



Antecedents of Job Burnout in Saudi Arabian Labor Market

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Abstract

Job burnout has become one of the biggest concerns for employees in the Saudi labor market, especially with high work demand. Although many studies have addressed job burnout as a negative impact. However, a few studies were conducted for the Saudi Arabian labor market to study the job burnout antecedents. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of total reward and leadership as independent variables on job burnout, employee engagement as a mediator, and the correlation between all variables. The study was conducted on employees from all sectors and various industries in the Saudi employment market, including all nationalities. The data was collected using electronic questionnaires, and there were 238 respondents. Moreover, the collected data was analyzed through descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviations, and correlation) along with applying reliability analysis to the data and finally performing path analysis. This study is useful for employers because it demonstrates that in order to get employees engaged, it is necessary to provide them with professional leadership and compensation to reduce job burnout.

Keywords: Total Reward, Leadership, Employee Engagement, Job Burnout, Saudi Arabia.

Introduction

Economic growth in Saudi Arabia creates a lot of business and investment opportunities, which drive a massive amount of work and complexity, along with different reward schemes and a lack of potential leaders, which might cause job burnout. In recent years, the concept of job burnout has gained attention among human capital practitioners and business leaders. Managers worry about job burnout, one of several variables that lower employee enthusiasm and productivity (Charoensukmongkol, P. et al., 2016). Long working hours, work-home conflict, role ambiguity, lack of management support, poor self-efficacy, and many years of experience can also lead to burnout, according to research (Sndenaa, E., et al., 2015). Moreover, the event hampers personal and social functioning in the workplace, which has substantial implications for the worker, others affected by them, and the organization. Burnout can cause some people to resign, but others will stay but accomplish the bare minimum (Leiter, M. P. et al., 2003). While organizational growth must address job burnout, examining job burnout's causes is important since understanding its development mechanisms is essential for intervention (Li, Y. et al., 2020). Research on social support and occupational burnout has been conducted, although numerous factors need further study. First, previous studies combined emotional weariness, depersonalization, and a perceived lack of personal success into one measure of burnout. The outcome variable was this combination (Charoensukmongkol, P. et al., 2016). Due to the lack of sufficient studies addressing job burnout

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antecedents among employees of Saudi Arabian sectors, we will study the impact of leadership style and total reward on employee burnout throughout employee engagement as a mediator. Figure 1 shows the theoretical model of this study.

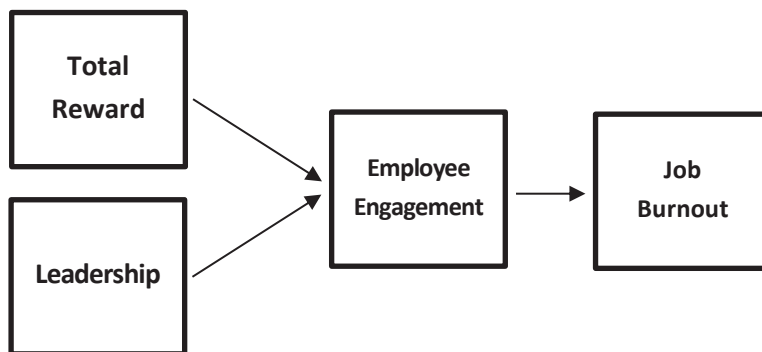


Figure 1: Research Model

Literature Review, Theoretical and Hypothesis Development

The relationship between Leadership and Employee Engagement

Leadership: described as the ability to convince people to perform certain actions to achieve organizational goals or even any other goals. (Hersey, P. et al., 1988). Additionally, according to (Hersey, P. et al., 1988) leading is different from managing, specifically when it comes to people. Good leaders have the ability to influence others in a positive way, whereas managers are process-oriented and mostly disregard people's feelings. However, leadership has become more of a practice than a definition, which influences and has an effect on employees.

Employee Engagement: "To engage" can signify anything from being "in gear" and devoted to working for a fair wage at work (Dajani M. 2015). Engaged employees can be described as active, devoted, enthusiastic, and empowered employees who show it at work (Mone E. et al., 2010). Furthermore, bringing intellectual effort, positive emotions, and meaningful relationships to work (Gifford J. et al., 2021). It is clear that many studies couldn't exactly define employee engagement. However, it became an important antecedent to many studies related to employees in the labor market.

According to (Mubarak et al., 2018), leaders can improve organizational performance through their own or others' strengths, notably their followers and stakeholders. Employees will be highly engaged and favorably influence others to achieve the organization's missions with their unique leadership styles. Furthermore, leadership predicted engagement. This element includes leadership indicators and supervisor support (PSS). Effective leadership behaviors that supported engagement included self-awareness, communication, honesty, and respect for employees and the organization's ethical norms (Dajani M. 2015). Moreover, transformational leadership boosts employee engagement. Psychological ownership emerges when a company seeks to bond with employees. Psychological ownership can improve company outcomes through transformative leadership (Ghafoor A. et al., 2011). Therefore, based on all the mentioned studies above, we could formulate the following hypothesis:

H1: Leadership has a positive impact on Employee Engagement.

