



The Effect of Social Support on Job Burnout and Work Engagement Mediated by Self-Efficacy

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BACKGROUND

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997) assumes that self-efficacy plays an important role in coping with stress. **Self-efficacy** refers to people's beliefs about their ability to cope effectively with a variety of demanding situations (e.g., stressful work).

Social support may affect self-efficacy beliefs (see enabling hypothesis, Schwarzer & Knoll, 2008). Perceived social support is the subjective judgment that social environment (e.g., family, friends, co-workers and supervisors) would provide quality assistance in coping with future stressors.

Job burnout is defined as a work-related syndrome that includes feeling of exhaustion and disengagement from work (Demerouti et al., 2003).

Work engagement is defined as a positive, work-related feelings and is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2005).

Xanthopoulou et al. (2007) showed that high self-efficacy predicts low emotional exhaustion and high work engagement. Findings from our study indicated that the effect of social support on secondary traumatic stress and posttraumatic growth was mediated by work-related self-efficacy (Zukowska & Cieslak, 2011).

In this study we investigate if burnout-related self-efficacy mediates the effect of perceived social support on job burnout and work engagement among workers exposed to secondary trauma.

AIMS

The study tested the mediating effect of burnout-related self-efficacy. In particular, it was hypothesized that:

- (1) Perceived social support would have an effect on burnout-related self-efficacy beliefs (path a),
- (2) Burnout-related self-efficacy beliefs would predict job burnout and work engagement (path b).

METHOD

Inclusion criteria

- Age \geq 18 years
- Being employed as a first responder, social worker, fire fighter, nurse or paramedic
- Indirect exposure to trauma through work
- Working with trauma victims \geq 1 year

Participants

- 271 professionals
- Mean age = 35 years ($SD = 8.62$)
- 76% females
- 79% with BA degree or higher
- Mean work experience = 9 years ($SD = 8.42$)

Measures

- **Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support** (Zimet et al., 1988), 12 items, scale from 1 to 7, $\alpha = .96$
- **Work Stress and Burnout Self-Efficacy Scale** (Lua, 2008), 9 items referring to beliefs about the ability to deal with burnout, scale from 1 to 7, $\alpha = .91$
- **The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory** (Demerouti et al., 2003), 16 items, scale from 1 to 5, $\alpha = .88$
- **Utrecht Work Engagement Scale** (Schaufeli et al., 2002), 9 items, scale from 1 to 7, $\alpha = .89$

Procedure

- Participants filled in the web-based questionnaires.

RESULTS

Table 1
Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Variables

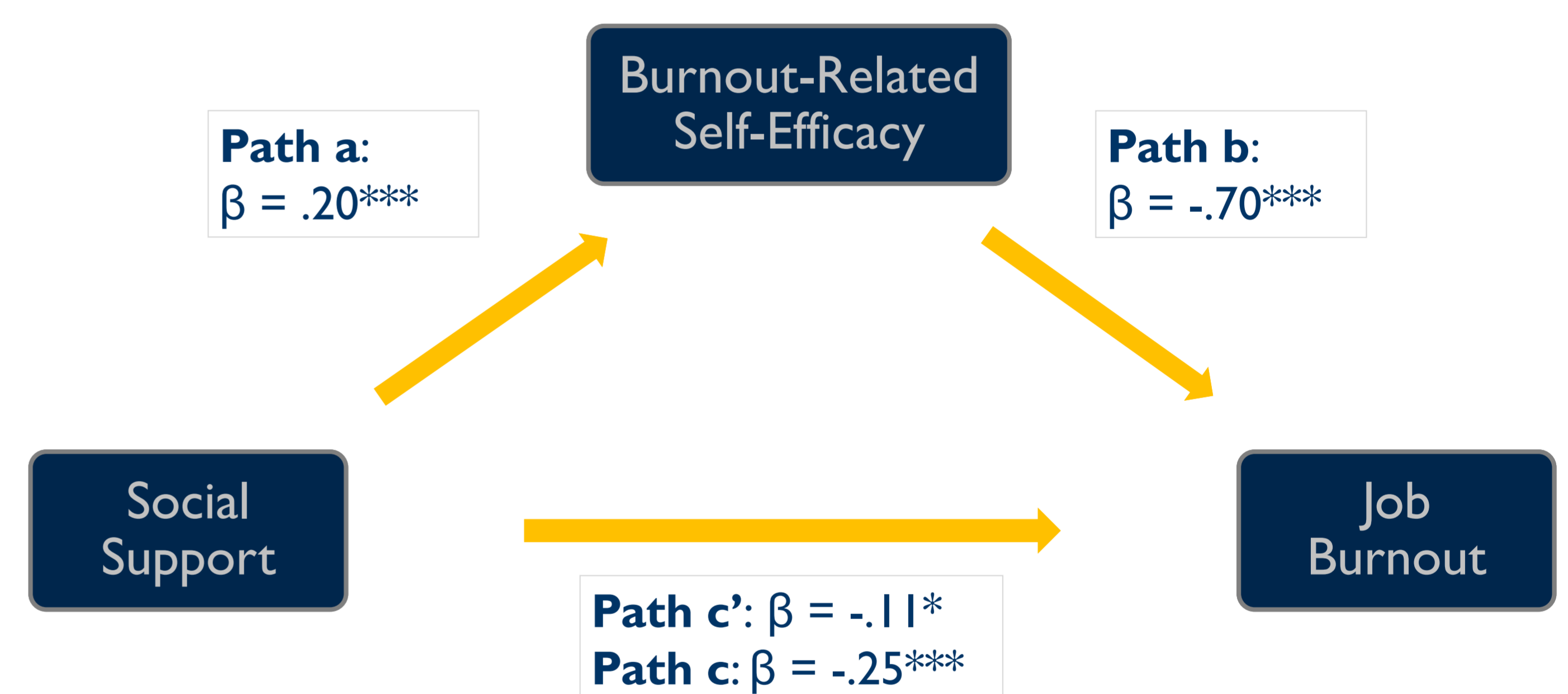
Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Age	35.23	8.44	—				
2. Gender	—	—	-.02	—			
3. Social Support	4.93	1.54	-.03	-.02	—		
4. Burnout-Related Self-Efficacy	5.21	.99	-.20**	.08	.23***	—	
5. Job Burnout	2.78	.60	.17**	-.08	-.26***	-.71***	—
6. Work Engagement	3.65	.89	-.17**	.03	.24***	.51***	-.70***

