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BURNOUT PHENOMENON: UNMASKING THE STRUGGLES OF EVENT AND MICE PROFESSIONAL

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ABSTRACT

Fatigue and burnout have long been recognized as pervasive issues across various occupations, including event management. This study aims to explore the concepts of fatigue and burnout specifically in the context of event professionals, examining their root causes, observable symptoms, and potential interventions for effective resolution. The paper endeavors to comprehensively review existing scholarly literature on this topic by thoroughly analyzing multiple studies that delve into these matters. The study results highlight the progressive nature of exhaustion as a precursor to burnout. It is evident that exhaustion can be triggered by specific incidents or prolonged work-related factors, leading to significant stress. Conversely, burnout manifests suddenly and negatively affects individuals' overall well-being and occupational effectiveness. The causes of fatigue and burnout in event professionals can be attributed to the demanding aspects of their work, including long hours, high-pressure environments, tight deadlines, and constant multitasking. In addition to these work-related factors, personal characteristics along with coping strategies also influence an individual's susceptibility to experiencing fatigue and burnout.

Keywords: Event and MICE professional, Burnout, Fatigue, Occupational Toughness, Burnout Prevention

INTRODUCTION

Fatigue and burnout are common concerns for professionals in various industries, regardless of their job responsibilities (Makasheva et al., 2016). Fatigue and burnout are distinct concepts, despite some similarities. Fatigue is characterized by both physical and mental exhaustion, leading to decreased focus and performance levels (Özel & Hacioglu, 2021). This can occur from lack of rest and insufficient recovery time. Burnout is a condition marked by sustained physical and mental exhaustion due to prolonged stress and excessive work responsibilities (Beer et al., 2020). Burnout is not just about feeling tired. It also affects an individual's ability to perform well in different areas of life. Burnout is caused by prolonged stress and overload in personal, work, and social relationships with students or colleagues. The chronic exhaustion that comes with burnout hinders people from functioning effectively across various social contexts because it takes a toll on both their physical and mental well-being (Özel & Hacioglu, 2021)

The significance of fatigue and burnout in the event and MICE (Meeting, Incentive, Convention, Exhibition) industry is substantial (Nadia & Hassnah, 2019).

Individuals in this field perform crucial tasks in planning and executing various events, such as conferences, trade shows, exhibitions, and corporate functions. These responsibilities require long work hours and high levels of stress while also requiring meticulous attention to detail (Makasheva et al., 2016). As the demands on event and MICE professionals increase, they become more susceptible to fatigue and burnout. Research from multiple countries has shown a strong link between burnout syndrome and professionals in the event, MICE, and hospitality industry. The study suggests that ongoing exposure to stressful events can have negative effects on individuals experiencing burnout. Emotional exhaustion is identified as a key factor contributing to burnout, impacting personal life, work environment, and interactions with clients or attendees (Asensio-Martínez et al., 2019; Ayachit & Chitta, 2022; Ayşegül & Erkan, 2018; Vagaeva et al., 2021).

This article examines the impact of fatigue and burnout on event industry professionals, including their causes, symptoms, and consequences. It also offers practical recommendations for organizations to effectively address these challenges.

FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS

This article presents an in-depth analysis of existing literature and research on burnout and fatigue in the service industry, focusing specifically on event professionals. The aim is to explore the various factors influencing burnout and fatigue among event professionals, including their causes, observable symptoms, and potential preventive measures or treatment options. In addition to books and treatises, this article draws highly upon online scholarly articles from reputable sources such as peer-reviewed journals (e.g., JSTOR), research studies available through databases like Google Scholar, Emerald E-Journal, IEEE Xplore, and ProQuest for such Up-To-Date information. Ultimately, the objective is to promote a sustainable work environment within the event industry that minimizes burnout among professionals.

MEANING, IMPORTANT, AND WHAT CAUSES FATIGUE AND BURNOUT?

Burnout is a state of chronic physical and emotional exhaustion, often accompanied by feelings of cynicism and detachment from work, and a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment (de Simoni & Dias, 2021). It is crucial to understand the concept of burnout because it has pervasive effects on individuals' overall well-being, job performance, and the organizations they work for. Without proper recognition and management, burnout can lead to reduced productivity, increased absenteeism, decreased job satisfaction, and even physical and mental health issues for the affected individuals (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022). Understanding the meaning of burnout and its importance is crucial not only for the individuals experiencing it but also for the organizations and industries in which they work (Bakker et al., 2014).

