

Job Burnout and Job Engagement Dimensions Among Hotel Employees in Sarawak: What Is the Relationship?

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Abstract

Hotel employees are constantly working in an increasingly stressful work environment. As hotel employees working in a demanding working environment, they may eventually face job burnout dimensions (emotional exhaustion, cynicism, reduced professional efficacy) due to the day-to-day operations which lead to burnout phenomenon. Despite the limited study investigating burnout dimensions particularly revealing the research finding in the non-western context which may have adverse effects on their relationship with their job engagement phenomena. The study aims to explore the correlation between job burnout dimensions and job engagement dimensions among hotel employees in Sarawak, Malaysia. In more specified, each of the burnout dimensions will be tested on its significant relationship with job engagement dimensions (vigour, dedication, absorption). Cross-sectional research design with a total of 201 valid responses were obtained which involved descriptive and inferential statistic with high reliability scoring while exploratory factor analysis values met the benchmark. This study can be utilized by the hotel industry to develop effective strategies to minimize job burnout of each dimension while enhancing job engagement among the hotel employees in Sarawak.

Keywords: job burnout, job engagement, hotel employee, Sarawak

1. Introduction

Hotel employees are responsible to maintain excellent work performance standard as services to the customer is very important. Job burnout and job engagement of hotel employee had grabbed the attention of researchers in the past few decades as it is one of the major corporate issues (Kasa et al., 2018). Job burnout is a psychological condition in which a person experiences exhaustion caused by emotional turmoil, having a sense of lacking personal accomplishment, and detaching themselves from reality (Talachi and Gorji, 2013). Since work performed by hotels demands full attention and caution to ensure the excellent services provided to the customers, few factors may lead the hotel employees to feel exhausted on their works. In general, employees often experience different levels of job-related distress which will ultimately expose them to exhaustion, disengagement, and health-related issues (Schaufelli & Greenglass, 2001), especially in the field of hotel industry due to the increase of competition in hospitality sector based on the increasing number of foreigner employee.

The association of job burnout dimensions and job engagement was studied mostly in Western societies. The degree of work commitment is the degree of individual psychological acceptance of the work; or the importance of the mind that is focused on doing the job individually (Sonnentag, 2003). Warr and Inceoglu (2012) stated that job engagement is when an individual agrees with the value of a job has to offer, leading to the individual's willingness to work on it. Thus, the positive impact deriving from job engagement is highly valued by any company. In the corporate arena, job engagement helps to reduce the issue of absenteeism (Scott & McClellan, 1990), decrease the rate of turnover (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009), promote the increase in performance (Brown & Leigh, 1996), boost in-role performance and bolster organizational citizenship behaviours (Diefendorff et al., 2002). As revealed by various past research, workers is more likely to improve their individual effort if they are engaging in their job (Brown & Leigh, 1996), more likely to experience job satisfaction, increase in the level of job accuracy, and is more complete in terms of communicating with others (Orpen, 1997). Nevertheless, past research mainly focused only on

the positive spectrum on what job engagement offers and little emphasis was placed on the research of the negative spectrum. This study will assume that the right level of job engagement serves to improve job performance—positive impact, however extreme job engagement can lead to the experience of job burnout—negative impact.

Conservation of Resources (COR) theory is being applied in this study. The theory proposed that resources of self-esteem, social support, security, time and money, are constantly being seek out by individuals for the purposes of obtaining and maintaining and that the loss of these resources will cause the experience of stress (Hobfoll, 1989). In short, an employee tends to be stressful due to the worried of loss of resources. This theory is applicable for this study as the job burnout dimensions of hotel employee is distress by the standard of services provided. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between job burnout dimensions and job engagement among hotel employee in Sarawak, contributing to the knowledge of burnout dimensions of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced professional efficacy, and engagement in term of vigour, dedication and absorption, among hotel employees.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis

Burnout can be differentiated into three dimensions—Emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced professional efficacy (Maslach & Jackson, 1981)— which can be found being experienced by employees of various occupation (Bakker et al., 2003; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Based on the explanation given by Demerout er al., (2000), the feeling of exhaustion refers to the feeling of over-extended due to work emotional demand. In this study, it is referring to the hotel employees’ feeling of exhaustion due to being overloaded with work. Meanwhile, cynicism is known to be ‘the attitude of scornful or jaded negativity’ that comes out with a sense of deeply embed negative view or distrust towards the world (Johnson, 2005)’. Cynicism in this study focuses on the attitude of hotel employees who are distrusting or having doubts among their peer, mostly referring to an employee in upper management who had the power among the others. Reduced professional efficacy is known as the inclination to examine other’s work in a negative way (Maslach & Jackson, 1981); referring to the hotel employee with low confident level who did not trust in themselves in organizing a task.