Note: ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Mediation analysis (controlled for age) showed that burnout-related self-efficacy beliefs mediated the relationship:

- (1) Between perceived social support and job burnout and
- (2) Between social support and work engagement.

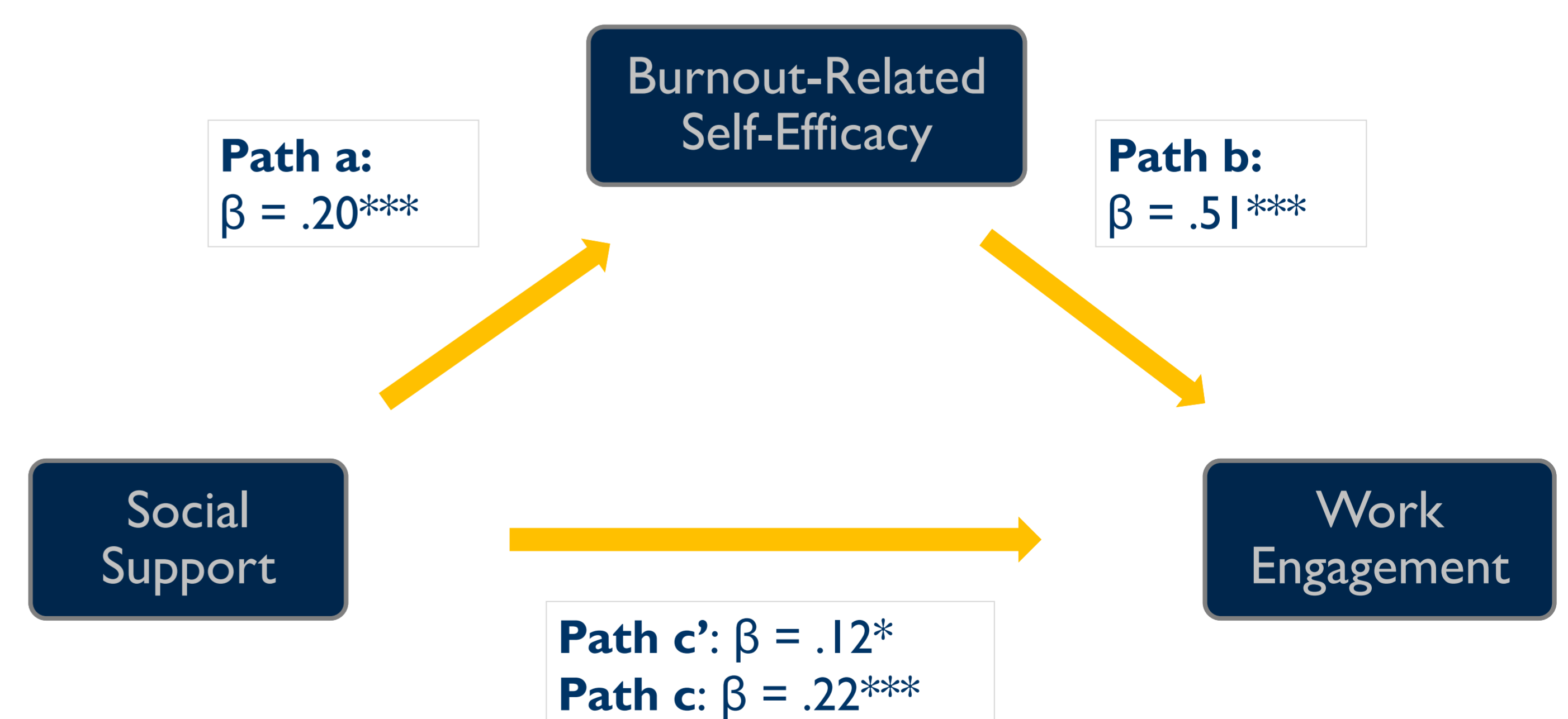
High perceived social support predicted high burnout-related self-efficacy beliefs. High level of burnout-related self-efficacy beliefs predicted low job burnout and high work engagement.



Sobel test $Z = -3.20, p \leq 0.001$

Figure 1. Results of mediation analysis: the effect of social support on job burnout is mediated by burnout-related self-efficacy beliefs.

* $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$



Sobel test $Z = 3.07, p \leq 0.01$

Figure 2. Results of mediation analysis: the effect of social support on work engagement is mediated by burnout-related self-efficacy.

* $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$

CONCLUSION

The findings support the enabling hypothesis (Knoll & Schwarzer, 2008). Results indicate a facilitating effect of perceived social support on burnout-related self-efficacy beliefs. Perceived social support operates through self-efficacy in reducing job burnout and promoting work engagement.