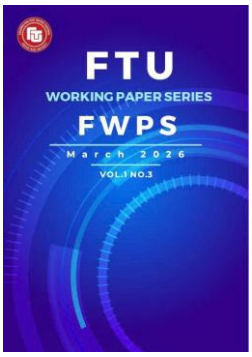

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TÌNH TRẠNG KIỆT QUỆ CẢM XÚC CỦA NHÂN VIÊN NGÀNH DỊCH VỤ: TÁC ĐỘNG CỦA CAM KẾT QUÁ MỨC, ÁP LỰC KHỐI LƯỢNG CÔNG VIỆC VÀ XUNG ĐỘT GIỮA CÔNG VIỆC VÀ GIA ĐÌNH

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Tóm tắt

Nghiên cứu này xem xét tác động của cam kết quá mức trong công việc, áp lực khối lượng công việc cảm nhận và xung đột công việc-gia đình đến kiệt quệ trong công việc của nhân viên ngành dịch vụ tại Việt Nam. Dựa trên nền tảng của lý thuyết Nhu cầu-Nguồn lực công việc, lý thuyết Xung đột Công việc-Gia đình và lý thuyết Bảo tồn Nguồn lực , nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp định lượng với kỹ thuật lấy mẫu thuận tiện đối với các nhân viên dịch vụ tuyến đầu. Dữ liệu được phân tích bằng phương pháp Mô hình cấu trúc bình phương tối thiểu từng phần (PLS-SEM) thông qua phần mềm SmartPLS. Kết quả cho thấy cam kết quá mức, áp lực khối lượng công việc cảm nhận và xung đột công việc-gia đình đều có tác động cùng chiều và có ý nghĩa thống kê đến kiệt quệ trong công việc, trong đó xung đột công việc-gia đình là yếu tố có ảnh hưởng mạnh nhất.

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Nghiên cứu góp phần làm rõ các cơ chế dẫn đến tình trạng kiệt quệ của nhân viên trong ngành dịch vụ, đồng thời gợi ý rằng các tổ chức cần triển khai các biện pháp can thiệp phù hợp như cải thiện quản lý khối lượng công việc, hỗ trợ cân bằng công việc-cuộc sống và xây dựng các chiến lược hạn chế cam kết quá mức nhằm bảo vệ sức khỏe tinh thần của nhân viên và duy trì hiệu suất làm việc bền vững.

Từ khóa: Kiệt quệ cảm xúc trong công việc, mức độ cam kết quá mức, áp lực khối lượng công việc, xung đột công việc-gia đình, ngành dịch vụ

AN ANALYSIS OF WORK EXHAUSTION AMONG EMPLOYEES IN SERVICE INDUSTRY: THE ROLES OF OVER-COMMITMENT, WORK OVERLOAD, AND WORK–FAMILY CONFLICT

Abstract

This study examines the impact of over-commitment, perceived work overload, and work–family conflict on work exhaustion among service industry employees in Vietnam. Grounded in the Job Demand-Resource theory, Work-Family Conflict Theory and the Conservation of Resources theory, the research applies a quantitative approach using convenience sampling with frontline service employees. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling with SmartPLS software. The findings indicate that over-commitment, perceived work overload, and work-family conflict all have positive and statistically significant effects on work exhaustion, with work-family conflict emerging as the most influential predictor. The study contributes to understanding the mechanisms that lead to employee exhaustion in the service sector and suggests that organizations should implement targeted interventions, including better workload management, support for work–life balance, and strategies to reduce excessive work commitment in order to protect employee mental health and maintain sustainable work performance.

Keywords: Work exhaustion, Over-commitment, Perceived Work Overload, Work-family conflict, Service industry

1. Introduction

The service sector plays an important role in modern economies and employs a large number of workers. However, employees in this sector often face high work pressure. Service jobs usually require frequent interaction with customers, quick responses to customer needs, and the ability to manage emotions while working. These demands can create strong psychological pressure and increase the risk of work exhaustion, which refers to a state in which employees feel emotionally drained due to long-term work stress (Maslach, 2001). Work exhaustion is one of the main components of burnout and has been linked to negative outcomes such as lower job performance, lower job satisfaction, and higher intention to leave the job (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Ganewatta & Hiroshima, 2023). Therefore, understanding the factors that lead to work exhaustion has become an important topic in organizational research.

