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The Impact of Personal Traits, Quality of Working Life, and Psychological Well-Being on Job Burnout among Sri Lankan Big 4 External Auditors

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Abstract

Given the detrimental effects of job burnout on both external auditors and external audit firms, the current study seeks to determine how personality traits, the quality of the auditors' working life, and their psychological well-being on job burnout in external auditing. The focus on a specific audit industry, where socioeconomic, political, and cultural factors differ greatly from those of Western and European developed economies, makes the current study particularly exceptional and unique. The authorities, lawmakers, and audit companies may find value for the findings offered in this study. The considered population under this study is the people who are currently working in the Big 4 audit firms. The sample is considered from the people who work as associates, supervisors, and managers. The sample is selected as 250 auditors working at junior, senior, and manager levels in the KPMG, EY, PWC, and Deloitte (SJMS Associate). Data was gathered through the distribution of questionnaires, which were then analysed using IBM (SPSS-23) software in order to arrive at conclusions. In line with previous research and this research expectations, this study indicates that the personal traits, quality of working life, and psychological well-being of Sri Lankan external auditors have a negative effect on job burnout.

Keywords: *Job Burnout, Quality of Working Life, Psychological Well-being, External Auditors*

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction and Background of the Study

In the twenty-first century, with globalization and digital technologies, human resources have become an important determinant in organizational performance. One of the hallmarks of a good organization is how it handles its employees' physical and mental health, partly because human resources are an organization's most precious asset and assess the performance and efficacy of its activities. According to earlier literature, quality of working life is no longer a novel concern, and most managers prioritize the qualitative components of work environment and employee mental health to achieve their objectives (Walton, 1973). According to Muftah (2011), one of the significant areas of HR management that have gained great attention from academics is quality of working life, which recognizes personnel as an "asset" rather than a "cost" to the organization.

Employees who experience a good work environment and have their needs met personally tend to stay loyal to their employer. In other words, it has been suggested that meeting individual needs are essential to increasing an organization's effectiveness and efficiency. According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, which divides individual needs into physiological, safety, love, self-esteem, and self-actualization needs, is seen as being like the quality of working life in this regard. It suggests that each individual need is distinct from the others and that a need that is significant to one employee may not be significant to other employees. In general, a person's occupation is a significant component of their life. People’s psychological requirements, like social contacts, self-assurance, skill, and mental fortitude, and physical well-being are all satisfied by their occupations. Under certain conditions, occupations may be linked to several unfavorable consequences, such as a bad working environment, high work demands, difficult job duties, and changes in working conditions. Following such events, job burnout is frequently cited as the most important phenomenon that slowly develops over time and is probably going to result in serious problems for both people and businesses (Salehi and Dastanpoor, 2018).

According to Freudenberger (1974), coined the term "burnout" in its present context. He described "job burnout" as mental and physical tiredness caused by working conditions. When considering prior studies there has been a vast corpus of research on burnout in various areas. Burnout is thought to be induced by mental and physical tiredness (Narehan, et. al. 2014). Furthermore, according to Narehan (2014), there is a three-dimensional burnout framework that includes emotional exhaustion (occurs while individuals have no emotional connections or, more precisely, when one's emotional reserves are depleted and they feel lethargic), poor personal accomplishment (regarding lack of motivation, low self-esteem, and career advancement), and depersonalization (emotional callousness and emotional distance from clients and colleagues). In addition to these characteristics, the conflict has been linked to burnout, which is characterized by an obsession with and willingness to engage with the problems of others (Maslach et al. 2001; Schwarzkopf et al. 2016).

According to Abuaddous, Bataineh, and Alabood (2018), different professions may experience varying degrees of burnout. It was found that the burnout rate experienced by external auditors, one of the two categories of the auditing profession (internal and external auditor), is greater than the average when compared to other professions like physiotherapists and social workers. External auditors frequently have cynical attitudes about their clients or coworkers, as well as high levels of stress and weariness (Mohd Nor, M. 2011). Later, it was discovered that, particularly during the hectic season, families also engage in this cynical conduct. Additionally, external auditors frequently lack the will to continue working and hold a strong dislike for their line of work (L. Diana, personal communication, October 30, 2020).

Being overworked has always been a problem in the accounting industry. Accounting studies from the 1980s showed that excessive time pressure could lead to abnormal auditor performance (Kelley and Seller 1982). According to subsequent research (Sweeney and Summers 2002; Fogerty, Singh, Rhoads, and Moore 2000), a high workload is a factor in employee burnout, higher attrition, and poorer performance. Accounting businesses have expanded attempts to monitor and manage workloads as they have grown more conscious of these issues. As an illustration, PwC states that its procedures are "designed to assist our staff members properly manage their workloads" (PwC 2014, 12). Similar to Deloitte, Ernst & Young evaluates the workloads of its audit executives "to ensure that they have the time necessary to carry out quality work" (EY 2015, 13) and Ernst & Young conducts "a detailed review of partner and senior manager duties annually" (Deloitte 2017, 19).

The British left behind an economic, political, and governmental structure in Sri Lanka that was all their own. The British ruled the country for more than 150 years before it gained independence in 1948. Prior to 1970, Sri Lanka's accounting and auditing standards were based on those of the Companies' Ordinance of Ceylon, a piece of then-current UK law (Perera, 1975). The Joint Stock Companies Ordinance No. 4 of 1861 established the first British company law in Sri Lanka. The Companies Ordinance of 1938, which required business auditors to register, highlighted the need to establish a regulating body and lay the groundwork for a formal admission process into the field of accounting in Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka, this is where the auditing profession had its start.

