

Emotions and burnout in the workplace: Practical and research implications

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Abstract: *The multifacet views of employees' emotions and reflections on burnout in various organizations become talking points and witnessed growth. These revealed the significance of the concepts and a solid need for reconfirmations in different contexts over time. At the same time, enrich the legacy of the past precedented knowledge about burnout and its associated antecedents, challenges and solutions. Humans are emotional beings, and ignoring this fact at the workplace is inapt in researching management and organizational systems designed for sustainable performances. This paper examines the possible grounds for job burnout among human resources professionals who receive unfortunate attention. Not only are emotions critical, but the inability to successfully manage those emotions can often lead to various forms of outbursts, affecting the general stakeholders. The gatekeeper of the business organization's workforce, the human resource professionals, needs to shine and brighten the entire organization. Emotional and spiritual intelligence and emotional labour strategies assessed by the authors from a paradigmatic view help frame the bondings as the several conduct emotions play out in the work atmosphere and bear burnout. We present a framework that draws attention to the institutionalization of Emotional Contagion Theory in connecting the antecedents of job burnout in business organizations. From the Emotional Contagion Theory's point of view, job burnout and its direct and indirect influencers will open new perspectives in interpreting and analyzing small and medium-sized businesses' knowledge that circulates in ubiquitous trade periodicals. Accordingly, in this paper, we have alluded to opportunities for researchers and human resource professionals to engage in spaced areas of job burnout and connect across paradigms of knowledge. We anticipate fueling future research and extent organizational dynamism of the complex yet impactful phenomenon of emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence and emotional labour strategies towards plummeting job burnout.*

Keywords: emotional intelligence, emotional labour strategies, human resources professional, job burnout, spiritual intelligence

1. Introduction

The rapid spread of the COVID-19 has roots in an unanticipated change in organizational work settings and does not exclude even the micro, small, medium and large businesses across all industries. It has caused increased challenges to human resources professionals to continue executing the human resources cycle. The COVID-19 pandemic has placed organizations in unfamiliar territory and created one of the most unpredictable work

environments. Without notice, organizations proceeded from overcoming recruitment, selection, and retainment challenges to deserted workspaces and dire job loss forecasts. Many organizations suspended hiring or reduced their recruitment efforts; experienced even more challenges as employees, including those with pre-existing conditions, withdrew from the workforce earlier than anticipated because of COVID-19-related challenges and concerns. It is noticeable a significant decrease in the labour force participation rate worldwide. These combined factors posed an immediate and potentially long-term challenge for executing sustainable HR activities to support organizational operations and remain competitive in business struggles. An increase in workplace stressors, including workplace modifications, corporate restructuring, and changing job requirements, requires HR professionals to upsurge help in many of these situations (Piwowar-Sulej, 2021). In the medical field, for example, research has shown significant increases in attrition, counterproductive work behaviour, and a negative effect on organizational culture when burnout is present, and its prevention within the organization lacks prioritization (Giménez Lozano et al., 2021; Santana et al., 2020; Sguera et al., 2020; Sporer, 2021). Identifying the extent to which burnout affects the HR professional fraternity who react as the human capital gatekeepers are essential in identifying issues and proposing immediate remedies (Campos et al., 2021; Edú-Valsania et al., 2022; Ivanovic et al., 2020; Vignoli et al., 2021). Programs focusing on reducing burnout and activity on skills to identify and address burnout can help improve many areas such as improving workplace culture, increasing satisfaction, decreasing attrition levels, decreasing the costs of workplace unwellness, and increasing overall organizational satisfaction (Bianchi & Schonfeld, 2021; Crowe et al., 2020). Investigations on different forms of burnout among employees are available. Still, there is a lack of research on emotional labour, individual attributes (emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence), and burnout, specifically among HR professionals across industries.

