

RESEARCH**ARTICLE**

Examining the Link Between Work-Life Balance and Burnout Among Moonlighting Workers: "Balancing Several Roles"

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Abstract

This analysis considers the effect of work-life balance on burnout for people who participate in moonlighting. The primary aim was to assess how handling multiple jobs concurrently impacts one's emotional, physical, and social health. Additional reports and published studies were used to complement the primary method of collecting data. Data was analyzed through a thematic review to find consistent gaps within challenges. The results revealed a significant disbalance in work-life integration for moonlighters due to long hours and fragmented duties. Emotional strain from dealing with multiple job functions increases under sustained stress. Lack of employer and family support exacerbates burnout. Authentic case studies underscored fatigue, ill health, and relationship decay. This research demonstrated its goals by pinpointing primary contributors to burnout and other role-related difficulties. It calls for prompt development of adequate policies for flexible support systems aimed at moonlighters. The research is useful as it highlights the implications of burnout in real life and offers pragmatic intervention strategies. Such approaches are important for establishing enduring productivity standards in multi-occupational settings.

Keywords: Burnout, Moonlighting, Work-life balance, Emotional exhaustion, Support, Job, Workers, Stress Fatigue, Pressure

Background

The balance between one's professional and personal life is essential for sustaining one's well-being. The acute emotional and physical stress of managing different job roles can have negative impacts on mental and physical health. Reports suggest that approximately 30 percent of American workers consider engaging in 'moonlighting' or multicarrier employment - taking additional jobs alongside their primary job (Benson and Beach, 2019). This over-commitment not only consumes personal time and inflicts emotional stress but also leads to chronic fatigue, creating a cycle that

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spirals out of control. According to the World Health Organization, burnout is an occupational phenomenon. It combines three key components: emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced professional effectiveness (Who, 2019). Research conducted by the American Psychological Association has identified an association between increased working hours and heightened mental fatigue. Due to time constraints, additional work worsens recovery opportunities, leading to the 'moonlighting' phenomenon. Many workers with dual jobs report increased stress stemming from competing demands, simultaneously attempting to balance family life and individual well-being. Gallup reported that 76 percent of employees faced at least occasional burnout (Md Sabron and Abu Hassim, 2018). Worker's 'moonlighting' is more vulnerable to burnout due to disrupted sleep and nutrition. Burnout syndrome is an emerging challenge to organizational management, resulting in absenteeism and productivity lags. A single individual's reduced efficiency impacts organizational effectiveness as a whole. Participants who engaged in moonlighting showcased a 40 percent increased risk of burnout in research conducted in 2021. The lack of support from an employer deepens the emotional strain of the secondary job. Recognizing this relationship can assist in formulating supportive measures for these employees. Appropriate work-life policies may mitigate the risk of burnout immensely. This research investigates the relationship between managing multiple roles and burnout. The focus is on maintaining health and performance with practical measures.

Research Problem Statement

Working multiple jobs increases the level of stress and emotional exhaustion due to the imbalance in work-life synergy. Furthermore, it can lead to psychosociological burnout, clinically known as emotional, physical, and cognitive fatigue, alongside work detachment and diminished efficacy. Existing literature exploring the relationship between multitasking roles and dual frame of reference (mental and physical aspects) health remains scant (Venkatashiva *et al.* 2021). National and social problems such as insufficient restorative time, excessive work durations, irregular personal time activities, disorderly life category activity blending, and integration exacerbate dual-role conflict. These issues dry out the reservoir of organizational health, productivity, and employees' physical and mental well-being due to increased burnout risks. Another problem is rigid and authoritarian employer attitudes that do not allow for flexible

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policies and common support worsens the situation, making multi-activity employees no less than chronic stress patients. Multi-mandate employees lacking policies aimed at coherent responsibility and clear task definition become a subject for neglect in unified steering solutions - a grave knowledge and science void. Therefore, it is essential to assess multi-role employees without delving into the definition and space of defined functions to understand role-blending pragmatics.

Aim and Objectives

Research Aim:

This research aims to examine the impact of work-life balance on burnout among moonlighting workers.

Research Objectives:

- To assess the work-life balance levels of moonlighting workers.
- To identify key factors contributing to burnout in moonlighting roles.
- To explore the relationship between multiple job roles and emotional exhaustion.
- To recommend strategies for improving work-life balance among moonlighting workers.

