

Prevalence of Collaborative Overload among the Academicians under Royal University of Bhutan

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Abstract

Background: Overworked collaboration is a symptom of a larger organizational issue. Many business leaders are now aware of the consequences of workplace collaboration overload. The evidence continues to build that the costs of meetings, emails, and other kinds of workforce cooperation now outweigh the advantages for many firms. In many companies, this ratio hovers around 80%, leaving employees with very little time for all the important work they need to do on their own. Performance suffers when they are buried in a wave of requests for feedback or advice, access to resources, or attend meetings.

Although the advantages of collaboration are well documented, the costs are frequently overlooked. In some of the articles, some of the leaders are experiencing collaborative overload, while others are experiencing the opposite. In this present study it has attempts to determine how much time people spend in meetings, on the phone, and replying to e-mails, as well as requests for extra input for the co-partner in day to day operations, and which categories of staff suffer from collaborative overload.

Methods: Focusing on the main objective of the research, the survey is conducted to study the prevalence of collaborative overload among the professional staff under Royal University of Bhutan, Bhutan. The method used for this research is based on quantitative data collection since this method emphasizes on objective measurements and statistical, mathematical and numerical analysis of data collected through questionnaires and surveys. The main reason behind conducting quantitative research is to determine the frequency of various variables associated with the workload that led to collaborative overload.

Findings: The results show that collaborative overload has been increasing with the increase in the position level. The degree of collaborative overload is higher in PL3 and PL4 level (Grade) with the mean scores of 4.34 and 4.21 respectively. But there is also existence of collaborative overload among other position level PL5, PL6 and PL7.

Keywords: Collaborative, Overload, Workload, Statistical, Mathematical

INTRODUCTION

On June 2, 2003, the Royal University of Bhutan was established to provide tertiary education in Bhutan. The

university's legal instruments are the royal charter and the statutes. (Cross R et al., 2016) The university's overall mission is to "disseminate knowledge and advance learning through a balanced, well-regulated, and sound

tertiary education system for the economic and cultural development of the Kingdom of Bhutan, as well as to promote the cultural enrichment, personal development, and well-being of our people," as stated in the royal charter and statutes (Mankins M, 2017). The mission of RUB is to provide programmes of study at tertiary education level, of relevance and good quality which will fulfill the needs of the country for an educated, skilled and humane population; to promote and conduct research to contribute to the creation of knowledge of relevance to Bhutan, and provide training and professional services for the enhancement of knowledge, capacity building and community development (Kelly K et al., 2014). According to the RUB annual report 2020-2021, RUB has a total of 551 academic staff and 579 administrative and technical staff which includes 39 expatriates and 21 nationals on fixed term appointment and 491 academics on regular (Cross R et al., 2013). Lately in the year 2008, RUB had identified Annual Performance Agreement (APA) and IWP as its areas of reform for the staff. The main purpose of these reforms' initiative was to enhance the performance of employee by strengthening the area of performance planning, review and evaluation and to reflect on its effectiveness (Simonin BL, 1997). These reforms are viewed to help translate university strategic plan to college and individual level work planning (Eichler L, 2016).

Royal University of Bhutan being the sole tertiary education providers in the country, it has encroached in the daily operation of the organization. It is more evident that collaboration overload can obstruct and hamper the employees in their productivity (Dobbins LT, 1996).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study design

The method used for this research is based on quantitative data collection since this method emphasizes on objective measurements and statistical, mathematical and numerical analysis of data collected through questionnaires and surveys (Jung D et al., 1999). The main reason behind conducting quantitative research is to determine the frequency of various variables associated with the workload that led to collaborative overload.

Our quantitative research is descriptive in nature (Amirkhanyan AA, 2008).

Study location

Focusing on the main objective of the research, the survey is conducted to study the prevalence of collaborative overload among the professional staff under RUB (Ashkenas R, 2012). The researchers have studied the structure of RUB. According to the annual report of the Royal University of Bhutan 2019-2020, it showed that there are 476 regular academic staff including staff on long term study and 560 administrative and technical staff (Callahan S et al., 2008).

Sample size: 172 respondents.

Data analysis

The data is analyzed using SPSS software. The collected data would be qualitative in nature and descriptive analysis is mostly used to analysis the collected data. Cross tabulation is also an inevitable statistical tool of data analyses where different set of respondents' profile such as position level, working hours are used to draw implications about collaborative overload.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Out of 171 respondents, 100 were males and 72 were females. The highest numbers of respondents were from position level PL6, PL4, PL5 followed by position level PL7 with 33, PL3 with 5 numbers. With respective to the colleges, GCBS has the highest number of respondents with 34 and GCIT has a least with 4 respondents (Wooley K, 2010).

To study out the prevalence of collaborative overload, questions related to collaborative overload, social commitments, and time used were examined. Responses show that 65.5% of the officials who participated in the study are current member of collaborative teams and taskforces. Around 16.5% of them are member of around 3 teams or more. 8.5% of them are leading around 1-3 project currently. 9.5% of them are the current member of collaborative teams outside their current office/organization (Table 1).