It may be said that the founding of the Accounting Boards in 1941, and the ICASL in 1959 served as a catalyst for the development of the Sri Lankan auditing sector. Companies Act No. 17 of 1982 and Companies Ordinance of 1938 were replaced by the Companies Act No. 7 of 2007. The Sri Lanka Accounting and Auditing Standards Act (No. 15) of 1995 was written by the Ministry of Finance and Planning (MOFP) with the assistance of accountants and representatives from the business and financial sectors. This Act designates particular businesses as Specified Business Entities (SBEs) and regulates the audit of SBE financial statements for the durations starting in January 1999 (ADB, 2002). The ICASL creates accounting and auditing standards in Sri Lanka in accordance with the Sri Lanka Accounting and Auditing Standards Act of 1995. These standards have been somewhat amended to take into account regional business requirements based on the ISA released by the IAASB of the IFAC. Accounting and auditing in Sri Lanka's corporate sector are directly impacted by international organizations like the IFAC, International Accounting Standards Board (IASB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), and Asian Development Bank (ADB).

In such a kind of situation, this study mainly focuses on what is the impact of personality traits, quality of working life, and psychological well-being on job burnout among Sri Lankan external auditors.

1.2. Problem Justification and Problem Statement

After nearly 30 years of civil conflict, the country's capital market has experienced a considerable upswing in the last ten years. About US$19.5 billion was the overall market capitalization in January 2016 (Wickramasinghe, J.B. 2015). KPMG, Ernst & Young, PWC, and BDO Partners are the four biggest international accounting firms operating in Sri Lanka; together, they audit 84% of the publicly listed companies in the Colombo Stock Exchange. As of December 2013, these publicly traded firms accounted for 98% of the market capitalization. Most of the remaining audits are performed by medium size audit firms. In Sri Lanka, there are 20 medium-sized audit companies with at least four audit partners (Wickramasinghe, J.B. 2015).

According to previous research done in Sri Lanka (Panchali, J., & Seneviratne, S. M. 2019), external auditing is considered one of the most stressful jobs that need both the best knowledge and the suspicious mind. Organizations like audit firms rely largely on their staff. Therefore, firms should consider the mental and physical health of employees to provide better services to society.

The facts mentioned in the introduction section identify that there have been many studies performed to evaluate burnout in various areas. However, there has been a lack of research performed in Sri Lanka to identify the impact of personality traits, quality of work life, and psychological well-being on job burnout among Sri Lankan external auditors.

1.3. Research Questions

Therefore, based on the problem justification previously mentioned, the following may be said about the research questions of this study:

- What is the relationship between personality traits and external auditors' job burnout?
- What is the relationship between quality of work life and external auditors' job burnout?
- What is the relationship between psychological well-being and external auditors' job burnout?

1.4. Research Objective

Based on the previously mentioned research questions, this study aims to:

To examine the impact of personality traits, quality of working life, and psychological well-being on job burnout among Sri Lankan external auditors.

1.5. Scope of the Study

This study examines the impact that personal traits, quality of working life, and psychological well-being on job burnout among Sri Lankan external auditors. From the people who are working in the external auditing field, this study considers the people who are working in the Big 4 audit firms in Sri Lanka.

This research is limited only to the people who are currently working in the Big 4 audit firms as audit associates, senior team members, and managers. Also, this study uses primary data from distributing questionnaires to external auditors. There are many audit firms in Sri Lanka scaling from small to large. Employees of the main four audit companies in the Colombo district are taken into consideration for the study due to the practical challenges in acquiring data.

Having considered the selected sample it seems that this study is restricted due to the sample size and the time frame.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Personal Traits

The word "personality trait" describes patterns of behavior and thought that are constant across time and an extensive variety of situations. According to many recent empirical studies (Boone & Hendriks, 2009; Bozionelos, 2004; Kauer, et al., 2007), personality traits have an impact on people's values and attitudes. One of the personality traits that has gotten a lot of attention in the organizational literature is locus of control. The degree to which a person believes that influential outsiders are in charge of events (external locus) as opposed to that individual's internal locus is referred to as locus of control (Rotter, 1966). People who have an extensive internal locus of control believe they are in charge of certain elements of their workplace. Prior research (Judge & Bono, 2001) has shown a favorable relationship between an internal locus of control and outcomes for desirable employment, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance. When it comes to their accomplishments and failures, internal people take ownership of their actions, whereas external people feel helpless and blame other forces for their circumstances (Aube, et al., 2007).

This study mainly focuses on personal traits such as work experience, level of education, field of study, gender, and position.

2.2. Quality of Working Life

The phrase "quality of work life" (QWL) has many definitions, according to Nadler and Lawler (1983). According to Nadler and Lawler (1983, p. 26), the focus of QWL should be on resolving how individuals can perform their jobs more effectively as well as how work may improve an individual's mood or state of being. A group of measures for QWL was created by Sirgy et al. (2001) and addresses a variety of employee demands, including those for respect, actualization, knowledge growth, health and safety, financial security, and social support. QWL assesses how satisfied employees are with their ability to meet a variety of requirements by acquiring and preserving resources, taking part in a range of organizational tasks, and accomplishing their individual and professional goals at work (Sirgy et al., 2001). According to Nadler and Lawler (1983), the involvement of employees in problem-solving, work enrichment, and decision-making autonomy would likely increase as a result of QWL activities.

2.3. Phycological Well-being

Positive affect, negative affect, mental health, emotional tiredness, happiness in life, domain happiness, psychological effect, and personal, psychological, and emotional well-being are all generally referred to as being in a state of well-being (Wright & Huang 2012, p. 1188). All elements that have a major impact on how people perceive and think about their lives might be considered components of psychological wellbeing (Rath et al., 2010). According to Robertson and Flint-Taylor (2009), on page 6, "the affective and purposive psychological state that people experience while they are at work" is the definition of employee psychological well-being in the organizational domain.