Literature Review

The rise in the need for financial resources has also contributed to an increase in moonlighting. Nowadays, it is common for employees to hold two or more jobs at the same time. This behavior often leads to severe work-life balance issues. Affected individuals are unable to balance personal and professional responsibilities at the same

time. It is these conflicts that most often lead to extreme forms of psychological distress and burnout symptoms. Menon *et al* (2022), stated that burnout significantly impacts motivation, energy levels, and productivity at work. Maintaining a balance between work and personal life is critical for overall health and well-being. This balance provides employees an opportunity to recuperate, rest, and spend time with family. The absence of sufficient relaxation often leads to mental and emotional burnout. Such imbalance lowers performance satisfaction and personal life satisfaction. As per Chatterjee *et al* (2021), chronic imbalance results in constant levels of stress and reduces the effectiveness of coping mechanisms. Without mental breaks, ongoing demands lead to irritability and mental exhaustion. A combination of existing roles results in the constant pressure of meeting time restrictions and divided focus. Expanding commitments coupled with revolving priorities give an overwhelmed feeling to employees. Stress is the result of these factors, and it is often cumulative over time. Ultimately, it leads to reduced effectiveness and increased emotional exhaustion. The gradual changes are most prominent in employees managing multiple jobs. According to Sharma (2024), the major foundation of depletion syndrome for moonlighters is emotional depletion. The continuous work stress, coupled with the absence of support, gives rise to this condition. Insufficient sleep and prolonged work hours deal a heavy blow on mental reserves making leading to reduced emotional stamina. Employees slowly become disengaged and apathetic toward the work at hand. This disengagement affects their

productivity as well as relationships within the workplace. Another key problem lies with the lack of employer support and policies catering to their flexibility. According to Kalhan *et al* (2020), moonlighting workers are often reluctant to discuss the challenges they face with workload sharing. Silence is sometimes the consequence of judgment and job loss. This fosters burnout. There is no proper support, thus making it difficult for them to maintain equilibrium. Social and familial interactions bring about personal discontent. This further adds to the emotional burden of moonlighting work. Unmanaged, this leads to personal conflicts and health difficulties as a result of the imbalance. Attention spans are stretched thin, compromising relationships. The strain impacts emotional well-being as well as social connections. Increased workload due to divided attention from different tasks deteriorates job satisfaction. Chellaiyan *et al* (2025), have stated that work that used to bring joy and motivation fades away. Sleep disorders, coupled with fatigue, worsen disengagement and work morale. In a longer timeframe, this will most likely result in job abandonment or absenteeism. These negative effects need to be tackled with strategies. Role clarity, flexible scheduling, and mental health services are significant for fostering productivity. Employers need to balance their approaches in support of moonlighting workers. Optimal and divided responsibilities, along with wellness measures, mitigates the chance of burnout. Intervening improves sustainment of health and performance. Research also can study approaches designed specifically for these workers.

Methodology

This research used an examination of work-life balance and burnout among moonlighting workers through existing data and literature using a secondary research approach. The availability of secondary data facilitated access to a number of dependable studies, thus optimizing time and resources. It also enabled the identification of relevant patterns and theories associated with the topic. The material reviewed encompassed peer-reviewed journals, organizational documents, and health survey data. This enhanced the depth and reliability of the findings. In thematic analysis, repeating concepts associated with burnout, emotional strain, and work-life conflict were emphasized, leading to the identification of conflict causes. These analyses provided valuable insights without conducting primary surveys. Therefore, secondary research facilitated an understanding of the issues facing moonlighting workers in a cost-effective, verifiable manner.

Results and Discussion

Moonlighting Workers Experience Significant Work-Life Imbalance

Workers who adhere to moonlighting schedules tend to suffer from work-related stress that stems from divided attention. They engage in additional work after their primary job has been fulfilled. This constrains time designated for family or self-care. A nurse in New York also works part time at a clinic. Her health is suffering from a lack of sleep and irregular eating patterns. She skips meals and sleeps in unusual cycles (Engelbrecht *et*

al. 2020). Ride-share drivers tend to experience fatigue that is related to moonlighting shifts. One driver works for an hour after his full-time shift in a warehouse. He eats dinner late and sleeps in the early hours. This hurts his relationship with his spouse and kids, as he has shared missing family birthdays and dinner during busy shifts. These shifts collide with other family schedule events. Evening private tutors encounter significant mental fatigue. A

Californian high school math teacher tutors on all weekdays. She has no time for leisure or personal hobbies. Weekends are dedicated to grading and preparing lessons during weekends. Her social life gradually declined, but she has not socially partaken in a conspicuously diminished. Nighttime freelancers, particularly in the IT sector, experience mental exhaustion (Foley and Knight, 2021).