On the other hand, fatigue can emerge from a multitude of factors, including engaging in extended periods of physical exertion, enduring mental and emotional tension, experiencing insufficient restorative sleep, working excessive hours, or undertaking repetitive tasks. These contributing elements can accumulate fatigue gradually over an extended period which results in diminished energy levels coupled with impaired cognitive functioning (Lim & Son, 2022). Hence, individuals who persistently challenge their boundaries without allowing sufficient time for recuperation may be more susceptible to encountering fatigue.

Researchers from Europe have drawn attention to the correlation between burnout syndrome and engagement in professional activity, emphasizing that burnout can develop as a result of prolonged exposure to stress arising from stressful events. This acknowledgment underscores the fact that enduring high levels of stress over an extended period significantly contributes to the occurrence of burnout (Vagaeva et al., 2021). In addition to work-related factors, it is essential to recognize that burnout can be influenced by various personal life circumstances and interpersonal relationships. Research shows that while excessive workload and prolonged working hours contribute significantly to burnout, other non-work-related aspects also play a role in its development. Personal life circumstances, such as familial responsibilities or financial pressures, can add additional stressors on top of the demands at work and further contribute to feelings of exhaustion and emotional depletion (Zhu & Li, 2018).

Moreover, a study from (Söyler et al., 2019) suggests that relationships with others, including colleagues and supervisors within the workplace environment, can impact an individual's susceptibility toward burnout. Supportive social connections are crucial for buffering against stressors associated with occupational fatigue. Conversely, though, unsupportive or conflict-ridden relationships may exacerbate stress levels and consequently increase vulnerability to burnout. Therefore, burnout should not solely be attributed as a consequence of job-related factors; rather it arises from a complex interplay between work-specific challenges along with personal life circumstances and social dynamics.

Fatigue is a key component of burnout and is closely interconnected with its development. The feeling of emotional exhaustion, characterized by physical and psychological fatigue, is considered the main cause of burnout (Vagaeva et al., 2021). This feeling of exhaustion arises from prolonged exposure to chronic interpersonal stressors in the workplace. In other words, fatigue resulting from stressful events can lead to burnout not only in the workplace but also in personal life and relationships.

CAUSES OF FATIGUE AND BURNOUT IN THE EVENT INDUSTRY

Fatigue within the event industry can arise from multiple sources. An important factor is inherent to the characteristics of this profession. Event specialists often work long hours, including evenings

and weekends, which inevitably leads to physical and psychological exhaustion (Bermejo-Casado et al., 2017; Koyuncu et al., 2021).

The high-stress nature of event coordination and the need to meet relentless time constraints contribute to chronic stress and exhaustion. The demanding environment requires quick decision-making, problem-solving, creativity, and attention to detail, which further escalates stress levels among professionals in this field. Moreover, the emphasis on perfectionism and client satisfaction can exacerbate burnout (Bermejo-Casado et al., 2017; Ayşegül & Erkan, 2018).

IMPACT OF FATIGUE AND BURNOUT IN THE EVENT INDUSTRY

Fatigue and burnout can have significant negative effects on the event industry, impacting both individual professionals and the overall success of events (Asensio-Martínez et al., 2019; Ayşegül & Erkan, 2018). Fatigue and burnout in event professionals can negatively impact job performance and efficiency. These individuals may experience difficulties with concentration, decision-making, and problem-solving due to reduced cognitive abilities caused by chronic

fatigue. Additionally, long working hours can compromise physical health and overall well-being, making them more susceptible to illness (Yan et al., 2022).

Fatigue and burnout can negatively impact event professionals' ability to effectively plan and execute events. It can make meeting deadlines difficult, lead to logistical errors, and hinder the delivery of excellent customer service. (Ayşegül & Erkan, 2018). Furthermore, research has shown that fatigue and burnout in hotel staff can lead to a higher turnover rate. This turnover can disrupt the cohesion of event planning teams and result in a loss of institutional knowledge, posing risks to future success (Kim et al., 2007; Oktavio & Kaihatu, 2020).