Two perspectives on the idea of psychological well-being are "hedonic" and "eudaimonic" (Boniwell & Henry, 2007; Fredrickson, 1998). The term "hedonic" refers to a state of well-being that includes pleasant sentiments and general contentment with life. People's attention and actions can be expanded by positive emotions, which contributes to an increase in psychological health (Fredrickson, 1998). According to Robertson and Cooper (2010), the alternative strategy, known as "eudaimonic," refers to having meaningful life events that give people's actions direction and values. In conclusion, two essential elements of psychological well-being are enjoyment and purpose, suggesting that cultivating psychological wellness in the workplace should involve both contentment and a distinct sense of purpose in one's work (Robertson & Flint-Taylor, 2009).

2.4. Job Burnout

Burnout is a work-related condition characterized by ongoing drowsiness, cynicism, and decreased professional competence, according to Maslach et al. (2001). A loss of a person's power reserves, continual fatigue, and chronic tiredness are characteristics of exhaustion. Cynicism is the propensity to disengage from one's work and to create negative evaluations of it. Finally, diminished professional effectiveness has been defined as a reduction in one's perceptions of competence and professional accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Although there are several extra explanations for burnout (such as Demerouti et al., 2010), many approaches incorporate the traits of exhaustion and cynicism. Job burnout, then, is a chronic psychological condition that results from a person's incapacity or reluctance to put in the required effort at work.

2.5. External Auditors

According to the literature, the external auditing profession has long provided an accountability service. The auditing role was created within the framework of the agency relationship (principal/agent) as a method to reduce the risk of the "owner or principal" who allocated assets into the trusteeship for an "agent". The agent's primary duty is to see to it that the assets are used properly and that the principal receives accurate accounting reports within a certain time frame.

Researchers and professional organizations have recognized the responsibilities of external auditors (Masoud, 2017; Porter et al., 2012; Porter, 1993). Fraud detection, assurance of a going concern, assurance of the correctness of financial information, and reporting to regulatory authorities were the areas of greatest concern for most respondents. As a result, numerous modifications have been made to broaden the duties and responsibilities of an auditor. Almost all studies have acknowledged that the auditor should take a more active and accountable role when it comes to fraud and going concern reporting. The studies also claim that to keep up with changes in the regulatory environment, auditor responsibilities must be modified.

Auditors are required by law to adhere to the statutory framework established by the in-force laws and regulations relating to accounting and auditing. Every listed company's set of financial statements is audited by a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka who has been granted a license to operate by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka. The auditors express an opinion in their audit report that the financial statements were prepared and presented in compliance with Sri Lanka Accounting Standards and that the audit was carried out in line with Sri Lanka Auditing Standards (CA Sri Lanka, 2017).

2.6. Personal traits and job burnout

There is widespread agreement that the field of auditing and the job of auditors are essential and inevitable in today's business and politics. When performing to the best of their ability, professional assurance services, auditors must be in good physical and mental health. There is evidence to support the claim that a public accounting firm's human resources play a significant role in determining its success or failure. More significantly, auditor personality traits are thought to influence an auditor's judgment as well as performance (Utami and Nahartyo, 2013). Most of the previous research on audit & assurance makes the case that the background in which auditors operate includes several features that are most probable to reduce the quality of an audit (Utami & Nahartyo, 2013). Accordingly, job stress has been identified as the most important factor impacting the audit profession. Several stressors, including burnout, have been identified as substantial contributors to the work stress experienced by auditors (Larson, 2011; Utami & Nahartyo, 2013). According to Fogarty et al. (2000), job or work overload is a component of burnout. Thus, the researchers contend from both quantitative and qualitative viewpoints that role overload might result in job burnout. Particularly, an excessive amount of qualitative labor causes auditors to become distracted and fail to properly accomplish their jobs (Zohar, 1997; Maslach and Jackson, 1984). This frequently happens when auditors believe they don't have enough time to finish the assignment before it's due (Cordes and Dougherty, 1993).

Prior research on burnout often points to elements in the workplace that contribute to job burnout. However, several individual and personal characteristics can have a big impact on whether burnout occurs (Utami and Nahartyo 2013). According to some meta-analyses' findings, for instance, the role stress model may be moderated by personality traits or type (Jackson and Schuler, 1985). In this regard, 58 auditors employed by public accounting firms in Yogyakarta, Semarang, Jakarta, and Palembang participated in Utami and Nahartyo's (2013) survey. The results indicate that personality type A is likely to increase the relationship between role overload and burnout. The domestic research by Amiri et al. (2011) examines job burnout between bank employees and provides solutions to the problem. Their findings demonstrate that job burnout is a serious issue that requires full attention.

According to the research, factors such as marital status, gender, number of children, educational background, workplace, and work experience have a big impact on job burnout. According to the findings of this study, senior managers must learn to manage job tiredness, role stressors, and unfavorable selfevaluations of their performance at work. Mahdinia et al. (2015) investigate the connection between workplace stressors and workers' increased job burnout in an industrial setting. The findings indicate a substantial link between personal characteristics (chronic illness, accidents, educational attainment, and work experience) and job burnout.

They discovered that job burnout is more likely to result from four different types of stressors at work, including demand, role overload, communication, and turnovers. To put it another way, they provide some evidence that hostile workplace interactions, workload, employees who are unfamiliar with the organization's goals and tasks, employees who are unaware of the importance of their role within the organization, staff organization, and job turnovers all contribute to job burnout.

Based on the prior literature can build the following hypothesis,

H1: There is a negative relationship between personality traits and auditors' job burnout.

