

# How Does Job Demands and Job Resources Affect Work Engagement Towards Burnout? The Case of Penang Preschool

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In recent years, preschool educators are engaged with demanding quality teaching and complex administrative work in their environment. The excessive job demands and the insufficient job resources have resulted in preschool educators to encounter more significant levels of burnout and this influences their work engagement. Hence, the paper aims to investigate the predictors of burnout among preschool educators as well as the potential mediating role of work engagement. This study proposes that job demands have a significant positive relationship with burnout, while job resources and work engagement have a significant negative relationship with burnout. In addition, work engagement is demonstrated to possess a significant mediator between job resource and burnout. Therefore, this study is priceless to both scholars and practitioners who wish to monitor and decrease the burnout prevalence among preschool educators.

**Key words:** *Job Demands, Job Resources, Work Engagement, Burnout, Preschool Teachers.*

## Introduction

According to Mustafa, Nor, & Azman (2013), preschool in Malaysia is to provide an early childhood education program for children age 4 to 6 years old. The majority of children below 6 years old enter preschool to prepare them to enter primary school. In addition, there are few agencies responsible for the preschool in Malaysia such as Ministry of Education (MOE), other public agencies such as Tabika Perpaduan, Tabika KEMAS, and preschools under the supervision of state governments such as MAIWP (or Federal Territory Islamic



Religious Council) Islamic Kindergarten and JAIS (or Selangor Islamic Religious Department) preschool, as well as private kindergartens (MyGovernment, 2019).

Current trends have shown that parents register their children to the private preschool compared to the government preschools even if they offer free charges or fewer fees. Furthermore, one of the factors that contributed to parents' trends towards private preschools is the quality of teachers. Teachers are expected to be friendly to the children as well as to treat them like their family members. In addition, the result from the regression analysis show that the quality of teaching and qualified teachers are predictors for the choice of a branded school (Mustafa et al., 2013). Relation to this, teaching is perceived as a challenging career that requires a lot of hard work and requirements in a holistic domain such as physical, mental, emotional strength. According to Jansen et al., (2018), there are several motivational medium that occurs between work engagement and burnout that is related to job demand and job resources models. However, teacher burnout may contribute to negative responses and behaviors of the students towards the teacher and the learning process (Mukundan & Ahour, 2011). In addition, burnout is considered a symptom of emotional tiredness, depression that decreases the teacher's performance. Stress and burnout are closely related and may cause a long-term effect on individual changes. This statement has been agreed by Mayben (2008) that in the context of teaching, a high stress occupation refers to the teaching profession because all the elements related with stress are associated with education. Furthermore, this article emphasises on the how does job demand and job resources relate to burnout as well to the work engagement.

The role of teachers is to plan, organise, control, and engaged in a task that contributes to the objectives of the organisations. While, in the Malaysian context, the result reported by the teachers that are burdened with workloads that would lead to stress at work. This has been supported by Syed Danial Syed Azahar (2018) which stated that the Education Minister, Dr. Maszlee has announced to lessen the burden of teachers. Relation to the announcement, the Education Ministry has introduced the nine steps intervention method in its efforts to reduce the burden faced by school teachers. The nine steps intervention method has been implemented and responsible by each state education department on January 14, 2019. Together with the news, the Ministry has reported that 4.4% or 2,123 out of 48258 teachers were classified as having moderate levels of stress last year.

There is a lot of research that has been done regarding stress, depression, and burnout among teachers, however, but there are not many in the early childhood context. However, job resources are important to boost the teacher's self-efficacy and motivate them by providing a good supportive environment. This an issue that the researcher will examine to get the results of the relationship between job resources and burnout. Based on Subon & Sigie (2016), these teachers are also suffering a lack of motivation as well as they are not able to cope with all

the demands and requirements of the teaching profession. National Union of Teaching Profession (NUTP, 2005) identifies that this research must be made because there were complaints about teacher stress and workload. Hence, this paper aims to investigate the predictors of burnout among preschool educators in Penang as well as the potential of mediating role of work engagement.

