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Investigating the Impact of Emotional Intelligence and Job Satisfaction on Burnout of Public Sector Employees

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ABSTRACT

The Namibian government's main aim is to transform the public service to be able to achieve targets set in Vision 2030, the national planning and the Harambee Prosperity Plan. The public service in Namibia has been experiencing difficulties because of poor service delivery, and the capacity for good service delivery lies with the employees. Stress and burnout are some of the main variables that inhibit work engagement and productivity of employees. The purpose of this study was to identify whether emotional intelligence and job satisfaction have an impact on public service employees' burnout levels. This study made use of the non-experimental research design, utilising a questionnaire to collect the data. Three state-owned enterprises were targeted in Windhoek, and a sample of n=130 completed the questionnaire. Emotional intelligence (self-awareness, social skills) reported a positive relationship with job satisfaction. Emotional intelligence (self-awareness, social skills) and job satisfaction reported a positive relationship with burnout. This study recommends emotional intelligence training, stress management training, employee assistance programs and further research to understand the stressors that employees face. This study adds to the understanding of burnout within the Namibian context and the field of Psychology.

Keywords: Burnout, COVID-19, Emotional intelligence, Job satisfaction

1. INTRODUCTION

The government's main aim is to transform the public service, to be able to achieve targets set in Vision 2030, the national planning and the Harambee Prosperity Plan. These targets require having a diverse, competent, and well-managed workforce that is capable and committed to delivering quality services to the Namibian people (Namibia Institute of Public Administration

and Management, 2017). This emphasises that the well-being of employees should be a major focus in organisations (Moshoeu & Geldenhys, 2015). To provide quality services, the organisation needs to become efficient and effective. To ensure quality service delivery, organisations need to focus on the well-being of their employees (Rodrigues & Pieters, 2019). The public service in Namibia has been experiencing difficulties because of poor service delivery (Helao & Naidoo, 2016). Good service delivery capacity comes from the employees (Ashraf et al., 2016). Employees strive to provide quality services where needed (Jackson, 2020). Public organisations are expected to continuously evaluate their service delivery processes (Korir et al., 2015).

According to the Office of the President, National Planning Commission (2012), to meet its objectives, Namibia needs to invest in the development of human capital for an excellent labour force that can meet the demands of the economy and address any issues regarding human resource skills across all sectors. The government needs committed and effective employees (Namibia Institute of Public Administration and Management, 2017). Understanding the impact of emotional intelligence and job satisfaction on burnout will help determine ways to increase the commitment and effectiveness of employees, to provide quality services to the Namibian people. Organisations need employees who are psychologically connected to their work, who are willing to invest in their work, and are committed to high-quality performance (Bakker et al., 2011).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Emotional intelligence

To understand emotional intelligence (EQ), one has to look at a person's nature when interacting, which will help to understand their social functioning (Snyder et al., 2011). This is because emotional intelligence refers to the capacity to understand, manage and recognise your own emotions and the emotions of others (Carr, 2004). Looking at the combined emotional intelligence theory, emotional intelligence is the mix of an employee's ability and their personality on how they apply them to components that correspond to their work performance. Since such competencies or skills are learned, it will all depend on an employee's potential to master them, and this will establish the success and drive of this employee's performance in the organisation (Goleman, 2001).

This study focused on two dimensions of emotional intelligence, namely self-awareness and social skills. Self-awareness is the ability to have confidence and be aware of your own emotions (Mullins, 2013). Social skills refer to the ability to manage and build relationships (Bagraim et al., 2016). Having high emotional intelligence helps one increase their social effectiveness and social relations; this way, employees progress better in verbal, social and other aspects of intelligence by being open and agreeable (Snyder et al., 2011). EQ enhances the ability to sense and respond to interactions (Creed, 2011). Jung and Yoon (2016) found that emotional intelligence is important for the performance of the organisation. It is a skill that advances the understanding of the selves and others as well as to interact with them (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011).