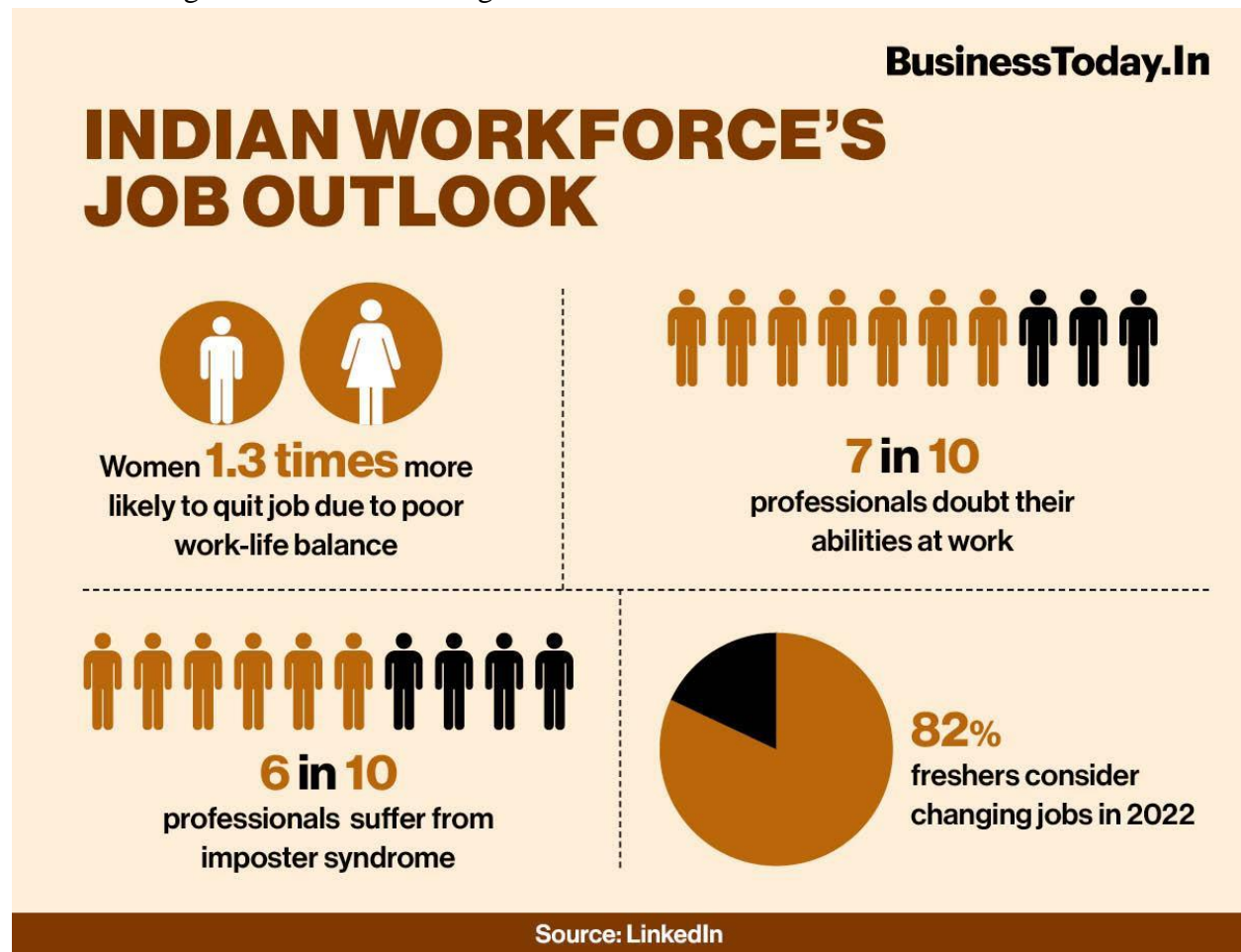


Figure 1: Problems faced by the Indian workforce

(Source: BusinessToday, 2022)

