

Antecedents of work exhaustion, its mediating role and subsequent effects on turnover intentions

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the factors influencing work exhaustion and its mediating role on turnover intentions in the context of manufacturing and services sector of Pakistan. The study is based on extensive review of literature and comprehensive statistical analysis (correlation, regression and mediation analysis). The results of this study support the view that work family conflict and perceived work overload are the major contributors of work exhaustion, fairness of reward is also important in the context of manufacturing concerns. The work exhaustion perfectly mediates between perceived work overload, work family conflict and turnover intentions. The paper demonstrates the importance of understanding on the job stressors for organizations while evaluating the role of work exhaustion on employee turnover intentions. The implications and future research direction are discussed.

Key words: Work family conflict, perceived work overload, on the job stressors, work exhaustion, turnover intentions



Available online
www.bmdynamics.com
ISSN: 2047-7031

INTRODUCTION

Stress being considered an important aspect of the human life and its antecedents can be traced to almost the evolution of mankind. Stress is a state of anxiety when a person feel out of his abilities due to excessive pressures and demands put on him. According to the definition of United Kingdom (UK) Government's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as the adverse consequent for the people resulted from excessive distress and other demands placed on them on job and off-job (HSE, 2001). The chronic stress has number of adverse effects on the physical being and psychological processes. The Confederation of British Industries (CBI), leading employers' organization in UK, ranks second the stress as the cause of absenteeism among the non-manual workers in united kingdom, with absenteeism causing around 10.5 Bn per year to the british industry (CBI, 2000).

Selye (1974) formalized a General Adaptive Syndrome (GAS) on the basis of his extensive work on stress. The model suggests that when an organism is faced with a Challenging and stressful object/ situation, it results in a generalized physiological response. Which occur in three stages alarm, resistance and exhaustion.

One significant extraction from the second and third approaches is the concept of work exhaustion. The theme has topical relevance as he considered to be the biggest consequent of occupational stress that could negatively impact the organizational and individual productivity (Sondhi, Chawla, Jain & Kashyap, 2008). Kanner et al., (1978) in their study concluded perceived work overload, job autonomy, fairness of reward, and work family conflict as the antecedents of work exhaustion that leads towards turnover intention. The continues studies on emotional exhaustion and tedium considered, job autonomy (Jackson et al., 1986); role clashes & uncertainty (Burke and Greenglass, 1995; Sethi et al., 1999); work overload (Sondhi et al., 2008), work family conflict (Ahuja et al.,2006) and lack of rewards as the most important antecedents of work exhaustion.

The empirically focused consequences of work exhaustsion are reduced job satisfaction (Wolpin, Burke & Greenglass, 1991; Burke and Greenglass 1995). Rosse et al. (1991) considered lower self esteem as a significant result of emotional job exhaustion. Leiter et al. (1994) and Thomas & Williams (1995) concluded reduced organizational commitment as a serious outcome of work exhaustion. Studies on the consequences of work exhaustion reflect higher turnover and higher turnover intention as the serious outcome of work exhaustion (Jackson et al, 1987; Thomas & Williams, 1995). In a Meta analysis on the

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correlates of the emotional exhaustion dimension of job burnout (Lee and Ashworth, 1996) concluded role conflict, work overload and lack of job autonomy as antecedents and increased turnover intention and reduced organizational commitment as the Major consequences of exhaustion.

Moore (2000) studied some important antecedents of work exhaustion and concluded direct link of perceived work overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, job autonomy and fairness of rewards with work exhaustion, to a serious antecedent to high turnover intentions. Further, the model used by (Ahuja et al, 2006) using work family conflict instead of role conflict and find positive association of strong association among variables that leads to turnover intention. Turnover is one's propensity to depart the job that the individual is currently pursuing (Sondhi et al, 2008). Harris, James and Boonthanom (2005) state that strain is a psychological response created by a Stressor that may contain frustration, nervousness, depressed feelings, and other symptoms of physical disturbance as well However in some scenarios organizational politics are seems as threatening. When the individuals experience strain and the resulting emotional feelings of willing to stop or go away from organization that is turnover intentions.

