

# **THE RELATIONSHIP OF BURNOUT DIMENSIONS WITH ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR (OCB) AMONG BANK EMPLOYEES IN SARAWAK: MEDIATING ROLE OF FLOW EXPERIENCE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Bank employees are constantly working in an increasingly stressful and arduous work environment. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of burnout dimensions on Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). As bank employees are requested to work overtime and are often overloaded with seemingly endless yet demanding tasks, the situation would contribute to the burnout dimensions, namely exhaustion and disengagement experience. Furthermore, this situation may exert adverse impact on employee OCB. A primary survey of 298 bank employees in Kuching, Malaysia indicated that there are mediating effects between burnout dimensions and OCB. The study's findings can be utilized by organizations to develop effective strategies to minimize exhaustion and disengagement while enhancing flow phenomena toward favorable OCB experiences in the organization.

**Keywords:** Exhaustion; Disengagement; Flow; Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB); Bank.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Bank employees are obligated to maintain excellent work performance standards, due to the fact that work in the banking industry demands full attention and caution to ensure the accuracy of the transactions (Hooi & Ali, 2017), which will lead to tension or pressure (Ling, Bahron & Boroh, 2014). Over the past few decades, there has been arising attention being paid to job burnout and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) among employees. Job burnout is one of the major corporate world issues which have become the focus of researchers. Burnout is a psychological condition where people experience emotional exhaustion, a lack of personal accomplishment, and a tendency to depersonalize others (Talachi & Gorji, 2013). Generally speaking, increased workload, lack of motivation and social support, low predictability, conflict, and ambiguity in the workplace would lead to burnout (Gorgievski & Hobfoll, 2008; Demerouti, Mostert & Bakker, 2010). The competition in banking sector is getting more intense due to the privatization of banks and the sprouting of new local and foreign banks.

The interception of flow experience between burnout would lead to OCB. The experience of OCB will aggregate to organizational effectiveness and efficiencies through its linkages with

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organization operation, customer satisfaction, financial performance, and growth in revenues (Organ, Podsakoff & Mackenzie, 2006).

Studies examining job burnout and its outcomes have mostly been carried out in the Western societies. Despite the significance of burnout towards organizational performance, researches that investigate the relationship between burnout and OCB are scarce, particularly with the inclusion on flow as a mediator. There is a need to investigate OCB considering the different cultural views on flow in the banking sector (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Paine & Bachrach, 2000). Bankers have to work longer hours per week, requiring high levels of mental energy even though they are given inadequate compensation. As most bankers deal directly with customers, dissatisfied bankers have a high tendency to experience burnout, which will negatively affect their interaction with customers (Jaramillo, Prakash Mulki & Boles, 2011). This experience may lead to loss of customers (Jaramillo, Prakash Mulki & Boles, 2011), a noticeable decline in the quality of service, job turnover, absenteeism, poor morale, and impaired performance (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Acker, 1999). Such unfavourable working conditions lead to burnout among bank employees and this decreases their level of OCB.

The underpinning theory of this study is the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. This theory posits that individuals are on a constant search to obtain and/or maintain resources, such as self-esteem, social support, security, time, and money, and will experience stress when there are threats of losing these resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Simply put, employees who are stressed do not involve in OCB because they are worried that the resources gained are less than the resources lost. This theory is appropriate for this study because the bank employees' OCB is affected by the distressing work environment. In the COR theory, there has been no known study on this population where flow acts as a mediator pathway. This study aims to bridge the gap by determining the mediating effect of flow between burnout dimensions and OCB. The research findings can contribute to increased knowledge about burnout dimensions, flow, and OCB among bank employees.

There are two dimensions of burnout, namely exhaustion and disengagement. Burnout is frequently associated with employee exhaustion and disengagement (Gorgievski & Hobfoll, 2008; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Exhaustion can be defined as the impact of intensive physical, affective, and cognitive strain which emerges due to prolonged exposure to meet certain demands (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001), as well as referring to the emotional depletion, reduced the physical resources, and feelings of being overextended (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Disengaged individuals dissociate themselves from their work, and exhibit negative attitudes within the work objectives, work content or task in general, and are likely to be less involved and lose their passion to exert maximum effort for goals attainments (Demerouti et al., 2001).

