

The Impact of Job Description on Burnout with Mediating Effect of Psychological Strain: An Empirical Evidence from the Cement Industry of Pakistan

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Abstract: The purpose of the present study was to investigate the mediating effect of psychological strain on the relationship between job discrepancy and burnout. The relationship between job discrepancy and burnout was also examined during the investigation. A comparative study of the Cement industry of Pakistan was planned to examine the mediating effect of psychological strain on the relationship between job discrepancy and burnout. The managers and staff members were respondents to the research from Lafarge Pakistan Cement Limited which is one of the Multinational Companies and DG Khan Cement Company Limited; which operates locally in Pakistan. The data was collected through the survey questionnaire that was distributed personally by the researcher. The results of the survey supported the existence of job discrepancy and its effect on job burnout. Moreover, the results showed that this effect was fully mediated by the psychological strain.

Key words: Burnout • Psychological strain • Strain • Job burnout

INTRODUCTION

Burnout is defined as a “psychological syndrome that results from dissatisfaction from one’s job or task and involves exhaustion, cynicism, detachment from the job and ineffectiveness” [1]. Burnout is used to describe a condition that goes beyond physical fatigue usually from overburden i.e. emotional exhaustion. Businesses lose an anticipated \$200 to \$300 billion dollars every year due to stress related productivity loss and other costs [2,3]. It was examined in number of studies that burnout occurs mostly among individuals who interact with people very often this study explore burnout among the employee who work in cement industry particularly in Pakistan. Respondents in this study are not only the managers and supervisors who interact with people inside and outside the organization but also the worker who do interact with people very often. The burnout among such employee is may be due to the job discrepancy. The increase in market antagonism forces organizations to focus more and more on cost-effective method than to focus on quality of work life and job design .The quality of work life and job design should be important concern for the organizations because the lack of concern in the quality of work life and job design would lead to mental exhaustion and eventually to burnout. Well thought out job design leads

to employees mental satisfaction and reduces the exhaustion. Mentally satisfied employee contributes to organizational sustainability and productivity. While, stressful and depressed employees would not be able to obtain the same sustainability and productivity for the organization. So to avoid productivity loss the organizations should be concentrating more on how to reduce dissatisfaction, stress and psychological hurdles among the employees.

Contemporary workplaces appear to be rife with psychological strain. This can cause considerable harmful outcomes for the organizations, especially among the individuals working with those organizations. The research studies repeatedly proved that emotional exhaustion causes the psychological stain. This is also a vital component of job burnout. Many researchers who worked on burnout have achieved a virtual harmony on its three aspects. These aspects include: (1) Emotional exhaustion; means energy discharge and burning up of emotional resources. This dimension is widely considered as cornerstone of job burnout by number of researchers. (2) Depersonalization which disconnect workers from others and causes an attitude of pessimism to colleagues, customers and sometime organization itself. This dimension of the job burnout is traditional among those employees who regularly communicate to other persons

(such as Nurses, teachers, students, customers, patients). (3) Diminished personal accomplishment by which the person comes to a negative self-assessment and keep pessimistic approach towards self [4-6]. This study examines the effect of psychological strain as a mediator for burnout and job discrepancy. A *discrepancy* is an evident difference between an adopted anchor and a personal perceptive of achievement along the similar dimension [7]. Job discrepancy has two key components job description and the job expectations; the extent to which there are differences between these two components is entire measure of job discrepancy. Job description defines a “position” that includes the specific tasks, responsibility, skills and knowledge. Job expectations are duties and responsibilities that management expects an employee to fulfill but mostly these are not formally communicated to the employees. When any employee perform a particular job or task; he or she might not have a clear idea what is expected of him or her. This is usually due the difference between job description and what is expected of employee in terms of their duties and responsibilities. Whenever the difference between job descriptions and expectations is high the employee dissatisfaction, as well as role ambiguity increases. To defining specific job roles and responsibilities is very important part of an organizations ability to successfully manage its employees and held them accountable for their work. The difference between formal job description and role expectations i.e. the existence of job discrepancy has been investigated in the present study.