As organizations have increased the usage of information systems and there is continuous advancement in technology, it has become a dilemma to retain the valuable staff in an organization for the achievement and success of strategic goals. The concern of employees for workload, work family conflict, job autonomy and fairness of rewards, and the level up to which they seek for a balance in order to avoid work exhaustion is very important for organization to consider while lining up the strategies for them. If work exhaustion arises how it could be accomplished by firms in order to avoid turnover. Employee turnover is a massive problem for organizations in which there is loss of valuable, competent and skilled employees lead to a decrease in the overall competitiveness of the organization. The study is conducted to work out solutions for reducing the employee turnover that incurs major costs of the entire hiring procedure and the training & development of the new employees.

Thus, on the basis of previous literature the current study aimed to evaluate the antecedents of work exhaustion and its impact on turnover intentions and mediating effect of work exhaustion between antecedents and turnover intention. The purpose is to integrate research on work exhaustion and its antecedent turnover intention by investigating the factors that leads to work exhaustion in eastern context. The study is beneficial additions to the existing knowledge by examining the impact of various factors on work exhaustion pertaining to different job positions. Turnover intention is considered important by managers and researchers because the cost associated is inevitable (Krischenbaum & Weisberg, 2002).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work exhaustion is emerged from the work done on tediousness and in exhausted work place. Moore (2000a) study has contributed substantial insights to the literature of work exhaustion, suggests some of the antecedents of work exhaustion i.e. job autonomy, work overload, work family conflict, & fairness of rewards which has been further linked it to work exhaustion to investigate its impact on turnover intentions. The model further used Ahuja et al (2007), by replacing role conflict and role ambiguity with work family conflict and brought organizational commitment as a mediating variable.

In observation of work exhaustion (or job burnout) the study of (Moore, 2000b) is the combination of two energies emotional and mental which are necessary for job demands. Initially it was addressed as "tedium." an emotional condition, mental, and physical exhaustion influenced by prolonged participation in demanding conditions, the outcome is that tedium is the effect of consisting much unhelpful and few helpful elements in related environment that is, so much conflicts, stress, and demands in combination with rewards, successes, and acknowledgments, However on a demanding place one might feel appreciated and valued, on the other hand many people feel exhaustion when they experience stress in their life rather than a fruitful support. Further, the author concluded that people influenced by work exhaustion will not reflect the whole job attitude and reflexes establish to relate with exhaustion factor. Job burnout has been explained as repeated or constant emotional pressure related with a well-built integration with people for a long time period (Moore, 2000a).

Turnover described as one's propensity to depart the job that the individual is currently pursuing (Sondhi et al, 2008). Harris, James and Boonthanom (2005) state that strain is a psychological response created by a Stressor that may contain frustration, nervousness, depressed feelings, and other symptoms of physical disturbance as well. Generally authors of stress address Stressors in sense the strains and predictors as the result of these Stressors. However in some scenarios organizational politics are seems as threatening. When the individuals experience strain and the resulting emotional feelings of willing to stop or go away from organization that is turnover intentions.

Rehman (2012) State that turnover purely refer to the leaving phenomenon of workers of an organization, This is a harmful situation, might lead towards the disappointment of worker sustainability in the organizations, skipping a job appears to show significant work place troubles, in spite of opportunities to go for better jobs, employee's turnover disrupt steams, increases costs, lower productivity, and leads in lost knowledge. So, it is necessary for the policy makers to realize the significance of employee's job satisfaction level.

The relationship among the corporate loyalty and turnover is important stuff; commitment of the organization shows the loyalty of employees with organization because loyalty shows the performance which means low turnover intentions and high job autonomy. To check the organizational commitment develops, there are three types of commitment include namely affecting, protraction commitment and normative. The first one includes emotional affection and loyalty with the firm or organization the second include the cost benefit for the firm or organization and the third include to keep the member of organization or firm in any circumstances and environment. (Narimawati, 2007). There is positive relation between work exhaustion and employee turnover intention if employee become exhausted at workplace then employee would want to get rid of it and want escape so there will be high employee turnover intention. Kanner et al. (1978) suggest that high work burden, clashes, stress and too few rewards lead to the tedium. Job burnout, on the other hand, is related to the emotional exhaustion aspect of tedium.