Generally, there is much-growing research in individual psychology and literature on organizational behaviour indicating the importance of unique attributes (emotional intelligence-EQ and spiritual intelligence-SQ) in the workplace and their influences on employees' work-related behaviours and attitudes, such as the ability to control work stress, job satisfaction, career selection, and leadership (Badu et al., 2020; Li & Xie, 2020; Pietraszewski, 2020; Setiana et al., 2021). Besides, studies reported establishing the bond between emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and emotional labour and Burnout (Jeung & Chang, 2021; Ogunsola et al., 2020; Pishghadam et al., 2022; Silbaugh et al., 2021). But the results are mixed; research performed in different cultures and work settings still lacks research on predicting individual attributes (EQ and SQ) for HR professionals, which involves their direct and indirect burnout. Unaddressed HR professionals' burnout could lead to an imbalance in human capital management and decreased performance.

Emotional contagion theory, ECT (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994), is a way to understand the underlying mechanisms behind the implicit spread of emotions from one individual to another. ECT has been significantly used as the theoretical basis to anticipate burnout crossover from one partner in a dyad to another in a team or workgroup (individual level). The contagion is evident among those highly susceptible to emotional stimuli. Thus, while the mechanisms of emotional contagion are likely solely implicit and automatic, the actual, final "contagion" of emotion may depend upon various factors, particularly conscious

ones. Cropanzano, Johnson, and Lambert (2020) stressed that distinction is needed to distinguish the primitive, implied, implicit emotional contagion means, primarily determined by the unconscious, automatic motor mimicry, from the beyond explicit methods which regulate human interactions.

Additionally, Bakker and Schaufeli (2000) explain that contagion may also happen through a sensible cognitive development by adjusting to (or out of) other people's emotions. This case will occur when a person tries to visualize how they would sense the situation and feel the same feelings. They also argue that this is likely more common in human-services professions, generally characterized by at least some empathic concern for others. The proposed research framework in this paper examines the individual differences constructs of spiritual and emotional intelligence in affecting emotional labour as the antecedent of burnout and whether the contagion effect is also affected by the individual differences constructs of spiritual and emotional intelligence. This research attempt could significantly fill the gaps in the ECT. Indeed, the timely management of burnout and superior support from the management team can bring back the business fortune and sail the workforce more smoothly post-COVID19 period. The following sections of this paper highlight the possible antecedents of burnout and the research hypothesis and framework for scientific inquiry.

2.0 Antecedents of HR Professionals' Burnout

2.1 Association between Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and Burnout

The theoretical foundations and empirical evidence for the correlation between EQ and burnout exists in multiple dimensions and contexts (McCallum et al., 2022; Lucas-Mangas et al., 2022; Han et al., 2022; Silbaugh et al., 2021; Xie et al., 2021; Sanchez-Gomez & Bresó, 2020; Tesi, 2021). It is proposed to research to find substantial relationships between the dimensions of EQ and burnout among HR professionals. The progression of burnout disorder may revolve around the understanding of emotional data. For example, feelings of emotional fatigue can trigger emotional exhaustion, negative thoughts toward breakable others can bring about depersonalization and feeling disgruntled with a person's role as a carer can imply a decrease in personal achievement. Thus, the existing or in-existent burnout depends on the emotional and intellectual operation, and EQ suggested negatively correlates with HR professionals' burnout. In addition, the proposed study expects to discover more excellent scores on the dimensions of EQ to match with more robust to weak scores on work-related and client-related dimensions and more excellent scores on the related personal dimension of burnout. Thus it is hypothesized that H1: There is a negative relationship between EQ (self-emotion appraisal, other's emotion appraisal, use of emotion and regulation of emotion) and Burnout

2.2 Association between Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) and Burnout

Few empirical studies investigated the relationship between SQ and burnout (Pishghadam et al., 2022; Kaur et al., 2013). Since literature review and empirical findings have shown that a negative relationship exists between spirituality and burnout thus, it is safe to presume that SQ has an inverse relationship with the burnout syndrome. To Pines and Aronson (1988), "the root cause of burnout lies in our existential need to believe that our lives are meaningful,

that the things we do are useful, important and even heroic.” Bulka (1984) argued that the self-transcendence dimension of spirituality might act as a vital construct in buffering the negative impacts of burnout. Personal meaning production also functions as a coping method by assisting a person in finding connotation and purposefulness inside the distress setting hence decreasing the negative effect of a stressor (King & DeCicco, 2009). Concerning the conscious state expansion, diverse adaptive applications have exposed relationships through condensed physiological stress scales (Alexander et al., 1989). However, since there are minimal prior empirical studies that underpin the relationships among the factors of SQ and the dimensions of burnout, the hypotheses as to which specific SQ subscales affect the particular sizes of burnout persist as an open issue. Thus it is hypothesized that H2: There is a negative relationship between SQ (critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness and conscious state expansion) and Burnout.

