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Emotional Exhaustion in Morocco: Quantitative Analysis of Influencing Factors among Executives

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Abstract: - The objective of this study is to explore the relationship between the individual and their organization, with a particular focus on emotional exhaustion. Using a mixed empirical approach, we aim to better understand the causes of emotional exhaustion, thus providing in-depth insights into this critical dimension of the connection between individuals and their professional environment.

Following the conclusions of the qualitative study conducted with fourteen executives experiencing emotional exhaustion, we implemented a questionnaire to assess the extent of this phenomenon. A survey of 327 executives in the Moroccan private sector was conducted to validate the quality of measurement scales, the overall model, and research hypotheses. The analysis of the data collected during this survey reveals the significance of workplace monotony, role ambiguity, and recognition at work in triggering emotional exhaustion.

Keywords: Emotional exhaustion; Quantitative study; Moroccan executives; PLS method.

INTRODUCTION

The study of emotional exhaustion and its antecedents holds crucial significance in the contemporary professional context. Indeed, the dynamics between individuals and their work environment are complex, shaped by a multitude of factors. Emotional exhaustion, as a phenomenon intrinsically linked to the emotional demands of work, impacts not only individual health but also the overall performance of organizations.

Emotional exhaustion goes beyond a mere feeling of fatigue; it encompasses a progressive erosion of emotional resources, leading to an inability to effectively manage emotions both professionally and personally. This phenomenon can manifest through various symptoms such as persistent fatigue, cynicism towards work, and a diminished sense of professional accomplishment.

Understanding the origins of emotional exhaustion is essential for designing effective management strategies. The antecedents of this phenomenon can vary, ranging from excessive workload to challenging interpersonal relationships. Identifying these precursor factors enables anticipation and prevention of risk situations, thereby promoting employee well-being and productivity within organizations. Hence, we seek to understand to what extent the professional environment can generate emotional exhaustion and what its real causes are.

This study aims to unravel the intricacies of emotional exhaustion by thoroughly exploring its antecedents. We analyze the relationships between various variables and emotional exhaustion, assessing their validity and reliability. To achieve this, we conducted an in-depth quantitative study involving 327 executives to gauge the extent of emotional exhaustion in Morocco. Using appropriate statistical tools, we examined measurement scales, the model, and research hypotheses. Through this approach, we aspire to make meaningful contributions both to the academic understanding of emotional exhaustion and to human resource management practices in the contemporary professional world.

Thus, we present the theoretical framework and research hypotheses. Subsequently, we describe the data collection process, analyze the gathered information, and conclude with a discussion of the obtained results.

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I. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The literature on emotional exhaustion largely focuses on job satisfaction and burnout. Burnout is described as emotional exhaustion and cynicism that often occurs in individuals working with people, with the key characteristic of the burnout experience being an increase in emotional exhaustion [1] [2] [3]. Emotional exhaustion occurs when an individual's emotional resources are so depleted that they feel they have nothing more to give psychologically to others [1]. Furthermore, it has been described as a chronic state of depleted emotional resources resulting from demanding work [2].

A. Theory of resource preservation

The Theory of Conservation of Resources (TCR), proposed by Stevan Hobfoll, is a psychological framework that helps explain how individuals cope with stress and adversity, particularly in the context of preserving and protecting their resources. The theory posits that individuals strive to acquire, retain, and safeguard their resources, and that the loss or threat of loss of these resources can lead to stress reactions. These stress reactions, in turn, can have various psychological and physiological consequences.

In the context of emotional exhaustion, a key component of burnout, the Theory of Conservation of Resources can be applied to understand how the depletion of emotional and interpersonal resources can contribute to the development of emotional exhaustion. Here's how the TCR can be linked to emotional exhaustion:

Resource Depletion: Emotional exhaustion can be seen as the result of a decline in emotional and interpersonal resources. In the workplace, individuals invest emotional energy in their tasks, interactions with colleagues, and managing professional demands. When demands exceed available resources or when individuals perceive a threat to their emotional resources, emotional exhaustion can occur.

Investment and Loss of Resources: Individuals invest emotional resources in their work, relationships, and various areas of their lives. When the returns on these investments are perceived as inadequate, or when individuals face chronic stress that depletes emotional resources faster than they can be replenished, emotional exhaustion can occur.

Adaptation Strategies: The Theory of Conservation of Resources suggests that individuals use various adaptation strategies to protect and replenish their resources. However, if adaptation strategies are insufficient or ineffective, emotional exhaustion can result from prolonged exposure to stress.

