

Research Paper



Impact of emotional exhaustion on job performance and intention to leave in service industry in nepal

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of emotional exhaustion on job performance and intention to leave among employees in Nepal's service industry. It also looks into the mediating role of job satisfaction on these relationships and the serial mediating effect of job satisfaction and job performance between emotional exhaustion and the intention to leave. A self-administered questionnaire utilizing a five-point Likert scale was used to gather data from 406 employees in banking, finance, medicine, education, hospitality, and other fields. For analysis, descriptive statistics as well as structural equation modeling with SPSS 25 and Smart PLS 4 were applied. The study is grounded on the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which explains how employees' resources are drained by emotional exhaustion, the Demand-Resources model of performance which focuses on the relationship between resources, job demands, and performance outcomes, and the Stressor-Emotion model, which focuses on the work attitudes and behaviors resulting from emotions tied to stress. The findings indicate that while emotional exhaustion does not impact job satisfaction, it does increase job performance and intention to leave. Job satisfaction affects performance at work, and intention to leave does not significantly depend on either. As revealed by mediation analysis, job satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between intention to leave and job performance, and job performance partially mediates the relationship between emotional exhaustion and intention to leave. No serial mediation effect was observed.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The service sector employs the majority of workers in the world [1] and has also been recognized as a significant source of revenue for Nepal's economy, it includes industries such as banking, finance, healthcare, education and hospitality pubs. These are sectors where employees must face emotionally challenging workspaces, high customer demands and a constant person-to-person interaction. This is often associated with burn out, a state of emotional and physical depletion at work due to prolonged work-related stress [2]. As a core component of burnout [3] emotional exhaustion is an important issue for employees and organizations. This hampers effective performance by the employees, reduces motivation and enhances a desire to leave employment [4]. Frontline employees, in particular, face higher risks of emotional fatigue due to their constant need to regulate emotions and maintain positive interactions with customers to uphold service quality [5].

There may be psychological and behavioral consequences when stress at work is unavoidable. Emotional fatigue is a term used to describe the effects of stressful and demanding working situations [6]. According to [7], emotional exhaustion had an effect on job satisfaction as higher the level of emotional exhaustion of the employee, the lower the achieved job satisfaction. Performance, or the quality and quantity of work performed by an employee in the performance of his tasks in accordance with the duties imposed on him, is always associated with the level of job satisfaction of a person [8].

Previous research has shown that emotional exhaustion negatively impacts job satisfaction [7] and job performance [9]. Moreover, job satisfaction is a critical predictor of turnover intention. Employees with lower job satisfaction levels are more likely to consider leaving their jobs [10], [11]. High employee turnover increases recruitment and training costs, disrupts team cohesion, lowers morale, and negatively impacts productivity and service quality [12], [13].

2. RELATED WORK

Emotionally exhausted employees show reduced work performance and eventually quit their jobs, until preventive measures are taken, organizations are likely to continue to experience costly and imbalanced symptoms of emotional exhaustion [4]. While the findings of [14] Emotional exhaustion and turnover intention are closely linked to the interpersonal dynamics of the work environment. Service professionals, such as counselors, working in settings characterized by supportive interactions, perceived autonomy, fairness, and interpersonal support are less likely to experience emotional exhaustion and less inclined to consider leaving their jobs. Job satisfaction is the most influential predictor of both individual performance and turnover intention, as well as emotional exhaustion [15]. Emotional exhaustion is a potentially important construct in the study of sales force behavior. Empirical results offer strong support for relationships involving job satisfaction, performance, and the consequences of emotional exhaustion with intention to leave [16].

A study [15], based on a survey of 222 Portuguese auditors with the help of the conservation of resources (COR) theory, presented a framework for a better understanding of employee emotional exhaustion and argues that emotional exhaustion negatively affects employees. Working attitudes, which subsequently influence the individual performance of auditors. This study also examines the effects and relative importance of emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, and turnover intention on individual performance. This is supported by the results of [17], on their study of 812 nurses, which indicate that job satisfaction is the most influential predictor of both individual performance and turnover intention, followed by emotional exhaustion.

Furthermore, study by [18] on a sample of 183 nurses, emotional exhaustion is positively associated with intention to leave. High performance negatively moderates the burnout relationship. High performance not only moderates the strength of the negative effect of emotional exhaustion, but also has a unique negative effect on intention to leave. Similarly, [19] explained that a service worker must be professional in dealing with clients and maintaining their emotions. In addition, they should have a sufficient level of knowledge and experience to be able to improve the quality of the service without

harming their emotions and their level of job satisfaction. Similarly, according to the result of [20] emotional exhaustion had a negative and significant relationship with job satisfaction and a significantly positive relationship with turnover intention, also a significant relationship between dependent variables followed by a mediating effect of job satisfaction in relation to emotional exhaustion and turnover intention.

