

A Proposed Framework of Research on the Influencing Factors of Burnout - Based on the Perspective of Individual Work Scenarios

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Abstract

Job burnout is a pervasive issue that spans all sectors, exerting profound impacts on individuals, teams, organizations, and societies. This issue is particularly significant in the manufacturing industry where the future growth hinges on the expertise and well-being of highly skilled professionals. Our research proposal aims to explore the complex dynamics of how the work environment, as perceived by these highly skilled talents in the manufacturing industry, contributes to job burnout. This paper adopts a comprehensive model that draws upon principles from the Conservation of Resource Theory, Affective Events Theory, and the Job Demands-Resources theory to test our hypotheses. A quantitative research approach will be adopted to dissect the root causes of job burnout. We will conduct a survey targeting highly skilled workers in the manufacturing industry within Weifang City. The data thus gathered will be scrutinized and validated using Smart-PLS and SPSS tests. Through the literature review and conceptual framework, this paper has certain theoretical significance for clarifying the mechanism of employee burnout influence and provides assistance for enterprises to develop targeted employee burnout intervention programs.

Keywords: Burnout, Job Characteristics, Organizational Justice, Destructive Leadership, Work Relationship, Work Life Balance, Role Stress

Introduction

Bakker et al (2023) reported job burnout is characterized by a persistent feeling of exhaustion and a negative perception of the workplace. The International Classification of Diseases, 11th edition confirms the existence of burnout, burnout is classified as a "problem related to employment or unemployment" and is defined as a syndrome that occurs because of prolonged exposure to stress in the workplace but remains inadequately managed.

Jiang et al (2021) report that The Health China Action Plan (2019-2030) was published by the National Health and Wellness Commission of the People's Republic of China, in response to the ongoing rise in workplace stress (Ouyang et al., 2022). When work and occupational settings are poorly organized and managed, employees may have negative effects in the form of physical and psychological stress, and rather than giving them a sense of dignity, employment may drain their mental resources and wear them out. All professional and occupational groups are susceptible to developing burnout as an occupational syndrome (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022).

China is a manufacturing power, according to (World Bank, 2023), China's manufacturing sector accounts for 30% of the world manufacturing output. The transformation of China from a predominantly manufacturing-based country to a more robust and advanced economy relies heavily on the presence of highly skilled talents (Liu Yang, 2021).

According to the conversation of resources theory and job demand-resources model, job resources refer to the physical, psychological, social, and organizational factors that can help individuals meet job demands, reduce stress, and foster engagement. A systematic review was conducted on papers published between 2011 and 2018, which encompassed a total of 94 studies. The review aimed to assess four distinct types of resources: individual resources, social resources, work resources, and organizational resources (Murtaza et al., 2023).

What is the role of organizational-level job characteristics in relation to burnout? Exploring how organizational factors, such as job characteristics, organizational justice, destructive leadership, work relationship, work-life balance and role stress, impact burnout is essential. Understanding how these factors interact with individual-level job characteristics can provide insights into the broader organizational context in which burnout occurs.

How do job characteristics influence burnout in the context of highly skilled careers in manufacturing?

The primary research objective encompasses a set of specific interrelated research goals that can guide the investigation. These goals include:

- 1.To examine the relationship between organizational-level factors such as job characteristics, organizational justice, destructive leadership, work relationship, work-life balance and role stress and burnout
- 2.To examine the contextual factors that influence the relationship between organizational factors and burnout as perceived by individuals. The study recognizes the importance of considering the industry context in which individuals perceive themselves.
- 3.To examine pursuing these research goals, a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between job characteristics and burnout can be developed. This knowledge can contribute to the identification of effective interventions, policies, and practices aimed at preventing and managing burnout, promoting employee well-being, and enhancing organizational outcomes.
- 4.To explore the problems, put forward relevant promotion mechanisms and suggestions in a targeted manner, and form scientific development experience, which has certain reference significance for realistic management (Leitão et al., 2021).

Literature Review

Overall, burnout is a common and pervasive occurrence that affects many different occupational groups. It is defined by a significant loss of physical and mental energy (de Vries

& Bakker, 2022; Schaufeli et al., 2020). The term "burnout" was initially introduced in the 1970s to experience emotional exhaustion, a sense of reduced personal accomplishment, and a loss of motivation in their work (Freudenberger, 1974; Groggel et al., 2022).

Burnout was later characterized in the scientific literature by Christina Maslach (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022; Maslach, 1976) Burnout is often described as a slow-moving process characterized by feelings of exhaustion, cynicism, and decreased commitment among social care providers.

After extensive empirical research, Maslach and her colleagues reformulated the concept of burnout, providing a more precise and measurable definition. They conceptualized burnout as a psychological syndrome that can occur in caregivers and is characterized by three key dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a diminished sense of professional efficacy. This refined definition allowed for a more comprehensive and systematic assessment of burnout, enabling researchers and practitioners to better identify and address the syndrome in caregivers and other affected individuals (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022; Maslach & Jackson, 1981) .

