Relationship Model of Perceived Task Autonomy, Burnout and Performance

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Abstract - Autonomy is a job characteristic variable which is the most powerful influence on various psychological factors at work. Conservation resource theory states that burnout occurs when valuable resources no longer exist. Burnout affects motivation and performance. This study aims to investigate the relationship between perceived task autonomy as an independent variable with burnout, work effort and work quality as dependent variables. Students at private universities in Indonesia, especially in Yogyakarta who have collectivistic cultures were selected as samples of this study. Using 628 students who had been at least in the second year, the results of this study found that the perceived task autonomy was significant positively related to students' work effort and significant negatively related to burnout. Burnout has a significant negative effect on students' work effort that can increase students' work quality. Model testing using structural equation modeling (SEM) showed the existence of perceived task autonomy effected students' work effort and burnout. Students' work quality as a performance variable was directly influenced by students; work effort. Further discussion is discussed in detail in this article.

Keywords — perceived task autonomy, burnout, work effort, work quality

I. INTRODUCTION

Many previouos studies have examined the effect of job characteristics on burnout and work stress (Bakker et al., 2005). In many workplaces, there is low of autonomy and social support, excessive workload, confusing role, and various job demands that causes feelings of exhaustion and negative attitudes at work. Autonomy is one of five core job characteristics (Greenberg & Baron, 2008). Shirom et al. (2006) explained that task autonomy is freedom and independence in doing tasks, including the schedule for making and collecting these tasks. Task autonomy positively related to work attitudes and performance (Ahuja et al., 2007). The task autonomy is more specific than job autonomy. Accorning to Humphrey et al. (2007), consistently and positively, task autonomy is related to performance and consistently and negatively associated with burnout.

Autonomy that uses the socio technical systems approach to work design will give autonomy to the team or group. In contrast, approaches based on job characteristics model, autonomy are individual-oriented (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). This article limits its scope to individual autonomy because individuals' perceived autonomy was different from workgroup. Furthermore, according to the conservative of resource model, the loss of job control (autonomy) may play a role in the development of burnout as core and resources at work (Hobfoll et al., 1995). Several studies have investigated the relationship between autonomy and burnout. Unfortunately, the results show little support for the conservative of resource theory. Autonomy does not provide strong evidence of the conservative of resource model.

Furthermore, this study was conducted with students as respondents. The students' perceived task autonomy have related to their motivation and creativity in doing assignments in class and outside the classroom. Autonomy not only provides freedom to choose instructional practices, but also makes students individually responsible for both the practices and the effects (Van den Broeck et al., 2010; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). Autonomy that has been found to be important for various occupations and organizations was rarely tested in relation to students (Gavrilyuk et al., 2013). Meanwhile, the academic burnout refers to the psychological syndrome that occurs in chronic academic pressure and the learning load that is manifested as emotional exhaustion, a cynical attitude towards assignments at school, and reduced efficacy of students (Gan & Shang, 2007; Shih, 2015; Zhang et al., 2007).

Previous researchers have used students as respondents by assessing academic burnout in students and modifying Maslach Burnout Inventory questionnaires (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Although formally students are not employees, from a psychological perspective, students have the same level of duties and responsibilities like employees (Breso et al., 2007). Students are bound in structured, coercive activities (e.g., class attendance, completeness of tasks) intended for specific purposes (i.e., pass the exam). Regarding the work phenomenon, burnout may exist in students is manifested by feelings of exhausted because study demands, being cynical or not caring about things related to lecture and learning, and feeling incompetent as a student.

Over the past 3 decades, several studies have shown that job characteristics can have an impact on stress and burnout (Bakker et al., 2005). Various situational and personal factors affect burnout (Golden et al., 2004). Job or

task autonomy includes situational factors. Autonomy is one of the job characteristics of the model. Hackman and Oldham (1976) define autonomy as independence, substantial freedom, and deviations from individual scheduling at work and in determining procedures for doing so. Autonomy is one of five task characteristics. Job or task autonomy is an individual's ability to make decisions about work or assignments every day such as methods or sequencing of tasks to complete a task or activity.

Autonomy differs from independence, even though both are related (Kiggundu, 1983). Deci and Ryan (2000) emphasize that autonomy is the experience of integration and freedom. The important thing is autonomy is a core job design characteristics that can be enhanced by job enrichment (Parker, 1998). Motivational theories state that autonomy can produce positive well-being at work (Wu et al., 2015). Autonomy increases responsibility and motivation for better performance. Autonomy also provides individual opportunities to organize themselves in achieving goals (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). For students at the university, autonomy would facilitate an autonomous internalization process where students can choose how to do the tasks and choose courses, lecturers, and thesis supervisors (Fernet et al., 2014). In other words, autonomy is a number of freedom, initiative, and independence in daily work.