IDENTIFYING BURNOUT SYMPTOMS IN EVENT PROFESSIONALS

To minimize the adverse effects of fatigue and burnout, it is essential to accurately recognize the indicators demonstrated by event professionals. According to Montero-Marín et al. (2009), these signs manifest through persistent exhaustion, a decline in motivation and passion towards work, challenges with concentration, mood swings accompanied by irritability, heightened absenteeism, and presentism rates.

The individuals may also encounter diminished productivity levels along with sentiments of cynicism or detachment regarding their occupation (Makasheva et al., 2016). Additionally, physical symptoms like headaches, muscle tension as well as disturbances during sleep might be experienced by these professionals (Vitorino et al., 2018).

Event professionals and their respective organizations must take a proactive approach in recognizing these indicators to effectively mitigate them and discourage the exacerbation of exhaustion and burnout.

PHASES OF BURNOUT SYNDROME

Burnout progresses through stages, starting with enthusiasm and ending in exhaustion. Models of burnout vary, but all lead to the same outcome. Exploring different models can help makes understand this phenomenon better.

One common model of burnout by Křivohlavý (1998) in a book named "Jak neztratit nadšení" or "How not to lose Enthusiasm" (as cited in de Simoni & Dias, 2021), mentioned three main stages:

1. In the early stages of burnout, individuals have a strong sense of enthusiasm and motivation towards their work. They are driven by specific goals or objectives that give meaning to their lives, viewing work as a fulfilling activity with purpose.

2. In the second stage, individuals prioritize financial gain or utilitarian interests over finding meaning in their work. This shift in motivation can lead to a change in meaningful goals and reliance on societal trends or aspirations for social status.

3. In the later stage of burnout, individuals reach a phase known as "life in the ashes." In this phase, there is a significant loss of respect for others and personal goals. The values that were once important become reduced to material possessions. As a result, individuals may exhibit insensitive behavior and disrespect towards others without recognizing their worth. Additionally, there is a noticeable change in how individuals view themselves; self-esteem decreases significantly while feelings of compassion for oneself diminish.

In the year of 2001, a researcher named Christina Maslach (2001) delineated her model of burnout in more detail into four distinct phases:

1. Enthusiasm and optimism

2. Stagnation and overload

3. Disillusionment and cynicism

4. Withdrawal and inefficacy.

In the book "Burnout: recognition, treatment, prevention," Herbert J.

Freudenberger proposes twelve stages of burnout that provide a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon (as cited in Poschkamp, 2013). These stages offer insights into how individuals experience burnout over time and can help professionals identify early signs or intervene effectively. Upon closer examination of burnout phases, it is clear that different models and perspectives generally agree on the progression of burnout syndrome. These stages involve a decline in motivation, emotional exhaustion, and negative attitudes towards work. This can be visualized in Figure 1 below:

Grouping by the author can be represented visually in Figure 1, as the effect of each stage on the profession is emphasized for simplicity and easy recognition.

1. Emotional zone: During this stage, individuals may only display emotional responses without any outward behavioral signs.

