Structural equations of the relationship between the psychological needs of male and female employees with the experience of being overwhelmed at work with the mediation of organizational commitment

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	*ABSTRACT*
	Background and Aim: The current research was conducted with the aim of structural equations of the relationship between the psychological needs of employees and the experience of being overwhelmed at work with the mediation of organizational commitment. **Methods:** The method of the current research was of the correlation type and the method of structural equations was used. All the employees of the Islamic Azad Universities of Tehran in the academic year of 2020-21 formed the statistical population of the present study, and 339 employees were selected as a sample using random sampling. To collect data, a questionnaire tool was used: a questionnaire on the experience of drowning in work (Talabeigi, 2013), psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and an organizational commitment questionnaire (Allen & Mayer, 1997) were the research tools, which were reliable and valid. Questionnaires in this research were calculated using Cronbach's alpha 0.865, 0.921 and 0.793 respectively for the aforementioned questionnaires. To analyze the data, Pearson correlation coefficient and structural equation model were used and using software SPSS 24 and AMOS 24 were used. **Results:** The results of the analysis showed that there is a significant positive and direct relationship between the psychological needs of employees with the experience of drowning in work and the organizational commitment of the organization ($P \geq 0.05$). Also, the results of structural equation analysis showed that organizational commitment mediates the relationship between employees' psychological needs and the experience of being overwhelmed at work ($P \geq 0.05$). **Conclusion:** Attention and emphasis on promoting organizational commitment help creating a clear image of effective human resources with appropriate psychological needs and the experience of drowning in work.

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Introduction

Every government and commercial organization will be challenged to retain its most valuable employees. Learning organizations improve the performance of their employees and reduce their intention to leave. This competition continues to intensify, however, the public sector is at a disadvantage with less progress in its traditional practices. However, improvement can be seen in current management practices. Employees seek perceived career growth in the organization, perceived value that increases their organizational commitment, which may further discourage them from leaving the organization. Therefore, creating an appropriate career growth path is necessary to retain existing employees, attract potential talent, and contribute to the effectiveness of the hiring process. Developing and implementing a career plan cannot happen overnight. It requires long-term commitment and a comprehensive approach to workforce management and requires effort and commitment from senior management, line managers and human resources personnel. Furthermore, the best performance of the career growth strategy concept may not be suitable for every environment and should be adopted according to cultural contexts (Al-Balushi et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, in traditional views, it was stated that financial, human and social capitals play the most important role in the success of organizations. In recent years, the attention of organizational researchers was focused on the abilities and positive traits in people and the importance of positive environments. Simply having advanced facilities and technologies, skills and job experiences and social interactions of human resources, the success of organizations is not guaranteed, but the positive attributes of employees are more important (Sheikhi Dizjagan et al., 2015). The drowning theory presented by May shows that the satisfaction and motivation of a person depends on the match between his skills and the challenges in the work. This experience occurs in situations where the challenges and skills are at a high level and the person's abilities to face the challenges are balanced and the person acts in his full capacity (Fagerlind et al., 2013). The experience of immersion is defined as a complete focus on work and the elimination of other distractions (Slauch-Gumzel & Alexi,

2020) and is very useful for the growth and improvement of organizations and employees (Sharma et al., 2020). Studies show that burnout as a work-related outcome is vitally related to job resources such as social support (Fagerlind et al., 2013). Organizations benefit when their employees experience immersion at work because it is a positive experience that helps them perform better. It is important to study the antecedents of the drowning experience, as these require further empirical investigation due to their complex nature (Taser et al., 2022). Research that specifically focuses on the antecedents of the experience of work burnout is still scarce in the literature (Van Ortmersen et al., 2020). Up to now, the following factors have been studied in the literature as antecedents of the drowning experience. challenge-skill balance (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), daily improvement (Demerouti et al., 2012), leadership (Sosiko et al., 1999), job characteristics (Demerouti, 2006), and job resources (Fagerlind et al., 2013).

