

Analysis of the factors that influence the emotional fatigue of women who work in commercial companies

Análisis de los factores que influyen en el cansancio emocional de las mujeres que laboran en empresas comerciales

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ABSTRACT

This research was based on analyzing the factors that influence emotional exhaustion in women working in commercial companies, considering its impact on well-being and job performance. This study is justified by the growing incidence of burnout in emotionally demanding environments, which can affect mental health and reduce productivity. The main objective is to identify the factors associated with emotional exhaustion and their relationship with the organizational climate. In addition, it seeks to determine how these elements affect the motivation and job satisfaction of female workers. The methodology used is quantitative and descriptive, based on the application of surveys and structured interviews to a sample of 660 people working in commercial companies. Variables such as workload, organizational support, and work-life balance were analyzed. The main results indicate that work overload, lack of recognition, and poor support from superiors are determining factors in the onset of emotional exhaustion. Likewise, it was observed that a positive organizational climate contributes to mitigating its effects.

Keywords: Burnout, stress, productivity, organizational climate, motivation

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RESUMEN

La presente investigación se basó en analizar los factores que influyen en el cansancio emocional de las mujeres que laboran en empresas comerciales, considerando su impacto en el bienestar y el desempeño laboral. Este estudio se justifica por la creciente incidencia del burnout en entornos de alta demanda emocional, lo que puede afectar la salud mental y reducir la productividad. El principal objetivo es identificar los factores asociados al cansancio emocional y su relación con el clima organizacional. Además, se busca determinar de qué manera estos elementos inciden en la motivación y satisfacción laboral de las trabajadoras. La metodología empleada es de enfoque cuantitativo y descriptivo, basada en la aplicación de encuestas y entrevistas estructuradas a una muestra de 660 personas que laboran en empresas comerciales. Se analizaron variables como carga laboral, apoyo organizacional y equilibrio entre la vida personal y el trabajo. Los principales resultados indican que una sobrecarga laboral, la falta de reconocimiento y el escaso apoyo de los superiores son factores determinantes en la aparición del cansancio emocional. Asimismo, se observó que un clima organizacional positivo contribuye a mitigar sus efectos.

Palabras clave: Burnout, estrés, productividad, clima organizacional, motivación

INTRODUCTION

Burnout syndrome (BS) affects a large part of the world's population and arises especially when individuals are involved in stressful situations due to being overloaded with activities or tasks, or when their environment demands more than they are capable of. The disorder is associated with emotional exhaustion, which leads to resignation, health problems, and absenteeism in the individual; this causes organizations to fail to meet their objectives and goals (Ordóñez et al., 2021). The relationship between mental health and productivity is a fact; individuals experience stress, fatigue, workload, and other psychosocial risks, which affect their job performance (Uribe & Uribe, 2020). The main symptoms are insomnia, irritability, difficulty concentrating, and somatic discomfort, which directly affect organizations with physical illnesses if not treated promptly (Estrada et al., 2023).

In recent decades, organizations have been in a changing environment, and structural dysfunction, inefficient division of labor, and task overload are considered risks to the

physical and mental health of workers (Marsollier, 2019). Organizations have adapted new strategies to deal with emotional exhaustion, especially among female workers, because women are considered the fundamental pillar of their households. The balance that must exist between home and professional life is important. In the workplace, commercial companies propose agreed-upon goals that must be met at the end of the day (García et al., 2021). Women's daily lives are characterized by responsibilities both at home and at work. They experience inequality in a field of work where it is uncommon for a woman to hold a leadership position. Gender discrimination exists due to stereotypes that still persist, reflecting cultural barriers, biases, and prejudices (Castillo et al., 2020).

Thanks to Santander, women have achieved empowerment despite gender inequality. Orquera also mentions that female leadership promotes innovation (Haro & Naranjo, 2022). Despite progress, the low representation of women in management positions raises questions about their abilities, which underscores the importance of fostering a more inclusive environment (E. Hernández & Stan, 2023). Women are characterized by being more careful and prudent in managing information, while men show more confidence when making decisions in the commercial sphere. García Solarte demonstrated that gender influences the performance of managers, with organizations led by women promoting a sense of belonging and teamwork. In contrast, organizations led by men drive productivity and competitiveness (Rosas et al., 2023).

