Workplace Implications of Psychological Empowerment on Emotional Exhaustion: Review and Outlook

Sumita Chahal[a*], Vandana Punia[b], B.K. Punia[c]

[a] ICSSR Post-Doctoral Fellow, Haryana School of Business, Guru Jambheshwar University of Science &Technology, Hisar, India, [b] Professor, Human Resource Development Centre & Dean, Faculty of Education, Guru Jambheshwar University of Science & Technology, Hisar, India, [c] Professor, Haryana School of Business, Guru Jambheshwar University of Science & Technology, Hisar, India.

A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

Purpose: This paper is an attempt to provide an understanding of the psychological empowerment and primary manifestation of burnout i.e., emotional exhaustion. Through this paper, the relationship between four dimensions of psychological empowerment (i.e., meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) and emotional exhaustion is analyzed.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Studies were reviewed spanning dozens of articles and research papers to clarify the concept of psychological empowerment and emotional exhaustion. Also, the work of different researchers and academicians has been reviewed to elucidate what is known concerning burnout's key component, emotional exhaustion. Few empirical investigations on psychological empowerment and burnout have been reviewed to investigate their relationship in different work situations.

Findings: The outcome of the review has brought out that psychological empowerment is a unique force that an organization can use to turn its low-performing team of employees into high performing team by doing away with or mitigating emotional exhaustion. The only requirement is that organizations need to have policies of justice and communication with a 'people-first' approach.

Research Limitations: The major limitation of the study is that the study is limited to the extensive review.

Managerial Implications: The outcomes will give managers and practitioners better recommendations for preventing emotional exhaustion at the workplace. It is very crucial in the workplace and highlights the need for managers to discover other strategies for increasing psychological empowerment which will mitigate the effect of emotional.

Originality/Value: The study showcased the original work of the authors in the reviewing the existing studies.

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Introduction

The workplace of the day has been emerging with a diversity of complications and implications. Apart from the technical issues, behavioral issues seem to be ruling the show. Technical issues can indeed be outsourced but human resources need to be motivated and empowered every day for the continuous growth of the organization. However, workplace complexities of the day are affecting the mental health of employees in a big way leading to situations of stress, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and burnout as a whole. Hence to keep the employees mentally healthy and physically fit, they continuously require psychological empowerment as well to avoid exhaustion and burnout-like situations. Burnout is a phenomenon defined by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and accomplishment as a result of persistent job stress (Xu & Yang, 2018). The plethora of research indicates that employee burnout negatively impacts various well-being outcomes at the personal as well as the organizational level (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014; Becker et al., 2006; Honkonen et al., 2006; Parker & Kulik, 1995; Peterson et al., 2008). The core indicator of burnout is emotional exhaustion, which denotes a state of depletion in which an individual has been strained to the point that they are just unable to contribute anymore (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The second dimension is depersonalization which signifies that stress can cause workers to detach and exhibit cynicism toward their coworkers. The third component is personal accomplishment, which refers to employees' belief in their abilities to meet their goals and its absence led to negative effects. In this study, the emotional exhaustion dimension is explored further as it is considered the primary manifestation of burnout (Cieslak et al., 2014; Kenworthy et al., 2014; Koeske, & D.K., 1989). Many studies identified the antecedents of burnout and the strategies that can mitigate its negative effects. It is imperative to identify potential protective factors for minimizing the negative repercussions of emotional exhaustion. Studies have shown that psychological empowerment can assist to alleviate emotional exhaustion (Yeter DEMÝR, 2010a). It is more certain that employees will accomplish their goals when they have a strong sense of psychological empowerment. Meaning, Competence, Self-determination, and their Impact are the key elements on which psychological empowerment rests. Using these four key components, employees can demonstrate a balance between work and personal values, beliefs, and actions, as well as meet job requirements and have an impact on strategic company decisions (Spreitzer et al., 1997). An effort has been made to study the individual literature on psychological empowerment and emotional exhaustion. Academics and researchers have done a lot of work, but only the important parts have been studied and cited in this paper. Based on the review of prior literature, this paper provides insight for future research work on exploring the duo version of psychological empowerment and emotional exhaustion. Various research and empirical studies have been quoted to make the literature a useful tool in understanding the relation of the above said dimensions and further will help to formulate strategies for psychological empowerment to mitigate the effect of emotional exhaustion on employees.