Statement of Problem: Most scholars agreed that burned-out employees are characterized by high levels of exhaustion and negative attitudes towards the work they do, there are several factors that lead towards job burnout. This study investigates the effect job discrepancy on job burnout, where the mediating impact of psychological strain was observed. An official job description often differs substantially from the actual job expectations, which eventually leads towards employee burnout. Responsibilities and duties that are not formally included in the job description are critical to be successful on the job. The difference among formal job descriptions and actual job responsibilities has been emerged addressed number of times in several pervious researches. For the present study, differences existing between the formal job description and actual expectations from an employee are defined as the job discrepancy. The impact of job discrepancy on burnout was investigated in this study; where the mediating effect of psychological strain on this relationship was also examined.

Objectives of Research: The objectives of this study is

- To investigate the effect of job discrepancy on job burnout.
- To see the mediating effect of psychological strain on job discrepancy and employee burnout.

Originality of Research: The mediating effect psychological strain on the relationship between job discrepancy and job burnout has never been studied before. This research will fill the gap in existing literature. Several researchers worked on cement industry of Pakistan but the area of burnout, psychological strain and job discrepancy are still under developed.

Literature Review

Burnout: Burnout is a long-drawn-out response to constant emotional and interpersonal stressors that employee feel while doing job and is usually defined by three dimensions i.e exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy. In the past years, it had been recognized that the complexity of the construct and places the individual stress experience within a larger organizational context of people’s relation to the work they do. [8]. Elman and Dowd [9] had demonstrated that: “excessive job demands, lack of proper performance recognition, unclear performance expectations, role conflict and poor attitudes toward work, emotional distress and frequent physical symptoms seem to be the most prominent features that are correlated with burnout”. Additionally, research indicates that stress and burnout are significant reason in the development of both physical and psychological illness [10]. The work on burnout has expanded internationally and led to the conceptual models. The focus on rendezvous, the positive antithesis of burnout, had promised to yield new perspectives on the involvement to burnout. The solid research basis concerning syndrome and its particular ties to work domain make a dissimilar and important involvement to the people’s health and their well-being [8].

Job burnout is considered as a common problem in numerous professions; however it is significantly more customary in the helping professions. Mostly among helping professionals like therapists, social workers and doctors are considerably subject to burnout [11]. In a study by Pines and Aronson [6] they had pointed out that “individuals who are potentially the most valuable resources in an organization because of their idealism and concern are precisely those who are most apt to burnout”. This responsibility combined with relatively limited resources, working conditions, long hours and often

unreasonable demands from those getting services, guide to chronic stress and sooner or later to burnout [12]. Predominantly as compared to job demands and the differences among the individual [13] that organizational context also has an influence on burnout is a quite recent development [8].

Job Discrepancy: *Job discrepancy* has two key components i.e. job descriptions and job expectations. The extent to which there are differences between these components is whole measure of job discrepancy. Hence to understand the nature of job discrepancy these two components should be very carefully described [14]. Job discrepancy dose not impacts work outcomes positively in workplace. To implement such policies to reduce, resist and remove these negative outcomes will eventually improves organization's outcome. A few implications as to the nature of policies needed can be extracted from such tentative. Job descriptions vary from broadly defined to extremely detailed descriptions that may not be consistent to the actual jobs expectations, which implies that job descriptions are a key factor attributed to the existence of job discrepancy. Organizations possibly will reduce job discrepancy by such policies that keep job descriptions current and consistent with possible changes for a particular job task. First of all, companies require detailed policies to keep job descriptions as clear and accurate as they can. To construct job descriptions employee feedback on the expectation of the company's job descriptions may be necessary to develop and implement guidelines. Annual job review of duties performed compared to job description for job roles may show necessary changes to keep the descriptions rationalized. Shifting job roles also contribute to job discrepancy, so identifying effective ways to communicate role change will decrease job discrepancy. Such changes occur naturally as time passes or whenever the needs of the company changes. To reduce job discrepancy over the time; polices to control role changes and forbid unnecessary shift in job responsibilities are important. Improved employee feedback concerning increased responsibility will be helpful to keep balance in job responsibilities and necessary to keep job descriptions up to dated and job discrepancy near to the ground [14].

Job descriptions are an official framework that defines a "position". Job descriptions can include specific tasks, responsibilities, specifications, competencies and knowledge that nearly any company desires [14]. The precision and usefulness of job descriptions by investigating the best way to form, design and make job

descriptions. The ambiguous and varied use of job descriptions has further illustrated by Wilson. He also cites some examples of job descriptions that define actual duties to perform and some other examples that only describe feature or traits that are needed to perform the job. Furthermore he confirms that no clear structures and standards exist for a particular job description. Such lack of standardization contributes to the existence of job discrepancy [15]. Although some companies may have similar descriptions for similar job titles, there are no required standards or set of criteria in creating job descriptions [14].