Emotional exhaustion may arise when employees are subjected to monotonous or high-stress work environments, particularly in the absence of adequate supervisory or organizational support. This can lead to a decrease in job satisfaction and performance, as well as an increase in employees' intention to leave their companies [21]. In research by [21] with 399 employees from different organizations participating in this research, several results were found. First, emotional exhaustion negatively influences job satisfaction. Second, job satisfaction positively impacts job performance. Third, job satisfaction shows no significant effect on intention of leaving. Fourth, emotional exhaustion positively affects the intention to leave. Finally, contrary to expectations, emotional exhaustion also exhibits a significant positive effect on job performance

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of emotional exhaustion on employees' job performance and intention to leave the organization in the presence of the level of job satisfaction they obtain. As shown in the Figure 1 employee performance and intention to leave is the dependent variable and emotional exhaustion is the independent variable; job satisfaction is the mediating variable. The theoretical framework of this study is adapted from a combination of studies of [22], [4] and [15].

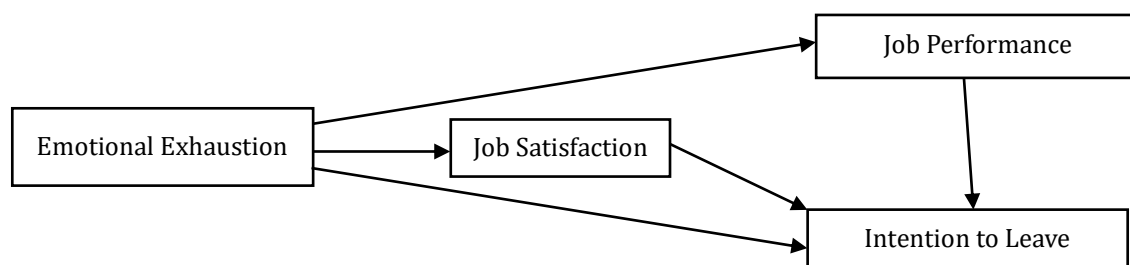


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Specifications of Variables

Emotional Exhaustion and Job Satisfaction

Emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction have both been identified as significant factors influencing job performance [23]. According to [24], Job satisfaction is defined as a positive emotional state that arises from an individual's evaluation of their job experiences and work conditions. It can be described as how people perceive their profession as important, meaningful, enjoyable and proud, or how satisfied individuals are with their pay [25] Past research suggests that job satisfaction reflects both an individual's emotional and behavioral reactions to their job and the alignment between personal and organizational values [26].

H1: Emotional exhaustion has a significant effect on job satisfaction.

Emotional Exhaustion and Job Performance

Employee performance can be described as employees' perceptions of their effectiveness and overall performance [27]. These outcomes encompass enhanced time efficiency in task execution, improved overall work performance, greater decision-making effectiveness, increased individual productivity, and more efficient use of effort. Conversely, research on emotional exhaustion highlights its association with negative work outcomes, including reduced productivity and lower job satisfaction. Employees experiencing emotional exhaustion tend to perform poorly, struggle to devote sufficient energy to their tasks, respond more slowly, and generate a higher rate of errors [28].

H2: Emotional exhaustion has a significant effect on work performance.

Emotional Exhaustion and Intention to Leave

Another negative consequence linked to burnout is turnover intention, which is defined as an individual's deliberate and conscious decision to leave the organization [29]. Turnover intention refers to an employee's consideration or plan to leave their position in the future, depending on circumstances, rather than an immediate departure, and is recognized as a primary negative consequence of emotional exhaustion [30]. Previous accounting research has identified increased turnover intention as a consequence of burnout, suggesting that when individuals are unable to manage emotional exhaustion, their likelihood of intending to leave the organization rises [31].

H3: Emotional exhaustion has a significant effect on intention to leave.

Job satisfaction and Job Performance

In 1976, Locke mentioned an optimistic or pleasant emotional state from self-evaluation or work experience. [32] Recommended that employee performance can be enhanced by increasing job satisfaction through various management strategies adopted by managers. Associations of job performance and job satisfaction remain vague from previous studies. There is an optimistic correlation between job performance and job satisfaction [33]. Recently, one study involving public, private, and non-profit sector employees revealed a remarkable influence of job satisfaction and job performance on each other simultaneously, although the effect of job satisfaction appeared to be more robust among employees than job performance [34].

