

## Job Demands

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According to Demerouti et al ( 2001), **job demands** refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs. Examples are high work pressure and emotionally demanding interactions with clients or customers. Although **job demands** are not necessarily negative, they may turn into **hindrance demands** when meeting those **demands** requires high effort from which the employee has not adequately recovered (Meijman & Mulder, 1998).

An overwhelming body of empirical evidence from the job stress literature indicates that emotional **job demands** contribute to stress reactions such as burnout and psychosomatic health symptoms (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002). In line with the above statement Zapf and Holz, (2006), stated that emotional **job demands** can be stressful. For instance, a longitudinal study by van Vegchel et al. (2004) showed that emotional **job demands** predicted emotional exhaustion (burnout's key component) over time. According to Maslach (2004), it is therefore not surprising that the burnout concept was originally introduced as an individual reaction to high emotional **job demands** in human service work (Maslach, 1978).

Job resources refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that are: (a) functional in achieving work goals; (b) reduce **job demands** and the associated physiological and psychological costs; or (c) stimulate personal growth, learning, and development (Bakker, 2011). Hence, resources are not only necessary to deal with **job demands**, but they are also important in their own right. Whereas meaningful variations in levels of certain specific **job demands** and resources can be found in almost every occupational group (like work pressure, autonomy), other **job demands** and resources are unique. For example, whereas physical **demands** are still very important **job demands** nowadays for construction workers and nurses, cognitive demands are much more relevant for scientists and engineers.

### **Job Demands–Resources Theory**

This theory was propounded by Bakker & Demerouti (2007) and for the past decade, the theory has gained a lot of traction. According to Crawford & Rich (2010), with JD-R theory, we can understand, explain, and make predictions about employee wellbeing (e.g., burnout, health, motivation, work engagement) and job performance. The model has been used to predict job burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001), organizational commitment, work enjoyment (Van Veldhoven, & Xanthopoulou, 2010), connectedness ( Bakker and Dollard, 2007), and work engagement (Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006). Besides, the JD-R model has been used to predict the consequences of these experiences, including sickness absenteeism (Carneiro, & Borg, 2012), and job performance (Bakker et al., 2008).

The second proposition of JD-R theory is that **job demands** and resources are the triggers of two fairly

independent processes, namely a health impairment process and a motivational process. Thus, whereas *job demands* are generally the most important predictors of such outcomes as exhaustion, psychosomatic health complaints, and repetitive strain injury (RSI) (e.g., Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2006), job resources are generally the most important predictors of work enjoyment, motivation, and engagement (Bakker et al., 2010). The reasons behind these unique effects are that *job demands* cost effort and consume energetic resources, whereas job resources fulfil basic psychological needs, 9 Resources, Coping, and Control Personal resources.

A corpus body of evidence has supported the dual pathways to employee wellbeing proposed by JD-R theory and showed that it can predict important organizational outcomes. Bakker et al. (2003), applied the JD-R model to call centre employees of a Dutch telecom company and investigated its predictive validity for self-reported absenteeism and turnover intentions. The results from a series of structural equation modelling (SEM) analyses largely supported the dual processes. In the first energy-driven process, *job demands* (i.e., work pressure, computer problems, emotional demands, and changes in tasks) were the most important predictors of health problems, which, in turn, were related to sickness absence (duration and long-term absence). In the second motivation-driven process, job resources (i.e., social support, supervisory coaching, performance feedback, and time control) were the only predictors of dedication and organizational commitment, which, in turn, were related to turnover intentions.

A study done by Hakanen et al. (2006), found comparable results among Finnish teachers. More specifically, they found that burnout mediated the effect of *job demands* on ill-health and that work engagement mediated the effect of job resources on organizational commitment. Moreover, Bakker et al. (2003), applied the JD-R model to nutrition production employees and used the model to predict future company-registered absenteeism. The results from SEM analyses showed that *job demands* were unique predictors of burnout and indirectly of absence duration, whereas job resources were unique predictors of organizational commitment, and indirectly of absence spells. Last but not least, Bakker et al. (2004) used the JD-R model to examine the relationship between job characteristics, burnout, and other ratings of performance. They hypothesized and found that *job demands* (e.g., work pressure and emotional demands) were the most important antecedents of the exhaustion component of burnout, which, in turn, predicted in-role performance. In contrast, job resources (e.g., autonomy and social support) were the most

important predictors of extra-role performance, through their relationship with (dis)engagement. In collaboration, these findings support JD-R theory's claim that *job demands* and job resources initiate two different psychological processes, which eventually affect important organizational outcomes. There is no credible denial that *job demands* and resources initiate different processes, but have also joint effects

The third proposition put forward by JD-R theory is that *job demands* and resources interact in predicting occupational wellbeing. There are two possible ways in which *job demands* and resources may have a combined effect on wellbeing, and indirectly influence performance. The first interaction is the one where job resources buffer the impact of *job demands* on the strain. A series of studies have shown that job resources like social support, autonomy, performance feedback, and development opportunities can mitigate the impact of *job demands* (work pressure, emotional demands, etc.) on the

strain, including burnout (e.g., Bakker et al., 2007). Employees who have many job resources available can cope better with their daily *job demands*. The second interaction is the one where *job demands* amplify the impact of job resources on motivation/engagement. Thus, research has shown that job resources become salient and have the strongest positive impact on work engagement when *job demands* are high. In particular, when a worker is confronted with challenging *job demands*, job resources become a valuable and foster dedication to the tasks at hand.

Hakanen, Bakker, and Demerouti (2005) tested the latter interaction hypothesis in a sample of Finnish dentists employed in the public sector. It was hypothesized that job resources (e.g., variability in the required professional skills, peer contacts) are most beneficial in maintaining work engagement under conditions of *high job demands* (e.g., workload, unfavourable physical environment). The dentists were split into two random groups to cross-validate the findings. A set of hierarchical regression analyses resulted in 17 out of 40 significant interactions (40%), showing, for example, that variability in professional skills boosted work engagement when the qualitative workload was high and mitigated the negative effect of qualitative workload on work engagement. Conceptually similar findings have been reported by Bakker et al. (2007). In one of the studies among Finnish teachers working in elementary, secondary, and vocational schools, it was found that job resources act as buffers and diminish the negative relationship between pupil misbehaviour and work engagement. Also, it was discovered that job resources particularly influence work engagement when teachers are confronted with high levels of pupil misconduct.

A series of moderated structural equation modelling analyses resulted in 14 out of 18 possible two-way interaction effects (78%). In particular, supervisor support, innovativeness, appreciation, and organizational climate were important job resources for teachers that helped them cope with demanding interactions with students. Finally, in a large study among more than 12,000 employees from different occupational groups, Bakker et al. (2010) found that task enjoyment and organizational commitment were also the results of combinations of many different *job demands* and job resources. Task enjoyment and commitment were highest when employees were confronted with challenging and stimulating tasks and had sufficient resources at their disposal (e.g., performance feedback, high-quality relationships with colleagues).

In sum, previous research indicates that *job demands* and resources interact and have a multiplicative impact on employee wellbeing.

According to a study done by Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, and Schaufeli (2007) in which they examined the role of three personal resources (self-efficacy, organizational-based self-esteem, and optimism) in predicting work engagement and exhaustion showed that personal resources did not manage to offset the relationship between *job demands* and exhaustion.

In light of the above discussion, it is important that the issue of *job demands* should be examined more often than never before and where warranted appropriate interventions need to be taken.

## References

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