Employee Perspectives on Decent Work and Job Burnout: Evidence from Nepalese Manufacturing Industries

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to explore the relationship between decent work and job burnout.

Design/methodology/approach: The study employs a structured questionnaire for the survey. It takes into account three factors of job burnout and seven dimensions of decent work to determine whether there is any association between them. The sample includes 600 people from four industrial estates (including 40 manufacturing industries and 15 employees in each) in Nepal.

Findings: The findings supported the idea that there is a strong negative link between decent work and job burnout. Adequate working time and workload, meaningful remuneration, and fundamental principles and values at work are the components of decent work that predict a negative association with job burnout best. It seems that employees are more prone to experience burnout when these characteristics, which can be inserted in the many parameters of decent work, are lacking. Employees can combine work and personal duties and progress professionally with decent work and its dimensions.

Research limitations/implications: Only a few manufacturing industries among Nepal's four industrial estates are the focus of this research. The findings of this study hence might not apply to all business groups.

Practical implications: Decent work dimensions assist in lowering workplace stress among employees. Reduced job burnout improves both work and quality of work life.

Originality/value: This research establishes the relationship between decent work and job burnout, to the author's knowledge the first of its kind in the context of Nepalese manufacturing industries.

Keywords: Decent work, Employee, Job burnout, Manufacturing industries, Perspectives

1. Introduction

The business world and industries have undergone many changes that have boosted things like technological advancement, market expansion, changes relating to the potential for international trade in goods, and elevated levels of competition (ILO, 2019). These changes entail and bring to light concerns like informal work, rising unemployment, especially among young people, poverty, inequality (such as gender pay gaps), insecurity, career complexity, and dwindling rights, benefits, and job security, for employees globally (UN, 2015; Guest, 2017). The need to safeguard workers' basic rights has grown in light of these complicated concerns (Ferraro et al., 2016; ILO, 2001). The concept of "decent work" arises as a guiding proposition for the development of more and better labor, taking into account the rights of workers their health and safety, and their quality of life at work, as well as the market's ability to expand sustainably and economically (ILO, 2009, cited in Dinis et al., 2022).

Decent work relates to moral behavior and worthwhile employment. The basic requirement for working conditions that permit an acceptable quality of life at the workplace is decent work (Kroon, 2018; Shrestha, 2021). These working environments give employees a sense of well-being on all fronts- physically, psychologically, and socially. Working conditions are deemed to be decent when employees have access to full-time, lucrative employment, can exercise their legal rights at work, are safeguarded by social security, and may take part in social discourse (ILO, 2013, cited in Kerti, 2020).

Decent work is a key initiative launched by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 1999 (Han et al., 2022) to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and human dignity (Adhikari, 2012; Adhikari et al., 2012). The United Nations also incorporated decent work into its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recently (U.N., 2019). The Government of Nepal (GoN) recently agreed to execute the 17 SDGs more quickly and incorporated them into the 14th and 15th national development plans (Adhikari & Shrestha, 2022). Out of 17 SDGs, goal 8 of the 2030 Agenda calls for the promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment, and decent work for all. Apparently, the ILO and its constituents have prioritized decent work as a crucial area of engagement (Khan et al., 2019). Of course, providing a decent work environment is a concern for organizational management. However, encouraging decent work among individuals from various cultural, economic, and social contexts is crucial for advancing overall social well-being (Blustein et al., 2019; Han et. al., 2022).