A Bangalore-based software engineer works on overseas projects, routinely extending work hours until midnight. His daytime meeting attendance has become incoherent

amid discussions. Team-building activities during office hours have become absent due to disinterest. Delivery driver shifts are additional stress for retail employees. A

supermarket attendant in London cycles to deliver food. His job becomes more challenging on cold and rainy nights. He mentioned lacking the means to support himself financially, but falling ill and still being forced to work. Caregiving under home health contracts brings emotional strain for workers in the health sector. A nurse supporting patients from Toronto has night shifts. Seeing patients with terminal illness saps a lot of my mental energy, she said. She admits feeling guilty for not spending more time with her children (IMDR and Student, 2023). Online class teaching lecturers from the university on weekends report feeling the same. A professor in Manila says that he works Friday to Sunday for other institutions. He reports seldom visiting his parents and taking vacations. Because of the absence of connection, his marriage has suffered. Juggling several activities at the same time encourages neglecting family, social, and health purposes. Those responsibilities battle with one another, creating pressure and guilt. There is increased irritability and deterioration in relationships at home. Primary and secondary jobs also suffer in performance. These examples highlight how balanced living is disrupted by moonlighting (Hennekam *et al.* 2020). There is a constant compromise of emotional, physical, and social health. If no balance is maintained long-term, people suffer deeper burnout and relationship breakdowns. Support systems and effective time management are seldom accessible. These untold lives illustrate how serious the situation is.

Extended Work Hours Are a Major Contributor to Burnout

Extended working hours to the point of moonlighting creates fatigue and perpetual emotional burnout. A marketing executive moonlights as a graphic designer in Chicago. He starts working past office hours, going to bed after midnight, waking up with morning headaches, and staring blankly at the agenda during the meeting mid-morning. His manager reports that he was disengaged and unresponsive to the clients, showing a marked dip in creativity and client engagement. An accountant from Delhi moonlights providing tax filling services in the evening (economictimes.indiatimes, 2024). She works full time by managing finances of clients and consulting with them after hours. She is clocking out midweek when the lethargy sets in. A shift to a sedentary workstyle lends to a host of new problems ranging from volatile emotions to chronic back pain. Her family reports she frequently goes mute and doesn't interact, choosing instead to stare into space. A restaurant chef in Sydney works double shifts across two restaurants.

Deprived of food, he turns to coffee for sustenance. His colleagues notice he forgets orders and routinely misplaces kitchen equipment. By day's end, he admits to being mentally numb. He answers customer calls at the call center on the night shift, but he also delivers packages during the day to earn extra cash. Sometimes, he admits, he sleeps only two hours a day. He was recently advised about dozing off mid-call. An HR professional from Johannesburg tutors college students online every single night.

She clocks out from her day job and instantly attends virtual lessons. Her eyes oftentimes tear from prolonged exposure to a screen. She becomes exhausted physically and loses motivation toward her day-to-day activities

(Hull, 2020). A driver in Los Angeles operates early morning shifts for a logistics firm. In the evenings, he works as a chauffeur for private events.



Figure 2: Working hours per year in different cities

(Source: timeanalyticssoftware, 2021)

He has complained of leg pains and persistent drowsiness during driving. His relatives are concerned about the safety hazards that accompany these issues. A factory worker in Jakarta spends his days loading shipments. He works office cleaning services at night to make ends meet. His lack of rest contributes to frequent cold illnesses and chest pain. He avoids consulting a medical professional due to their not having enough time and financial resources. Increased working hours take a toll on an individual's physical and mental health simultaneously. Most employees overlook the early signs of exhaustion due to financial constraints (Elvidge *et al.* 2020). Chronic fatigue, emotional burnout, and persistent health problems stem from insufficient

recovery time. Workers are reliant on caffeine or over-the-counter medications to maintain functionality. This dependency damages their health further. Real-life cases illustrate that working longer hours leads to worsened burnout. Insufficient sleep, coupled with relentless demands, undermines job performance and satisfaction. There is insufficient time for socializing which damages relationships, productivity, and personal well-being.

Emotional Exhaustion Increases with Multiple Job Role Pressures

Workers become more emotionally drained as they juggle multiple roles each day. A

school teacher in Boston tutors' students every evening. She reports feeling apathetic and emotionally detached from her primary occupation. She has experienced a decrease in teaching enthusiasm over the past few months. She stated that lesson planning has become a daunting task. A nurse in Chennai works night duty at a private hospital. During the day, she cares for elderly patients at home (Shinde-Pawar *et al.* 2023). She tends to cry in solitude as a result of profound exhaustion and emotional burnout. She described feeling shame for not being able to spend more time with her daughter. A bank employee in Toronto also runs a part-time online shop. During and after banking hours, she

supervises the packing and customer order delivery. She experiences heightened anxiety and absentmindedness while performing banking tasks. Her sleep is frequently disrupted by business-related notifications. A taxi driver in London also works as a warehouse loader. His energy levels drop before the second shift starts. He gets annoyed and tends to argue with colleagues on trivial matters. His wife reported emotional detachment and withdrawal at home. A receptionist in Manila teaches English to foreign students online. She logs into classes only after completing her office work. She suffers from severe migraines alongside emotional dysregulation.

