Work-life balance and Burnout among Lawyers in Pakistan: Moderating Role of Emotional Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

The study was focused on determining the relationship between Emotional intelligence, Work-life balance and burnout, along with exploring the direct effect of predictor (Work-life balance) on the outcome variable (Burnout) as well as aimed to explore the Impact of Emotional Intelligence as a moderator amid Work-life balance and burnout. This research was conducted because of limited Research on Pakistani Lawyers and the challenging nature of their legal work. The present study encompasses framework and model including Job Demand resource model. A Cross-sectional, Quantitative study design was used and through snowballing and purposive sampling, substantial data of 301 was gathered from Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Multan, Lahore, Karachi, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan to draw meaningful analysis. The findings of the study revealed there is a significant positive correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Work-life balance whereas a significant negative correlation between Emotional intelligence and burnout as well as amid Work-life balance and burnout. Findings also stated that Work-life balance negatively predicted Burnout. Results also indicated that Emotional Intelligence acts as a significant moderator between Burnout and Work-life balance. Overall, the study highlights and brings attention to the significance of Emotional Intelligence in improving Work-life balance, hence reducing burnout and helps individuals balance personal and professional life.

Keywords. Emotional Intelligence, Work-life balance, Burnout, Pakistani Lawyers

Introduction

Lawyers face intense workload, demanding schedules, long working hours, continuous demands by clients and prolonged stress situations. According to research conducted worldwide, these expectations often result in burnout, which manifests as emotional exhaustion and a diminished sense of professional accomplishment. These demands lead to occupational stress and burnout impacting their personal life, and professional efficacy. Burnout often results from prolonged stress in the legal profession. It is marked by emotional exhaustion and detachment (Sheldon & Krieger, 2015). There is a positive correlation between emotional labor and all three dimensions of burnout, which means that emotional demands in legal practice can lead to burnout over time, especially in junior lawyers (Martin & Mathew, 2025). Demerouti et al. (2003) state that burnout refers to a psychological reaction to persistent job stressors that are manifested in exhaustion, cynicism and diminished professional effectiveness. The concept belongs to the Job Demand Resource model that defines burnout as an after-effect of high job demands that energy consumes and provides inefficient coping strategies.

Work-life balance impacts the level of burnout; Work-life balance is the ability to effectively divide time and effort between personal and professional responsibilities (Allen & Greenhaus, 2011). Initiatives regarding improving Work-life balance improves Burnout (Hussain et al., 2025). Whereas, Emotional Intelligence act as a protective factor against burnout; According to Wong and Law (2002), "Emotional intelligence is the ability of individuals to appraise and express emotions in themselves and others, to regulate emotions in self and others, and to use emotions in solving problems.'' The role of emotional intelligence is particularly significant in high-stress professions such as law. Emotional Intelligence has played an important role in the professional life of lawyers, but now highlighted as well as significantly focused in the modern era.

Moreover, Research explains that demands of clients are more fulfilled by emotionally intelligent lawyers (Kelton, 2015). Research indicates that individuals with high level emotional intelligence are better able to manage stress, regulate their emotions, and sustain positive relationships at work, all of these support a better work-life balance (Vasumati & Sagaya, 2017). Another research also confirmed an Inverse relationship between emotional intelligence and burnout (Aljohara & A. Azer, 2023). Researchers found that the extent of this issue can be assessed by studying Greek lawyers (Platsidou & Salman, 2012). They explained that factors like long working hours, high client demands, and intense competition often lead to burnout in legal professionals. However, they also found that emotional intelligence serves as an important protective factor. Research indicates that Emotional intelligence impacts Work-life Balance as Emotionally intelligent employees are generally better at juggling their personal and professional responsibilities which reduces role conflict and enhances life satisfaction in general (Sánchez- Gómez & Breso, 2020).