2.7. Psychological well-being, Quality of working life (QWL), and job burnout

Numerous studies (e.g., Sheppard and Herrick, 1972; Simmons and Mares, 1985; Knox et al., 2001; Sirgy et al., 2006; Ahmad, 2013) have discovered a significant relationship between the physical and social work environment and employees' psychological well-being. According to Knox et al. (2001), the quality of working life is largely influenced by the degree of strengths and weaknesses that are present in the working environment. Similar to Bagtasos (2011), they view the quality of working life as an advantage within an organization that contributes to the health and welfare of the workers.

Employees not only complete their regular activities but also obtain a significant amount of new knowledge and ability when their known "job requirements or facets" are totally achieved (Narehan et al., 2014). This collection of research indicates that a number of factors might cause workplace burnout, including high workloads, overtime shifts, conflicting role expectations, and unmet job demands. As audit firms and their auditors are known to be a high-stress job encompassing significant turnover and busy periods (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2004; Herda, 2012), these factors, along with the QWL consequences mentioned earlier in this section, are frequently significant in the practice of auditing.

Particularly, independent auditors usually struggle to manage a number of professional problems such as statutory deadlines, completing Chartered Accounting examinations, and work overload that leaves little time for their own lives. The recent economic downturn and the rise of offshore audit & assurance services have also resulted in several significant layoffs in the audit industry (Daugherty and Dickins 2009; Herda, 2012). Auditors are affected by these occurrences, which can cause emotional tiredness, tension, frustration, and, more generally, job burnout.

According to accounting research, burnout can have serious negative effects on individuals who are auditors and audit firms, including increased work turnover, bad work performance, workplace unhappiness, and job frustration (Jones et al. 2010; Herda, 2012). Herda (2012) looks at the interaction among external auditors and auditing companies in this regard and how it affects both job stress and intention of leaving the position. Their findings imply that good connections among auditors and their company depend on treating employees fairly.

Furthermore, it is less probable that auditors will become burned out on the job and quit the company if the audit firms employ fair methods in their internal decision-making. Additionally, successors are more likely to receive predecessors' firm obligations than vice versa. Marvian Hosseini and Lari DashtBayaz (2015) investigate the effect of job burnout on the relationship between job stress and auditors' job performance for a sample of Iranian auditors. The results show a significant relationship between burnout, job stress, and performance. According to the researchers, improved auditor performance may dramatically lessen job burnout and role stress.

Based on the prior literature can build the following hypotheses, *H2: There is a negative relationship between quality of working life and auditors' job burnout.*

H3: There is a negative relationship between psychological well-being and auditors' job burnout.

3. Research Methodology

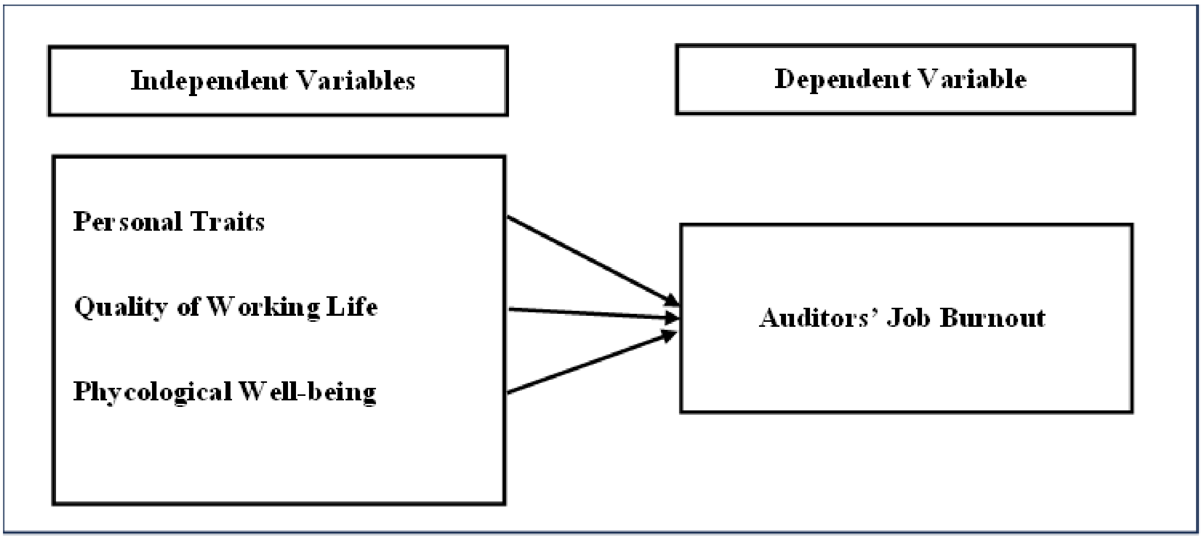
3.1. Introduction

A deductive technique is used based on this framework to ensure that the results are accurate. This suggests that the ideas already in existence are used to draw conclusions about how to solve current issues or fill in research gaps found in the literature study. The goal of the research is to find the necessary solutions, not to propose or create new theories, by either expanding the current body of knowledge to meet the goals of the study or by refining it by reorganizing the existing information to make it more appropriate for the current research goal. A deductive method will result in more accurate discoveries in order to do this than putting forth new theories.

3.2. Conceptual Diagram

Table 1 represents the basic overall research framework including the direct relationship between independent variables and dependent variables.

