

The impact of mental health, work-life balance, and organizational support on burnout: Perspectives of employees in the creative industry

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze and understand the impact of mental health, work-life balance, and organizational support on burnout among employees in the creative industry. The phenomenon of burnout has become an increasingly serious issue among creative workers due to high work pressure, tight deadlines, and demands for continuous innovation. The research approach used is descriptive qualitative, with data collection methods through in-depth interviews with a number of employees from various creative industry sub-sectors, such as graphic design, advertising, and media production. The results show that good mental health plays an important role in reducing burnout levels; individuals with adequate stress management and psychological support tend to have higher emotional resilience. A balanced work-life balance helps employees maintain productivity without losing motivation and personal satisfaction. Meanwhile, organizational support has been shown to be a protective factor that strengthens work engagement and reduces the risk of emotional exhaustion. These findings reinforce the relevance of the model that explains that burnout occurs when work demands are not balanced with the availability of personal and organizational resources. This research confirms that the synergy between mental health, life balance, and organizational support is crucial for preventing burnout and creating a sustainable work environment in the creative industry.

Keywords : Mental Health, Work-Life Balance, Organizational Support, Burnout, Creative Industry.

1. INTRODUCTION

The creative industry is one of the fastest growing sectors in the digital economy era. This sector requires human resources with high creativity, innovative thinking skills, and strong mental resilience in facing work pressures. However, fast-paced work dynamics, tight deadlines, and high expectations for work results often trigger increased stress and work fatigue (burnout) among creative industry employees. The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model explains that burnout occurs when high job demands are not balanced with adequate personal and organizational resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). This phenomenon shows that the issue of employee psychological well-being is increasingly important for organizations to pay attention to. In the context of the creative industry, pressure to innovate, tight deadlines, and high expectations can increase the risk of stress and emotional exhaustion (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2013).

Mental health is a fundamental aspect that affects a person's productivity and performance. Good mental health helps individuals manage stress through resilience and emotional regulation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; World Health Organization, 2019). Conversely, mental disorders increase the risk of burnout, which impacts productivity and job satisfaction (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Employees with good mental health tend to be better able to manage work stress and maintain motivation, while poor mental health can increase the risk of burnout. Additionally, work-life balance is also an important factor in maintaining psychological well-being. Work-life balance and organizational support act as protective factors against burnout. Balance between work and personal life reduces stress and improves well-being (Allen et al., 2013; Greenhaus, 2011), while organizational support in the form of appreciation and attention to employees strengthens emotional attachment and reduces work fatigue (Kim & Park, 2022; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). An imbalance between work demands and personal needs often leads to excessive stress, which can ultimately reduce work performance and life satisfaction.

On the other hand, organizational support plays an important role in reducing employee burnout levels. Support in the form of attention, appreciation, and organizational policies that favor employee welfare can create a sense of security and emotional attachment to the company. With adequate support, employees will feel more appreciated and motivated to work optimally even when facing high work pressure (Bakker et al., 2023; Carlasare et al., 2024; Ren et al., 2024; Yu et al., 2021).

Although there have been many studies discussing the relationship between mental health, work-life balance, and organizational support for burnout (Khoirunnisa Amalia & Parwoto, 2022; Riyono & Rezki, 2022; Sukandar Nur et al., 2025), most of them still focus on formal sectors such as corporations, education, and health. Studies that specifically highlight the creative industry context are still relatively limited, even though the nature of work in this sector tends to demand high creativity and has unique time pressures. In addition, previous studies generally tested each variable separately, without integrating the three factors simultaneously in a single analytical model. This gap indicates the need for more comprehensive research to understand how psychological and organizational factors interact in influencing burnout among creative industry employees.

The novelty of this study lies in the integration of analysis between mental health, work-life balance, and organizational support simultaneously in the context of the creative industry, which has rarely been studied. This approach is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of studies on burnout in the creative sector and provide practical implications for companies in improving the welfare and sustainability of the creative workforce.

This study aims to analyze the impact of mental health, work-life balance, and organizational support on burnout from the perspective of employees in the creative industry. Through this study, it is hoped that a deeper understanding of the psychological and organizational factors that influence burnout can be obtained, thereby providing a basis for management in designing strategies to improve employee well-being and organizational sustainability in the creative sector.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive phenomenological type to understand the experiences and meanings felt by creative industry employees related to mental health, work-life balance, organizational support, and burnout (Creswell, 2018). The research was conducted at several creative sector companies in Surabaya, including advertising agencies, graphic design, digital media, and content production, during July–September 2025. The research subjects were permanent and contract employees who had worked for at least one year and had experienced high work pressure. Informants were selected using purposive sampling with the number determined by data saturation, approximately 8–12 people (Miles et al., 2013). Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, workplace observations, and documentation related to company policies and activities (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles et al. (2013), which included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data validity was tested through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 RESULT

This study involved 12 informants working in various creative industry subsectors, including advertising agencies, graphic design, digital marketing, and content production. All informants had been working for more than one year and were aged between 23 and 35 years old. Most informants stated that working in the creative industry was satisfying because it was dynamic and challenging. However, they also acknowledged the high pressure from clients, tight deadlines, and the constant demand for new and fresh ideas.