2.3 Association between SQ and EQ

Based on the researchers’ knowledge, there are scarce empirical studies investigating the correlation between SQ and EQ. Conversely, theoretical propositions have pointed out SQ as a core ability, a general aspect that penetrates and guides other capabilities (Ling et al., 2020; Nayyar et al., 2019; Vasconcelos, 2020). Specifically, several researchers have asserted that SQ impacts EQ (Hosseini et al., 2010; Kaur et al., 2013; Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Since there are no former empirical studies that support the relationships between SQ and EQ dimensions, the hypotheses as to which particular SQ subscales impact EQ specific dimensions persist as an open question. The third proposed hypothesis is H3: There is a positive relationship between SQ and EQ dimensions.

2.4 Association between EQ and Emotional Labour (EL)

Following Wong and Law’s (2002) theoretical framework, high EQ personnel should be competent to be efficiently involved in emotion regulation to reassure organizational display guidelines with higher simplicity and efficiency. Personnel excellent on the first two dimensions will be more conscious of their emotions and those of their clients or stakeholders. Subsequently, they will recognize the demand to be involved in EL to fulfil display rules and provide a joyful service experience for the client or stakeholder. Cote (2005) specified some preliminary outcomes that sustain the correlation between EQ and deep acting. He described that people with high EQ expect to participate in deep acting throughout interpersonal communications. The EL approaches also are hypothesized to have a discrepancy impact on people’s performance and well-being. EQ permits a person to properly suit the approach to the setting (Bayighomog & Arasli, 2022). Therefore, the proposed study anticipates treasuring significant correlations between EQ and EL. Thus, the hypothesis is H4: There is a positive relationship between EQ dimensions and EL (deep and surface actings).

2.5 Relationship between SQ and EL

Grandey (2000) indicated that individual differences and emotional expressivity influence whether people need to engage in active emotion regulation or not. Other researchers found how a person usually feels connected regardless of whether they imitate their emotions at

work, but not whether they openly adjust their moods (e.g., Cottingham, 2022; Hwang & Park, 2022). Skrzypińska (2021) inferred that individuals with high SQ experience positive emotions more frequently; consequently, they may have fewer requirements to do surface acting and may likely exhibit their instinctively perceived emotions, i.e., deep acting. On the contrary, individuals high in neuroticism encounter negative emotions more frequently, so they may be more likely to adopt surface acting and less likely to exhibit instinctively experienced emotions. Thus, the following hypothesis proposed H5: There is a positive relationship between SQ and EL dimensions.

2.6 Association between EL and Burnout (BO)

A study by Wharton (1999) has revealed that emotional labour does locate personnel at better risk of burnout and contributes to negative connotations beneath some conditions. Ha, Jae-Hwan and Ha (2021) demonstrated that surface acting more strongly influences burnout than deep acting. Silbaugh, Barker, and Arghode (2021) discovered that surface acting was positively correlated to burnout, while deep acting exposed nearly a negative correlation in an experience research sampling of school principals. Literature on emotional labour signifies that surface acting is, to a greater extent, probable to have negative impacts, for instance, depersonalization and emotional exhaustion, while deep acting appears to be related to positive consequences, for example, personal accomplishment and affective well-being (Adams & Mastracci, 2020; Jeung & Chang, 2021; Lartey et al., 2020). Besides, research on several types of human support service professionals (e.g., promoters, frontline customer service, flight attendants, teachers, medical staff, security force etc.) has established diverse findings on emotional labour approaches (i.e., deep acting and surface acting) with burnout (Bodenheimer & Shuster, 2020). Therefore, hypothesized as follows H6: There is a positive relationship between EL dimensions and BO.

