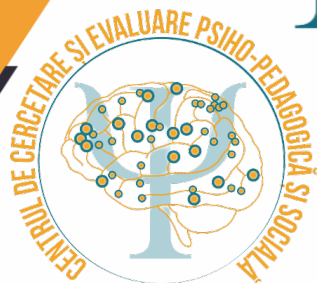




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The relationship between burnout, perceived organizational support and effort at work

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Abstract: The present study addresses the complex relationship between burnout, perceived organizational support, and effort at work, in the context of a multidimensional analysis. By applying the Spearman correlation test, the research reveals a negative correlation between the level of burnout and the perception of support provided by the organization, emphasizing the significant influence of the organizational environment on employees' well-being. In addition, the study identifies a weak positive correlation between burnout and employee effort, suggesting that high levels of burnout may coexist with increased effort, possibly as a compensatory mechanism. The analysis is completed by a perspective on the gender dynamics within the burnout phenomenon, with reference to the study of Purvanova and Muros (2010), which challenges traditional assumptions and emphasizes the differences in the manifestation of burnout between the sexes. In conclusion, the research provides an integrative perspective on the interplay between organizational, personal and gender factors, laying the groundwork for personalized and effective intervention strategies to combat burnout and promote workplace health.

Keywords: relationship, burnout, organization, support, work

Introductory notions

According to Maslach et al. (2001) burnout is a global concern and work-related stress has the potential to negatively affect the psychological and physical health of the individual as well as the effectiveness of organizations. Therefore, it is recognized worldwide as a major challenge for the health of workers and the functioning of their organizations. In the last decade, several



epidemiological studies have found a high prevalence of OSB in Western and developing countries. According to the same study (Maslach, C. et al., 2001) burnout is a psychological condition that occurs as a result of prolonged interpersonal stress at work. Initial research on burnout used qualitative techniques and came from social and clinical psychology, with subsequent research focusing on occupational attitudes and behaviours. The three dimensions of burnout are exhaustion, cynicism, and ineffectiveness, each of which describes different aspects of the experience.

It is a major problem for workers worldwide, with studies showing a high prevalence in both developed and developing countries. Burnout affects various professional groups, but it is most common among professionals who have constant demands and intense interactions with people who have physical and emotional needs.

Burnout was first described in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a phenomenon experienced by young human service professionals who were highly idealistic and committed to social causes greater than themselves. Chronic overwork, combined with low rewards and lack of positive outcomes, eventually led to demoralization and collapse (Freudenberger, H.J., 1974).

It was first identified by Freudenberger (1974), and since then several theoretical models have been developed. He defined burnout syndrome as „exhaustion following excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources” and attributed it to people with severe emotional needs. Personal characteristics such as personality, values, goals, and age also play a role in burnout.

According to Maslach and Jackson (1981), burnout syndrome is the consequence of stress at work. It is characterized by exhaustion and depersonalization and is predominantly found in social professions (social work, education, medicine).

According to Maslach and Jackson (1981) depersonalization is a coping mechanism used by employees to distance themselves emotionally from their customers. It is a response to the emotional stress of work and aims to conserve available resources. However, excessive depersonalization may lead to less effective functioning at work and, according to conservation of resources theory, may result in a negative relationship with job performance.

Diminished personal achievement is a dimension of burnout that refers to a decline in feelings of competence and professional success. This feeling is related to self-efficacy, which is a person's belief in their ability to control the events that affect their life.

Research suggests that negative self-evaluations of job performance can lead to decreased performance or productivity, as well as low morale and increased withdrawal behavior (Roelofs, J. et al., 2005).

Burnout is seen primarily as a psychological and social disorder rather than a physical one. It is caused by a combination of personality traits and external stressors such as social and organizational pressures. The nature of burnout may change over time as cultural values and motivations for hard work evolve, with a shift from idealism to self-centered motives.