Emotional Intelligence plays a role as a moderator amid Work-life balance and burnout Chu & Sun (2025) conducted research, findings indicated that Emotional intelligence has a Moderating role in the association between Work-family conflict and Burnout. Another study by Chakravorty & Singh (2020) suggest that Emotional intelligence plays a role as a Moderator between Work interference Family, Family Interference Work and Burnout). Another research study was conducted and results showed that there is a positive correlation between work-life and psychological well-being, while there is a negative correlation between burnout and psychological distress, Emotional intelligence act as a moderator. (Begum et al., 2025).

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of the study
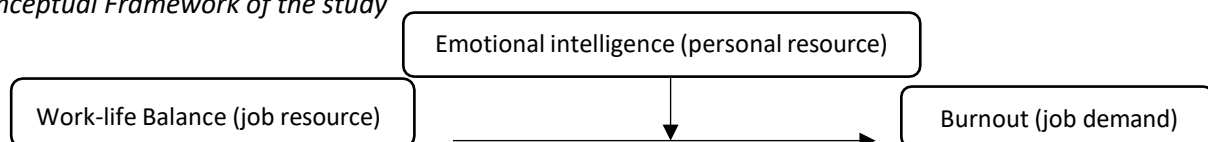
Methodology

The current study used a cross-sectional, Quantitative research design. The aim of current study is to find the association between work-life balance, burnout and emotional intelligence among Pakistani lawyers. Moreover, the study also focuses on determining whether emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between the burnout and work-life balance among Pakistani lawyers

Sample

The sample was obtained through snowball and purposive sampling technique from a total of 301. The sample consists of lawyers (male and female; experienced and freshers) practising in the field, ranging between the ages of 25 to 50. The sample comprised of lawyers from different regions of Pakistan. Sample was obtained while following a specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria required individuals who were 25 to 50 years, who have done LLB and have In- field experience and are proficient in English. Exclusion criteria consisted of individuals who were handicapped and had any type of psychological disorder history, failed to give complete responses and Volunteer or intern roles were excluded. Ethical considerations were followed and necessary approvals from the board of the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) were taken before the data collection was started**.** Data was collected through questionnaires that were previously used in studies to ensure Validity and Reliability.

Assessment measures

The assessment measures included demographics, Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) and Hayman's Work-Life Balance Scale (WLBS)

Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS)

The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLIES) is used in this study to access the level of Emotional intelligence among lawyers. The scale consists of 16 items with four subscales; Self emotion appraisal subscale measures an individual's ability to express and understand their own emotions. The Other emotion Appraisal subscale assesses the capacity to understand the emotions of others. The Use of Emotion subscale evaluates the use of emotions to enhance performance. Whereas the Regulation of Emotion subscale measures the ability to regulate emotions in oneself. Each subscale comprises 4 items. It is a 7-point Likert scale (1= Strongly disagree, 7= Strongly agree). A total score on the scale is known as "Emotional Intelligence", and it is calculated by taking the mean across all the items. The higher scores on the scale demonstrate a greater level of emotional intelligence. The scale depicted good test-retest reliability and a high internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha value for WLEIS in the current study is 0.89.

The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI)

This scale consists of 16 self-report items. The scale has two subscales, i.e., Exhaustion and Disengagement, with the former one incorporating 8 items and the latter including 8 items. It is a well-known scale for assessing burnout levels linked to stress at work. It is a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Strongly Disagree). The sum of the scores for each item yields the overall score. High job burnout is indicated by high scores on the scale, and vice versa. OLBI is employed to assess how much a person feels worn out and disengaged because of work-related responsibilities. The current study's OLBI has an alpha score of 0.64. Before the addition, some items (2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12) are to be reverse scored. The high scores on the scale depict high job burnout and vice versa.