2.7 Mediating Effect of EL

Research supports a negative association between feelings of burnout and EQ since individuals with higher EQ are better at regulating emotions and adapting to complex social interactions (Silbaugh et al., 2021; Sanchez-Gomez & Bresó, 2020). Specifically, emotionally intelligent individuals better modify their feelings to avoid detachment, prevent depersonalization, and find rewards from stressful situations (Obeid et al., 2020; Fteiha & Awwad, 2020). The modification of feelings to avoid the symptoms of burnout is the deep acting component of EL (Hochschild, 2003). Research supported that deep acting has a positive association with professional efficacy, a negative association with cynicism, and not emotional exhaustion (Brotheridge, 2006a; 2006b; Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Hochschild, 2003). However, surface acting is positively associated with all feelings of Burnout (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Hochschild, 2003). The type of EL performed impacts the degree of burnout experienced. Studies indicate that EQ influences the kind of EL utilized (Brotheridge, 2006a; 2006b; Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002, Hochschild, 2003). Therefore, it is vital to determine if the type of EL performed mediates the negative association between EQ and the degree of burnout experienced among HR professionals. Specifically, those individuals with high EQ typically perform deep acting, which results in a lesser degree of experienced burnout. In contrast, individuals with lower EQ typically perform surface acting, which results in a higher degree of experience of burnout.

SQ connects to the set of abilities that use shared principles and instincts to comprehend people and their sphere (Arnout, 2020; Vaughan, 2002). There are shreds of evidence that coping mechanisms may buffer EL values (Lartey et al., 2020). Jung and Yoon (2016), thus, propositioning SQ is not misperceiving for service professionals. SQ has pertained to the work atmosphere to motivate personnel's dedication and engagement (Sani & Ekowati, 2019; Osman-Gani & Hassan, 2018) and offers an irreligious setting to tackle organization related issues (Vasconcelos, 2020). SQ is competent in dragging personnel through self-esteem, aching and distress related to job commitment (Ogunsola, 2018). In this manner, it can bring to a minimum or certainly not emotion-related values. In other ways, some dimensions of SQ, once incorporated into labour activity, may significantly profit personnel in terms of emotional strength, personal well-being, innovation, and organizational harmony (Fontaine, 2018; Ogunsola, 2018; Osman-Gani & Hassan, 2018). These gains are all essential values and distinguished vital for human growth. Holding that argument in viewpoint, (Emmons, 2000a) theorizes that SQ has been "associated with a wide variety of success in living (real) life such as physical health, psychological well-being, marital satisfaction and stability." Therefore, it can work an improved function in directing service personnel's thinking, ethics, innovations, emotions, and pro-social manners. Thus the following is hypothesized, H7: EL dimensions mediate the relationship between EQ and BO. And H8: EL dimensions mediate the relationship between SQ and BO

3. Methodology

Research hypotheses and future research directions using the HR professionals as a sample set proposed with an extensive review of EQ, SQ, EL and burnout works of literature. The frame of acquaintance in this field is comprehensive, yet concepts are fragmented and still evolving to address multifaceted areas. This paper guides future empirical research methods in business and non-business conditions. This study seeks to build on previous organizational behaviour research from pragmatic findings. The following validated and reliable instruments help execute the proposed research: 1) Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (Kristensen, Borritz, Villadsen, & Christensen, 2005); 2) Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (Wong & Law, 2002); 3) Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (King, 2008) and 4) Emotional labour scale (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003). The specific dimensions highlighted in the hypothesis was derived from the measurement variables of these instruments.

4. Conclusion

Emotional intelligence has important implications for HR professionals' quality of work. Literature has pointed out that EQ may positively influence burnout among employees, including HR professionals. Scholars put forward that people with high EQ also have a better understanding of their own and feelings of people around them, understand how to control themselves and people efficiently, and respond to job demands effectively. A negative correlation exists between EQ and burnout syndrome. In addition, EQ may influence emotional labour through the surface and deep acting. Some empirical findings and theories support this linkage between EQ and emotional labour. On the other hand, spirituality has been linked to the inner strength of the individuals and influences their work behaviours. The

relationship between spiritual intelligence (SQ) and emotional labour and burnout is still not established.