Some researchers also found a significant correlation between tedium and reduction in job commitment and greater turnover intention. Lee and Ashforth (1996) in meta-analysis provided a significant correlation was found between work exhaustion and its antecedents which leads employee to quit organization. Sondhi et al., (2008) in their study found a significant relationship between work overload and fairness of rewards as antecedents to work exhaustion which in turn significantly impacting turnover intentions. Ahuja et al., (2006) examine the turnover intentions among IT professionals. The study predicted traditional factors (Job Autonomy, Fairness of Rewards, Work-Family Conflict and Job Autonomy) as antecedents of work exhaustion and organizational commitment and work exhaustion as predictors of turnover intentions. Further the study concluded the intended results.

Hypothesis

H1: There is likely to be a positive relationship between Perceived Work Overload (PWO) and Work Exhaustion (WE) among working individuals, means if PWO will increase then WE will increase.

H2: There is likely to be a positive relationship between Work Family Conflict (WFC) and Work Exhaustion (WE) among working individuals, means if WFC will increase then WE will increase.

H3: There is likely to be a negative relationship between Job Autonomy (JOA) and Work Exhaustion (WE) among working individuals, means if JOA will decrease then WE will increase.

H4: There is likely to be a negative relationship between Fairness of Reward (FAR) and (WE) among working individuals. If FAR will increase then WE will decrease.

H5: There is likely to be a positive relationship between Work Exhaustion (WE) and Turnover intention (TOI) among working individuals, means if WE will increase then TOI will increase.

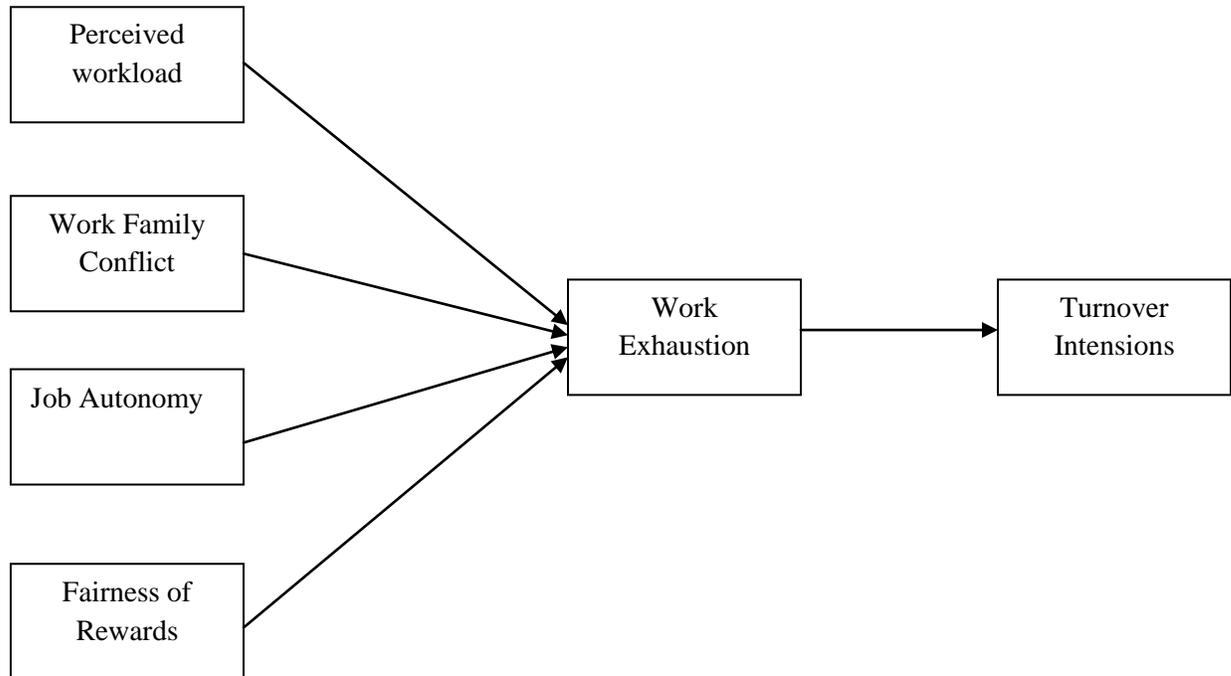
H6: Work Exhaustion (WE) mediates between Perceived Work Overload (PWO) and Turnover intention (TOI).