Emotional intelligence is founded on the basic human skills of controlling feelings and inner potential to create positive interactions. The ability to communicate efficiently and effectively is an example of emotional intelligence in action (Petrovici & Dobresou, 2014). This means emotional intelligence is developed through communication, making it the core capability for effective communication (Murno et al., 2015). Public service employees need high levels of emotional intelligence as their work involves emotionally intense work (Lee, 2017). Emotional intelligence is a protective barrier against burnout consequences, and this increases performance (Sanchez-Gomez & Bresó, 2020). Kim and Qu (2019) said that a highly intelligent person can deal with demanding conditions, which can help an individual control their deviant work behaviour and avoid incivility. This then impacts employees by decreasing their exhaustion, and the employee also becomes better at adapting in a constantly changing environment (Sanchez-Gomez & Bresó, 2020).

2.2 Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a complex term that has different meanings to different people (Mullins, 2013). According to Bagraim et al. (2016), job satisfaction refers to an employee's overall attitude toward their job. It can also be defined as the way individuals feel about their job (Armstrong, 2014). When an employee is satisfied with all aspects of their job that they find significant, it will help them experience satisfaction in their job (Bagraim et al., 2016). When an employee doesn't experience satisfaction in their work role, they have difficulty executing duties, and they may not have a sense of belonging, which will make them want to leave (Pieters et al., 2020). An employee can be dissatisfied with some part of their job while satisfied with other parts. An employee's experiences will influence their attitudes (Bergh & Geldenhuys, 2014). The experiences throughout an employee's life and work impact the attitudes they develop.

Employees who are satisfied with their jobs are less likely to leave the organisation they are working for (Bagraim et al., 2016). This means that job satisfaction has a negative relationship with turnover intention (Srimindarti et al., 2017). When an employee experience decreased enthusiasm with their work, it makes them want to leave the organisation (Li et al., 2019). When an employee has positive feelings about their work, it enhances motivation to maintain and create good relationships (Lavy & Bocker, 2018). A satisfied employee's work becomes more meaningful, and their motivation is enhanced (Johnson & Dowey, 2021).

Organisations' policies that are perceived fairly, getting paid on time and access to adequate resources can encourage performance, which affects their satisfaction, but if these factors are lacking, employees can protest or strike (Bergh & Geldenhuys, 2016). Employees need to feel compensated fairly for their work (Mitonga-Monga et al., 2016). Fairness is not only about the amount of the rewards, as some people can work for less pay if there are other rewards. These rewards need to be fair according to the demands of the job (Bergh & Geldenhuys, 2014).

Job satisfaction encourages positive moods. Job satisfaction will make employees engage in behaviours that will support those moods (Belwalker et al., 2018). Other outcomes of job satisfaction are lower levels of absenteeism, lower accident rates and decreased tardiness, and increased employee well-being (Sirgy, 2012).

2.3 Burnout

When someone is experiencing stress, the body reacts by producing hormones to respond. These hormones are made according to each specific stressful event. After every stressful event, the level of hormones dies in the bloodstream (Procter & Procter, 2013). This response is conditioned to be short-term. The problem comes in when one experiences prolonged pressure, thereby making these hormone levels high for longer periods. These hormones do not rest, but they are pumped around in the bloodstream, and if this becomes a permanent feature, an employee will experience burnout (Procter & Procter, 2013). The term *burnout* was coined by Herbert Freudenberger (Cam & Ogulmus, 2019). It is defined as a psychological syndrome with a lengthened response to chronicle interpersonal stressors on the job (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). This study defines burnout, according to Cam and Ogulmus' (2019) definition, as the depletion of energy, personal achievements and dedication.

Burnout usually occurs when individuals consistently experience demands over a long period of time and when one's energy is used up more than it is restored (Procter & Procter, 2013). The consequence of prolonged stress is burnout (Werner, 2016). Studies like Toppinen-Tanner (2011) found that burnout was significantly correlated with work stressors. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a lot of stress because of the changes in lifestyle, making it a big stressor (Saadat et al., 2020). High-pressure work includes environments like working with difficult customers, supervisors and colleagues (Werner, 2016). When employees are in an environment that constantly pressures them to perform or they don't have control over their environment, they are likely to experience burnout (Armstrong, 2014).