Job expectations are the "set of duties and responsibilities that management holds for an employee and generally does not communicate to the employee in writing. These expectations may change over time to fit the needs of the company or that of a specific manager" [14].

Psychological Strain: [16] defined strain as states that are usually harmful and give an adverse affect on the individuals who experience them. [17] on the other hand defined strain as an individual's state of feeling that is characterized by used up emotional resources and be deficient in of energy. Previously research had examined feelings of strain arising from certain job features. Strain usually arises when individuals perceive themselves as unable to meet the environmental demands [18]. When strain occurs, people will try to deal with the negative effects of this stressor or with the stressor itself. French, Caplan and Harrison, [19] recommended that strain results from the divergence between a person and the environment mostly on dimensions that are important to the well-being of human being. Osipow and Spokane, [20] identified four types of strain. They divided strain into four categories: vocational, psychological, interpersonal and physical. Particularly for this study psychological strain has been consider.

- Pines and Aronson [6] had point out that "the individuals who are potentially the most valuable resources in an organization because of their idealism and concern are precisely those who are most apt to burn out".
- Barrett *et al.* [21] found that correlations between overwork, downsizing, cost containment, little reward or recognition to stress and burnout.
- Osipow and Spokane [20] developed their instrument that was based on a model where behaviors mediate the stress-strain relationship and that "given equal amounts of stress, strain will be moderated by coping" [22].

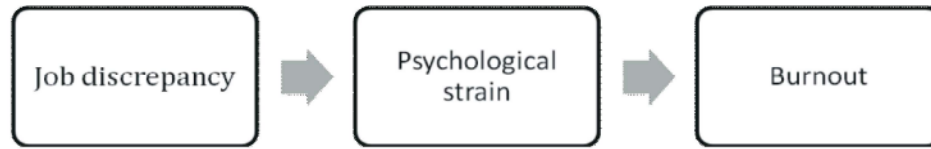


Fig. 1: Jobdiscrepancy and employee burnout ; a mediating impact of psychological strain. Source: researcher's own processing.

From the above points it is evident that no such study has been conducted on; the impact of job discrepancy on burnout where the psychological strain was examined as a mediator that's why the researcher keeping in view the knowledge gap established following framework.

Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Generation: Following theoretical framework has been developed for generation of the hypothesis (Figure 1)

Hypothesis 1: Higher job discrepancy generates higher level of burnout.

Hypothesis 2: The effect of job discrepancy on employee burnout gets meditated by psychological strain of employees.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The survey approach is considered as one of the widely used approaches for gathering data to evaluate the results of proposed hypothesis. For this study the established scales were used to collect the data. These scales were gathered throughout the literature review. The managers and staff members from the cement industry of Pakistan were respondents to the study. Two factories were targeted for data collection; first one was the DG Khan Cement Company Limited and Lafarge Pakistan Cement. The survey instrument was personally distributed by the author for the purpose of data collection.

Sampling Procedure: The respondents in this study were employee of Lafarge Pakistan Cement Limited and DG Khan Cement Company Limited. A sample of 200 employees was taken. 100 employees were from Lafarge Pakistan Cement Limited and 100 from the DG Khan Cement Company Limited.

Tools for Data Collection: Burnout: There are many scales to measure job burnout one of them is the famous

MBI questionnaire. It was devised by Maslach in early 1980s. The MBI (Maslach Burnout Inventory) a 22-items questionnaire designed by Maslach and Jackson in 1981 was used to assess the employee burnout for the present study.

Psychological Strain : Psychological strain of employees was measured by using the 12-item scale of the General Health Questionnaire [23]. The items were measured on a five point frequency scale with 1 = "not at all" and 5 = "more than usual".

Job Discrepancy: A five point frequency item scale developed by Stephen M. Barbouletos [14] was used to assess job discrepancy.

Reliability of the Instruments: SPSS version 16 was used for the data analysis. Alpha reliability values for the instruments during pre-testing were .927 which indicates a strong consistency of the tools being used for this research.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Demographic Characteristics: Employees of Lafarge Pakistan Cement Limited and DG Khan Cement Company Limited.

A majority of the employees of DG Khan cement were less than 41 years old where greater part (39%) of the respondents lies between 30 to 35 years. The majorities (67%) of the respondents from DG cement were male and 58% of the respondents were married.