H4: Job satisfaction has a significant effect on job performance.

Job Satisfaction and Intention to leave

Job satisfaction is a crucial factor influencing turnover intention. Research has demonstrated that job satisfaction significantly affects employee attitudes and overall job performance [26]. Several studies have demonstrated that higher job satisfaction is associated with lower turnover intention, while low job satisfaction is linked to counterproductive behaviors and withdrawal attitudes, including absenteeism and increased turnover intention [35]. According to [36], there is a significant negative correlation between aspects of job satisfaction and turnover intention.

H5: Job satisfaction has a significant effect on intention to leave.

Job Performance and Intention to Leave

Job performance refers to the extent to which an individual effectively fulfills their job duties and responsibilities. Employee turnover intention denotes the likelihood that an employee will leave their current position [37]. Employee turnover poses a significant challenge for organizations worldwide. Consequently, understanding and addressing employee turnover intentions has been a primary focus of organizational management [38].

H6: Job performance has a significant effect on intention to leave.

Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

Emotional exhaustion indirectly and significantly affects performance through employee job satisfaction [22]. Emotional exhaustion reduces job satisfaction and subsequently reduces work performance [39]. According [21], emotional exhaustion reduces job satisfaction and can lead to many negative consequences, including reduced organizational commitment and job termination.

H7: Job satisfaction mediates the effects of emotional exhaustion on employee job performance.

H8: Job satisfaction mediates the effects of emotional exhaustion on employees' intention to leave.

Mediating Role of Job Performance

High job performance not only mitigates the adverse impact of emotional exhaustion but also independently exerts a negative effect on employees' intention to leave. There is a significant relationship between emotional exhaustion and turnover that would drop to no significance if job performance effects were taken into account [40] which is also supported by [4]. Job satisfaction has a positive significant impact

on job performance [41]. Job performance also has a significant negative relationship with intention to leave [42]. And job satisfaction has a direct and indirect significant relationship with employees' intention to quit [43].

H9: Job performance mediates the effects of emotional exhaustion on employees' intention to leave.

H10: Job performance significantly mediates the effects of job satisfaction on employees' intention to leave.

Serial Mediation of Job Satisfaction and Job Performance

Emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction have both been demonstrated to be significant determinants of job performance [23]. Research indicates that emotional exhaustion is associated with negative work outcomes, including reduced productivity and decreased job satisfaction. Employees experiencing emotional exhaustion tend to perform poorly, struggle to allocate sufficient energy to their tasks, respond more slowly, and generate a higher number of errors [28]. Several studies have demonstrated that higher job satisfaction is linked to lower turnover intention, while low job satisfaction is associated with counterproductive behaviors and withdrawal attitudes, including absenteeism and increased turnover intention [35]. The study therefore seeks to explain whether there is serial mediation of job satisfaction and whether job performance influences the relationship between emotional exhaustion or not.

H11: Job satisfaction and job performance significantly mediate the effects of job satisfaction on employees' intention to leave.

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the methodology used to achieve the study objectives. It presents a detailed description of the research method, area of study, target population and sample, sampling procedures, data sources, and data collection tools employed.

Research Design

Descriptive research was employed to examine respondents' demographic and important variable emotional exhaustion, job satisfaction, job performance, and intention to leave. Causal research design was employed to examine the relationships between independent and dependent variables.

Population and Sample

As the population size is unknown, the sample size was determined using a formula for estimating proportions, targeting a 95% confidence level. Based on this approach, the required sample size was calculated to be 384 respondents [44]. However, data were collected from a total of 406 employees across various sectors of the service industry in Kathmandu, thereby ensuring sampling adequacy for the study.

Sampling Technique

The study employed a convenience sampling technique. This approach is often selected by researchers because it is low-cost and easy to implement while having a relatively higher response rate compared to other sampling methods [45].

Sources of Data and Data Collection

Through online and physical distribution, a structured questionnaire was given to 500 employees from different organizations in the service industry. Out of the total, 408 respondents completed the questionnaire which corresponds to a response rate of 81.6%.

