Emotional Exhaustion: A Mediator between Work-overload and Job Performance among the University Faculty

Mohammad Daud Ali
Department of Management Sciences, University of Haripur, Pakistan

Muhammad Abdul Haseeb
PhD (HRM) Scholar at Institute of Management Sciences Peshawar, Pakistan

Shah Raza Khan
Iqra National University, Peshawar, Pakistan

Syed Imran Khan & Shehnaz Sahibzadi
Institute of Business Studies and Leadership,
Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Pakistan

The study probes into a model of work-overload and Job performance with the mediation effect of emotional exhaustion through "Baron and Kenny technique" among full-time faculty members (N=54) at the Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Pakistan. The data were collected through standard tools. Respondents were identified by looking at workloads of the individual departments. The study included all those lecturers who teach for more than 12 hours a week or assume extra responsibilities besides 12 credit hours of teaching. Descriptive statistics revealed that male lecturers were more overloaded (78%) than females (22%). Moreover, the significant indirect effect was checked through Sobel's test. The outcomes exhibited that emotional exhaustion fully mediated the association between workload and job performance. Besides, it was established that work overload and emotional exhaustion both have negative impacts on job performance with B = -.34 and -.50 respectively. Besides, results revealed that work overload prompts emotional exhaustion (B= .36). The scope of the study could be extended to a larger population by including instructors at the national level.
Keywords: Emotional Exhaustion, Job Performance, Pakistan, Work Overload.

The Job demand-resource Model suggests that stressful situations lead to burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Jobs that give limited decisional authority to employees and demand high responsibility are called High-stress jobs (Nathaniel, Sandilos, Pendergast, & Mankin, 2016) for example, teaching (Lambert, Boyle, Fitchett, & McCarthy, 2018). Work-overload (WO) is one of the important work stressors that has not received ample attention (Kimura, Bande, & Fernández-Ferrín, 2018). Though little research has been carried out in this domain as teachers' performance has been linked to their overloaded jobs (Griffith, Steptoe, & Cropley, 1999). Teachers perceive their jobs as extremely distressing (Vandenberghe & Huberman, 1999; Kyriacou, 2001). Teachers' performance is negatively affected by their stress levels (Santavirta & Solovieva, 2007). Furthermore, such exhausted situations have adverse effects not only on their concerned institutions but also on the students (Sandilos, Goble, Rimm-Kaufman, & Pianta, 2018).

Santavirta and Solovieva (2007) contend that teachers get emotionally exhausted as sometimes they have excessive work to do within less time available or assigned work mismatches with their capabilities. In this regard, Organization for Economic Development and Co-operation (2009) report concludes that the student-teacher ratio, which shows the number of students per teacher influences both teacher's and student's performance. Further, this ratio is not uniform across countries rather it differs e.g., it is least in Luxemburg and Russian Federation i.e., 15, 29 in Chile and China, and even higher in developing countries. This higher ratio has put teachers under severe kind of pressure as educational institutions have raised performance bars along with overloading them, which mostly has resulted in stressful situations, specifically emotional exhaustion (EE). In this regard, Logan and Ganster (2005) state that such situations may prevail in every educational institution. Beehr and Newman (1978) opine that such situations often change the normal behavior of teachers both psychologically and/ or physiologically and thus they start behaving in deviant manners. Furthermore, they sometimes feel pressured as they deem themselves incapable or less capable of meeting the demands or performing the assigned tasks and thus become emotionally exhausted. Wilk and Moynihan (2005) explain that emotionally exhausted employees are emotionally inundated and tattered by

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Mohammad Daud Ali, Department of Management Sciences, University of Haripur, Pakistan,
Email: dr.daud@uoh.edu.pk

their work. Resultantly, performance is affected in a negative manner (Anderson, 2003). Consequently, organizations are compelled to cope up with this situation for performance optimization

Problem Statement

Organizations tend to lower the quality and quantity of their staff by work overload and tasks other than those included in job descriptions. They believe that employees would take it as a challenge thus putting extra effort, but the actual situation reveals that performance is deteriorated as they get emotionally exhausted after becoming overburdened.

Purpose of the Study

Employees' workloads play vital roles in determinations of their job performance (JP). This paper is aimed at finding the association between work-overload and job performance after becoming exhausted emotionally with their jobs due to extra hours of work or such tasks that require high energy levels.

Research Questions

Does emotional exhaustion mediate the association between work-overload and job performance?