Several studies have examined the effect of autonomy on job outcomes (Wang & Netemeyer, 2002). Farh and Scott (1983) found negative effects of autonomy on performance and satisfaction. On the other hand, autonomy has been found to improve performance (Aube et al., 2007; Bakker & Evalia, 2008; Van Prooijen, 2009). By giving autonomy, individuals are expected to have higher motivation, satisfaction, and performance (Wilson et al., 2015). The results of previous studies found the potential effect of the task autonomy on performance (Spector, 1986).

The Job Demand-Resource model proposed that job demands and resources are two groups of work conditions that can be found in all jobs and organizations (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Job demand includes workload, work environment, job demands, while job resources include autonomy, feedback, and peer support (Schaufeli et al., 2009). Several previous studies have found the effect of job demands-resources on burnout (Bakker et al., 2001). Some researchers have noted that lack of control or autonomy in the task contributes to burnout (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Burnout includes emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced self-efficacy (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

The absence of job resources reduces motivation and performance and increases burnout (e.g., Bakker et al., 2003; Bakker et al., 2004). Empirical evidence shows that job resources have a direct negative relationship with burnout (Nahrgang et al., 2011). This is because resource job resources are owned allowing individuals to fulfill job demands, and protect them from strains. Lack of job resources will make individuals unable to meet demands and will experience strains from time to time so that individuals experience burnout (Bakker et al., 2005; Lee & Ashforth, 1996).

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) state that job resources are positively related to burnout. Autonomy can make individuals decide how to use job demands and reduce potential strains. Hemingway and Smith (1999) also find that autonomy is negatively related to stress. Autonomy is used to deal with the influence of job demands (work overload and time pressure). Autonomy shows passion for work or assignments. Conversely, the low autonomy causes a lack of opportunity to make which choices are preferred and beneficial. Therefore, autonomy or decisions latitude play a role in motivation and are associated with burnout (Fernet et al., 2014; Pearson & Moomaw, 2006). Autonomy also allows individuals to use their skills and resources more flexibly.

Previous researchers stated that the lack of autonomy reduces personal accomplishments and engenders a depersonalized attitude among employees causing burnout (e.g., Maslach et al., 2001; Kim & Stoner, 2008). Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) find that autonomy is negatively and weakly related to emotional exhaustion. However, in a 2009 study, they found that perceived autonomy is negatively unrelated with all dimensions of burnout. In some conceptual papers, lack of autonomy reduces personal accomplishment and leads to a depersonalized attitude (Maslach et al., 2001).

Autonomy is also a stressor aspect that can be controlled by people who experience it (Kahn & Byosiere, 1992). This is disputed by other researchers. Greater autonomy is related to the opportunity to cope with stressful situation (Bakker et al., 2005). Spector's (1986) meta-analysis shows that greater perceived autonomy decreases the individual's desire to resign, so that autonomy is negatively related to burnout. Spector's (1986) research was also supported by other researchers (e.g., Bakker et al., 2005; Madathil et al., 2014; Maslach et al., 2001; Van der Ploeg et al., 2003; Yener & Coskun, 2013). Previous researchers have suggested that the relationship between autonomy and burnout requires a further empirical investigation (Bussing & Glaser, 2000).

Research evidence suggests that burnout is detrimental to the individual, since it could result in poor job performance (Cropanzano et al., 2003). When applied to academic settings with students as respondents, emotional exhaustion is explained as fatigue due to learning demands, while cynicism implies students' attitudes toward academic assignments, while academic inefficacies indicate feelings of competency in students related to schoolwork (Shin et al., 2011). In other words, burnout can be negatively related to important consequences both individually and institutionally such as job performance, organizational behavior, job

attitudes, and psychological outcomes.

This research was conducted in Indonesia, especially in Yogyakarta that tends to adopt a collectivistic culture. Previous research has found that autonomy is suitable for individuals from individualistic cultures (Wu et al., 2015). This is because autonomy regulates feelings and behav[illegible] that are in line with values as unique individuals and achieving self-fulfillment. This suitability can facilitate success in self-regulatory process and positive evaluation towards the activities (Foster et al., 1998). Conversely, individuals from collectivistic cultures tend to develop harmonious relationships with others, value of ownership, conformity, restraint, and promote the goals or ideals of others (Lu & Gilmour, 2007). This study aims to reaffirm the autonomy influence negatively on burnout and positively on performance, especially for students. This study intends to prove that students with a collective culture also have autono[illegible]y.

