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THE EFFECTS OF BURNOUT, SUPERVISORY SUPPORT AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE AMONG MBA STUDENTS

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Abstract

This research examined the effects of burnout, supervisory support and work-life balance on job performance among part-time MBA students in Malaysian private universities. Quantitative research design is used in this study, where 130 part-time MBA students from two The National Energy University (UNITEN) and Multimedia University (MMU) participated in the study. Correlation is used to measure a possible linear association between burnout, supervisory support, work-life balance and job performance. Result reveals that supervisory support has a positive impact on job performance. However, burnout and work-life balance showed a non-significant relationship toward job performance. This study is among the first to examine the relationship of burnout, supervisory support and job performance among part-time MBA students in Malaysian private universities. This study is the first in literature to examine the relationship of burnout and job stress among MBA students. Effects of burnout dimension, supervisory support and work-life balance is rare in literature.

Keywords: Burnout, supervisory support, work-life balance, job performance, Malaysia, private universities.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, a growing number of workplace stresses exist. The nature of work structure has been changed, contributing to workplace psychosocial risks. Due to increased competition, employees are pressured to meet higher work demands and expectations. Work-home interface that are currently dictated by instant communications from superior to subordinates creates long working hours culture in organisation.

The causes of stress are many and it happens when demand and pressures do not match employee's knowledge, capabilities and managing skills. The stress can lead to adverse results such as work-related stress, burnout and depression. The workplace stress factors include unclear or conflicting roles, excessive workloads, job insecurity, poorly managed organization, and limited management support. Additionally, personal stress factors are interpersonal conflict, physical and psychological exploitation, sexual harassment, violence and limited social support from colleague and spouse. Indeed, understanding on stress management, employees wellbeing and workplace abuse are growing human resource issues. Previously, employers tend to dismiss these issues as harmless and display little empathy towards affected staff. If work stress is not handled carefully, the employees will feel worry, anxious and agonies. As a result, their energy levels decrease, making them less able to concentrate on their work and fuelling a cycle of happiness and unproductivity.

2. Problem Statement

Many factors contributed to the workplace stress and burnout. In general, work stress can happen due to lack of work-life balance. Employees, who have dual career households, are difficult to achieve balance between work, travel and tasks of social reproduction as they manage family responsibilities with two different jobs. Work-life balance refers to the individuals' capability, regardless of age or gender, to integrate work and family responsibilities. In 2009, UK government has launched Work-life Balance Campaign to improve in working condition and enhance work flexibility. The campaign was to increase employers' attentiveness to the benefits of work-life balance policies and practices.

For employers, it is important to design an appropriate work-life balance programs that enables employees to achieve greater autonomy in integrating work and non-work domains (Camison, 2013). A career woman usually has higher family responsibilities. If appropriate work-life policies implemented, organisation will benefit from higher productivity, better recruitment and retention, lower absenteeism, improved customer services and high employee motivation. Poor employees' work-life balance will increase work stress, resulting in low performance (Camison, 2013).

Work-family conflict related to inter-role conflict in which certain role (i.e. work) is mutually incompatible in some domain (Buttner & Lowe, 2015). Work-family conflict can influence employees' job stress, burnout and job performance. Buttner & Lowe (2015) stated that time, strain and behavior-based are sources of conflict. Time-based conflict happens when "time devoted to one role make it difficult to fulfil requirements of another role"(Buttner & Lowe, 2015). Strain-based conflict occur when "strain from one role make it difficult to fulfill requirement of other role"(Buttner & Lowe, 2015). Behaviour-based conflict is the situation when specific "behaviors required in one role make it difficult to fulfil the requirement of another role"(Buttner & Lowe, 2015). The job demand will also reduce the individual's resources of mental

and emotional. Individuals try to minimize the loss of resources by using coping strategy to maintain their less resource (Tremblay & Mansour, 2015). Unfortunately, the strategy may lead to threaten family resources and the employee will find difficulty to fulfil family demand more than work demand. The employee soon will suffer psychologically from the family and job stress. The stress increases when the demand of work increases and overload. However, the support from family member especially spouse can reduce the level of stress. Family play an important role to individual by giving support emotionally to overcome the problems.

