

THE COMPARISON OF SATISFACTION LEVELS AMONG SALARIED AND SELF-EMPLOYED PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT

Work-life balance and occupational burnout are now seen as crucial psychological factors that affect employee well-being, productivity, and mental health. Salaried employees often deal with organizational pressures, deadlines, and role expectations, while self-employed individuals face unique stressors like income instability, long work hours, and difficulty separating work from personal life. This study aimed to compare work-life balance and burnout between self-employed and salaried individuals, as well as to explore the relationship between these factors. A total of 100 participants (50 self-employed and 50 salaried individuals) aged 20–60 from Faisalabad city were selected for the study. The results showed that self-employed individuals reported higher work-life imbalance and greater burnout levels than salaried individuals. A significant negative correlation was found between work-life balance and occupational burnout, indicating that those with poor balance are more likely to experience exhaustion and disengagement. The findings suggest that having autonomy in self-employment does not necessarily protect against burnout and may actually increase stress due to financial uncertainty and lack of support structures.

Keywords: Comparison, Satisfaction Levels, Salaried, Self-Employed.

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INTRODUCTION

Work and personal life are two essential aspects of human existence that constantly interact and influence individual well-being. Work-life balance (WLB) refers to

the equilibrium between professional responsibilities and personal commitments, enabling individuals to perform well in both areas. On the other hand, occupational

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burnout is a persistent state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion caused by prolonged work-related stress. In today's demanding economic environment, both employees and self-employed individuals struggle to maintain this balance [1, 2]. Salaried employees often deal with organizational constraints such as tight deadlines, rigid hierarchies, and limited autonomy, while self-employed individuals face challenges like irregular income, long working hours, and blurred personal-professional boundaries. Despite the flexibility that self-employment offers, it also brings uncertainty, responsibility, and continuous engagement, which can lead to exhaustion.

Work-Life Balance

The concept of WLB has progressed from the earlier idea of "work-family conflict" to a broader understanding that includes psychological satisfaction, time management, and emotional regulation. Maintaining a balance is linked to enhanced mental health, productivity, and life satisfaction. Conversely, poor WLB can result in anxiety, burnout, and reduced motivation. The professionals often struggle to separate work and home life due to lengthy commutes, extended workdays, and the prevalence of digital work communication. The expectation to be constantly available further worsens this imbalance. Researchers originally defined work-family conflict as a type of inter-role conflict where work and family demands are mutually incompatible. Over time, the concept of work-life balance (WLB) has evolved to encompass psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and life integration [3-5]. Studies have shown that salaried employees in corporate settings often struggle with poor work-life balance due to long hours and job insecurity. On the other hand, self-employed individuals enjoy flexible schedules but grapple with blurred

boundaries between their professional and personal lives. Research indicates that self-employed individuals have higher autonomy but also experience greater work intensity, indicating that autonomy alone does not ensure balance. Similarly, entrepreneurs face increased work-family conflict despite having flexibility in their work schedules.

Occupational Burnout

Burnout comprises three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. It arises from prolonged exposure to work-related stressors and inadequate recovery mechanisms. Burnout not only hampers individual functioning but also impacts organizational productivity and interpersonal relationships. Self-employed individuals face unique burnout triggers like financial insecurity, overcommitment, and lack of peer support, while salaried employees often encounter role overload, workplace politics, and performance pressure. Researchers have defined burnout as a decline in engagement characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. Numerous studies have linked burnout to factors such as job stress, work overload, and inadequate social support. In a comparative study, researchers found that self-employed individuals tend to report higher emotional exhaustion than salaried employees, despite feeling more control over their work. Additionally, researchers highlighted that salaried employees with low autonomy are particularly susceptible to burnout [6, 7].

Relationship Between Work-Life Balance and Burnout

Researchers have established a significant negative correlation between work-life balance and burnout. When individuals struggle to manage conflicting work and personal responsibilities, their psychological resources are depleted, leading to fatigue and disengagement. A study revealed that Indian

professionals facing high work-life imbalance also reported more burnout symptoms, such as irritability, loss of motivation, and emotional withdrawal. Furthermore, effective time management and setting boundaries were observed to substantially reduce burnout risk among freelancers and small business owners [8, 9].