Instrumentation

The demographic information was collected in the first section, which included the name, age (groups of 18-25, 26-39, 40+), gender (Male, Female, Others), educational qualification (Plus 2/Diploma, Bachelor, Masters and above), marital status (Married, Single), work experience (Less than 3 years, 3-7

years, More than 7 years), income level (Less than 25,000; 25,000-50,000; More than 50,000), and working sector (Banking & Finance, Medical, Education, Hospitality, Others). Respondents to the survey selected one option per item.

The second section focused on the study variables, using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). It included 30 items in total: nine items measuring emotional exhaustion (adapted from the Maslach Burnout Inventory), 10 items measuring job satisfaction, 10 items on job performance, and six items measuring turnover intention (adapted from Roodt's Turnover Intention Scale).

Reliability Analysis

This analysis also contributes to the validity and accuracy of data interpretation by researchers. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to provide a measure of the internal consistency of the items. Calculating Cronbach's alpha for multi-item assessments has become a standard method in research.

Table 1. Cronbach Alpha

Variables	Cronbach Alpha	No. of Items
EE	0.89	9
JS	0.89	10
JP	0.93	10
ITL	0.74	6

The dependability of the data was evaluated using the Cronbach alpha test. In this scale, a value greater than 0.70 is typically regarded as dependable. From the [Table 1](#) with all the value greater than 0.70 data can be said to be reliable.

Data Management and Analysis Tools

The study initially conducted descriptive analyses and data normality checks using SPSS software. Subsequently, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was performed using Smart-PLS to investigate the relationships among the constructs of the proposed research model. For analysis, only the responses from participants who answered "Yes" to the question, "Do your job responsibilities affect your emotional well-being?" and other related items were considered. SEM techniques are broadly categorized into Covariance-Based SEM (CB-SEM) and Partial Least Squares SEM (PLS-SEM). While CB-SEM is typically employed for theory testing and confirmation, PLS-SEM is more suitable for hypothesis testing and the assessment of established theoretical models [46]. According to [46], PLS-SEM is used when:

- PLS-SEM is preferred over regression analysis for testing mediation effects in structural models due to its superior capability in evaluating such relationships [47].
- The data feature a small sample size and non-normal distribution, while the models include numerous constructs and indicators

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter describes the study's findings, how the results were interpreted, and how the data were analyzed. All of the data that were gathered was examined, and the findings are shown in tabular format.

Model Validation Result

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity

Constructs	Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	CR (rho_a)	CR (rho_c)	AVE
Emotional Exhaustion			0.88	0.89	0.90	0.51
	EE1	0.74				

	EE2	0.69				
	EE3	0.72				
	EE4	0.72				
	EE5	0.69				
	EE6	0.79				
	EE7	0.69				
	EE8	0.69				
	EE9	0.67				
Intention to Leave			0.74	0.76	0.84	0.57
	ITL1	0.67				
	ITL2	0.39				
	ITL3	0.79				
	ITL4	0.79				
	ITL5	0.66				
	ITL6	0.44				
Job Performance			0.93	0.93	0.94	0.61
	JP1	0.78				
	JP2	0.78				
	JP3	0.76				
	JP4	0.76				
	JP5	0.82				
	JP6	0.80				
	JP7	0.78				
	JP8	0.85				
	JP9	0.74				
	JP10	0.71				
Job Satisfaction			0.89	0.90	0.91	0.53
	JS1	0.76				
	JS2	0.76				
	JS3	0.71				
	JS4	0.64				
	JS5	0.65				
	JS6	0.72				
	JS7	0.69				
	JS8	0.36				
	JS9	0.74				
	JS10	0.72				

Table 2 exhibits that except for ITL2, ITL6 and JS8, measurement model construct reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability are all greater than 7, indicating acceptable internal consistency [48]. For model's internal consistency, items ITL2, ITL6 and JS8 with outer loading values below 0.7 are eliminated. The degree of relationship between a construct's items is tested for convergent validity. The result demonstrates good convergent validity as all of the constructs have AVE values higher than 0.5 [48]. It serves as evidence that all internal consistency requirements are met.

Discriminant Validity

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker Test

Variables	EE	ITL	JP	JS
EE	0.71			
ITL	0.27	0.75		

JP	0.34	0.32	0.78	
JS	0.05	0.10	0.49	0.73

The Fornell-Larcker criterion assesses discriminant validity by ensuring that a construct's AVE square root exceeds its correlations with other constructs [48]. Bold letters highlighted in the Table 3 represents the square root of AVE. As in Table 2, AVE square root is more than other values among other latent variables. Hence, discriminant validity is established.

