

Personal Demands and Personal Resources as Facilitators to Reduce Burnout: A Lens of Self-Determination Theory

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Purpose of this research paper is to examine the role of personal demands-resources in reducing burnout through the mediating part of Basic Need Satisfaction (BNS). With the help of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), this study proposes that personal demands-resources could play a vital role in satisfying the basic psychological needs of employees, which in turn could reduce the burnout of employees. Total of four hypotheses were developed after a detailed literature review. By using judgmental sampling technique, multisource data was collected from 392 sales professionals and their respective supervisors of insurance companies of Pakistan by using survey method. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique was used to analyze the data by using MPlus software. Results showed that personal resources and personal demands could not impact burnout directly. However, basic need satisfaction fully mediated between personal demands-resources and burnout relationship. This study also indicated future research directions.

Keywords: Personal Demands, Personal Resources, Burnout, and Basic Need Satisfaction, Self-Determination Theory

INTRODUCTION

A large stream of contemporary research examined that work engagement and job commitment tend to increase through positive work environment (e.g. low strain) and negative perception leads towards the diminution of resources called 'burnout' (Ahola, Toppinen-Tanner, Huuhtanen, Koskinen, & Väänänen, 2009). According to previous literature (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001), burnout induced by external factors, reduces the resources (either internal or external). Maslach and Leiter (2008) defined that burnout is "a malady that spreads gradually and continuously over time, putting people into a downward spiral from which it's hard to recover". However, most recent research (e.g. Bakker & Demerouti, 2017a; Barbier, Hansez, Chmiel, & Demerouti, 2013), is of the contrasting opinion that internal factors (for example personal resources) may also influence job attitudes (i.e. burnout and work engagement).

Most extensively used dimensions of burnout are emotional exhaustion and cynicism. According to Maslach and Jackson (1986), individuals become exhausted "when the emotional reserves are depleted, employees feel that they are no longer able to provide work of good quality" and Cynicism is "indifference and distant attitudes toward the work one does in general". Researches have evidenced emotional exhaustion as the fundamental dimension of burnout (Sonnentag, Kuttler, & Fritz, 2010). Burnout can be an economic setback for organizations through its alleviating impact on turnover, absenteeism and low performance (Borritz, Rugulies, Christensen, Villadsen, & Kristensen, 2006).

Preceding investigators (Bakker, Demerouti, & Sanz-Vergel, 2014; Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti, & Xanthopoulou, 2007; Crawford, LePine, & Rich, 2010) majorly focused job characteristics and their consequential variables in terms of employee engagement, burnout, and several job attitudes, which have been believed to be distinguished by the scholars of this field. Researchers credited the work environment as a vital component for effective employee performance. The traditional stress models (e.g. job demands-resources model) mainly emphasize a prominent perspective that job demands upsurge job stress (Bakker et al., 2014; Bakker et al., 2007; Crawford et al., 2010), whereas job resources mitigate burnout and various adverse outcomes.

However, the discussion on burnout and other outcomes did not stop here. Numerous studies have suggested that job characteristics (job demands-resources) and self-related characteristics (personal resources) impact engagement, burnout, and other outcome (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Surprisingly, job demands were found in no connection with a few outcomes (e.g. work engagement) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). However, evidence of a vital role of personal demands found on individual's well-being is found. As an interpretation, Hyvönen, Feldt, Salmela-Aro, Kinnunen, and Mäkikangas (2009) enlightened that employees with higher personal demands towards their work performance and contributions to their organization are expected to engage in positive attitudes. Moreover, Bakker and Demerouti (2017a), stressed that personal demands should be considered in line with personal resources in study related to burnout, as the nature of personal demands will to some extent explain either motivational

process or a health-impairment process. This study focuses that personal characteristics are useful aspects to reduce job burnout of employees. Further, it has been contended that personal demands and personal resources require extensive investigation concerning their hypothetical mechanism with outcome variables (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017a; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Thus, the current study investigates the connection of personal demands and personal resources with burnout through mediating mechanism of well-established SDT and finds that how BNS is essential in explaining the relationships of personal demands and resources with burnout.

