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EXAMINING JOB DEMANDS AS A MEDIATOR: UNRAVELING THE INFLUENCE OF ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITIES ON JOB BURNOUT

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Abstract

Given that burnout can have detrimental effects on both entrepreneurs and their businesses, it is crucial to comprehend how job demands affect burnout among entrepreneurs. Understanding the causes of burnout can help entrepreneurs manage their workload and resources more skillfully, which can improve both their personal and professional success. According to data from the Office of Cooperatives and Micro Businesses of Malang City, Indonesia, 126 respondents who were registered as "entrepreneurs" in this study employed structural equation modeling (SEM). The main finding of this study is that job demands play an important role in influencing the level of job burnout among entrepreneurs. This study concentrates on solo entrepreneurs who operate their businesses without employees. The study also found that solo entrepreneurs can experience motivation and stress in running their business, and they can create their own resources over time, reflecting their efforts in managing their business.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of entrepreneurship research, there has been a notable focus on the beneficial contributions entrepreneurs make to the economy, including job creation, innovation, industry development, and expansion (Haltiwanger et al., 2013). Nevertheless, the significance of entrepreneurship goes beyond these external advantages and encompasses the personal satisfaction that individual entrepreneurs experience (Van Praag and Versloot, 2007). Entrepreneurs not only passively receive these benefits but also actively shape their positive development through entrepreneurship (Heckhausen and Schulz, 1995), using entrepreneurship as a tool to maximize their work satisfaction through personal agency (Frese, 2009). Hence, when individuals are driven to optimize their well-being through personal initiative (Simon, 2000), entrepreneurs actively attain significant personal satisfaction from their work compared to those who are not involved in entrepreneurship. However, the actual personal utility gained from entrepreneurial work and the underlying psychological processes have been subjects of ongoing debate (Monsen et al., 2010).

When examining personal satisfaction, two commonly utilized perspectives are the economic and psychological viewpoints (Kaplan and Schulhofer Wohl, 2018). The economic standpoint concentrates on the monetary value of labor. Some studies in the field of entrepreneurship have indicated that "many entrepreneurs could potentially earn a higher income as salaried employees" (Van Praag and Versloot, 2007), implying that the economic benefits of entrepreneurship are often not significantly superior (and may even be inferior) when compared to similar employment options. Consequently, entrepreneurship might offer alternative sources of personal satisfaction as a means to attract individuals to this career choice and provide them with personal contentment (Benz and Frey, 2008).

On the other hand, as Monsen et al. (2010) suggested, researchers in the field of entrepreneurship have increasingly focused on non-economic personal satisfaction, particularly in terms of psychological well-being, in order to move beyond the concept of "simple utility." In contrast to the conventional economic models advocated by Robinson (1962), modern interpretations of utility aim to integrate psychological perspectives to achieve a more psychologically accurate comprehension of utility. As Simon (2000) emphasizes, this method acknowledges the subjectivity and complexity that are inherent in each person's psychological processes while also taking into account the limits of reason. Although psychology's significant contributions to economics have been acknowledged (Loewenstein, 1999), research on entrepreneurial well-being has yet to fully embrace recent psychological insights.

When we turn our attention to the favorable aspects for entrepreneurs, the exploration of psychological well-being can be approached through the lens of positive psychology. This viewpoint explores positive subjective experiences, positive individual traits, and positive societal frameworks to improve an individual's quality of life and mitigate psychological problems (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Building upon previous discussions in the field of entrepreneurship research, we define entrepreneurial psychological well-being as the positive subjective experiences that entrepreneurs encounter in their work engagement, their positive attributes, and the supportive institutional environment, distinguishing it from non-entrepreneurial occupations. This idea of psychological well-being includes not only the psychological benefits of being an entrepreneur (Kaplan and Schulhofer-Wohl, 2018), but also the psychological benefits of sticking with an entrepreneurial career (psychological returns from this commitment) and comparing it to other career paths, like wage employment (Goethner et al., 2012).

Nevertheless, despite the growing interest in research, our grasp of the intricate mechanisms of psychological well-being remains limited. One notable exception is the work by Benz and Frey (2008), which focuses on procedural well-being, the well-being that entrepreneurs derive from their decision-making processes, and the outcomes they achieve through entrepreneurial activities. In our study, we delve into the firsthand psychological well-being experienced as a result of entrepreneurship and the underlying processes that shed light on how entrepreneurs actively enhance such well-being. In line with our idea of psychological well-being, we have come up with a model that can be tested. It combines the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model of stress and motivation (Bakker et al., 2014) with a recovery-oriented approach (Sonnentag et al., 2022). However, it is crucial to acknowledge that we do not assert that this approach is the sole means of advancing our comprehension of entrepreneurial psychological well-being, given the inherent complexity of the concept.