Employee perceptions at the workplace matter a lot for their effective performance and organizational success. Such perceptions are shaped by the conditions and atmosphere at work, which can be either favorable or unfavorable. All kinds of industries now have a responsibility to foster a constructive work environment that encourages employees to display positive work behavior and feel good about their work. For this, the industries and their management need to respect and comprehend employee psychology. In fact, burnout at work affects people everywhere. It is a sort of occupational stress that has detrimental repercussions on the person experiencing it and also on the workplace (Wen et al., 2020; Giorgi et al., 2017; Chung et al., 2017; Gautam & Gautam, 2022). In such a case, it is believed that decent work contributes to an increase in employee positive behavior. It encourages job engagement and motivation, while also assists in reducing job burnout (Ferraro et al., 2017, 2018; Graça et al., 2021). Most likely, a decent work environment would be able to prevent burnout and tiredness. In light of these facts, the purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between decent work and job burnout using the perspectives of employees who are engaged in Nepalese manufacturing industries.

2. Review of the Literature

Conceptualization of Decent Work

Individually, employees' needs have changed as a result of the current economic climate, moving away from their previous needs for material things and safety and toward their present needs for respect, need, and acquisition. Additionally, these employees have raised their standards for the improvement of their employment prospects and pursuit of career advancement (Shrestha, 2021). On the other hand, in light of the comeback of humanistic management and the advent of the new employee-centered economy, business organizations are committed to develop a strong employer brand to attract more exceptional individuals and improve their sustainable competitive advantages (Haiming & Yan, 2020). In actuality, in today's stressful environment, decent work is crucial for both businesses and employees. Consequently,

it is believed that decent work can boost employee engagement and innovation (Qing et al., 2016) which ultimately leads to a low level of burnout.

The concept of decent work has grown since Juan Somavia's 1999 proposal, which was based on the ILO's founding in 1919 and is the outcome of a protracted journey involving both that organization and the United Nations (Pereira, 2020). Numerous decent work milestones demonstrate the concept's high validity and the formal principles that should govern labour concerns and issues on a global scale (dos Santos, 2019). This concept focuses on ensuring human dignity, accomplishing people's goals for their working lives, and showing solidarity with others (Ferraro et al., 2016; ILO, 2001). Additionally, decent work can meet needs shared by people, such as survival, and self-determination (Blustein et al., 2019). Such a work is a highly competent, successful, and qualified job that is performed in a safe, social environment. Decent work serves as an example of a job that satisfies employees by allowing them to put their skills, knowledge, and abilities to use. Additionally, workers' rights and dignity are upheld, and their labor is well-paid (Markovi, 2012). In addition to full and productive employment, the idea of decent work incorporates a number of qualitative characteristics of work, such as rights at work, social protection, and the promotion of social dialogue (Piasna et al., 2020).

Several public documents discuss the concept of decent employment (ILO, 2008, 2012, 2013). According to a recent study by Ferraro et al. (2016) on decent work from the perspective of work, organizational, and personnel psychology, empirical research on that idea is still in its infancy (Pereira et al., 2019). According to Ferraro et al. (2018), the content of DW is conveyed in the seven psychological dimensions. These seven dimensions illustrate how employees' conceptions of decent work are structured (Figure 1):

Figure 1: Seven Psychological Dimensions of Decent Work

Source: Elaborated by the author

1. Fundamental principles and values at work: They measure the degree to which the work environment upholds values like respect, freedom, non-discrimination, trust, and procedural and interactional fairness.

2. Adequate working time and workload: They include a healthy workload, work-life balance, and an appropriate pace of work.

3. Fulfilling and productive work: They involve the perception that work contributes to the future of future generations, to professional development and fulfillment (personal and professional), and is perceived as a true creation of value.

4. Meaningful remuneration: It involves the benefits and earnings that are seen as fair and sufficient to be a full member of society, as well as the perception that the compensation gives employees and their families' freedom so they may act as citizens.

5. Social protection: It is the idea that a worker's family will be taken care of in the event of sickness or unemployment due to a social security system and the possibility of a comfortable retirement. This dimension conveys the employee's expectations of what society will or can do to reward or honor their long-term dedication to their jobs.

6. Opportunities: They are centered on potential alternative jobs, giving a worker a choice, as well as personal and professional advancement. This development means opportunities to increase compensation and advance one's career (as an employee or entrepreneur).