Meanwhile, there has always been a strong link between psychology and the concepts of organization and management. One of these concepts is psychological needs. From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), satisfaction of basic psychological needs is necessary for motivation, well-being, and independent work performance (Ryan & Deci, 2019). Three requirements are considered essential. These are the need for autonomy (i.e., the need for free choice), competence (i.e., the need to master tasks), and relatedness (i.e., the need to relate to others) (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In the field of research, the satisfaction of basic psychological needs in the context of work has received wide attention (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Studies have shown how people's need satisfaction varies from one another (i.e. between people). The satisfaction of these psychological needs depends on changes in the environment (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and the environment and its perceptions are not constant. Therefore, it can be believed that the experience of need satisfaction within people fluctuates over time (Ryan and Deci, 2017). Therefore, scientific information about how the same people's need satisfaction experiences fluctuate over time (i.e., within the individual) is needed. Understanding these intra-individual fluctuations is essential because it brings us

closer to understanding natural and real-life phenomena (Cooksen et al., 2021). According to Bolger and Laurenceau (2013), psychological constructs should be studied as natural processes that are developing or evolving. Basic psychological need satisfaction is a psychological construct that depends on the social environment and how it is perceived (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Therefore, it can be argued that need satisfaction is likely to fluctuate with changes in the environment or perception of it.

In conclusion, the literature on need satisfaction antecedents suggests that job demands are generally negatively related to need satisfaction if they are perceived as a hindrance. Conversely, the opposite can be true for challenge demands. Job and organizational resources are generally positively related to basic psychological needs. Most of these studies adopted a cross-sectional between-person approach and compared employees experiencing, for example, different degrees of workload. However, the work environment is dynamic and the demands and resources of an employee can constantly change. For example, one's workload may vary from day to day. If the work environment factors are cross-sectionally related to the satisfaction of basic psychological needs, it can be hypothesized that changes in these work environment factors can be related to changes in need satisfaction. Then, changes in these workplace factors may be related to changes in need satisfaction. Existing diary studies have shown that changes in factors in the work environment are associated with changes in the satisfaction of basic psychological needs (De Getier et al., 2018).

In recent years, organizations have faced numerous challenges caused by rapid technological or social changes. Due to these rapid changes, employees are decisive in the success, efficiency and productivity of any organization. Organizations that want to be competitive need motivated, committed, satisfied and innovative human capital. Engaged employees tend to behave in ways that support the organization. A strong desire to belong to the organization encourages people to perform better. Social exchange theory also supports the positive relationship between commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. According

to social exchange theory, job attitudes (eg, commitments) are enhanced by the work environment in which job attitudes determine the employee's response to his or her organization. Employees who experience positive exchanges with organizations will be more committed and will be more involved by showing high organizational citizenship behavior (Martono et al., 2021). Srivastava and Dehar (2016) proved that organizational commitment can encourage employees' extra-role behavior. Solton et al. (2020) also found that employees who have higher commitment will show higher organizational citizenship behavior. Organizational commitment has been proven to be a factor that can directly improve employees' organizational citizenship behavior (Jin et al., 2018). In addition to playing a direct role, organizational commitment can also be a mediating variable. Organizational commitment is reflected when employees have loyalty and identity with the organization and feel that they want to continue being a part of the organization (Lambert et al., 2008). In short, organizational commitment is the loyalty of employees to employers. Organizational commitment is formed when employees and organizations develop a great interest and desire to maintain their working relationships. Organizational commitment is the emotional connection that employees feel with their work (Obedgio et al., 2017). Farzaneh et al. (2014) show that organizational citizenship behavior may be influenced by the fit of the individual with the environment through organizational commitment as a mediating variable. Paul et al. (2016) proved that commitment plays an important role in facilitating the antecedents of organizational citizenship behavior. Previously, Chabra (2015) showed the important role of organizational commitment in facilitating the fit of the person with the environment on the work result.

Furthermore; Solton et al. (2020) also found that individual fit with the environment and organizational citizenship behavior are mediated by organizational commitment. Committed employees have loyalty and a sense of helping the organization. This is the key to connecting the fit of the individual with the environment and organizational citizenship behavior. Person-environment fit can encourage extra-role

behavior and increase organizational commitment. From an organizational point of view, also Rivkin et al. (2018) state that commitment to the organization can be one of the preconditions for the immersion experience. Therefore, organizational affective commitment equips employees with resources that are essential for survival or achieving the main goal in their professional context. This emotional connection to the organization may help employees manage stress effectively and give them more flexibility. It makes them safe and protected against the loss of resources, promotes less stress or burnout, and provides them with the capacity and opportunity to acquire more resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Therefore, doing challenging tasks with high skill can be beneficial for employees and organizations. One can see many positive consequences such as: creativity, peak performance, talent development and productivity in case of creating conditions based on which a person becomes overwhelmed at work. The resources that predict job burnout may be at the collective or organizational level, such as the degree of innovation or legality of the organization, or at the individual level, such as autonomy, feedback, and opportunities for professional development (Talabeigi, 2014).

