

# The Psychology of Protest: Activism Involvement and Burnout

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**BACKGROUND**

In 2021, Jeux Rinedahl filed an employment discrimination lawsuit. This action freed the SPU community to engage in activism and advocacy around LGBTQIA+ inclusion.

**PURPOSE**

We evaluated the effects of eight work values on protest-related burnout, through the indirect (mediated) effect of weekly hours engaged in protest.

**METHOD**

Participants (N = 65) were SPU students, staff, and alumni who are involved in the protests on campus.

- Participants completed three self-report questionnaires, online:
- Work Values Inventory (Cable & Edwards, 2004; Myerinc, n.d.),
  - Protest-Related Burnout (adapted from Salmela-Aro et al., 2011)
  - Estimate of average weekly protest hours

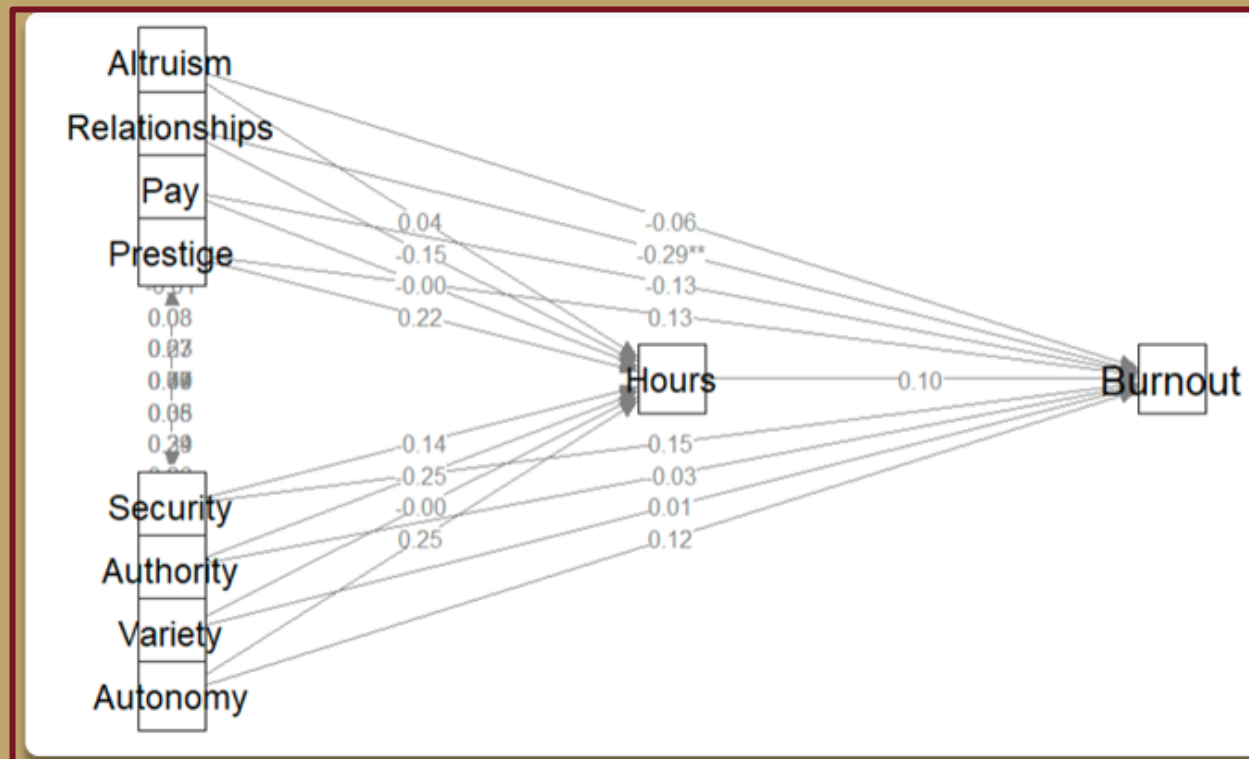
Data analysis was conducted with the lavaan package in R, evaluating if protest hours mediated the relationship between 8 work values of burnout.

**RESULTS**

Regarding weekly hours of protest, no work values were statistically significant. However, authority was the strongest predictor; having a high value for authority led to less involvement in protest (B = -0.248, p = 0.124).

Regarding work values, relationship had an inverse relationship on protest-related burnout (B = -0.293, p = 0.003); having a higher value for relationship were less likely to experience protest-related burnout. Security was positively related to protest-related burnout (B = 0.150, p = 0.072); having a high value for job security were more likely to experience burnout.

There were no statistically significant indirect effects.



**LIMITATIONS**

- Small sample size of surveys distributed and received
- Self-report measures are subjected to social desirability or recall bias. This may impact accuracy and reliability of the collected data and result in measurement error into the analysis.
- Potential issues with measurements used may impact the accuracy of the results.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES**

- This study may help social justice scholars and practitioners better understand the ebb and flow of activism.
- Understanding the role of work values in activism and burnout may be important for designing effective interventions and support systems for activists.
- People who place a high value on relationships may be less likely to experience burnout related to protest activity. This suggests that social support may be an important factor in preventing burnout among activists.
- The IRB application allots for 300 surveys to be collected. As the protest unfolds, we are continuing to collect data and, sample sizes permitting, hoping to analyze longitudinal effects.

**Table 1**  
Model Coefficients for Predicting Protest-Related Burnout from Work Values via Hours of Protest Activity

Antecedent		Weekly Protest Hours (Mediator)					Protest-Related Burnout (Dependent Variable)					
		Coeff.	SE	p	ci.lower	ci.higher	Coeff.	SE	p	ci.lower	ci.higher	
Altruism	a1	0.043	0.353	0.903	-0.646	0.665	c1	-0.060	0.166	0.719	-0.349	0.309
Relationship	a2	-0.147	0.207	0.477	-0.540	0.258	c2	<b>-0.293</b>	<b>0.099</b>	<b>0.003</b>	<b>-0.478</b>	<b>-0.094</b>
Pay	a3	-0.001	0.249	0.996	-0.458	0.529	c3	-0.134	0.129	0.299	-0.388	0.134
Prestige	a4	0.223	0.218	0.306	-0.144	0.693	c4	0.128	0.114	0.264	-0.093	0.371
Security	a5	-0.140	0.154	0.361	-0.434	0.166	c5	<b>0.150</b>	<b>0.083</b>	<b>0.072</b>	<b>-0.021</b>	<b>0.304</b>
Authority	a6	<b>-0.248</b>	<b>0.161</b>	<b>0.124</b>	<b>-0.594</b>	<b>0.028</b>	c6	-0.033	0.078	0.672	-0.198	0.106
Variety	a7	-0.001	0.219	0.998	-0.418	0.445	c7	0.015	0.122	0.905	-0.212	0.278
Autonomy	a8	0.253	0.259	0.328	-0.300	0.735	c8	0.120	0.149	0.420	-0.228	0.403
M (Mediator)							b	0.100	0.103	0.334	-0.069	0.343
Constant	i <sub>M</sub>	1.764	0.407	0.000	1.242	2.683	i <sub>y</sub>	0.498	0.081	0.000	0.417	0.760
R <sup>2</sup> = 13%						R <sup>2</sup> = 31%						

Note: All indirect effects were non-significant.

