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Relation Between Emotional Intelligence and Burnout in Organizations

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ABSTRACT

In contemporary workplaces, burnout is becoming a significant psychological issue, which impacts employees emotionally, in their efficiency, and the overall organizational performance. Emotional Intelligence (EI), which can be described as the ability to easily sense, comprehend, and manage emotions, has been found to be a significant personal resource which can enable people to manage work stress (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). This research was intended to investigate the correlation of Emotional Intelligence with Burnout within the group of working professionals, specifically whether increased levels of Emotional Intelligence correlate with a decrease in burnout (Lee & Ok, 2012). The study was conducted on a quantitative correlational research design. Data were collected using the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale-10 (BEIS-10; Davies et al., 2010) and the Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT; Schaufeli et al., 2020), measuring burnout dimensions such as exhaustion, mental distance, cognitive impairment, and emotional impairment. Descriptive statistics and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation were used to test the hypotheses. Results showed a significant negative correlation between Burnout and Emotional Intelligence, with employees higher in EI reporting lesser emotional exhaustion and fewer cognitive and emotional impairments. The findings indicate that Emotional Intelligence is a protective psychological resource that minimizes the chances of burnout and highlights the importance of encouraging EI in organizational environments.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, burnout, emotional exhaustion, working professionals, occupational stress

INTRODUCTION

Today's workplaces are faster, more demanding, and more competitive than ever before. In such an environment, looking after employee well-being is not just good practice — it is essential for organizations to function effectively and meet their goals. When employees are constantly under pressure without adequate support, the long-term consequences can be serious, ranging from declining performance to reduced productivity across the organization (Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Among the many challenges that threaten employee well-being in the modern workplace, burnout stands out as one of the most pressing and widely recognized concerns (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Burnout is a condition of physical and emotional fatigue experienced as a result of continuous stress at work. It may result in ill health, low productivity, and high costs for the organization. Work pressure, emotional pressure, and lack of coping resources are commonly associated with the causes of burnout (Peeters et al., 2005).

Emotional intelligence plays a significant role in handling stress and emotional

demands at work. It involves understanding, managing, and responding to emotions in oneself and others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). A study by Lee and Ok (2012) suggests that emotional intelligence helps individuals manage emotional labor and reduces the risk of burnout. Workers with higher emotional intelligence are better equipped to face workplace challenges, balance their emotions, and handle stress effectively.

Since emotional intelligence is key to managing stress in the workplace, this research paper aims to explore the link between emotional intelligence and burnout among employees. Studying this relationship will help determine if emotional intelligence can serve as a protective factor against burnout and improve employee well-being.

Background of the Study

Over the past few decades, the modern workplace has become increasingly difficult due to globalization, technological shifts, and higher performance expectations. These changes have raised work pressure and made employees more vulnerable to psychological stress. Burnout is a common result of ongoing stress at work — it can be defined as a psychological condition caused by long-term exposure to work stress factors, manifesting through emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a sense of reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Burnout has been linked to various negative effects, including lower productivity, poor job performance, absenteeism, and mental health problems.

Research suggests that burnout not only has psychological implications for employees but also carries major organizational implications. Burnout is associated with high turnover intentions and work ineffectiveness (Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Consequently, scholars have grown keen on determining individual and psychological resources which can counteract the outcomes of stress in the workplace.

Emotional Intelligence is one of the most valuable psychological resources a person can develop. It refers to the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and regulate emotions both in oneself and in others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Goleman (1995) defined emotional intelligence as the capacity to recognize one's own feelings and those of others, to motivate oneself, and to manage emotions effectively in both personal and professional relationships — recognizing it as a key factor for success at work, especially when it comes to handling stress, interpersonal relationships, and emotional needs.

Research supports the link between Emotional Intelligence and Burnout. For example, a study by Lee and Ok (2012) found that employees with higher emotional intelligence experienced lower levels of emotional exhaustion. Similarly, Kaur et al. (2013) demonstrated a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and burnout, indicating that individuals with strong emotional control are less likely to show burnout symptoms. These findings suggest that Emotional Intelligence can act as a buffer against burnout. This research explores this link among employees to provide deeper insight into how emotional skills can influence workplace well-being.