Method

From the point of view that the purpose of this research is to predict the experience of drowning in work based on the psychological needs of employees: the mediating role of organizational commitment, therefore, descriptive-survey research method has been used to investigate these elements and in terms of correlational purpose. The statistical population of the present study was made up of all the employees of the free universities of Tehran who were working in the academic year 2020-2021. In this research, the rule of 10 to 1 is used for sampling based on the suggestion of Klein (2011). Due to the possibility of participants dropping out in the research process, the researcher decided to collect information from 400 participants. Finally, 339 complete questionnaires were analyzed.

Materials

1. Questionnaire related to the experience of drowning at work (Talabeigi, 2014): This questionnaire was designed by Talabeigi (2014) based on the standard questionnaire for measuring the experience of drowning that was prepared by Csikszentmihalyi (2008). The respondents have been asked to score their agreement and disagreement from 1 to 6,

respectively, from completely disagree to completely agree. This questionnaire has 9 components: the challenge/skill balance component refers to the relationship between the skills required to perform an activity and the challenges of that activity. The second component, the unification of activity and awareness, refers to the fact that a person engages in activities automatically and spontaneously, without the need to reflect on his behavior. The third component, clear goals, means that the person has a clear understanding of what needs to be done. The fourth component, concrete feedback, refers to the fact that the performed activity allows the person to receive clear and direct feedback on his performance. The fifth component, focus on the task at hand, indicates that individuals are fully invested in their activity and are not distracted by environmental factors. The sixth component, sense of control, is related to the feeling of quasi-invulnerability in which the possibility of failure is not currently on one's mind. The seventh component, loss of self-awareness, indicates that the person is completely one with the activity and is not concerned about the judgment of others. The 8th component, time variation, time may appear to pass slowly or rapidly, depending on the activities in progress. Finally, the ninth and last component, the experience of internal reward, means that the activity is intrinsically motivating (Ayoub et al., 2013). Talabeigi (2014) measured the content reliability of work immersion experience with experts' opinions. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire in the form of pre-test and post-test, and the alpha of the instrument was 0.84 and 0.82 respectively in the pre-test and re-test.

2. Psychological needs: This scale was created by Guardia, Deci and Ryan in 2000, which measures the degree of feeling of support for the needs of autonomy, competence and connection with other subjects. The mentioned scale has 21 items, which are graded based on a seven-point Likert scale. Health is the only target force that has physical and mental dimensions. On the other hand, the satisfaction of basic needs provide the necessary conditions for growth, integration and psychological well-being. Research in the field of needs in recent years has focused on the development and expansion of basic psychological needs, which were first

proposed by Deci and Ryan in 2000 under the title of self-determination theory (Tali, 2012). According to this theory, three inherent psychological needs are: Autonomy, competence and communication ability (Deci, 2006). Autonomy refers to a person's need for a sense of choice and self-initiation in doing tasks and actions. Competence is the need to be effective in interacting with the environment and showing the desire to use talents and skills and follow challenges and assignments aligned with abilities and mastering them. The need for connection refers to the need to feel secure when having relationships with others and the need to be accepted as a person worthy of love and respect by others. In this research, the standard score of basic psychological needs is the score that a person gives to the 21-item questions of the questionnaire. The reliability coefficients resulting from its implementation on the subjects' mother, father, romantic partner, and friends were reported as 92%, 92%, 92%, and 92, respectively (Qurbani & Watson, 2004). In Iran, this scale has been implemented in the samples of Iranian managers and students and has good validity and reliability, so that the alpha fluctuates between 74% and 79% (Guardia & Deci, 2007).