The relationship between Total Reward and Employee Engagement

Total Reward: also known as compensation and benefits, is defined as all forms of financial "extrinsic" and non-financial "intrinsic" benefits paid to an employee in return for a job done or service provided (Milkovich, G. T. et al., 2014). Total Reward is critical for meeting employee needs, which boosts morale and engagement. Moreover, it increases retention. The more the organization is competitive in the market, the greater the possibility of retaining employees within an organization.

The results of a study done by (Kulikowski, K. 2018) discovering that there is a clear relationship between pay for performance and employee engagement. Moreover, according to (HOOLE, C. et al., 2015),

much research has stressed the importance of demographic characteristics in understanding the relationship between total incentives and work engagement. First, the association between total rewards and work engagement was examined, followed by work engagement and the reward subscales. Reward subgroups positively correlate with work engagement. Employee engagement is highly influenced by rewards systems, as rewards systems can influence company culture, where engaged employees are essential to competitive advantage. An organization must find a competitive advantage plan. Engaged employees can also be a competitive advantage. Motivated workers are more dedicated to their jobs. Additionally, a positive workplace can stimulate employees and boost their confidence (Taufek F. et al., 2016). Therefore, based on all the mentioned studies above, we could formulate the following hypothesis:

H2: Total Reward has a positive impact on Employee Engagement.

The relationship between Employee Engagement and Job Burnout

Job Burnout is defined by (Maslach, S. et al., 2001) as an employee's negative feelings toward their job, either losing their personal identity or being mentally and physically exhausted. Burnout is widely known as a syndrome affecting people (Barnard et al., 2006).

The cause of burnout is a sense of collapse in the experiential quest for meaning, which is supported by the fact that burnout and engagement are polar opposites of the same concept. Evidence shows it is not in the best interests of businesses to disregard the prevalence of employee burnout. This is due to the fact that work burnout is characterized by emotional tiredness and detachment, which reduces creative involvement (Timms, C. et al., 2012). Similarly, to other good emotions, job engagement is beneficial to objective behavior and approach behavior, so as to motivate the individual to engage in his or her work or work environment, thereby contributing to an increase in performance. Consider passion and level of involvement to be job engagement, and the higher the level of job engagement among employees, the greater their intention to work hard. Furthermore, they can develop more productive forces than others, meet client demand, and demonstrate the performance required for the firm to achieve its highest goal (Yin N. 2017). Therefore, based on all the mentioned studies above, we could formulate the following hypothesis:

H3: Employee Engagement has a negative impact on Job Burnout.

The mediating effect of Employee Engagement

Based on the above hypothesis and research model, we believe that employee engagement will mediate the relationship between leadership and burnout, as well as total reward and burnout.

H4: Employee Engagement a mediator between Leadership and Job Burnout.

H5: Employee Engagement a mediator between Total Reward and Job Burnout.

Methodology

Sample and Data Collection

Data was collected via an online survey through Google Forms among employees in the Saudi Arabian labor market. The questionnaire consists of thirty-eight items that measure total reward, leadership, employee engagement, and job burnout. There are five questions to determine the demographic characteristics of the workers (gender, age, years of service, qualification, and sector). The sample size was 238, 104 males and 134 females, which creates a balance. The majority of the workers were between 26 and 35 years old, with 56.3%. Furthermore, in terms of the years of service, the highest percent of participants is between 2–5 years of experience, with 30.3%, followed by less than 2 years, with 26.9%. Furthermore, 75.2% of them have bachelor's degrees, while 58% are private sector employees. More details are shown in Table 1.

Measures

- **Total Reward:** Includes two questions taken from the questionnaires of (AlJarradi K. S. 2011; Babich, R. 2014); and (Smith, R. M. 2021).
- **Leadership:** Includes seven questions taken from the questionnaires of (Mendelsohn, D. B. 2021).
- **Employee Engagement:** Included fifteen questions taken from the questionnaires of (Anderson, M. S. 2021), and (Shellow, A. 2022)
- **Job Burnout:** Included fourteen questions taken from the questionnaires of, Burnout Questionnaire, Adapted by Michelle Post, MA, LMFT from Public Welfare, American Public Welfare Association, 1981, Vol.39, No.1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