Burnout can negatively influence employee performance, commitment and interpersonal relationships, while exhaustion leads to cynicism and reduced personal accomplishment. Burnout also enhances the withdrawal of employees from contracts, which leads to a decrease in organisational commitment (Leiter et al., 2011). Burnout can also lead to job dissatisfaction, which leads to turnover intention (Mullen et al., 2018). When an employee leaves, they lose financial benefits and social contacts. When an organisation loses an employee, there is a loss of expertise. Organisations are required to hire and train new personnel, and services provided by the organisation can be interrupted (Lambert & Barton-Bellessa, 2015). Burnout can affect one's mental and physical health, causing problems which can make employees want to withdraw from work (Lambert & Barton-Bellessa, 2015).

2.4 Emotional intelligence, job satisfaction and burnout

Lee and Chelladurai (2017) supported the notion that both acting and genuine expressions (aspects of emotional intelligence) would reduce burnout, and when an employee can manage their emotions, it can significantly predict satisfaction (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2011). Employees who experience high levels of emotional intelligence are capable of controlling their emotions. Employees can develop burnout if it becomes an emotional burden (Chen & Chen, 2018). When the job involves emotionally intense work, employees need to have a higher level of emotional intelligence because this could lead to job dissatisfaction and burnout (Lee, 2017).

2.5 Burnout and demographic variables

Past research has focused on burnout and its effect on demographic variables, in different contexts, specifically within the teaching industry (Louw et al., 2011). This study looked at the following demographic characteristics: sex, age, tenure, rank, number of dependants, educational qualification, marital status and management level. Matin et al. (2012) found that demographic characteristics such as gender, age, educational qualification and marital status can be moderators of the relationship between burnout and its outcomes. Extraneous variables can have an impact on the relationship between demographic variables and burnout (Mousavy & Nimehchisalem, 2014). Males tend to experience burnout more than females (Wulolign et al., 2020). Raidzuan et al. (2020) reported that age had a significant effect on burnout. Married employees have reported experiencing a higher level of burnout than those who are not married (Mousavy & Nimehchisalem, 2014). Louw et al. (2011) found that rank, age, gender, marital status and qualifications are not significantly correlated to burnout except for experience.

Based on the literature discussed, the following hypotheses were developed. *Hypothesis 1: Emotional intelligence has a negative relationship with the burnout of employees. Hypothesis 2: Job satisfaction has a negative relationship with the burnout of employees. Hypothesis 3: The variance in burnout can be experienced differently based on sex, age, tenure, rank, number of dependants, educational qualification, marital status and management level.*

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

This study made use of the non-experimental quantitative research design; this kind of design is used in descriptive studies (Maree, 2016). A questionnaire (survey) was used to assess and explore the influence of emotional intelligence and job satisfaction on burnout.

3.2 Population

The total population is N = 2106 employees from the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation, the Ministry of Industrialisation and Trade and the Ministry of Finance in Windhoek. This consisted of employees in non-managerial, mid-level management and senior management positions.

3.3 Sample

Random sampling technique (availability sampling) was used to allow any individual in these three ministries to have an equal opportunity of becoming part of the study (Kumar, 2011). The target sample of n=250 employees from the three ministries was approached to respond to the questionnaire. In total, 130 out of 250 responded, making the response rate to be at 52%. The low response rate may be influenced by the regulations and fear related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.4 Research instrument

The first section requested information on demographic characteristics, such as sex, age, total number of years in the profession, marital status, number of dependants, highest qualification, and management level. The second section had the *Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire*

(EQQ) by the National Health Service (Nagaraj & Ramesh, 2020). This questionnaire consisted of 20 items focusing on self-awareness and social skills with a response format from 1 (does not apply) to 5 (always applies). Example items include 'I know what makes me happy' for self-awareness and 'I am an excellent listener' for social skills. Mehta and Singh (2013) found internal consistency for self-awareness, $\alpha = .78$, and social skills, $\alpha = .78$.