Therefore, the objectives of the current study are to find out the relationship between personal demands and personal resources with burnout. In addition to this, we also aimed at finding the mediation role of BNS in the relationships of personal demands-resources and burnout. The review of literature and development of hypothesis provides a comprehensive justification of these relationships.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Personal Demands-Resources and Burnout

Demands (such as job demands) play a vital role in the health-impairment process (i.e. job demands enhance burnout). However, it has also been claimed that job demands are pivotally channelizing in well-being (LePine, Podsakoff, & LePine, 2005) and hence, are attributed as challenge stressors/demands (e.g. high workload, time pressure, etc.). These demands require an effort, but in the meantime, help in personal development and achievement (LePine et al., 2005). These positive spirits are referred to as “eustress” which activate individuals. Eustress contains feelings that bring a sense of challenge, help an individual attain better accomplishments. Thus, eustress is recommended as a type of optimism that as a kind of optimism that encourages strength, which allows in problem-focused coping, involvement, the satisfaction of needs, and achievement (LePine et al., 2005). In harmony with this perspective, the present study has considered personal demands as positive/stressors, which stimulate an individual zeal for personal challenge and helpful in mitigating burnout.

However, conceptually, personal demands are “the requirements that individuals set for their performance and behavior that force them to invest effort in their work” (Barbier et al., 2013). In line with the definition, personal demands may also have a positive association with burnout. Because, according to the definition, personal demands are also associated with physical and psychological costs. This can further be explained with the help of job hindrance/stressor literature. For example, LePine, (2005), investigated the positive relationship between personal demands and health impairments. They suggested that demands can be demanding on one's capacities, which leads to adverse outcomes. Hence, due to the rewarding work experiences and the aptitude to lessen the discomfort involved, personal demands can be considered as positive stressors even as they may not cause burnout.

The debate on personal demands with regards to burnout is novel and, hence, needs explanation (see, e.g., Bakker & Demerouti, 2017a). Therefore, it is essential to investigate the stipulated roles of personal characteristics (for this study, personal characteristics are personal demands and resources). This type of explanation originates that personal demands may not directly reduce burnout. However, personal demands may have the potential not directly to cause burnout.

Along with personal demands, personal resources refer to “developable systems of positive beliefs about one's self (e.g. self-esteem, self-efficacy, mastery) and the world (e.g. optimism, faith) which motivate and facilitate goal-attainment, even in the face of adversity or challenge” (Van den Heuvel et al., 2010,). Hobfoll, Johnson, Ennis, and Jackson (2003), investigated that self-aspects are fundamentally linked to resiliency and connected to resiliency and signify an individual's knowledge of their ability to effectively control and affect their environment. In connection to this, self-efficacy is expected to forecast the psychological wellbeing partially (e.g. Llorens, Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2007; Salanova, Agut, & Peiró, 2005; Salanova, Schaufeli, Xanthopoulou, & Bakker, 2010).

Based on the notion above, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H1: Personal demands and burnout are insignificantly related to each other.

H2: Personal resources and burnout are significantly negatively related to each other.

Basic Need Satisfaction as a Mediator between Personal Demands-Resources and Burnout

According to the SDT, psychological needs, senses of self-direction, well-being, and performance of individuals are either facilitated or thwarted by one's personal, social, and cultural context. Moreover, the SDT focuses on “the degree to which an individual's behavior is self-motivated and self-determined” (Deci & Ryan, 2000,). Circumstances which support the experience of autonomy, competence, and belongingness are fruitful in nurturing high levels of motivation and well-being (e.g. work engagement, reduced burnout), which also improves performance and creativity (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Numerous theoretical foundations have been exploited to understand the relationships of personal resources and personal demands with burnout. The COR theory (Hobfoll, 2002) proposed the direct connection between resources and work engagement and reduced burnout. Few researchers (e.g. Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, De Witte, & Lens, 2008; Willis, Neil, Mellick, & Wasley, 2019) have investigated the indirect relationships of job demands and resources with burnout through “individual satisfaction of basic psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Although these theories have unpinned valuable empirical beliefs regarding job demands and resources, they have majorly ignored underlying personal demands-resources mechanism. It has also been observed that various personal resources are related to certain outcomes through motivation (Ventura, Salanova, & Llorens, 2015; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti,

& Schaufeli, 2009). Different theories (e.g. the COR theory and the SCT) have been utilized to explain indirect and direct relationships of personal resources with job burnout within the JD-R model (Llorens et al., 2007; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). However, further explanation is still needed regarding personal demands-resources relationship with outcomes concerning motivation and health-impairment (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). For this reason, the current study will be helpful through well-established SDT in answering the questions regarding the position of Basic Psychological Needs (BNS) into the relationship of personal demands and resources with burnout.