Table 1 - Conceptual Framework



Source: Author Compiled

3.3. Operationalization

Table 2 - Operationalization

Variable	Working Definition	Measurement
Dependent Variable		
Auditors' Job Burnout	Job burnout can define as chronic psychological condition that results from a person's incapacity or reluctance to put in the required effort at work.	Five-point Likert scale (Salehi, M., Seyyed, F. and Farhangdoust, S., 2020)
Variable	**Working Definition**	**Measurement**
Independent Variables		
Personal Traits	Personal Traits describes patterns of behavior and thought that are constant across time and across an extensive variety of situations.	Factors such as Job position, gender, field of study, level of education, and work experience (Salehi, M., Seyyed, F. and Farhangdoust, S., 2020)
Quality of working life (QWL)	QWL assesses how satisfied employees are with their ability to meet a variety of requirements by acquiring and preserving resources, taking part in a range of organizational activities, and accomplishing their personal and professional goals at work (Sirgy et al., 2001).	Five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Salehi, M., Seyyed, F. and Farhangdoust, S., 2020)

Psychological well-being	Psychological well-being broadly refers to "positive affect, negative affect, mental health, emotional exhaustion, life satisfaction, domain satisfaction, dispositional affect, and subjective, psychological, and emotional well-being (Wright & Huang, 2012).	Five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Salehi, M., Seyyed, F. and Farhangdoust, S., 2020)

Source: Author Compiled

3.4. Research Approach and Justification

This study is conducted under the **positivistic paradigm** where the quantitative approach is used to conduct the research.

The positivism paradigm is the method of quantitatively measuring the truth of independent factors' reality. Further, it was identified hypothesis verification, quantitative methodologies, surveys, and experiments as the methodologies used in the positivistic paradigm by Guba & Lincoln (1994) and Healy & Perry (2000). By providing a clear idea of the positivism paradigm of the research study, Coghlan and Brydon-Miller (2014) state that the positivism approach is a famous method used among the social sciences where gathering numerical data to analyses the data more reliably.

As per referred related prior studies to the current study, many more studies performed through a quantitative approach to bring forward the objectives of respective research. Therefore, as per the most used method and the applicability, it is ascertained to use a quantitative approach under the positivism paradigm.

3.5. Hypotheses

Based on the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1 and by referring to the prior literature related to the subject, the hypotheses are developed as follows.

H1: There is a negative relationship between personality traits and auditors' job burnout.

H2: There is a negative relationship between quality of working life and auditors' job burnout.

H3: There is a negative relationship between psychological well-being and auditors' job burnout.

3.6. Population and Study Sample

The population consisted of people who are working as external auditors in Big 4 audit firms in Sri Lanka. The sample is selected from the people who are currently working as associates, supervisors, and managers of Big 4 audit firms.

3.7. Sample Size and Selection of Sample

The sample size is 250 external auditors (Associates, Senior team members, and Managers) who are currently working at Big 4 audit firms (KPMG, Ernst & Young, PWC, and Deloitte) which are currently located in Colombo.

3.8. Sources and Collection of Data

By distributing questionnaires to employees of the Big 4 audit companies, data have gathered.

4. Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Introduction

The ultimate objective of this section is to thoroughly review and show the data gathered via the questionnaire in order to compile and perform statistical analysis on them. Questions were assessed for validity and reliability. Each type of replies was supplied independently to enable a more thorough evaluation of the results.

There will be responses to research questions. This study aims to identify relationships between demographics, quality of work life, and psychological well-being among undergraduates. Data analysis has done using a quantitative methodology. Survey responses were analyzed to assess job burnout among Big 4 external auditors. Data was acquired using a survey and analyzed through SPSS software version 23 to identify the relationship between factors.

4.2. Data Preparation for Analysis – Screening and Cleaning Data

To ensure that the obtained data is consistent with quality, reliability, and validity to an appropriate degree, screening and cleaning procedures must be performed before the data is processed to provide answers to the study objectives. Here, the researcher determines if the data set is accurate enough to allow for further research. In order to identify the missing values and outliers, the researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-23) software.

4.2.1. Missing Value

The values for the variables in the current observations that are not stored are known as missing values. Non-ignorable and ignorable missing values make up the two primary categories of missing values.

Because the researcher does not anticipate receiving answers to specific inquiries, they can disregard the ignorable missing data. When answers are expected by the researcher but are not given to respondents, this is referred to as non-ignorable missing values. Therefore, non-ignorable missing values must be given appropriate attention and cannot be disregarded. There aren't any missing values in this investigation. The researcher is not interested in changing the existing data collection in any way. The findings of the analysis of the missing values are shown in Table 3,

Table 3 - Summary of Valid and Missing Values for the Independent and Dependent Variables

		Job Position	Gender	Field of Study	Level of Education	Work Experience
N	Valid	250	250	250	250	250
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Author Compiled

Utilizing descriptive data analysis, the attributes and traits of the variables are enumerated. Here, the researcher has presented the data analysis through the use of tables. Researchers examine frequency distribution analysis for variables and frequency distribution analysis of personal traits under descriptive data analysis.

4.2.1. ***Frequency distribution analysis of demographic characteristics***

Demographic analysis for the study can be identified as Big 4 firm, job position, gender, field of study, level of education, and work experience. The data can be represented as follows,

4.2.1.1. ***Big 4 Audit Firms***

As per the Table 4 responses are mainly received from people who are currently working in Big 4 audit firms and mainly for this analysis based on those Big 4 audit firms. Which are KPMG, EY, Deloitte, and PWC. Most respondents are currently working at KPMG firm, and which is around 56.4%.

Table 4 - Frequency analysis for Big 4 audit firms

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Delloitte	28	11.2	11.2	11.2
	EY	52	20.8	20.8	32.0
	KPMG	141	56.4	56.4	88.4
	PWC	29	11.6	11.6	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author Compiled

4.2.1.2. ***Job Position***

According to the Table 5 respondents' job positions were categorized into 5 categories Trainee Associate/Associate 1/Audit Associate, Associate 2/ Senior Accountant, Supervisor/Audit Executive/Senior Associate, Project Manager, and Assistant Manager/Manager. Of these job positions, 85 respondents are working as Trainee Associates out of 250 total respondents. Which is 34% of the total respondents. The least no of respondents are working in Assistant Manager positions which is around 1.6% respondent percentage.