7. Health and safety: The primary goals of health and safety are the preservation of health, workplace security, and comfort.

Conceptualization of Job Burnout

Burnout in the workplace is a typical occurrence. It is a long-standing social issue with many different manifestations that differ depending on the time, researcher, country, and language (Schaufeli et al., 2009). Job burnout is a condition caused by a protracted vulnerability to work-related stress (Lubbadeh, 2020). Particularly, burnout on the job occurs when workers get worn out at work. It is a psychological process that develops as a result of ongoing stress or long work hours. Job burnout is recently added to the World Health Organization's (WHO) list of mental health issues associated with the workplace (WHO, 2018). This syndrome was described by the WHO (2018) as the result of extended workplace stress that was not properly controlled by an individual. This idea should be classified as a phenomenon that solely applies to events in the environment of the workplace (Dinis et al., 2022). The frequency of this syndrome has negative effects on both the individual and the organization (Shirom, 2014; Garca-Arroyo et al., 2019); hence burnout has grown in importance as a concept.

Burnout can come from feeling too stressed, even though it typically happens as a result of specific job-related stressors and conditions (Maslach and Leiter, 2016). Numerous factors, including a way of life decisions, personality characteristics, and qualities of the profession, can contribute to it. Additionally, lack of control, ambiguous job goals, dysfunctional workplace interactions, excessive activity, lack of social support, and unbalanced work-life schedule are all seen as major contributors to job burnout. Burnout at work has various expenses for both the company and the people. The importance of job burnout is demonstrated by its relationship with a variety of adverse organizational outcomes, including absenteeism, and different sorts of health problems: cardiovascular disorders, mental health issues, and insomnia (Cordes and Dougherty, 1993; Shirom and Melamed, 2005; Maslach and Leiter, 2016). Awa et al. (2010) report that burnout's detrimental effects have sparked calls for intervention initiatives that would both enhance employees' quality of life and stop organizational losses.

Many researchers (e.g., Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Freudenberg, 1974; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Lubbadeh, 2020) discuss the concept of job burnout over time. According to Maslach and Jackson (1981), there are three aspects of job burnout (cited in Lubbadeh, 2020), including exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Three Aspects of Job Burnout
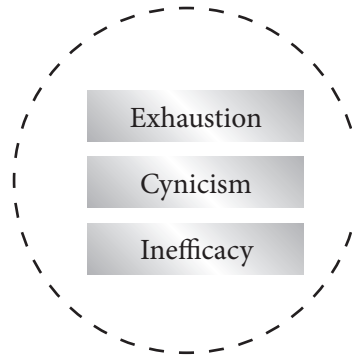
Source: Elaborated by the author

1. Exhaustion: It includes loss of energy, depletion, debilitation, and fatigue which impairs the worker's capacity for effective work.

2. Cynicism: Given the nature of human services employment, the cynical factor was first known as depersonalization, but it has also been referred to as unfavorable or inappropriate attitudes toward clients, irritation, loss of idealism, and disengagement.

3. Inefficacy: Diminished personal accomplishment, reduced productivity or capability, low morale, and an inability to cope are all terms used to define the inefficacy component.

Association between Decent Work and Job Burnout

Job burnout has various repercussions and adversely affects how well people perform (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Some researchers (e.g., Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Maslach et al., 2001; Bakker et al., 2014) reported that job burnout can lower productivity, effectiveness, and the likelihood of having fulfilling work experiences. It can also reduce dedication to the business or the work. It can also increase early retirement, sickness, mortality, and plans to leave one's employment (Borritz et al., 2006; Eurofound, 2018). Therefore, to avoid such negative effects of job burnout, today's industries need to focus on decent work. Many researchers (e.g., Bal et al., 2019; Ferraro et al., 2015, 2017, 2018; 2020; Dinis et al., 2022) have reported that decent work prevents job burnout. Dinis et al. (2022) reported that a high level of decent work is linked to a low level of burnout, and a low level of decent work can promote burnout. Based on these facts, this research proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Decent work is negatively associated with job burnout.