Work-Life Balance Scale (WLBS)

There are 15 self-report items on this Scale (WLBS). There are three subscales of the scale. It is a widely used measure for assessing how successfully a person balances their personal and professional lives. The items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1= Strongly disagree, 5= Strongly agree). The total score is obtained by adding the score for each item. Before addition, some items (1-11) are to be reverse-scored. The high scores on the scale depict poor work life balance and vice versa. In the current study, this scale is used to evaluate the degree to which an individual experiences conflict or harmony between their work and personal life. The alpha value in current study is 0.79.

Data analysis

After the data was collected, data was arranged and summarized using descriptive statistics and then analysed using Pearson Correlation, Linear Regression and moderation analysis through SPSS software. Kurtosis and Skewness were calculated and verified that the data was normally distributed. The findings suggested that the values of kurtosis and skewness are between -1 and +1 in the present research study and data is normally distribute.

Table 1 revealed that the highest number of participants were of the age range 25-35 years 237 (79%) and lowest number of age range was 45-50 years 13 (4.3%).The number of males were *n*=214 (71.1 %) and females *n*= 87 (28.9%).Greater were the number of unmarried participants which were *n*=193 (64%).Participants having LL.B educational qualification were highest 270 (89.7%).There were greater number of fresher lawyers 100 (33.2 %), 2nd highest were the number of lawyers having more than 5 years of experience 82 (27.2%) and the smallest number of participants were of having 5 years of experience 48 (15.9).

Table:1

Frequency and percentage of demographic variables (N=301)

Sample characteristics	*f*	%
Age		
25–35 years	237	78.7
35–45 years	50	16.6
45–50 years	13	4.3
Gender		
Male	214	71.1
Female	87	28.9
Marital Status		
Married	107	35.5
Unmarried	193	64.1
Educational Qualification		
LL. B	270	89.7
LL.M	28	9.3
Bar-at-Law	2	.70
Ph.D. in law	1	.30
Years of Experience		
Fresher	100	33.2
2 years	71	23.6
5 years	48	15.9
More than 5 years	82	27.2

Note. Frequency=*f*; Percentage=*%*

Table 2 shows Correlation analysis using Pearson correlation test was performed in this study to uncover associations among work-life balance, Emotional intelligence and burnout. Results indicated that Emotional Intelligence significantly and positively correlated Work-life balance (r=-.26, *n*=301, *p*<.001) whereas, Emotional Intelligence significantly negatively correlated with Burnout (r=-.42, *n*=301, *p*<.001). Findings also explained that Work-life balance significantly and negatively correlated with Burnout (r=-.55, *n*=301, *p*<.001). So, H1, H2 and H3 were supported.

Table 2

Pearson correlation coefficient on variables included in study (N=301)

Variable	*N*	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3
Work-life balance	301	48.50	8.39	1	.26**	-.55**
Emotional Intelligence	301	82.21	16.62		1	-.42**
Burnout	**301**	**36.87**	**5.14**			1

Note. *N*=no of individuals; *M*=Mean; *SD*= Standard Deviation; p<0.01

Table 3 shows the impact of work-life balance on Burnout among Pakistani Lawyers. The value of R^2 0.30 revealed that the predictor variable (Work-life balance) explained 30% variance in the outcome variable

(Burnout) with *F* (1,299) =131.23*, p*<.001. The findings revealed that Work-life balance negatively predicted burnout (β=-.55, *p*<.001)

Table 3

Linear Regression between Work-life balance and Burnout among Pakistani Lawyers (N=301)

Variable	*B*	β	*SE*	95 % CI	
				LL	*UL*
(Constant)	53.28***		1.45	**50.42**	**56.13**
Work-life balance	-.34***	-.55	.03	**-.396**	**-.280**
R²	**0.30**				

Note. p<.001.

Moderation Analysis was conducted through the Process Macro Model 1 by Hayes.