A later definition based on the Maslach Burnout Measurement Inventory illustrates exhaustion, depersonalization but also reduced performance satisfaction as decisive factors in the emergence of the burnout syndrome (Burisch, M., 1994). Maslach et al. argued that burnout can occur when there is a disconnect between the organization and the individual regarding the main areas of work life: values, fairness, community, reward, control and workload (Maslach, C. et al., 2001).

Roelofs et al. (2005) argue that emotional exhaustion is the most important dimension of burnout and is closely related to depression and anxiety disorders. Emotional exhaustion consists



of feelings of emotional overload and exhaustion. However, burnout syndrome can also be considered an individual experience specific to workplace circumstances, according to Roelofs et al. (2005). At the same time, stressful interpersonal relationships at work can be secondary to a lack of reciprocity that can affect employees' relationships with both the institution and team members.

There are different models for understanding burnout, including a sequential model that describes exhaustion, detachment, and feelings of inadequacy, as well as models that focus on imbalances between job demands and resources. The „Job Demands-Resources” (JD-R) model (Bakker, A. B. & Demerouti, E., 2007) suggests that burnout occurs when individuals experience excessive job demands with insufficient resources, while the „Conservation of Resources” model (COR) (Hobfoll, S. E., 1989) suggests that depletion occurs because of persistent threats to valuable resources. Another model, the Areas of Worklife (AW) model, identifies six areas of person-work imbalances that contribute to burnout: workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values. Burnout can lead to negative outcomes such as job dissatisfaction, low engagement and staff turnover.

Burnout is caused by various factors, including workload, lack of control, insufficient recognition and reward, poor relationships with coworkers, unfair treatment, and conflicts with personal values. Burnout can lead to negative reactions at work, such as low job satisfaction, decreased commitment to the job or to the organization, and decreased productivity (Maslach, C. et al., 2001). Burnout can also affect peers and perpetuate itself through social interactions. Burnout is linked to poor health outcomes such as headaches, chronic fatigue and cardiovascular disease. Exhaustion is the most predictive dimension of burnout for stress-related health outcomes.

However, the concept of burnout does not only refer to exhaustion, as cynicism and efficacy are also important dimensions. Recently, there has been a push to define burnout as an individual disorder, with burnout as the only dimension, which can lead to misdiagnosis and missing the distinct quality of burnout that reflects a crisis of meaning or values. A new approach allows for the existence of several distinct patterns along the burnout-engagement continuum and suggests that the experience of cynicism may be more central to burnout than burnout (Weber, A., & Jaekel-Reinhard, A., 2000). Treatment and prevention strategies include changing work patterns, developing coping skills, obtaining social support, using relaxation strategies, promoting good health and fitness, and developing a better self-understanding.

According to Karasek (1979), job stress refers to demanding job demands and low control over workload. Those who work in such fields are at high risk of mental illness associated with burnout. The risk of having a depressive disorder is higher among employees who hold jobs perceived as very demanding. Factors such as effort-reward imbalance, organizational injustice, workload, personality traits, and social support can influence the risk of suffering from depression.

According to some studies (Hobfoll, S. E., 1989), teachers are often cited as an example of burnout because of the high expectations and idealism they bring to their work. Many teachers enter the profession with the hope of making a significant impact on the lives of their students, but some become disillusioned when their efforts do not yield the desired results. Burnout can occur when the perceived outcome in terms of personal satisfaction or student performance no longer matches the perceived input, leading to physical and emotional exhaustion.

Cultural changes in recent decades have resulted in increased workloads and pressures on workers in various occupations, including human service professionals such as teachers and



psychotherapists. The focus on profits and responsibility made it harder for workers to feel idealistic about their work and find meaning in it. These changes have made it more difficult for workers to avoid burnout, which can have physical and emotional consequences.

According to Farber (2000), the nature of work has changed over time, with individuals now prioritizing financial gain over personal investment and meaning in their work. As a result, the type of burnout experienced by workers has changed from working to achieve socially meaningful goals to feeling overwhelmed by multiple obligations, external pressures, and inadequate rewards. These changes have altered the social and cultural contexts of work, leading to a different type of burnout that is more prevalent today.

