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Presenteeism and its Effect towards Academic Burnout and Life Satisfaction: A Study in a Public University of Malaysia

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Abstract

Universities are the only organizations focus on dual core functions of knowledge creation and knowledge transmission through the processes of research and teaching. Besides that, a high calibre of work responsibilities together with the real work obligations of academics have influenced their presenteeism i.e. tendencies to go to work although in ill condition hence later leads to the dissatisfaction of their life. Additionally, academic burnout can occur when there is a mismatch between the job and the person carrying out the duties of the job. Thus, the study of academic burnout, which includes university and lecturers, represents a topic of considerable attention in research. However, with regard to these facts, still most of the universities' lecturers have unclear explanation of this situation and its triggering factors. Therefore, this survey study among ninety six academic staffs of various faculties in one of a public university in Malaysia has been conducted to identify the effects of presenteeism towards academic burnout and life satisfaction. The results indicated that presenteeism has a positive effect towards some part of academics' burnout and at the same time negatively affecting their life satisfaction. Hence, this study is useful for educators and policy makers in understanding presenteeism as the determinants of the academics' burnout and their life satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Academics are synonym as individuals who spend important parts of their life to the job and responsibilities of guiding other people. Furthermore, nobody can oppose the significance of education and the existence of the people who able to guide them. Thus, teaching is considered as one of the primary and essential occupations in each society (Barari & Barari, 2015). Additionally, over the past three decades higher education in many countries has undergo new changes that have increased the mental, technical and emotional pressure placed on academic personnel (Byrne, Chughtai, Flood, Murphy, & Willis, 2013). On top of that, academics are not escaped from the increasing responsibilities that may influence their poor performance and emotional problems. This is because, academicians need to attend work despite they may suffer the ill-health which known as presenteeism. Concerning the work content, the highest presenteeism levels have been found in the education sectors because this work involves helping, teaching and providing service to others and workers are more disposed to work when sick in order to meet some of the fundamental needs of other people (Panari & Simbula, 2013). At the same time, academic burnout can be experienced by any positions of educators either in primary

schools, colleges and universities. Therefore due to uneasiness and unhappiness to academics, this can influence their life satisfaction as well (Khan, Aqeel & Riaz, 2014). Hence this research is carried out to reach an improved knowledge of presenteeism that is most likely influence on burnout and life satisfaction especially for academics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Presenteeism

Presenteeism can be defined as attending work even as not feeling well. According to Palo and Pati (2013), it is a state in which an individual come to work in spite of being sick. It may imply physical presence and psychological absence (Karanika-murray, Pontes, Grif, & Biron, 2015). Presenteeism appears in most professions, but it ranks especially high among educational sectors (Ferreira & Martinez, 2012). In these jobs, task significance and associated high responsibilities have been shown to be potent antecedents of presenteeism because it is likely that workers feel irreplaceable at work, both in a subjective and in an objective way, and are afraid of neglecting social expectancies, mainly when these expectancies concern helping and supporting other people (Grant, 2008). Presenteeism is regularly related with significant productivity losses and its signs include various types of medical conditions e.g. migraines and other types of episodic or chronic pain, allergies or sinus problem, asthma, acid reflux disease, dermatitis, anxiety and depression (Ferreira & Martinez, 2012). Other studies have revealed that presenteeism leads to exhaustion and depersonalisation (Panari & Simbula, 2013). At the same time, presenteeism possibly will reduce job satisfaction as individuals are not capable to carry out to their full capabilities both mentally and physically, and expected results are not accomplished. Karanika-murray et al. (2015) found that when psychological presence is lay open, individuals may psychologically detach from work but still sense forced to be physically existent in the workplace. Panari & Simbula, 2013 proved that there is a relation between presenteeism and burnout, as passion and duty demands at work influence the rate of presenteeism which in turn induce to burnout. Presenteeism has also been proven to ruin the well-being and life satisfaction of an employee which is most likely triggered by piled exhaustion subsequent from poor recovery from disease (Janssens et al., 2016).

