

# Experiencing PERMA as potential Burnout-prevention for psycho-social professionals

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## Background

Psycho-social professions (psychologists, social workers and social education workers) face an increased level of occupational stress, which leads in an above average burnout-rate. Prevention programs which tried to reduce psychological stress lead only to small preventive effects (Sanchez-Moreno et al., 2014; Seidler et al., 2014; Ruotsalainen et al., 2015)

Positive Psychology suggests that promoting subjective wellbeing not only leads to a mere symptom reduction but to an elevation of positive experiences (Seligman, 2011).

The aim of the study is to examine the potential of the PERMA factors of human wellbeing for reducing burnout within the population of psycho-social professionals in Austria.

## Methods

### Participants:

- $N = 168$  psychosocial professionals (129 females)
- Age:  $M = 38.7$  years ( $SD = 9.7$  years)
- Years of service:  $M = 7$  years ( $SD = 9$  years)
- Sample recruited from three socioeconomic companies
- Online survey

### Methods:

#### Wellbeing measure

PERMA-Profiler Positive Psychotherapy Inventory (Wammerl et al., 2015)

- Measurement of the five PERMA factors of human wellbeing

#### Occupational stress measure

Salutogenetic Subjective Work Analysis

- Measurement of five work related stress factors (Udris & Rimann, 2014)

#### Burnout measure

Maslach Burnout Inventory

- Measurement of the three burnout factors

#### Sociodemographic questionnaire

- Work related variables

## Results

### Multiple Regression Analysis

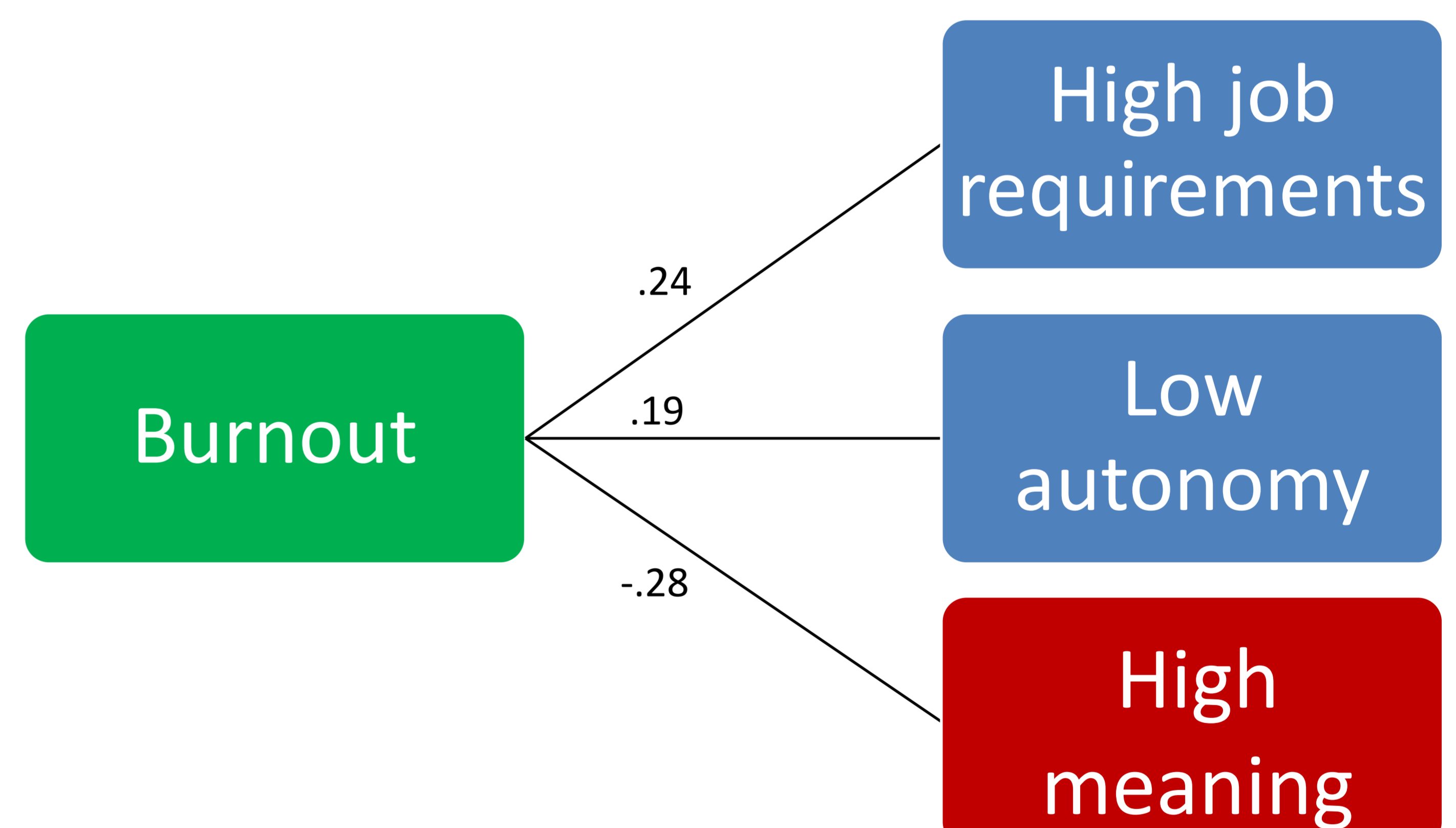
A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict burnout risk on the PERMA factors of wellbeing and work-related stress.

A significant regression equation was found ( $F_{(10,157)} = 11.06, p < .000$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .413.

Job requirement ( $\beta = .24, p < .01$ ), low autonomy ( $\beta = .19, p < .05$ ) and meaning ( $\beta = -.28, p < .05$ ) were significant predictors of burnout.

Meaning was the strongest negative predictor of burnout risk.

Additional correlations of the sociodemographic variables with burnout showed that there is a moderate positive correlation between the length of service and the burnout risk ( $r = .20, p < .01$ ).



## Discussion

**This study was the first to examine the interaction between burnout risk and the PERMA factors of human wellbeing in psycho-social professionals in Austria.**

Experiencing meaning at work leads to lower risk to experience burnout. Meaning was the strongest single predictor of burnout reduction.

For the occupational stress factors high job requirement and reduced autonomy turned out to be the most important determinants of burnout risk.

Senior employees experienced a slightly higher burnout risk.

Future burnout prevention programs should include meaning in their trainings, in order to efficiently reduce burnout in this population.

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