Nevertheless, it is anecdotal that SQ may influence the burnout of HR Professionals. In addition, SQ may affect emotional labour. Literature has provided empirical evidence for the mediating role of emotional labour between the work environment and organizational outcomes such as burnout. Emotional labour also has the potential to mediate the relationship between individual characteristics and organizational outcomes. However, there is a lack of empirical support for the mediating role of emotional labour between individual differences, especially SQ and burnout. Emotional contagion theory serves as the underpinning theory for the proposed research. Figure 1 shows the graphic representations of the relationship between EQ and SQ and Burnout (BO), with the mediating effect of emotional labour. Satisfied HR professionals can control their burnout, and perhaps that is the foundation of significant achievement for the organization during the post-Covid-19 pandemic. However, empirical research is needed to generalize the strength of the previous research and theoretical points.

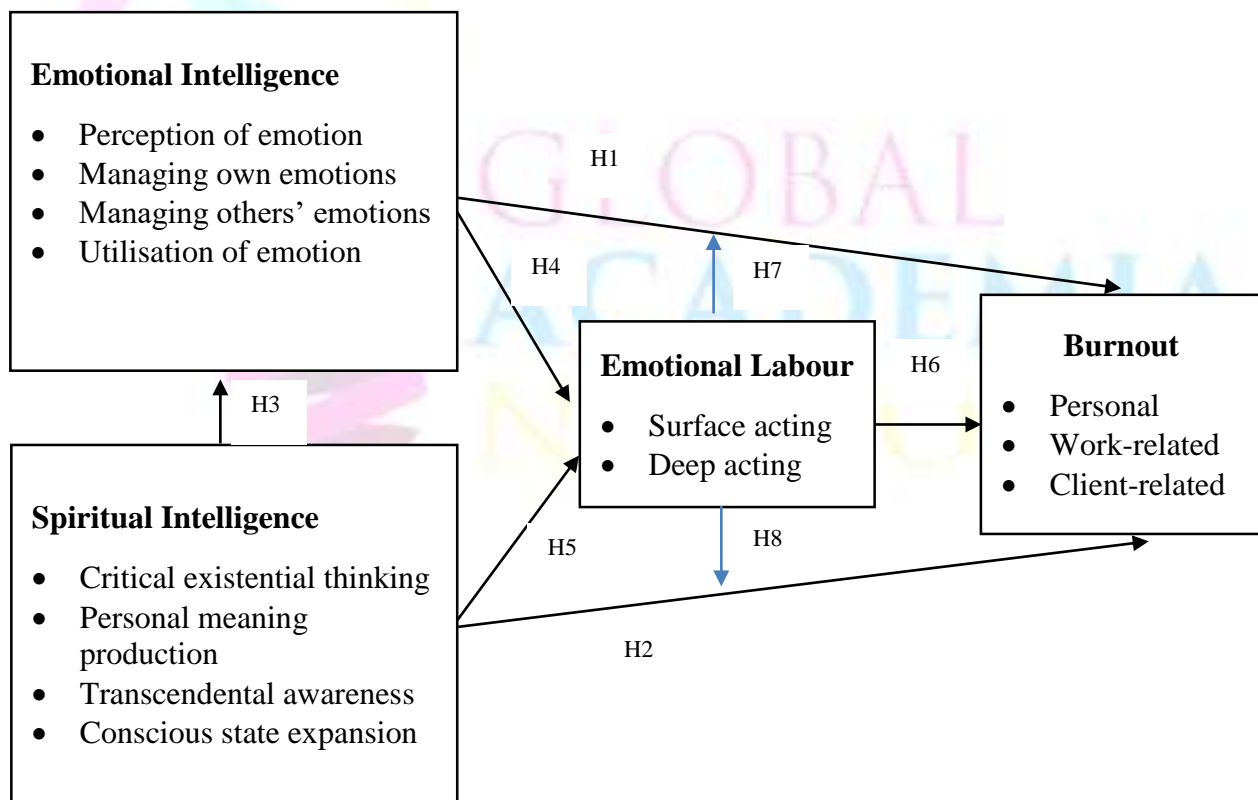


Figure 1: Summarised Research Framework

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