In essence, this approach permits us to delve into intriguing psychological mechanisms, such as why entrepreneurs appear to be less preoccupied with the risk of exhaustion due to their strong work engagement. We illustrate that these mechanisms may hold a central role in comprehending how entrepreneurs actively extract high levels of psychological well-being from their work. In recent times, scholars in the field of entrepreneurship have advocated for research that delves into the intricate dynamics of motivation and stress unique to entrepreneurial endeavors (Nikolaev et al., 2020). This research has practical implications for assisting entrepreneurs in mitigating negative psychological job-related outcomes and optimizing positive ones. Additionally, there has been a growing interest in exploring eudaimonic well-being among entrepreneurs, which emphasizes personal agency and encompasses various dimensions of well-being (Ryff, 2019). Our model aligns with these themes by shedding light on how entrepreneurs can maximize their psychological well-being while managing certain associated costs.

Our findings make a substantial contribution to the body of scientific knowledge in several ways. To begin with, our research brings forth fresh theoretical and empirical perspectives within the domain of psychological well-being in entrepreneurship and the underlying mechanisms, filling a substantial research gap present in contemporary entrepreneurship studies. Secondly, it provides specific insights into the psychological processes of stress, motivation, and recovery within the context of entrepreneurship, comparing them to those observed in individuals in conventional employment. By integrating the JD-R theory with a recovery-oriented approach, we make a valuable contribution to the growing body of research exploring the role of recovery in reducing distress and enhancing well-being among entrepreneurs (Williamson et al., 2021). Finally, our research takes into account the diversity within entrepreneurship and its implications for psychological well-being, encompassing sole entrepreneurs and various entrepreneurial contexts. This aspect is often acknowledged but rarely explored in entrepreneurship research (Davidsson, 2016).

METHOD

This study uses original survey data collected over two months. We compared the distribution of gender, age, and occupation among survey participants with equivalent national statistics for Indonesia in a given year to ensure the validity and applicability of our data. Our sample includes a higher percentage of women than men (60% vs. 40%), as observed. However, the age distribution in the 20–60-year range that we used in our survey is very similar to the distribution across countries.

Our sample shows a slight self-representation of self-employed individuals, with 73 respondents, while those with additional employment totaled 53 respondents. Our survey primarily focused on a group of 1,615 individuals identified in the database of the Malang Cooperative and MSME Agency as 'entrepreneurs'. In addition, we randomly selected 500 individuals from the general adult population aged 20 to 60 from the same database. At the start of the survey, individuals who were not involved in commercial ventures were excluded to maintain consistency and comparability with the main sample of entrepreneurs. When we collected data from the random sample, we used a weighing technique to ensure that the final sample of entrepreneurs was truly representative of solopreneurs in Malang within a given age group. This reduces the possibility of non-response bias as much as possible. In this analysis, some distinctive characteristics were found among participating solo entrepreneurs, including lower levels of minor administrative tasks affecting the progress of their main job and higher levels of role burden. In addition, these individuals tended to be younger than their participating peers. Among solo entrepreneurs, those who took part in the survey were generally younger and had a higher level of education compared to solo entrepreneurs with a second job as an employee in a company. However, the other characteristics analysed remained similar regardless of their status. It is important to note that the sample size is limited, including only 126 solo entrepreneurs. Therefore, it is important to emphasise that the effects of resource-demand theory should not be exaggerated in interpreting the results of this study.

While the specificity of our data in targeting 500 known entrepreneurs may make it less representative more broadly, the inclusion of a large number of entrepreneurs ensures the robustness of our hypothesis testing. To address the oversampling of entrepreneurs, we applied specific criteria and measures to make the final sample of entrepreneurs representative of the population of solo entrepreneurs in Malang. In this analysis, some typical characteristics were found among solo entrepreneurs.

Job burnout. Using a five-item scale, job burnout, as it is defined in this study, is assessed as emotional weariness experienced at work. This scale, which Maslach et al. (1996) first proposed, goes from "very rarely" (1) to "very often" (5). Statements like "I frequently feel emotionally drained due to my work" and "I experience fatigue when I wake up in the morning, knowing I have another day of work ahead of me" are examples of items on this scale. It's crucial to recognize that Maslach et al. (2001) defined job burnout as encompassing cynical attitudes and feelings of inefficacy in addition to emotional exhaustion. Nevertheless, it's commonly acknowledged that emotional exhaustion acts as the principal marker of burnout, particularly when viewed from a stress-related standpoint (Maslach et al., 2001).