The conservation of resources (COR) theory was first proposed in the late 1980s Hobfoll (1989); Hobfoll (2001) published "The influence of culture, community, and the nested-self in the stress process: Advancing the conservation of resources theory". In the same issue of the journal, several scholars, including Lazarus (2001), an iconic scholar of stress research, debated COR theory from different perspectives and further improved the theory. In 2014, (Halbesleben et al., 2014) and other authors elaborated on the role of "resources" in COR theory. On this basis, Hobfoll et al (2018) co-authored an article to provide a comprehensive review and outlook on the application of the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory in organizational research, In a certain social context, we can objectively define adverse events, and human behavior shows resilience in the face of adversity(Bardoel & Drago, 2021).

Affective Events Theory suggests that understanding the impact of affective events on employees' emotional experiences can provide valuable insights into their behavior in the workplace (Li et al., 2023; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), Positive or negative events at work can trigger individual emotional response such as.

According to Ouyang et al (2022), The job demands-resources model has been widely used in the literature on employee burnout. This combination of high job expectations and limited resources can lead to persistent stress, which increases the risk of burnout. Burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion (Bakker & Vries, 2021).

Hypothesis Development

1) Job characteristics and Burnout

Employees operate within a context where multiple job characteristics simultaneously impact their work (Li et al., 2023).

According to the Affective Events Theory, events related to job characteristics can influence employees' emotions and behaviors. If employees perceive a work event as deviating from the expected standards or if the event triggers feelings of disappointment and anger, it can lead to burnout and other negative consequences (Zapf et al., 2021). Several scholars suggest that challenging and demanding work requirements can deplete employees' energy reserves, leading to a positive association with burnout (Bunjak et al., 2021; Podsakoff et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2014). Therefore, this study proposes that

H1: Job characteristics have a positive effect on Employee Burnout.

2) Organizational Justice and Burnout

COR theory explains that a person's organizational performance is reduced when all the resources are spent but the results are not as expected. (Agustina, 2022). There is still a fundamental question that requires further investigation: "How and why does organizational justice influence burnout?" The empirical evidence available so far presents a perplexing situation, highlighting the need for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms and reasons behind the relationship between organizational justice and burnout. Therefore, this study proposes that

H2: Organizational justice has a negative effect on Employee Burnout.

3) Destructive leadership and Burnout

Leadership is essential in all fields of human endeavor (Omer et al., 2022). Conservation of resources theory pointed out that destructive leadership is a broad, leadership process that affects the behaviors of followers and organizations, we still do not truly understand destructive leadership as an ongoing problem in organizations in past research, destructive leadership has adverse and costly effects on organizational performance and subordinate absenteeism, turnover, and legal action. Effective organizational functioning is associated with it (Mackey et al., 2021).

According to Affective Events Theory, the leadership style creates a relationship between the leader and the employee, and the relationship between colleagues can be rather depressing. This environmental trait may directly cause stress at the psychological level of the employee, which then leads to emotionally driven behaviors, such as low engagement and burnout.

Due to the influence of traditional Confucian culture and collective values, employees often express a stronger desire for a harmonious work environment and a sense of belonging (Zhou et al., 2023). Therefore, this study proposes that:

H3: Destructive leadership has a positive effect on Employee Burnout.

4) Work relationships and Burnout

In a peer relationship, there is no inherent differential social power, but rather a sense of rivalry or competition due to limited organizational resources such as promotions and pay increases. As a result, employees are motivated to distinguish themselves from their peers and become increasingly concerned about the prospect of falling behind (Bandura & Walters, 1977; DENISI et al., 1983; Festinger, 1962; Kim & Kim, 2020). Therefore, we suggest the following hypothesis:

H4: Work relationships have a positive effect on Employee Burnout.

5) Work-life balance and Burnout

Having an improved work-family balance, with fewer conflicts between work and family responsibilities, is likely to have positive effects on individuals' health. Research has shown that satisfaction with work-family balance is associated with reduced burnout (Ter Hoeven & Van Zoonen, 2015).

Hence, it is likely that work-family balance will have a positive effect on reducing burnout. The benefits of work-life balance include the creation of safe and healthy work

practices and the reduction of unhealthy working conditions (Fraccaroli et al., 2017; Rasool et al., 2021). Therefore, this study proposes that:

H5: Work-life balance has a negative effect on Employee Burnout.

6) Role stress and Burnout

Distinguishing between role stress and burnout can be challenging due to the complex and multifaceted nature of burnout Pereira et al (2022), While role stress, such as role conflict and role ambiguity, can contribute to the development of burnout, it is important to recognize that burnout is not solely attributed to role stressors.

Individuals who face challenges related to role conflict and role ambiguities are at a higher risk of experiencing emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal success (Karatepe & Uludag, 2008; Pereira et al., 2022). Therefore, this study proposes that: H6: Role Stress has a positive effect on Employee Burnout.

A Proposed Conceptual Framework

Based on a review of past literature, the study variables were identified by integrating the three main theories and new additional variables.

Identified by integrating three main theories and new additional variables. A model integrating Conservation of Resource Theory (COR), Affective Events Theory (AET) Job Resource-Demand theory (JDR) was used to expand the scope of this quantitative approach study. to examine how organizational and personal factors influence work scenarios.