It has been previously discussed that “a challenging work environment is likely to provide opportunities to get one’s basic needs satisfied, job hindrances are likely to thwart the basic needs” (Van den Broeck, De Cuyper, De Witte, & Vansteenkiste, 2010). According to Webster, Beehr, and Christiansen (2010), challenge stressors provide individuals with a chance to fulfill their basic needs, and hindrance stressors deter individuals’ basic needs. In the same monarchy, it can also be argued that personal demands serve as either personal challenges or hindrance stressors depending on their nature. The challenge stressor’s (e.g. performance expectations, perfectionism, etc.) may gratify one’s need for competence and achievement (Webster et al., 2010).

As per SDT, “the individual’s experience of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are argued to foster the most volitional and high-quality forms of motivation and engagement for activities, including enhanced performance, persistence, and creativity” (Deci & Ryan, 2000). As part of SDT, psychological needs are strictly defined as “those nutrients that must be procured by a living entity to maintain its growth, integrity, and health” (Deci & Ryan, 2000,). According to SDT researchers, the satisfaction of basic psychological needs helps individuals to prevent ill health and maladaptive working behaviors. So, individuals with fulfilled needs are expected to experience psychological advantage and utilize all the available resources for their satisfaction of needs (Van den Broeck et al., 2010). From this argument, it can be proposed that individuals will occupy their resources to fulfill their concerned needs, hence, mitigating their burnout. It is also significant to account that the concern of the SDT is the fulfillment of needs only, not the extent of one’s desire to have these basic needs met. As per the SDT’s assumption, when one need is satisfied, the other two needs go hand-in-hand in such a way that all three needs are positively associated. Several studies have combined these three needs to form an aggregated score of general need satisfaction (Deci et al., 2001; Vansteenkiste, Neyrinck, Niemiec, Soenens, & De Witte, 2007).

H3: Basic Need Satisfaction explains the relationship between personal demands and burnout, it means personal demands help individuals to satisfy their basic psychological needs, and this basic need satisfaction will reduce the burnout.

H4: Basic Need Satisfaction explains the relationship of personal resources and burnout, it means personal demands

help individuals to satisfy their basic psychological needs, and this basic need satisfaction will reduce the burnout.

Theoretical Model

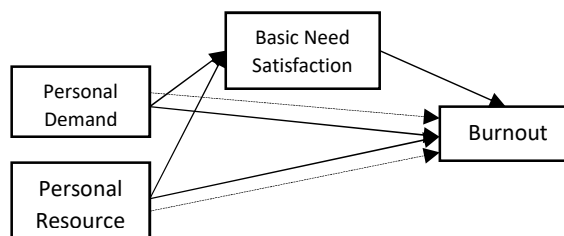


Figure 1: Theoretical framework

METHODOLOGY

Unit of analysis for this study was sales professionals from the insurance sector of Pakistan because very little work about job burnout has been observed in insurance companies. 08 companies were selected (utilizing the formula for optimal sampling) out of 49 companies listed on security and exchange commission of Pakistan by using random sampling technique. To reduce common method bias, Multisource data was collected from 392 sales professionals by using survey method. Sampling size was selected by using the guidelines of Kline (2011). This sampling size was gained by multiplying a total number of items with 05. Personal demands, personal resources and basic need satisfaction related data was collected from 392 sales employees and burnout of employees’ related data were gathered from their respective supervisors (total 101 supervisors). Supervisors of selected companies were approached to take their consent. Moreover, all the employees, along with their supervisors, were adequately informed that their information would be kept confidential.

Measures

Personal demand (performance expectations) was measured with the help of 4 items, constructed by Ang (2006) and later on, it was customized by Barbier et al. (2013) in work ratings. Personal resource (self-efficacy) was measured by using a scale developed by Bandura (1982) and validated by Wilk (2005). For example; “I feel like I can be myself at my job” is a sample item for self-efficacy. 18-items BNS-W scale by Deci et al. (2001), was utilized to measure BNS. This scale was revised and validated by Van den Broeck et al. (2008). Sample item to measure BNS is “I feel like I can be myself at my job”. Burnout was measured by the nine-item Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS) (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1981). Sample items for Burnout are “I feel emotionally drained from my work”.