Nevertheless, there are limited burnout studies focuses on part-time Master Business Administration (MBA) students in Malaysian private universities. Most of MBA students are both students and workers in their organizations. They are pursuing MBA because they aim to have better positions in the company. MBA students focus more on managerial competency study, in which they learn executive decision-making. They will face variety of problems that lead to both academic and job stress. MBA students have to survive academically and professionally (Pandya, 2012). An academic stress can impact positively and negatively. Pandya (2012) also stated that universities have different environments compared to non-academic institutions. Pandya (2012) added that an apparent increase in financial difficulties and outside pressure may affect student mental health and academic performance.

3. Purpose of the Study

Therefore, this research aims to examine the relationship between burnout and job performance among part-time MBA students. This study will also examine whether there is an effect of supervisory support and work-life balance on their job performance. Indeed, pursuing higher studies to increase human capital skill is indeed a prolonged and demanding investment which requiring skills to balance work and studies. As part-time students, who are also working could transfer the knowledge from MBA studies to workplace competence and recognition and from workplace experience and training to the individual learning and outcomes in their university pursuits. However, stress might occur in order to maintain both academic and job performance.

4. Literature review

Job performance is defined as "behaviors engaged in by employees at work that are in keeping with the organizational goal" (Khosa, Tiriyo, Ritacco, & Lowies, 2014, p6). If the employees have poor performance, it will result in poor productivity. Productivity was defined as " measure of the quality and quantity done considering the cost of the resources it took to do the work" (Khosa et al., (2014), p.6). The authors also stated that employee performance depends on the ability to work, level of effort, and support given to the employee. It is important to them to work together because if the factors reduced or diminished, performance will be negatively affected. (Khosa et al., 2014).

Additionally, part-time MBA students are struggling to maintain their academic and job performance. Employees who are pursuing higher degree need to manage well their time in achieving their goals as both student and worker. As a student, time management is important to fulfil the course requirement such as doing an assignment and seating for examination. At the same time, they have their work responsibilities. Thus, most MBA students face both job and academic stress. MBA students face many challenges while

pursuing higher education. They are required to fulfil the MBA program requirement, pressuring them to earn good grades and degree (Pandya, 2012). Stress might affect their academic and job performance and they must know how to deal with it. Higher stress will affect their performance.

Moreover, with the support from the supervisor, the employees may gain more experience needed to increase their job performance. If they get less support from their supervisor, it may reduce their motivation to perform in their job. A supportive supervisor is sympathetic to the employee's need to pursue work and family balance, assisting the employee to fulfil work-family responsibilities (Ahmed & Wee, 2015). Employees with no support will have low confident, self-esteem and job performance. Wee & Ahmed (2015) agreed that supervisory support is an additional resource that serves to enhance their subordinates' experiences in work and non-work domains, adding work-life enrichment.

According to Machuca, Mirabent and Alerge (2016), p.586, work family conflict is "a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressure from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect". For employees who are both studying and working, they will face difficulty to handle their work-life conflict. Managing conflict between work and life is a big challenge for organizations and individual (Machuca, Mirabent & Alerge, 2016). Work-life balance has implications for employees' attitudes, behavior and well-being and as a result it will effect on organizational effectiveness (Machuca, Mirabent & Alerge, 2016). Employees with poor management of work-life balance will affect their job performance. In order to achieve their target, they need to sacrifice their personal and family time. As a result, work-life conflict is increased. The effects of work-life conflict such as absenteeism, turnover, and low performance will tend to occur in the organisation. Overall, previous study showed that burnout, supervisory support and work-life balance influence employees' job performance. Therefore, the following hypothesis is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between burnout and job performance among part-time MBA students .

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between supervisory support and job performance among part-time MBA students .

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between work-life balance and job performance among part-time MBA students.

5. Research Methods

For this study, a quantitative method is used to determine the impact of burnout, supervisory support and work-life balance on job performance. The sampling design chosen for this research is non-probability sampling. The researchers estimate the population parameter to fall within a range based on the estimated sample.