Academic Burnout

According to Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001), burnout is describe as too much fatigue and losing commitment and idealism for work, and it has long time been considered as a social drawback by critics and implementers thus making it become a major subject of study by researchers. Burnout also defined as “a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job and is represented by three dimensions: (a) emotional exhaustion that refers to the feelings of being overextended and depleted of one’s emotional and physical resources; (b) cynicism (or depersonalisation) that refers to the negative, callous, or excessively detached response to various aspects of the job; and (c) lack of accomplishment that refers to the feelings of incompetence and a lack of achievement and productivity at work” (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). In most of the researches, the followings are introduced as the influential factors in academics’ job burnout such as working for extend periods of time, absence of administration's consideration regarding the staffs' welfare issues, teaching in multi-level classes, teaching one subject in several classes and student's disrespect (Barari & Barari, 2015). Besides that, burnout is characterized as a reaction and drawn out in time which leads to perpetual interpersonal stressors in the workplace. Therefore, academic burnout happens when academic face the exhaustion and low readiness and dedication for work regarding of many things that academics need to settle despite they need to teach many students. Burnout affects each person differently i.e. different self-reported lists of personal distress, including physical weariness, a sleeping disorder, expanded utilization of liquor and drugs, and family issues (Maslach, Jackson, Maslach, & Jackson, 1981). Moreover, the negative impacts of academic burnout could range from slight physical symptoms such as mouth sores to more serious psychopathological symptoms like depression and suicidal ideations (Kodavatiganti & Bulusu, 2011).

Life Satisfaction

Kord and Baqer (2011) define life satisfaction as an “overall assessment of feelings and attitudes about one's life at a particular point in time ranging from negative to positive. It is one of the three major indicators of wellbeing: life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect”. This is because life satisfaction exhibits overall feelings in life and being used to measure of emotional happiness (Arslan & Acar, 2013). In fact, life satisfaction is the situation of comparing the expectations of a person for what they want and what one monopolize and own (Arslan & Acar, 2013). For example, people choose jobs in line with the knowledge, skills and ability that they have at which make them happy and facilitate them obtain accomplishment in their career. Dogana, Lacina, and Tural (2015) suggested that the word life satisfaction views for not a satisfaction level at a particular moment or towards a specific event but a satisfaction level about the whole life. Life satisfaction signifies individuals’ emotional health and having positive reactions and attitudes towards their interpersonal interactions. Job burnout might have effects on some domains especially on life satisfaction (Kord & Baqer,

2011). According to Mauno, Ruokolainen and Kinnunen (2013), heavy workload as well as a high level of work–family conflict may negatively influence life satisfaction among academics. Individuals who devote most of their lives as workaholics and persons who are forced to remain living in excessive workload are more prone to burnout and very frequently feel low life satisfaction (Arslan & Acar, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

The study focused on quantitative cross sectional study using survey method and is conducted among lecturers of a public university located in Selangor, a state in the western part of peninsular Malaysia. Administrators are not included in the sampling because it is conducted for lecturers as their in-service may lead to academic burnout. The convenience sampling technique was used to collect the information and final sample size for this study comprised of 96 lecturers from different faculties i.e. Faculty of Architecture, Planning & Surveying, Faculty of Art & Design, Faculty of Business Management, Centre of Foundation Studies, Faculty of Health Science, Faculty of Hotel Management & Tourism Management, Faculty of Pharmacy and Faculty of Accountancy. The measurements were all adopted or adapted from prominent scholars as per Table 1.

TABLE 1
MEASUREMENTS

No.	Variable	No. of Items	Source of Instruments	Likert Scale	Items
1.	Stanford Presenteeism Scale (SPS-6)	6	(Koopman et al., 2002)	1= “strongly disagree” to 7= “strongly agree”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Because of my (health problem) *, the stresses of my job were much harder to handle. 2. Despite having my (health problem) *, I was able to finish hard tasks in my work. 3. My (health problem) * distracted me from taking pleasure in my work. 4. I felt hopeless about finishing certain work tasks, due to my (health problem) *. 5. At work, I was able to focus on achieving my goals despite my (health problem) *. 6. Despite having my (health problem) *, I felt energetic enough to complete all my work.
2.	Academic Burnout adapted from Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)	22	(Maslach et al., 1981)	1= “never” to 7= “every day”	<p><u>Emotional Exhaustion</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I feel emotionally drained from my work. 2. I feel used up at the end of the workday. 3. I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job. 4. Working with people all day is really a strain for me. 5. I feel burned out from my work. 6. I feel frustrated by my job. 7. I feel I’m working too hard on my job. 8. Working with people directly puts too much stress on me. 9. I feel like I’m at the end of my rope. <p><u>Personal Accomplishment</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I can easily understand how my students feel about things. 2. I deal very effectively with the problems of my students. 3. I feel I’m positively influencing other people’s lives through my work. 4. I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my students. 5. I feel very energetic. 6. I feel exhilarated after working closely with my students. 7. I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job. 8. In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly. <p><u>Depersonalization</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I feel I treat some students as if they were impersonal ‘objects’. 2. I’ve become more callous toward people since I took this job. 3. I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally. 4. I don’t really care what happens to some students. 5. I feel students blame me for some of their problems.
3.	Life Satisfaction Scale	5	(Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985)	1= “absolutely inappropriate” to 7= “absolutely appropriate”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By many aspects my life is close to my ideals 2. My life standard is very good 3. I am happy with my life 4. I have been able to achieve what I aspired so far 5. If I was born again I would change almost nothing in my life