Previous studies have identified several factors that may increase employees' emotional exhaustion. According to the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model, high job demands such as

heavy workload and time pressure can consume employees' energy and increase stress levels (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). At the same time, work-family conflict may also increase emotional strain because employees must divide their time and energy between work responsibilities and family roles (Allen et al., 2000; Amstad et al., 2011). In addition to these external pressures, personal characteristics may also affect how employees respond to job stress. One important factor is over-commitment, which refers to a tendency to invest too much effort in work and to have difficulty mentally detaching from work tasks (Siegrist, 1996; Mazzetti et al., 2021).

Although many studies have examined these factors, most research focuses on them separately. As a result, there is still limited understanding of how over-commitment, workload pressure, and work-family conflict together influence work exhaustion. This gap is especially clear in the context of developing countries and the service sector. In Vietnam, where the service industry is growing rapidly, research on employee stress and well-being is still limited.

To address this gap, this study develops a research model to examine the impact of over-commitment (OC), perceived work overload (PWO), work–family conflict (WFC) on work exhaustion (WE) among service employees in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The study is based on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory and the Work-Family Conflict (WFC) theory. By examining these relationships together, this research aims to provide a clearer understanding of the factors that contribute to employee exhaustion and to offer useful insights for organizations that want to improve employee well-being in the service sector.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Foundational theory of the study

2.1.1. Job Demands - Resources (JD-R) Theory

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory, first introduced by Demerouti et al. (2001) and later expanded by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), has become one of the most influential frameworks in organizational psychology and human resource management. The model posits that every occupation, regardless of context, can be understood through two fundamental dimensions: job demands and job resources.

Job demands refer to physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of work that require sustained effort and may lead to strain or emotional exhaustion if persistent. Typical demands include excessive workload, time pressure, role ambiguity, emotional demands, and cognitive complexity. Conversely, job resources are aspects that help employees achieve work goals, buffer the effects of demands, and foster personal growth, such as autonomy, supervisory support, recognition, and learning opportunities (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

At the core of JD-R lie two psychological processes: the health impairment process, where excessive demands drain energy and cause emotional exhaustion, and the motivational process, where sufficient resources stimulate engagement and performance. When job demands chronically exceed available resources, the imbalance results in exhaustion and reduced well-being.

In service industries, JD-R provides a powerful framework for explaining emotional strain and performance decline. Service employees face not only high workloads and time pressure but also continuous emotional regulation while interacting with customers. When organizational resources such as recognition, control, or training are insufficient, employees experience heightened fatigue and exhaustion (Ganewatta & Hiroshima, 2023).

2.1.2. Work - Family Conflict Theory

The Work-Family Conflict Theory, proposed by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), is one of the foundational theoretical frameworks in occupational stress research. The theory explains how the demands of work roles and family roles can be incompatible, thereby negatively affecting individuals' psychological well-being and work effectiveness. According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), WFC is defined as a form of inter-role conflict in which pressures arising from the work role and the family role are mutually incompatible, such that participation in one role becomes more difficult due to demands from the other role.

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) argue that WFC occurs in three main forms. Time-based conflict happens when time spent on work reduces the ability to meet family responsibilities, or vice versa. Strain-based conflict arises when stress or fatigue in one role affects performance in the other. Behavior-based conflict occurs when behaviors suitable in one role do not fit expectations in the other. Together, these forms show how work demands can spill over into personal life and create negative psychological outcomes.

Beyond the core theoretical framework, empirical studies have shown that WFC is often rooted in the structural characteristics of work (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Specifically, long working hours, frequent overtime, extended commuting time, and irregular work schedules are positively associated with higher levels of WFC among employees (Burke et al., 1980; Pleck et al., 1980; Bohen & Viveros-Long, 1981). In addition, control over work schedules has been identified as a key factor, as employees with greater autonomy in organizing their working time tend to experience lower levels of WFC, even when total working hours remain relatively high (Herman & Gyllstrom, 1977). These findings suggest that WFC is not only the result of competing work and family roles but also a consequence of how work is structured and managed in practice.

