

Work-Life Balance and Employee Mental Health in Bon Travel and Tours

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Abstract

The mental health of the employees is one of the biggest concerns for the modern enterprises as it is related with productivity, job satisfaction and the overall success of the company. A good work-life balance is regarded as a basic ingredient to promote workers' mental health and to deal with work challenges. The present study is related to the impact of work life balance on mental health of employees at BON Travel and Tours Pvt. Ltd. Kathmandu, Nepal. The employees were selected using stratified random sampling method. From this population 44 employees were used to collect primary data through structured questionnaires through quantitative research approach. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS and Microsoft Excel for descriptive and correlational analysis.

The results show that work hours, workload management, organizational support, and personal commitments are important variables that influence employees' ability to balance their personal and work-related responsibilities. Research shows that when employees have a healthy work-life balance, they experience less stress and burnout. Employees with a healthy work-life balance also tend to be more emotionally stable and satisfied with their jobs. By contrast, work-family conflicts are linked to higher mental stress and lower wellbeing at work. Research has shown that companies can promote the mental health of their employees through supportive policies and a work culture that encourages a good work-life balance.

Keywords: Work-life balance; Employee mental health; Job stress; Workload; Working hours; Organizational support.

Introduction

Employee wellbeing has become a top priority for businesses in today's competitive business climate. The mental health of employees is important for increasing job satisfaction, productivity, motivation and the general performance of the organization. Supportive work environment can help employees to manage their work responsibilities well and also keep their personal health maintained. Work-life balance is defined as the ability of workers to balance personal and professional responsibilities (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011).

With increasing workloads, workplace stress and longer hours, work-life balance is hard to come by. Workers who are unable to balance work and personal responsibilities may suffer from stress, emotional exhaustion, reduced job satisfaction and a range of mental health problems. According to Maslach et al. (2001) high work expectations and ongoing pressure can cause burnout and negatively impact an employee's well-being. This means businesses must strive to create accompanying policies and procedures to enhance employees' mental health. The travel and tourism industry is a service industry, where workers are often faced with demanding schedules, client pressure, and deadline-driven tasks. Increased workload, job stress and irregular hours may influence the ability of workers in travel and tour organizations to maintain work-life balance. Unbalanced personal and work life can decrease employee motivation and affect their mental health.

In Nepal, the tourist industry helps economic development and creates considerable employment opportunities. But employees in this sector often have trouble with workload management, meeting client expectations, and managing work-related stress. Thus, the understanding of the relationship between work-life balance and employee mental health is required to improve employee satisfaction and organizational effectiveness.

The present study is to investigate the impact of work-life balance on the mental health of employees of BON Travel and Tours Pvt. Ltd. of Kathmandu, Nepal. The study is based on the impact of working hours, workplace stress and workload on the mental health of employees.

Literature review and hypothesis development

Job Stress and Employee Mental Health

Work stress has a great impact on the mental health of workers. Workers are often under stress when they are faced with too heavy a workload, urgent deadlines, high expectations, and difficulties in doing their job. Continuous exposure to stress at work leads to emotional exhaustion, mental fatigue and general health decline. According to Demerouti et al. (2001) when employees have no resources to overcome problems at work, higher job expectations can lead to stress and exhaustion. Occupational stress negatively affects the mental health of employees as increased stress can lead to decreased ability of an employee to maintain positive psychological states.

H1: Job stress has a significant relationship with employee mental health.

Workload and Employee Mental Health

Workload is the quantity and complexity of tasks that employees have to do in a certain period of time. Stress can occur due to an excessive workload and affect the mental health of employees negatively. However, an equitable allocation of responsibilities can enhance motivation and productivity. The workload is so demanding that it can be hard for workers to finish their tasks, juggle personal responsibilities and have a work-life balance. According to Bakker and Demerouti (2007), high job demands can lead to stress, fatigue and a reduction in employee wellbeing. So workload is believed to have a huge impact on mental health of workers.

H2: Workload has a significant relationship with employee mental health.