Over the last four years, commercial organizations have developed new strategies to combat emotional exhaustion, one of which is teleworking, which has had a major impact during the global pandemic. It is based on women being able to work from home and take care of their domestic duties without neglecting any key aspects of their lives. In addition to incorporating flexible schedules and reducing workloads, it reduces the time spent commuting to the workplace, allowing women to devote themselves to other activities such as rest. However, there are organizations that do not implement these strategies due to a lack of widespread policies, which is a major challenge for women working in this sector (Venegas & Leyva, 2020).

Organizations have incorporated tools such as mindfulness, a relaxation technique to reduce stress, pain, anxiety, and depression, which has some clinical evidence (Oblitas et al., 2019). It is carried out through protocols or interventions based on mindfulness, and there are currently several countermeasures for stress and depressive states (Molina, 2022). After the pandemic, it was considered necessary to take preventive measures to maintain the emotional health of employees, such as comprehensive emotional well-being programs in organizations, as a tool for retaining, building affinity, and retaining human talent (Rodríguez & Rodríguez, 2023). It is essential to identify within organizations whether an employee is showing symptoms so that timely action can be taken, as this affects productivity (Méndez et al., 2023).

Emotional exhaustion is conceptualized as the depletion of energy, fatigue, and exhaustion, both physical and psychological, caused by excessive psychological demands,

which can lead people to feel that their internal resources are being depleted (Estrada & Gallegos, 2022). In the 1970s, Freudenberger referred to the term burnout as a combination of emotional exhaustion, physical fatigue, and loss of interest in work (González et al., 2019).

The main objective of this research is to analyze the factors that influence the emotional exhaustion of women working in commercial companies. To this end, several specific objectives are proposed. First, we seek to identify the organizational policies and practices that institutions in the commercial sector implement to address the emotional exhaustion of their female workers, as well as to understand their perception of the importance of emotional well-being in organizational performance. Second, it aims to determine the level of emotional exhaustion experienced by female workers in this sector. Finally, it proposes to design an organizational intervention model based on the results obtained, with strategies aimed at preventing emotional exhaustion in female workers in the commercial sector.

Emotional exhaustion is conceptualized as the depletion of energy, fatigue, and exhaustion, both physical and psychological, caused by excessive psychological demands, which can lead people to feel that their internal resources are being depleted (Estrada & Gallegos, 2022). In the theory proposed by Maslach and Jackson, burnout is explained as the feeling of being emotionally exhausted and overwhelmed, caused by a heavy workload. It is also linked to feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, and confinement, and can lead to suicidal thoughts (Salirrosas et al., 2023).

There are various factors, such as the work environment, lack of interest on the part of managers, lack of incentives, and the fact that workers have not been evaluated to determine whether they are satisfied with their current job (Román, 2020). Freudenberger identified burnout as the excessive demand on workers' energy, resources, and availability, which has repercussions on the physical, emotional, and psychological integrity of those who suffer from it. This was taken up by authors such as Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (M. Hernández et al., 2021).

Mindfulness is a tool that improves the physical and emotional well-being of employees, increases effective responses and decision-making capacity, and benefits productivity. Organizations must promote the commitment of their workers to achieve high standards of quality of working life and meet their goals (Rodríguez & Rodríguez, 2023). Emotional exhaustion is measured using tools such as the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI), which assess the frequency and intensity of fatigue, demotivation, and stress, providing a detailed view of employees' emotional well-being (Golonka et al., 2019). Cognitive-behavioral therapy is used for this purpose, aimed at reorienting disturbed thoughts and reversing anxiety and depression. Mindfulness is a tool that acts on disturbed thoughts, allowing control over stress. Religion acts on anxiety and depression as a palliative for helplessness, especially in more religious countries (Dionicio et al., 2023).

Good healthy business practices are related to the promotion and optimization of resources that improve tasks, the social environment, and the company. They are not techniques for developing human potential, but rather intrinsic cultural components of the company that are part of the business philosophy (Sánchez et al., 2021).

A change in attitude and satisfaction was observed among employees, their salaries were balanced, and there is greater motivation to achieve their goals. Management is willing to continue with the change to achieve improvements, they are satisfied, and there is interest in continuing with other projects (Montaño et al., 2022).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The inductive method was used in this research. A research question will be formulated, data will be collected through surveys, and a detailed analysis will be carried out to identify specific patterns that lead to general conclusions.