In the service sector, where long hours, high intensity, and emotional demands are common, WFC is often more serious. It affects not only employees' personal lives but also work outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and psychological health (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Frequent conflict between work and family roles can drain emotional energy, reduce recovery, and lower performance. Therefore, WFC is considered an important antecedent of work exhaustion among service employees.

2.1.3. Conversation of Resource Theory

The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, developed by Steven E. Hobfoll (1989), explains how psychological stress occurs and develops in individuals' work and life contexts. The central idea of COR theory is that individuals strive to obtain, protect, and maintain valuable

resources. Resources are broadly defined and may include material resources (e.g., income and working conditions), personal resources (e.g., energy, skills, self-esteem, and sense of control), social resources (e.g., support from colleagues and family), and condition resources (e.g., job position and employment stability).

According to COR theory, stress occurs when individuals experience a loss of resources, face a threat of resource loss, or invest resources without receiving adequate returns. An important principle of COR theory is that resource loss has a stronger psychological impact than resource gain. This idea is often described as the "loss spiral," in which initial resource loss increases individuals' vulnerability to further losses. Over time, continuous depletion of resources may lead to psychological strain and emotional exhaustion.

In organizational contexts, particularly in the service sector, employees frequently expend emotional and cognitive resources to meet job demands such as interacting with customers, regulating emotions, and coping with time pressure. When the recovery process is insufficient to restore the depleted resources, employees may experience prolonged energy depletion. From the COR perspective, emotional exhaustion can therefore be understood as the result of continuous resource loss without sufficient recovery or replenishment.

2.2. Hypotheses development

2.2.1. Over-commitment and Work exhaustion

Over-commitment describes a situation in which employees put too much mental and emotional energy into their work. People with high over-commitment often think about work even after hours, find it hard to switch off, and expect too much from themselves. While this behavior may appear positive at first, it can become harmful when it prevents employees from resting and recovering (Barbier et al., 2013; Mazzetti et al., 2020).

Recent studies in the JD-R framework view over-commitment as a personal demand, a pressure that individuals place on themselves. These self-imposed demands require extra effort and lead to higher emotional and psychological costs (Barbier et al., 2013; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). When such internal pressure is combined with heavy job demands, emotional energy is used up more quickly.

From the perspective of Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, emotional exhaustion occurs when individuals continuously invest personal resources without sufficient recovery or compensation (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018). When over-committed employees repeatedly expend energy to meet work expectations, their personal resources may gradually decline, increasing the risk of emotional exhaustion. Empirical studies have also shown that over-commitment is positively associated with emotional exhaustion across different occupational contexts (Mazzetti et al., 2021; Van den Broeck et al., 2023).

Service employees, who must deal with customers and control their emotions throughout the day, are especially at risk. Research shows that workers with high over-commitment report higher levels of emotional exhaustion, even when their workload and personal characteristics are taken

into account (Mazzetti et al., 2021; Van den Broeck et al., 2023).

H1: Over-commitment has a positive effect on work exhaustion among service industry employees.

2.2.2. Perceived Work Overload and Work exhaustion

Within the JD-R framework (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), perceived work overload represents a core job demand, referring to employees' perception that work quantity, pace, or intensity exceed their available time and capacity. When job demands persistently outweigh available resources, employees enter a health impairment process, leading to emotional energy depletion and ultimately, work exhaustion (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Empirical studies have consistently confirmed this relationship across occupational contexts. For example, Deng et al. (2022) found that workload intensity among online service employees in China significantly increased emotional exhaustion and reduced service quality. Similarly, Hung (2025) reported that employees in time-pressured environments exhibited higher fatigue and lower emotional recovery. These findings suggest that overload not only drains psychological energy but also disrupts social and emotional functioning (Hobfoll, 2018).

In the service sector, where employees must manage both cognitive and emotional demands, the impact of work overload is amplified by continuous multitasking and emotional regulation (Huang et al., 2023; Ganewatta & Hiroshima, 2023). Accordingly, this study hypothesizes:

H2: Perceived work overload is positively associated with work exhaustion among service employees.