Generally accepted, there is no single definition that encompasses solo entrepreneurship (Kuratko, 2014). The word originates from the French "entreprendre," meaning "to take action," and has also been described as "a promising journey" (Kuratko, 2014). The literature includes three characteristics that set an entrepreneur apart from a small business owner. A small business is generally seen as an ongoing enterprise managed with little focus on change or growth. In contrast, entrepreneurial endeavors involve the pursuit of rapid yet sustainable growth, immediate profits, and accepting responsibility for a certain level of risk (Kuratko, 2014). Although entrepreneurs may secure funding and assemble teams to enable the growth they seek, it's the pursuit of growth and the assumption of risk that define entrepreneurship, not the means by which that growth is achieved.

The literature reflects the assumption that entrepreneurship is driven by combining opportunities and individual skills (Kuratko, 2014). However, solo entrepreneurs describe a necessary dimension of having control over their schedules and finding meaning in their work, which aligns more with Daniel Pink's (2009) inner motivational model of autonomy, mastery, and purpose.

Entrepreneurs typically gain experience as employees before starting their own ventures. Solo entrepreneurship has become a more prevalent topic in mainstream literature and, to a lesser extent, in academic literature. A solo entrepreneur is defined as an entrepreneur with no employees (Wasdani and Mathew, 2014). Solo entrepreneurs include freelancers selling their own services, owners of agencies of contractors, or individuals who expand their businesses by broadening their product lines and distribution channels. Solo entrepreneurs may use investment capital to start or grow their ventures, assume risks, and focus on growth and profit while deliberately avoiding hiring employees. Solo entrepreneurs and microbusinesses make a significant contribution to the economy and are seven times more affected by mental health issues, stress, and burnout than traditional employees (Carson, 2015).

In this study, we chose to limit our respondents to solo entrepreneurs who operate their businesses independently without employees. The reason for selecting solo entrepreneur respondents is to understand the extent to which solo entrepreneurs can manage their businesses on their own, especially if they plan to expand their ventures by hiring others as employees in the future. Although some respondents may still work as part-time employees in companies, we decided to focus on respondents who prioritize their entrepreneurial activities over their part-time employment in a company.

We assessed a list of five job-related demands, which included two that could potentially present obstacles: the degree to which minor administrative tasks hindered the completion of primary job tasks (administrative task

hindrance) and the level of uncertainty individuals experienced regarding their job roles (role ambiguity). To gauge administrative task hindrance, we utilized a variable that measured how often respondents felt that minor administrative tasks necessary for their primary work impeded their progress. We employed a five-category scale, ranging from very rarely or never to almost daily, for this measurement. Role ambiguity was evaluated using a five-item scale adapted from Likert et al. (1970), which included statements such as "Clear, planned goals and objectives exist for my work" and "I comprehend my responsibilities." Participants provided ratings for these items on a five-point scale, with anchors at strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (5).

The three remaining job demands pose potential challenges: the level of workplace role overload, the pressure of time, and the overall workload volume. Role overload was assessed by employing two items sourced from Beehr et al. (2000): "It frequently seems that there is an excessive amount of work for a single individual to manage" and "The performance standards established for my work are exceedingly high." Respondents provided ratings for these items on a five-point scale, with anchors at strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (5). Time pressure was evaluated using three items adapted from Semmer et al. (1999): "How often do you encounter time pressure at work?" "How frequently do you end up working longer than originally planned?" and "How often are you required to work at a high speed?" These items were also rated on a five-point scale, with anchors at very rarely/never (1) and very often (5).

In our analysis, we incorporated gender, age, and educational factors as control variables. Additionally, we took into account the number of vacation days taken by respondents in the two months preceding the study, following the methodology established by Bloom and colleagues in 2009. To address the skewed distribution of the data, we applied a logarithmic transformation to the number of vacation days.

We selected structural equation modeling (SEM) for two distinct reasons. First, a significant portion of our variables consist of multi-item scales, and representing them as latent variables allows us to account for potential measurement inaccuracies. Second, according to our research hypotheses, there may be a number of mediation effects. Williams and colleagues' method from 2009 allows for the most efficient analysis of these effects by estimating indirect effects within the SEM framework.