Table 4. HTMT Matrix

	EE	ITL	JP	JS
EE				
ITL	0.32			
JP	0.35	0.38		
JS	0.15	0.13	0.52	

Table 5. Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Correlation Ratio

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	2.50%	97.50%
ITL <-> EE	0.32	0.32	0.20	0.44
JP <-> EE	0.35	0.36	0.23	0.48
JP <-> ITL	0.38	0.38	0.23	0.52
JS <-> EE	0.15	0.18	0.15	0.24
JS <-> ITL	0.13	0.16	0.11	0.26
JS <-> JP	0.52	0.52	0.39	0.63

The HTMT ratio measures discriminant validity by comparing the average correlations between different constructs to those within the same construct [47]. HTMT when crosses 0.9 it is indication of issues in discriminant validity. For structural models with constructs, [49] propose a threshold value of 0.90. All of the HTMT ratios in Table 4 and Table 5 are less than 0.90. Consequently, discriminant validity was established.

Structural Equation Model Analysis

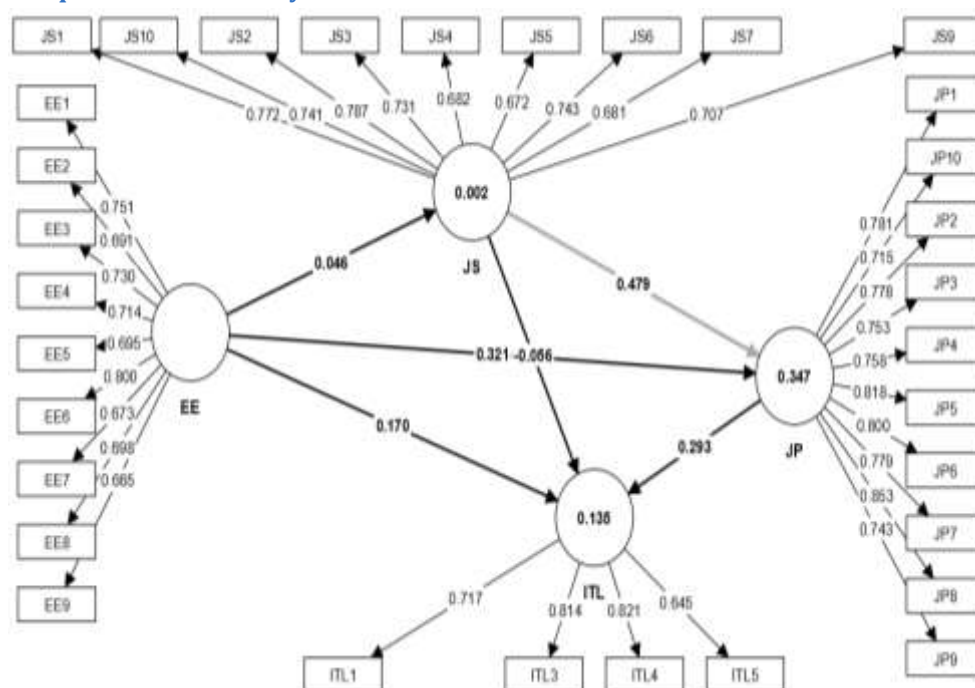


Figure 2. Structural Model

This is done by the bootstrapping process with 10,000 bootstraps recommended to find the required p-value and confidence interval for the hypothesis given in the study [47].

Structural Model Assessment

Table 6. Collinearity Test Statistics VIF

	ITL	JP	JS
EE	1.16	1.002	1
JP	1.53		
JS	1.353	1.002	

According to [46], the maximum acceptable value for the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is 5; values exceeding this threshold indicate the presence of collinearity. As shown in Table 6, all VIF values are below 5, indicating that there is no collinearity among the explanatory variables.

Table 7. Hypothesis Support Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Original Sample (O)	P Values	Hypothesis Support
H1	EE -> JS	0.046	0.61	No
H2	EE -> JP	0.321	0.00	Yes
H3	EE -> ITL	0.17	0.00	Yes
H4	JS -> JP	0.479	0.00	Yes
H5	JS -> ITL	-0.056	0.32	No
H6	JP -> ITL	0.293	0.00	Yes

Table 7 depicts result for hypothesis testing as per the table, there is no significant impact of EE on JS ($\beta=0.046$, $p=0.61$). Therefore, hypothesis H1 is rejected. Similarly, There is no significant impact of JS on ITL ($\beta=-0.056$, $p=0.32$) but JS has a significant impact on JP ($\beta = 0.479$, $p=0.000$). Therefore, H5 is rejected, but H4 is supported. Likewise, EE also has a significant impact on job performance ($\beta = 0.321$, $p = 0.000$) supporting H2 along with the impact on ITL as it does have a significant impact on ITL ($\beta = 0.17$, $p=0.000$) supporting H3. Similarly, job performance has significant impact on intention to leave with $\beta = 0.293$, and p value $p=0.000$ supporting the H6. Thus, the result supports Hypothesis H2, H3, H4 and H6 and rejects Hypothesis H1 and H5.