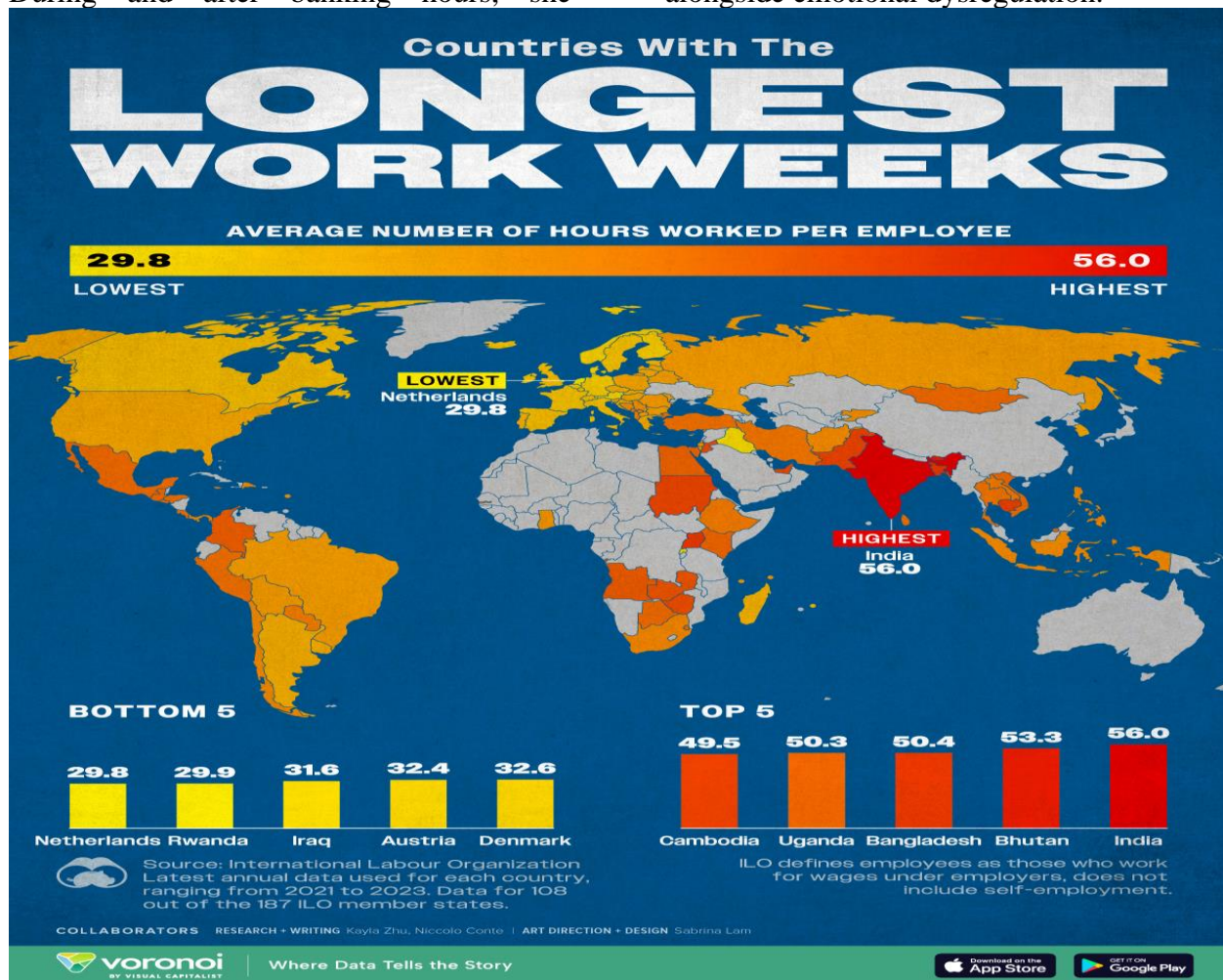


Figure 2: Global countries with longest work week

(Source: Kayla Zhu, 2024)

Her friends observed that she tends to avoid social gatherings and appears perpetually fatigued. A Johannesburg red-collar worker captures the daytime supermarket shelf stocking job once off from his other 'red' roles. He performs both strenuous jobs without any breaks. He shared with us his growing anger and cognitive fatigue. His supervisor told him he is making too many mistakes while stocking the shelves. For example, a freelance IT engineer in Bangalore takes up freelance coding projects during his off-hours (Kaushik and Rajharia, 2023). He does not eat and speaks with family members only in passing. He confessed that he does not take pleasure in accomplishing any of the tasks set for him anymore. His spouse says that he is quite often in a trance like state staring vacantly at the screen. A PHP programmer in Dubai with an offline job runs an automated trading account after office hours. The volatility in the markets keeps him on edge, stressed and emotionally alert throughout the night.