3. Research Methodology

Exploring the issue of decent work and job burnout in the manufacturing industries of four industrial estates (Bhaktapur, Kathmandu, Patan, and Pokhara) in Nepal is main the purpose of this research. In order to investigate the link between decent work and job burnout, the study uses a survey research technique using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. The sample consists of 600 employees from the four industrial estates that operate in a variety of businesses (including 40 manufacturing industries and 15 employees in each). Only 431 (71.83%) of the standardized questionnaire's replies were valid, and those were the ones that were included in the study. Table 1 depicts the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1
Demographic characteristics of respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	195	45.24
Female	236	54.76
Age (years)		
18 − 35	221	51.28
36 − 50	195	45.24
51 − 58	11	2.552
≥ 59	4	0.928
Educational level		
Masters	26	6.032
Bachelor	155	35.96
+ 2	203	47.1
School	47	10.9
Work experience (years)		
6 months to 5 years	198	45.94
6 years to 10 years	142	32.95
11 years to 15 years	55	12.76
16 years to 20 years	21	4.87
≥ 21 years	15	3.48

In this study, the decent work questionnaire (DWQ), developed by Ferraro et al. (2018), was used to assess how workers feel about their workplace. The DWQ has a 31-item questionnaire with seven dimensions such as fundamental principles and values at work, adequate working time and workload, fulfilling and productive work, meaningful remuneration, social protection, opportunities, and health and safety. Employee perceptions of job burnout were measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), created by Maslach and Jackson (1981). The MBI has a 31-item questionnaire with three aspects such as exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy.

4. Results and Findings
Reliability Analysis
The Cronbach Alpha results for the aspects of job burnout and decent work are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2
Reliability analysis

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Decent work	**31**	**0.93**
Fundamental Principles and Values at Work	*6*	*0.83*
Adequate working time and work overload	*4*	*0.87*
Fulfilling and productive work	*5*	*0.79*
Meaningful remuneration	*4*	*0.89*
Social protection	*4*	*0.81*
Opportunities	*4*	*0.78*
Health and Safety	4	0.85
Job burnout	**22**	**0.89**
Exhaustion	*9*	*0.84*
Cynicism	*5*	*0.78*
Inefficacy	*8*	*0.91*

Acceptable Cronbach alpha scores are 0.60 and higher (Sekaran, 2006). All of the study's variables have Cronbach alpha values greater than 0.6. For the analysis, they are adequate (Hair et al., 2014).

Descriptive Statistics of Decent Work Dimensions and Job Burnout

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of decent work dimensions.

Table 3
Decent work dimensions and job burnout

Decent Work Dimensions	Mean	S.D.
Fundamental principles and values at work	3.43	0.23
Adequate working time and workload	3.71	0.37
Fulfilling and productive work	3.97	0.54
Meaningful remuneration	3.77	0.61
Social protection	3.31	0.76
Opportunities	3.57	0.46
Health and safety	3.83	0.65
Job burnout	3.27	0.57

In light of these results, fulfilling and productive work has a higher mean (M = 3.97; S.D. = 0.54) while social protection has the lowest (M = 3.31; S.D. = 0.76). According to the findings, respondents truly believe that doing decent work should be the standard in their places of employment. The job burnout variable has a mean of 3.27 with S.D. of 0.57. The results indicate that respondents believe the average level of burnout situation in their workplaces.

Inferential Statistics of Decent Work Dimensions and Job Burnout

Table 4 presents correlations of all the dimensions.