Theoretical Framework

The current study is grounded in the theories of Emotional Intelligence and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory of Burnout (Bakker et al., 2014). The concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) is explained through three main models: the Ability Model (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, 1997), the Trait Model (Petrides & Furnham, 2001), and the Mixed Model (Goleman, 1995; Bar-On, 1997).

The Ability Model treats EI as a set of cognitive-emotional skills organized in a four-branch hierarchy: perception of emotions, using emotions to facilitate thought, understanding emotions, and the management and regulation of emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). The Trait Model, proposed by Petrides and Furnham (2001), frames EI as stable emotional self-perceptions organized into well-being, self-

control, emotionality, and sociability factors, measured via self-report. The Mixed Model integrates emotional abilities, personality traits, motivational characteristics, and social competencies; Goleman (1995) proposed five core domains — self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills — while Bar-On (1997) built a parallel framework around intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, stress management, adaptability, and general mood.

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) proposes that every job can be understood through job demands — physical, psychological, social, and organizational aspects requiring sustained effort — and job resources, which help employees achieve goals, reduce demand costs, and stimulate growth. Crucially, the JD-R model explicitly includes personal resources such as self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience, opening the door for Emotional Intelligence to function as a protective internal resource. Bringing together EI theory and the JD-R model, Emotional Intelligence functions as a personal psychological resource that directly influences an employee's capacity to manage job demands without depleting into burnout. Employees with higher EI are better equipped to accurately perceive their stress responses before they accumulate, regulate emotional reactions under pressure, and maintain engagement with their work even when demands are high (Bakker et al., 2014).

Statement of Problem

Despite the fact that earlier studies have suggested the importance of Emotional Intelligence in coping with workplace stress and enhancing psychological well-being (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995), burnout remains a major concern in organizational contexts. Research indicates that emotional exhaustion is related to lower productivity and unfavorable organizational performance (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Nonetheless, there has been relatively little research on the specific connection between emotional intelligence and burnout in employees within organizational settings using updated multidimensional burnout frameworks (Schaufeli et al., 2020). This study addresses that gap to form effective interventions that can improve emotional competencies and minimize burnout at work.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine the connection between Burnout and Emotional Intelligence in employees within an organization. Specifically, the study seeks to: (1) determine the degree of Emotional Intelligence among employees; (2) assess the extent of burnout among employees; (3) examine the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Burnout among employees; and (4) examine the extent to which Emotional Intelligence is associated with the four dimensions of Burnout among corporate employees.

Hypothesis

H1: Emotional Intelligence will have a significant negative association with Burnout and its dimensions of exhaustion, mental distance, cognitive impairment, and emotional impairment among employees in an organization.

MATERIALS & METHODS

Research Design

The research used a quantitative correlational design, which is suitable for examining the relationship between Emotional Intelligence (IV) and Burnout (DV) without manipulating any of the variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The design was also cross-sectional, with observations taken from employees at one point in time.

Participants and Sampling

The research included 252 employees employed in corporate organizations. The study adopted a combination of purposive and snowball sampling — both non-probability techniques — to recruit participants via an online survey on Google Forms. Inclusion criteria required adults aged 18 years or above, currently employed

full-time in a corporate organization, with at least six months of continuous working experience in their current organization, and working a minimum of 30 hours per week. Employees working in in-office/on-site, remote, and hybrid models were all included. Only those functionally proficient in English were included. Freelancers, part-time workers, contract workers, interns, trainees, and employees on extended leave were excluded.

Instrumentation

Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale-10 (BEIS-10). The BEIS-10, developed by Davies et al. (2010), is a 10-item self-report scale validated based on Salovey and Mayer's (1990) EI model. It covers five subscales: appraisal of own emotions, appraisal of others' emotions, regulation of own emotions, regulation of others' emotions, and utilization of emotions. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree. Davies et al. (2010) reported acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .77) and test-retest reliability over a two-week period ranging from .63 to .78 across subscales.

Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT). The BAT was developed by Schaufeli et al. (2020) as a contemporary and comprehensive measure of burnout encompassing four core dimensions: exhaustion, mental distance, cognitive impairment, and emotional impairment. The short form (BAT-12) was used in this study. The scale demonstrates strong internal consistency across all four subscales (Cronbach's alpha values exceeding .80) and its four-factor structure was confirmed through Confirmatory Factor Analysis across multiple large samples. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never to 5 = Always).

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using JASP (Version 0.19.3; JASP Team, 2025). Descriptive statistics — including mean, standard deviation, variance, skewness, and kurtosis — were calculated for all variables. Shapiro-Wilk tests were conducted to assess normality. To examine the link between Emotional Intelligence and Burnout, Pearson product-moment correlation was used alongside Spearman rank-order correlation (rho) as a non-parametric alternative, given that Shapiro-Wilk tests revealed significant deviations from bivariate normality across all variable pairs ($p < .001$). Effect sizes were calculated using Fisher's z transformation and interpreted according to Cohen's (1988) conventional guidelines (.10 = small, .30 = moderate, .50 = large). Statistical significance was set at $\alpha = .05$.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles outlined by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017). Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to participation, and they were made aware that participation was entirely voluntary with the right to withdraw at any point without consequence. Confidentiality and anonymity of all responses were maintained throughout the study, with data reported in aggregate form only.

RESULT

This chapter presents the research findings on the link between Emotional Intelligence and Burnout among corporate employees. The findings are presented systematically, starting with total Emotional Intelligence and total Burnout, followed by the four burnout dimensions.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for Total Burnout and Total Emotional Intelligence (EI) across the sample of 252 employees.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Total Burnout and Total Emotional Intelligence

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Shapiro-Wilk	p
Total Burnout	252	32.61	10.41	−0.19	0.04	0.990	.065
Total EI	252	17.16	2.45	−0.22	12.95	0.753	< .001

Note. EI = Emotional Intelligence; SD = Standard Deviation.

The mean burnout score was 32.61 (SD = 10.41), while the mean EI score was 17.16 (SD = 2.45). The Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that Total Burnout approximated normality (W = 0.990, p = .065), whereas Total EI significantly deviated from normality (W = 0.753, p < .001). Bivariate normality tests further confirmed violations for all variable pairs (all p < .001), justifying the use of Spearman rank-order correlation as the primary inferential statistic.

Correlational Analysis

Table 2 presents the Pearson and Spearman correlations between Total EI and Total Burnout and its four dimensions.

Table 2. Correlations Between Emotional Intelligence and Burnout Dimensions

Variable	Pearson r	p	Spearman ρ	p	Effect Size (Fisher's z)
Total Burnout	−0.217***	< .001	−0.468***	< .001	−0.507 (mod.)
Exhaustion	−0.149*	.018	−0.369***	< .001	−0.387 (small-mod.)
Mental Distance	−0.144*	.022	−0.310***	< .001	−0.321 (small-mod.)
Emotional Impairment	−0.232***	< .001	−0.456***	< .001	−0.493 (mod.)
Cognitive Impairment	−0.210***	< .001	−0.414***	< .001	−0.440 (mod.)

Note. * p < .05. *** p < .001. Effect size based on Fisher's z transformation; mod. = moderate.

A significant negative Pearson correlation was found between Total EI and Total Burnout (r = −0.217, p < .001), confirmed by Spearman correlation (ρ = −0.468, p < .001), indicating a moderate negative association. Employees with higher EI reported significantly lower overall burnout levels. Significant negative correlations were also found between EI and all four burnout dimensions: Exhaustion (r = −0.149, p = .018; ρ = −0.369, p < .001), Mental Distance (r = −0.144, p = .022; ρ = −0.310, p < .001), Emotional Impairment (r = −0.232, p < .001; ρ = −0.456, p < .001), and Cognitive Impairment (r = −0.210, p < .001; ρ = −0.414, p < .001). Since all p-values fell below α = .05, the alternative hypothesis H1 is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study paint a clear and consistent picture: Emotional Intelligence and Burnout are meaningfully and negatively related. Employees with higher EI are less likely to experience burnout, and this pattern held across all four dimensions measured by the BAT (Schaufeli et al., 2020). Within the Job Demands-Resources model (Bakker et al., 2014), EI functions as a personal resource that employees draw on internally to manage the emotional and cognitive demands of their work. When that resource is well developed, job demands feel more manageable and the risk of burnout decreases. This is consistent with a wide body of research: Gorgens-Ekermans and Brand (2012) found that EI moderated the stress-burnout relationship among nurses, and Almeneessier and Azer (2023) similarly reported significant inverse associations between EI and burnout among academics and clinicians.