Burnout has changed over time from being based on internal disappointment at not achieving personally and socially significant goals to being generated by external pressures such as meeting increasingly demanding big, intense competition and the desire to make more money. Farber (2000) argues that earlier idealistic views of work were more focused on helping others, whereas today the emphasis is on self-interest. This change has led to a greater sense of detachment and a lack of personal investment in work, which has contributed to the prevalence of burnout in today's society.

1. Research methodology

2.1. Objectives and hypotheses of the study

The objectives of the research are:

Exploring the correlation between the level of burnout and the perception of organizational support.

Exploring the correlation between burnout level and effort.

Exploring the gender difference in the level of burnout.

The research hypotheses are:

Hypothesis 1: It is assumed that there is a negative correlation between the level of burnout and the perception of organizational support.

Hypothesis 2: It is assumed that there is a positive correlation between the level of burnout and the level of effort.

Hypothesis 3: It is assumed that there is a significant difference between men and women regarding the level of burnout.

2.1. Study participants

The group of participants consisted of 89 participants, of which 44 were male and 45 female, from the urban environment, employed for a period longer than 3 years, with a minimum of one year of service.

2.2. Research tools

For this research we chose the Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT), The Work Effort Scale and the Perceived Organizational Support Scale (POS).

Developing the BAT involved conducting around 50 in-depth interviews with professionals dealing with burnout and reviewing existing burnout questionnaires. Emotional and cognitive impairment has been found to be a result of exhaustion, as it prevents effective regulation of emotional and cognitive processes due to lack of energy (Schaufeli, W.B. et al., 2020). The Burnout

Assessment Tool comprises six short assessment scales: burnout, mental distancing, impairment of emotional control, impairment of cognitive control, psychological distress and psychosomatic symptoms.

The Work Effort Scale questionnaire, made by De Cooman et al. (2009) is a scale that measures the level of effort that an employee makes when performing his duties at work and involves a number of 10 items divided into three categories: Perseverance (3 items), Direction (3 items) and Intensity (4 items). Items are measured using a Likert scale.

The Perceived Organizational Support Scale (POS) questionnaire, made by Eisenberger et al. (1986) measure the level of support provided by the organization as perceived by the employee. This scale features 17 items measured on a Likert scale.

2.3. Ethical aspects

During the application of the questionnaires, we obtained voluntary consent from the participants, making sure that they understood the purpose of the research. They were informed that their involvement was entirely optional and that they could withdraw at any time. Their personal data was anonymized, using a code consisting of the initials of the name and first name to maintain confidentiality.

The subjects were also informed that they can call us at any time to provide them with information if they have questions or uncertainties. Moreover, they had the opportunity to receive feedback on the results obtained after completing the questionnaire.

2.4. Interpretation of results

Hypothesis 1. It is assumed that there is a negative correlation between the level of burnout and the perception of organizational support.

Correlations			suport_organ izational_per ceput	burnout
Spearman's rho	perceived organizational support	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.102
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.339
		N	90	90
burnout		Correlation Coefficient	-.102	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.339	.
		N	90	90

Following the application of the Spearman correlation test in our study, the results indicate the presence of a negative correlation of low intensity. This phenomenon suggests an inversely proportional relationship between the degree of burnout shown by individuals and their perception of the level of support provided by the organization in which they are employed. Specifically, observations indicate that subjects with high levels of burnout tend to report diminished perceptions of organizational support.

This finding is supported and amplified by research by Xu & Yang (2021), who not only validate this interconnection, but also extend it, identifying a perpetual and self-perpetuating cycle.



According to these authors, there is a cyclical and deteriorating relationship between the level of burnout and stress experienced by employees and the degree of perceived support within the organization. This dynamic is characterized by the fact that employees who perceive insufficient support become progressively more affected by stress, which in turn amplifies the degree of burnout. This escalation of stress and burnout subsequently contributes to further diminishing employees' positive perception of organizational support, thus perpetuating the negative spiral and perpetuating the degrading cycle.