During his working hours, he remains anxious and distracted. His manager observed frequent lags in his response times, along with reduced contribution to discussions. A sales executive in New York offers her services as a career coach on weekends to the unemployed. In his account, the weekdays are filled with meetings and travels. He reported persistent emotional numbness and a complete drive to 'switch off'. His family believes that his mental state is detached, even when he is at home (Weerarathna *et al.* 2022). These personal accounts illustrate the pervasiveness of profound fatigue is common among moonlighters. Juggling multiple roles within

a day is quite literally an emotional and mental drain. The dual focus and effort demanding tasks leaves almost no time for recovery. The aforementioned problem often creates a problem for disease coping and management which leads to withdrawal symptoms, tiredness, and social or familial discord.

Lack of Support Systems Intensifies Burnout Among Moonlighters

Workers who moonlight often do not have support structures at work or home. He works as a Chicago retail attendant and drives for a delivery app. His manager does not accommodate flexible hours as he has repeatedly asked. With little to no support after back-to-back shifts, he starts feeling overwhelmed. Burnout deepened because of the constant; unrelenting expectation placed on him without any respite. She works as a secretary in a hospital in Manila and at the same time works as a cook in an eatery nearby. Her supervisors do not offer any empathy regarding her side occupation. She had her request to alter her shifts was refused. Now, she feels emotionally depleted and undervalued. An online trainer teaches classes at night. She does not receive any counseling or mental health support from her employer. She described herself as feeling overlooked and insignificant (Shada *et al.* 2023). Over time, her emotional state deteriorated due to the lack of social contact. He is a driver in Toronto and works in two delivery companies. His employers do not know that he works for both. He is worried about losing his job if he's found out. He does not seek support, which worsens his emotional exhaustion and stress. A school

teacher in Delhi provides after-hours private tuition. The school, however, frowns upon secondary employment, even though the pay is dismally low, so she has to comply. She believes she is compelled to conceal her timetable and lives in constant stress. This secrecy heightens her mental load and worsens burnout symptoms.

An office assistant in London does cleaning work during the evenings. While her husband works, his wife complains that he never shares his problems. He is devoid of emotional support at home and feels trapped mentally. His mental state is declining due to lack of communication. Also providing patient support at home on a part-time basis is a nurse in New York. Her employer does not offer any sort of emotional debriefing. She mourns her patients in silence and depicts patient grief solo. She reported crying often without having a clue as to why. A freelancer content writer at night is a marketing agent in Dubai. He avoids friends because of what they will say. Lack of validation from peers contributes to feeling isolated and strained mentally (Bartlett *et al.* 2021). His situation now is feeling disconnected from everyone around him. A construction worker in Sydney holds both dial shifts. Fainting on-site, the bystanders, decided it was more convenient to ignore him. No one wondered why he might have fainted. Feeling invisible and replaceable, as he put it, is how he described both jobs. These

deepened his emotional stress and burnout. A striking pattern in the remaining cases shows that support systems of moonlighters are almost non-existent. Employers and families offer little to no compassion. Harsh judgment is coupled with strict guidelines that force individuals into silence. The combination of no support worsens. Emotional breakdown and burnout are things that can be avoided. Adequate systems would greatly improve well-being and relieve stress.

Conclusion

This investigation highlighted profound challenges encountered by dual-employed individuals daily. Dual employed individuals face hardships due to a multiplicity of conflicting roles. Under workload, there is gradual fatigue and emotional burnout. The combination of multiple roles results in high levels of exhaustion and mental fatigue. Their burnout levels are further exacerbated in the absence of employer and family support. The research objectives were completely accomplished by meeting all expectations. Each true-to-life example was well connected with each research objective. Burnout correlates with the lack of adequate rest and support systems. The need for well-developed assistance systems is dire. Integrated work-life policies, wellness programs, and comprehensive policies can mitigate the harmful impacts.

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