3. Organizational Commitment Questionnaire: Allen and Meyer's Organizational Commitment Questionnaire is designed to check the level of employees' commitment to the organization. This questionnaire has three emotional dimensions of

questions 1 to 8, continuous dimension of questions 9 to 16 and normative dimension of questions 17 to 24. To obtain the overall score of the questionnaire, the scores obtained from each question are added together and considered as the overall score. This score indicates the high or low level of the variable based on the respondent's opinion, and the higher the score, the higher the variable and vice versa. The scoring method of this 24-item questionnaire is 7 options and includes the options "I agree very much", "I somewhat agree", "I slightly agree", "I have no opinion", "I slightly disagree", "I somewhat disagree", "I completely disagree". Therefore, the subjects must answer one of the 7 options of each question, and then they are scored based on the values of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. The validity of the whole questionnaire was reported by the researcher using the item analysis method of 0.54-0.90, and the reliability was reported as 0.89 by Cronach's alpha method.

Implementation

The distribution of the questionnaire among the samples of this research was mostly carried out electronically. In this research, the advanced statistical method of structural equation modeling was used using AMOS software.

Results

The demographic findings indicate the homogeneity of the statistical sample of the present study. In the following table, the findings of descriptive statistics are reported.

Table 1. Descriptive indices of the variables of knowledge				
Variable	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Autonomy	32/86	5/5	-.752	.388
Competence	28/35	4/45	-1.006	1.056
Relationship	36/33	6/52	-.606	.078
Psychological needs of employees	97/55	15/46	-.858	.738
Emotional	31/08	4/67	.080	.286
continuous	28/7	5/23	-.072	-.591
normative	30/05	4/82	.097	.446
Commitment of the organization	89/84	13/1	-.304	.682
The experience of drowning in work	37/13	5/51	.917	1.364

Garson (2007) emphasizes that if the values of skewness and kurtosis of the data are between

+2 and -2, the data have a normal distribution at the level of 0.5. In this study, the values of

skewness and kurtosis of the data were between   +2 and -2 (Table 1).

Table 2. Correlation matrix between research variables			
Matrix of variables	1	2	3
Psychological needs	1		
Organizational Commitment	.410[**]	1	
The experience of drowning in work	.457[**]	.380[**]	1

Based on the results obtained (Table 2), there is a significant positive relationship between organizational commitment and the experience of drowning in work with the value of r = 0.380. The relationship between psychological needs and the experience of drowning in work with the value of r = 0.457 is also positive and significant. The relationship between psychological needs and organizational commitment with the value of r = 0.410 is also evaluated as positive and significant. It should be mentioned that the correlation matrix between the variables is significant at p ≥ 0.01 level.

Table 3. Goodness of fit indices of the assumed model after modification						
	χ^2	*df*	χ^2/df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Modified Model	146/620	85	1/724	0/932	0/952	0/041

In the above table, the chi-square index (X2) equals 146/620; The chi-square index on the degree of freedom (X2/df) is equal to 1.724; Comparative fit index (CFI) is equal to 0.952; goodness of fit index (GFI) equal to 0.932; and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is equal to 0.041; Obtained. Therefore, according to Hu and Bentler (1999), a value greater than 0.90 for the CFI and GFI indexes and a value smaller than 0.08 for the RMSEA index indicates a good fit of the assumed model with the data.
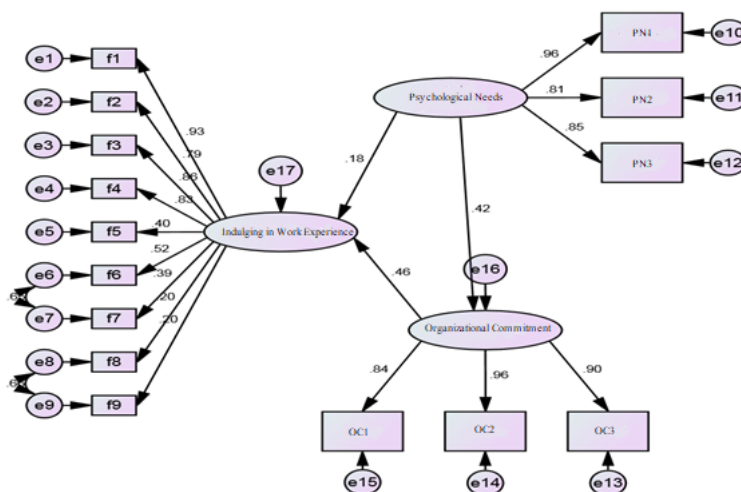

Figure 1. Path coefficients of the pre-experience model of work immersion based on psychological needs with the mediation of organizational commitment