a. Optimistic – Individuals experience a sense of enthusiasm and positive thoughts about their work. They approach tasks with motivation and optimism, although they may face some minor challenges that are still manageable. In this phase, individuals recognize
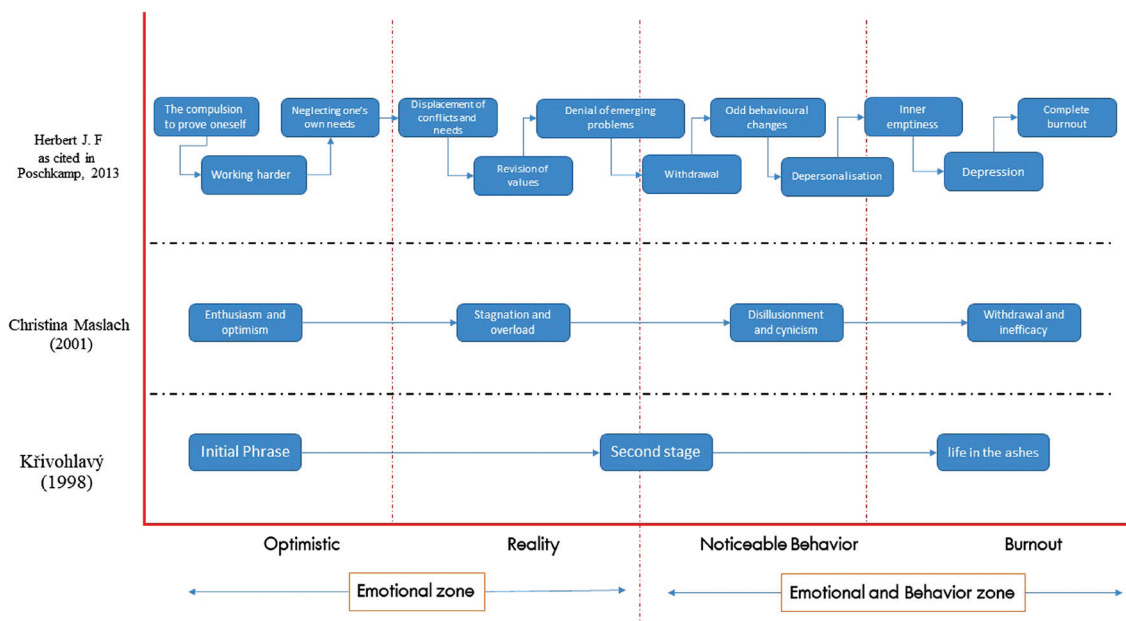

Figure 1 Common Themes in the Stages of Burnout

the potential burdens of work but do not yet feel excessive stress or burnout.

b. Reality – In this stage, individuals begin to feel an internal impact. They struggle to balance their work and personal life commitments, resulting in stress and strain. Over time, they become aware that work demands are negatively affecting their energy levels and personal well-being. This leads to feelings of tension, fatigue, and frustration.

2. Emotional and Behavior zone: This is when the impact of burnout becomes visible through observable behaviors or actions that are easier to identify.

a. Noticeable Behavior – Individuals struggle to hide their emotions and thoughts. The build-up of feelings and cognitive processes from previous stages starts to show in their behaviors, causing noticeable changes like reduced concentration, tardiness, and frequent absences. These effects also seep into personal aspects of life. Individuals may develop coping mechanisms, some distancing themselves from others while others resort to unhealthy habits like excessive alcohol consumption for temporary relief. However, these coping mechanisms can have negative consequences on both personal and professional life.

b. Burnout – The final stage of burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and negative attitudes toward work. Individuals may feel detached from colleagues and clients, viewing them as objects rather than considering their unique needs. This state can have serious implications for mental health and contribute to clinical depression.

PREVENTION STRATEGIES FOR BURNOUT

Several key principles can be employed to prevent burnout syndrome. According to Lheureux et al. (2017), to effectively address burnout, it is important to promptly recognize its symptoms. The Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey developed by Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson in 1997 (as cited in de Simoni & Dias, 2021) is a commonly utilized instrument on a global scale for assessing burnout among different occupational groups. It includes three sub-scales:

1. "Exhaustion" refers to the state of extreme fatigue caused by excessive work demands and pressures.

2. "Cynicism" refers to a person's tendency to become detached or display negative attitudes towards their work.

3. "Professional efficacy" refers to an individual's satisfaction with past

achievements and their expectations for ongoing effectiveness in the workplace.

The MBI-GS uses a 7-point scale to measure burnout. It consists of three separate scales mentioned earlier that assess different components of burnout. Each item in the MBI-GS is scored from 0 to 7 according to guidelines. Score ranges have been established for identifying low, moderate, and high levels on each scale using this scoring system. High scores on exhaustion and cynicism indicate greater burnout, while low scores on professional efficacy suggest higher intensity of burnout (as cited in de Simoni & Dias, 2021). The reliability and validity of the MBI-GS have been established through research in various European nations and Korea, demonstrating its cross-cultural applicability (Schutte et al., 2000), (Shin et al., 2019). It is recognized as a valuable tool for assessing burnout syndrome across different cultural settings.