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 shows, within the 96 respondents, 31.3% were the male respondents. The rest with percentage of 68.3% were the female respondents. The highest frequency of age of the respondents was ranging from 31 to 35 years old with 21.9%. The second highest that follow closely was age ranging from 41 to 45 years old with 18.8%. This was followed by age ranging 36 to 40 years old with 17.7%, and age 26-30 years old with 13.5%. The lowest frequency of age of the respondents was ranging 61-65 years old with 1.0%. The majority of respondents were Malay (95.8%). In terms of educational backgrounds, 66 respondents with 68.8% have educational qualification of Master's Degree. This was followed by 26 respondents with 27.1% have Doctoral Degree (PhD), and the rest by 4 of respondents with 4.2% have educational qualification of Bachelor's Degree. Within the 96 respondents, most of respondents were 35 academics that have grade of DM/DS45 and DM/DS52 with 36.5%. The second highest which is 11 academics that has grade of DM46 that consists of 11.5%. Based on the findings, it was found that most respondents i.e. 19 academics (19.8%) have length of service between 1 to 3 years. 16 respondents (16.7%) have 4 to 6 years' length of service, 7 to 9 years for 14 respondents (14.6%), 17 to 20 years for 12 respondents (12.5%), 10 to 12 years for 11 respondents (11.5%), followed by 13 years to 16 years and 29 to 32 years consists of 8 respondents (8.3%). Additionally most of respondents i.e. 55 respondents (57.3%) worked in average 38 to 42 hours in a week. Next, 16 respondents (16.7%) worked in average 48 to 52 hours in a week, followed by 12 respondents (12.5%) who worked in average of 43 to 47 hours, and 4 respondents (4.2%) worked with average of 8 to 12 hours in a week. Majority of the respondents i.e. 72 academics (75%) have current position in faculty while have 13 respondents (13.5%) have position in faculty with some administrative responsibilities.

TABLE 2
RESPONDENTS' PROFILE

Profiles	Details	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	30	31.3
	Female	66	68.3
Age	26 – 30	13	13.5
	31 – 35	21	21.9
	36 – 40	17	17.7
	41 – 45	18	18.8
	46 – 50	7	7.3
	51 – 55	12	12.5
	56 – 60	7	7.3
	61 – 65	1	1.0
Ethnicity	Malay	92	95.8
	Chinese	2	2.1
	Indian	2	2.1
Level of Education	Bachelor's Degree	4	4.2
	Master's Degree	66	68.8
	Doctoral Degree (PhD)	26	27.1
Current Position	DM/DS41	3	3.1
	DM/DS45	35	36.5
	DM46	11	11.5
	DM/DS51	6	6.3
	DM/DS52	35	36.5
	DM/DS53	4	4.2
	DM/DS54	1	1.0
	VK7	1	1.0
Length of service	1 – 3	19	19.8
	4 – 6	16	16.7
	7 – 9	14	14.6
	10 – 12	11	11.5
	13 – 16	8	8.3
	17 – 20	12	12.5
	21 – 24	5	5.2
	25 – 28	3	3.1
	29 – 32	8	8.3
Hours of Work in Average	8 – 12	4	4.2
	13 – 17	1	1.0
	18 – 22	1	1.0
	23 – 27	1	1.0
	28 – 32	3	3.1
	33 – 37	3	3.1
	38 – 42	55	57.3
	43 – 47	12	12.5
	48 – 52	16	16.7
Current Appointment	Faculty	72	75.0
	Faculty with some Administrative Responsibilities	13	13.5
	Faculty with other related duties	11	11.5

Based on Table 3, the mean range of the variables was between 2.60 and 5.41. For independent variable, presenteeism its mean was 3.18 (SD=1.06). For dependent variables, Academic Burnout, the highest mean was Personal Accomplishment (Mean=4.82, SD=1.06), Emotional Exhaustion (Mean=3.40, SD=1.50), and the lowest was Depersonalization (Mean=2.60, SD=1.34). The highest mean was found on the other dependent variable of life satisfaction with mean of 5.41 (SD=0.81). The findings also show that all variables used in this study were reliable.