Working Hours and Employee Mental Health

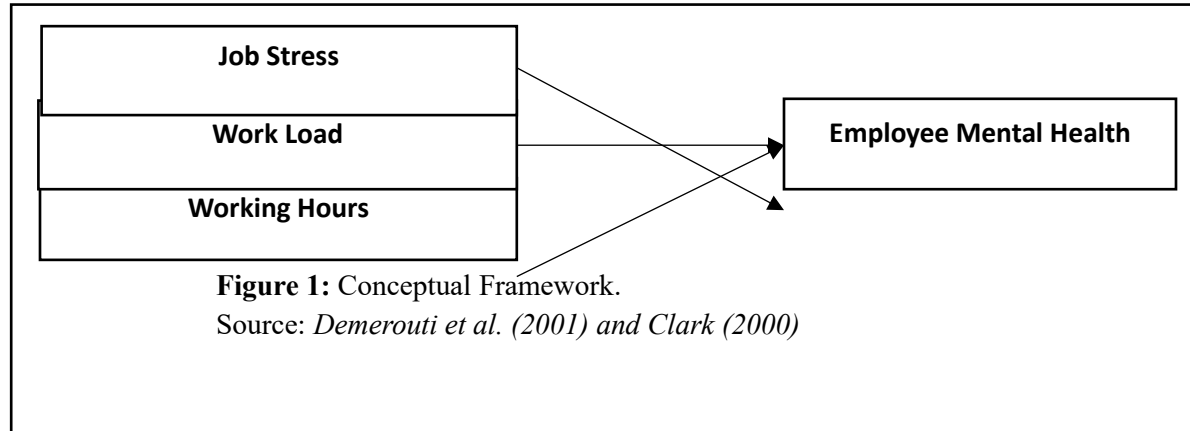
Working hours are the number of hours employees spend on their job responsibilities. Longer working hours, mandatory overtime and a lack of flexibility can reduce the time employees have for personal activities and recovery. This can increase stress levels and negatively affect mental health. Long Work Hours Virtanen et al. (2012) studied long work hours and found negative health impacts and increased psychological stress. Work hours are important for employee mental health and work-life balance.

H3: Working hours have a significant relationship with employee mental health.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study is the relationship of work-life balance and employee mental health. The framework specifies the number of aspects of the workplace that impact workers' mental and emotional health. It provides a unique framework to understand the relationship of independent factors with the dependent variable of the study. The study problem investigation is guided by a well-developed conceptual framework that helps to outline the major influences on employee mental health. The present study regards

workload, working hours and job stress as important aspects of the workplace which may affect the mental health of the workers. The framework clarifies the potential effects of excessive workplace demands on employees' ability to maintain a healthy work-life balance.



Methodology

Measurement instrument

The main tool of research is a structured and closed ended questionnaire. The study factors and demographic data are also included in the questionnaire comments. A 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) is used. The tool is intended to measure employees' perception of workplace elements and their impact on mental health.

Sample and data collection

The study population was the employees of BON Travel and Tours Pvt. Ltd. Kathmandu, Nepal. Because of limitations of time and resources, a limited number of employees are included as respondents in the study. The sampling technique is used to select respondents who can provide useful information for the research. Primary data is collected directly from employees thru a systematic questionnaire. The questionnaire is developed based on the conceptual framework and objectives of the study. It asks about mental health of employees, workload, working hours and job stress.

Table 1: Background Information

Items		Frequency	Percent
Age	20–30 years	26	59.1
	30–40 years	13	29.5
	40–50 years	4	9.1
	Above 50 years	1	2.3
	Total	44	100
Gender	Male	24	54.5
	Female	20	45.5
Experience	0–1 year	4	9.1
	1–3 years	20	45.5
	3–6 years	13	29.5
	Above 6 years	7	15.9

Source(s): *Authors' own work*

The age, gender and work experience of the 44 respondents are presented in Table 1. The majority of respondents were aged between 20 and 30 years old (59.1%, $n = 26$), followed by the 30–40 age group (29.5%, $n = 13$). The sample was mostly younger, with 9.1% ($n = 4$) of respondents aged between 40 and 50, and only 2.3% ($n = 1$) over the age of 50.

Gender distribution was generally equal with male respondents accounting for 54.5% ($n = 24$) and females 45.5% ($n = 20$). The largest group (45.5%, $n = 20$) had from one to three years of job experience, followed by three to six years (29.5%, $n = 13$), more than six years (15.9%, $n = 7$), and zero to one year (9.1%, $n = 4$). The study was grounded on a strong base because most of the respondents were young professionals with substantial work experience.

Correlation analysis

Table 2: *Correlations Coefficient between independent and dependent variables*

Constructs		MH	JS	WL	WH
MH	Pearson Correlation	1			
JS	Pearson Correlation	.331*	1		
WL	Pearson Correlation	0.018	.554**	1	
WH	Pearson Correlation	0.232	.326*	.642**	1

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Authors' own work based on SPSS analysis.