The third section is the *Job Satisfaction Survey* (JSS), which was developed by Spector (1994). This study made use of the 20-item version that focused on dimensions such as pay, promotion, co-worker, supervisor and the nature of work. Discriminate, convergent and construct validity were demonstrated (Spector, 1997). Internal consistency was reported as $\alpha = .78$ (pay); $\alpha = .78$ (promotion); $\alpha = .89$ (supervision); $\alpha = .58$ (co-worker), and $\alpha = .70$ (nature of work) (Lumely et al., 2011).

The fourth section focused on the *Maslach Burnout Inventory* (MBI), which consists of 22 items that measure exhaustion, professional inefficacy and cynicism (Srivastava et al., 2019). The response format consists of a seven-point Likert scale from 0 (never) to 6 (every day). The scale measures exhaustion with five items (*I feel used up at the end of the work day*); professional inefficacy with seven items (*In my opinion, I am good at my job*) and cynicism with four items (*I have become less enthusiastic about my work*) (Marias et al., 2009). Wambui (2020) found acceptable reliability for exhaustion $\alpha = .87$, professional inefficacy $\alpha = .92$ and cynicism $\alpha = .76$.

3.5 Data analysis

Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the data. This study made use of the Cronbach alpha to assess the reliability of the instrument and the Pearson correlation to examine the relationship and strength between emotional intelligence, job satisfaction, and burnout. The Man-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis test were used to analyse the relationship between the biographical variables and burnout.

3.6 Research ethics

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Decentralised Ethics Committee of the University of Namibia. Permission was obtained from the different ministries. The employees consented to participate in the study. There was a confidentiality clause on the questionnaire to assure participants that the information obtained would not be shared with any other person outside the research. Participation was voluntary, and participants could withdraw without discrimination. No names were used; instead, numbers were assigned after the data collection. The data is kept in a locked file cabinet and the softcopy on a password-protected storage drive.

4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive Statistical Analysis

The biographical results are depicted in Table 1 below.

Table 1:

Biographical Details of the Sample

Category	Item:	Frequency:	Percentage:
SEX	Male	50	38.5
	Female	79	60.8
	Missing Values	1	0.8
AGE	Below 24	1	0.8
	24-28	5	3.8
	29-31	22	16.9
	32-35	30	23.1
	36-40	28	21.5
	41-45	19	14.6
	46-50	10	7.7
	51 or older	15	11.5
YEARS IN PROFESSION	Less than 1 year	12	9.2
	1-2	9	6.9
	3-4	6	4.6
	5-6	27	20.8
	7-8	15	11.5
	9-11	17	13.1
	12-15	17	13.1
	16 or more	27	20.8
HIGHEST QUALIFICATION	Grade 12	10	7.7
	Certificate	8	6.2
	Diploma	10	7.7

	Degree	33	25.4
	Honours Degree	39	30
	Master's Degree	26	20
	PhD Degree	1	0.8
	Missing Values	3	2.3
NUMBER OF DEPENDANTS (CHILDREN)	None	27	20.8
	1-2	54	41.5
	3-4	37	28.5
	5-6	9	6.9
	7-9	1	0.8
	10 or more	1	0.8
	Missing Values	1	0.8
MARITAL STATUS	Single	79	60.8
	Married	45	34.6
	Divorced	4	3.1
	Widowed	2	1.5
MANAGEMENT LEVEL	Non - managerial staff	95	73.1
	Mid-level management	29	22.3
	Senior management	4	3.1
	Missing Values	2	1.5
TOTAL		130	100.0

Table 2:

Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation Table

*Statistically significant (small effect): $p \leq 0.05$

+Practically significant correlation (medium effect): $0.03 \leq r \leq 0.49$

++Practically significant correlation (large effect): $r \geq 0.50$

1. EQ_SA = Emotional Intelligence (Social Awareness)
2. EQ_SS = Emotional Intelligence (Social Skills)
3. EQ_COM = Emotional Intelligence Combined
4. JS_COM = Job Satisfaction Combined

