Nigerian Association of Clinical Psychologists (NACP)

Nigerian Journal of Clinical Psychology (NJCP)

© Nigerian Association of Clinical Psychologists
ISSN: 0189-2304
E-ISSN: 2971-6306

2025, Vol.15, No. 2, 47- 64
http://nacpjournal.org.ng
nacpjournals@gmail.com
DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.18264240

INFLUENCE OF EMPLOYEE BURNOUT ON WORK ENGAGEMENT AND TURN OVER INTENTION AMONG HR PROFESSIONALS IN A MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

Workplace burnout has become a pervasive issue in global organizations potentially affecting the well-being and productivity of employees across various industries. The present study was conducted to examine the influence of workplace burnout on work engagement and quitting intention among purposively selected 150 Human Resource (HR) professionals in multinational organisations in Lagos State, Nigeria. We adopted the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) to assess the three dimensions of burnout syndrome. This measure was administered along with other relevant instruments. Five hypotheses were tested using correlation and regression analyses. The finding of the study indicates that burnout is negatively related to work engagement ($r= -.527$, $p<.01$), implying that higher level of burnout correspond to lower level of engagement among HR professionals. Additionally, a positive relationship was found between workplace burnout and emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. Further the study found workplace burnout to be a predictor of turnover intention. The findings underscore the critical impact of burnout on both work engagement and retention, highlighting the need for interventions and programmes aimed at mitigating burnout and its adverse effects on HR professionals' wellbeing, particularly. in multi-national organisations.

Keywords: *burnout, work engagement, turnover intention, HR professionals, Multicultural*

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INTRODUCTION

The term 'burnout' was first applied in the behavior science by Herbert Fredenberger in 1974 to describe the occupation - related exhaustion felt by many helping professionals (Kumareswaran, 2023). Over the years, the term has been applied in various fields to describe the experiences of mental and psychological exhaustion people have regarding tough workplace realities (Roskam et al., 2022). Working in difficult circumstances, particularly, in a multicultural city grappling with infrastructure shortages among other challenges can be tasking for professionals who have to deliver expected results in their assigned roles (Longe, et al., 2018).

The professionals who are prone to workplace burnout may lose their effectiveness, become cynical, pessimistic and lose their empathic attunement, they can also get unnecessarily angry and resentful with their colleagues whom they are supposed to motivate as HR personnel (Mousavi, 2020; Asekun, 2016). Burnout is an occupational syndrome resulting from chronic work-related stress characterized by emotional exhaustion, a cynical attitude towards work and a decline in personal accomplishment. Burnout has been found to be associated with an increased risk of absence from work and low work satisfaction (Westermann et al., 2014; World Health Organization, 2019). Despite the need to address burnout in order to maintain a healthy and productive workforce, there is a paucity of empirical research focusing on its specific impact on work engagement and turnover intention among HR professionals.

This gap in the literature leaves organizations without clear strategies to mitigate burnout and its adverse effects. Although burnout was initially considered to be specific to healthcare and human services profession such as nursing and teaching, however, it has now become clear that burnout is not confined only to social service professions (Takase, 2010). More than three decades after its first conceptualisation, it has now spread to other professions such as banking, Information Technology, Sports among others (Lubbadeh, 2020). Its negative impacts on the economy and public health of the most affected countries has led the World Health Organization (WHO) to include this syndrome in the 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as a phenomenon exclusive to the occupational context. Similarly, the need to address burnout has also been justified for legal reasons, such as compliance with the European Union Framework Directive on Health and Safety (89/391/EEC) (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022).

On the other hand, work engagement is a multidimensional construct defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption (Demerouti & Sanz Vergel, 2014). Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working; the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties (González-Romá et al., 2006). Turnover intention is defined as an employee's willingness to leave the organisation within a defined period of time (Saufi, et al., 2023) it can also be defined as an employee's psychological detachment from his/her organization (Lee & Bruvold, 2003; Abet, et al., 2024). Voluntary employee turnover is expensive for an organization as it can bring about a significant loss for such an organization, due to huge cost and time required for proper replacement of experienced employees (Lazzari et al., 2022; Yamazaki & Petchdee, 2015).