| Characteristic | Category | Count | Percentage |
|---------------------|--------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Gender | Male | 104 | 43.7% |
| | Female | 134 | 56.3% |
| Age | Between 18-25 | 43 | 18.1% |
| | Between 26-35 | 125 | 52.5% |
| | Between 36-45 | 49 | 20.6% |
| | Between 46-60 | 21 | 8.8% |
| Years of Experience | Less Than 2 Years | 64 | 26.9% |
| | Between 2-5 Years | 72 | 30.3% |
| | Between 5-10 Years | 42 | 17.6% |
| Qualification | Above 10 Years | 60 | 25.2% |
| | Bachelor's | 179 | 75.2% |
| | Masters | 31 | 13.0% |
| | PhD | 2 | .8% |
| Sector | Diploma | 17 | 7.1% |
| | High School | 9 | 3.8% |
| | Private | 138 | 58.0% |
| | Semi-Government | 33 | 13.9% |
| | Government | 67 | 28.2% |

Scaling

We used a five-point Likert scale: [1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Agree), 5 (Strongly Disagree)] as a response for each question in the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

To analyze the collected data, SPSS and Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS) were both used. Before performing this step, we checked all of the responses in Excel365 to clean them up and eliminate inconsistent ones. Using SPSS, we performed descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) on the data to demonstrate demographic characteristics. To check the reliability of all measures, we calculated Cronbach's Alpha. AMOS was supplemented for determining the best model fit and testing the model quality.

Results

Reliability

To check the reliability of the measurement scales, Cronbach Alpha was calculated. All variables have high Cronbach Alpha; hence they all were retained. Cronbach's Alpha (α) ranges from 0.865-0.917, which indicating that our measures have a good level of internal consistency, taking in consideration that the recommended Cronbach's Alpha is 0.7 or higher.

Table 2: The Reliability Test Results

| Scale | Cronbach's Alpha | No. of Items |
|----------------|------------------|--------------|
| Total Reward | .781 | 2 |
| Leadership | .912 | 7 |
| Job Engagement | .917 | 15 |
| Job Burnout | .865 | 14 |

Means, Standard Deviation and Correlations

Table3 presents the means, standard deviation and correlations among the variables investigated in our study. **Leadership** has a mean value of (3.0912), and a standard deviation value of (1.05269). **Total Reward** has a mean value of (2.5105), and a standard deviation value of (1.20604). Moreover, the mean value for **Job Burnout** is (3.0576), and the standard deviation (.76094). Furthermore, **Employee Engagement** has (3.2059) as a mean value, and (.84995) as standard deviation.

According to the findings, the correlations between the variables indicates that **Leadership** has a significant positive correlation with **Employee Engagement** ($r=.768, p<0.01$) as well as **Total Reward** which has a significant positive correlation with **Employee Engagement** ($r=.479, p<0.01$). However, a significant neg-

ative correlation between **Employee Engagement** and **Job Burnout** ($r=-.480, p<0.01$). Moreover, **Job Burnout** has a negative correlation with both **Leadership** ($r=-.321, p<0.01$) and **Total Reward** ($r=-.199, p<0.01$). According to the data, all variables are correlated with each other at the 0.01 significance level.

Testing Research Model Fit

The theoretical model displayed in Figure1 was tested, Table4 shows the fit indices from the default model (Chi-square=2.194, RMR=.013, GFI=.995, AGFI=.977, RFI rho1=.980, CFI=.999, RMSEA=.020). Based on these results, Figure1 shows the best model that explains the relationships between the variables. Table5 shows a summary of the results of model fit. The indicators show that the study’s model fit adequately where the study reached the best model. According to Figure2,

the significant positive impact of **Leadership** on **Employee Engagement** was confirmed ($\beta=0.57, P<0.01$), supporting (H1). Moreover, a positive effect of **Total Reward** on **Employee Engagement** was confirmed as well ($\beta=0.16, P<0.01$), supporting (H2). Finally, a significant negative effect of **Employee Engagement** on **Job Burnout** was found ($\beta=-0.43, P<0.01$), supporting (H3). Previous results support (H4 and H5).

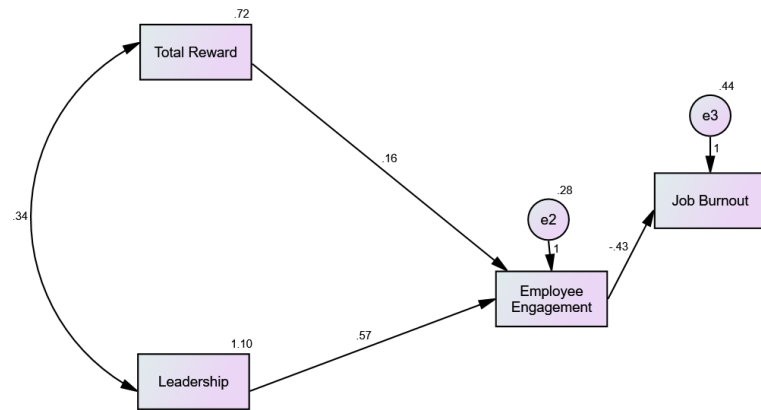


Figure2: Path Analysis

Table3: Means, Standard Deviation and Correlations

| Variable | Mean | SD | LS | TR | JB | EE |
|----------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----|
| LS | 3.0912 | 1.05269 | N/A | | | |
| TR | 2.5105 | 1.20604 | .425** | N/A | | |
| JB | 3.0576 | .76094 | -.321** | -.199** | N/A | |
| EE | 3.2059 | .84995 | .768** | .479** | -.480** | N/A |