2.2.3. Work-family conflict and Work exhaustion

Based on the Work-Family Conflict Theory proposed by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), WFC can be understood as a stress transmission mechanism, through which job demands not only create pressure within the workplace but also extend into the family domain, thereby reducing employees' capacity for recovery. When work demands repeatedly intrude into personal and family life, individuals struggle to maintain balance between work and family roles, leading to the accumulation of stress and the gradual depletion of emotional resources.

Firstly, the inability to separate work-related stress from family life requires employees to remain emotionally engaged even outside formal working hours, leading to increased feelings of overload, fatigue, and emotional energy depletion, particularly in jobs characterized by high intensity and strong emotional demands. WFC prevents psychological detachment from work, when emotional resources are not sufficiently restored, employees are more likely to experience WE, manifested through persistent tiredness, reduced concentration, and decreased work motivation.

Secondly, in the service industry, long working hours, unstable schedules, and high emotional demands intensify conflicts between work and family roles. This sustained role pressure restricts emotional recovery and further contributes to WE. Therefore, this study proposes the following

hypothesis:

H3: WFC has a positive effect on WE among service industry employees.

2.3. Proposed research model

Based on the JD-R Theory, WFC Theory and COR Theory, this study proposes a model with three independent variables which are over-commitment, perceived work overload, and work-family conflict, one dependent variable which is work exhaustion, and one moderator variable which is marital status. The model explains how different personal, job-related, and boundary-related demands contribute to exhaustion. The study focuses on service employees working in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, two major urban centers where service jobs are highly demanding. This group often faces high emotional demands, fast work pace, and blurred work-life boundaries.

This model provides a clear framework for examining the main sources of strain that increase emotional exhaustion in the service sector.

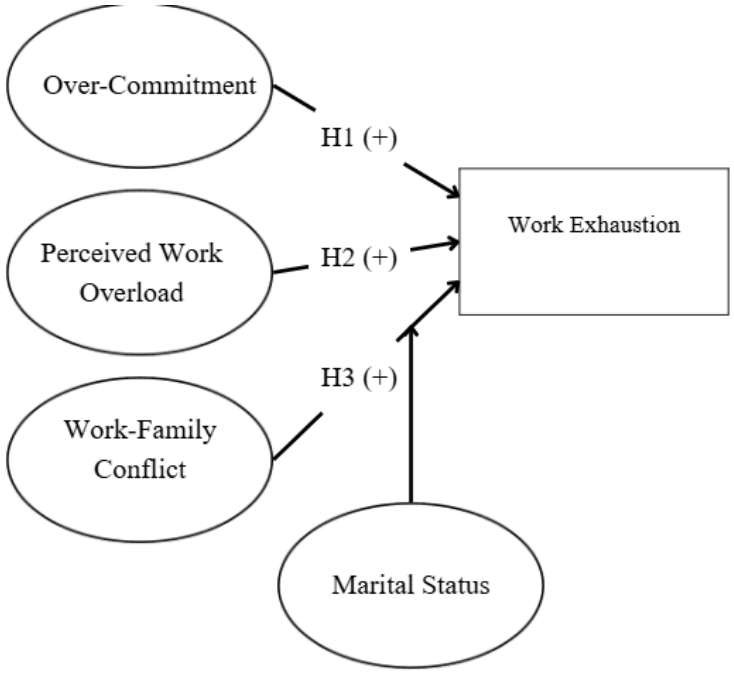

Figure 1. Research model

3. Methodology

3.1. Research process

This study adopted a quantitative research approach to examine the relationships between over-commitment, perceived workload pressure, work–family conflict, and emotional exhaustion among service sector employees in Vietnam. The research process was implemented through several systematic stages to ensure methodological rigor and reliability of results.

First, an extensive review of domestic and international literature related to emotional exhaustion, over-commitment, workload pressure, and work–family conflict was conducted. This review helped clarify the theoretical foundations of the study and identify established relationships

among the constructs. Based on the Job Demand–Resource theory, Work-Family Conflict Theory and the Conservation of Resources theory, a conceptual research model and corresponding hypotheses were developed.