Item:	TOTAL		α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	MEAN	SD								
1. EQ_SA	54.95	86.45	.92	-						
2. EQ_SS	50.64	86.44	.95	.94++	-					
3. EQ_COM	105.59	170.04	.96	.98++	.98++	-				
4. JS_COM	57.88	51.69	.70	.18*	.18*	.18*	-			
5. BO_EXH	38.53	91.09	.93	-.05*	-.04	-.04	.03	-		
6. BO_EFF	65.31	102.53	.91	.14*	.14*	.14*	.09*	.87++	-	
7. BO_CYN	29.75	69.76	.92	.20*	.23*	.22*	.08*	.84++	.92++	-
8. BO_COM	133.58	252.65	.97	.09*	.11*	.10*	.07*	.95++	.97++	.95++

5. BO_EXH = Burnout (Exhaustion)
6. BO_CYN = Burnout (Cynicism)
7. BO_EFF= Burnout (Professional Inefficacy)
8. BO_COM = Burnout combined

Table 2 above shows that self-awareness reported a mean of 54.95, standard deviation SD of 86.45 and reliability (α) of .92. Social skills revealed a mean score of 50.64, SD=86.44 and α = .95, while the combined emotional intelligence reported a mean= 105.59, SD=170.04 and α =

.96. Job satisfaction combined revealed a mean= 57.88, SD= 51.69 and $\alpha = .70$; the dimensions of pay, promotion, co-workers, nature of work and supervision showed low reliability; thus, these associations were not examined. Exhaustion reported a mean= 38.53, SD= 91.09 and $\alpha = .93$; professional inefficacy reported a mean= 65.31, SD= 102.53 and $\alpha = .91$ and Cynicism reported a mean= 29.75, SD= 69.76 and $\alpha = .92$. Combined burnout reported a mean= 133.58, SD= 252.65 and $\alpha = .97$.

4.2 Inferential Statistical Analysis

This study found that self-awareness reported a positive relationship with combined job satisfaction ($r = .18, p < 0.05$; small effect). A negative relationship was reported between self-awareness and exhaustion ($r = -.05, p < 0.05$; small effect). Self-awareness reported a positive relationship with professional inefficacy ($r = .14, p < 0.05$; small effect), with cynicism ($r = .20, p < 0.05$; small effect) and with burnout combined ($r = .09, p < 0.05$; small effect).

Social skills reported a positive relationship with job satisfaction combined ($r = .18, p < 0.05$; small effect). Social skills then reported a negative relationship with exhaustion ($r = -.04, p < 0.05$; almost no effect), a positive relationship with professional inefficacy ($r = .14, p < 0.05$; small effect), with cynicism ($r = .23, p < 0.05$; small effect) and with burnout combined ($r = .11, p < 0.05$; small effect).

Findings show that combined emotional intelligence has a positive relationship with job satisfaction combined ($r = .18, p < 0.05$; small effect). Emotional intelligence combined has a negative relationship with exhaustion ($r = -.04, p < 0.05$; almost no effect); a positive relationship with professional inefficacy ($r = .14, p > 0.05$; small effect), with cynicism ($r = .22, p < 0.05$; small effect) and with combined burnout ($r = .10, p < 0.05$; small effect).

Job satisfaction combined has a positive relationship with exhaustion ($r = .03, p < 0.05$; almost no effect), with professional inefficacy ($r = .09, p < 0.05$; small effect) and with cynicism ($r = .08, p < 0.05$; small effect). Furthermore, combined job satisfaction has a positive relationship with combined burnout ($r = .07, p < 0.05$; small effect).

Independent samples Man-Whitney U test

1. H_{2a}: The variance in burnout is experienced differently based on sex

Table 3:

Sex Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test

N:	Mean	H	Degree freedom (df)	of	Asymptotic Sig.
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Sex (BO)	130	2.36	8.874	2	.012
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Table 3 above shows that sex was evaluated by the independent-sample Kruskal-Wallis test, which showed that the variance in burnout is experienced differently based on sex (Chi-square = 8.874; df = 2; p = .012). H_{2a} : *The variance in burnout is experienced differently based on sex; Accepted.*

Kruskal-Wallis Test

2. H_{2b} : The variance in burnout is experienced differently based on age

The variance in burnout is not experienced differently based on age (Chi-square = 8.143; df = 7; p = .320). H_{2b} : *The variance in burnout is experienced differently based on age; Rejected.*