Table 2 shows the association analysis between Employee Mental Health (MH), Job Stress (JS), Workload (WL) and Working Hours (WH). The results show a positive and statistically significant relationship between job stress and employee mental health ($r = 0.331$, $p = 0.030$), indicating a relationship between changes in job stress and changes in employee mental health. There is no statistical significant relationship between employee mental health and workload ($r = 0.018$, $p = 0.911$) and working hours ($r = 0.232$, $p = 0.140$).

However, the results further demonstrate a positive and significant association between job stress and working hours ($r = 0.326$, $p = 0.037$) as well as workload ($r = 0.554$, $p < 0.01$). Moreover, there is a strong positive correlation between workload and working hours ($r = 0.642$, $p < 0.01$). Those who have a higher workload are those who work longer hours. The results imply that workload and working hours are more strongly related to job stress than to mental health in general, but job stress is the variable most strongly related to employee mental health.

Table 3: *Model Summary*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.342 ^a	0.117	0.042	0.5547

a. Predictors: (Constant), WH, JS, WL

Source: *Authors' own work based on SPSS analysis.*

According to the model summary, the overall association between the dependent variable (employee mental health) and independent variables (job stress, workload and working hours) is shown. The R value of 0.342 indicates a weak positive relationship between the predictors and employee mental health. The R Square value is 0.117, indicating that the three independent variables explain 11.7% of the employee mental health and the remaining 88.3% is explained by other factors not included in the model. The Adjusted R Square is 0.042 which means that there is a very little ability of the model to explain the outcome when the number of predictors is taken into account. In general, the model has limited power to explain differences in workers' mental health.

Table 4: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	1.43	3	0.477	1.549	.219 ^b
Residual	10.769	35	0.308		
Total	12.199	38			

a. Dependent Variable: MH

b. Predictors: (Constant), WH, JS, WL

Source: *Authors' own work based on SPSS analysis.*

The ANOVA table shows the overall significance of the regression model with the effects of Job Stress (JS), Workload (WL) and Working Hours (WH) on Employee Mental Health (MH). The F-value of the model was 1.549, with a significance threshold of $p = 0.219$. The p-value is greater than 0.05, so the regression model is not statistically significant. Therefore, overall, job stress, workload and working hours were not significant predictors of employee mental health in this study. Hence, the overall regression model is not sufficient to give evidence for explaining the changes in employee mental health.

Table 5: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	2.81	0.451		6.224	0		
JS	0.152	0.116	0.247	1.31	0.199	0.709	1.41

WL	-0.317	0.168	-0.446	-1.892	0.067	0.453	2.208
WH	0.247	0.143	0.361	1.73	0.092	0.579	1.728

a. Dependent Variable: MH

Source: *Authors' own work based on SPSS analysis.*

Multiple regression coefficients of job satisfaction (JS), workload (WL) and working hours (WH) on mental health (MH) are presented in Table 5. Results indicate that job satisfaction has a positive but not statistically significant effect on mental health ($B = 0.152$, $\beta = 0.247$, $t = 1.310$, $p = .199$). Working hours had a positive impact ($B = 0.247$, $\beta = 0.361$, $t = 1.730$, $p = .092$) and workload had a negative impact ($B = -0.317$, $\beta = -0.446$, $t = -1.892$, $p = .067$) but neither was statistically significant at the 5% level. The most significant standardized effect among the predictors was shown by workload followed by working hours and job satisfaction. Moreover, the VIF values ranged from 1.410 to 2.208, showing no multicollinearity problem among the independent variables. The results indicate that job satisfaction, work load and working hours were non-significant predictors of mental health of the study group.

Table 6: Collinearity Diagnostics

Model	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	Variance Proportions			
			(Constant)	JS	WL	WH
1	3.91	1	0	0	0	0
	0.044	9.392	0.01	0.7	0.01	0.23
	0.03	11.449	0.92	0.03	0.17	0.07
	0.016	15.682	0.06	0.27	0.82	0.7

a. Dependent Variable: MH

Source: *Authors' own work based on SPSS analysis.*

Table 6 displays the collinearity diagnostics for the regression model of the effects of Job Satisfaction (JS), Workload (WL) and Working Hours (WH) on Mental Health (MH). The highest Condition Index is 15.682 which is lower than the generally accepted criterion of 30, indicating no evidence of considerable multicollinearity among the independent variables. The condition index was in the acceptable range, however, Workload (WL) and Working Hours (WH) showed significant variation proportions (0.82 and 0.70, respectively) on the same axis. Furthermore, the VIF values (1.410–2.208) and tolerance values (0.453–0.709) were in the recommended ranges. Thus, the collinearity diagnostics indicate that multicollinearity was not a serious problem, which means that the independent variables can be used reliably in the regression model and the regression coefficients are stable.

