

The Burnout of Leaders

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Abstract

The study of leadership-related problems is gaining traction. Furthermore, a number of researchers have focused their study and inquiry into organizations on health-related concerns in general, and particularly the issue of burnout. Burnout is a condition that occurs at the confluence of exhaustion and overwhelm. As a leader, one could be even more susceptible to it. We live and work in a fast-paced society that pushes us to be busy. Organizations are under-resourced, forcing them to accomplish more with fewer resources. Our personal and professional aspirations are greater. While we are rising to the occasion in certain ways, it comes at a substantial cost to our health. Overwhelm is a common, long-term condition that becomes unsustainable over time. We get exhausted, weary, and burned out. Since it is possible to avoid burnout, it is vital to provide reliable and effective advice on how to minimize or avoid burnout, overwhelm, and stress. Lastly, human resource interventions are necessary to deal with the detrimental repercussions of specific leadership styles on organizations.

The Burnout of Leaders

Burnout is described as being subjected to activities that negatively influence performance and mostly relates to prolonged stress as a factor connected to a person's success. The primary goal of this research is to describe the relationship between leadership styles and burnout among leaders. To determine which style of leadership is most prone to burnout effects, research will explore laissez-faire, transactional, and transformational leadership styles. As a result, organizations may use the findings to help in the development, selection, and recruitment of effective leaders.

Literature Review Analysis

This section gives an overview of the study, starting with the concept of burnout. It then reviews the major leadership constructs, such as laissez-faire, transactional, and transformational styles, which are regarded as the new paradigm for understanding the echelons of management. Finally, it explores the relationship between emotion regulation and burnout.

Burnout

Burnout is a phenomenon characterized by professional accomplishment, depersonalization, and emotional weariness that has negative consequences for both the organization and the individual leader. The subject has piqued the interest of academics who have looked at it from a range of viewpoints. First, emotional exhaustion is a component of burnout caused by a lack of adequate stress coping strategies, excessive interpersonal interactions, unrealistic personal expectations, role conflict, and work overload. Second, depersonalization is a dimension of burnout that is caused by excessive workload, excessive interpersonal engagement, workplace stress, and the nature of professional tasks, such as addressing customer grievances or other difficult circumstances. Lastly, diminished personal

accomplishment is a dimension of burnout linked to the provision of pseudo-authority, feelings of incompetence and inadequacy, and lack of positive feedback and acknowledgment. According to Leary et al. (2013), low personal achievement is initiated by poor management quality and unrealistic work expectations, whereas others claim that it is due to feelings of being undervalued due to disparity between organizational rewards and employee contributions and limited opportunities to take part in decision-making.

Arnold et al. (2015) stated that a healthy organizational climate helps decrease burnout, whereas Leary et al. (2013) found a link between emotional exhaustion and work performance, resulting in an unhealthy work environment. This manifests itself in the form of lower levels of productivity, unprofessionalism, low morale, poor attitudes, distress, and conflict, which increases the likelihood of employee turnover, resulting in increased medical coverage and high financial costs. The overall impact is a reduction in corporate civic behavior, as well as an inability to exceed or meet or customer expectations and a reduction in customer service. Nonetheless, burnout and stress may be reduced by “hardiness training.” Where avoidance/passive leadership implies a detached leadership style, people who adopt this style are more likely to experience burnout signs, especially if they possess lower hardiness scores.

Leadership

Leadership is among the most studied aspects of organizational studies, but it is also one of the most misunderstood. Much of the studies have focused on leader’s characteristics by analyzing the relationship between different measures of leadership effectiveness and leadership behavior (Exantus, 2012). A hierarchical taxonomy may be used to identify behavior categories that are meaningful and relevant. To accomplish so, one may look into different leadership behavior measures, such as the multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ), which offers

indications for the component behavior's construct validity being examined. This work highlights behaviors that might be useful in effective leadership. In response to MLQ criticisms, Arnold et al. (2015) assert that the instrument may be used to develop a more comprehensive leadership understanding. They give support for the MLQ construct validity, implying that some of the previously contradictory results might be attributable in part to the use of diverse samples to assess the instrument's construct validity. The suggestion is that looking into similar types of organizations and situations should improve the MLQ's validity.