Hypotheses

H1a: work-overload has a positive impact on emotional exhaustion.
H1b: work-overload has a positive impact on job performance.
H2: emotional exhaustion has a negative impact on job performance.
H3: emotional exhaustion mediates the association between work-overload and job performance

Method

Sample

The sample for this study comprises Lecturers of Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan. Currently, 176 lecturers are working in various departments of AWKUM on a regular basis. According to the statutes of Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan. A lecturer can teach up to a maximum of 12 credit hours/week. The researcher checked the workload sheets of all the departments and found out that 54 of them were given extra assignments that specify work overload. Thus, data were collected from all these 54 lecturers.
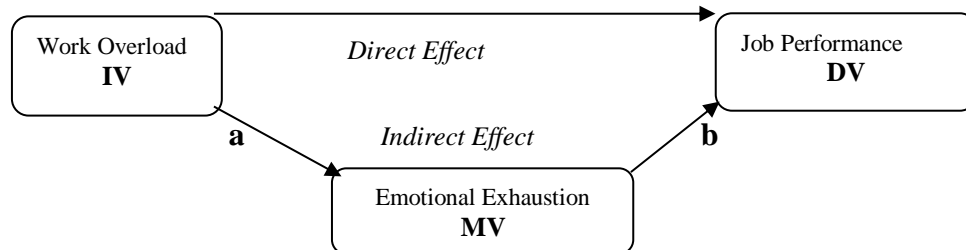
Instruments

Well-established scales have been used to measure the constructs. Explicitly, Price's (2001) Work- Overload Questionnaire was adopted to gauge WO. Sample items on this scale included "I have to work very hard on my job", "I have to work very fast on my job" and "I do not have enough time to get everything done on my job". Similarly, the Maslach Burnout Inventory was used to measure EE (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The employees had to rate themselves on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 demonstrating as "Strongly agree" and 5 as "strongly disagree". Some of the items from this scale are "I feel burnt out from my work", "I feel frustrated by my job " and "I feel I am working too hard on my job". Job Performance was measured through a tool adapted from the questionnaire developed by Babin and Boles (1998). Sample items for performance measurement are "How much do you think your overloaded job affects students' satisfaction", "how much do you think your overloaded job has affected your service quality" and "how much your overloaded job has impacted your problem-solving abilities". This again was a 5-points Likert scale, with 1 showing "much improved" and 5 representing "worst".

Procedure

After taking permission from the university administration, lecturers who were assigned extra workload were identified and contacted. After taking the consent of the lecturers, questionnaires were distributed among them individually. All participants cooperated and we received back fully completed questionnaires.

In this study, WO has been taken as explanatory variables while JP is the variable of interest. Further, EE has been taken as mediating variables (Fig.1).

The job demand-resource Model has been used in the study of occupational stress such as Bakker and Demerouti (2007). This model proposes how working conditions for example, amount of work affect employees' health and job outcomes (Llorens, Bakker, Schaufeli, & Salanova, 2006). Specifically, poorly designed or highly demanding jobs lead to EE that results in negative job outcomes such as low performance on the job (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Baron and Kenny (1986) mediation technique was employed to test the stated hypotheses. Regarding this method, Aguinis, Edwards, and Bradley (2016) argue that mediation is indicated: (a) when the association between X and Y is nonsignificant (path c), (b) relationship between X and M is significant (path a), (c) association between M and Y is significant (path b), and (d) association between IV and DV is insignificant (path c'). They further state that " first condition is taken as evidence that there is a relation between X and Y to be mediated. The second and third conditions establish that the paths to and from the mediator variable M are significant. Finally, the fourth condition shows that M mediates the effect of X on Y. If the first three conditions are met but the fourth condition is not,

then mediation is considered partial rather than complete."(p.9).

Results

Descriptive statistics for work overload of lecturers on gender basis shows that a higher percentage of male lecturers is affected in comparison to female lecturers. Out of total instructors (N=54), 78 % are male lecturers while female lecturers comprised only 22 % of the population. A prerequisite for mediation is that all the variables must correlate with each other, Pearson 's correlation analysis show that JP has a significant negative association with both EE and WO (r = -.65 and - .33) respectively. Similarly, EE and WO are positively correlated with each other (r = .28).

Table 1
Regression to predict Job Performance via Work-overload and Emotional Exhaustion as a Mediator

Models	B	SE	β	t	*p*
WO	-.345	.13	-.33	-2.59	.01
Dependent Variable: JP					
WO	.36	.17	.28	2.10	.04
Dependent Variable: EE					
EE	-.50	.08	-.65	-6.17	.00
Dependent Variable: JP					
EE	-.47	.08	-.60	-5.57	.00
WO	-.17	.11	-.16	-1.56	.12
Dependent Variable: JP					

Note: Number of Faculty members is 54.