Research Methodology

This paper is based on the review, which provides a deeper understanding of the past and current literature related to psychological empowerment and emotional exhaustion. The researcher searched for articles on Google scholar and Web of science. This study includes papers from reputed journals from the domain of Human Resource Management and Social Sciences that clarify the constructs namely "psychological empowerment" and "emotional exhaustion". The literature search begins from 1975 till 2022 to examine the key components of the concept and further studies have been reviewed to investigate the relationship between psychological empowerment and emotional exhaustion in different work situations. In this study, 89 papers have been selected and reviewed keeping the objectives of the paper into consideration.

Psychological Empowerment

Employee empowerment is a 1990s management buzzword and it is an important tool to enable employees in this dynamic work environment (Punia, 2004). The Empowered and outperforming culture can play a vital role to gain this edge. The concept "of empowerment" has been the subject of much debate, but it remains an ambiguous concept (Greasley et al., 2008). Empowerment is an instrument for keeping the employees' hands open so that they can work individually for what they believe is the best and have the autonomy to accomplish the

task without apprehension of managers' acceptance (Achour et al., 2013). Organizations adopted different forms of empowerment projects for the majority of their employees (Lawler et al., 2001). Self-empowered workers tend to feel a sense of ecstasy when they are allowed to make their own decisions at work, which is aided by employee empowerment (Chahal & P.B. 2017). For a company to be successful in the current global business world, every person from the front line to the top-level managers in the executive suite must contribute their expertise, ideas, enthusiasm, and creativity. Encouraging employee initiative, serving the firm's overall interests without micromanaging, and acting as if the company is their own are some of the greatest ways to do this.

In the literature, two complementary views on workplace empowerment have arisen (Liden & Arad, 1996). The first focuses on the social-structural factors that support workplace empowerment. The second, which has a more micro-oriented focus, is concerned with the psychological impact of empowerment at work. Delegating power and control are at the heart of structural empowerment, whereas psychological empowerment is linked to an employee's perception of their work. Psychological empowerment is described as a person's belief in the process of empowerment (Appelbaum et al., 2015; Kraimer et al., 1999; Robbins et al., 2002; Sun et al., 2012). Psychological empowerment means, the combination of cognitions that are essential for employees to feel autonomy and control in the workplace. The psychological viewpoint focuses on how employees perceive their job rather than on managerial practices that share authority among employees at all levels. In this perspective, empowerment refers to the employees' own opinions regarding their function in the organization. Psychological empowerment focuses on employee growth, autonomy, power, self-efficacy, and decision-making (Tandon et al., 2021).

As per the available literature, (Conger & Kanungo, 1988) pioneered the motivational construct of empowerment. They identify a major flaw in the structural approach: it lacks the ecstasy of self-efficacy. Their definition of empowerment exhibits it as the process that enhances the sense of self-efficacy across the organization via the recognition and exclusion of situations which create powerlessness. Conger & Kanungo, (1988), ideas were expanded by Thomas & Velthouse, (1990), with the addition of a hypothetical structure elucidating the concept of empowerment as a multi-dimensional concept focusing on the four dimensions-meaning, choice, self-determination, and impact-that demonstrate their work orientation. They define empowerment as a set of cognition impacted by one's workplace environment that contribute significantly to a person-environment fit. Spreitzer et al. (1997), explained em-powerment into four dimensions to achieve the gestalt sagacity of empowerment leading to Meaning, Competence, Self-Determination, and Impact.

Meaning Cognition

Hackman & Oldham (1975), model of cognition states at work has been cited as the basis for the concept of meaning in the available literature. Employees were able to define meaningfulness as the amount to which they viewed their work as important and worthwhile. It requires a fit between one's job function and one's viewpoints, attitudes, actions, etc., to be effective (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). According to Thomas & Velthouse (1990) meaningfulness is stated as "the worth of the work objective or goal, as compared with personal values or standards." Employees' sense of significance in their work is measured by Wong et al., (2007). Similarly, Lethbridge et al., (2011), define meaning as the relevance of a task as per employees' standards and values. Furthermore, Jie-Tsuen Huang, (2012) stated that the significance of a task is based on ensuring that the value of the task is aligned with one's personal beliefs. Researchers conceptually and empirically concluded the connotation as "role identity" in some circumstances or "self-respect" (Wang & Cheng, 2009; Yang, & Choi, 2009).