Professional Demands and Resources Model: The Professional Demands and Resources Model, which is related to TCR, posits that professional demands and resources can influence well-being. Emotional exhaustion can occur when professional demands exceed available emotional resources, leading to a depletion of emotional resources.

Impact on Overall Well-being: Emotional exhaustion, as a manifestation of resource depletion, can have a cascading effect on overall well-being. It can contribute to physical and mental health problems, decreased professional performance, and an increased likelihood of burnout.

B. Research hypotheses

Our study aims to explore, detail, and elucidate the process of emotional exhaustion development among Moroccan executives. Our objective is to shed light on the stress factors associated with emotional exhaustion. Throughout this research, we have conducted a dynamic interplay between existing literature and field observations to formulate empirical hypotheses to address our research question.

Our exploratory qualitative study is based on fourteen life narratives collected from executives experiencing emotional exhaustion. It has enriched the theoretical model established following literature analysis by highlighting new variables and suggesting research avenues to deepen the understanding of the links between emotional exhaustion and its antecedents.
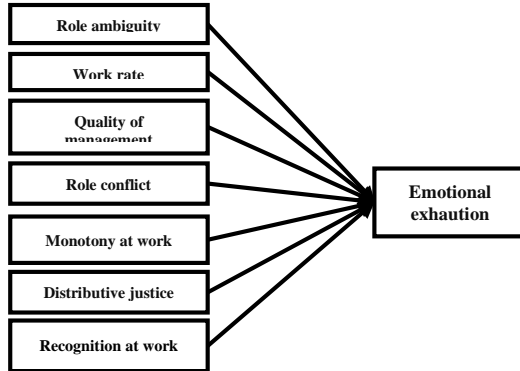
Fig. 1. Conceptual model derived from qualitative study

High workload and emotional exhaustion

A high workload pace is closely linked to a considerable workload, leading to deteriorating health among exhausted executives. According to [4], [5], [6], and [7], controlling the pace and quantity of work imposed by the position is impossible, making these factors significant sources of stress.

H1: High workload pace generates emotional exhaustion

Role ambiguity and emotional exhaustion

Working sometimes without a job description and frequently performing tasks not aligned with the role generates both quantitative and emotional burdens on executives, leading to physical problems and negative emotions towards others. A study on burnout among 562 teachers highlights a significant negative correlation between role clarity (role conflicts and ambiguities) and emotional exhaustion, indicating that well-defined roles reduce the sense of emotional exhaustion [8].

H2: Role ambiguity generates emotional exhaustion

Work monotony and emotional exhaustion

Workload has profoundly impacted the professional lives of many executives. However, when daily tasks become monotonous and repetitive, it not only breeds boredom but also exhaustion. Workplace routine and monotony are triggers for emotional exhaustion, causing negative emotions towards others, especially superiors.

H3: Workplace monotony generates emotional exhaustion

Role conflict and emotional exhaustion

Our analysis reveals disruptions in the interpersonal relationships of executives, encompassing interactions with superiors, colleagues, clients, and collaborators. Conflicts emerge due to various triggers such as compensation, working methods, and workload. This unfavorable situation results in negative emotions such as hatred, anger, irritability, and sometimes revenge among executives, contributing to a sense of emotional exhaustion. According to [9], role-related problems, such as role conflicts, represent the primary stress factors likely to compromise mental health at work.

H4: Role conflict generates emotional exhaustion

Work recognition and emotional exhaustion

Interviews have revealed that the lack of verbal recognition, primarily from superiors, has disrupted the professional balance of some executives. They emphasized that the absence of this form of motivation and appreciation has had negative repercussions on their physical and emotional states, leading to emotional exhaustion. In the same context, [10] assert that the deficit of gratitude, reward, or pride is correlated with higher levels of emotional exhaustion.

H5: Recognition generates emotional exhaustion

Management quality and emotional exhaustion

The interviewed executives invest their time fully, working intensely day and night to achieve the ultimate goal of organizational performance. However, this dedication comes with dehumanization at work, characterized by a rigid

system that separates the task from the employee, creating an unfavorable work climate. Factors such as incompetent profiles from superiors and their lack of empathy also contribute to the exhaustion of executives. According to the results of a university survey on working conditions among executives in a French employment association, the quality of management emerges as the most influential variable on well-being [11].