Next, a structured questionnaire was designed based on measurement scales that had been validated in prior studies. The survey instrument was carefully adapted to suit the cultural and occupational context of service sector employees in Vietnam. Prior to the main survey, a pilot test with a small group of respondents was conducted to ensure the clarity, relevance, and comprehensibility of the questionnaire items.

Primary data were collected through an online survey distributed to employees working in the service sector in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, two major economic and service centers in Vietnam. After the data collection stage, responses were screened to remove incomplete or invalid questionnaires. The remaining valid responses were coded and prepared for statistical analysis.

3.2. Research methods

The development of measurement scales in this study followed two main stages. First, relevant academic literature was reviewed to identify appropriate constructs and measurement items used in previous studies on emotional exhaustion, over-commitment, perceived workload pressure, and work–family conflict. The selected items were adapted from established scales and slightly modified in wording to ensure suitability for the research context.

All measurement items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The questionnaire consisted of two main sections. The first section measured the core constructs of the research model, including over-commitment, perceived workload pressure, work–family conflict, and emotional exhaustion. The second section collected demographic information such as gender, age, workplace location, and marital status, which were used to describe the sample and support further analysis.

The questionnaire was distributed through online platforms, including social media, email, and professional groups related to the service sector. A total of two hundred and forty-two responses were collected. After removing incomplete or invalid responses, two hundred and twenty-nine valid observations remained for analysis. This sample size satisfies the requirements for Structural Equation Modeling, meeting the commonly recommended ten-times rule for Partial Least Squares analysis.

The collected data were coded and analyzed using SmartPLS software. The analysis was conducted in two main stages. First, the measurement model was evaluated through tests of reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Second, the structural model was assessed to examine the relationships between the constructs and to test the proposed research hypotheses. In addition, multi-group analysis was performed to explore whether marital status moderates the relationships between the key variables in the research model.

4. Findings

4.1. Presentation and interpretation of results

4.1.1. Preliminary results

Prior to testing the structural model, a pilot test was conducted to assess the reliability and preliminary validity of the measurement scales. The pilot sample consisted of respondents working in the service sector to ensure that the items were clearly understood and suitable for the Vietnamese context.

Table 1. *Preliminary measurement model results*

Latent construct	Indicator	Outer Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Over-commitment (OC)	OC1	0.638	0.838	0.881	0.555
	OC2	0.822			
	OC3	0.662			
	OC4	0.679			
	OC5	0.783			
	OC6	0.855			
Perceived work overload (PWO)	PWO1	0.763	0.832	0.875	0.505
	PWO2	0.511			
	PWO3	0.784			
	PWO4	0.598			
	PWO5	0.650			
	PWO6	0.847			
	PWO7	0.762			
Work–family conflict (WFC)	WFC1	0.717	0.812	0.855	0.470
	WFC2	0.641			
	WFC3	0.608			
	WFC4	0.799			
	WFC5	0.679			

Latent construct	Indicator	Outer Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
	WFC6	0.082			
	WFC7	0.831			
	WFC8	0.816			
Work exhaustion (WE)	WE1	0.668	0.890	0.915	0.608
	WE2	0.600			
	WE3	0.816			
	WE4	0.872			
	WE5	0.885			
	WE6	0.799			
	WE7	0.776			

Source: Author

The preliminary results show that all constructs meet the minimum reliability thresholds. The factor loadings of observed variables are above the acceptable level, indicating that the items adequately represent their underlying constructs. In addition, Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values exceed the recommended thresholds, confirming the internal consistency of the scales. These results indicate that the measurement items are suitable for further analysis in the full structural model.