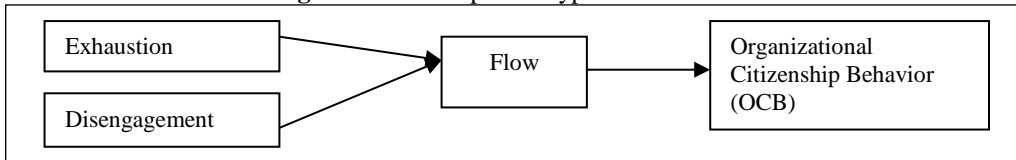
OCB is a behaviour observed in employees who go beyond the fundamental requirements of their job that is not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system and this behaviour is beneficial to the organization (Lambert, 2006). In addition, OCB also refers to a role that is concerned with behaviors that go above and beyond the formal duties (Organ, Podsakoff & Mackenzie, 2006). Past studies revealed that OCB is vital to the survival of an organization (Organ et al., 2006) as it comprises of social behaviours, such as being sensitive about fault of others, discussing problems if necessary, completing work on time, helping others, being innovative and performing voluntarily (Podsakoff et al., 2000), which are not required in their specified contractual obligations. When employees are willing to exert effort surpassing formal obligations, it will maximize the efficiency and productivity of both employee and organization, which

ultimately affects the organization’s capability to allure and retain good employees in the organization (Organ et al., 2006). On the contrary, employees who have lower levels of OCB are not willing to do beyond the formal duties because of the difficult and challenging working conditions, which results in increasing the number of unsatisfied, non-motivated, and unhappy employees.

Flow refers to an experience of being highly engaged, passionate, and in deep concentration whilst doing and completing tasks where everything else is irrelevant (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Flow experience in the organization will lead to positive outcomes (Kasa & Hassan, 2017).

Meanwhile, burnout leads to high in self-pressure which may cause employees to be exhausted and feel disengaged from their related tasks. This statement is supported by several past studies which showed the significant negative relationship between burnout and OCB (Ying, 2012; Talachi & Gorji, 2013). Nevertheless, there have been limited studies conducted to investigate the mediating role of flow between burnout dimensions and OCB in Sarawak among bank employees. Thus, to bridge this research gap, the following hypotheses are proposed: **(H<sub>1</sub>)** Flow mediates the relationship between exhaustion and OCB, **(H<sub>2</sub>)** Flow mediates the relationship between disengagement and OCB, **(H<sub>3</sub>)** Flow is positively related to OCB.

**Figure 1:** The Proposed Hypothetical model



**2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A quantitative research approach was employed with self-administered survey questionnaires through purposive sampling method. A total of 298 bank employees in Sarawak, Malaysia responded, which took approximately 12 weeks for data collection. The minimum sample needed is higher than 107 respondents, which was calculated using G\*Power 3.1.9.2 (with the 2 indicators with effect size  $f^2$  0.15 and output of parameter of actual power at 0.95). No major issues on normality and outliers as well as validity and reliability of the constructs were observed. The construct items have factor loadings of above 0.40 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1998), Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value exceeding 0.7 and Bartlett’s test of Sphericity values of below .05, all of which indicated that the correlation matrix was significantly different from an identity of matrix (Hair et al., 1998). All the research instruments were adopted from past literature and the value of the Cronbach alpha was  $\geq 0.70$ , which demonstrated good reliability (Nunnally, 1978), as seen in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Research Instruments

No.	Instrument	Name of the Instrument	Total Items	Sources	Cronbach Alpha
1	Exhaustion	Oldenburg Burnout Inventory	8	Demerouti & Bakker (2008)	0.76
2	Disengagement	Oldenburg Burnout Inventory	8	Demerouti & Bakker (2008)	0.72
3	Flow	WOLF	13	Bakker (2008)	0.81
4	OCB	OCB Scale	16	Lee & Allen (2002)	0.85