Table 4. Direct effects in the investigation of research variables in the research hypothesis			
Independent variable	**Dependent variable**	**Effect size**	**t**
Psychological needs	Organizational Commitment	0/42	7/572
Psychological needs	The experience of drowning in work	0/18	3/196
Organizational Commitment	The experience of drowning in work	0/46	8/016

Based on the above table and Figure 1, the direct effect of psychological needs on organizational commitment (0.42) is statistically significant. Also, the direct effect of psychological needs on the experience of drowning in work (0.18) is also significant. In addition, the direct effect of organizational commitment on the experience of drowning in work (0.46) has also been evaluated as positive and significant. As can be seen, the value of t in all paths is more than ±1.96, which indicates the significance of these paths. Sobel's test was used to determine the significance of the relationship between the pre-experience pattern of work immersion based on psychological needs and the mediation of organizational commitment.

Table 5. Sobel test results for mediating and indirect effects					
Predictor	Mediator	Criterion	Indirect effect	Z	p
Psychological Needs	Organization Commitment	The experience of drowning in work	0/19	5/153	p≤0/01

Based on the data in Table 5, in predicting the experience of drowning in work through psychological needs with the mediation of organizational frequency, the z value is more than ±1.96 and (P=0.01) shows the significance of this path. It can be concluded that "organizational commitment mediates the relationship between psychological needs and the experience of work immersion.

Conclusion

The results of the research hypothesis showed that organizational commitment plays a mediating role in the relationship between psychological needs and the experience of being overwhelmed at work. Consistent with the self-determination theoretical framework of Gray and Mayer and Maltin (2010), the satisfaction of basic psychological needs is expected to facilitate commitment as well as experiential immersion. Therefore, to increase well-being, organizations must satisfy employees' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. For example, the need for autonomy can be satisfied by reducing the number of formal rules and procedures and giving employees the opportunity to decide when and how to perform tasks (van den Broek et al., 2008). In addition, the need for competence may be satisfied by stimulating the use of different skills, thereby increasing the skill levels of employees and increasing tasks that match the skill level of employees (van den Broek et al., 2008). Finally, the need for communication can be satisfied by organizing corporate events and creating a culture of acceptance and support in the organization (Frent et al., 2013). In turn, the satisfaction of basic psychological needs is expected to facilitate commitment and related immersion experiences, which in turn contribute to the promotion of psychological well-being. In addition, previous research has shown that leadership can have a large effect on commitment. Servant leadership is a leadership style that focuses on integrating the interests of various organizational stakeholders and especially on empowering employees to unleash their full potential (Greenleaf, 2002). Previous research has shown that servant leadership predicts commitment, among other outcomes (Walmoa et al., 2010). Consequently, leadership training based on servant leadership principles (e.g., Brooker et al., 2015) may help leaders increase employee well-being by increasing commitment and related immersion experiences.

These results suggest that the satisfaction of basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) at work is the basis for experiencing commitment and regulating autonomous (as opposed to controlled) action or intrinsic motivation, which in turn facilitates well-being. (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Specifically, the authors suggest that affective commitment and self-regulation are mutually related (Mayer & Maltin, 2010). That is, the satisfaction of basic needs may promote autonomous regulation at work, which facilitates the initial emergence of employee commitment. In turn, once commitment is established, it may enhance autonomous regulation, which can be expected to buffer the adverse effects of job stressors (Rivkin et al., 2015).

Also, previous research has shown that a positive relationship between intrinsic life goals and well-being indicators is mediated by psychological need satisfaction (Deci & Ryan 2000; Nimik et al. 2009; Ryan & Deci 2000). Based on the integration of self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci 2002) and immersion theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), intrinsic life goals lead to the satisfaction of work-related psychological needs. In turn, it leads to more drowning in work and, as a result, more satisfaction with life.

According to self-determination theory, focusing on internal goals leads to greater well-being because it directly satisfies basic psychological needs. On the other hand, pursuing and achieving external life goals does not help to satisfy these needs (Deci & Ryan 2000; Nimik et al. 2009; Ryan & Deci 2000). There are three basic innate psychological needs: the need for autonomy, the need for competence, and the need for relatedness (Ryan 1995). The need for autonomy refers to the experience of choice, ownership of behavior, and psychological freedom (Ryan & Deci 2000). The need for competence indicates an individual's inherent need to feel competent and effective in interacting with the environment (Deci & Ryan 2000). The need for connection means caring for others, caring and feeling emotionally connected to other people (Ryan & Deci 2000). Basic psychological needs energize behavior and help people achieve greater general well-being (Deci & Ryan 2000). They are assumed to be inherently rewarding experiences that are necessary for proper human functioning. The universal importance of satisfying basic needs for well-being has been shown not only in individualistic individuals (Vector, 2006) but also in collectivist countries such as South Korea and China (Jang et al., 2009).