3 H_{2c} : The variance in burnout is experienced differently based on years in the profession

The variance in burnout is not experienced differently based on years in industry (Chi-square = 10.973; df = 7; p = .140). H_{2c} : *The variance in burnout is experienced differently based on years in industry; Rejected.*

4. H_{2d} : The variance in burnout is experienced differently based on marital status

The variance in burnout is not experienced differently based on marital status (Chi-square = 5.403; df = 3; p = .145). H_{2d} : *The variance in burnout is experienced differently based on marital status; Rejected.*

5. H_{2e} : The variance in burnout is experienced differently based on the number of dependants (children).

The variance in burnout is not experienced differently based on the number of dependants (Chi-square = 10.719; df = 5; p = .057). H_{2e} : *The variance in burnout is experienced differently based on the number of dependants; Rejected.*

6. H_{2f} : The variance in burnout is experienced differently based on the highest qualifications obtained

The variance in burnout is not experienced differently based on highest qualification (Chi-square = 8.993; df = 6; p = .174). H_{2f} : *The variance in burnout is experienced differently based on the highest qualification obtained; Rejected.*

7. H_{2g} : The variance in burnout is experienced differently based on the level of management

The variance in burnout is not experienced differently based on management level (Chi-square = .678; df = 2; p = .712). H_{2g} : *The variance in burnout is experienced differently based on the level of management; Rejected.*

5. DISCUSSION

The findings show that combined emotional intelligence has a positive relationship with combined burnout. The findings of this study reject *Hypothesis 1*, focusing on the negative association between emotional intelligence and burnout. This indicates that emotionally intelligent employees can experience higher levels of burnout and vice versa. This is in contrast to past research findings like Gorgens-Ekermans and Brand (2012) and Sanchez-Gomez and Bresó (2020). Self-awareness and social skills reported a negative relationship with exhaustion in this study. This shows that when an individual is self-aware with good social skills, this will decrease the likelihood of them experiencing exhaustion. When employees can manage and perceive their own and others' emotions, they are likely to decrease their exhaustion levels (Lee, 2017). On the other hand, self-awareness and social skills reported a positive relationship with professional inefficacy and cynicism in this study.

The positive association between combined emotional intelligence and combined burnout may be explained as the COVID-19 epidemic is most likely acting as a mediator in this relationship. The pandemic restrictions have resulted in limited interactions with people all around the world (Ward, 2020). As a result, social connections decreased and loneliness worsened (Singh & Singh, 2020). The lack of engagement and persistent worry can harm the development of one's emotional intelligence. A constantly demanding work environment can influence an employee with a high level of emotional intelligence to get discouraged, thus increasing burnout (Vaezi & Fallah, 2011). However, according to Sanchez-Gomez and Bresó (2020), highly emotionally intelligent employees can have low levels of burnout and still perform because burnout has been demonstrated to be a moderator between emotional intelligence and performance.

This study discovered that combined job satisfaction has a positive relationship with combined burnout. The results reject *Hypothesis 2* of this study. Previous studies found an inverse association between job satisfaction and burnout (Ismail et al., 2013; Payne et al., 2020). In greater detail, combined job satisfaction was found to have a positive relationship with exhaustion, professional inefficacy and cynicism in this study. Bruce and Sangweni (2020) discovered that job satisfaction has a negative relationship with exhaustion and cynicism and a positive relationship with professional efficacy. Experiencing a high level of job satisfaction and a high level of burnout or vice versa can show that work circumstances might not be the cause for the burnout. Payne et al. (2020) have explained that this can be possible if the burnout is influenced by factors that are personal, like personal health or family demands. Having an employee experiencing low levels of job satisfaction and low levels of burnout can indicate that work is viewed as a tool for obtaining money in fulfilling their basic needs (Wiltshire, 2016). Even if they are not experiencing burnout, employees may be dissatisfied with their jobs but believe they have no choice but to continue working to earn a living. External factors can also come into play. These external factors may include the constant retrenchments of employees or the high unemployment rate in Namibia, and the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to research, emotionally intelligent public service employees with reduced burnout can improve job satisfaction, which increases their commitment to performing (Lee, 2017). Burnout is thought to play a role in the relationship between emotional intelligence and job

satisfaction by acting as a moderator (Lee & Ok, 2012). However, according to this study, it is possible for an emotionally intelligent employee who is satisfied with their job to experience burnout.