## Literature Review

Job Demands related to cognitive and emotional demands that involve a psychological effort such as physical, mental, social or organisational aspects of work (Hakanen., Bakker & Schaufeli, 2006). Based on the same research stated that job demands might become an issue in situations that require a high commitment to maintaining the intended performance level that leading to adverse reactions, including burnout. Job Demand refers to the level of work that needed and the conditions as well the time constraints associated with the job (Fernet & Sen, 2004). However, according to European studies, workload and time burden could pose a challenge and role ambiguity as a hindrance (Jayakaran & Koroush, 2016; Mukundan & Ahour, 2011; Subon & Sigie, 2016). In the context of early childhood education, job demand has been reported as the main cause of psychological pressure among educators, such as individual disruptive behaviour, workload, and poor working environment (Hakanen et al., 2006). In addition, recent research has shown that Early Childhood teachers' success is dictated not only by their qualifications but also by other factors such as their working environment, their wages, a role that will affect the quality of their work requirements (Foong, Palanisamy, Mogana & Carynne, 2018). In line with this factor, Foong, Veloo and Dhamotharan (2014) findings show that the teachers from the private sector of Early Childhood Education are experiencing a high turnover rate in Malaysia. However, job demands critically influence the behaviour of teachers, job resources and burnout.

In the perspective of Job Resources, it refers to the work engagement, inspirations and optimistic work-related structure characterized by vigour, dedication and engagement (Prieto, Soria, Martínez, & Schaufeli, 2008). Based on Jansen et al. (2018) stated that job resources positively related to the psychological need of satisfaction. The terms of job resources have been defined as a characteristic of the work such as being effective in achieving the work objectives, reduce the numbers of job demands and the associated physiological and psychological cost, supporting their development (Schaufeli, 2017). In the context of early childhood education, job resources can play either an internal or an external motivational role because when teachers have lack of resources, the cannot deal with job demands (Nurul Aimi Roslan et al., 2015). The same research stated that the demands for teachers will be high if there is a lack of job resources, such as a lack of support from the principal. Job resources are not only important to meet job demands, but they are also significant in their own right (Katja Upadyaya et al., 2016). Thus, teachers with a high level of job resources will have a low

burnout level (Lee & Wolf, 2018). Therefore, job resources play an important variable in creating a positive educational environment as well to create a good work engagement due to its positive impact on performance outcomes.

However, according to Hakanen, Bakker & Schaufeli (2006), work engagement is defined as an optimistic, satisfying, work-related state of mind that is categorised by vigour, dedication, and absorption. Vigour means giving high levels of energy and having mental resilience and willingness to invest effort in one's work. Persistence will always be there while they are having difficulties in handling the task if the individuals are engaged with their work. At the same time, individuals will always be dedicated to working as they have a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. In other words, work engagement is also referred to as a positive, effective motivational state of high energy combined with high levels of dedication and a strong focus on work. The majority of studies have shown that individuals who are immersed in their work will engage with a high level of energy and completely enthusiastic about the work they do. Dedicated workers will emphasis on their work activities and express a better in role-task performance (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). However, burnout has also influenced conceptual work, especially given its place in an extensive range of psychological associated with work, such as work engagement and chronic exhaustion (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

In addition, burnout is a condition of extreme psychological, physical and mental exhaustion caused by stress and excessive. Prieto, Soria, Martínez, & Schaufeli (2008) defines burnout as feedback to emotional illness and interpersonal stress in the workplace. The same research stated that there are three major elements of burnout: exhaustion, cynicism and professional inefficacy. The researcher refers that emotional fatigue similar to lose or exhaustion or emotional energy can result from interpersonal demands. Cynicism represents an indifference or distant willingness to work, and lack of professional performance include both social and non-social influences of work achievement (Prieto, Soria, Martínez, & Schaufeli, 2008). Teaching can be seen as a high-stress profession. In Seyedehhava Mousavy, Nur Sakinah Thomas, & Mukundan (2012) study indicate that burnout included the intensity of job pressure, burnout and effects on both individuals and organisations. In the context of early childhood, Emolina (2011) described problems among child care teachers with burnout results, such as lack of management support, support for coworkers, job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Therefore, the issue of burnout among teachers is becoming as one of the major problems, and some strategies to overcoming the issue should be provided.