Competence Cognition

The theory of social learning incorporates the concept of competence. Bandura (1977) defines competence as "the psychological processes, regardless of their form, that helps to generate and strengthen beliefs of personal efficacy". Employees with a high feeling of self-efficacy at work are more likely to excel at their jobs. The words of (Spreitzer, 1995; Stander & Rothmann, 2010) support (Bandura 1977) view of competence as personal mastery. Delegating authority, engaging people, and sharing resources and rewards are just a few

of the ways that Fernandez & Moldogaziev, (2015) claim that empowerment techniques improve workplace happiness. According to Dierendonck & Dijkstra, (2012) competence refers to an employee's ability to fulfill his or her job obligations to the best of his or her ability. The belief that a person has in his or her knowledge and ability to carry out work tasks in an organization was described by Allameh et al., (2012). Further, Spreitzer & Quinn (2001), found that competence is an employee's belief in their ability to carry out their responsibilities. To put it simply, competency is a belief that an employee can perform their job well (Sun et al., 2012).

Self Determination Cognition

Self-determination theory is at the heart of the concept of self-determination (Deci, E. 1975; Deci, E. L. & Ryan, 2000; Valler et al., 2008). Thomas & Velthouse (1990) used the word "choice" to convey the idea of self-determination. Employees who have a strong feeling of self-determination in the workplace feel empowered to make decisions about how they go about their work (Spreitzer, 1996; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). When employees are in charge of organizing their work, putting in the effort, and having the freedom to start and finish their projects, they are exercising their right to self-determination (Krishna, 2007). Self-determination, according to Elele & Fields, (2010) is the belief that one has in one's ability to succeed in one's career. Liu et al. (2011) defined empowerment as the capacity to make one's own decisions and assume responsibility for one's life. Many researchers and academics have found that self-determined individuals in their workplace have witnessed a positive impact on their work-related outcomes like job satisfaction (Dickson & Lorenz, 2009), job performance (Namasivayam et al., 2014), creative performance (Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Sun et al., 2012), and organizational commitment (Choong, 2011; Sun et al., 2012).

Impact Cognition

The concept that employees may influence the structure in which they are embedded is referred to as "Impact" (Spreitzer, 1996). When it comes to the policies and results connected to administrative work, workers have a significant impact (Krishna, 2007). The influence was described by Thomas & Velthouse in 1990 as the perception that an individual's behavior affects his task environment.

Spreitzer & Quinn (2001) described the impact as "Influential initiative ones that include considerable change and real innovation". According to Dewettinck & Ameijde (2011), an individual's effect is defined as the amount to which he or she may influence strategic and operational outcomes. It has also been pointed out by Zhang & Bartol (2010) that employee behavior has a significant impact on workplace outcomes. An employee's impact on strategic, managerial, and operational outcomes was discussed by Ertürk (2012) as evidence in favor of this claim.

Emotional Exhaustion

There are three elements to the burnout syndrome: emotional exhaustion (feelings of being "empty"), depersonalization (unfavorable, cynical approach toward work), and diminishing personal accomplishment (negative view of one's achievements at work) explained by Becker et al., (2006). Being emotionally exhausted is becoming increasingly evident as the essential component of burnout. Emotional exhaustion is considered the major stress characteristic of burnout and happens when a person is emotionally depleted through interactions with other individuals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). It involves the depletion of individual resources and the perception that one cannot further provide anything to others on an emotional level (Calvo & García, 2018).

In the past few decades, antecedents and outcomes of burnout have attracted tremendous academic attention. Burnout is a situation-specific phenomenon associated with work (Heather et al., 2003; Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli et al., 2009). The condition of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment" is the most commonly used definition of burnout as a multidimensional construct (Maslach et al., 2001). Emotional exhaustion is considered to be the central component of burnout and its most prominent indicator. It is associated with the emotional state of tiredness in the workplace context (Klusmann et al., 2021).