The MLQ measures laissez-faire (avoidance/passive), transactional, and transformational leadership styles, and where researchers have asserted that although transactional and transformational leaders proactively intervene to solve issues, transactional leaders are less effective than transformational leaders. Arnold et al. (2015) propose that changes should be made to the MLQ before examining leadership among various cultures and groups. Transactional leadership theories are based on the premise that leader-follower relationships are built on a series of transactions or implicit deals between followers and leaders. Essentially, it is a quid pro quo relationship in which the leader defines what needs to be addressed and then rewards those who accomplish the task. To attain corporate goals, transformational leadership theories emphasize a shared goal between followers and leaders. Strong personal connection with the leader, participating in a shared sense of purpose, or moving beyond the self-interested exchange of rewards for obedience are all characteristics of transformational leadership (Covelli & Mason, 2017). As a result, transformational leaders strive to address their followers' emotional drives to accomplish goals.

Arnold et al. (2015) state that transformational leadership protects leaders from depersonalization. Their research reveals that depersonalization is avoided, and personal success

is enhanced, thanks to active management-by-exception. Passive laissez-faire leadership causes emotional exhaustion while also lowering job performance. For instance, the limited studies done in the hospitality industry promote the notion that transformational leaders have a beneficial impact on subordinate commitment and performance. This is accomplished since the leader can clearly state and explain the role of the follower in achieving the goal. As opposed to transformational and transactional leaders, those who employ the laissez-faire approach often avoid making decisions, and are therefore reactive instead of proactive leaders. It is described as “the leadership construct's antithesis.”

Emotion regulation and burnout

Burnout is a stress-related condition characterized by diminished emotions of personal success, depersonalization (the treatment of individuals as objects), and emotional exhaustion. The kind of emotional response strategy that leaders utilize when dealing with their workers is frequently determined by their leadership style. Therefore, a leader's emotional response strategy has an impact on their risk of burnout. The three types of emotional response strategies are genuine emotion, deep acting, and surface acting. When a leader presents one feeling to employees while internally harboring a different emotion, this is known as surface acting. On the other hand, deep acting refers to a leader's ability to control their emotions to meet the demands of a circumstance. Genuine emotion is an external manifestation of a leader's natural reaction to a circumstance.

Genuine emotion and deep acting are frequently used by transformational leaders. Employees frequently perceive these leaders as sincere. Deep acting is also used by transactional leaders, although they are more inclined to utilize surface acting as well. Surface acting is less emotionally taxing. As a result, transactional leaders may be perceived as superficial, causing

their subordinates to distrust their leadership and become disengaged. Genuine emotion is more likely to be used by laissez-faire leaders. The least emotionally taxing response is genuine emotion. This type of leader avoids problem-solving and engaging in mental work. Such leaders are detrimental to the organization and the workforce. Genuine emotion is the most probable response strategy to cause burnout. Consequently, laissez-faire and transformational leaders are the ones who are most prone to burnout. Transactional leaders are less susceptible to burnout because they use more surface acting.

As per COR theory, burnout happens when a person has limited resources for an extended period, causing other resources to also become compromised. Through the employment of this emotion regulation strategy, leadership styles that suggest surface acting may have an indirect link to burnout. Surface acting tends to deplete leader resources, resulting in resource loss spiraling out of control. According to a well-established discovery in the customer service emotion regulation study field, surface acting is connected to detrimental consequences related to individual well-being (Guan & Jepsen, 2020). Clarke (2019) found that surface acting is linked to lower work performance, depersonalization, and emotional exhaustion.

On the other hand, deep acting and genuine emotion are not as strongly connected to burnout or other markers of poor health. Deep acting has been linked to beneficial results, including improved work performance, although it is not always associated with psychological strain (Guan & Jepsen, 2020). Deep acting's beneficial effects may be counterbalanced by concurrent resource losses, making its impacts on strain and stress harder to identify. Based on existing evidence, genuine emotion's impacts may also be difficult to determine, and empirical study on the consequences of genuine emotion is scarce. While it would seem that a lack of emotional dissonance (suggested by genuine emotion) is a psychologically protective

component, genuine emotion has been reported to be a predictor of emotional exhaustion in one study (Clarke, 2019). As a result, while further assessments enabled the investigation of indirect impacts of leadership on burnout through genuine emotion and deep acting, the conflicting evidence made it difficult to propose specific hypotheses concerning the indirect impacts of leadership approaches on burnout through genuine emotion and deep acting.