A number of studies have shown that burnout affects job performance negatively (Kalyani et al., 2009; Takahasi & Takahasi, 2010). Previous studies reported an inconsistent relationship between burnout and performance. Some studies show a negative relationship (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998) and some others show a positive relationship (Keijsers et al., 1995). According to the results of previous studies, autonomy has been found to improve per[illegible]rmance and low exhaustion and can improve output (e.g., Aube et al., 2007; Bakker & Evalia, 2008; Van Prooijn, 2009). Autonomy can improve p[illegible]ormance because when individuals have autonomy, they are trusted to perform the task well. This study uses two performance measures separately, namely work qua[illegible] and work effort. This is due to here are individual feelings that job outcomes are the result of their effort. Therefore, work effort is a motivational variable that can improve performance. A high level of autonomy sends a message that the individual has confidence in his ability to do the task as expected. By implementing social cognitive theory and job characteristics models, I proposed a model which autonomy affects learning effort. Referring to conservative resource theory, burnout has negative consequences on work effort that[illegible]ads to improved outcomes. Based on the explanation about the relationship between autonomy, burnout, and performance, the hypo[illegible]sis that I propose are:

H1: Perceived task autonomy is positively related to work effort.

H2: Perceived task autonomy is positively related to work [illegible]lity.

H3: Perceived task autonomy is negatively related to burnout.

H4: Burnout [illegible]egatively to work effort.

H5: Burnout is negatively related to work quality.

H6: Work effort is positively related to work quality.

II. METHODS

A. *Research Procedures and Samples*

The present research was conducted on students' undergraduate programs who were studying in universities in Yogyakarta whose cultures were more likely to be collectivistic. The universities were chosen as the research location were private universities that have undergraduate programs on business and economics. Students in business and economics programs were required to be able to make decisions in working on tasks with a certain time limit. Students were also required to graduate with certain achievement standards, both academic and non-academic. In addition, private universities were selected as research locations were accredited private universities and always assigned tasks independently to their students. This was because this study examined perceived tasks autonomy that required a situation that supported students' autonomy in carrying out tasks and having certain stresses that must be passed.

Re[illegible]rch settings were chosen based on previous research. In recent years, a number of studies on autonomy and burnout tasks have increased spectacularly and expanded in almost all jobs. The results of previous studies using self-theory which stated that individuals who have western culture have self-model as fundamental independent (Shih, 2015). Previous research suggested that research on the task autonomy was more suitable for individualistic culture. This was due to western culture tends to choose the values of independence. While the collectivistic culture focused more on building harmonious relationships with others, adjusting each other, and prioritizing togetherness values (e.g., Triandis et al., 1988; Hofstede, 1991; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Lu & Gilmour, 2007). Previous research results suggested that western culture members prefer a sense of autonomy and c[illegible]form self-identity (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to prove that college students have independence in determining the burden of their studies. In addition, the perceived task autonomy was more effective in a competitive environment so that it required various inputs to achieve good performance (Youndt et al., 1996). This study deliberately used the eastern culture, namely Indonesia, especially Yogyakarta which was famous for mutual cooperation cultura[illegible]nd very collectivistic.

This study used a survey method using questionnaires and individuals as unit analysis. Exploratory study was conducted to understand the characteristics of respondents. Convenience sampling w[illegible]h was a non probabilistic sampling was chosen as a method of data collection in this study. However, the requirements for the selected sample were students who were active in undergraduate programs for four semesters. Determination of sample criteria needs to be done in order to control the diversity of samples.

This study used a minimum number of respondents as many times as many items of questions as in the multivariate criteria according to Hair et al. (2006). The questionnaires used in this study were as many as 32 items and the number of respondents was at least 160 people as required by the multivariate criteria which were five times the number of item questions (Hair et al., 2006). Students who was selected as respondents were students who were in the fourth semester because they have passed the first stage of evaluation. Data collection was conducted in September 2017 until January 2018. Complete questionnaires were used to test the validity and reliability, while incomplete questionnaires were discarded. 628 students were used as respondents of 650 students who were given a questionnaire to fill in (a response rate of 96.62%). The questionnaire was filled in by students using paper and pens and without writing names, so that their confidentiality was guaranteed.