H7: Work Exhaustion (WE) mediates between Work Family Conflict (WFC) and Turnover intention (TOI).

H8: Work Exhaustion (WE) mediates between Job Autonomy (JOA) and Turnover intention (TOI).

H9: Work Exhaustion (WE) mediates between Fairness of Reward (FAR) and Turnover intention (TOI).

Research Framework



METHODOLOGY

Procedure

The study was conducted in two phases. In first phase the questionnaire developed with some adaptations from previous literature and discussions with pioneer HR managers from the concentrated concerns. The second phase take care the responses of the participant concerns. The purpose of this methodology was to briefly understand the point of view of each organization.

Reliability

The questionnaire used for the study is consisted of measures from different studies. The job autonomy measure adapted from the study of (Beehr 1976), WFC measured using the scale from (Adams et al., 1996), Perceived work overload, Work exhaustion scale from (Moore, 2000a), Turnover intention using a four-item scale from (Moore, 2000a) and Fairness of reward from (Ahuja et al., 2006). The reliability values were 0.632, 0.863, 0.784, 0.847, 0.829 and 0.894 respectively.

Participants

Sample is collected from the hierarchy of 5 managerial levels of the services organizations (MCB, HBL XAVOR, CCPL, STYLO and LAHORE CARPET). Simple Random Sampling method used to collect

data. 475 questionnaires were personally administered and 281 employees responded with 59.15% response rate.

RESULTS

Correlation Analysis

Table 1.

Variable	Mean	S.D	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. JA	4.7500	1.264	(.632)					
2. WFC	4.7166	1.322	.005	(.863)				
3. FOR	4.9110	1.348	.367**	.059	(.847)			
4. PWO	4.4891	1.035	.026	.461**	.211**	(.784)		
5. WE	4.4047	1.277	-.050	.641**	-.036	.423**	(.829)	
6. TOI	4.2327	1.676	.014	.445**	-.171**	.312**	.562**	(.894)

n= 281. ** $p \leq .01$.

Table 1 provides the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of the study variables. The correlation analysis used to identify the strength and direction of the correlation between variables of interests. The relationship between factors contributing in work exhaustion (WE) and its impact on turnover intention (TOI) were investigated using Pearson correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. The results reveals the positive correlation between perceived work overload and work exhaustion ($r = .423, n = 281, p < .000$), i.e. high level of Perceived work overload associated with high level of work exhaustion among Pakistani employees.

As upon the 2nd hypothesis results reveals the positive correlation between Work family conflict and work exhaustion ($r = .461, n = 281, p < .000$), i.e. with high level of work family conflict the employee will be exhausted from work. Thus 2nd hypothesis is accepted. Considering the hypothesis 3, the results reveals the negative but statistically insignificant correlation between Job Autonomy and work exhaustion ($r = -.050, n = 281, p < .402$), Thus 3rd hypothesis rejected. The fairness of reward reveals the negative, but non-significant correlation with work exhaustion ($r = -.036, n = 281, p < .553$), with high level of fairness of reward associated with low level of work exhaustion. Thus due to insignificant results hypothesis 4 rejected. The results hypothesis 5 results reveals the positive strong correlation between Work exhaustion and turnover intention ($r = .562, n = 281, p < .000$), with high level of work exhaustion associated with high level of turnover intention. Thus hypothesis 5 is accepted.