Discussion

The regression analysis study indicates that workplace stress has significant impact on the mental health of the employees whereas workload and working hours have no significant effect. The perceived psychological stress is thus more important for the mental health of the employees than e.g. the actual employment parameters like workload or hours worked. This is in line with the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) paradigm by which job demands are expected to affect mental health mainly thru psychological strain and

stress reactions, rather than thru direct exposure (Bakker et al., 2023; Demerouti et al., 2021). Recent empirical research has demonstrated that work stress is one of the most significant predictors of burnout, anxiety and emotional exhaustion across a range of professional fields (Nielsen et al., 2023; Gualano et al., 2023).

However, the absence of a significant effect of workload on the mental wellbeing of employees, may suggest that workload is not a cause of psychological suffering in itself, but only when the workload is perceived to be too high or unmanageable. Workload becomes a problem when there is no control over the work, no time to recover and no ways to cope (Bakker & de Vries, 2021). Likewise, no significant association was found between working hours and mental health. This is consistent with recent results showing that long workdays are only detrimental for wellbeing when combined with low autonomy, poor boundary management or lack of recovery possibilities (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022). Such an environment may have led to flexible habits or coping skills by employees to cope with the psychological effects of workload and hours.

Also, the results suggest that workload and working hours effects on mental health outcomes are more indirectly thru perceived stress. The main mechanism thru which working conditions impact on mental health outcomes is job stress. This is in line with recent extensions of the JD-R model, which propose that subjective appraisals of job demands are more important for mental health than objective job characteristics (Bakker et al., 2023). Also, the model's low explanatory power suggests that variables such as individual resilience, job satisfaction, organizational support and quality of leadership could be important in the mental health of employees (Hammer et al. 2022).

Finally, the study concluded that attention should be paid to reduce occupational stress and improve psychological support networks instead of managing workload or working hours to improve mental health of employees. If companies want to improve mental health in the workplace, they need to consider stress management techniques, leadership behavior and employee wellness programs.

Conclusion

According to the findings of the study, the work life balance is an important factor for the mental health of the employees of BON Travel and Tours Pvt. Ltd. Workers with reasonable workloads, a good work environment and less stress at work are more likely to have good mental health. The study has shown that the employees have a moderate level of workload, job stress and hours worked. Employees experienced work-related challenges and achieved a reasonable level of mental well-being. The findings reveal a strong correlation between occupational stress and the mental health of the employee, with occupational stress significantly affecting the mental well-being of the employee.

But the study found no direct relationship between workload or working hours and the mental health of employees. This means that the mental health of the employees is affected by other things than the workload and the number of working hours. The employee satisfaction and personal resilience, workplace culture and organizational support greatly impact the psychological condition of an employee. Regression analysis revealed that combined job stress (workload and working hours) did not significantly predict mental health

of employees. This indicates a wider approach to using mental health, not only driven by working hours or workload.

Overall, the study highlights the need for achieving a healthy work-life balance for improving the employees' well-being. BON Travel & Tours Pvt. Ltd. should focus on creating positive work environment, reduction in excessive job stress, promoting open communication and implementing employee wellness programs. Such programs could enhance worker satisfaction, motivation and overall effectiveness of the organization.

Implications

The implications of this study are relevant for management, theory and practice. From a managerial point of view, it is recommended that BON Travel and Tours Pvt. Ltd. focus on developing a supportive work environment to reduce workplace stress and improve the mental health of employees. Management should regularly review employees' workload, offer appropriate help and promote open discussion on workplace issues. Human resource practices must be based on employee-centered solutions such as stress management programs, employee assistance services, wellness initiatives and supportive workplace policies. These techniques can help employees achieve a better balance between their personal and professional lives.

From an organizational perspective, a supportive work environment, equitable distribution of workload, and reasonable working hours can improve employee satisfaction and reduce mental stress. A positive environment can help to achieve success and commitment from workers. This study contributes to the expanding body of literature on work-life balance and employee mental health in the travel and tourism industry of Nepal. The study highlights how important workplace factors like job stress, workload, and working hours are to understanding employee well-being. The findings provide a foundation for other researchers to investigate other factors affecting workers' mental health.

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