4.1.2. Measurement model assessment

Following the pilot test, the measurement model was evaluated using SmartPLS to examine reliability and convergent validity. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Measurement model results*

Construct	Indicator	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE	Outer Loading	R^2 (Outer Loading^2)	VIF
OC		0.831	0.877	0.543			
	OC1				0.738	0.545	1.641
	OC2				0.733	0.537	1.648

Construct	Indicator	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE	Outer Loading	R^2 (Outer Loading^2)	VIF
	OC3				0.716	0.513	1.535
	OC4				0.747	0.558	1.616
	OC5				0.717	0.514	1.540
	OC6				0.766	0.587	1.709
PWO		0.865	0.896	0.552			
	PWO1				0.724	0.524	1.712
	PWO2				0.676	0.457	1.559
	PWO3				0.739	0.546	1.683
	PWO4				0.753	0.567	1.956
	PWO5				0.731	0.534	1.663
	PWO6				0.754	0.569	1.930
	PWO7				0.816	0.666	2.355
WFC		0.862	0.894	0.547			
	WFC1				0.778	0.605	2.025
	WFC2				0.686	0.471	1.554
	WFC3				0.693	0.480	1.613
	WFC4				0.758	0.575	1.926
	WFC5				0.682	0.465	1.527
	WFC7				0.813	0.661	2.295
	WFC8				0.756	0.572	1.725
WE		0.857	0.890	0.538			
	WE1				0.740	0.548	1.724
	WE2				0.703	0.494	1.567

Construct	Indicator	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE	Outer Loading	R^2 (Outer Loading^2)	VIF
	WE3				0.751	0.564	1.675
	WE4				0.724	0.524	1.580
	WE5				0.757	0.573	1.726
	WE6				0.742	0.551	1.673
	WE7				0.713	0.508	1.614

Source: Author

The results indicate that the factor loadings of all retained items exceed the recommended threshold of 0.6, demonstrating satisfactory indicator reliability. In addition, the Composite Reliability (CR) values for all constructs are above 0.7, suggesting strong internal consistency. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are greater than 0.5, indicating adequate convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019). These findings confirm that the measurement model meets the recommended reliability and validity criteria.

4.1.3 Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT). The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Discriminant validity results*

	OC	PWO	WFC	WE
OC	0.737			
PWO	0.352	0.743		
WFC	0.366	0.549	0.740	
WE	0.506	0.597	0.627	0.733

Source: Author

The findings show that the square root of AVE for each construct is higher than the correlations with other constructs. Additionally, the HTMT values are below the threshold of 0.85. These results confirm that the constructs are empirically distinct from one another and that discriminant validity is established.

4.1.4 Structural model and hypothesis testing

After validating the measurement model, the structural model was tested to evaluate the proposed hypotheses regarding the relationships between over-commitment, perceived work overload, work-family conflict and work exhaustion.

Table 4. *Hypothesis testing results*

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	STDEV	T-statistics	P-values	Results
H1	OC →WE	0.266	0.056	4.749	0.000	Supported
H2	PWO → WE	0.305	0.054	5.659	0.000	Supported
H3	WFC→WE	0.362	0.054	6.735	0.000	Supported

Source: Author

The results indicate that all proposed hypotheses are supported. First, over-commitment has a positive and statistically significant effect on work exhaustion. This finding suggests that employees who invest excessive psychological and emotional resources in their work are more likely to experience emotional depletion. Second, perceived work overload also shows a significant positive relationship with work exhaustion. When employees perceive that the amount and intensity of work exceed their available resources, they are more likely to experience emotional fatigue. Third, work-family conflict demonstrates the strongest positive effect on work exhaustion among the three predictors. This indicates that conflicts between professional responsibilities and family roles play a critical role in draining employees' emotional resources.

4.1.5 Multi-group analysis (PLS-MGA)

To further explore potential differences across employee groups, a multi-group analysis using the PLS-MGA technique was conducted. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. *Multi-group analysis results (PLS-MGA)*

Relationship	Single group (n=67)	Married group (n=162)	Δβ	MGA p-value
	β (p-value)	β (p-value)	Difference Δβ	
OC→WE	0.135 (p=0.276)	0.346 (p=0.000)	-0.210	0.090
PWO→WE	0.245 (p=0.004)	0.370 (p=0.000)	-0.125	0.226
WFC→WE	0.481 (p=0.000)	0.258 (p=0.000)	0.224	0.035

Source: Author

The analysis reveals differences in the strength of relationships across groups based on marital

status. Specifically, the impact of work–family conflict on work exhaustion is stronger for certain groups of employees, suggesting that personal circumstances may influence how individuals experience and respond to work–family pressures. These findings provide additional evidence that personal and contextual factors may shape the way job demands translate into emotional exhaustion.

