

BURNOUT IN THE ERA OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS

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Abstract

Burnout is an occupational phenomenon that can develop as a result of high job demands and insufficient access to necessary resources, affecting employees' mental health and well-being at work, as well as the organization as a whole. This study adopts a qualitative research design and a document analysis method, aiming to gain a deeper understanding of the factors underlying burnout, as well as to highlight the impact of artificial intelligence on work-life balance with the goal of strengthening the existing information framework on the topic. The analysis revealed that the factors leading to burnout are both organizational, such as high workload, role ambiguity, role conflicts, time pressure, high emotional demands, tension between professional and personal responsibilities, lack of social support and limited autonomy and individual, including personality traits and coping strategies. Among the consequences regarding burnout in the workplace, notable is decreased productivity, lack of creativity, diminished service quality, absenteeism, staff turnover, conflicts or a negative organizational climate, as well as physical, emotional, interpersonal, attitudinal and behavioral individual effects. Furthermore, artificial intelligence can have a negative influence on employee well-being leading to anxiety about job loss, fear of not having the necessary skills, automation and intensification of tasks, social isolation or competition between humans and machines, leading to burnout. Alternatively, it can have a positive impact on personal and professional quality of life by providing support on employee well-being with an assortment of practical tools and innovative solutions.

Keywords: occupational burnout, mental exhaustion, occupational stress, mental health in the workplace, artificial intelligence impact.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's social context, burnout represents one of the most notable psychological and social risks, generating considerable costs for both individuals and organizations and affecting not just one occupational branch, but all professional categories and sectors of activity (Saud & Rice, 2024).

The World Health Organization (2019) has defined burnout as a syndrome and occupational phenomenon caused by prolonged exposure to stress in the workplace. It is characterized by emotional

exhaustion, depersonalization and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment (Omose & Ikuyinminu, 2024).

Emotional exhaustion is the main dimension of burnout and is characterized by decreased energy levels and depleted emotional resources which affects the ability of a person to adapt successfully to the work environment, often resulting in depersonalization or cynicism, which can manifest as detachment and indifference toward work or emotional numbness (Maslach, et al., 2001). Exhaustion occurs when employees no longer have the emotional resources needed to cope with stress and begin to withdraw or distance themselves (Marian, et al., 2011).

Emotional exhaustion leads to frustration and tension among employees who feel unable to fully devote themselves to their work and attend to clients's needs, while depersonalization manifests itself through emotional detachment and the adoption of a cold or cynical attitude toward colleagues, clients and the organization, particularly through the use of derogatory or abstract language in the workplace, analytical over-intellectualization of situations, avoidance of interactions with colleagues in the workplace or with the people benefiting from the services provided and frequent use of field-specific jargon (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993).

Lastly, the reduced sense of personal accomplishment or ineffectiveness reflects a reduced self-worth, accompanied by a decrease in productivity and resilience, a lack of confidence and a doubt regarding the capacity of performing the tasks effectively, which ultimately prevents meeting the job's demands (Saririk, et al., 2019; Salvagioni, et al., 2017, Edú-Valsania, et al., 2022).

Burnout often occurs as a consequence of intense job demands, such as high workload, role ambiguity, role conflicts, emotional load, time pressure, tension between professional and personal responsibilities, interpersonal interactions, information technology and heightened demands imposed by oneself and the organization, which gradually lead to exhaustion and the development of detached attitudes toward work (Saririk, et al., 2019; Bakker & Vries, 2021). A deficiency in job resources, whether physical, psychological, social or organizational can also contribute to burnout, particularly when individuals feel that they are depleted or cannot be restored (Bonfanti, et al., 2025). The lack of access to certain resources can lead to behavioral and attitudinal changes, such as the development of alternative coping strategies, the decision to leave the job, reduced sense of commitment to the organization and job engagement as well as lower job satisfaction (Marian, et al., 2011). When job demands exceed existing resources, fatigue sets in and over time this imbalance ultimately leads to burnout (Edú-Valsania, et al., 2022).

The factors that lead to burnout can be: organizational like workload, emotional pressure, lack of social support or individual as personality traits and stress coping strategies (Saud & Rice, 2024). The

individual factors involved in the onset of burnout have been less studied than organizational factors. Personality and psychometric characteristics play a crucial role among the individual factors with evidence demonstrating a significant association between personality traits and burnout, however, burnout is not determined by a particular personality trait, but rather by a series of personality traits that can either protect or increase an individual's vulnerability to burnout under the influence of key organizational factors (Narang, et al., 2022).