“Working in the creative industry is exciting, but honestly mentally exhausting. Sometimes I feel like I've run out of ideas, but the deadline is still approaching.” (Informant 3, Graphic Designer, 29 years old).

Based on the results of interviews and observations, three main themes were identified that reflect the relationship between mental health, work-life balance, and organizational support for burnout among creative industry employees.

Mental Health Conditions and Their Impact on Burnout

The majority of informants stated that mental pressure was the factor that most influenced work fatigue. The pressure came from a backlog of projects, revisions from clients, and a lack of time for rest and self-reflection. Several informants admitted to experiencing symptoms such as overthinking, difficulty sleeping, irritability, and loss of motivation. “I often feel unmotivated, even though I used to enjoy my job very much. Now I'm even anxious every time I open my laptop.” (Informant 5, Copywriter, 26 tahun).

These results show that poor mental health contributes directly to the onset of burnout, in line with the findings of Lee & Ashforth (1996), who stated that chronic stress and depression are the main predictors of burnout. These field findings also reinforce the view of Bakker & Demerouti (2017) that individuals with low resilience are more prone to emotional exhaustion when faced with high workloads.

Imbalanced Work-Life Balance

Creative industry employees often find it difficult to set boundaries between work and personal life. The flexible nature of the job often leads to unpredictable working hours, including overtime at night or on weekends.

“Our working hours are flexible, but in reality we often work overtime. For big projects, we can work until 2 a.m.” (Informant 2, Videografer, 31 tahun).

Some informants revealed that they found it difficult to make time for family or personal activities,

because creative workloads do not have fixed hours. This causes prolonged fatigue and reduces productivity. These findings support the research by Greenhaus (2011), which states that work-life imbalance causes stress and emotional exhaustion. In addition, Hesmondhalgh & Baker (2013) also found that blurred work boundaries in the creative industry are a major trigger for burnout. Interestingly, some informants who were able to maintain personal routines such as light exercise, meditation, or social activities reported lower stress levels. This shows the importance of personal strategies in maintaining life balance.

Organizational Support as a Protective Factor against Burnout

Some informants stated that support from superiors and coworkers greatly affected their psychological condition. Employees who feel listened to and appreciated tend to be more resistant to work pressure.

"If superiors give space to talk and value ideas, the workload feels lighter." (Informant 8, Art Director, 33 years old). However, other informants complained about the lack of support from the organization, especially in terms of welfare policies and mental health support. "The company does not have a mental health program. So if you're stressed, you have to deal with it yourself." (Informant 7, Social Media Strategist, 28 years old) These findings are in line with research by Rhoades & Eisenberger (2002) and Caesens & Stinglhamber (2014), which confirms that perceived organizational support has a negative relationship with burnout. Organizations that provide discussion forums, recognition, and psychological support are able to reduce the impact of emotional exhaustion on employees. From the above findings, it can be analyzed that mental health, work-life balance, and organizational support are interrelated in influencing burnout. Good mental health enables employees to better manage work stress, thereby reducing burnout.

A balanced work-life balance serves as a mechanism for recovering from work pressure. Organizational support plays a role in strengthening employees' psychological resilience through a supportive work environment. When these three factors work together, employees tend to have high work motivation, stable emotions, and low levels of burnout. Conversely, if one of these factors weakens—for example, a lack of organizational support burnout can increase, even if employees are mentally strong.

These findings reinforce the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory that burnout arises from an imbalance between job demands and the resources available to individuals and organizations (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

3.2 DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that burnout among creative industry employees is not only caused by workload, but also by psychological and structural aspects of the organization. Mental health factors are directly related to an individual's ability to manage stress. Emotional disturbances that are left unchecked can develop into chronic psychological fatigue. Work-life balance factors play a role in maintaining work rhythm and self-recovery. Time imbalance makes it difficult for employees to rest mentally. Organizational support factors serve as a form of external protection that promotes a sense of appreciation, security, and connection with the company.

These results support the research by Allen et al. (2013), which states that work flexibility and company support can reduce burnout levels. Kim & Park (2022) also found that companies that provide emotional and psychological support can improve the mental well-being of creative employees. Meanwhile, Bakker & Demerouti (2017) emphasize that the balance between demands and resources is key to preventing burnout. Thus, it can be concluded that burnout prevention efforts in the creative industry must be carried out holistically, including increasing mental health awareness, realistic work-life balance policies, and organizational commitment to employee well-being.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of qualitative research conducted through in-depth interviews and observations

of employees in the creative industry, it was found that mental health, work-life balance, and organizational support play an important role in determining the level of burnout. Employees with stable mental health and good stress management skills are able to cope with work pressure more effectively, while mental health disorders such as chronic stress, emotional exhaustion, and loss of motivation tend to increase the risk of burnout. An imbalance between personal life and work exacerbates this condition, especially for employees who face long working hours and high demands. Meanwhile, organizational support in the form of recognition, open communication, and attention to mental well-being has been proven to be a protective factor that can reduce burnout levels. Overall, this study confirms that the synergy between mental health, work-life balance, and organizational support is key to preventing burnout and maintaining productivity and work sustainability in the creative industry. These findings reinforce the relevance of the Job Demands–Resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), which explains that burnout occurs when job demands are not balanced with personal or organizational resources.

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