H6: Management quality generates emotional exhaustion

Organizational justice and emotional exhaustion

Executives state that their remuneration does not at all correspond to the efforts they put into work, creating a sense of injustice. This perception of injustice is one among several factors contributing to the sense of exhaustion among executives. Several authors corroborate this observation. According to [12], when an individual's investment exceeds what they receive in return, and they perceive it as unjust, the level of burnout tends to be higher. This inequity can also be perceived in interactions with the organization or with clients, as indicated by [13].

H7: Interpersonal justice generates emotional exhaustion

II.   EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

We dedicate this section to understand the experience of executives in the workplace, emphasizing the adopted methodology and the obtained results to reveal the actual situation of Moroccan executives in the professional world.

A.   Participants

Our sample consists of 327 executives (225 males and 102 females) who voluntarily responded to our questionnaire, hailing from various cities across the Moroccan territory. The executives are predominantly male, representing 68.8% of the population, while females make up 31.2%. The majority of executives are young, with 270 individuals (82.6%) being under the age of 35, and 53 (16.2%) falling in the age range of 35 to 49. Only 0.9% (3 executives) of the executive population are between 50 and 54 years old. However, the distribution of executives in terms of age indicates an absence of profiles aged 54 and above. Furthermore, all executives have pursued higher education, with 178 (54.4%) holding a Bac+5 level, 78 (23.9%) being state engineers, 17 (5.2%) holding bachelor's degrees, and 12 (3.7%) having a doctorate. Among the higher education graduates, a small proportion of executives have Bac+2, Bac+4, and Bac+6 levels.

B.   Measurement instruments

To create a measurement scale adapted to the research context, it is essential to undergo a thorough validation process. This assessment will be carried out through a pre-test, allowing for the reformulation, addition, or removal of items to make them simpler and clearer. At this stage of the research, a dataset has been identified and manually processed using various qualitative data processing techniques. Seven themes (variables) emerged from the interview analysis, for which a list of 44 items was established. Where possible, existing scales developed and validated in the literature were used. Seven existing scales were applied, including the one specifically developed to measure workplace monotony.

Table 1. Characteristics of Measurement Scales

Variables	Sources	Number of items	Number of items after pre-test
Emotional exhaustion	[14] [15] **for the french version**	**3 items**	**5 items**
Rhythm and Workload	[16]	**4 items**	**7 items**
Management quality (Empathy; Exemplary behavior)	[17]	**6 items**	**6 items**
Workplace recognition	[18]	**8 items**	**8 items**
Distributive justice	[19] [20]**for the french version**	**4 items**	**4 items**
Role conflict	[21]	**8 items**	**4 items**
Role ambiguity	[21]	**4 items**	**4 items**
Monotony at work	**Creation**	**6 items**	**6 items**

C. Data analysis

The results of the Bartlett test and the KMO indicator indicate that the data are suitable for a factor analysis (KMO > 0.6, p < 0.0005) for all variables. Principal component analysis was conducted using unrotated principal axes. To achieve a clear factorial structure, all complex items were eliminated. The table above demonstrates an adequate representation of all variables, each exclusively linked to a factor. Regarding the internal consistency of the scales, it is deemed highly satisfactory, with a Cronbach's alpha exceeding 0.6 for all variables.

Table 2. Results of the Exploratory Analysis

Variables	KMO	Bartlett	total variance	Number of factors	retained items	Cronbach's alpha
Emotional exhaustion	0.62	0.000	82.96%	1	2	0.79
Rhythm and workload	0.88	0.000	57.34%	1	5	0.87
Role ambiguity	0.80	0.000	67.47%	1	4	0.83
Role conflict	0.62	0.000	47.32%	1	2	0.61
Monotony at work	0.85	0.000	62.65%	1	4	0.88
Empathy	0.72	0.000	74.85%	1	3	0.83
Exemplary behavior	0.67	0.000	72.97%	1	3	0.80
Distributive justice	0.83	0.000	82.54%	1	4	0.82
Company recognition	0.81	0.000	65.37%	1	4	0.82
Recognition from superiors	0.82	0.000	74.65%	1	4	0.88

D. Internal and external model testing

The criteria for convergent and discriminant validity show satisfactory results. The factorial contributions of the items are significant, primarily focused on the construct they are supposed to measure. Regarding discriminant validity, the results demonstrate that each measure has the ability to produce distinct results compared to measures of other constructs.

The predictive relevance of latent variables, or their nomological validity, is assessed for the structural model. This assessment is based on the analysis of the coefficient of determination R^2, the Stone-Geisser Q^2 coefficient, and the Goodness-of-fit (GoF) index. The results of the external model are presented in Table No. 3.