Table 1. Academic by position level and gender.

		Position level					Total
		PL3	PL4	PL5	PL6	PL7	
Gender	Male	4	23	21	34	18	100
	Female	1	16	14	26	15	72
Total		5	39	35	60	33	172

Over above official assignments, collaborative teams require discussion and meetings to ensure progress of their work. Responses shows that 69.8% of the officials surveyed, participate in around 1-3 meetings in a week,

which is typically 37.8% of officials spend 1-3 hours of their time in attaining meetings in a week. 54% of officials spend their time 1-3 hours on official emails in a day. Whereas 50.9% of officials spend at least an hour on official calls in

their offices. If we count all the time invested in the collaborative works in a normal working day, out of eight working hours including 1 hour for lunch time in a day the officials spent more than 2.5 hours which is 31.3% of their time in collaborative task. This result suggested that the officials in the organization were overload with collaborative works and wasted their valuable times in extra communication and collaborative.

In social commitment when the respondent was asked questions on sparing their office time to attain social commitments such as volunteering, visiting hospital,

visiting cremation grounds, etc. 89.9% of officials do spare their office time to attain such social commitments and 90.8% goes 1-3 times in a week. For attaining such commitments, 78.5% officials at least spent 1-3 hours on each visit. These results show that the officials spare their office time to attain social commitments and injuries their normal working hour which leads to collaborative overload beyond their office workload. The various tests such as T-test and ANOVA were used for further interpretation but found to be insignificant (Table 2).

Table 2. Percentile of informational resources parameters.

Parameters	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Qualification	5.80%	8.70%	85.50%
Potential and capacity	4.70%	7.00%	88.40%
Underutilization of skills	59.30%	6.40%	34.30%

In informational resources domain, 85.5% of the respondents have agreed that their qualification is relevant to their present job. 88.4% of the respondents have agreed that the tasks assigned are within their potential and capacity while about 4.7% of the respondents disagreed. 34.3% of the respondents have agreed that their skills are being under-utilized in their organization where as 59.3% of the respondents have disagreed. Therefore, planning and standard operating procedures may be necessary in the organizations.

Table 3 shows that 70.3% of the respondents have agreed that they have access to expertise and officials from their organization. 62.2% of the respondents have agreed that they mostly seek help from their colleagues to complete

their task and 22.8% of respondents have disagreed. 52.2% of respondents have disagreed that they sought support from other organization to perform their office task and only 20.9% of respondents are getting help from other organization.

49.1% of respondents have agreed that they have effective staff management and 31.6% of respondents have disagreed. 79.7% of respondents have agreed that they prefer working in team and only 5.6% of respondents do not prefer to work in team. 71.3% of respondents have agreed that their position requires them to lead team; about 11.3% of respondents have disagreed to this statement (Table 3).

Table 3. Percentile of social resources parameters.

Parameters	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Access to expertise	6.60%	23.10%	70.30%
Seeking help from colleagues	22.80%	15.00%	62.20%
Seeking help from other organization	52.20%	26.90%	20.90%
Effective staff management	31.60%	19.40%	49.10%
Working in team	5.60%	14.70%	79.70%
Leading of team	11.30%	17.50%	71.30%

Table 4 shows the percentile of personal resources. In personal resources domain, 86.1% of respondents have agreed that they complete their task on time and only 10.2% of respondents have disagreed. 76.5% of respondents have agreed that they receive timely support from their colleagues as and when needed whereas only 7.1% of the respondents have disagreed on this statement. 74.8% of respondents have agreed that they frequently help colleagues in their office in performing their task and

only 8.3% does not help their colleagues.

47.7% of respondents have agreed that the workloads are fairly distributed among the employees and only 24% of respondents have responded that work loads are not fairly distributed among the employees. 53.4% of respondents have agreed that they rely on competent person from the group to complete the assigned group task and 22.5% of respondents are not relying on competent person from the group to complete the assigned group task (Table 4).

Table 4: Percentile of personal resources.

Parameters	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Completing work on time	10.20%	3.60%	86.10%
Receiving timely support from colleagues	7.10%	16.40%	76.50%
Helping colleagues	8.30%	16.90%	74.80%
Fairly distribution of workload	24.00%	28.30%	47.70%
Relying on competent person	22.50%	24.10%	53.40%

Under the work load domain, 73.5% of respondents have agreed that their position requires them to attend the meeting as and when conducted and only 10.2% have disagreed. 50.3% of respondents have agreed that they constantly end up themselves in surfing, writing and sending official emails whereas 16.8% of the respondents are not spending their time in writing and sending official emails. 66.5% of respondents have agreed that they have good balance between their professional life and a family

and only 9% respondent does not have good balance between their professional life and family.