TABLE 3
DESCRIPTIVE AND RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

Variables	No. of Items	Items Dropped	Cronbach Alpha	Mean	Standard Deviation
Presenteeism	6	-	0.72	3.35	0.94
Academic Burnout					
• Emotional Exhaustion	9	-	0.91	3.40	1.50
• Personal Accomplishment	8	-	0.77	4.82	1.06
• Depersonalization	5	-	0.79	2.60	1.34
Life Satisfaction	5	-	0.68	5.41	0.81

Table 4 shows correlation values among variables of the study. Based on the results, there was a large significant correlation ($r=0.37$, $p<0.01$) between presenteeism and emotional exhaustion. There was also a large significant correlation ($r=0.31$, $p<0.01$) between presenteeism and depersonalization and there was no significant correlation found between presenteeism and personal accomplishment ($r=-0.20$). Based on the results, there was a large significant correlation ($r=0.32$, $p<0.01$) between life satisfaction and personal accomplishment. There was no significant correlation found between life satisfaction and emotional exhaustion ($r=-0.06$), and between life satisfaction and depersonalization ($r=-0.09$). Based on the results, there was a strong, negative correlation between two variables which were life satisfaction and presenteeism ($r=-0.29$).

TABLE 4
CORRELATION ANALYSIS

	Presenteeism	Burnout			Life Satisfaction
		Emotional Exhaustion	Personal Accomplishment	Depersonalization	
Presenteeism	1				
Burnout					
• Emotional Exhaustion	0.37**	1			
• Personal Accomplishment	-0.20	0.04	1		
• Depersonalization	0.31**	0.71**	-0.04	1	
Life Satisfaction	-0.29**	-0.06	0.32**	-0.09	1

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) * Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

Based on Table 5, it can be summarized that presenteeism explained 14 percent of the variance in emotional exhaustion, only 4 percent of the variance in personal accomplishment, 10 percent of the variance in depersonalization, and 9 percent of the variance in life satisfaction. Based on the F test for all dependent variables, the values were all significant at below 0.01 except for personal accomplishment. These were consistent with the coefficient values of presenteeism towards all dependent variables which were all significant at p-value less than 0.01 except for personal accomplishment. Hence there was no significant relationship between presenteeism and personal accomplishment. It was found that presenteeism has a positive and significant effect on emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.39$, $p<0.01$) and depersonalization ($\beta = 0.31$, $p<0.01$). Hence, presenteeism is positively and significantly related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization which were the two of three dimension of academic burnout. Additionally there was a negative and significant relationship between presenteeism and life satisfaction ($\beta = -0.29$, $p<0.01$).

TABLE 5
REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Independent variable	Dependent variable (β) Burnout			Dependent variable (β) Life Satisfaction
	Emotional Exhaustion	Personal Accomplishment	Depersonalization	
Presenteeism	0.37**	-0.20	0.31**	-0.29**
F value	14.86**	3.78	10.22**	8.76**
R ²	0.14	0.04	0.10	0.09
Adjusted R ²	0.13	0.03	0.09	0.08

Note. * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$

CONCLUSION

From the study, we found that level of presenteeism and academic burnout among academics were moderate while the level of life satisfaction was high. Additionally based on the results of this study it is concluded that presenteeism will increase emotional exhaustion and depersonalization among academics and at the same time will reduce their life satisfaction. Therefore, there are several recommendations for the employers e.g. to distribute task fairly to academics especially the task that related with their position in faculty and university and to give training at the same time do not disturb the lecture hours of academics. The academics can also fulfill their lecture hours by interacting or giving an assignment to the students through online learning so that to ensure the issue of presenteeism is taken care of. Academics could also be rewarded vacation therefore they able to release their stress after doing so many given tasks.

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