The negative relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Exhaustion (ρ = −0.369, p < .001) suggests that employees with higher EI are better equipped to manage the physical and emotional toll of demanding work. Rather than absorbing stress passively, emotionally intelligent individuals tend to

process and regulate their emotional experiences more effectively, preventing the slow drain of energy that leads to exhaustion. Lee and Ok (2012) demonstrated this in hotel employees, finding that higher EI significantly predicted lower emotional exhaustion because EI reduced the costs of emotional labor. Saiiari et al. (2011) found the same pattern among physical education teachers, attributing this to the use of more adaptive coping strategies.

The negative correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Mental Distance ($\rho = -0.310$, $p < .001$) is particularly notable, as this dimension — characterized by cynicism, detachment, and growing aversion toward work — is one of the harder burnout dimensions to address once it takes hold. Employees who are emotionally aware and interpersonally connected are less likely to psychologically withdraw from their work under sustained pressure. Goleman's (1995) argument that empathy and social skills keep individuals relationally anchored to their environment supports this mechanism theoretically.

The strongest association was found between Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Impairment ($\rho = -0.456$, $p < .001$). This is intuitive: EI is fundamentally about understanding and regulating emotions, so employees with higher EI are naturally much better equipped to maintain emotional control and avoid overreacting at work (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Alkhalili et al. (2025) found in their study of critical care nurses in Jordan that EI was most strongly inversely associated with emotional impairment specifically, explaining that nurses with higher EI were able to process intense emotional demands without losing their capacity for emotional self-regulation. Nastas and Farcaca (2015) added that even in cases where EI did not strongly predict overall burnout, it consistently predicted lower emotional impairment, reinforcing that EI's most direct protective effect operates at the emotional regulation level.

Similarly, the significant negative relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Cognitive Impairment ($\rho = -0.414$, $p < .001$) suggests that higher EI is associated with better concentration, clearer thinking, and less mental fatigue on the job. This is consistent with the ability model of EI (Mayer & Salovey, 1997), which argues that the capacity to use emotions to facilitate thought — rather than being overwhelmed by them — carries direct cognitive benefits. Yusoff et al. (2021) demonstrated that higher EI was associated with lower cognitive impairment under academic stress, attributing this to emotionally intelligent individuals' ability to prevent emotional interference from disrupting cognitive processes like attention, memory, and decision-making.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Burnout among 252 corporate employees using a quantitative correlational design. The findings consistently demonstrated a significant negative association between EI and total burnout and across all four burnout dimensions: exhaustion, mental distance, emotional impairment, and cognitive impairment. The alternative hypothesis H1 was accepted and the null hypothesis was rejected across all analyses.

The results support the view that Emotional Intelligence is a genuine psychological resource that protects employees from burnout at emotional, cognitive, and motivational levels. The findings are consistent with the JD-R theoretical framework (Bakker et al., 2014) and extend the growing empirical literature highlighting the safeguarding role of emotional competencies in sustaining workforce health (Gorgens-Ekermans & Brand, 2012; Almeneessier & Azer, 2023). These results have important implications for theory and practice: organizations could invest in EI training programs focused on improving emotional awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and interpersonal skills; leaders with high EI can create supportive work environments that reduce both individual and

organizational burnout; and EI-based approaches can be integrated into stress management and employee assistance programs. Future research should employ longitudinal and experimental designs, examine mediating and moderating variables, expand to diverse cultural and occupational contexts, and explore how individual EI components uniquely predict specific burnout dimensions.

Declaration by Authors

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