RESULTS

The study uses the Anderson and Gerbing-recommended two-step methodology for structural equation modeling (SEM) estimation. This approach involves an initial phase in which the dimensions, reliability, and validity of the measurement scales are assessed before proceeding to estimate the structural equations. During this preliminary step, an exploratory principal component analysis is conducted to determine whether the individual items comprising the measurement scale adequately load onto the intended factors.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) encompasses two distinct models: the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model). The measurement model elucidates how latent variables are constructed through each indicator within the measurement model while also allowing for the examination of the impact of each exogenous latent variable on the endogenous latent variable. In the context of this study, there is one exogenous variable, namely the entrepreneur, assessed using a single indicator. Furthermore, there is one endogenous variable, job burnout, measured through a single indicator. Additionally, there is a mediating variable, job demands, evaluated using five indicators.

To find out how a latent variable is related to its observable variables or indicators, an outer model measurement model is used. This model includes tests for convergent validity, discriminant validity, reliability, and construct validity.

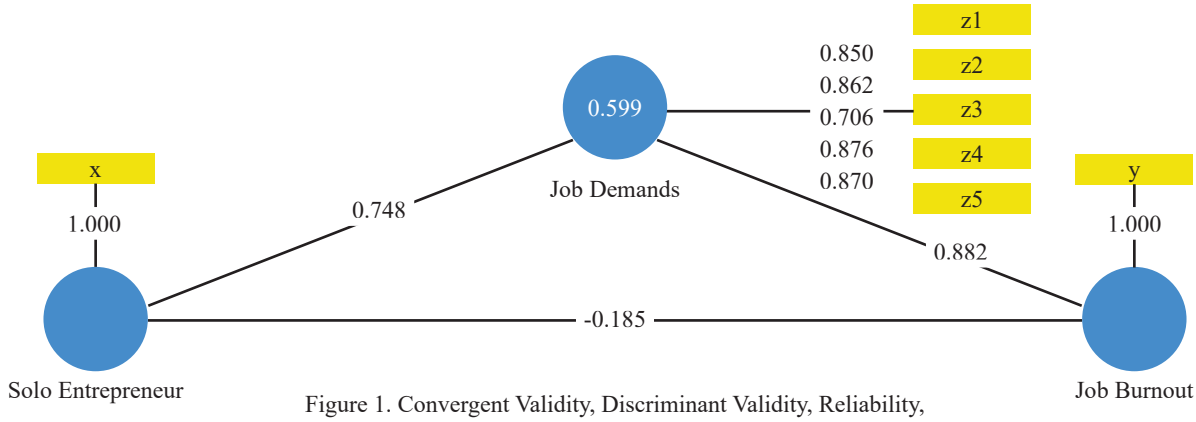

Figure 1. Convergent Validity, Discriminant Validity, Reliability, and Construct Validity Tests Model

Based on the value of the loading factor, all the indicators had a value above 0.7, so it can be assumed that all the indicators are valid.

Discriminant validity is evaluated by scrutinizing cross-loadings with different constructs. An indicator is deemed to possess discriminant validity if its cross-loading value on its designated variable is greater than that on other variables. The results of the cross-loading analysis are as follows:

Table 1. Discriminant Validity

	Job Burnout	Job Demands	Entrpreneur
X			1,000
Y	1,000		
z1		0,850	
z2		0,862	
z3		0,706	
z4		0,876	
z5		0,870	

Source: processes data, (2023)

Referring to Table 1, we can conclude that all indicators display higher values within their respective variables when compared to the other variables, thereby meeting the criteria for discriminant validity.

The next step in the analysis entails assessing the reliability to measure the consistency of respondents' responses. This reliability assessment employs two methods: composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha. According to the general guideline, the alpha or composite reliability value should exceed 0.7.

Table 2. Composite Reliability

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Job Burnout	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Job Demands	0,891	0,901	0,920	0,698
Entrpreneur	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000

Source: processes data, (2023)

Assessment of the inner model's structure is conducted in two phases, which include the determination of coefficients (R^2) and the evaluation of goodness of fit (GoF).

According to the outcomes of the conducted test, the R square value was acquired as follows:

Table 3. Coefficient of Determination

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Job Burnout	0,567	0,560
Job Demands	0,559	0,555

Source: processes data, (2023)

From the information presented in the table, we can draw the following conclusions: The R square value for the job demands variable is 0.559, equivalent to 55.9%. This signifies that the entrepreneur variable exerts an influence on job demands amounting to 55.9%, with other variables accounting for the remaining impact. Similarly, the R square value for the job burnout variable is 0.567, or 56.7%. This demonstrates that the entrepreneur and job demand variables collectively contribute to job burnout at a rate of 56.7%, while other factors are responsible for the remainder of the influence.