METHODOLOGY

While there is extensive research on work-life balance and burnout among salaried employees, there has been relatively less focus on self-employed individuals, particularly in the Indian context where the entrepreneurial culture is growing. Understanding the differences in how these two groups experience and manage stress is vital for designing targeted mental health interventions. Study Objectives is to Compare work-life balance between self-employed and salaried individuals. While international literature acknowledges self-employment as both a risk factor and a resource for well-being, research specific to India is limited. Given the evolving workforce, with increasing entrepreneurship and gig work, there is a need for a deeper understanding of how work arrangements influence balance and burnout. This study aims to bridge that gap by comparing these two occupational groups.

The sample comprised 100 adults (50 self-employed and 50 salaried individuals) aged between 20 and 60 years. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring gender and sectoral diversity. A 15-item scale assessing perceived balance between professional and personal life. Higher scores indicate greater balance. The study followed a comparative, correlational quantitative design. Participants were contacted through professional networks and digital platforms. After obtaining informed consent, data were collected via online questionnaires. Ethical guidelines

and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study [10, 11].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study's findings showed significant differences in work-life balance and occupational burnout between self-employed and salaried individuals. Self-employed participants reported poorer balance and higher burnout, which challenges the assumption that self-employment inherently offers psychological freedom.

Differences in Work-Life Balance

Self-employed individuals had significantly lower work-life balance (WLB) scores, likely due to longer working hours, irregular schedules, and blurred boundaries between work and home life. Entrepreneurs often mix work with personal time, leading to constant mental engagement and reduced recovery. In contrast, salaried employees benefit from structured work hours and organizational systems that help separate work from personal life.

Occupational Burnout

Self-employed individuals reported higher burnout levels, facing emotional exhaustion due to overcommitment and lack of external support. The financial stress of maintaining business continuity and the absence of formal leave or peer networks can add to this pressure. Salaried employees, despite organizational pressures, may have more security, stability, and access to resources, which buffer against chronic burnout. However, factors like autonomy and recognition within organizations still play crucial roles in employee well-being [12-15].

Relationship between Work-Life Balance and Burnout

The study found a strong negative correlation ($r = -0.62$) between work-life balance and burnout, indicating that poor balance directly leads to exhaustion and



Figure 1: Percentage of work life balance and occupational burnout.

disengagement. Individuals who struggle to separate personal and professional life are more likely to experience emotional depletion, which aligns with existing research highlighting the importance of maintaining balance to prevent burnout [16, 17].

Cultural and Contextual Interpretation

The professional identity is closely linked to familial responsibilities and societal expectations. Self-employed individuals, especially in small businesses or startups, feel pressure to maintain economic stability and social reputation. Salaried workers, while benefiting from structured employment, may face challenges like monotony and limited autonomy. Both groups experience unique psychological challenges, albeit through different means. Implementing policies that promote flexible work hours, mental health counseling, and employee engagement programs can help reduce burnout [18, 19]. Participating in time management training, peer networking, and psychological resilience workshops can enhance balance and well-being. Providing tailored interventions that address

occupational identity, boundary-setting, and self-regulation can improve coping strategies for both groups.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the intricate relationship between work-life balance and occupational burnout among contemporary Indian professionals. Self-employed individuals displayed poorer balance and higher burnout compared to salaried employees, indicating that autonomy does not always lead to well-being. The significant negative correlation between work-life balance and burnout emphasizes the importance of maintaining equilibrium between work and personal life for psychological well-being and sustainable productivity. In today's dynamic work environments, individuals need to establish boundaries, prioritize rest, and seek social support actively. For organizations and policymakers, promoting mental health awareness and flexible structures is not only an ethical necessity but also a productivity strategy. Ultimately, achieving balance is more about managing energy, priorities, and self-compassion than just time management.

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