The respondents of Lafarge Pakistan Cement Limited were less than 40 years old. The data revealed that 74% of the respondents were male and majority (73%) of the respondents were married. Education level in both sets of data (95% and above) that is, bachelors and masters level. More than 70% of employees were married in both companies. Almost 38% of respondents from Lafarge Pakistan cement and (33%) of respondents from DG cement have 8 to 13 years of job tenure.

Table 1: Job Discrepancy and Burnout

Lafarge Pakistan Cement					DG Khan Cement				
R	R2	Ad.R2	F Stat.	P value	R	R2	Ad.R2	F Stat.	P value
.588a	.346	.339	51.836	.000	.487a	.237	.229	30.435	.000

Source: Researcher's own processing.

Table 2: Job Discrepancy and psychological strain

Lafarge Pakistan cement					DG kham cement				
R	R2	Ad.R2	F Stat.	P value	R	R2	Ad.R2	F Stat.	P value
.559	.312	.305	44.428	.000	.424	.179	.171	21.437	.000

Source: Researcher's own processing.

Hypothesis Testing: The testing of hypothesis was carried out with application of the regression coefficient and to investigate the mediating effect psychological strain on the relationship between job discrepancy and job burnout, the baron and Kenny's [24] four steps approach for mediation was used.

Hypothesis 1: which predicted that "higher job discrepancy generates higher level of burnout", was supported in both the cases.

r value : r value indicates the correlation coefficient between job discrepancy and employee burnout. For both the cases ($r=.588$ and $r=.487$) indicates positive correlation among two variables.

R²: R² is the coefficient of determination; closer the value to 1 greater is the authenticity of model. In case of Lafraj cement it is 0.346 which indicates greater veracity in comparison with DG kham cement. Which reveals that only 34.60% variation in the burnout is due to job discrepancy and 65.40% is explain by error or residual. Analysis reveals that job discrepancy may cause burnout so it should be designed in such a way that the job description should be closer to actual responsibilities of employees.

Whereas in case of DG kham cements value of R² is 0.237 which indicates lower veracity between two variables rather than Lafraj Pakistan cement. Only 23.70% variation in the burnout is due to job discrepancy and 76.30% is explaining by error or residual. The analysis revels that the proposed relationship is authentic.

Adjusted R² Value: An adjusted R² value indicates adjustments in R² which reflects the reality. Adjusted R² values are 0.339 in case of Lafraj cement and 0.229 for DG cement factory.

F Statistics: F statistic is an overall view indicates that the model fitted is fairly accurate.

P Value: As shown in table 1, for both the cases p value (0.000) is less than $< \alpha$ (0.05) accepting the research hypothesis indicating that higher level of higher job discrepancy generates higher level of burnout.

Hypothesis 2: which predicts "effect of job discrepancy on employee burnout gets meditated by psychological strain of employees", was also supported for both the companies.

The Baron and Kenny's (1986) four steps approach for mediation was used to obtain the results of hypothesis 2.

Step1: The regression analysis was carried out to see that the relationship exists between job discrepancy and burnout. From table 1 and its interpretation we can see that relationship between job discrepancy and burnout exists which fulfills the requirement (step 1) of Baron and Kenny approach.

Step2: The regression analysis was carried out to see that relationship between job discrepancy and psychological strain exists as a partial fulfillment of baron and Kenny test. The results showed that relationship between these two variables does exist.

r Value: As r value indicates the correlation coefficient between job discrepancy and psychological strain. For both the cases ($r=.559$ and $r=.424$) indicates positive correlation among two variables. There is not much difference between both the values but in the case of Lafraj cement the correlation is relatively stronger.

Table 3: Psychological strain and burnout

Lafarge Pakistan cement					DG khan cement				
R	R2	Ad.R2	F Stat.	P value	R	R2	Ad.R2	F Stat.	P value
.734	.539	.535	114.684	.000	.464	.215	.207	26.898	.000

Source: Researcher's own processing.

Table 4: Job discrepancy, Psychological strain and burnout.

Lafarge Pakistan cement					DG khan cement					
R	R2	Ad.R2	F Stat.	P value	R	R2	Ad.R2	F Stat.	P value	r
JD	.588	.346	.339	51.836	.000	.487	.237	.227	30.435	.000
PS	.765	.585	.577	68.451	.000	.564	.318	.304	22.614	.001

Source: Researcher's own processing.