Discussion

After establishing the background within the literature review, the next section describes the link between burnout and leaders that employ laissez-faire (avoidance/passive), transformational, or transactional leadership styles. Moreover, the section explores the impact of emotion regulation employed by leaders on burnout.

Leadership and Burnout

The section details the findings of an exploratory study conducted on the link between leadership styles and burnout among leaders. To determine if laissez-faire (avoidance/passive), transactional, and transformational leaders are susceptible to burnout, the results indicate that transformational leadership has a significant positive correlation with personal achievement and is negatively correlated with depersonalization and emotional exhaustion. Personal success has a strong positive correlation with transactional leadership, whereas depersonalization and emotional exhaustion have a negative but weak correlation. Furthermore, laissez-faire leadership is positively correlated with depersonalization and emotional exhaustion. A laissez-faire leadership style means that the leader is not engaged in the leadership task, and thus displays burnout symptoms. Additionally, these study results support previous research in this field by Usman et al. (2020), who found that where laissez-faire leadership implies a detached leadership

style, leaders who adopt this style are more likely to experience burnout symptoms, especially if they have relatively low hardiness scores.

Leaders that demonstrate transformational leadership qualities are prone to be not just more productive in their leadership roles, but also less likely to burn out than their counterparts who demonstrate laissez-faire leadership traits. Additionally, not only are the latter at risk of burnout, but they are also a destructive influence for their subordinates who look to their leader for guidance and inspiration but do not receive it. It is recommended that leaders use the findings from a range of viewpoints. To begin with, research indicates that transformational leaders are more efficient. As a result, organizations and businesses may update their leadership promotion, selection, and recruitment strategies by incorporating structured psychometric approaches into the hiring process. This will aid in identifying and nurturing persons who have transformational leadership qualities. Further, introducing hardiness training for these leaders might have significant advantages for both the institution and leader, by reducing burnout and increasing morale, conduct, performance, and resistance to high-stress situations. According to Zopiatis & Constanti (2010), burnout may serve as a learning experience for leaders. They explain that burnout is an important developmental occurrence that provides transformative insights for both organizations and leaders.

Ideally, it may be time to rethink burnout, focusing on the opportunities rather than the risks it brings to organizations and leaders. As per scholars such as Zopiatis & Constanti (2010), if it is not possible to completely eradicate burnout in the workplace, people could at least start to understand it better and thus use its impacts for development and learning, which will benefit both the organization and burnout victim's long-term viability. From a theoretical standpoint, it is clear that leaders who display characteristics associated with a transformational style are not only

less likely to burnout, but also more effective at managing personnel and increasing organizational performance. If organizations are to endure uncertainty and function sustainably, they should incorporate a platform for transformational leadership development and training, as well as developmental guidance for reducing the negative effects of burnout.

Emotion Regulation Strategies and Burnout

This research also explored the relationship between burnout, emotion regulation strategies, and leadership styles. The COR theory is used to hypothesize that the results linked with different leadership styles indicate a difference in capacity and motivation to utilize genuine emotion, deep acting, and surface acting expression as emotion management. In consequence, the aim was to see if surface acting depleted resources in connection to leadership styles. The role of surface acting in describing the indirect impacts of management by exception – passive, management by exception – active, and contingent reward styles on burnout was examined. The discovery is that transformational leadership is positively and significantly related to both genuine emotion and deep acting. Discovery was also made that contingent reward is positively related with both deep and surface acting substantially. Surface acting is more common among leaders who report greater degrees of management by exception – passive and active. Furthermore, leaders who acknowledge employing a laissez-faire approach are more likely to exhibit genuine emotion. Surface acting as a mediator of the impacts of management by exception – passive or active, contingent reward on burnout was not proven true. Nevertheless, genuine emotion serves as a mediator, with significant indirect impacts of laissez-faire and transformational leadership on burnout via genuine emotion.

