the other hand, there is also pressure from bereaved families and the general public. The pressure on employees in the funeral industry has become increasingly prominent and will become a long-term social problem. (Liu (2021).

Funeral workers adjust their mentality to adapt actively funeral workers work around the deceased, in the process, a variety of emergencies, not only need to adapt to the work environment, and work content but also to overcome psychological fear and mental pressure

Respondent 3 (Female, 24, funeral attendant; Interview place: HF City; Interview time: 2023 /30/9) explained that it was very difficult to do this job, we cannot be sad nor be happy, we are in the middle of this degree must grasp, especially sometimes the sadness of the family at the highest time, you have to be particularly careful to speak, a little bit of the family mood will collapse. Funeral staff is very difficult, when we do not understand it, we think it was a particularly common occupation, but once we look deeply, we will find it very difficult, very difficult.”

The results of the study related to the article "Burnout Status of China's Primary Health Personnel and its Influencing Factors" that the current burnout situation of China's primary health personnel is not optimistic, and the problems of emotional exhaustion and low personal achievement are more serious, so it is necessary to strengthen psychological counseling and intervention, strengthen the skills training of primary health personnel, improve the level of salary treatment, reasonable allocation of work tasks, and reduce Work intensity and other aspects of intervention.

And also related to Wang (2022)in his master's thesis "Analysis of the Causes and Countermeasures of Civil Servants' Job Burnout in Jiangxi Audit System", pointed out that job burnout is significantly related to factors such as unsatisfactory environment, uncertain prospects, high workload, and low income. Based on this, by providing intervention measures such as changing the working environment, expanding the promotion space, strengthening the care for employees, and improving the salary mechanism, this paper is expected to alleviate the negative emotions of civil servants in the audit system and mobilize their work enthusiasm, to reduce the degree of job burnout of civil servants in the audit system of Jiangxi Province

Recommendation

Because of their unique social standing, unique line of work, and unique work intensity in the wake of the epidemic, funeral directors are particularly vulnerable to job burnout due to negative perceptions held by the general public. Shortly, the government and organizations need to be aware of this job's development. The following is the presentation of the key recommendations:



1. Funeral unit level

1.1 Increase the remuneration of funeral workers

At the funeral unit level, the unit leader should consider whether the salary of the employee is consistent with its expectations. From the perspective of workload, the funeral industry's work tasks are not heavy, and its pay is basically at a medium level compared with other industries, which matches its workload. However, from the perspective of work requirements, working environment, and the influence of family, friends, and society, their efforts in work are lower than their income, that is, they do not have any financial compensation when they are under pressure from family, friends, society, physical and psychological aspects, which will inevitably cause an imbalance in the heart of funeral workers. Correspondingly, it will affect the work efficiency and work quality of funeral workers, which will also hurt the image of the funeral industry. Therefore, funeral units should be based on the specific situation, on the one hand from the overall increase of funeral workers' salary level; On the other hand, according to the suggestions of funeral workers in the interview, funeral units should formulate compensation standards according to the workload and nature of the work of funeral workers, change the current phenomenon of "more work and less pay are the same", advocate "more work and more pay", and enhance the enthusiasm of funeral workers for work.

1.2 Improve the working environment of funeral workers in some positions

Given the poor working conditions and working environment of some employees, leaders of funeral units should consider taking appropriate preventive measures according to the situation of different positions to ensure that funeral workers have a good working environment. Such as the cremation workshop, funeral home leaders should force employees to wear dust masks at work, and distribute dust tools, and at the same time, improve the ventilation equipment of the cremation workshop, to avoid workers' body damaged by dust.

1.3 Strengthen career development planning for funeral workers

In response to the unclear career development planning of funeral workers, funeral units should develop a reasonable career development path map, and at the same time, publicize it in the public place of the unit, so that more workers can understand their future development opportunities. In addition, given the problem that most funeral workers are contract workers, funeral units should provide more promotion space for contract workers, attract contract workers to become front-line leaders or basic managers, and at the same time give different bonuses to different positions so that funeral workers in the funeral industry career development will be clearer. In addition, funeral units should also disclose the assessment standards of funeral workers, so that funeral workers know whether their work is satisfied by their families and superiors.

1.4 Provide more training opportunities for funeral workers

Given the particularity of the funeral industry service object is the deceased or the family of the deceased, it is also reasonable for the unit to have high work requirements for funeral workers. However, because funeral workers are in a "high-pressure" state for a long time, it will certainly hurt the body and minds of funeral workers. The author believes that in addition to strengthening training in work standards, work requirements, and other business aspects, funeral units should also invite relevant experts to carry out physical and mental training and guidance for funeral workers. For example, psychological experts are invited to regularly carry out psychological counseling lectures for funeral workers, and one-to-one emotional counseling for workers with large emotional responses. At the same time, according to the different work content of employees, carry out the corresponding theme of group activities. In addition, the unit should also encourage funeral workers to re-study and further study, encourage employees to return to school to learn professional knowledge of the funeral industry, and reward employees who actively learn material and spiritually, so that funeral units can not only retain and attract a large number of talents to contribute to the unit, but also provide more professional talents for the funeral industry.

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