



ISSN: 2617-6548

URL: www.ijirss.com



Emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction: an investigation of the mediating role of job involvement using structural equation modeling

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Abstract

It is important for management to make its employees fully satisfied at work by reducing emotional exhaustion and increasing their involvement. Today the majority of companies strive to improve their employees' performance by providing them with all the facilities they need to maintain their physical and psychological well-being and thereby enhance their effectiveness. Therefore, the current study aims to examine whether job involvement mediates the relationship between emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction among financial sector employees. An analysis of 200 responses from financial sector employees was conducted using a survey. To gather information, a set of tools including emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, job involvement and biographical information from bank employees were used. A structural equation model was used to analyze the relationships. The results showed a positive correlation between emotional exhaustion and job involvement between emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction and between job involvement and job satisfaction. Thus, it is observed that job involvement mediates and has a significant impact on job satisfaction. The current findings have their own significance for social scientists and managers since they provide a framework for designing work arrangements in a way to prevent emotional exhaustion while increasing employees' level of job involvement and job satisfaction. The study concludes with a discussion of limitations and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Emotional exhaustion, Job burnout, Job involvement, Job satisfaction, Bank employees, Structural equation modeling.

DOI: 10.53894/ijirss.v6i1.1067

Funding: This study received no specific financial support.

History: Received: 3 October 2022/**Revised:** 18 November 2022/**Accepted:** 5 December 2022/**Published:** 14 December 2022

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Authors' Contributions: All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Transparency: The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained.

Ethical Statement: This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

Publisher: Innovative Research Publishing

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 crisis and rapid technological development have prompted the financial institutions' management to adapt to the current environment of discharging responsibilities mostly virtually. Over the past three decades, exhaustion, involvement and satisfaction have been widely studied by practitioners and researchers [1-6] and [Krishnakumar \[7\]](#).

Organizations that focus on increasing employee involvement, engagement and satisfaction by implementing burnout coping mechanisms will undoubtedly increase employee productivity and business performance [Allam \[8\]](#) and [Al Seri and McLaughlin \[9\]](#). In the financial sector, job involvement, emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction are the most critical phenomena. It is expected that employees in this sector will work hard, put in more effort and be more involved in their work setup to attain a higher degree of satisfaction while also learning to cope with stress and emotional exhaustion in order to maintain their physical and psychological wellbeing [1, 10].

In today's dynamic environment, the success of any sector is dependent on the expertise, aptitude, creativity, talent and skills of its employees as well as effective management practices [Asad \[10\]](#); [Ashfaq and Irum \[3\]](#); [Asad, et al. \[11\]](#); [Al Kahtani, et al. \[12\]](#); [Tan, et al. \[13\]](#); [Shamsi and Alsinani \[14\]](#) and [Bergheim, et al. \[15\]](#). Nevertheless, if these characteristics are lacking or nonexistent, the result will surely be being unable to manage time, anxiety, stress, tension, a disruption in work life, worries, emotional breakdown, a reduced sense of accomplishment, depersonalization, burnout, dissatisfaction and disengagement [Al Seri and McLaughlin \[9\]](#); [Kara \[16\]](#); [Prajogo \[17\]](#); [Allam \[18\]](#); [Ali and Allam \[19\]](#); [Saleem \[20\]](#); [AlKahtani and Allam \[2\]](#) and [Allam \[21\]](#). Based on the original work of the concept's pioneer [22] stated that "burnout is a state of physical and emotional depletion resulting from the condition of work". [Maslach \[23\]](#) stated that "burnout in terms of loss of concern for the people with whom one is working". However, burnout is characterized by three dimensions, each of which has a profound effect on the lives of those who experience it which in turn causes them to act in a negative manner. In fact, [Maslach and Jackson \[24\]](#) defined "job burnout" as a multidimensional concept that is composed of three components namely, emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DEP) and personal accomplishment (PA): Emotional exhaustion (EE) is the feeling of being emotionally overextended and exhausted as a result of one's work, DEP is an unfeeling, impersonal response toward the recipients of a person's service, care, treatment or instruction, whereas PA refers to the feeling of competence and success in one's work with others".