Objectives of Study

The study aims to examine the influence of workplace burnout on work engagement among HR Professionals in Lagos with the specific objectives as stated below:

1. To investigate the relationship between workplace burnout and employee turnover.
2. To examine the nature of relationship between workplace burnout, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal achievement
3. To examine the predictive influence of work burnout on employee turnover intention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The stressors that contribute to burnout are generally well defined, however, patterns of causality are difficult to determine, partly because the variables have only been assessed at one point in time and partly because many of these variables are interdependent (Burke & Richardson. 1996). There are some major themes in different theories of what causes burnout. Most researchers (e.g., Anadkat & Joshi, 2023: Willmar & Arnold 2004 Cherniss, et al., 1998) have emphasized difficult interpersonal relationships at work, job demands, and characteristics of the organizational settings in which work takes place. There have also been discussions of individual causes of burnout, such as personal expectations, motivations, and various personality traits (Obioma et al., 2025; Pines, 1992). Maslach and Leiter (2008) believed that the causes of burnout lie more in the job environment than in the individual. Many different job settings that are prone to burnout have several things in common: (i) overload; (ii) role conflict and

role ambiguity; (iii) lack of control; and (iv) lack of support. Overload is a mismatch between the organization and definition of workload and the individual's definition of work. (Herminingsih & Kurniasih, 2018).

Work burnout has been linked to a variety of negative workplace outcomes such as absenteeism, poor quality of work, and poor inter-personal relationships with team members (Anadkat &; Joshi, 2023). According to a study by Brunsting et al., (2023) the three burnout dimensions were connected with teacher's decision to quit their employment (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). Acker (2004) suggested that there was a link between role conflict and burnout in his study and that both factors have a negative impact on workers performance. Burnout also affects employees' cognitive, emotional, and attitudinal behaviors, leading to negative work interactions (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022). Further, burnout consists of three components: exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. Exhaustion is the most researched dimension and refers to physical and emotional fatigue caused by work stress (Anadkat & Joshi, 2023; Salama et al, 2020). Cynicism, also known as depersonalization, involves detachment from colleagues or job tasks, which often leads to reduced commitment and organizational withdrawal (Bang & Reio, 2017). Inefficacy, or reduced personal accomplishment, refers to employees' poor self-evaluation and feelings of reduced capability at work, which lowers morale and coping skills (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022). Other consequences of burnout includes reduced productivity and increased health risks, such as migraines, depression, and cardiovascular problems (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

Theoretical Framework

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory highlights how work environments influence employee well-being and performance. Demerouti and Bakker (2001) posits that excessive job demands without adequate resources lead to stress and burnout, while sufficient resources buffer these effects and promote work engagement. Job demands include heavy workloads, emotional labor, and role ambiguity, while resources such as autonomy, social support, and opportunities for development enhance resilience and mitigate stress. Further, the theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by Ajzen (1991), is relevant for examining turnover intention. It suggests that employee behavior is influenced by three predictor variables which include: attitude,

subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Employees with positive attitudes towards their jobs, strong social support, and a sense of control are less likely to leave. (Lam, et al., 2003). Understanding these factors allows organizations to address turnover issues and retain valuable talent.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses below were formulated to guide the study:

1. There would be a significant relationship between workplace burnout, work engagement, and turnover intention among HR professionals.
2. There would be a significant relationship between work burnout exhaustion, depersonalization and reduction in personal achievement.
3. Work burnout would have a significant effect on turnover intention among HR professionals;
4. Work burnout would be a significant predictor of turnover intention among HR professionals

METHOD

Design

The study employed a survey method using a set of questionnaires to elicit responses from sampled research participants.