To prevent burnout, fostering strong friendships and maintaining positive relationships are important. Socializing with friends regularly can serve as a protective factor against burnout (Riethof & Bob, 2019). Engaging in hobbies or leisure activities outside of work is highly beneficial for avoiding burnout. Taking breaks to enjoy nature or participate in sports helps provide relaxation and distract from work-related stressors (de Simoni & Dias, 2021). Bartošíková suggests implementing various strategies to mitigate burnout, which can be categorized into three main aspects (Bartošíková, 2000).

1. Workload aspect: Maintaining work-life balance and prioritizing well-being are crucial for preventing burnout (Manivannan et al., 2022). Employers can promote physical and mental health through activities outside of work, ensure adequate resources and support, distribute workload effectively with additional staff members if needed, provide professional development opportunities, foster a supportive work environment with open communication, and offer accessible mental health resources like counseling or therapy services (Martínez-Íñigo et al., 2015), (Boet et al., 2023).

2. Mental aspect: Creating a culture of appreciation and recognition in the workplace can help prevent burnout. By acknowledging accomplishments, providing feedback for growth, and offering meaningful recognition, organizations can boost morale and job satisfaction as protective factors against burnout. (Shin et al., 2019). Additionally, event professionals find fulfillment in the successful execution

of events and are often driven by their passion for their work.(Cabanas et al., 2020). Organizations should prioritize creating a sense of purpose and autonomy for professionals, encouraging creativity and innovation, and acknowledging the impact their work has on others. Research indicates that finding meaning in one's work can reduce emotional exhaustion while increasing personal gratification at work. (Barello et al., 2020).

3. Coping mechanisms aspect: Event professionals can effectively cope with burnout by practicing self-care, which includes engaging in activities that promote physical, mental, and emotional well-being (Schmidt & Hansson, 2018). Event professionals can practice self-care by exercising, maintaining a healthy diet, getting enough sleep, and engaging in joyful and relaxing activities. They can also utilize stress management techniques like deep breathing exercises, mindfulness meditation, and effective time management strategies (Brudnik-Dąbrowska & Noworol, 2022). It is important for event professionals to take regular breaks and ensure they have downtime in order to recharge and prevent burnout. Building a strong support system is also crucial, including connections with colleagues, mentors, and supportive staff who can provide emotional support, guidance, and a sense of camaraderie (Dal & Malkoc, 2020). This network is a valuable resource for sharing ideas and challenges, providing advice and perspective, and fostering a community-driven atmosphere in the industry.

HOW TO RECOVER FROM BURNOUT?

Recovering from burnout requires a holistic approach that addresses both physical and psychological well-being. However, there is limited research on treating burnout. According to Demerouti et al. (2021), previous studies mainly address prevention methods and coping strategies at the individual level. Restorative activities, like those mentioned by Maricuțoiu et al. (2016) and Tetrick & Winslow (2015) such as engaging in hobbies or leisure activities to relax and rejuvenate, may help reduce burnout symptoms to some extent. However, there is still no consensus on the most effective treatment for this condition. Further investigation conducted by Ahola et al. (2017) reviewed four employee-focused interventions for treating burnout, but their effectiveness remains inconclusive. Currently, there is still a lack of clarity regarding treatment approaches for burnout. The absence

of clearly defined guidelines or strategies has persisted over time, highlighting the complexity and challenges associated with managing this condition effectively.

CONCLUSION

This article focuses on the issue of fatigue and burnout among event professionals. The impact of these factors on the well-being, productivity, and quality of life in this industry is significant. Finding ways to prevent or mitigate these effects is crucial for individuals in the sector and overall success in organizing events. Research has shown that implementing self-care strategies is crucial in preventing burnout and promoting overall well-being among professionals. These strategies can help reduce emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, as well as build resilience. It's important to note that finding meaning in one's work and feeling a sense of connection with it also play a significant role in lowering levels of burnout. Incorporating purpose, autonomy, and creativity in one's profession enhances job satisfaction and reduces burnout. Recognizing the impact on others fosters fulfillment and encouraging innovative thinking promotes creativity. Creating a supportive environment supports individuals personally and professionally.

Further research is required to explore the effectiveness of various interventions and strategies in preventing and treating burnout among event professionals. It would be prudent to focus on mitigating and reversing the stages of burnout experienced by employees, rather than risking turnover which necessitates searching for new employees and initiating training from scratch.

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