Table 3. Fit indices of our model

Constructs	structural model (external)	Measurement model (internal)
	R^2	AVE
Emotional exhaustion	0.625	0.829
Rhythm and Workload		0.573
Monotony at work		0.625
Role ambiguity		0.671
Role conflict		0.737
Recognition from superiors		0.745
Distributive justice		0.825
Empathy		0.746
Exemplary behavior		0.728
Mean	0.625	0.719
GOF	0.568	

According to the data presented in the table above, the value of GoF is highly satisfactory, calculated as follows: GoF = $\sqrt{[(0.625) \times (0.719)]}$ = 0.568. This value exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.36, as stipulated in the literature.

Thus, we can conclude that the GoF model in this study is significantly high, allowing us to affirm that the overall PLS model validity is adequate.

E. Hypothesis testing

We employed the resampling method or bootstrap to assess the statistical significance of each coefficient. The critical ratios of structural coefficients, related to the T-test, should exceed 1.96 to be considered significant. The results of the tests are presented in Table No. 4, where the hypotheses of our study were confirmed.

Table 4. Structural Model testing (internal model)

Hypotheses	t- value	p- value	Judgment
Role ambiguity -> emotional exhaution	2,4620	0,0142	**Validated**
Role conflict -> Emotional exhaution	0,2587	0,7959	Rejected
Empathy -> Emotional exhaution	1,6297	0,1038	Rejected
Exemplary behavior -> Emotional exhaution	0,6227	0,5338	Rejected
Monotony at work -> Emotional exhaution	8,4914	0,0000	**Validated**
Recognition from superiors -> Emotional exhaution	2,1462	0,0323	**Validated**
Rhythm and Workload -> Emotional exhaution	0,8306	0,4066	Rejected
Distributive justice-> Emotional exhaution	0,7804	0,4355	Rejected

We observe that three causal relationships between latent variables are significant (T statistics >1.96; p<0.01, p<0.05).

DISCUSSION

Our findings highlight that role ambiguity contributes to the development of emotional exhaustion. This observation aligns with existing literature, which asserts that role ambiguity acts as a stressor, thus accentuating professional burnout. Furthermore, a study conducted among university teachers indicates that low levels of conflicts and role ambiguities explain high levels of personal accomplishment. The researchers add that, even at the elementary level, teachers subjected to high levels of conflicts and role ambiguity also report high scores of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. In contrast, levels of personal achievements at work are rather limited [22].

This newly introduced variable, derived from field observations, represents the difficulty of daily work performed by executives. This monotonous, routine, and demanding work position generates feelings of frustration and hostility towards the organization.

The absence of recognition is correlated with all three aspects of [1] burnout model. The need to maintain the relationship by deploying efforts and personal resources despite the perception of injustice is associated with emotional exhaustion. This perception of injustice leads to a tendency to engage less in the relationship, thus reducing investment in the goal of restoring perceived equity.

The results of confirmatory analysis have highlighted that the deficit of recognition at work plays a role in the manifestation of acute exhaustion in individuals. This deficiency, particularly perceived at the level of superiors (through verbal recognition), influences the development of emotional exhaustion among executives. The literature attests to the existence of this positive correlation, indicating that the absence of gratitude, reward, or pride is associated with a higher level of professional burnout.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, emotional exhaustion is a complex phenomenon resulting from various interconnected antecedents and factors. A thorough examination of its origins reveals the importance of considering both organizational and relational aspects that contribute to this condition.

On the organizational level, excessive workloads associated with monotonous, routine, and ambiguous tasks, as well as unrealistic expectations, are factors that can lead to emotional exhaustion. The work environment and organizational culture play a crucial role in managing individuals' emotional stress.

On the relational level, factors such as lack of recognition from superiors and relational difficulties can also contribute to emotional exhaustion. It is essential to recognize the complex interaction between these factors and implement prevention and intervention strategies at multiple levels.

Research continues to explore innovative approaches to mitigate emotional exhaustion, focusing on promoting individual resilience, enhancing stress management skills, organizational awareness, and creating work environments conducive to mental health.

In summary, addressing emotional exhaustion requires a holistic approach, incorporating changes at both the individual and organizational levels. By investing in the understanding and management of these antecedents, it is possible to create conditions conducive to emotional health, fostering sustainable well-being for individuals in their professional and personal environments.

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