Burnout not only affects employees' well-being in the workplace, but also impacts organizations through a lot of factors: reduced productivity, lack of creativity, a decline in service quality, absenteeism, staff turnover, prolonged medical leave, conflicts, work accidents or errors and a negative work environment (Bakker, et al., 2023; Awashreh & Ghunaimi, 2024). Furthermore, burnout poses a significant risk to mental health with serious negative implications, leading to depression, anxiety disorders, substance dependence and suicidal behaviors (Liu, et al., 2023). Other psychological effects are problems with staying focused and retaining information, struggles with decision making, reduced resilience, life dissatisfaction, low self-worth and heightened irritability (Salvagioni, et al., 2017).

On the other hand, burnout has physical consequences, given that it has the potential to elevate the risk of developing various illnesses. Among these, cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, musculoskeletal disorders, sleep disorders, headaches, respiratory as well as digestive system conditions could be mentioned. In some cases, even death has been recorded (Ahola, 2007; Ahola et al., 2010; Kim, et al., 2011). In this context, burnout may generate a series of complex and interrelated effects, notably including physical effects (fatigue, sleep disorders, headaches), emotional effects (depression, sensitivity), interpersonal effects (isolation from friends, reduced social interactions), attitudinal (low organizational commitment, low job satisfaction) and behavioral effects (smoking, substance use) (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993).

In conclusion, burnout can be systematically categorized into four clearly defined stages (Guitart, 2007):

- Mild, which is an early stage where affected individuals are prone to experiencing minor or inconspicuous symptoms, such as headaches or back pain, moderate fatigue and lower productivity at work;
- Moderate, which is an intermediate stage where sleep disturbances and difficulties in staying focused become evident. At this stage, emotional detachment, exhaustion, cynicism, demotivation and irritability have been observed, frequently observed in conjunction with feelings of frustration, inadequacy, guilt and low self-esteem;

- Severe, which represents an advanced stage, including frequent absenteeism, avoidance of professional responsibilities, depersonalization and on certain occasions the use of substances or psychotropic medications;
- Critical, which constitutes an extreme stage characterized by pronounced isolation, aggressive behaviors, chronic depression and even suicidal behaviors.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The phenomenon of burnout in public sector organizations has gained increasing attention in the fields of organizational psychology and management, leading to numerous studies exploring its causes, consequences and management strategies. The most affected sectors are healthcare, educations and social services, as employees in these areas experience higher levels of emotional exhaustion compared to those in the private sector, due to the complexity of their roles (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993).

Burnout in public sector organizations is driven by heavy workload, high professional demands, constant pressure to deliver services within a restrictive financial framework, bureaucratic structures that create unclear roles and limit autonomy and rigidity that hinders innovation and fosters a sense of stagnation and lack of freedom in the workplace (Awashreh & Ghunaimi, 2024). A study conducted by Tove Gustafsson and Jessica Hemberg in 2022 which looked at the empathic exhaustion experienced by nurses in Finland showed that the excessive emotional demands resulting from constant exposure to others' suffering and intense empathetic engagement lead to compassion fatigue which is a major factor that contributes to burnout. This finding is also supported by Tsipouri et al. (2024) who highlighted that nurses and other healthcare professionals are emotionally challenged by their work as they are required to adopt an empathetic attitude in difficult and stressful work contexts. The depersonalization dimension of burnout may cause employees to adopt a detached attitude toward the community they serve, and treat its members without empathy, however, neglecting their own needs in order to meet the demands of those they serve leads to a high degree of exhaustion generated by heavy workload and lack of attention to personal well-being (Wright, Hassan, & Baluran, 2025).

Public sector employees are exposed to multiple sources of stress, such as political pressures, citizens's expectations, varied responsibilities, lack of resources and bureaucracy while pressures are further amplified by the need to cut costs, demographic changes and the demand for high-quality services, which requires public organizations, like private ones, to adopt procedural and structural adjustments (Kotzé, 2022).

At the same time, many employees find it difficult to manage both work demands and personal commitments, especially when faced with heavy workload (Awashreh and Ghunaimi, 2024). Therefore, burnout can also extend to an individual's personal life, leading to increased conflicts, detachment from family and challenges maintaining social relationships (Saud & Rice, 2024). Balancing high work demands with personal commitments can become challenging for individuals exposed to the stress of meeting these demands over the long term, which can lead to frustration and the decision to leave the job, as it no longer offers a sense of professional fulfillment (Bonfanti, et al., 2025).