The most common definition of burnout stated that work pressure caused this syndrome (Maslach et al., 2001). Thus, the work domain was the exclusive focus on the understanding of the roots of burnout. Accordingly, the JD-R job demands-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014), which is based on

task and organizational psychology, focuses primarily on components concerning work to concretize the circumstances that lead to emotional exhaustion. According to the paradigm, a combination of high demands in the job (i.e., job stresses) and low resources at the job leads to emotional exhaustion. More specifically, a demanding job leads to ongoing overload and, eventually, emotional exhaustion. Job demands were stated as elements of social, physical, or organizational work that required ongoing mental or physical effort. Job resources are characterized as aspects of a job that help employees meet their professional goals while also encouraging their personal growth and mitigating the negative effects of their jobs' high demands. A handful of studies based on the JD-R model have found the work demands and resource needs of various occupational groupings (Demerouti, 2007).

The adverse repercussions of burnout on employee productivity, customer satisfaction, and institutional reputation (Manzano-García & Ayala, 2017; Maslach & Jackson, 1981) have prompted a great deal of discussion. Burnout has several physical, emotional, and work-related impacts, including disorders, depression, and absenteeism (Salvagioni et al., 2017). The major determinant of emotional exhaustion is the expectations placed on employees by organizations and individuals (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Emotional exhaustion has long piqued the interest of academicians as it has a huge impact on work-life quality vis-à-vis the efficiency of organizational operations. Workplace performance, voluntary turnover, health, and citizenship behavior are all affected by emotional exhaustion (Cropanzano et al., 2003; Halbesleben et al., 2014; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998)**.** This underlines how critical it is to successfully manage feelings of emotional exhaustion at this time.

Verticals of Psychological Empowerment Vis-À-Vis Emotional Exhaustion

Meaning: Meaning denotes the congruence between a person's values, beliefs, and behaviors with the demands of their professional roles (Nord et al., 1990). The previous study has underlined the differences connecting the work and the employee's early indicators of emotional exhaustion. The occurrence of meaning's sense requires

recognizing a meaningful objective at work; it transcends external results and is a fundamental human motivation (Arnold et al., 2007) which lowers the likelihood of emotional exhaustion.

Competence: Competence refers to self-efficacy or the notion that one can carry out work magnificently and accomplish one's responsibilities (Bandura, 1993). Persistence and hard work, the ability to deal with challenging conditions, and a high level of target expectations are all signs of competence (Spreitzer, 1995). Meta-analyses have shown that competence (self-efficacy) and burnout are directly linked (Aloe et al., 2014). Emotional exhaustion has been shown to negatively affect self-efficacy in numerous pieces of research (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008; Rubio et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2015).

Self Determination: Thomas &Velthouse (1990) used the expression "choice" to explain the concept of Self-determination. It refers to the sense of empowerment regarding how employees perform their tasks with autonomy and have control at their workplace (Spreitzer, 1996; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Feelings of control provide employees with constructive resources in stressful and challenging circumstances, preventing emotional exhaustion (Grandey et al., 2005; Hochwälder, 2007; Schermuly & Meyer, 2016).

Impact: Impact depends on the individual ability to overcome hindrances and show the distinction. Individuals with a high degree of empowerment orientation impact believe that they can influence the strategic direction, operational procedures, and results of the team or organization. As a result, they are more willing to take on difficult jobs and are better able to handle emotional exhaustion at work.

Together working of cognitive components of psychological empowerment help in reducing emotional exhaustion. Gong et al. (2021) suggested that the degree of job burnout can be reduced by enhancing psychological empowerment among the members. Liu et al. (2011) studied the mediating effect of psychological empowerment on emotional exhaustion and established that there exists an inverse relationship between psychological empowerment and the level of emotional exhaustion among employees. Many scholars, (Boudrias et al., 2012; Gong et al., 2021; Heather et al., 2003;

Hochwälder, 2007; O'Brien, 2011; Spreitzer et al., 1997; Tian et al., 2015; Yeter DEMÝR, 2010b) have established that a demonstrates a negative relationship across psychological empowerment and burnout symptoms of the individuals.

Conclusion

The study offers a review of the body of research on the relationship between psychological empowerment and emotional exhaustion. The four verticals of psychological empowerment i.e., Meaning, Competence, Self-determination, and its Impact are the vital cognitions on which psychological empowerment rests. The research examines the relationship between the verticals of psychological empowerment i.e., meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact on emotional exhaustion. Research has demonstrated the empirical relationship between psychological empowerment and emotional exhaustion (Aloe et al., 2014; Arnold et al., 2007; Grandey et al., 2005; Schermuly & Meyer, 2016). The four cognition of psychological empowerment helps in mitigating the effect of emotional exhaustion. Past research highlights that there is a negative relationship between psychological empowerment and emotional exhaustion. (Boudrias et al., 2012; Yeter DEMÝR, 2010a; Gong et al., 2021; Hochwälder, 2007; Heather et al., 2003). Based on the findings, it is clear that psychological empowerment is a powerful tool that can be used by businesses to transform underperforming teams into high-performing ones by minimizing the impact of emotional exhaustion on employees in different work situations.