Participants

The survey was opened to all HR professionals from not less than 15 sectors including, banking and financial services, maritime, construction & engineering, technology. 73(48.7%) of the participants were males while 77(51.3%) were females. On years of experience, those who were between 2-3 years on the job were 39 (26%), while those who were 4-5years were 36 (24%), those who were with 6-7years of experience were 19 (12.7%), Finally, those with 7years experience and above were 56 (37.3%), Respondents participated from fifteen (15) sectors, including Banking and Financial Services 55(36.7%), Manufacturing 9(6%), Telecommunication 4 (2.7%), Aviation 2(1.3%), Medical 1 (.7%), Insurance 3(2%), Oil and Gas 6 (4%), Real Estate 2(1.3%), E-commerce 1(.7%), Consulting/Professional 22 (14.7%), Agriculture 1 (.7%), Technology 10 (6.7%), Construction & Engineering 4(2.7%), Government 1 (.7%), Maritime 1(.7%), Others 28 (18.7%).

Research Instrument.
The study was conducted using the instruments below:

Maslach Burnout Inventory

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was used to measure burnout. Maslach and Jackson (1981) constructed the MBI to measure the three factors of burnout syndrome: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is highly respected as a tool of measurement. It has a reliability coefficient of .89 (Portoghese et al., 2018). In Nigeria reliability coefficient of .82 was reported by Coker and Omoluabi (2009).

Utrecht Work Engagement Scale

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-17) was developed by Schaufeli et al., 2002). It is a 7-point Likert scale format ranging from 0 (never) to 7 (always). It measures the three factors of work engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption. It has a reliability Cronbach's Alpha of .79.

Turnover Intention Scale

The turnover intention scale (TI) was used to measure turnover intention. Bothma and Roodt developed the Turnover Intention Scale in 2004 to gauge an employee's desire to leave or remain with an organisation Later, Bothma and Roodt (2013) developed a short version, TIS-6 and found the TIS-6 to be a valid and reliable instrument in measuring turnover intention and stated it was appropriate for use in business and academic research. It has a reliability coefficients of 0 .86. (Bothma & Roodt, 2013).

Procedure.

Participants were approached before the commencement of the study in their various organisations. They were briefed on the purpose of the study and gave their consent to participate. All the participants were HE Professionals and must have at least 2 years' experience in HR, they must be employed full time and must be currently working in Lagos State. They were assured on confidentiality on anonymity. Also any participant could quit participation at any stage of the study without any consequence Participants answered items on the questionnaire within 30 minutes on the average and were appreciated for taking part in the survey, the study was conducted within a period of two months. After this, the questionnaires were collated and coded. The coded data were subsequently keyed into SPSS 25 version software for analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

In the study we employed correlation analysis to test the relationship between workplace burnout, work engagement, and

turnover intention among HR professionals. Similarly, we also adopted the correlation analysis to examine the relationship between work burnout exhaustion, depersonalization and reduction in personal achievement.

Further, a regression analysis was deployed to test for the significant effect of burnout on work engagement. Also, the regression was run to test if work burnout would be a predictor of turnover intention.

Result

Test of Hypothesis 1: There would be a significant relationship between workplace burnout, work engagement, and turnover intention among HR professionals.

Table 1: Correlation showing relationships among burnout, work engagement and turnover intention

Variable	1	2	3
Burnout	-	-527**	.524**
Work engagement		-	-.296**
Turnover Intention			-

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Burnout-Independent Variable, Work Engagement and Turnover Intention are Independent Variables

Table 1 shows the relationships among the variables of the study. The result revealed that burnout was negatively related to Work engagement (r=-.527, p<.01); this implies that the more workers are engaged meaningfully in their work the less they are likely to experience burnout.

It also revealed that Turnover Intention was positively related to burnout (r=.524, p<.01), This means that the more workers experience burnout the higher the likelihood to quit. The result also shows that work engagement is negatively related to turnover intention (r=-.296, p<.01), this implies that the more workers are engaged meaningfully in their jobs the less likely they will want to quit.