From a practical standpoint, organizations ought to adopt workplace stress reduction strategies to prevent burnout, such as implementing stress management programs, mindfulness training, equitable distribution of tasks, reorganization of responsibilities and alignment of tasks with employees' competencies, setting clear goals and achievable deadlines, ensuring adequate resources, fostering open communication and collaboration through team-building initiatives and developing well-being programs which can include regular medical assessments, psychological support, flexible work policies and stress management training (Saud & Rice, 2024). Although organizational support can help prevent burnout, it's also important to consider the individual's internal resources. Therefore, the development of self-leadership skills and awareness through mindfulness can have a significant impact on employees' perception of the work environment and can enhance their ability of handling work demands (Kotzé, 2022).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design aimed at gaining a deeper insight into the factors underlying the emergence of burnout, as well as the impact that artificial intelligence generates on work-life balance. In order to elaborate this research, the document analysis method was preferred, which involves examining and interpreting written materials, both in digital versions and physical forms. The goal of the present study is to bring to light relevant aspects as well as to enrich the information available on the subject under investigation.

This method plays a crucial role in qualitative research, as it allows the researcher to carefully select the most suitable sources to provide evidence for the research (IET, 2024). Furthermore, the insights that have been gathered from these documents are incredibly valuable for researchers because they provide necessary context for the present analysis, providing complementary perspectives, while helping to verify findings derived from other scientific sources.

In this context, our work aims to delve deeply into the following lines of analysis:

- identifying the main factors leading to the occurrence of burnout in organizations;

- highlighting the consequences of burnout on the professional environment;
- analyzing the challenges of artificial intelligence in relation to employee well-being and the risk of burnout
- highlighting the positive impact of artificial intelligence on personal and professional quality of life

4. CHALLENGES OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR EMPLOYEES WELL-BEING AND BURNOUT RISK

Artificial Intelligence is part of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and marks the transition to the Algorithmic Age (Chuang, et al., 2025). On the other hand, AI is often perceived as a “black box” that cannot be fully understood, raising concerns about its potential to replace humans as well as its capacity to exceed humans’ ability to control and supervise it (Kaaria, 2024).

Some of the key challenges organizations currently face are the process of task automation, employee replacement, the elimination of certain roles, the reorganization of skills and the requirement for employees to develop new capabilities (Didem and Anke, 2021; Nazareno and Schiff, 2021; Peters, 2017).

The development of Artificial Intelligence is seen as a risk factor for job security, affecting employee well-being. The main factors that gradually lead to burnout and make employees reluctant to embrace technological change are anxiety about losing the job due to the integration of AI-based technologies, fear of lacking the necessary skills to meet future demands and challenges and the need to constantly adapt and improve as a result of rapid and continuous technological advancement (Kaaria, 2024). Employees who lack the necessary digital skills may encounter obstacles in using AI-based systems, leading to dissatisfaction, a sense of isolation and incompetence, having a negative impact on both employee well-being and their work efficiency (Zheng, et al., 2025).

Employees who perceive technological progress as a threat to their jobs tend to exhibit higher levels of depression, cynicism and anxiety (Johnson, et al., 2020). Therefore, Artificial Intelligence can intensify burnout through changes in job roles and requirements, but also by destabilizing work routines (Kim & Lee, 2024).

Amid the continuous and rapid development of Artificial Intelligence, its introduction across various sectors of activity is an unavoidable aspect (Li, et al., 2025). While these changes bring benefits to organizations, the impact of AI on employee well-being should not be ignored (Tiwari, et al., 2024).

The process of digitalization and automation can lead to the creation of healthy jobs only if it's geared towards people's needs and this is possible if employees have control over the technologies they use

and when organizations make efforts to provide adequate working conditions, such as managerial support, opportunities for continuous training, constant attention to employees' health at all hierarchical levels and the development of an organizational culture that values employees' well-being and acknowledges that digital technology has also a negative impact on the health and well-being of employees (Håkansta, et al., 2025).

Techno-stress would represent the main effect of implementing Artificial Intelligence in the public sector, arising not only from the challenge of adapting to new technologies and the rapid pace of technological change, but also from the feeling that humans are beginning to compete with machines which can generate fear among civil servants that their work may be inferior to that performed by technology considering that people need rest and follow a certain schedule while machines operate continuously, without interruption (Crisci, 2025). This will, therefore, lead to an imbalance between professional and personal life, as employees strive to maintain their own relevance in the workplace (Manzella & Tiraboschi, 2021).

Automation and intensification of tasks in the workplace increase the pressure felt by employees, leading to techno-stress and a reduction in decision-making autonomy, especially for those who interact with citizens and lack the time needed to provide adequate support to beneficiaries (Håkansta, et al., 2025).

The social isolation resulting from limited direct human interaction in the workplace, combined with the lack of support by AI, which lacks emotional intelligence and empathy and is unable to provide support in difficult times has far-reaching consequences for employees' professional and personal lives. Furthermore, the fatigue caused by constant, impersonal interaction with AI which imposes strict compliance with its requirements and protocols, profoundly affects employees who feel isolated, unsupported and mentally and physically exhausted (Zheng, et al., 2025).