In the first equation regression analysis performed for JP over WO that resulted in significant relationship β = -.345(p = .012)). Furthermore, R^2 value implies that 11.4 % of the change in JP is due to WO. Similarly, looking at the F-statistic value $F_{(1, 52)}$ = 6.378) it could be concluded that the hypothesized model is significant as (p<.05). Consequently, H1b was accepted as JP gets decreased by .345 units with a single unit increase in WO. In the second equation, EE was regressed on WO that yielded significant results as well (β = .366 (p = .04)) which suggests that a one-unit increase in WO increases EE by .366 units. F- Statistic demonstrates the significance of the model as p<.05 while R2 value in the model summary suggests that WO accounted for 7% of the variation in EE. Thus, H1a was accepted. In the third step, JP was regressed on EE. The Regression Coefficients suggest that JP decreases by .508 units with a single unit increase in EE of the lecturers, which confirms a positive significant relationship between these variables as t-static was significant too (p = .000). Resultantly, H2 also accepted. In the fourth equation, JP was simultaneously regressed on mediator and predictor i.e. EE and WO. R2 value suggested that 45 % of the variation in JP is due to these two variables in the model. Furthermore, the difference between R^2 and

Adjusted-R (.428) is not large that may show that the variables in the model are not redundant. Similarly, ANOVA reveals that the model is significant as p<.05 with $F_{(2,51)}$ = 20.844. Moreover, Coefficients of regression revealed mediation, as the relationship between WO and JP once significant became insignificant (β = -.173 (p = .12)). To test the significance level of the mediation Sobel test (1982) was employed, and test statistics show that mediation is significant (-1.96, p< .05)

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to explore the mediation of emotional exhaustion between job performance and workload. It has been proven in the literature that emotional exhaustion negatively effects job performance which is directly correlated with the workload. However previous research has left a gap where workload and job performance are directly related, and the relationship is mediated by emotional exhaustion. The outcomes of this study are crucial for teaching staff at institutes of higher education who are working under conditions that demand extra effort in form of workload that adds to the exhaustion factor on the emotional level and effects the performance simultaneously. The hypotheses formulated are supported by the findings which are in line with the JDR model by Bakker and Demerouti (2007). This study adds to the existing literature by testing the assumption in a different occupational setting to test the relationship of variables in the model. Higher performance level is supposed to be maintained by the lecturers despite emotional exhaustion which is added through additional workload. It is confirmed based on the existing findings in the literature and the results of this study that emotional exhaustion does mediate the relationship between workload and job performance.

Practical implications of the study suggest that management can play crucial role in detection of emotional exhaustion and its effects on job performance in the relevant staff. Reduction of workload seems to be the most appropriate strategy. In cases where departmental resources demand extra work allocation, it should be divided among the staff in a way that alleviates the exhaustion aspect through rotation of job. Since the findings of the study corroborate the existing results that workload can be detrimental to mental and physical health of the employees in any organization, initiatives must be taken by the management to balance work and life. This will not only have beneficial effects on the performance of the lecturers in the educational institutes but also save the organization resources that will be spent on dealing with cases on emotional exhaustion and lawsuits. Although it is observed that reduction of workload is not possible at any given time, necessary steps can be taken by the management to make amends to accommodate employees and reduce exhaustion.

Theoretical implications of the study reveal that JDR model is important in extending its applications across the fields. Recent studies have called for cross field examination to shed light on similarities and deviations in form of effects on employees and their job performance. This study adds to the JDR model by introducing emotional exhaustion as the mediator between workload and job performance. It is imperative that distinguishing characteristics of the work environment be investigated to determine the characteristics that are psychosocial and related to health and motivational aspects on the job.

Limitations

This research has been conducted in one Public Sector University in Pakistan. The results obtained cannot be generalized since other variables can be introduced in the conceptual framework to reach better supposition. Also conducting similar studies in other institutes of higher education in the public and private sector may yield results that allow the researcher to refine the conceptual framework. It is suggested that future studies be taken up with the addition of associated variables to expand the knowledge base and make a valuable contribution in the present literature.

Conclusion

The present study proposed and examined a model whether EE serves as a mediator between WO and JP through collected data from overloaded lecturers at Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan. Furthermore, the aim was to find out the effects of WO on EE and, JP. Similarly, the impact of EE on JP was also tested. The outcomes suggested that the hypothesized models were logical as the framed hypothesis was supported based on the analysis. Specifically, WO influenced JP by means of EE. Furthermore, it was found that the EE level of employees increased with their increasing workloads while performance levels were observed to get dropped. Moreover, high levels of EE were proved to be the reason for low performance. It recommends that the university administration ought to take into consideration the capability of every worker while assigning workloads.

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