Table4: Results of Model Fit

| Statistics | Results of Model Fit |
|------------|----------------------|
| Chi-square | 2.194 |
| RMR | .013 |
| GFI | .995 |
| AGFI | .977 |
| RFI rho1 | .980 |
| CFI | .999 |
| RMSEA | .020 |

Table5: Path Analysis

| | Estimate | S.E. | C.R. | P | Label |
|----------------|----------|------|--------|-----|-------|
| EEAV <--- LSAV | .570 | .035 | 16.125 | *** | |
| EEAV <--- TRAV | .161 | .044 | 3.684 | *** | |
| JBAV <--- EEAV | -.430 | .051 | -8.429 | *** | |

Discussion

This study aims to investigate the effects of leadership and total reward on job burnout and to examine the mediating role of job engagement in the Saudi labor market. The model was analyzed using the Path Analysis method. Our present study shows, based on the results, that the first hypothesis (H1) supports that leadership can positively affect job engagement significantly. This study agrees with some studies such as (Tress A. 2017). These results are consistent with a study done by (Gemed H. K. et al., 2020) which examined many leadership styles and found that leadership styles have a strong positive impact on job engagement. Therefore, strong leadership would have a huge influence and impact on employee work engagement. Investing in and developing great leaders will increase the work engagement of employees accordingly, (Milhem, M. et al., 2019) confirmed that leadership styles and emotional intelligence have a significant positive impact on employee job engagement as well. Moreover, the study based on the results confirmed that the second hypothesis (H2) total reward can positively affect job engagement. This study agrees with some studies such as (Jung H. S. et al., 2015) and (Kulikowski, K. 2018) which find a strong relationship between total reward and job engagement. Therefore, this means that total reward is an important aspect of employee work engagement, organization needs to focus on total reward strategy and have com-

petitive pay to support increasing employee work engagement and review it regularly in line with individual performance and the organization's performance as well. Furthermore, based on the results, the study confirmed that the third hypothesis (H3) where job engagement is significantly and negatively affected by job burnout. This study agrees with some studies such as (Gabel S. R. et al., 2016) and (Hakanen J. J. et al., 2006) who find a strong relationship between burnout and engagement. Therefore, organizations that are targeting reducing job burnout must focus on all activities and practices that lead to employee job engagement and its antecedents as one of the main confirmed factors for reducing and containing job burnout, which requires strong planning to include all human resources management activities towards achieving this ultimate outcome. Having said that, and based on the results above, which confirmed that employee engagement mediates the relationship between leadership and burnout, confirming the fourth hypothesis (H4), employee engagement will significantly increase the impact of leadership on job burnout. Moreover, the results above confirm that employee engagement mediates the relationship between total reward and burnout, confirming the fifth hypothesis (H5), employee engagement will increase the impact of total pay on job burnout.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to assist the Saudi labor market in identifying the causes of job burnout and its antecedents. We discussed the impact of leadership and total compensation, as well as employee engagement as a moderator of job burnout. The study highlights the significance of human resource management's role in mitigating job burnout in order to maintain engaged and productive employees as a competitive advantage for the organization. To maintain a competitive advantage in human capital, organizations must ensure that their employees are engaged and free of burnout in order to achieve their objectives. In conclusion, many researchers have discovered a remarkable relationship affecting job burnout. However, this study was conducted on employees in the Saudi labor market to focus on the amount of burnout and its antecedents and suggests focusing on practices that reduce employee job burnout.

Practical Implications

Our study focused on employee job burnout and its antecedents in the Saudi labor market. Organizations should consider these factors as indicators of their employees' status within their environment prior to the fact of being burned-out. We recommend organizations consider these results and focus on developing leadership and maintaining employee engagement with the goal of reducing and avoiding employee job burnout.

Limitations and Future Research

This research is limited to the Saudi labor market, which makes it limited. However, we tried to target all sectors and industries and distributed the questionnaire translated into Arabic to ensure full understanding and accuracy of results. Based on the results, we highly suggest studying more antecedents of job burnout in Saudi Arabia and focusing on specific sectors and industries, i.e., the private sector and the information technology industry, as well as focusing on specific demographic factors as well as different cities to have more realistic and focused results.

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