Satisfying needs in specific areas has been associated with greater specific well-being, but also contributes to general well-being (Kasser & Ryan 1999; Miliavskaya & Koestner 2011) and optimal performance (La Guardia et al. 2000; Williams et al. 2009). In the work domain, satisfaction of basic psychological needs has been associated with various indicators of well-being, such as more positive and less negative emotions (Tang et al., 2009), higher self-esteem, and lower levels of psychosomatic symptoms.

control over job status and salary (Ilardi et al., 1993) and higher job satisfaction and greater performance (Bard et al., 2004). On the other hand, need neutralization has been associated with various manifestations of illness such as the development of psychopathological behaviors (Kozuko & Shimshek, 2013; Ryan et al., 2006).

Organizational commitment refers to the force that binds an individual to a goal and a course of action related to that goal (Van Dyck et al., 2006). While Allen and Mayer (1990) originally proposed three components (affective, normative, and continuance commitment), most researchers agree that affective commitment forms the conceptual core of organizational commitment. This concept is embedded in a large body of empirical evidence that inevitably shows that affective commitment exerts the strongest beneficial effects on job performance and psychological well-being (Mayer & Maltin, 2010). Previous research has proposed commitment as a mediating variable that, on the one hand, predicts job outcomes such as performance, turnover, and well-being and, on the other hand, can be determined by multiple factors such as personal characteristics (e.g., age and tenure). job characteristics (e.g., skill variety and task autonomy), leadership (e.g., attention; Matthew & Zajac, 1990) and through the satisfaction of basic psychological needs and related forms of autonomic regulation (Meyer & Maltin, 2010). Therefore, studies that emphasize the emergence of commitment have examined it as an outcome variable while research that focuses on the consequences of established forms of commitment have considered it as a predictor. work-related outcomes (e.g., Leung et al., 1996; Ng & Feldman, 2011; Schmidt & Distel, 2012; Rivkin et al., 2015). Furthermore, studies on commitment have shown that once employees have developed a certain level of commitment to their organization—for example, through basic need satisfaction and autonomous regulation—this level remains relatively stable over time. For example, in a sample of experienced nursing staff, Bateman and Strasser (1984) found that over a five-month time lag, the correlation between Time 1 and Time 2 commitment was 0.65 (p<0.01). In addition, the analysis of the temporal stability of affective commitment shows that individuals with high tenure experience experience more

stable levels of commitment. According to this finding, only significant changes in job or organizational characteristics and perceptions can affect the level of employee commitment (Johnston et al., 1990).

Most previous research has identified psychological needs as a factor or mediator in the relationship between life goals and life satisfaction, while other potential mediators have not been consistently examined. In our study, a sequential mediation model was proposed and tested because we hypothesized that the satisfaction of basic psychological needs can stimulate the experience of flow at work, which in turn can lead to increased life satisfaction. Although the satisfaction of basic psychological needs has previously been shown to mediate the relationship between life goals and life satisfaction, this study provides evidence that this relationship may be partially mediated by job burnout. Building on these arguments, in the present study, we examine stable levels of affective commitment as a predictor, which is expected to be stable over the time period covered by our study. In the context of the mediating role of organizational commitment in the relationship between psychological needs and the experience of being overwhelmed at work, appropriate training programs can facilitate the exchange and sharing of information and improve the feeling of psychological empowerment. In addition, it can provide grounds for improving the psychological capital of employees. In experimental and applied studies, the limitation is considered as its inseparable part. Despite the effort to minimize the limitations, some cases can limit the explanation of the research results. One of the limitations of this research is its cross-sectional nature, and because it was cross-sectional, the tested hypotheses and model cannot be confirmed with full confidence. Therefore, conducting longitudinal studies based on the model of this research can be very beneficial.

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Conflict of Interest

According to the authors, this article has no financial sponsor or conflict of interest.

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