Job engagement is the result derived from positive psychological processes (Chen and Chen, 2010) which had been characterized into vigour, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). The characteristic of vigour can be defined as ‘high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one’s work and persistence even in the face of difficulties’ (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007); dedication is known as the effort of being strongly participated in one’s work and experiencing self-significance, passionate, inspiring, self-respect and competitiveness; lastly absorption is known as the positive feeling of a person who involved in the work provided.

The concept of job burnout and job engagement was being studied throughout the decades as the practical measure of psychological behaviour of employees in the service-oriented industry (Chen and Chen, 2010). Past studies have revealed the existence of a relationship between a high level of work engagement and job performance, increase in organizational commitment, reduction in absence rate and low turnover level (Salanova, 2005; Bakker, 2006; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). The job engagement by the opposite pattern of scores on the three burnout dimensions had been studied once by Maslach and Leiter in the year 1997; however, Diener (1999) argued that job burnout and work engagement are two different independent variables. The current study intends to re-examine the correlation between job burnout and job engagement to support the previous researcher’s state of mind.

This study adheres to the core concept of having job burnout as independent variable and job engagement dimensions as a dependent variable to create a model consisting of three hypotheses as shown in Figure 1.

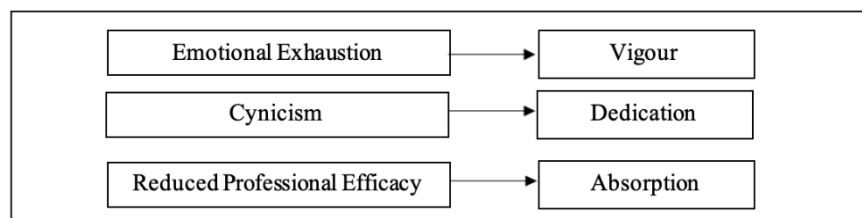


Figure 1. The research proposed model

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between emotional exhaustion and vigour.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between cynicism and dedication.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between reduced professional efficacy and absorption.

3. Methodology

The quantitative research method was applied to this study, with self-administered survey questionnaires were employed through non-probability sampling method, purposive method. A total of 201 questionnaires were distributed to respondents working as hotel employees in Sarawak, Malaysia; which had exceeded the minimum sampling (138 respondents) needed as per calculated using Raosoft sample size calculator (margin error 5%, confident level 95%). There are no major issues found through observation on normality, outliers, validity and reliability. The constructed item had a factor loading from 0.423 to 0.970 which had exceeded 0.40 (Hair et al., 1998), Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value had exceeded 0.70 with a range of 0.715 to 0.856 and Bartlett Sphericity Test had shown the p-value of 0.000 which is below 0.50. Therefore, it indicated that all correlation matrixes are free of similarity from an identity of the matrix (Hair, 1998). Lastly, as per Table 1, research instruments were all adopted from past study and had exceeded the Cronbach Alpha value of 0.70, which shows positive reliability (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 1. The research instrument

Measure	Items	Sources	Factor Loading (>.40)	KMO (>.70)	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (>.70)	Cronbach Alpha (>.70)
Professional Efficacy	6	Maslach, & Jackson, (1981)	.423 - .940	.775	466.619 P=0.000	0.841
Cynicism	4	Maslach & Jackson, (1981)	.478 - .924	.762	507.624 P=0.000	0.890
Emotional Exhaustion	5	Maslach & Jackson, (1981)	.477 - .886	.819	768.003 P=0.000	0.918
Vigor	6	Schaufeli & Bakker (2003)	.468 - .901	.856	491.558 P=0.000	0.876
Dedication	5	Schaufeli & Bakker (2003)	.742 - .970	.837	341.343 P=0.000	0.820
Absorption	6	Schaufeli & Bakker (2003)	.557 - .938	.776	210.556 P=0.000	0.781

4. Results and Findings

4.1 Respondents' Demographic

There was a total of 201 respondents, consisting of 57% of female (116 respondents) and 42% of male (85 respondent). Majority of the respondents were age less than 30 years old (70%), 31-39 years old as second (23%), and lastly 40-49 years old as least (7%). As per race, the majority is Chinese (47%), followed by Iban (21%), Bidayuh (18%) and Malay (14%); while 69% of them were single and 31% was married. There were 69% working in the non-managerial sector, and 31% working in the managerial sector with the longest range of 5 years and above (27%), followed by 1 to 5 years (40%) and less than a year (33%).

4.2 Hypotheses Testing

To ensure reliability and validity standards were met, explanatory factor analysis and Cronbach alpha were applied in this study. As shown in Table 2, the result of Pearson Correlation analysis had shown the inferential statistic of all variables, which between absorption and professional efficacy, it shows a result of $r = .476$ at $p = .000$; between vigour and emotional exhaustion, it shows a result of $r = .553$ at $p = .000$; and between dedication and cynicism, the result is $r = .535$ at $p = .000$ ($p < .01$) significant level at 2 tailed test). The statistical result had accepted and supported all hypothesis proposed— there is a significant relationship 1) between absorption and professional efficacy, 2) between vigour and emotional exhaustion, and 3) between dedication and cynicism.