Tale 4 shows that Model 1 reading shows the *value* of .38 indicated that the independent variable showed 38% variation in the outcome variable along with *F* (2, 298) =94.76*, p* <.001. The outcomes tell that Worklife Balance (β =-.47, *p* <.001) and Emotional Intelligence negatively predicted burnout β = -.30, *p* <.001). Model 2, the *R²*.40 expresses that 40% variance is shown in the outcome with *F*(3, 297) = 67.50, *p* <.001.Results exhibited the work-life Balance (β = -.45 *p* < 0.001), Emotional Intelligence (β = -.28, *p* <.001) and Work Life balance x Emotional Intelligence predicts in negative way the burnout (β = -.13 , *p* < 0.001) .The Δ *R²* value of .01 expresses change of 1% in the variation given in model 1 and model 2 and Δ *F*(1, 297) = 8.31 *p* < 0.001 Findings demonstrated Emotional Intelligence works as a moderator among burnout and work- life balance.

Table 4

Moderation given of variables i.e. Emotional Intelligence between Burnout and Work-life balance (N=301)

	Model 1				Model 2	
Variables	*B*	β	*SE*	*B*	β	*SE*
Constant	36.87***		.23	37.03***		**.23**
WLB	-2.44***	-.47***	.24	-2.31***	-.45***	**.24**
EI	-1.54***	-.30***	.24	-1.46***	-.28***	**.24**
WLB x EI				-.61***	-.13***	**.21**
R2 Δ R	**.38**				**.40** **.01**	

Note. p<.001; WLB x EI=Work-life balance x Burnout

DISCUSSION

Lawyers face continuous emotionally and mentally demanding situations. This leads to occupational stress (Krystia & Brian, 2012) and the occupational stress has a direct positive relation with occupational burnout (Azeem et al., 2020). This disrupts their work-life balance, whereas Emotional intelligence acts as a resource to help with Work-life balance and burnout. The main aim was to explore the moderating function of EI in burnout and WorkLife balance among Pakistani lawyers. In addition to this, our goal was also to predict the effect of Work-life balance on Burnout among Pakistani lawyers.

Kurtosis and Skewness were calculated for all scales and subscales and verified that the data was normally distributed. The findings suggested that the values of kurtosis and skewness are between -1 and +1 in the present research study and data is normally distributed.

Our first hypothesis proposed that there will be negative relationship amid emotional intelligence and burnout among Pakistani lawyers. Burnout and Emotional intelligence negatively relate which explains that a lawyer with increased Emotional Intelligence will have low burnout and vice versa. These results align with prior study which shows that there is an increased negative correlation between burnout and emotional intelligence (Taylor et al., 2024). Another prior research in Lahore discussed a significant correlation between burnout and EI scores (Qutab & Joya, 2022).

Our second hypothesis states that there will be negative relationship between burnout and work-life balance. These also consistent with previous literature highlighting there is a substantial and inverse relationship between Work-Life Balance and burnout (Sanawar et al., 2025). The results emphasize the significance of organizational policies that reinforce work–life balance, such as flexible working hours, manageable caseloads, and encouraging breaks.

The third hypothesis stated that there will be positive correlation between Work-life balance and Emotional Intelligence meaning a lawyer who scores high on Emotional intelligence will have good work -life balance. This finding is also consistent with prior researches that Emotional intelligence positively effect work-life balance (Kumarasamy et al., 2016). Taken together, these results highlight that there is dual role of emotional intelligence: it not only protects against burnout but also enhances ability of one's to maintain personal life and professional. So, organizations should emotional trainings and should encourage work life balance by giving different types of leaves and flexible hours which will lead low burnout, turnover and good performance and motivation.