Implications and Outlook

The current study is an attempt to examine the relationship between psychological empowerment and emotional exhaustion wherein the researchers highlight the significance of psychological empowerment in supporting employees to manage their emotional exhaustion. This outcome carries tremendous significance in the workplace and underscores the need for managers to investigate additional methods for enhancing psychological empowerment. In the 11th Revision report of the International Classification of Diseases, the World Health Organization (WHO) (2019) recognized burnout as an occupational phenomenon. This study has substantial practical implications for practitioners and managers in different

organizational contexts, given that emotional exhaustion is a crucial characteristic of burnout. First and foremost, the research shows that psychological empowerment plays a vital part in minimizing emotional exhaustion when previously available literature is explored. To increase the employees' sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact, organizations can implement practices that lead to better human resource management and will optimize the required employees' job fit. (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999). The reason for this is that empowered individuals are better able to deal with upcoming changes (Boudrias et al., 2012). Changes in workplace context like enhancing employee access to information and access to resources, autonomy, and freedom in decision making can help in achieving empowerment (Spreitzer, 1996; Hochwälder, 2007).

On a practical level, previous research highlights that empowerment act as a protective factor against emotional exhaustion, and further improvising aspects of the work environment will result in a greater sense of empowerment. These findings suggest that emotional exhaustion among employees may be mitigated by enhancing their empowerment (defined in terms of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact which can be accomplished by changing the work environment (e.g., reducing role ambiguity, enhancing access to information, and resources, enhancing social support, and reviewing organizational culture (Spreitzer, 1995). So, it indicates that psychological empowerment plays a crucial part in the fight against emotional exhaustion of employees in different fields like sales, health, academics, etc.

The organization should create work environments that empower and enable their employees to reduce the amount of emotional exhaustion they feel. There is no magic formula that can empower employees; rather some important areas have to be considered to develop the feeling of holistic empowerment. It is crucial to emphasize the communication of organizational principles, goals, and policies to the employees. Having access to information about the organization's strategy and goals can help employees feel like they have a stake in the company's success, as well as empower them to make their own decisions that are good for the company (Spreitzer, 1996). Feedback, direction, and

emotional support should be provided to employees that help in creating an open culture, and employees' abilities can be utilized to their fullest potential by achieving a gestalt sense of empowerment (Walumbwa et al., 2010). This review is examining the relationship between the quad-dimensions of psychological empowerment and emotional exhaustion. The majority of the past research was done in the healthcare sector and research is scarce in other fields like sales, hospitality, academics, etc. It is imperative to understand the primary manifestation of burnout i.e., emotional exhaustion in other fields like sales, hospitality, and academics, etc. so that certain strategies could be implemented to alleviate emo-tional exhaustion at the workplace. Additionally, future research could explore the effect of verticals of Psychological Empowerment i.e., Meaning, Competence, Self Determination, and Impact on Emotional exhaustion in different fields apart from the healthcare sector. In this paper, the burnout core dimension i.e., emotional exhaustion is taken and further studies could explore the relationship of psychological empowerment with other dimensions of burnout i.e., depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment.

So, in summation, if employees are duly provided with work-related information, required opportunities & resources, and due support with formal and informal power, their psychological empowerment can be enhanced ultimately benefitting the individuals and the organization as a whole. In addition, it is equally important to maintain congruence between their values, beliefs, and the work environment. This will boost the confidence of employees to achieve their goals and minimize the effect of emotional exhaustion. Enhancing psychological empowerment will alleviate emotional exhaustion. A psychologically empowered employee is indeed an indispensable asset to any organization who can turn impossibilities into possibilities. Along with the concern, the employee can keep others away from the stages of burnout as well. The phenomenon of psychological empowerment has gained particular significance in post-COVID situations. It is high time for organizations to do justice to their employees to create a feeling of organizational ownership amongst the employees so that they can have a total feeling of well-being and can act as a performing team to gain a competitive advantage across all its endeavors.

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