Frequency distribution analysis for job positions is as follows,

Table 5 - Frequency analysis for Job Position

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Assistant Manager/Manager**	4	1.6	1.6	1.6
	Associate2/Senior Accountant	72	28.8	28.8	30.4
	Project Manager	12	4.8	4.8	35.2
	Supervisor/Audit Executive	77	30.8	30.8	66.0
	Trainee Associate/Associate 1	85	34.0	34.0	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author Compiled

4.2.1.3. Gender

The gender of the respondents was divided into two categories, male and female, based on Table 6. According to the following table, of the total responses, 34.4% fall into the female category and 65.6% into the male category. It demonstrates that men make up the bulk of respondents.

Table 6 - Frequency analysis for Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Female**	86	34.4	34.4	34.4
	Male	164	65.6	65.6	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author Compiled

4.2.1.4. ***Field of Study***

Under the field of study, there are 4 categories as shown in Table 7 that respondents can respond to Accounting, Economics, Management, and Other. Out of these 4 categories, most employees have an accounting background. Which is around 76%. Some employees have an Economics background as well, which is around 3.2%.

Table 7 - Frequency analysis for Field of Study

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Accounting**	190	76.0	76.0	76.0
	Economics	8	3.2	3.2	79.2
	Management	51	20.4	20.4	99.6
	Other	1	0.4	0.4	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author Compiled

4.2.1.5. ***Level of education***

There are 4 education categories the researcher used for the analysis and shown in Table 8. Such as Bachelor, Certificate, Diploma, and Master. Out of this level of education most employees are following a bachelor's degree. From 250 total respondents there are 3 employees who has a Master qualification.

Table 8 - Frequency Analysis for Level of Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Bachelor**	224	89.6	89.6	89.6
	Certificate	7	2.8	2.8	92.4
	Diploma	16	6.4	6.4	98.8
	Master	3	1.2	1.2	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author Compiled

4.2.1.6. ***Work experience***

According to the Table 9 the researcher is categorized work experience as less than 1 year, 1-2 years, 23 years, and more than 3 years. Out of total 250 respondents 86 respondents are having 2-3 years of experience. There are 13 respondents who are having more than 3 years of experience.

Table 9 - Frequency analysis for Work Experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**1-2 years**	74	29.6	29.6	29.6
	2-3 years	86	34.4	34.4	64.0
	Less than 1 year	77	30.8	30.8	94.8
	More than 3 years	13	5.2	5.2	100.0
	Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author Compiled

4.2.2. ***Descriptive analysis of Dependent and Independent variables***

To explain descriptive of independent and dependent variable use central tendency and dispersion measures.

"The statistical measure that identifies a single value as representative of an entire distribution," according to the definition of central tendency. It strives to give a precise account of all the facts. It is the lone value that best typifies or reflects the information gathered. For the purpose of describing this part of data description, the term "number crunching" is used. The three most frequently employed measures of central tendency are the mean, median, and mode. The mean is the unit of central tendency that is most frequently used. The average of the group is known as the mean, or more precisely, the arithmetic mean. Only numerical variables are usable when calculating the mean. The middle score is the median. The score at the fifty percentiles in the distribution of scores is another method to describe the median. The most frequent score is the mode. The score that appears the most frequently is another way to describe the mode. The distance between data points and the center of the distribution is referred to as variability. The proportions of fluctuation in the dataset are summarized in measures of variability in statistics. The measure of variability reveals how widely apart data points often fall, whereas a measure of tendency represents the average value. We refer to large dispersion as the distance between the data points and the distribution's center and low dispersion as the distance between the data points and the distribution's center.

The three most popular ways to measure variability are range, variance, and standard deviation. The most straightforward and often employed measure of variability is range. The difference or subtraction between the largest and smallest values is known as the range of a dataset. Statistics define variance as the average squared deviation of values from the mean. This measure of variability incorporates all values in the computation, as opposed to the range and interquartile range, which compare each value with the mean. The standard deviation, which represents the usual distance between each data point and the mean, is the final and least popular measure of variability. The standard deviation is reduced when values in a dataset are clustered more closely together. However, the standard deviation is higher in situations where the values are widely apart. As a result, a rise in distance immediately correlates with an increase in the size of the standard deviation. Since it uses the original data units, the standard deviation is the most recommended measure of variability since it makes interpretation simpler.

The Independent variable which measures the auditors' job burnout has two variables such as,

- Quality of working life (QW)
- Psychological well-being (PW)

The descriptive Statistic for the above-mentioned independent variables with the dependent variable which is Job Burnout (JB) is interpreted in Table 10.

Table 10 - Descriptive Statistics of Quality of working life (QW)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
QW1	250	1	5	2.46	0.602	0.362
QW2	250	1	4	2.80	0.785	0.616
QW3	250	1	5	3.33	0.534	0.286
QW4	250	1	5	2.44	1.041	1.083
QW5	250	1	5	2.84	0,820	0.673
Valid N (Listwise)	250					

Source: Author Compiled

The Table 10 displays that the five measures of minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation as well as variance are used to conceive of the quality of working life variable. As the descriptive statistics given, the highest mean value from the measures is 3.33. It indicates from QW3 that means "How satisfied are you with the healthiness (e.g.: cleaning, lighting, noise, etc.) of your workplace?". The lowest mean value from the measures is 2.44. It indicates from QW4 that means "Regarding the tiredness that your work causes you, how do you feel?".

Table 11 - Descriptive Statistics of Psychological well-being (PW)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
PW1	250	1	5	3.86	0.452	0.204
PW2	250	1	4	3.94	0.692	0.479
PW3	250	1	5	3.03	0.744	0.553
PW4	250	1	5	2.12	0.827	0.684
PW5	250	2	5	3.94	0.755	0.571
Valid N (Listwise)	250					

Source: Author Compiled

The Table 11 displays the five measures of minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation as well as variance used to conceive of psychological well-being variable. As the descriptive statistics given, the highest mean value from the measures is 3.94. It indicates from PW2 and PW5 that means "I have confidence in my opinions even if they are contrary to the consensus" and "I am an active person in carrying out the plans I set for myself". The lowest mean value from the measures is 2.12. It indicates from PW4 that means "I have been able to create a lifestyle for myself that is much to my liking".