B. Instruments

The questionnaire used in this study covers perceived task autonomy, students 'work effort and students' work quality that have been developed by Dysvik and Kuvaas (2011). The questionnaire regarding burnout was taken from the research of Maslach and Jackson (1981). All questionnaire items use a Likert scale from 1 to 5. Content validity is carried out using the judgment of an organizational behavior expert. The structural equation model (SEM) by using AMOS software used to test the model in this study with the mediating models. Mediating model testing is done with a two-step approach (Byrne, 2010).

III. RESULTS

A. Analysis of Validity and Reliability

The results of the factor analysis using orthogonal techniques and varimax rotation demonstrated that 32 items used were valid. Factor extraction was determined based on the theory used. The factor loading recorded value between 0.559 and 0.708 for the perceived task autonomy construct, between 0.666 and 0.841 for the burnout construct, between 0.712 and 0.825 for students 'work effort, and between 0.691 and 0.82 constructs for constructing students' work quality. Question items that have a loading factor less than 0.5 were not used in subsequent analyzes. Items of questionnaire that have been qualified by construct validity were tested reliability with internal consistency. Internal consistency with Cronbach Alpha more than 0.6 was used to test the reliability of instruments. Cronbach's alpha values 0.824 for perceived task autonomy, 0.891 for burnout, 0.791 for students' work quality, and 0.824 for students' work effort. Cronbach's alpha values of all variables used in this study were above 0.6. Based on the results of the reliability testing, the researcher stated that the reliability of the instrument was recommended by Zikmund et al. (2010). Based on the groupings that have been carried out by Zikmund et al. (2010), the reliability of the four variables in this study was classified as good reliability.

B. Preliminary Analysis

Correlation analysis was carried out before testing the model of the relationship between constructs used in this study. This was done to ensure that the construct being tested does correlate significantly. The mean and standard deviation also needs to be measured to ensure that the construct does exist in the research settings used. Descriptive statistical results are presented in Table 1.

TABLE I
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICAL RESULTS

	Mean	Std. Dev.	1	2	3	4
Perceived Task Autonomy (1)	3.9834	0.4428	1.000			
Burnout (2)	2.5809	0.6278	-0.146**	1.000		
Students' Work Effort (3)	3.9312	0.5756	0.280**	-0.108**	1.000	
Students' Work Quality (4)	3.4900	0.6209	0.210**	-0.139**	0.440**	1.000

Notes: **sig. at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The mean of the three variables in Table 1 were in between 2.5809 until 3.9834 and the standard deviation values between 0.4428 and 0.6278. The high mean of perceived task autonomy showed that despite being in a collectivistic culture, students feel autonomy in learning they feel on campus. The average burnout was moderate, which means students did not experience burnout too much in their study. In addition, all correlations were obtained are not quite strong. The results of this study found that perceived task autonomy was significantly negative associated with burnout (H3 was supported), significantly positively associated with students' work effort (H1 was supported) and with work quality (H2 was supported). The results of this study also showed a significant positive relationship between students 'work effort and students' work quality (H6 was supported). Furthermore, the relationship between burnout and students 'work effort was significantly negative (H4 was supported) and the relationship between burnout and students' work quality was also significantly negative (H5 was supported).

C. Model Testing Results

The first model tested was the mediation model where burnout was a mediator variable in the relationship between perceived tasks autonomy and students 'work effort and students' work quality. Mediating testing of the burnout model is presented in Table 2.

TABLEII

TESTING RESULTS OF BURNOUT AS MEDIATING VARIABLE USING SEM

	Std. Regr. Weights	CR
Perceived Task Autonomy → Burnout	- 0.179**	- 3.894
Burnout → Students' Work Effort	- 0.152**	- 3.303
Burnout → Students' Work Quality	- 0.221**	- 4.737
GFI = 0.881 AGFI = 0.604 Chi-square = 166.314 df = 3 CFI = 0.203 RMR = 0.028 RMSEA = 0.295		

The results of model testing using SEM in Table 2 indicated that the model must be modified so that there was a match between the data and theory.This can be seen from the high difference between the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI = 0.881) and the Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI = 0.604) which was supported by a modification index that indicated that the model needs to be modified if supported by theory. The results of the modification of the model are presented in Table 3.