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There were a total of 298 respondents, consisted of 199 females and 99 males. The majority of the respondents are aged less than 30 years (71.1%), followed by 31 to 39 years old (23.8%), and 40 to 49 years old (5%). For race, the majority is Chinese (47.3%), followed by Iban (20.8%), Bidayuh (18.1%), and Malay (13.8%). For marital status, 69.8% of the respondents are single and 30.2% are married. In terms of education background, the majority of the respondents obtained SPM (45.6%), followed by Diploma or STPM (41.3%), and Bachelor Degree (13.1%). For occupation, 68.8% of the respondents are non-managerial and 31.2% of the respondents are in managerial positions. For length of service, the majority of the respondents have been working for 1 to 5 years (40.6%), 32.2% working for less than 1 year, and 27.1% have worked for more than 5 years.

To examine the mediating effect, bootstrapping method was employed because this method is valid and more powerful to test the indirect effect (MacKinnon, Lockwood & Williams, 2004; Mackinnon, 2008). The PROCESS model, in SPSS macros Model 4, was used to determine the significant value, as recommended by Preacher & Hayes (2004).

As shown in Table 2, the number of lower limit and upper limit of Exhaustion was .1803 and .3751, Disengagement was .3073 and .5803. A value of zero (0) did not appear in the 95% confidence, which means that it can be concluded that the mediating effect of exhaustion and disengagement through flow was statistically proven and hypothesis H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub> are accepted.

**Table 2:** Direct, Indirect, and Total Effect

Variable	Direct	Indirect	Total	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Exhaustion	.051	.283	.334	.1803	.3751
Disengagement	-.012	.456	.444	.3073	.5803
TOTAL	.039	.739	.778		

For Hypotheses 3, it was proposed that Flow is positively related to OCB. A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was computed and statistical result revealed that the two variables is positively related [ $r = .964^{**}$ ,  $n=298$ ,  $p=.000$ ].

The first assumption was supported, where flow mediated the relationship between exhaustion and OCB. Few studies in the Western context revealed the negative correlation between burnout and OCB (Cropanzano, Rupp & Byrne, 2003; Gorgievski & Hobfoll, 2008). Surprisingly, the present study revealed the dimension of burnout; exhaustion as predictor and with the insertion of flow experience as mediator could affect the employees' working experience as they may see their work as rewarding and beneficial in the future. Flow could further foster employees' resilience at their workplace and improve positive mood (Frone, 2000) as flow is believed to link to positive improvement among employees, even though their current work scope is vastly demanding (Ensenger & Rheinber, 2008).

The second assumption was supported, where flow mediated the relationship between disengagement and OCB. Flow could spur productivity (Seligman, Csikszentmihalyi, Fredrikson, Wateman & Emmons, 2011) and resiliency (Frone, 2000) among bank employees while pushing the OCB experience that benefits the organization. Another explanation for the significant result is the disengagement phenomena's capability to trigger flow experience as bank employees constantly must be on alert and focus in all their tasks.

The third hypotheses - flow is positively related to OCB was also supported. Bank employees feel that their workplace is a favourable avenue to experience flow, which resulted in displaying OCB. Using the COR theory, this favourable working environment ensures that the resources gained and lost are in a stable balance for the employees. Thus, the COR theory provides an explanation to explain why bank employees experience deep concentration in their demanding work setting. Furthermore, employees may choose to be deeply engaged in OCB of their own free will and perceive the action as a way to attain intrinsic rewards (Rioux & Penner, 2001).

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study was attempted to determine the relationship between burnout and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) among bank employees in Sarawak. Employees experiencing burnout dimensions will feel a lack of energy in performing their work tasks. This will cause organizational productivity and performance to decline. Nevertheless, by creating the right conditions for employees to experience flow in the organization, the possibility of OCB decline may be reduced.

It is recommended that bank management redesign policies that provide a positive and supportive workplace environment for their employees' social, mental, and physical wellbeing which would create positive job resources within the work context. This is to prevent employees from experiencing excessive burnout which may lead to exhaustion and disengagement, thus improving their level OCB. In addition, professional counseling services should be provided within the organization to minimize burnout experience as well as enhancing flow experience whilst increasing OCB experience.

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