Table 12 - Descriptive Statistics of Job Burnout (JB)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
JB1	250	2	5	3.78	0.729	0.531
JB2	250	1	5	3.79	0.504	0.254
JB3	250	1	5	3.74	0.507	0.257
JB4	250	1	5	2.26	0.546	0.298
JB5	250	1	5	4.22	0.649	0.421
Valid N (Listwise)	250					

Source: Author Compiled

The Table 12 displays the five measures of minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation as well as variance used to conceive of the job burnout variable which is the dependent variable. As the descriptive statistics are given, the highest mean value from the measures is 4.22. It indicates from JB5 that means

"I often think about quitting". The lowest mean value from the measures is 2.26. It indicates from JB4 that means "I feel very energetic".

4.3. Validity and Reliability Test

We evaluate the critical elements of validity and reliability assessment to ensure that our conclusions are reliable and trustworthy. It is appropriate to use the notions of reliability and validity when presenting a noteworthy setting in research. The stability of findings is referred regarded as reliability, whilst the veracity of findings is referred to as validity.

4.3.1. *Validity*

Each research study's validity and reliability should be evaluated before producing the presumptive analysis. Reliability guarantees fairness in the data and proves the "goodness" of a metric. The researcher has used Cronbach's coefficient alpha to assess the interitem consistency dependability. The measurement instrument improves as the coefficients increase. It should be mentioned that reliability is a necessary but insufficient requirement for the analysis of a measure's validity. It's also essential to evaluate the validity of the scale to make sure it can measure the desired concept effectively. The study's supervisor compared the administered questionnaire items to the corpus of published literature to ensure face validity. To lessen the possibility of any issues, a pilot study was conducted to see whether the respondents could easily understand and respond to the questionnaire's questions.

A validity test was performed to determine the data collection method's accuracy and its capacity to measure the things it was intended to capture. High validity makes it easier to extrapolate sampling results to the entire population. The researcher selects the key variables and develops a questionnaire based on previously conducted, related studies to ensure the validity of the current study.

4.3.2. *Reliability*

A reliability test was conducted to verify the questionnaire's conformity with the data collection process. If the metrics were reliable, the same outcomes would be obtained again and over again under many different conditions. With Cronbach's alpha, the researcher assessed the questionnaire's internal consistency.

A questionnaire was created and sent to 250 responders in order to evaluate the objectivity and clarity of the item. Table 13 below shows the Cronbach's alpha values for each of the 15 metrics. Values of Cronbach's Alpha greater than 0.7 signify the study's validity.

Table 13 - Results of the Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.774	15

Source: Author Compiled

4.4. Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis between the Quality of working life and Job burnout was statistically significance at the 0.01 level with a Person correlation coefficient of -0.376 (Refer Figure 11). It shows that there is a negative relationship between the Quality of working life and Job burnout.

The correlation analysis between Phycological well-being and Job burnout was statistically significance at the 0.01 level with a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.469. It shows that there is a negative relationship between the Quality of working life and Job burnout.

From the above results, it was evident that Job burnout was more moderately negatively related to psychological well-being than Quality of working life.

Table 14 - Correlation analysis for Independent and Dependent Variables

		JB Job burnout	OWL Quality of working life	PWB Psychological well-being
JB Job burnout	**Pearson**	1	-.376	-.469
	Sig. (2-tallech		.000	.000
	N	250	250	250
OWL Quality of working life	**Pearson**	-.376	1	-.171
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.007
	N	250	250	250
PWB Phycological well-being	**Pearson**	-.469	-.171	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.007	
	N	250	250	250

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

Source: Author Compiled

4.5. Regression Analysis

When independent factors are assumed to have an impact on a single dependent variable, regression analysis is used. This predicts the dependent variable while evaluating the strength and nature of the link between the independent variables. It can be helpful to determine the variation in the dependent variable based on the individual regression coefficients when the variables are jointly regressed. When independent factors are assumed to have an impact on a single dependent variable, regression analysis is used.

The regression analysis of the SPSS output resulted in the creation of the two tables, the model summary and the ANOVA tables. The model summary table has three columns: R, R square, and corrected R-square. The ANOVA table includes the model significance.

Table 15 - Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.504[a]	0.254	0.248	0.640

Source: Author Compiled

Moving on to statistical elements, R-squared accounts for 25%, which means that the study's independent variables account for 25% of the change in the dependent variable which is auditors' job burnout.

R-squared adjusted, which is roughly 0.248. Adjusted R-squared is a modified version of R-squared that takes the number of predictors in the model into consideration. The adjusted R-squared increases when the extra term improves the model more than would be expected by chance. A predictor falls if its improvement on the model is less than expected.

Table 16 - ANOVA Table Summary

Model		Sum of Squares	dt	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	34.423	2	17.211	41.955	.000[b]
	Residual	101.328	247	.410		
	Total	135.751	249			

Dependent Variable: JB Job burnout

b.Predictors: (Constant), PWB Psychological well-being, OWL Quality of working life

Source: Author Compiled

The P value (sig.) is displayed as 0.000 in the ANOVA Table above (Table 16), which is less than 0.05 and indicates that it is significant at a 95% confidence level. The entire model is significant.