TABLEIII

TESTING RESULTS OF BURNOUT AND STUDENTS' WORK EFFORT AS MEDIATING VARIABLES USING SEM

	Std. Regr. Weights	CR
Perceived Task Autonomy → Burnout	- 0.170**	- 3.682
Perceived Task Autonomy → Students' Work Effort	0.321**	6.832
Burnout → Students' Work Effort	- 0.096**	- 2.124
Students' Work Effort → Students' Work Quality	0.538**	12.062
GFI = 0.991 AGFI = 0.954 CFI = 0.953 Chi-square = 11.725 df = 2 RMR = 0.007 RMSEA = 0.088		

Table 3 showed that the model was in accordance with the data and the underlying theory.This was indicated by the value of GFI= 0.991, AGFI= 0.954, and the value of Comparative Fit Index (CFI= 0.953). The small difference between GFI and AGFI showed that the model did not need to be modified again. This was reinforced by the CFI value of 0.953 and small Chi-square (= 11.725), the model was declared fit with the data. The results of this study indicated that burnout mediated the relationship between perceived tasks autonomy and students' work effort. Meanwhile, the perceived task autonomy also had a positive direct effect on work effort. Next, students 'work effort, affects students' work quality. In other words, students 'work effort also mediated the relationship between burnout and students' work quality.

IV. DISCUSSION

The results of this study reinforced some previous research that found that perceived task autonomy was positively related to performance (e.g., Parker, 2003; Shirom et al., 2006; Wang & Netemeyer, 2002) and had been able to improve performance (e.g., Langford & Moye, 2004; Leach et al., 2005; Park & Searcy, 2012; Spector, 1986). The present study proved that perceived task autonomy influenced motivation (students' work effort). In particular, the perceived task autonomy influenced performance (students' work quality) through its influence on students' work effort that drove the achievement of students' work quality. Previous researchers have stated that the task autonomy influenced performance through its influence on motivation (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Langford & Moye, 2004).

Autonomy encourages individuals to be responsible and motivate them to achieve better results. The results of this study also reinforced the results of some previous studies which found that perceived task autonomy was negatively related to burnout and can reduce burnout (e.g., Ahuja et al., 2007; Maslach et al., 2001; Van Yperen & Hagedoorn, 2003; Vigoda-Gadot, 2007; Wall et al., 1996). When individuals get freedom and discretion in completing their tasks, the individual can overcome the demands in his task so as to reduce burnout. Autonomy is an important characteristic in an environment that is related to burnout and functions as a supporting factor or protective burnout. Individuals will not experience high levels of exhaustion and depersonalization if they are experienced adequate levels of autonomy.

Results of this study implied that perceived task autonomy might generally improved work effort and reduced burnout directly. Individuals who have been given more autonomy were generally less burnout and better motivation or effort. The results of this study also corroborated the results of previous studies that burnout affects student's work quality negatively through students' work effort. In other words, burnout reduces performance. This is consistent with previous studies (Kalyani et al., 2009; Takahasi & Takahasi, 2010). Therefore, the perceived task autonomy must also be owned by students so that they are motivated to achieve better learning achievement.

The purpose of the present study was also to examine the effects of burnout in the relationships between job resources (autonomy) and work outcomes (students 'work effort and students' work quality). I found that perceived task autonomy had a positive impact on students' work effort and students' work effort affects students' work quality. The results of this study proved that the perceived task autonomy was not only suitable for people with individualistic cultures, but also that people with collectivistic cultures also have the perceived tasks autonomy. These findings were consistent with some previous studies conducted in western societies

(Boyd et al., 2011). The results of this study indicated that perceived task autonomy increased students' work effort and lower individual burnout. This was consistent with the results of previous studies (e.g., Wall et al., 1996). Autonomy can improve performance because individuals who have been trained to have autonomy at a certain level are considered capable of being trusted to perform the task well.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Task autonomy is important for students to prevent burnout and increase students 'work quality through students' work effort. The task autonomy for students is a situational variable that influences performance in addition to dispositional variables. The task autonomy is support for students to reduce burnout in challenging tasks. Perceived tasks autonomy enhancing the feelings of individuals for outcomes are results of their effort. Students in Indonesia who are full of collectivism culture also want there is the task autonomy in academic activities on campus. This study imply that autonomy may generally improve work effort and work quality and reduced burnout. Therefore, teachers need to provide autonomy for students, but that does not mean freedom and deviation from the existing systems and regulations. It is necessary to have control training through the training methods, scheduling, and standards used to assess performance.

This study is not free from limitation. First, The survey research design in this study is cross-sectional which limits testing of causal relationships using mediating variables. Future research is expected to use a longitudinal research design to test the relationship model. Second, the present study was conducted using a self-report method. This results in a variance common method which implies a bouncing beta or a higher beta value (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Future research is expected to use multiple sources, especially for measuring performance more objectively. Third limitation is that I investigate special groups of private university students, which means that future research is needed to classify the generalization of my findings with other findings at state universities.

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