According to the fourth hypothesis the Emotional Intelligence will moderate the relationship between burnout and Work Life Balance among Pakistani Lawyers. The results of our study are coherent with the prior empirical research studies that states Emotional Intelligence significantly moderated the relationship between burnout and Work-family conflict (Chakravorty & Singh, 2020). Emotional Intelligence ability model also proves this idea that Emotional Intelligence act an ability that helps in personal as well as professional development (Mayor & Salovey, 1997); helps with enhancing work-life balance and diminishes burnout. It is quite predictable as well that when an individual has high Emotional Intelligence, this will help them understand themselves and everyone more effectively, using and regulating their emotions better which will enhance their work-life balance and ultimately reducing their burnout. Another research also identifies that Emotional Intelligence act as a moderator between Work-family conflict and burnout (Chu & Sun, 2025). Moderation analysis was performed after analysing the regression between the variables was significant. In our study, Work-life balance significantly predicted burnout among Pakistani lawyers. This outcome was in line with the prior research that work-life balance and social support predict burnout (Tuğsal, 2017). It is quite certain that when an individual has difficult maintaining work-life balance, the chances of burnout is increased. It was also predicted that Emotional Intelligence predicts the Burnout in our research study. This was coherent with the previous literature, a meta-analysis of 59 articles that burnout is significantly associated with Emotional Intelligence (Mendonca et al., 2023). Another research proposed that higher Emotional Intelligence predicts burnout (Lindeman B et al., 2017).

Implications

Previous literature was not focused on Pakistani Lawyers so conducting this research filled the gap and gives a different cultural perspective on the study variables. Research on Emotional Intelligence as a moderator was limited so this addition to the existing literature emphasizes the importance of Emotional Intelligence in legal profession. This study also emphasizes that future researchers should develop and test EI-training programs, stress-management workshops, or work–life balance strategies to evaluate whether these interventions can effectively reduce burnout. This study significantly contributes to society by providing valuable insight for policy makers, legal institutions and mental health practitioners in designing strategies that enhance lawyers' well-being and professional efficacy.

Limitations and Suggestions

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. All variables (work–life balance, emotional intelligence, and burnout) were measured through self-report scales, which may introduce social desirability bias and participants may respond in a way they think is more acceptable rather than fully accurate. The problem of generalizability as this study sample consisted of only Pakistani lawyers from so it may limit the generalizability of findings to other populations or work environments. The cross-sectional study design could also affect the validity of findings as it is conducted at a single point in time. The study did not control for potential confounding variables such as current mental health conditions, family dynamics, or traumatic life events, which may have independently influenced emotional regulation and may not control for all the outside influences in legal settings such as stress, mood, work load, and personal situations that could affect the quality of responses. For in-depth viewpoint qualitative study can be performed as well. The sample should be diversified to improve generalizability. Future research should use different data collection techniques like interviews, observation. Legal professionals often read statements very carefully and small wording differences may lead to varied interpretations. Legal professions may give socially acceptable answers because they are trained to be careful words and could reduce the honesty of responses. Researchers can also include participants from different areas of legal field such as corporate office, government departments, law colleges and universities, criminal courts and civil courts to explore how different work settings shape emotional intelligence, work-life balance and burnout.

Conclusion

Limited Research on Pakistani Lawyers, the challenging nature of their legal work and rising trend in Occupational burnout, it is important to explore the impact of Emotional Intelligence as a moderator as well as the Impact of Work-life balance on Burnout among lawyers. The study results states and proves that there is a significant correlation between Emotional Intelligence and burnout among Pakistani Lawyers. Moreover, Significant correlation is also depicted between Work-life balance and burnout among Pakistani Lawyers. Results of the research study depicts that Emotional Intelligence as well as Work-life balance significantly predicts the burnout. The findings suggests that Emotional Intelligence act as a significant moderator between Work-life balance and burnout among Pakistani Lawyers. Researchers and policy makers and different professionals may benefit as the study highlights the importance of professional's wellbeing and the importance of Work-life balance as well as developing and designing interventions related to Emotional Intelligence and preventions programs for diverse professionals to improve their personal wellbeing and professional efficacy.

Declaration

Ethical Approval This study was conducted following the ethical guidelines provided by the American Psychological Association and the committee of the National University of Modern Languages

Conflict of Interest The authors have no conflicts to declare.

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Consent for Publication The authors have agreed upon the publication of this manuscript.

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