For an individual to act appropriately in any situation, he or she must feel positive about the job and its surrounding environment. So, regardless of the circumstances, a satisfied employee contributes to the improvement of the organization [AlKahtani and Allam \[2\]](#); [Bergheim, et al. \[15\]](#); [Azzam and Harsono \[25\]](#). A person's level of job satisfaction varies depending on the nature and attributes of their work, as well as what their employer expects from them in terms of their performance. It is important to note that each profession has its own distinctive characteristics. According to [Maslach \[26\]](#), the concept of "job satisfaction" can be defined as "describing the level of satisfaction people have about their job and their feelings toward it" whereas [Locke \[27\]](#) posits that "job satisfaction is a positive emotional state derived from a person's subjective experience of his or her job". It is clear from all the definitions that job satisfaction results from a positive feeling about one's job as a result of positive experiences at work.

2. Review of Literature

Over the past decade, there has been increased interest in studies involving job involvement, emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction which have a positive effect on workplace performance and employee effectiveness [Hansen, et al. \[28\]](#); [Jin \[29\]](#); [Abdallah, et al. \[30\]](#); [Allam \[21\]](#) and [Azzam and Harsono \[25\]](#). Among Saudi Arabian bank employees, a study was conducted to examine the relationship between emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishments, depersonalization and job satisfaction. The most striking finding of the investigation was that emotional exhaustion had inversely significant correlations with job satisfaction [1]. Moreover, [Mustafa and Ismail \[5\]](#) conducted a study to examine the relationship between burnout and job satisfaction. A study conducted by the researchers indicated that emotional exhaustion (EE) is one of the most important and significant factors that contribute to job satisfaction. According to a study conducted in Turkey by [Bakker, et al. \[4\]](#) job satisfaction has a negative relationship with burnout. EE has been found to be detrimental to job satisfaction and a component of burnout [Talachi and Gorji \[31\]](#); [Simanjuntak \[32\]](#); [Kim, et al. \[33\]](#); [Kluger, et al. \[34\]](#) and [Prajogo \[17\]](#).

[Arslan, et al. \[6\]](#) conducted research on bank employees and discovered that one of the determinants of job satisfaction, rewards is negatively correlated with DEP and EE in contrast to PA. Indeed, employees working in the banking industry are also provided with reward programs that prevent job burnout. A study conducted by [Jin \[29\]](#) stated that job satisfaction has a negative impact on burnout in different aspects and in different ways.

[Allam and Tyagi \[35\]](#) explore the effects of job burnout, marital status, age, gender and job satisfaction on medical professionals who are seeking employment. As a result of their research, they concluded that married employees, low burnout employees, younger employees and female employees were significantly more likely to report high levels of job satisfaction than their counterparts with a higher level of burnout. [Khamisa, et al. \[36\]](#) examined the relationship between job burnout, work-related stress, the general health of nurses and their satisfaction with their jobs among 200 nurses in South Africa who worked in four different hospitals. According to them, job burnout has a negative impact on job satisfaction. However, [Talachi and Gorji \[31\]](#) conducted research on the relationship between burnout and job satisfaction among Iranian workers working in mines, industries and trade organizations. The study's findings showed a substantial relationship between burnout and job satisfaction, as well as a negative association between EE and job satisfaction as a result of burnout. A study carried out by [Allam \[21\]](#) among bank employees in India investigated the relationship between

emotional exhaustion and job involvement. In his investigation, he found that emotional exhaustion was significantly associated with job involvement indicating that involvement led to greater degrees of emotional exhaustion. It has been noted in a recent research study that workload and uncertainty, two of the main risk factors are related to both emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction. As a result of their study, they stated that supportive organizational behavior is essential for reducing emotional exhaustion and increasing job satisfaction in academic institutions for those who work in them [28].

Gopinath and Kalpana [37] stated that job involvement was significantly associated with job satisfaction. In addition, they pointed out that job involvement provides opportunities for growth and success in the future. In the service industry, employee involvement has a positive impact on employee satisfaction and job satisfaction [38]. According to Abdallah, et al. [30]; Nwibere [39] and AlKahtani and Allam [2] found a positive and significant impact of job involvement on job satisfaction and improved employee performance.