Table 8. Hypothesis Support Testing of Mediation

Hypothesis	Path	VAF	Hypothesis Support
H7	EE -> JS -> JP	0.06	No
H8	EE -> JS -> ITL	0.00	No
H9	EE -> JP -> ITL	0.36	Yes
H10	JS -> JP -> ITL	1.66	Yes
H11	EE -> JS -> JP -> ITL	0.04	No

Table 8 shows job satisfaction did not reveal any mediating effect in the relationship between emotional exhaustion and job performance (VAF= 0.06). Hence, Hypothesis 7 is rejected. Similarly, JS has no any significant mediation between emotional exhaustion and intention to leave with VAF value of 0.00 so that, hypothesis 8 does not supports the mediation of JS on EE and ITL. Likewise, job performance has partial mediation effect between emotional exhaustion and intention to leave with VAF value of 0.36 and thus hypothesis H9 is supported. Also, H10 is supported as there is strong mediation of JP between JS and ITL with VAF value 1.66 but H11 has been rejected as JS and JP with the VAF value of 0.04 does not support the mediation between EE and ITL. Thus the result supports the Hypothesis H9 and H10 and rejects Hypothesis H7, H8 and H11.

Findings and Discussion

Knowledge on emotional exhaustion and its repercussion have been mostly from developed nations, this study uniquely addressed this linkage among service sector employees in a developing country context, Nepal. The results indicated that emotional exhaustion had no significant impact on job satisfaction, in line with [21] and also some other past studies [20], whereas other research achieved entirely opposing results. Nonetheless, emotional exhaustion was found to have a strong impact on performance at work and also on the intention to quit, as per [22] and [14], pointing toward emotionally exhausted employees continuing to perform their duties while being highly likely to resign.

Additionally, the study found that job satisfaction had a significant impact on job performance but not on intention to leave, which contradicts findings from [21] but differing from [43], which found both direct and indirect effects. Moreover, job performance significantly affected intention to leave in that even high job performance employees may leave, consistent with [21], but contrary to [42], who reported a negative relationship.

On the effects of mediation, the study found no mediating effect of job satisfaction between emotional exhaustion and job performance or intention to leave, unlike [22], whose hypothesis suggested job satisfaction as a mediator of these two relationships. Job performance, nonetheless, partially mediated between emotional exhaustion and intention to leave, demonstrating that emotional exhaustion would lead to decreased job performance, which in turn would increase turnover intentions.

5. CONCLUSION

Emotional exhaustion plays an important role in predicting employee satisfaction, which results in better productivity and stronger retention. Workers need to maintain emotional stamina and flexibility to cope with the mental and physical demands of their occupations. Emotional exhaustion significantly impacts an employee's behavior since it has a positive correlation with job satisfaction, job performance, and the intention to quit. At the same time, satisfaction stands out as an important driver of both performance and loyalty. Employees who see themselves as high performers exhibit greater role commitment. The findings illustrate the need for managing emotional exhaustion in order to promote organizational engagement in different areas of service sector in Nepal. Emotional exhaustion leads to increased dissatisfaction which negatively impacts performance, increases intention to leave, and results in higher turnover.

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Author Contributions Statement

Name of Author	C	M	So	Va	Fo	I	R	D	O	E	Vi	Su	P	Fu
Sajish Kumar Niraula	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Ranjana Aryal	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	

C : Conceptualization

M : Methodology

So : Software

Va : Validation

Fo : Formal analysis

I : Investigation

R : Resources

D : Data Curation

O : Writing - Original Draft

E : Writing - Review & Editing

Vi : Visualization

Su : Supervision

P : Project administration

Fu : Funding acquisition

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all the participants prior to engaging in the study. They were certainly informed of the confidentiality of their responses and of their right to withdraw from the study at any moment in time without suffering any negative consequences.

Ethical Approval

The study was conducted in compliance with the ethical codes and procedures of the School of Management, Tribhuvan University (SOMTU). Ethical approval was obtained from the concerned departments before carrying out data collection.

Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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