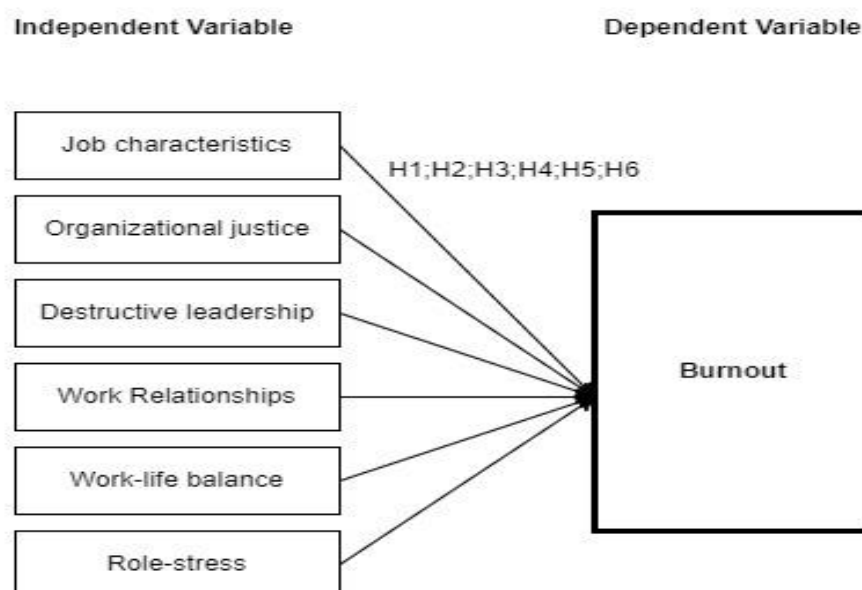


Figure 1. Conceptual Research Framework

Research Methodology

Sample and Procedure

The manufacturing employment population in Weifang City is 346,000 according to the (SHANDONG STATISTICAL YEARBOOK, 2022), and the environment of this study involves high skilled talents living in all Weifang's manufacturing industry. employees with vocational qualifications within five years of their first employment. The selection process of data collection spanned four months: from January to May 2024. Respondents were selected from two methods: online and face-to-face questionnaires.

Sampling involves finding the right sample or respondents for a study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Two common sampling methods are non-probability and probability (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016; Sekaran, 2003). This study used non-probability sampling due to the lack of a sampling frame of all highly skilled talents from all manufacturing industries in Weifang City.

These criteria were: 1: Employees belonging to manufacturing industry, 2: Have an occupational skills qualification. The reason the researcher specified employees with vocational skills credentials in manufacturing firms is that China specifies that having a vocational credential is one of the criteria for highly skilled talent.

Measures

Table 1

Measures of Variables

Constructs	No of Items	Scale	Source
Organizational Justice	11 items	Five-Point Likert Scale	(Colquitt, 2001)
Job Characteristics	13 items	Five-Point Likert Scale	(McDermott, 1984)
Destructive Leadership	20 items	Five-Point Likert Scale	(Larsson et al., 2012)
Work Relationship	20 items	Five-Point Likert Scale	(Carmeli et al., 2009)
Work-life Balance	3 items	Five-Point Likert Scale	(Irfan et al., 2023)
Role Stress	5 items	Five-Point Likert Scale	(Johan & Yusuf, 2022)
Burnout	22 items	Six-Point Likert Scale	(Maslach & Jackson, 1981)

To ensure that our study has an accurate measurement scale, we need to perform the following operations on the variables.

We investigated burnout using an adapted version of Maslach and Jackson's (1981) scale. Similarly, organizational justice was measured using a scale adapted from Colquitt (2001). As for the perception of job characteristics, the study relied on a scale modeled after McDermott's (1984) work. In addition, we assessed the perception of destructive leadership using a scale adapted from Larsson et al.'s (2012) research. Work relationship perceptions were gauged using a measurement influenced by Carmeli et al.'s (2009) study. Moreover, the perception of work-life balance was assessed using a scale adapted from (Mas-Machuca et al., 2016). Lastly, role stress was examined using a measurement influenced by Johan and Yusuf's (2022) research.

By applying these established scales, we aimed to ensure the accuracy and consistency of our findings across various aspects of high-skilled talent's workplace experiences.

Conclusion

The relationship between burnout and negative work environments has been well researched. It is recommended that organizations establish healthy work environments that promote the following: Supportive work environments empathize with all employees and encourage positive mental health. A thriving work environment is one in which job characteristics, organizational equity, leadership, work relationships, work-life balance, and role stress actively contribute to safeguarding the health, safety, and well-being of all people in the workplace.

Job burnout is a work-related syndrome that has not been successfully managed and is prevalent in all occupations, while it is generally considered to be related to the management level. This study enriches the theory of employee burnout by examining it from the perspective of individual perception theory and clarifying the mechanism of employee burnout caused by work-related factors through the theory of resource conservation and the theory of affective events. China's manufacturing industry is in a fundamental position in the national economy, and the key to competition lies in highly skilled personnel. This study is of practical significance in guiding how to reduce the burnout of highly skilled personnel from the practical level.

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