2.1. Aim of the Investigation

In this study, the aim is to determine the correlation between emotional exhaustion, job involvement and job satisfaction. This study examines the relationship between emotional exhaustion (the independent variable) and job satisfaction (the dependent variable), emotional exhaustion (the independent variable) and job involvement (the moderating variable), and job satisfaction (the dependent variable) and job involvement in financial sector employees.

2.2. Proposed Framework

After reviewing the literature and considering the findings of previous investigations, a conceptual model has been developed to identify the correlation between the dependent variable, the moderating variable and the independent variable as shown in Figure 1.

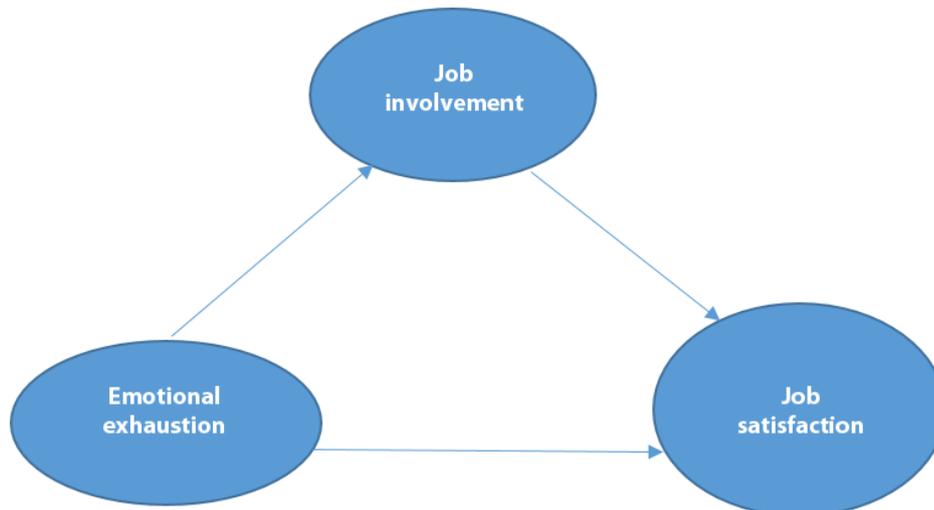


Figure 1.
Planned model of investigation.

2.3. Hypothesis

The following hypotheses have been formulated based on the current conceptual framework and a comprehensive review of the literature discussed in this study.

Ho1: There is a significant relationship between emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction among financial sector employees.

Ho2: There is a significant relationship between emotional exhaustion and job involvement among financial sector employees.

Ho3: There is a significant relationship between job involvement and job satisfaction among financial sector employees.

3. Methodology

Sample: A total of 200 employees working in Saudi Arabia's financial sector were collected randomly with varying degrees of age, experience and so on.

Instruments Used:

To achieve the set goals, the following instrument was used to collect participant responses:

- (I) Emotional exhaustion (EE): EE is measured using the Maslach and Jackson [40] burnout scale and consists of nine items on a seven-point scale, with 1 being very mild and 7 being very strong. Their reliability and validity have been established using statistical measures.
- (II) Job satisfaction: The level of employee satisfaction was assessed using the job satisfaction scale developed by Singh [41]. The scale includes 20 items, each rated from "severely dissatisfied" to "highly satisfied" on a 5-

point Likert scale. Therefore, the total number of points ranges between 20 and 100. Based on statistical procedures, this scale is regarded as valid and reliable.

- (III) Job involvement: The job involvement scale devised by Lodahl and Kejnar [42] was used in the present investigation to assess job involvement. The scale contains 20 items with each item rated according to a continuum of five points i.e. strongly agree to strongly disagree and the score of the scale varying between 20 and 100. The test and retest reliability ranges from 0.72 to 0.89.
- (IV) Employee biographical information including their salary, experience, gender, age and social status was also collected.

3.1. Data Analysis

In order to analyze the relationship between dependent, independent, and moderating variables in the present study, the researcher used Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3. In addition to this, the SPSS software was used in order to examine the demographic information of the respondents.

Table 1.
Respondents' demographic profile.