RESULTS

We calculated the basic features of the data by using SPSS. Results showed that most of the sales employees were males (329 males and 63 females) between the age of 21 to 35 making a 74.5% of the sample and remaining 25.5% was between 36 to 45 years. Most of the respondents were with 16 years and more than 16 years of qualification. Most of the respondents were having 1 to 10 years of experience.

Before applying further tests, we calculated the normality of the data by calculating the tolerance values and variance inflation factor. According to the results (personal demand = .51; personal resource = .73, autonomy = .77, belongingness = .51, competence = .72), tolerance values for all the independent variables were above the threshold value .10 (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2013). Moreover, VIF for all independent variables (personal demand = 1.97, personal resource = 1.37, autonomy = 1.30, belongingness = 1.96, competence = 1.39) were less than the threshold value of 4 (Pan & Jackson, 2008). Results indicated that skewness values were less than 2, and kurtosis values were found less than 7 (Finney & DiStefano, 2006). All the results showed that there was no serious concern for non-normality in the data.

By utilizing MPlus software, alternative models were developed by using model re-specification technique to reach the optimum model (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Out of the 4 models, the 4 factor 2nd order CFA model showed a good fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 2012.62$; $df = 965$; $\chi^2/df = 2.07$; RMSEA = 0.05; SRMR = 0.06; Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.92, confirmatory fit index (CFI) = 0.92). Moreover, a total of 3 items from emotional exhaustion was deleted after checking factor loading on each of the dimensions of the variables. Factor loading values for these three items were less than 0.50. However, all other items had loading values more than 0.50. Reliability value for all the variables showed that Cronbach Alpha value was greater than 0.70. By using SEM statistics excel sheet, average variance extracted (AVE) for each variable was calculated. All the estimates were well above the threshold value of 0.50. The AVE for each factor was computed to examine the convergent validity by using an SEM stats Excel sheet. The results in the table below show that all estimates are well above the recommended value of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Moreover, the comparison between the AVE's and squared correlation of all the factor showed that AVE's values were greater than the squared correlations of all the factors

Table 1: Reliability & Validity

	Items	CR	α	AVE
Personal Demand	4	0.86	.86	0.62
Personal Resource	3	0.82	.88	0.62
Basic Need Satisfaction				
Autonomy	6	0.90	.91	0.61
Belongingness	6	0.93	.92	0.72
Competence	6	0.93	.92	0.72
Burnout				
Exhaustion	2	0.75	.74	0.63
Cynicism	4	0.90	.90	0.73

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation

Descriptive statistics (table 2) and correlation analysis were applied by using SPSS Software. The results showed that most of the variables were significantly correlated with each other.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and correlation metrics and dimensions

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Performance Expectations	6.3	0.9									
Self-Efficacy	6.3	0.8	.4**								
Autonomy	4.9	1.4	.2**	.1**							
Belongingness	5.8		.6**	.4**	.3**						
Competence	5.9	1.1	.4**	.3**	0.0	.4**					
Exhaustion	3.8	1.7	-.0	-.1*	0.0	-.0	0.0				
Cynicism	3.0	1.8	-	-	0.0	-	-	-			
			.2**	.2**		.2**	.1**	.1**			
Gender	1.1	0.4	-.0	.1*	-.0	0.0	-.0	0.0	0.1		
Education	4.1	0.8	0.0	0.0	-.0	0.0	-.0	-.0	0.0	0.0	
Experience	2.9	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	.1**	.1*	0.0	0.0

N = 392, * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$ a 1 = male; 2 = female, b 1 = 10 or Equivalent years; 2 = 12 or Equivalent years; 3 = 14 or Equivalent years; 4 = 16/ & above or Equivalent years, c 1 = less than one year; 2 = 1-5 years; 3 = 6-10 years; 4 = 11-15 years; 5 = above 15 years

MPlus was used to test the model fit indices. Results ($\chi^2 = 2296.27$; $df = 1153$; $\chi^2/df = 1.99$; RMSEA = 0.05; SRMR = 0.07; TLI = 0.90, CFI = 0.91) showed good fit with the data.

Direct effects of the hypothesized model were tested by using SEM. We have controlled the impact of experience while running the advance analysis because the experience was significantly correlated with the dependent variable. Below given table gives details of direct effects. Results (0.67 $p < 0.001$) show (see table 3) that personal demands are significantly related to BNS. In the same manner, personal resources and BNS were also found significantly (0.23 $p < 0.01$) related to BNS. However, the direct effects of personal demand and personal resource on burnout are insignificant. Basic need satisfaction impacted burnout negatively and significantly (-.29 $p < .05$).