This research empirically investigates the relationship between leadership styles and the employment of emotion regulation strategies. This is one of the study's key contributions, given

the recent interest in this issue. The research has a number of theoretical implications. To begin, it conforms with Hildenbrand et al. (2018) that transformational leadership is significantly linked to deep acting. These leaders are more likely to have a lot of resources, including positive performance and follower support, making them better suited to deep acting. Considering transformational leadership's emphasis on 'the good of the group,' it is possible that these leaders are aware of how their emotional displays influence followers, and so take the time and effort to match their emotions with the circumstance. Transformational leaders tend to be prepared to alter their sentiments to meet their followers' expectations.

The strong positive link discovered between genuine emotion and transformational leadership validates the theory that transformational leaders are also authentic leaders. Leaders that engage in more transformational leadership behaviors are also more likely to communicate their true feelings. Although researchers may argue that real emotion is linked to authenticity, no scientific evidence for this relationship was discovered. The current findings are beginning to corroborate this theoretical hypothesis. The research's findings, on the other hand, do not reveal when transformational leadership is linked to each type of emotional regulation.

Transformational leaders are devoted to establishing a positive working environment for their workers. Nonetheless, transformational leaders are also human and will experience emotions that are not always beneficial when expressed. To develop theory in this area, future research should examine this issue qualitatively.

Surface acting as an emotional regulation approach is used more frequently by leaders who utilize management by exception – passive and active. Increased surface acting is generally accompanied by elevated burnout levels. However, research findings indicate that surface acting may not be connected to burnout six months later. This conclusion may be at odds with prior

research, which has linked surface acting to negative work attitudes and decreased employee well-being (Johnson et al., 2017). Is this an indication that the research hypothesis needs to be revised, or are the facts peculiar? One possible reason for this result is that we assessed these variables across time, and the six-month time lag may be to blame. Surface acting's impacts may be short-lived. Another argument is that a great deal of research examining the impacts of surface acting involves employees who work in service roles. We focused on individuals who had managerial experience and responsibilities, and we examined their use of surface acting in their interactions with their subordinates. There may be something fundamentally unusual about this link that explains our findings. Although we cannot be certain, we conclude that this is a discovery that should be substantiated by future research that examines the type of connection as a moderator of the burnout – surface acting relationship.

Genuine emotion is commonly used as an emotion control method by leaders who acknowledge practicing laissez-faire leadership. We argue that this is due to a lack of resources and equipment to participate in either form of acting. They are the personification of a depleted leader (Usman et al., 2020). Genuine emotion seems to need less effort than either deep or surface acting, thus a leader who is not actively involved might employ this technique with ease. Research findings also indicate that expressing genuine emotion is a measure in minimizing leader burnout. Through genuine emotion, both laissez-faire and transformational leadership have a significant indirect influence on burnout. Since there was no prior empirical data to assert how these emotional regulation strategies would function, we did not hypothesize indirect correlations involving genuine emotion or deep acting. This discovery is intriguing because it supports the idea that genuine emotional expression requires less effort than deep or surface acting. Nevertheless, the rationales for these indirect burnout impacts are likely to be diverse. For

laissez-faire leaders, we suggest that it is a result of a lack of regard for employees and outcomes. For transformational leaders, we suggest that it is a result of the extra resources they have and their ability to utilize these techniques in an efficient balance that guarantees their own and their employees' well-being. These are also concerns that can only be answered through further investigation. The takeaway for individuals in leadership roles would be that, while both approaches are linked to burnout indirectly, transformational leadership is preferable owing to its numerous benefits.

Conclusion

To summarize, occupational health psychology is associated with enhancing the quality of peoples' lives at work, as well as safeguarding their well-being. The study of burnout, and its association with leadership styles and emotion regulation has been the focus of this research paper. Understanding the reasons and mechanisms relating work design and organizational variables to well-being in the workplace, as well as designing remedies to enhance work conditions and promote well-being, has also been achieved through this study. While most of this study has focused on how leaders end up experiencing burnout, recommendations provided such as embracing transformational leadership may have inspired leaders to develop and learn from their previous mistakes and avoid burnout.

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