### ***JD-R Model***

This paper aims to focus on Job Demand Resources (JD-R) Model by Hakanen, Schaufeli, and Aloha as the model has been widely used to aid discussion on how job burnout occurs

through high demand and lack job resources among employees. In other words, workers need to invest more resources to meet the demands and to protect themselves from further depletion (Roslan, Ho, Ng, & Sambasivan, 2015). Hu, Schaufeli, & Taris, (2013) has also stated that high job demands will trigger an erosion or health impairment process that may lead to burnout and psychosomatic health complaints. Hence, the JD-R model is a tool that been used to investigate the predictors of burnout among preschool educators as well as the potential mediating role of work engagement. Job resources have motivational potential and lead to high work engagement, low cynicism, and excellent performance. It plays as an intrinsic motivational role as it fosters employees' growth, learning, and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Multiple studies have been done and confirmed that job demands and lack of resources are positively associated with burnout, whereas job resources are positively related to engagement (Hu, Schaufeli, & Taris, 2013).

## **Methodology**

A literature review is done on the area of burnout, enclosed to the early childhood education industry, concentrating on burnout among Penang preschool teachers. Only full-time preschool teachers with more than one year of working experience from Penang island is examined in this study. This is because the socialisation process consistently needs at least 6 months to take place in any given workplace (Filstad, 2004). Moreover, preschool teachers may not experience burnout when they are in their first year of teaching life. However, preschool teachers who are on medical, maternity or study leave during the data collection period will be excluded from this study.

## **Results and Findings**

### ***Relationship between Job Demands and Work Engagement***

There is a study that stated that there is a positive relationship between job demands and work engagement (Schaufeli, Taris & Van Rhenen, 2008). However, based on Coetzer & Rothmann, (2004) states that job demands showed a low relationship with work engagement. The challenges of job demand such as workload, time pressure and also cognitive demands could positively lead to a work engagement component (Bakker, Demerouti & Euwema, 2005; Crawford, LePine & Rich, 2010; Van den Broeck at al., 2010). Moreover, hindrance such as role conflict, interpersonal issues and work home problems may cause evidence for the relationship of job demands with work engagement (Inoue, Kawakami, Tsutsumi, Shimazu, & Miyaki, 2014). Thus, it shows that the hindrance demands will influence and create a difficulty in jobs as well the employees could feel engaged, and it may in turn fade away the sense of enthusiasm and commitment towards job (Verbruggan, 2009). The same finding has been mentioned in the study by Teoh and Kee (2018), that challenge job demands

are positively associated with work engagement, whereas the hindrance job demands are negatively associated with work engagement. It is seen that job demands can lead to an increase in work engagement, and it may influence a negative impact on the emotional and cognitive development of employees.

### ***Relationship between Job Resources and Work Engagement***

Based on Nurul Aimi Roslan et al., (2015) proposed that the job resources are available if the work engagement among teachers is increased, but if the resources are not provided, they will have a negative work engagement level. There are a study shows that job resources may lead to an increase in work engagement (Alzyoud, Othman & Isa, 2017). However, based on the survey identified that a positive relationship occurs between job resources and also work engagement (Finland, Hakanen, Bakker and Schaufeli, 2006). Besides that, Alzyoud, Othman & Isa (2017) describe that the individual who received higher job resources will have a higher work engagement. Based on Coetzer & Rothmann (2004) stated that job resources such as organisational support, growth chances, social encouragement are positively associated to work engagement.