To ensure the successful implementation of Artificial Intelligence, organizations should address ethical issues such as transparency and fairness. Moreover, they should also ensure that employees have access to continuous training in order to strengthen their skills, prioritize their needs and ensure the protection of their well-being and mental health (Soulami, et al., 2024).

Maintaining data confidentiality, transparent communication as well as allowing employees to manage how technologies operate represents fundamental elements contributing to the increase of the acceptance of Artificial Intelligence in the workplace (Fukumura, et al., 2021). Consequently, continuously monitoring employees' opinions and attitudes toward the adopted Artificial Intelligence technologies is essential to determine whether their autonomy and sense of usefulness at work are affected (Kinowska and Sienkiewicz, 2020).

5. POSITIVE IMPACTS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON THE QUALITY OF PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

Although it poses numerous threats, artificial intelligence can support employees' well-being and mental health by monitoring it, using real-time analysis of mood, stress levels and fatigue with personalized feedback provided, as well as through the use of chatbots and mobile applications that can provide emotional support and counseling to help employees manage stressful situations effectively and by developing wellness programs tailored to the needs of each employee (García-Madurga, et al., 2024). Artificial Intelligence can be used to develop personalized wellness programs tailored to each employee's needs, while mobile applications and wearable devices can collect mental health data in a customized manner, facilitating the creation of more effective and personalized workplace wellness programs (Rodriguez, et al., 2018).

Technology has transformed the way organizations address employee well-being using advanced tools such as Slack, Zoom or Asana which enable workload analysis and efficient activity planning while facilitating interaction and communication between employees in remote work settings or AI-based chatbots that monitor stress levels and provide context-specific support for each employee, offering personalized responses and various techniques, such as time management or mindfulness practices, that take into account the factors contributing to burnout (Harsha and Natraj, 2024). Loureiro et al. (2023) showed that employees who manage mental or emotional stress effectively through interaction with Artificial Intelligence tend to be happier, more engaged and more likely to remain with the organization.

Artificial Intelligence is increasingly being used for the early identification of mental health issues, identifying risk indicators for conditions such as depression, anxiety or bipolar disorder by analyzing genetic, behavioral, environmental and social data, creating individual risk profiles reviewed by specialists who can offer educational recommendations, treatments or lifestyle adjustments while machine learning algorithms can detect unusual patterns and variations in speech, emotional tone used in messages or daily activities, thus anticipating mental health issues before they worsen (Jangid, 2024).

Wearable devices and IoT sensors allow for continuous tracking of employees' health and well-being, including their activity, sleep habits and stress levels, providing data that can be used to monitor overall wellness, develop tailored wellness programs, identify harmful behavioral patterns and habits and pinpoint potential health risk factors (Gorovei, 2020). Artificial Intelligence can also be used to monitor and assess workplace risks that may have a negative impact on employees's mental health and well-being, for example, for conditions such as lung or skin cancer, diabetic retinopathy and cardiovascular

disease as well as mobile applications that are capable of detecting stressful situations and harmful behavioral patterns affecting mental health (Howard, 2019; Rodriguez, et al., 2018). Therefore, Artificial Intelligence can track mental health risk factors and provide tailored recommendations designed to help employees adopt preventive behaviors (García-Madurga, et al., 2024).

Artificial Intelligence can also support employees in developing mental health and well-being skills through training and development programs that can use Virtual Reality for an immersive and dynamic experience that simulates dangerous situations and improve employees' ability to recognize the risks they may face while organizational leaders bear the responsibility to acquire knowledge about AI and understand how to use it effectively (Chang, 2020).

Finally, organizations implementing AI-based solutions must consider ethical issues such as data privacy, data security and algorithmic bias in order to support employee well-being, as the successful integration of these AI-based technologies can increase employee satisfaction, reduce staff turnover, improve organizational performance and employee engagement, thereby promoting long-term success (García-Madurga, et al., 2024).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The core contribution of this study focuses on analyzing the organizational and individual factors leading to burnout as well as the impact of artificial intelligence on employee well-being and their professional and personal life. The research shows that artificial intelligence could have both beneficial and negative consequences for the employees in the workplace. From one viewpoint, AI implementation could give rise to considerable difficulties for employee well-being while increasing the risk of burnout. This situation arises from various factors including task automation, employee replacement, the elimination of certain roles, heightened work demands, constant monitoring as well as blurred boundaries between professional and personal life. From another perspective, AI could positively influence the quality of both personal and professional life of employees. In this regard, it could provide continuous monitoring of employees' health, with real-time analysis of stress and fatigue levels. Although AI generates task automation and implicitly reduces the number of employees, it could also contribute to simplifying the workload of employees by automating routine tasks while providing employees with tools and resources that support decision-making and reduce stress. These findings highlight the importance of AI implementation within organizations while pointing out that technological advancement contributes to employee health and engagement and reduces potential negative consequences.

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