4.2. Strengths and limitations

This study provides several methodological strengths. First, the research integrates multiple theoretical perspectives, including the Job Demands–Resources model, Conservation of Resources theory, and Work-Family Conflict theory, to develop a comprehensive model explaining emotional exhaustion among service employees. Second, the use of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling allows for the simultaneous examination of multiple relationships between variables while accommodating complex models and relatively moderate sample sizes.

Despite these strengths, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study relies primarily on self-reported survey data, which may introduce common method bias. In addition, the sample focuses on service employees in two major Vietnamese cities, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or industries. Future studies may expand the sample scope and incorporate longitudinal designs to capture the dynamic development of emotional exhaustion over time.

4.3. Synthesis of general relationships

4.3.1. The impact of over-commitment on work exhaustion

The findings confirm that over-commitment significantly increases the likelihood of work exhaustion. Employees who continuously invest excessive time and psychological energy into their work often struggle to disengage from job demands, leading to prolonged emotional strain. This result supports the theoretical argument of the Conservation of Resources theory, which suggests that continuous resource investment without adequate recovery can lead to resource depletion and emotional exhaustion (Hobfoll, 1989).

4.3.2. The impact of perceived work overload on work exhaustion

The results also demonstrate that perceived work overload significantly contributes to work exhaustion. When employees face excessive workloads and tight deadlines, they are required to allocate substantial cognitive and emotional resources to meet work demands. According to the Job Demands–Resources model, high job demands such as workload pressure can initiate the health-impairment process, eventually resulting in emotional exhaustion (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

4.3.3 The impact of work–family conflict on work exhaustion

Among the examined factors, work–family conflict exhibits the strongest effect on work exhaustion. Conflicting demands between work responsibilities and family obligations create persistent psychological strain that reduces employees' capacity for emotional recovery. This

finding aligns with previous studies indicating that work–family conflict is a key predictor of emotional exhaustion and other forms of occupational stress (Allen et al., 2000; Amstad et al., 2011).

4.4 Linkage between the study findings and previous research

The findings of this study are broadly consistent with previous empirical research on occupational stress and emotional exhaustion. First, the positive relationship between over-commitment and work exhaustion aligns with prior studies suggesting that excessive psychological attachment to work can accelerate emotional depletion (Mazzetti et al., 2021). Second, the effect of perceived work overload confirms earlier findings that high job demands represent one of the most significant predictors of emotional exhaustion in service environments (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Finally, the strong influence of work–family conflict supports a growing body of research indicating that boundary conflicts between work and personal life are among the most critical sources of emotional strain in contemporary work settings (Allen et al., 2000; Amstad et al., 2011). By integrating these factors into a unified model, the present study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how different sources of pressure jointly shape emotional exhaustion among service employees.

5. Policy Implications for Corporations

This study examines factors influencing work exhaustion among service employees in Vietnam. Using PLS-SEM, the findings show that over-commitment, perceived work overload, and work-family conflict all have positive and significant effects on emotional exhaustion, with work-family conflict having the strongest impact. The model explains a moderate level of variance in work exhaustion. The study also finds that marital status moderates the effect of work-family conflict, with stronger effects among single employees. Overall, the results show that both job demands and difficulties balancing work and personal life contribute to emotional exhaustion in the service sector.

Based on these results, several practical implications can be suggested for organizations and policymakers:

First, organizations should reduce work-family conflict by supporting better work-life balance. Flexible work arrangements, such as adjustable schedules or hybrid working options, can help employees manage both work and family responsibilities. Clear boundaries between work time and personal time, including limiting work communication after hours, may also reduce role conflict and emotional strain.

Second, organizations should improve workload management. Regular evaluation of workload and clearer task priorities can help ensure that job demands remain reasonable. Performance evaluation should focus more on work outcomes rather than long working hours. Encouraging breaks and sufficient leave can also support employees' recovery.

Third, organizations should promote healthy work commitment. While commitment to work is valuable, excessive commitment may lead employees to invest too much time and energy in their jobs. Training on time management and boundary management may help employees maintain a more balanced approach to work.

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