Regression Analysis

Regression method applied for advanced analysis. The depiction of results through regression equation is as follow:

$$WE = 1.385 + 0.230PWO - 0.021JOA + 0.542WFC - 0.095FAR$$

$$T \text{ VALUE } \quad (3.86) *** \quad (3.59) *** \quad (0.436) \quad (11.06) *** \quad (2.03)*$$

*** = .001

** = 0.01

* = 0.05

R² = 0.443

F value = 54.85

The regression results reveals that the variable perceived work overload and Work family conflict are positively influence work exhaustion. Which means work exhaustion will increase with the increase in work family conflict and perceived work overload. Furthermore, fairness of reward reveals negative influence to work exhaustion. Which means work exhaustion will decrease with the increase in the Fairness of reward of an organization. Job autonomy does not reveal any influence on work exhaustion.

Work-family conflict and perceived work-overload found to be most significant in influencing work exhaustion as indicated by two tailed t test at .001 level and Fairness of rewards at 0.05 level. The significance of R² as measured by F statistic indicates that the regression equation is significant. The results concludes that hypothesis 1 and 2 are true.

$$TOI = 0.982 + 0.738WE$$

$$T \text{ VALUE} = (3.29)^{***} (11.35)^{***}$$

*** = .001

** = 0.01

* = 0.05

R² = 0.316

F value = 129.02

The regression results reveals that work exhaustion positively influence the turnover intention among Pakistani employees. Furthermore, it is significant at .001 level of significance as indicated by t statistics. The R² value 0.316 shows the significance of the equation at .001 levels. The regression indicates that employee's intention to leave the organization will increase with the increase in the work exhaustion level. Keeping all the things same, work exhaustion is the major contributor towards turnover intention and turnover. The results conclude that hypothesis 5 is significantly true.

Mediation Analysis

Table 2.

Predictors	Turnover intentions		
	B	R ²	ΔR ²
Mediator Analysis			
Step 1			
WE		0.31	
Step 2			
PWO	.06		
WFC	.12	.33	.02

n=281, * $p \leq .01$, ** $p \leq .05$

Mediator: Work Exhaustion (WE)

Independents: Perceived Work Overload (PWO); WFC: Work Family Conflicts (WFC)

Dependent: Turnover Intentions (TOI)

Mediation analysis performed to predict the mediating effect of work exhaustion among independent variables (Job autonomy, work family conflict, perceived work overload and fairness of reward. Hypothesis 6 predicts that work exhaustion (WE) mediate the relationship between perceived work overload (PWO) and turnover intentions (TI). Refer to table 2 the correlation between PWO and WE ($r=.423, p < .000$) and between WE and TI ($r=.562, p < .000$), which fulfills the pre-requisites prescribed by (Baron and Kenny, 1986). There should be a perfect relationship between independent and dependent, mediator and dependent, independent and mediator. In step 1 we enter WE (mediator) and in second step we enter PWO (independent) and WFC (independent) and found significant drop in β (from $\beta = .31, p < .000$ to $\beta = .06$ n.s, $\Delta R .02$) which support our hypothesis 6.

Hypothesis 7 predicts that work exhaustion (WE) mediate the relationship between work family conflict (WFC) and turnover intentions (TI). Refer to table 2 the correlation between WFC and WE ($r=.641, p < .000$) and between WE and TI ($r=.562, p < .000$), which fulfills the pre-requisites prescribed by (Baron and Kenny, 1986). The results reveals the significant drop in beta (from $\beta = .44, p < .000$ to $\beta = .12$ n.s, $\Delta R .02$) which support our hypothesis 7. Hypothesis 8 and 9 fails to fulfill the pre-requisites, so we exclude these hypotheses from testing the mediation analysis.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The extensive review of the literature and the throughout analysis of the data collected from the structured questionnaires statistically proves that factors (work-family conflict and perceived-work overload and fairness of reward) contribute towards work exhaustion which in turn leads towards turnover intentions. Comparing the manufacturing sector with the services sector, the results of services concerns reveals that work family conflict, perceived work overload are the major contributor of work exhaustion which in turn leads towards turnover intention.