Table 3: Direct Effects

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	
	BNS	Burnout
Personal Demand	.67***	NS
Personal Resource	.23**	NS
Basic Need Satisfaction	-	-.29*

N = 392; + Significant at 0.10; * Significant at 0.05; ** Significant at 0.01; *** Significant at 0.001; NS not significant

The phantom model approach was used for analyzing the mediation effects. This approach helps to avoid the restrictions associated with SEM programs by (Macho & Ledermann, 2011). By using 5000 bootstrap samples, a bootstrap method in SEM was used to find out the indirect effects. It was hypothesized that BNS mediates between personal demands, personal resources, and burnout. Below given table 4 indicates that BNS has fully mediated the relationship of personal demand and burnout (-0.19 $p < .05$). Similarly, BNS fully explained the relationship of personal resource and burnout (-0.07⁺ $p < .05$). These results showed that personal demands and personal resources helped sales employees to satisfy their basic needs, which in turn reduced burnout.

Table 4: Mediation Effects

Independent Variables	Burnout		
	Direct	Via BNS	Mediation
Personal	NS	-0.19**	Full
Resource			
Personal	NS	-0.07 ⁺	Full
Demand			

N = 392; + Significant at 0.10; * Significant at 0.05; ** Significant at 0.01; *** Significant at 0.001; ns not significant.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study has discussed to pave the ways to reduce the burnout of employees at the workplace. Burnout literature has been extended by the inclusion of personal demands and personal resources in the current study. More importantly, the underlying mechanism adds essential insights into the relationship between personal characteristics and burnout. With the help of SDT, the current study was aimed at identifying the

role of personal demands-resources through BNS in reducing burnout of employees. SDT entails that “a fundamental process is the satisfaction of basic psychological needs through which an individual’s optimal and dysfunctional functioning can be understood” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 326). SDT is considered a fundamental motivational theory which can explain underlying mechanisms (Van Wingerden, Derks, & Bakker, 2018). This study included 392 matching dyads in the insurance sector of Pakistan. Results did not provide evidence for direct relationships of personal demands-resources and burnout; this fully backed the idea of this study that there must be some underlying mechanism that connects these variables. Therefore, indirect findings showed that BNS fully mediated the relationship between personal demands-resources and burnout. This explanation of BNS entailed that individuals feel a higher level of psychological freedom (autonomy), interpersonal relatedness (belongingness), and effectiveness (competence) (Goemaere, Van Caelenberg, Beyers, Binsted, & Vansteenkiste, 2019). This type of explanation answers why employees feel less exhausted while working. One understandable explanation which supports the conclusion of this study is that health-promoting personal characteristics provide impetus to critical psychological states (Willis et al., 2019) and that is precisely why these personal characteristics relate to employees’ functioning (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Tomo & De Simone, 2018).

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study entails that BNS is the key to get an individual’s optimal functioning. This study is unique in a way that it has started a new debate in burnout literature by examining the mediating role of BNS between personal demands-resources and burnout. In connection to this, Demerouti and Bakker (2011), suggested employees utilize their aspects (e.g., performance expectations, self-efficacy, etc.) due to the non-availability of sufficient resources which will help to reduce their burnout. This study was conducted particularly in the insurance sector of Pakistan. Therefore this will help insurance sales managers to devise training and methods to reduce burnout of insurance sales employees by using personal aspects of individuals. This could also be very useful in Pakistan as it is a developing economy where employers may not provide sufficient job resources. Therefore, the utilization of positive personal aspects can help in achieving personal and organizational goals through the satisfaction of basic psychological needs.

Limitations and Future Directions

Along with the strengths of this study, there are also a few limitations. The debate about personal demands-resources in connection to burnout has just started in the literature. Few studies (e.g., Bakker & Sanz-Vergel, 2013), have validated performance expectations as personal demands but there is a strong need to explore more personal demands (e.g., perfectionism and goal-setting) to enhance the work of previous studies (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017b). This will allow options to organizations to understand employees’ desires which help employees to fulfill their basic needs and this need satisfaction

will ultimately help to reduce burnout of employees. Secondly, we have used a cross-sectional study design to collect the data. However, we collected multisource data to mitigate the challenges attached to the cross-sectional design. Nevertheless, future studies should utilize longitudinal design to handle challenges related to the cross-sectional design.

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