This study involved two institutions which are The National Energy University (UNITEN) and Multimedia University (MMU). The number of UNITEN's MBA students is 153 students and for MMU is 468 MBA students who are still active. The total number of MBA students in UNITEN is 153 students and for MMU is 468 students. The total number of sample is 621 students. According to Krejcie & Morgan (1970), the sample size will be 242 respondents. Due to the MMU have a higher number of MBA students compared to UNITEN, the sample from MMU will be more than UNITEN which is MMU will be 170

students and UNITEN will be 71 students. The selected students are MBA students who are working full time. There were 200 questionnaire distributed to both universities but only 130 questionnaires were completed.

5.1. Measurement of variables

The data source for this research is primary data. Primary data is a data that originally collected, differ from the secondary data that is compilation from the available published sources. Descriptive research describes something which could be a phenomenon, a current situation or characteristic of a group of organization and people. This research is suitable with descriptive research which describes students' behaviour toward stress and burnout.

According to Khosa, Ritacco and Lowies, (2014) the research must measure the concepts correctly otherwise the data will be interpreted wrongly. In this study, there are three type of variables (i.e. demographic variables, dependent variable and independent variables). Nominal scale will be used to measure the demographic variables such as gender, working sector and name of university. Nominal scale does not signify anything and it is only an indication of category. Therefore, these variables cannot be ranked. For the variables year of study, age and incomes, the researcher will use ordinal scale so that the researcher will find the differences among various categories. This scale measures the degrees of difference but not the specific of difference. The ordinal scale implies ranking based on preference.

The questionnaires for this study are adapted from Maslach Burnout Inventory (2009). The first part of the questionnaire attempted to the demographic profiles of the respondents such as age, gender, year of study, occupation and marital status. The second part consists of the question related to the independent variables and the dependent variables.

Section B questionnaire related to supervisory support. It is one of the factors causing occupational stress among MBA students. The questionnaire was designed to measure the influence of supervisory support on MBA students (Khosa, Ritacco & Lowies, 2014). Only five related statements used in this study. Section C questionnaire is about work-life balance. There are 17 statements used in this study. All questions contain a Likert Scale response ranging from 1-Never, 2- Occasionally, 3- Frequently and 4- Very Frequently.

5.2. Statistical analysis

This research used Descriptive Analysis, Normality Test, Reliability Analysis and Correlation to get the findings. These analyses used to test the hypothesis that has been developed by the researcher. The data is analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 24.

6. Findings

6.1. Respondents

Details of respondents profile are reported in Table 1. 200 questionnaires has been distributed to the respondents at the chosen universities but only 130 questionnaires returned and completed. According to the result, most of the respondents were female which is 80 respondents (61.5%) and male only 50 respondents, which is 38.5%. Age for most of the respondents is among 23-27 years old (48.5%), followed

by 28-32 years old which includes 37 respondents (28.5%). However, there is no respondent in age below than 23 years old. Majority were students year 1-2 which is 51 respondents (39.2 %). Total respondents for more than 2 years study is 40 respondents (30.8%), followed by 39 respondents from less than 1 years equal as 30%. Most respondents were married (48.4%) and total single students are 57 respondents (43.8%). Majority of the respondents are working in governments sectors (60.8%), followed by private sector (38.5%) and from other sectors (0.8%). Lastly, most respondents have 1-2 years working experiences (69.2%) followed by 24 respondents who have 2-5 years of working experiences (18.5%).

Table 01. Demographics characteristics of respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Gender	Male	50	38.5
	Female	80	61.5
Age	less than 23 years old	0	0
	23-27 years old	63	48.5
	28-32 years old	37	28.5
	33-37 years old	17	13.1
	more than 37 years old	13	10
Year of Study	less than 1 year	39	30
	1-2 years	51	39.2
	more than 2 years	40	30.8
Marital status	Single	57	43.8
	Married	63	48.4
Occupational Sector	Government	79	60.8
	Private	50	38.5
	Others	1	0.8
Work experience	less than 1 year	16	12.3
	1-2 years	90	69.2
	2-5 years	24	18.5
	More than 5 years	0	0

6.2. Reliability

The result shows that Cronbach alpha value for all the variables are >0.70. The analysis shows that all variables are reliable and consistent to use in the future. Work-life balance get the highest reliability, which is 0.849, supervisory support 0.788 and job performance is 0.739. The result reported that the highest mean is work-life balance, which is 47.79 followed by supervisory support, which is 21.97 and job performance 21.25.