Test of Hypothesis 2: There would be significant relationships between work burnout exhaustion, depersonalization and reduction in personal achievement

Table 2: showing the relationship between work burnout, exhaustion, depersonalization and reduction of personal achievement

Variable	1	2	3	4
Burnout	-	.762**	.803**	.635**
Exhaustion		-	.685**	.057
Depersonalization			-	.199
Reduction of personal achievement				-

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Burnout subdivisions (Exhaustion, depersonalization and reduction of personal achievement)

The Table 2 above reveals that burnout and its sub-dimensions are positively related. The relationship between burnout and exhaustion (r=.76), burnout and depersonalization.(r=.80), burnout and reduction of personality achievement and turnover intention (r=.64), showing that burnout and its sub-dimension are directly proportional.

Work burnout would have an effect on turnover intention among HR professionals. To test the hypothesis that workplace burnout negatively predicts work engagement, a standard linear regression analysis was performed with burnout as the predictor and engagement as the criterion variable in Table 3:

Test of Hypothesis 3:

Table 3: Regression Analysis showing the effect of workplace burnout on work engagement

Variable	B	Beta (β)	t	Sig.	R	R^2	F	P
(Constant)	27.310		7.536	< .05	.52	.27	56.795	<.05
Burnout	-0.699	-0.527	-5.27	< .05				

Note: The dependent variable is Work Engagement

The regression analysis in Table 3 shows that workplace burnout has a statistically significant negative effect on work engagement ($\beta = -0.527$, $p < .05$). The unstandardized coefficient ($B = -0.699$) indicates the direction and scale of this relationship. The model explains 27% of the variance in work engagement ($R^2 = .27$), which is confirmed by a significant F-statistic ($F = 56.795$, $p < .05$). Therefore, the hypothesis that workplace burnout negatively affects work engagement is supported.

Test of Hypothesis 4:

Work burnout would be a significant predictor of turnover intention among HR professionals

Table 4: showing work burnout as a predictor of turnover intention

Variable	B	Beta (β)	t	Sig.	R	R^2	F	P
(Constant)	2.534		34.880	< .001	.468	.22	41.562	<.05
Burnout	0.228	0.468	6.447	< .001				

Note: The dependent variable is Turnover Intention

Table 4 shows that work burnout is a statistically significant positive predictor of turnover intention ($\beta = 0.468$, $p < .001$). The unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.228) indicates that for each one-unit increase in burnout, turnover intention increases by 0.228 units. The model explains approximately 22% of the variance in turnover intention ($R^2 = .219$). The overall regression model is significant ($F = 41.562$, $p < .001$). Therefore, we accept the hypothesis that work burnout is a significant predictor of turnover intention among HR professionals.

Discussion

The finding of this study based on the first hypothesis shows that burnout has a negative association with work engagement. Previous studies in literature show that high job demands exhaust physical resources and lead to depletion of energy (emotional exhaustion) and lead to health problems (Cabrera & Estacio, 2022) whereas the absence of job resources decreases motivation leading to cynicism (depersonalization) and reduced performance (reduced personal accomplishment (Onyishi et al., 2012; Yener & Coşkun, 2013). This finding also aligns with the finding of the study conducted by Plooy and Roodt (2010) that turnover intention is less likely among employees with high work engagement.