Table 4
Pearson's correlation coefficients of decent work and job burnout

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Fundamental principles and values at work	1							
2. Adequate working time and workload	0.44*	1						
3. Fulfilling and productive work	0.51**	0.34*	1					
4. Meaningful remuneration	0.61*	0. 25**	0.34*	1				
5. Social protection	0.23*	0.26*	0.31*	0.37*	1			
6. Opportunities	0.25*	0.17*	0.19*	0.23*	0.12*	1		
7. Health and safety	0.16*	0.21*	0. 34*	0.32**	0.16**	0.47**	1	
8. Job burnout	-0.45**	-0.71**	-0.52**	-0.29**	-0.36**	-0.29*	-0.59**	1

Note: *$p \leq 0.05$; **$p \leq 0.01$

The results show a negative and substantial association between job burnout and decent work dimensions (p<0.01). The two variables with the highest and lowest correlations, respectively, are personal burnout and adequate time and workload (r = -0.71; high degree) and personal burnout and opportunities (r = 0-.29; believed to have a minor effect size).

Table 5
Regression Analysis

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	28.28	1.92		14.8	0.00
Fundamental principles and values at work	- 0.52	- 0.06	- 0.31	- 9.41	0.00
Adequate working time and workload	- 0.813	- 0.04	- 0.71	- 19.4	0.00
Fulfilling and productive work	- 0.34	- 0.05	- 0.3	- 6.84	0.00
Meaningful remuneration	- 0.571	- 0.07	- 0.34	- 8.39	0.00
Social protection	- 0.154	- 0.11	- 0.06	- 1.46	0.01
Opportunities	- 0.03	- 0.1	- 0.05	- 0.01	0.00
Health and safety	- 0.146	- 0.05	- 0.08	- 3.05	0.04

Note: Dependent variable: Job burnout
R = 0.806; R^2 = 0.649; F = 199.972; p-value = 0.000
**p<0.01. *p<0.05

In this research, job burnout is the criteria variable and the other seven elements of decent work are considered predictive variables. According to the results of the multiple linear regressions (Table 5), decent work generally accounts for 60.9% (R^2) of job burnout (F = 199.972, p<0.01). The hypothesis that decent work is negatively associated with job burnout is supported by the fact that job burnout is inversely and closely linked with decent work. According to the beta's score, adequate working time and workload (β = - 0.71; p<0.01), meaning remuneration (β = - 0.34; p<0.01) and fundamental principles and values at work (β = - 0.31; p<0.01) are the decent work's most predictive determinants of job burnout.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to investigate the link between decent work and job burnout. The results confirmed the concept that decent work and job burnout have a significant and adverse relationship (Ferraro et al., 2015, 2017, 2018; 2020; Bal et al., 2019; Dinis et al., 2022). Even though all the decent work dimensions show significant results, the most predictive dimensions are adequate working time and workload, meaning remuneration, and fundamental principles and values at work (Dinis et al., 2022). This is significant because it appears that employees are more likely to experience burnout when there is a deficit in these dimensions that can be inserted in the various dimensions of decent work (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Siegall & McDonald, 2004; Sabagh et al., 2018; Kashyap & Arora, 2022; Maslach et al., 2001; Khan et al., 2019; Ferraro et al., 2020).

In conclusion, decent work and its dimensions enable employees to balance work and personal responsibilities, advance professionally, etc. Particularly, adequate working time and workload, meaning remuneration, and fundamental principles and values at work help to reduce employee stress in the workplace. Lowering job burnout enhances the quality of both work and life and has a substantial impact on organizational performance. Having stress-free employees is especially important for modern industries because doing good work becomes a fundamental element of an organization's long-term success. Therefore, today's organizations must create efficient working environments, promote the idea of

decent work in their workplaces, and make employees happy and cheerful in order to increase employee positive behavior and, ultimately, increase organizational performance and long-term sustainability.

6. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study is confined to only 40 manufacturing industries from the four industrial estates of Nepal. The findings of this study hence might not apply to all business groups. If information was gathered from a broad population using other sampling techniques, the results might be different. Therefore, future research should consider using sizable sample size and organizations from other industries.

Conflict of interest: The author declares that there is no conflicting interest in this research work.

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