Table 2. Inferential Statistics—Person's Correlation Analysis

Variables	Professional Efficacy	Cynicism	Emotional Exhaustion	Vigour	Dedication	Absorption
Professional Efficacy	1					
Cynicism	.592**	1				
Emotional Exhaustion	.000	.623**	1			
Vigour	.464**	.498**	.553**	1		
Dedication	.496**	.535**	.031	.504**	1	
Absorption	.476**	.003	.705**	.705**	.638**	1

5. Discussion

Hypothesis 1 (H_1) suggested that emotional exhaustion is significantly related with vigour. Emotional exhaustion is referred to as the state where the stress created from work causes an individual to be emotionally worn out (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Meanwhile, vigour refers to the presence of energy with the absence of exhaustion and fatigue (MacArthur, 1997). The correlation between emotional exhaustion and vigour can be portrayed mainly from two perspectives— bipolar perspective (Maslach & Leiter, 1997) and bivariate perspective (Shirom et al., 2013). Bipolar perspective describes both emotional exhaustion and vigour items measure one fundamental bipolar dimension. Therefore, they can be measured on an underlying bipolar dimension identified as "energy" (Gonzales, 2006). Energy is one of the vital elements which can ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the work performance (Dutton, 2003). It can be assumed that an individual with high emotional exhaustion will feel less energized, lack of concentration at work and thereby decreasing the individual's vigour (Mulki et al., 2006). In the context of a hotel setting, the bipolar perspective claims that hotel employees are unable to experience both emotional exhaustion and vigour simultaneously. However, the bivariate perspective suggests that emotional exhaustion and vigour do not represent two distinctive extremes of a similar dimension but are indirectly related (Shirom et al., 2013). Thus, the experience of emotional exhaustion and vigour might occur simultaneously as both variables are two different and separable experiences. In sum, at the individual level, emotional exhaustion and vigour are two distinctive experiences and therefore can co-exist in a person and generate different patterns of exhaustion-vigour.

Meanwhile, hypothesis 2 (H_2) indicated that cynicism is related to dedication. Cynicism refers to a negative and insensitive thought or attitude towards a job. On the other hand, dedication shows the opposite trends which refers to a positive and fulfilling thought and attitude in mind towards a job (Maslach et al., 2001). Dedication is included vigorously in an individual's experience of enthusiasm, fulfilment, challenge, seriousness, and creativity (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Dedication is perceived as the total opposite of cynicism (Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Schaufeli et al., 2002). As cynicism seems to grow with the reaction to exhaustion and professional effectiveness grows independently (Leiter, 1993). Thus, when an individual is being cynical, he/she is unlikely to be dedicated to a job. In short, there is a significant relationship between cynicism and dedication since cynicism shows a negative attitude towards a job, while dedication shows the positive attitude towards a job (Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Hence, cynicism and dedication are two different incidents that occur separately in an individual which means an individual can't have these two traits at the same time.

Hypothesis 3 (H_3) proposed that professional efficacy and absorption is significantly related. Reduced professional efficacy is defined as a sense of decrease in professional accomplishment and competence (Greenglass et al, 2003). Besides that, absorption can be described as a pleasant state of immersion in one's work (Taris et al., 2017). Past studies claim that individuals with elevated levels of professional self-efficacy are linked to fewer challenging demands which subsequently linked to a higher level of engagement which encompasses the three dimensions which are vigour, commitment and absorption (Salanova et al., 2005). The studies indicate that absorption and efficacy may be considered under the concept of engagement (Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001). Thus, job engagement being an intrinsic work-driven motivation can be influence by people's low levels of self-efficacy. Furthermore, there is a positive relationship between individuals with low levels of professional self-efficacy and the experience of a higher level of hindrance demands and having their relationship affected by adverse experiences such as burnout (Ventura & Salanova, 2014), This also entails a decrease in energy levels and commitment in the face of competition and a lack of appreciation of jobs (Lloren et al., 2005).

6. Conclusion and Implications

This study aims to determine the relationship between job burnout dimensions and job engagement among hotel employees in Sarawak. Ample of studies have been conducted on the fact to achieve a high level of job performance, a high level of job engagement is required. However, being immersed in high levels of job engagement contain the potency leading to job burnout. When an employee put excessive effort into their work, it can constitute the experience of job burnout. It is recommended for organisation to put more emphasis on the phenomenon of high-level employees' job burnout as if there is employee burnout, an employee will lack the motivation to work. It is also recommended for the hotel industry to implement policies to provide a positive workplace environment for the employee in term of social, mental and physical wellbeing. These recommendations may help in preventing employees from experiencing burnout that leads to disengagement.

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