Moreover, our second hypothesis suggests that there exists a relationship between work burnout, exhaustion, depersonalization and reduction of personal achievement. This finding is consistent with similar past studies which pointed to the fact that burnout is associated with a number of work-related behaviors and attitudes, and that occupational burnout also influences workers' functioning outside work (see, Burke & Richardson, 1996) For the third hypothesis, result shows that burnout has an effect on turnover intention among HR professionals. This is in line with the Job Demand-Resources Model adapted from Wilmar & Arnold (2004). The Job Demand- Resources (JD-R) model submitted that when there is a mismatch between job demands and resources, burnout

can be the outcome (Tummers & Bakker, 2021). Such demands of work include role ambiguity, role conflict (Acker, 2004), stressful events, heavy workload and pressure. Thus, the enormous job demands of work without the corresponding job resources are likely to cause significant levels of stress and, over time, burnout among HR professionals resulting in lower productivity and, eventually, a desire to leave the organization for better opportunities (Brunsting, et al,. 2023).

Further, the result of this research reveals that burnout is a predictor of turnover intention among HR professionals

This is because burnout explained 27% variance of turnover intention, this outcome supports the proposition of a past study that states that job demands and personal resources activate different processes (Demerouti et al., 2001). Having high job demands such as an extreme workload leads to constant overtaxing and burnout which can make workers quit their jobs (Egwurugwu, 2019; Cordes., et al., 1997). In contrast, having high job resources makes workers more motivated, resulting in increased work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). However, employees plan their exit when the environment does not support their well-being. (Coetzee & Dyk, 2017), therefore, to reduce turnover intention, business leaders must consider improving work engagement (Randle, 2022).

Conclusion

HR professionals play important role in fostering employee engagement (Bailey et al., 2015). As professionals charged with the roles of ensuring organizational effectiveness, monitoring of organizational culture, talent management and retention. HR professionals face enormous pressure from both leaders and employees which can lead to burnout. Burnout among HR professionals may lead to increased turnover intention within the profession which may be the costliest problem facing organisations today. (Lazzari, et al. (2022)

To reduce turnover intentions, business leaders and HR managers must focus on initiatives that improve work engagement and reduce employee burnout.

Based on the results of this study, the onus is on managers and business leaders to focus on improving work engagement and

decreasing employee burnout to reduce turnover intention leading to actual turnover. Creating a work environment with job resources such as social support from managers and peers, participation in decision making, autonomy, clarity of purpose, skill variety, flexible work plans, and job enhancements will foster the well-being of employees leading to a more engaged workforce and reduction in the need to leave the organization.

Study Limitations/Future Direction

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, we acknowledge that there were limitations that could guide the interpretation and generalization of the present findings.

First, the study deployed data obtained through self-report which may be fraught with common method bias, social desirability effects, and subjective interpretation by research participants. It was likely that HR professionals may have underreported their levels of burnout or turnover intention due to organizational loyalty or fear of professional repercussions (see, Zhang & Jiang, 2022). Future research could address this concern by incorporating multi-source data such as supervisor evaluations, organizational records etc.

Second, the cross-sectional research design limits the ability of the study to draw causal inferences between employee burnout, work engagement, and turnover intention. Although we found a significant associations between the two variables, the direction of causality cannot be established. We suggest that a Longitudinal or experimental designs may be more effective in examining the temporal and causal relationships among these constructs. Thirdly, the sample composition and sampling technique adopted present potential limitations to the study's external validity (see, McEwan, 2020). The research focused specifically on HR professionals within multicultural organizations, which may not represent other occupational groups or industries. Additionally, the use of convenience sampling may have introduced selection bias, as participants who chose to respond could differ systematically from those who did not. Expanding future studies to include a more diverse range of employees and industries would enhance the generalizability of the findings. Fourthly, cultural diversity was treated as a contextual variable rather than being deeply analyzed as a moderating factor. Future research could incorporate cross-cultural comparative designs or qualitative methods to better capture the

nuanced role of culture in these relationships. Finally, while the study used validated measurement instruments, contextual adaptation issues may have affected reliability. Constructs like burnout and engagement may manifest differently across cultural settings, potentially influencing how participants interpreted certain scale items. Conducting further psychometric validation within specific cultural contexts could strengthen future research accuracy.

Disclosure statement

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest related to this study.

Funding

The authors confirmed that no external funding was received for the research or publication of this article.

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