R² : In case of Lafraj cement it is 0.312 which indicates greater veracity in comparison with DG khan cement. Which reveals that only 31.60% variation in the psychological strain is due job discrepancy and 68.40% is explain by error or residual. Analysis reveals that job discrepancy cause psychological strain.

Whereas in case of DG khan cements value of R² is 0.179 which indicates lower veracity between two variables rather than Lafraj Pakistan cement. Only 17.90% variation in the burnout is due to job discrepancy and 82.10% is explaining by error or residual. The analysis revels that the proposed relationship is authentic.

Adjusted R² Value: An adjusted R² value indicates adjustments in R² which reflects the reality. Adjusted R² values are 0.305 in case of Lafraj cement and 0.171 for DG cement factory.

F Statistics: F statistic is an overall view indicates that the model fitted is fairly accurate. The variation explained by model was not by chance it actually exists.

P Value: As shown in table 1, for both the cases p value (0.000) is less than α (0.05) hence accepting that job discrepancy causes psychological strain.

R Value: As r value indicates the correlation coefficient between job discrepancy and psychological strain. In the cases of Lafraj Pakistan cement value of r (i.e. 0.734) indicates stronger correlation between the two variables.

R²: In case of Lafraj cement R² =0.539 which indicates greater veracity in comparison with DG khan cement.

This reveals that only 53.30% variation in the burnout is due to psychological strain and rest is explained by error or residual. Analysis reveals that psychological strain cause burnout.

Whereas in case of DG khan cements value of R² is 0.215 which indicates lower veracity between two variables in comparison to Lafraj Pakistan cement. Only 21.50% variation in the burnout is due to job discrepancy and 78.50% is explaining by error or residual. The analysis revels that the proposed relationship is authentic.

Adjusted R² Value: An adjusted R² value indicates adjustments in R² which reflects the reality. Adjusted R² values are 0.535 in case of Lafraj cement and 0.207 for DG cement factory.

F statistics: F statistic is an overall view indicates that the model fitted is fairly accurate.

P Value: As shown in table 1, for both the cases p value (0.000) is less than α (0.05) hence accepting that job discrepancy causes psychological strain.

Step 4, Examining Psychological strain and burnout while keeping Job discrepancy constant,

To establish that psychological strain completely mediates job discrepancy and burnout relationship, the effect of job discrepancy on burnout controlling for psychological strain should be zero and for this study we can in step 3 and 4 that its zero. The effects in both Steps 3 and 4 are estimated in the same equation. Keeping job discrepancy constant Investigation reveals that t value was 3.395, partial correlation was found to be 0.326 and tolerance was 0.821.

The following conclusions have been drawn from the above findings:

- Burnout due to job discrepancy was found to be at higher level among the employees of Lafarge Pakistan Cement Limited which is one the Multinational Company rather it comparatively at a lower level among the employees of DG Khan Cement Company Limited.
- Relationship was found between job discrepancy and burnout. It was also founded that that psychological strain has mediating effect on the relationship between job discrepancy and burnout.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to investigate the mediating effect of psychological strain on the relationship between job discrepancy and burnout. The relationship between job discrepancy and burnout was also examined. Burnout due to job discrepancy was found among the employees. The basic reason for existence of job discrepancy among employees was found to be that while performing a particular job or task, they might not have a clear idea what is expected of them. This leads to the mental exhaustion and eventually burnout because employer may not got what they expect of employees. In this study the overall impact of job discrepancy has in the workplace has been explored. It has also been found that psychological strain mediates the relationship i.e. higher level of job discrepancy generates higher level of burnout. It was found that psychological strain mediates the relationship. It is very obvious that the negative consequences of job burnout are too costly for any organization. Job burnout includes a wide scope including productivity mitigation, decrease in organizational commitment, turnover and absenteeism at large and job dissatisfaction. Hence, it is necessary to control this trend in organizations seriously and to devise proper polices to avoid its consequences.

Recommendations: In the above study, it is recommended that investigations may be designed to examine the relationship among job discrepancy and burnout and psychological strain should also be studied. So, that future studies may be designed keeping into account the existing method and findings.

Limitations: The finding of this research also has its limitations. The study was conducted with one local and

one multinational cement factories; other local and multinational cement factories may be included for more generalization. In present study there are many aspects that are still remain undefined and hence giving basis for the further research to be conducted. The sample size was also limited.

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