80.2% of respondents have agreed that they are aware that they can be honest about their workload and only 8.6% have disagreed. 61.4% of respondents have agreed that they complete some of their office tasks at home and 19.8% have disagreed. 59.3% of respondents have agreed that they work beyond normal office hour and 16.8% of respondents have disagreed on this statement (Table 5).

Table 5. Percentile of workload.

Parameters	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Attain meeting	10.20%	16.30%	73.50%
Surfing, writing and sending emails	16.80%	32.90%	50.30%
Balanced between professional and family life	9.00%	25.20%	66.50%
Awareness about workload	8.60%	11.10%	80.20%
Completing office task at home	19.80%	18.20%	61.40%
Overtime	16.80%	24.20%	59.30%

The overall statement percentile of the collaborative overload is the summation of the score statement of four domains. 65.3 % of respondents agree that they are spending their time in meetings, on the phone, and responding to e-mails, request for additional input for the co-partner in the day-to-day activities while only 18.2%

disagree to the said statements. On the other hand, 16.5 % respondents feel that they comfortable with their working load so far.

The researcher could conclude that there is prevalence of collaborative over load in the academic staff working under the Royal University of Bhutan (Figure 1).

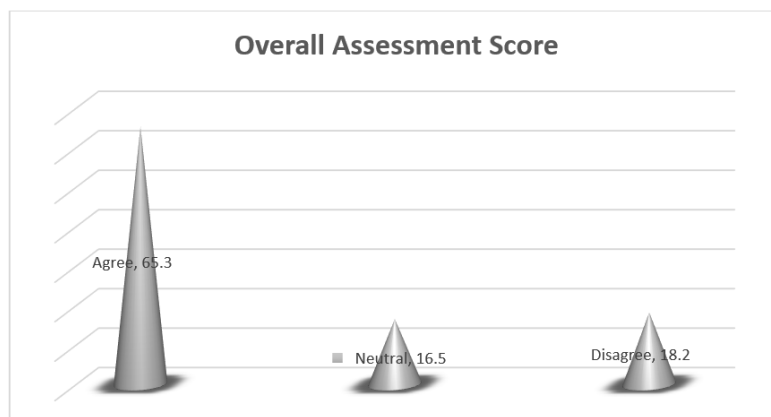


Figure 1. Overall assessment score.

Majority of the academics under position and management category feel that the degree of collaborative overload differs with one another position classification.

The researcher has found out that the collaborative overload has been increasing with the increase in the position level. The degree of collaborative overload is

higher in PL3 and PL4 level with the mean scores of 4.34 and 4.21 respectively. But there is also existence of collaborative over load among position level PL5, PL6 and PL7.

Since the position level PL6 and PL7 is the entry level for professional and management category and a greater number of academic under this category have to depend on to the others. With less working experience and new to the parent organization, they trend to seek help from the experienced person who are already employed. There is also a high degree of collaborative overloads to the

position level PL7 and PL6. 75% of respondents have agreed that they frequently help colleagues in their office in performing their task as well as they have got their own responsibilities. The researcher finds out that 74% of respondents have agreed that their position requires them to attend the meeting as and when conducted. 50% of respondents have agreed that they constantly end up themselves in surfing, writing and sending official emails. This is the indication of collaborative overload to the PL3 and PL4 position level (Table 5).

Table 5. Category of staff suffer from collaborative overload.

Position level	Mean
PL3	4.34
PL4	4.21
PL5	3.52
PL6	3.65
PL7	3.55
Total	3.85

CONCLUSION

Collaborative overload is a phenomenon that must be addressed before it leads to unproductive team members and eventually to burnout. Business is a constant give and take, an exchange of thoughts, ideas, products, services, and time. In fact, we talk about time in the same way we talk about money. Since time is one of our most precious resources, it is vital to consider how the actions of individuals may inadvertently impact teams and organizations. A simple act of sending an email or a meeting request to a wide distribution list means asking for, in exchange, other people's time to review it, think about it or attend.

Many understand the importance of building their networks of professional relationships but the time this takes is anything but trivial. In fact, with regard to professional relationships, top-performers tend to have larger internal networks than their colleagues a behavioral characteristic that corporations value because when people connect with others; this often leads to sparking new innovations, unlocking creativity, and moving projects and initiatives forward. But how many people are too many? How can we optimize our workplace interactions to help keep everyone's ratio of focus time to meetings in check?

Organization time waste is often due to lack of executive visibility into time usage, but this means executives can take the initiative to drive change by examining their own individual meeting behaviors and coaching others to think about collaboration overload. In terms of meeting efficiency, it's also important to note that meeting

productivity is often negatively correlated with the number of attendees when more people are in the room, fewer decisions tend to be made. It has been identified that the optimum number of individuals in meeting is right around 7 people. More than that and the meeting are skewed towards one-directional knowledge sharing or providing status updates.

The ability for corporations to stay competitive and operate efficiently relies on factors related to both organizational structures and systems and organizational behaviors. The ability for executives to change how they manage requires them to first understand how they work with colleagues through evaluating baseline and measuring change over time.

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