Table 17 - Coefficients of the Variables of the Regression Analysis

Variable	Coefficient	Error deviation	t-value	Sig.
Intercept	-1.503	0.031	1.321	0.056
Gender	1.498	0.055	0.759	0.114
Position	-1.121	0.021	1.010	0.021
Field of study	-0.889	0.048	0.906	0.451
Level of education	-1.100	0.986	1.213	0.301
Work experience	-2.119	0.190	1.908	0.041
Quality of working life	-1.190	0.207	1.214	<0.001
Psychological well-	-1.398	0.502	2.108	<0.001

Source: Author Compiled

4.5.1. ***Testing Hypothesis***

Hypothesis testing allows the researcher to determine whether the sample data are statistically significant. Hypothesis testing is one of the most important methods for assessing the reliability and validity of findings in any kind of systematic investigation. The results have been reviewed in light of the Coefficients summary table stated above.

We estimate one regression model to test research hypotheses. The model's estimation results are shown in the Table 17 (Coefficients of the Variables of the Regression Analysis) above. At the 5% significance level, it is clear that the position ($C=-1.121$; $p=0.021$) and work experience ($C=-2.119$; $p=0.041$) of auditors are strongly and negatively correlated with their job burnout. Consequently, this result offers proof in favor of H_1. The associated coefficient for quality of working life quality ($C=-1.190$) indicates a significant inverse link ($p < 0.001$) between quality of working life quality and job burnout among auditors. As such, H2 is supported, in line with our main expectation. According to H_3, there is a significant negative correlation between the psychological well-being of auditors and their job burnout, as indicated by the coefficient and probability value of psychological well-being ($C=-1.398$; $P < 0.001$).

In other words, this finding provides supporting evidence for H3 as well.

4.6. Discussion

When considering about the personal traits this study mainly looking about the job position, gender, field of study, level of education, and work experience. As of the analysis first, the position and work experience have a negative influence on job burnout. This describes that when employees who are working at the senior level and who have more years of experience, it will help to reduce their job burnout. This this mainly because of experienced auditors may have substantial knowledge about accounting and auditing standards and also, they can manage workplace stresses. Further they may earn high salaries than unexperienced auditors and positions like project managers/assistant managers and managers are categorized under permanent carder employees. This will help to earn high salaries for experienced and higher positioned auditors, and this will result to reduce their job burnout. In prior studies also this has proved in another context as well. According to this study more responses are received from external auditors who are working in KPMG audit firm. According to the prior studies KPMG Sri Lanka has the highest no of employees compared with other audit firms in Sri Lanka and reason for the high responses received from KPMG will be proved by this research as well.

When looking at the quality of working life as per this research found that there is a negative relationship between quality of working life and job burnout. Which mean when the auditors' quality of working life increase then it will result to reduce job burnout. According to the prior studies (Salehi, M., Seyyed, F. and Farhangdoust, S., 2020) there is negative relationship between quality of working life and job burnout. In this research also found that same finding in Sri Lankan context as well. It may be because of in Sri Lanka there are around 300 Public listed companies are operated and all of them are auditing by the Big 4 audit firms. Due to this reason, they may have to work till mid night all the 7 days per week in deadline periods. This may reduce their quality of working life and it will be affected to job burnout as well. As per results of this study it can be concluded that auditors may not consider about the healthiness of the workplace (Responses received for QW3). With the workload that Big 4 auditors have in their working life it will results to increase job burnout.

According to previous research done in Sri Lanka (Panchali, J., & Seneviratne, S. M. 2019), external auditing is considered one of the most stressful jobs that need both the best knowledge and the suspicious mind. But if the auditors without having a psychological well-being it will impact to the quality of the external auditing and finally it will negatively impact on larger public interest entities. Because as per the prior studies (Salehi, M., Seyyed, F. and Farhangdoust, S., 2020) this research study also found that there is a negative relationship between the psychological well-being and job burnout. It means if the auditors' psychological well-being increase it will reduce their job burnout. According to this study majority of external auditors are suffering from job burnout because they may haven't good psychological health.

5. Conclusion, Limitations and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

This study is designed to investigate the impact of personal traits, quality of working life, and psychological well-being on job burnout among Sri Lankan external auditors. This study is a popular research area in the global context and many studies have carried out on this. However, in Sri Lankan context such study has not performed yet. Prior studies performed in Sri Lanka regarding the external auditors it can be identified that many of the external audit trainees and senior employees are suffering from the high-stress level and nowadays audit firms are searching to reduce such pressures. Because employees are the most valuable asset of organizations like audit firms. Because this profession involves a lot of professional judgments.

Audit training is popular among ICASL students because 4 years of audit training is a mandatory requirement to become a practicing Chartered Accountant. However, the number of ICASL students decreased after CIMA, ACCA, and other professional qualifications became popular in Sri Lanka. With the economic crisis in Sri Lanka, most of the accounting undergraduates and accounting students who are following ICASL's exams tend to join the mercantile sector due to the lower payments in audit firms. Also, several factors have affected to decrease in the number of people to audit training. Due to those reasons, audit firms are following certain strategies to attract and retain employees.

Audit firms and trainees agree for a period of 1 to 3 years. Most audit trainees leave the firm after completing the training period and this has become a critical issue for audit firms. The lack of experienced staff in the audit team affects the quality of the audit engagement (Nouri & Parker 2020). Because of that audit firms implement certain strategies to retain trainees. For all of these reasons, Sri Lankan audit firms are looking to reduce job burnout among their employees, and they tend to increase the audit quality. This research will benefit them to identify the factors which are related to decreasing job burnout and then they can implement new strategies to reduce those negative consequences.

This study has found that there is a negative relationship between personal traits, quality of working life, and psychological well-being with job burnout among Sri Lankan external auditors. In conclusion, this study will benefit for Sri Lankan Big 4 audit firms, external auditors, government policy makers as well as for universities who are providing accounting studies. Also future studies can focus more about the mid-tier and small audit firms in Sri Lanka with more independent factors.

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