BURNOUT AMONG NZ DAIRY FARMERS: RESULTS FROM TWO STUDIES

NEELS BOTHA AND TONI WHITE

OVERVIEW

Introduction

Burnout

The studies and findings

Conclusions

agresearch
INTRODUCTION

The NZ dairy sector provides 26% of New Zealand’s total goods exports.

New Zealand Dairy Statistics 2010/11:

- Herd size increase continues - the trend for the past 30 seasons.
- Average effective hectares increasing (140 ha)
- More cows per area.

Pressure on dairy farmers increases.
**BURNOUT**

Burnout (Schaufeli & Enzmann 1998: 36):

- Is a persistent, negative, work-related state of mind.
- Occurs in ‘normal’ individuals.
- Is primarily characterised by exhaustion, linked to
  - Distress
  - Reduced effectiveness
  - Loss of motivation
  - Negative attitudes and behaviours
- Develops gradually (unnoticed for a long time by individual).
- It results from a difference between job expectations and reality.
- Is self-perpetuating because of inadequate associated coping strategies.
MEASURING BURNOUT: OLDENBERG BURNOUT INVENTORY (OLBI)

An inventory measuring total burnout using two dimensions

1. Exhaustion (emotional and physical)
2. Disengagement

16-item self-assessment instrument (8 for each dimension)

Four-point Likert scales [1 = “strongly agree” to 4 = “strongly disagree”]

Averages are calculated for each subscale with higher scores indicating higher burnout.

The OLBI exhibited good test–retest reliability and internal reliability (a>.80) for both subscales

(Demerouti et al., 2002, 2003)
STUDY 1 – TELEPHONE SURVEY

Dairy Farmer Health PitStops (N = 520)

Follow up telephone interviews – (87) farmers who screened positive for depression and anxiety

Purpose – find out:
• the impact of health pitstops
• if farmers were seeking support
• preferences for farmer support
• willingness to participate in a community of interest
• whether the OLBI questions were suitable

Response rate 69% (n = 52; 24 males, 28 females).
STUDY 1 – LIMITATIONS AND FINDINGS

Exploratory study

Extrapolating the findings inappropriate

No farmer burnout studies

We chose cut off scores for the OLBI based on international literature and the Maslach Burnout Inventory.
## STUDY 1 - FINDINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score cut off points (max score = 4)</th>
<th>Number of respondents (%)</th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exhaustion score</td>
<td>Disengagement score</td>
<td>Total burnout score</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very low</td>
<td>&lt;1.0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.0 - 1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>&gt;1.5 - &lt;2.5</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>16 (33%)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>&gt;3.0</td>
<td>4 (8%)</td>
<td>14 (28%)</td>
<td>6 (12%)</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
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STUDY 1 - FINDINGS

Disengagement from work (farming) was a bigger issue than exhaustion

75% High / very high levels of disengagement

Disengagement is primarily related to
  • satiation (which is a sense that work/farming has lost its meaning to the individual)
  • the experience of monotony (Demerouti et al, 2002).

65% respondents had a high / very high burnout score

Burnout was a big issue in this particular sample
  There is a correlation between depression, anxiety and burnout (Shirom & Ezrachi, 2003).
STUDY 2 – DAIRY FARMER HEALTH PITSTOPS (2011-12)

Interviews during Health Pitstops (N = 523)

Used the OLBI to assess burnout

Limitations
- Respondents are self-selected
- Certain characteristics could be over-represented because they correlate with willingness to be included

Results of this survey provide a picture of a particular type of dairy farmer
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disengagement category</th>
<th>Number of respondents (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>13 (2%)</td>
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<td>Average</td>
<td>458 (88%)</td>
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<td>52 (10%)</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>523 (100%)</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhaustion category</th>
<th>Number of respondents (%)</th>
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<td>Low</td>
<td>6 (1%)</td>
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<td>Average</td>
<td>395 (76%)</td>
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<td>High</td>
<td>115 (22%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>7 (1%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>523 (100%)</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Burnout category</th>
<th>Number of respondents (%)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>3 (1%)</td>
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<td>Average</td>
<td>452 (86%)</td>
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<td>High</td>
<td>68 (13%)</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>523</td>
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</table>
STUDY 2 - FINDINGS

10% scored high / very high on disengagement
23% scored high / very high on exhaustion
13% scored high on burnout

In this sample exhaustion seems to be a more prevalent issue than disengagement
CONCLUSIONS

It is plausible that burnout is an issue on 10-15% New Zealand dairy farms.

There clearly is an interplay between burnout (disengagement and exhaustion), anxiousness and depression.

OLBI seems to work with dairy farmers.