Job autonomy and fairness of rewards does not show the significant contribution towards work exhaustion. The relationships prove by the significance levels of the values. The long working hours and unpaid overtimes cause work exhaustion by clashing the family events with the work priorities. The employees feel exhausted by sacrificing their belongings for the sake of their profession. The perceived work overload affects the employee psychologically and encourages him to get rid of the organization.

While in the case of manufacturing concerns the results reveal that work family conflict, perceived work overload and fairness of rewards contribute to work exhaustion but work exhaustion does not impact turnover intentions. The long working hours and unhealthy conditions make them suffer physically and mentally and cause disorder in their personal life with work and cause work exhaustion. The employees suffer from its after effects but did not make their intentions of turnover. The employee perception of overload and fairness of reward influence the level of exhaustion they feel and express. This means employee perception of overload and fairness of reward are also very solid predictors of work exhaustion. The fairness is in terms of monetary benefits they received from the organization (i.e. increments, TA, bonuses).

Although these factors influence the extent of work exhaustion but in long run does not encourage an employee to leave the job. The lack of exposure and switching opportunities for the employees in the changing technological work environment and diversified requirement of skill sets for manufacturing units discourage the turnover intentions and turnover of the employees. Another reason of no relationship between variables is the immature industrial sector of Pakistan due to energy crisis. Shifting of major industrial zones to China and Bangladesh creates unemployment in the market. That's why employees often avoid leaving the organization because of the narrow employment market of industrial sector.

Referring to the current study, it is identified that the overall results are partially consistent with (Moore, 2000 a,b; Ahuja et al., 2007; and Sondhi et al., 2008) study. The five hypothesis among the among nine are accepted. The Job autonomy and Fairness of reward did not display any significant impact on the intensity of the work exhaustion. Sondhi et al.,(2008) study reveals the negative and significant relationship of both the variable on work exhaustion at Indian setup, but while in Pakistani context these two constructs show their existence to work exhaustion but could not reach to the significance level.

The study has several limitations. Due to the limited resources this study is limited to the concerns operated in Lahore. So there can be a difference in personal traits, level of emotional intelligence, exposure among the employees working in Lahore and other remote areas. Another limitation is that the study neglects the effect of supervisor on managing the stress of employees and motivating them. The supervisor can lead the behaviours of the employees and transform the level of thoughts to manage the on the job and off the job stressors and role conflicts. The study lacks the comparison on the basis of gender of the factors contribute towards work exhaustion.

On the basis of the limitations the future research can direct towards the moderating role of the person supervisor fit and its influence on work exhaustion and turnover intention. Another study can be conducted to identify the transformational role of a leader in eliminating the factors of work exhaustion and on the other hand increase the loyalty of the employees towards the organization. Emotional intelligence and its impact on the job and off the job stressors can also be a motivating direction for future research. The comparison of the results of exhaustion among employees working in Lahore and other smaller cities like (Bahawalpur, Multan, Faisalabad, Abbottabad). The comparison with these four sites can add the potential insights in the literature of work exhaustion and turnover intentions at the context of Pakistan.

The demand on new competitive era is to work hard and receive the benefit. There is no room for personal and professional constraints at workplace. Organizations requires performance, irrespective of the personal constraints. The implications of this study are pretty certain for the organizations. The organizations need to intergrate the human resource practices with strategic management (Strategic human resource management). The work overload and work family conflict are the major contributor to stress.

To tackle these constraints organizations need to align the employee personal goals with the organizational goals by introducing the transformational role of the leader. This can decrease on the job and off the job stressors, and also shape the behaviour of the employees which inturn increase the performance of the employees. At person level the training of emotional intellegence can help employees to manage their wasted emotion at work, which can increase the efficiency.

This study concludes that on the job stressors are the major contributors towards the work exhaustion. There is a positive relationship between these stressors and work exhaustion which can leads towards turnover and turnover intention. Action plan of organizations is required to overcome the work family conflict by increaing job autonomy among employees. This is the way they can balance their work and family goals by utilizing the parallel startegies(putting their work and family goals parallel). This study will be helpful for the companies mentioned above to shape their strategic human resource roadmap to further excute it to decrease the job stressors.

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