Table 02. Descriptive Analysis

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Burnout	1	5	3.31	0.87
Supervisory Support	8	30	21.97	4.21
Work life balance	25	73	47.79	8.22
Job Performance	13	29	21.25	3.34

6.3. Correlation

By analysing correlation coefficient, the result can identify whether there is a problem of multicollinearity exists in the data. According to the table above, most of the variables are within the range that have small but define relationship. Therefore, multicollinearity does not exist in these data. A Pearson correlation was also computed to assess the relationship between burnout, supervisory support, work-life balance and job performance. Result are depicted in Table 1.

Table 01. Variables Correlations

		Burnout	Supervisory Support	Work Life Balance	Job Performance
Burnout	Pearson Correlation	1	-.081	.519**	.170
	Sig. (2-Tailed)		.359	.000	.054
	N	130	130	130	130
Supervisory_Support	Pearson Correlation	-.081	1	-.048	.470**
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.359		.586	.000
	N	130	130	130	130
Work_Life_Balance	Pearson Correlation	.519**	-.048	1	-.038
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000	.586		.668
	N	130	130	130	130
Job_Performance	Pearson Correlation	.170	.470**	-.038	1
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.054	.000	.668	
	N	130	130	130	130

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 Level (2-Tailed).

Based on Table 1, H1 and H3 are not accepted as the correlation between burnout and job performance are not significant. However, H2 is accepted. There is a positive correlation between supervisory support and job performance, $r = 0.47$ $p \leq 0.01$, n = 130

6.4. Regression

Table 03. Summary of Regression

Variables	t-value	Sig.	Hypothesis Result
Burnout	3.355	0.001	Not Supported
Supervisory Support	6.422	0.000	Supported
Work life balance	-1.912	0.058	Not Supported
	R^2	0.285	

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between job performance and various potential predictors. As can see in Table 3, supervisory support is positively and significantly predictors indicating that, MBA students with no support from supervisor were expected to have poor performance in their job. The support from supervisor will affect their job performance. Meanwhile, burnout and work life balance are negatively correlated with job performance.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

The result showed that supervisory support is the most influential factor of job performance. The result supports the previous literature that stated the employees with higher levels of emotional stability reported higher willingness to perform in their work when they received high supervisory support (Wanny & Popaitoon, 2015). If employees do not receive support from the supervisor, they will feel demotivated and low confident level to perform their job. It is supervisor's role in the organization to pay attention to the employees' needs and performance. Employees need to be rewarded when they give their best performance. Moral support and training should be provided when the performance is decreased. Moreover, MBA students who are work and study at the same time need more support directly and indirectly from their supervisors. It will encourage them to perform both academically and professionally.

The result also showed that there is no significance relationship between burnout, work-life balance and job performance. Most of the respondents were adults with many experiences related to both personal and career. Employees who have dual roles such as student and employee have learnt to manage their life properly. Due to the experiences, they have skills to manage their time if they pursue higher studies. They eventually know how to manage their work-life, handling job and studies stress effectively. They are also more matured and calm to cope with problems and commonly have a stable family with less finance and family issues.

As a conclusion, supervisory support plays a vital role to enhance job performances among employees who are pursuing MBA. Supervisor could be more considerate in giving tasks because stress from the overload work may lead to stress and burnout. With cooperation from the supervisor and top management, employees would be able to study and contribute new idea and knowledge that they have learned while studying. By supporting MBA students, the company's performance may increase and sustain. Overall, company should care and value their employees as valuable assets. Employees with the excellent performance may help the company to achieve their targets and goals. Indeed, fulfilling organisation goals require employers and employees to depend for each other in moving forward and achieving success.

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