### ***Relationship between Work Engagement and Burnout***

Typically, the relationship between work engagement and burnout that people create with their jobs is differentiated (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). However, Cole, Walter, Bedeian and O'Boyle (2012) presented some theoretical and realistic proof that there is only one continuum in the relationship between work engagement and burnout without splitting both items into a different construct. Moreover, evidence has shown that strength and determination as components of work engagement were directly opposed to tiredness and dissatisfaction as components of burnout (Demerouti, Mostert & Bakker, 2010; Gonzalez-Roma, Schaufeli, Bakker & Lloret, 2006). Thus, in this study, the relationship between work engagement and burnout in the context of early childhood is important to create a good environment job setting.

### ***Work Engagement Mediates the Relationship between Job Demands and Burnout***

Based on the previous studies, job demands and job resources, are important predictors of burnout and engagement in the predictable engagement (Prieto et al., 2008). The negative relationships occur between job demands of the teachers and job resources given by the school (Nurul Aimi Roslan et al., 2015). However, high work engagement was negatively associated with burnout (Katja Upadyaya et al., 2016). Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) describe that work engagement is negatively associated with burnout. Since then, the relationship between job demands and work engagement has a significant relationship between work

engagement and burnout; thus work engagement can be a mediator between job demands and burnout.

### ***Work Engagement Mediates the Relationship between Job Resources and Burnout***

Based on the findings Bermejo et al., (2013) stated that Job Resources has a high effect on Burnout than on work engagement. In addition, job resources show a relationship to work engagement through burnout (Hakanen et al., 2006). Furthermore, job demands and job resources showed a positive relationship with work engagement and negative relationship with burnout (Katja Upadyaya et al., 2016). Thus, work engagement showed a negative effect on burnout as well plays a modulating role between job demands and resources towards burnout (Bermejo et al., 2013). In addition, the research stated by Hakanen et al., (2006), indicate that burnout mediated the relationship between job demands as well work engagement mediated the relationship between job resources and the issues of turnover among employee.

### **Conclusions**

In general, this paper aims to investigate the predictors of burnout among preschool educators as well as the potential mediating role of work engagement. Based on the previous result shows that job demands have a significant positive relationship with burnout, while job resources and work engagement have a significant negative relationship with burnout. In addition, work engagement is considered as a significant mediator between job resources and burnout. This article also suggests an organisation that cares about its preschool educators' well-being will have a significant negative relationship with burnout.

### ***Implications***

To understand the implication of this research might help the employer to understand their employee's expectation and need so that it will not promote burnout among preschool educators. Engaged employees are more likely to stay with their organization, while disengaged employees will leave as they face burnout. Leaders in a preschool should support preschool educators' psychological needs into the organizational as burnout may influence preschool educators to leave the profession. There is a continuing need for policymakers to understand how the preschool system fails to provide job resources to carry out their work (Ford, Olsen, Khojasteh, Ware & Urick, 2019). This also will help the preschool leaders to provide suitable job demands and job resources to the preschool educators.



### ***Limitations***

There are some limitations to the study. Most importantly, this study used a cross-sectional design. In addition, the common method variance due to the use of cross-sectional will be one of the limitations in this study. The results of this study cannot be generalized to a bigger population of teachers from another preschool as only a small sample of one hundred teachers was used to involved in this study. Besides, as limited research of job demands, job resources, work engagement and burnout application in the context of early childhood education, this study depends on the general information that is related to the literature and research context.

### ***Future Directions***

Research should continue to investigate employee engagement to predict burnout among preschool teachers in Malaysia. This is because only a few pieces of research has been done in this field. Future studies should incorporate many different types of school working conditions into even more sophisticated models of teacher outcomes. The analysis should be expended to other states other than Penang (Ford et al., 2019). Also, future researchers should also compare the relationship between teachers' experience and burnout as in this study it could not be done due to the small number of the sample as the researchers overlooked it prior to the study.

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