Variables	Scale	Frequencies	Percentage
Education	High school	8	4.0
	Intermediate	38	19.0
	Bachelor	150	75.0
	Master	4	2.0
Age	21-30	128	64.0
	31-40	56	28.0
	41 and above	16	8.0
Designation	Manager	14	7.0
	Subordinate staff	186	93.0
Social status	Married	92	46.0
	Single	96	48.0
	Divorced	12	6.0
Gender	Male	126	63.0
	Female	74	37.0

4. Result and Discussion

Table 1 shows the biographical information of the respondents in terms of frequency and percentage. According to the table, most respondents hold a bachelor's degree (N=150, 75%), followed by an intermediate (N=38, 19%). In addition, a few employees had a high school and a master's degree which represented 4% and 2% respectively. 64% of employees are between the age of 21-30 followed by 28% and 8% of employees between the ages of 31-40 and 41 and over. Ninety-three percent were subordinates, while only seven percent were in managerial positions. In addition, 48% of employees were single, 46% were married and 6% were divorced. Males represented 63 % of the 200 participants while females represented 37 %.

Table 2.
Showing the factors, loading, and convergent validity values.

Variables	Factors	Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
Emotional exhaustion	JB1	0.827	0.895	0.916	0.710
	JB2	0.795			
	JB3	0.755			
	JB4	0.776			
	JB5	0.877			
	JB6	0.744			
Job involvement	JI1	0.888	0.805	0.861	0.627
	JI5	0.729			
	JI19	0.509			
Job satisfaction	JS17	0.833	0.880	0.917	0.735
	JS18	0.852			
	JS19	0.868			
	JS20	0.875			

A partial least square structural equation model (PLS-SEM) was carried out using Smart PLS 3 to examine the relationship and impact of the above variables. In order to satisfy the current goal, the item loadings, Cronbach's alpha,

Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) have been determined. Table 2 shows these results. By using factor analysis, we identified the most significant factors faced by financial sector employees and we only kept the ones related to job involvement, job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion. As mentioned by Hinkin [43] and Ford, et al. [44], the specified criterion for assessing the factor loading is .40. The Cronbach's alpha was calculated for all the variables in order to satisfy the instrument's reliability and the thumb rule is that it should be above .07. Thus supporting the reliability proposed by Nunnally [45]; Hair, et al. [46] and Lavrakas [47]. Similarly, to examine the internal consistency of the measurement, CR was also used to observe a range of CR values between 0.861-0.917 which showed the internal consistency reported by Hair, et al. [46] and Lavrakas [47].

In addition, AVE was used to assess the convergence in the measurement of the construct revealing a target convergence of 0.50 or higher Baker and Hart [48] and Henseler, et al. [49].

Table 3.
Fornell-Larker Discriminant validity.

Measures	Emotional exhaustion	Job involvement	Job satisfaction
Emotional exhaustion	0.781	-	-
Job involvement	0.292	0.726	-
Job satisfaction	0.441	0.503	0.857

Table 3 summarizes the discriminant validity. Another essential aspect of measurements is to ensure the discriminant validity [49]. As stated by Gefen and Straub [50], “discriminant validity is shown when each measurement item correlates weakly with all other constructs except for the one to which it is theoretically associated.” The discriminant validity of a construct measure ensures its empirical uniqueness and its ability to accurately represent phenomena of interest that are not captured by other structural equation models [46].