Hypothesis 2. It is assumed that there is a positive correlation between the level of burnout and the level of effort.

Correlations

			burnout	effort made
Spearman's rho	burnout	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.156
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.142
		N	90	90
	effort made	Correlation Coefficient	.156	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.142	.
		N	90	90

In the context of the statistical analysis carried out by means of the Spearman non-parametric correlation test, it is observed, by examining the resulting correlation coefficient, the emergence of a weakly positive correlation between the magnitude of burnout and the intensity of the effort made by employees in professional activities. This association suggests that there is a tendency for employees experiencing high levels of burnout to also exhibit increased levels of effort in the work environment, revealing possible overcompensation within work dynamics.

This dynamic is deeply analyzed and illustrated in the study led by Tanimoto et al. (2023), who investigated, in a meticulous academic setting, the impact of employment conditions and psychosocial factors on the well-being of university teaching staff in Sweden. The results obtained in this study are revealing and contribute to deepening the understanding of the phenomenon. It is found that the increased levels of effort are concurrent with an increased degree of professional exhaustion, thus conditioning a depreciatory subjective assessment of the state of health. Moreover, this pattern is also correlated with a higher frequency of intersectional conflicts between professional responsibilities and family obligations. This complex interconnection between the level of effort and its psychosocial and professional consequences provides detailed insight into the hidden costs and deeply integrative repercussions of occupational stress among university teachers.

Hypothesis 3. It is assumed that there is a significant difference between men and women regarding the level of burnout.



	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Burnout	3.689	.058	.796	88	.428	.13691	.17199	-,20489	.47870
			.800	84,942	.426	.13691	.17199	-,20327	.47708

Following the implementation of a parametric test and the analysis of the significance value (Sig.), which exceeds the threshold of 0.05, it is concluded that the observed discrepancy does not reach the threshold of statistical significance. Consequently, rejection of the null hypothesis is not warranted, thus suspending any definitive inferences based on the current data.

This conclusion is contextualized and extended by the results of a rigorous meta-analysis conducted by Purvanova and Muros (2010). This comprehensive study aimed to explore gender differences in the manifestation of burnout, addressing a topic frequently debated in the specialized literature. Contrary to a widespread conception, which postulates an increased susceptibility to burnout among female employees compared to male employees, the obtained findings nuance this narrative. It is observed that although women may be slightly more prone to emotional exhaustion, men show more pronounced tendencies towards depersonalization. This finding sheds light on the complexity and gender specificity of burnout dimensions, suggesting that different components of burnout may be differently accentuated among women and men, and underscores the need for a nuanced and differentiated approach in burnout research and interventions. the

Conclusions

Collectively analyzing the results presented in the three hypotheses, we can draw some general conclusions that underline the complexity and interconnections of burnout dynamics in the work environment:

Regarding the interconnection between Burnout and the Perception of Organizational Support, there is an obvious relationship between the level of burnout of employees and their perception of the support provided by the organization. This negative correlation emphasizes the importance of organizational support as a factor in mitigating burnout. Organizations must be aware of the impact of organizational policies and culture on employee well-being and strive to provide a supportive environment that minimizes the risk of burnout.



The weakly positive correlation between burnout and effort indicates that employees with higher levels of burnout may struggle to maintain performance, possibly to the point of burnout. This suggests that measuring employee performance should not be based solely on visible effort or immediate results, but should also consider their long-term psychological and physical health.

The findings regarding gender differences in the manifestation of burnout emphasize the need to approach burnout in a manner that recognizes and responds to the specific needs of each gender. Women and men may experience and respond differently to stress and burnout, requiring tailored approaches to workplace interventions and support.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the need for a holistic and integrated approach in the management of burnout in the work environment, taking into account organizational, individual and gender factors. Understanding and addressing these interconnected factors can help organizations develop more effective strategies for promoting employee health and well-being, thereby reducing the negative impact of burnout.

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