This study assessed whether the demographic variables of sex, age, highest qualification obtained, years in industry, marital status, number of dependants and level of management were experienced differently in relation to burnout. The variance in burnout is experienced differently based on sex. Burnout is not experienced differently based on age, number of years in industry, marital status, number of dependants, highest qualification and management level. These findings are inconsistent with those of Bezuidenhout and Cilliers (2011), who stated that older females are more prone to experience burnout compared to those who are younger. However, Louw et al. (2011) found that burnout is experienced differently with the number of years in industry, while age, gender, position, marital status and qualifications did not.

5.1 Limitations and implications

When interpreting the findings of this study, the following should be considered. Despite the effort put into the data collection, the study has a response rate of only 52% (130/250). The questionnaires were completed by the majority of employees during the peak of COVID-19 infections and death tolls as well as during the aftermath of such a stressful/ traumatising period. Some employees pointed out that the MBI instruments' response ratings were confusing at times.

5.2 Theoretical and Practical Implications

It is recommended that the emotional intelligence of employees be assessed to identify the levels of emotional intelligence and which employees may require additional training. Emotional intelligence training can also aid in ensuring the effectiveness and commitment of employees to their work (Akintayo & Babalola, 2012).

This study recommends the provision of training on emotional intelligence and learning how to deal with stressors from both work and family interference. This can also be done through mindfulness activities (such as mindfulness training), which have been shown to improve both physical and mental outcomes (Creswell & Lindsay, 2014). The focal point is on individual awareness and attention (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). This study also recommends training on how emotional regulation and management can give employees the ability to reach their objectives (Pio et al., 2021).

This study also suggests that organisations should make use of assessments and surveys to evaluate burnout and job satisfaction. Constant evaluation and research of job attitudes can help organisations be able to develop excellent strategies (Louw et al., 2011). In the end, what could work for one organisation might not necessarily work for others.

Suggestion boxes and stay interviews can allow employees an opportunity to discuss with employers their struggles, dislikes and likes in relation to their current position and what would keep them with the organisation (Nelson, 2015). This would help employees feel heard, and according to Reeves et al. (2012), having employees heard can help management obtain in-

depth insight into how to help employees perform even better. Including employees as part of the decision-making processes can impact their performance positively (Sukimo & Seingthai, 2014).

Organisations should encourage wellness programs and create awareness among employees on the importance of wellness programs. One important factor to consider is that an organisation cannot become productive and successful if its employees are feeling unwell and not engaged (Richardsen & Burke, 2014). These programs help promote the improvement of employees' physiological, social and mental well-being (Richardsen & Burke, 2014). Wellness programs can also help employees be able to deal with stressors (Lange, 2014). Being able to identify and manage stressors more effectively can build resilience and coping. Employees should also be encouraged to seek counselling to help them cope better (Akomolafe & Olatomide, 2013). Having a platform to air concerns or talk to a counsellor can relieve employees of worries and may act as a sounding board to identify credible solutions to their challenges.

Further research is needed to identify whether COVID-19 is a mediating factor in the relationship between emotional intelligence, job satisfaction and burnout. Additional research is also needed to explore whether burnout is experienced differently according to sex, age, tenure, rank, number of dependants, educational qualification and marital status in other settings and after the Covid-19 pandemic. A qualitative approach may be undertaken to provide additional insights into the current findings. Future studies may investigate other government organisations as well. The results of this study have contributed to an understanding of the relationship between emotional intelligence, job satisfaction and burnout in the Namibian context. The findings can be used by organisations as a tool in improving job satisfaction and emotional intelligence, which can lead to increased performance.

6. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to assess whether emotional intelligence and job satisfaction influence burnout. Emotional intelligence reported a positive relationship with burnout. Job satisfaction reported a positive relationship with burnout. The study discovered that variance in burnout is experienced differently based on sex, but it is not experienced differently based on age, number of years in industry, marital status, number of dependants, highest qualification or management level.

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