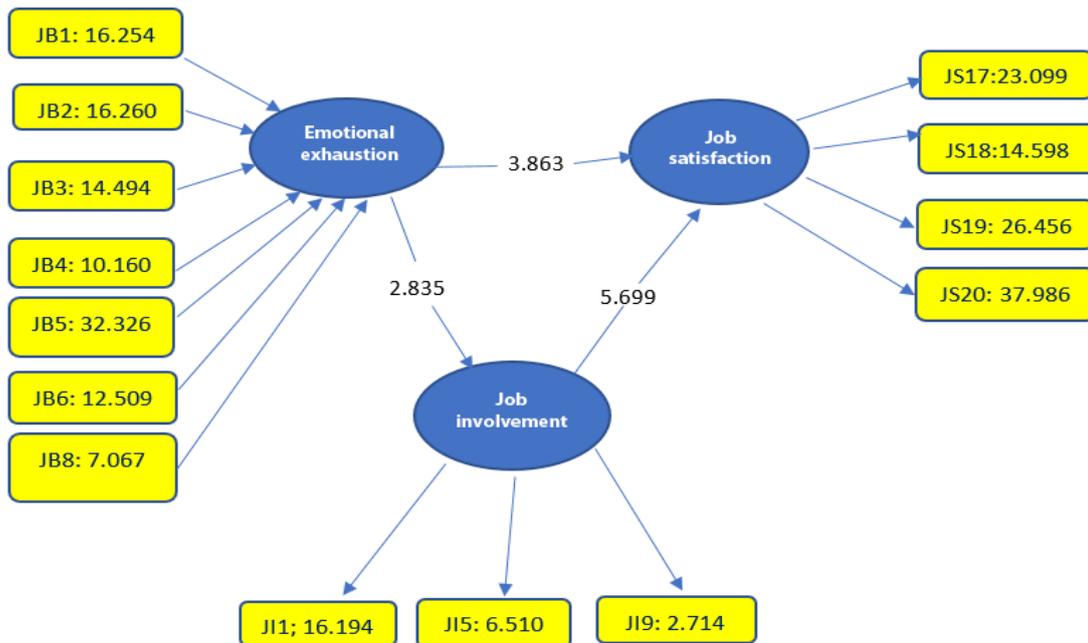


Figure 2.
PLS-SEM direct relationships bootstrapping.

The coefficients of the paths are significant in Figure 2 as the value of the paths exceeds 1.96. Taking into consideration job involvement as the mediating variable, we ensure that there are direct relationships between the variables. A mediation analysis reveals a direct relationship between emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction among financial sector employees with job involvement as a mediating factor. Based on this analysis, it was concluded that either job involvement mediates the relationship between emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction or not. However, it is observed that job involvement really mediates the relationships and the mediation is significant for the study.

Table 4.
Results of hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis	Path coefficient	T statistics	P-value	Decision
Emotional exhaustion-> Job satisfaction	0.322	3.863	0.000	Accepted
Emotional exhaustion-> Job involvement	0.292	2.835	0.005	Accepted
Job involvement-> Job satisfaction	0.410	5.699	0.000	Accepted
Emotional exhaustion-> Job involvement-> Job satisfaction	0.119	2.317	0.021	Accepted

Table 4 presents the results of the study that can help decide whether the hypotheses are accepted or rejected. P values and T statistics determine whether a hypothesis is acceptable or not. The hypothesis is supposed to be accepted when the T statistic increases to 1.96 and the P-value falls below 0.05 [46, 48] and Fisher [51]. The results of the hypotheses are presented in Table 4. According to Table 4, all hypotheses have been accepted. In this study, we found that job involvement mediates the relationship between emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction among employees in the financial section of the bank.

5. Conclusion

The current findings aim is to check the relationship between emotional exhaustion, job involvement and job satisfaction and consider job involvement as the mediating variable between emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction. According to the findings, it is stated that the relationship exists and such finding have been supported by previous researchers [1, 2, 5, 21] and Gopinath and Kalpana [37]. Researchers who conducted studies in the banking industry concluded that employee involvement, engagement and satisfaction enhanced by implementing mechanisms to reduce burnout would enhance employee productivity and success [2, 6, 9, 21, 52]. Feelings of emotional exhaustion have a negative relationship with job satisfaction and its components [6, 17, 31, 32]. Khamisa, et al. [36] also noted the same and mentioned that burnout and its components negatively influenced job satisfaction which is contradictory to the current findings. Job involvement creates the possibility for growth and success in the future reflecting the belief that they will perform and change the current scenario to a more positive one in the future [37]. Furthermore, according to Hansen, et al. [26], it has been shown that emotional exhaustion leads to a reduction in job satisfaction and job involvement.

6. Limitations and Suggestions

This study has limitations too. As a mediator between job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion, job involvement contributes to job satisfaction. The findings must therefore be interpreted with caution. In this study, a smaller sample size is employed to examine job involvement in the financial sector. Future research could include a wider variety of employees with a larger sample size. The current study may serve as a stimulus for further research which will surely add some up-to date knowledge. Job involvement was viewed as a mediator between emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction, but other provoking and academic variables could be used in future studies instead. For this present investigation, only one component of job burnout was considered namely emotional exhaustion. Future investigations can include other components of job burnout. There are several HRM practices that need to be implemented in order to maximize the level of job satisfaction and job involvement of employees including coping strategies to minimize their emotional exhaustion [12, 53] and Maslach and Leiter [54].

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