The evaluation of goodness of fit (GOF) can be ascertained through the NFI score. A NFI value greater than 0.662 is considered to be indicative of an appropriate and fitting condition for assessing the research hypotheses. According to the evaluation results:

Table 4. Goodness of Fit

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0,106	0,106
d_ULS	0,316	0,316
d_G	0,243	0,243
Chi-Square	180,667	180,667
NFI	0,749	0,749

Source: processes data, (2023)

Derived from the table, the NFI (Normed Fit Index) value stands at 0.749. This indicates that the model employed in this study possesses a strong level of goodness of fit and is deemed suitable for testing the model's hypotheses.

In this research, hypothesis testing was carried out by examining the T-statistic values and P-values. A hypothesis is deemed valid if it satisfies the criteria of T-Statistic > 1.96 and P-Values < 0.05. The results obtained from this testing are as follows :

Table 5. Path Coefficient (Direct Effect)

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Job Demands → Job Burnout	0,882	0,892	0,079	11,133	0,000
Entrpreneur → Job Burnout	-0,186	-0,197	0,094	1,980	0,048
Entrpreneur → Job Demands	0,748	0,749	0,038	19,487	0,000

Source: processes data, (2023)

The table reveals that all three hypotheses regarding direct effects have been confirmed. H1, with a T-Statistic of 19.487 and a P-Value of 0.000, is substantiated. Similarly, H2 is validated with a T-Statistic of 1.980 and a P-Value of 0.048. H3, with a T-Statistic of 11.133 and a P-Value of 0.000, is likewise supported.

Table 6. Path Coefficient (Indirect Effect)

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Job Demands → Job Burnout					
Entrpreneur → Job Burnout	0,659	0,669	0,075	8,833	0,000
Entrpreneur → Job Demands		0,000	0,000		

Source: processes data, (2023)

The table indicates that the T-statistic for the indirect effect of entrepreneurship on job burnout is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This suggests that job demands have the potential to amplify the impact of entrepreneurship on job burnout.

DISCUSSION

This research brings several innovations and contributions that were previously absent in prior studies. Here are the key points of novelty in this research compared to previous studies: This study concentrates on solo entrepreneurs who operate their businesses without employees. This is an approach that hasn't been widely explored in previous research, which often centered on entrepreneurs with teams or employees. The research employs meticulous methods to measure job demands and resources within the context of solo entrepreneurs. This includes both demands that could be hindrances (such as administrative tasks) and challenges (like workload and time pressure). This study delves into a deeper understanding of the relationships between job demands, job resources, and the phenomenon of burnout. It helps clarify how demands and resources impact solo entrepreneurs. The research acknowledges that solo entrepreneurs can experience both motivation and stress in running their businesses. This enriches our understanding of how work influences their well-being and motivation. Solo entrepreneurs often face problems alone. Makes them think harder in solving the problem. Usually they will be motivated by opportunities rather than needs. The result is that solo entrepreneurs will tend to be more successful when they are motivated by opportunities (de Vries et al., 2020). Most of them are motivated by extrinsic factors such as financial problems, fame, and positive feedback (Sufian et al., 2022). The study demonstrates that solo entrepreneurs can create their own resources over time, reflecting their efforts in managing their businesses. This provides a deeper insight into how individuals contribute to the development of their resources. Because basically individuals can contribute to the organization (Harvey & Butcher, 1998). On the other hand job-specific measure is a strongest predictor of chronic stressor (Beehr et al., 2000). This will impact to individual job performance. High job demands can lead to decreased employee performance due to psychological tiredness (Maheswari, 2023). An individual who does multitasking at the same time tends to feel stressed easily. This is usually caused by role conflict, workload, leadership, fear of the unknown, self-efficacy, organizational citizenship behavior, and emotional intelligence (Universari &

Harsono, 2021). In summary, this research not only fills gaps in the literature concerning solo entrepreneurs but also deepens our understanding of the dynamics between job demands, resources, motivation, and work-related stress in this context.

CONCLUSION

The research of Zhang and Parker (2019) demonstrates that JD-R studies provide insightful information with useful implications. This statement refers to the implications of research findings that may involve job redesign within the organization. It examines adjustments to job tasks and resources aimed at creating a more favorable environment for employees. In other words, organizations can make changes in how jobs are structured, including reducing excessive workloads and enhancing the resources available to employees so that they can work in a better and more productive environment. Applying techniques to their own roles but also motivating their employees to engage in the same practice.

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