Due to its nature, this article is documentary and field-based. Furthermore, it is a non-experimental study as it analyzes consumption in real situations rather than in a controlled laboratory environment. Finally, it is a cross-sectional study because it involves the collection of data at a single point in time.

This project is characterized by a descriptive level of research with a quantitative and qualitative approach.

For this article, surveys and interviews were selected as methods to further explore the problem posed.

In Ecuador, women represent 50.5% of the population. In the first quarter of 2023, only a portion of the economically active population (EAP) managed to find jobs with incomes above the basic wage. In February 2024, registered female employment reached 42.26%, highlighting a labor gap compared to men. Although sectors such as commerce generate greater opportunities, inequalities persist that limit women's equal participation in the labor market.

Infinite sampling will be used for the evaluation. To calculate the random sample size required for an infinite population with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the respective formula is applied, reaching a sample size of $n= 385$ individuals.

Where:

n : is the sample size

Z : is the z-value corresponding to the desired confidence level (in this case, 1.96 for a confidence level of 95%)

p : is the proportion of the population that has the characteristic being studied (as we have no prior information, we assume that $p = 0.5$)

q : is the complementary proportion to p ($q = 1 - p$)

e : is the desired margin of error in decimal (in this case, 0.05)

Substituting the values, we have:

n = 385

Surveys were conducted with 660 people using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) questionnaire on burnout syndrome, focusing specifically on the exhaustion or emotional fatigue subscale. This subscale assesses the experience of feeling emotionally exhausted due to work demands. The questionnaire includes nine key questions (1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 13, 14, 16, and 20).

Scale measurement ranges:

- 0 = Never
- 1 = A few times a year or less
- 2 = Once a month or less
- 3 = A few times a month
- 4 = Once a week
- 5 = A few times a week
- 6 = Every day

To conduct interviews with company managers and/or executives of commercial companies, non-random sampling is used and a sample size of n = 5 is selected.

RESULTS

Analysis of interviews with experts confirmed that emotional exhaustion is due to a lack of recognition in the workplace, poor communication, excessive workloads, and a lack of trust among employees. Table 1 shows the practices implemented by organizations to combat or mitigate emotional exhaustion, the importance of employee well-being, the importance of leadership management, and communication channels.

The expert interviews revealed that organizations are adopting strategies that address emotional exhaustion, with a focus on the well-being of human talent. These initiatives include efficient role management, active breaks, and recreational activities, which improve productivity within the organization. Leadership within an organization is essential; an effective leader inspires confidence, promotes clear communication, and fosters a positive work environment.

The sample is characterized as follows:

The age distribution shows a predominance of young people between 25 and 34 years old, representing 43.79%, followed by those under 25. This means that the analysis of emotional exhaustion will focus on young adults.

64.70% of respondents are single, and 20.45% are married. Therefore, those who are cohabiting (8.64%), divorced (5%), and widowed (1.21%) represent a non-predominant number within the sample.

67.12% indicated that they are Catholic, followed by Evangelicals with 16.36% and people without religion with 10.61%. The majority of the sample is Catholic, compared to other religions.

62.27% of respondents have no children, while 18.48% have one child and 11.52% have two children.

This shows that the majority of the population surveyed does not have children.

61.36% say they sleep between 5 and 7 hours a day, followed by 32.58% who sleep between 7 and 9 hours. Only 5.3% sleep less than 4 hours and 0.76% sleep more than 9 hours, which indicates that a large proportion do not get the recommended amount of sleep for adequate rest, and this could affect their physical and mental health.

The sample rated their mental health as "Neither good nor bad" (41.06%), followed by those who considered it 'Good' (35.76%) and "Very good" (13.94%). A total of 9.24% perceived it as "Bad" or "Very bad." Overall, this shows a central tendency in the rating of their mental health. 41.21% of respondents rated their physical health as "Neither good nor bad" and 31.21% rated it as "Good." 5.45% considered it to be very poor.

Respondents have a low or zero level of physical activity, as almost 84% are below the recommended minimum of 150 minutes per week. This suggests opportunities to encourage active lifestyles and promote physical health in this group.

The sample has household incomes of \$1,000 or less, representing 74.25%, with the largest groups in the ranges of \$501-\$1,000 (37.58%) and \$500 or less (36.67%). Only 7.09% exceed \$1,500, reflecting a prevalence of low income. This may suggest economic limitations and challenges in accessing opportunities and financial stability.

21.67% experience emotional exhaustion "a few times a month," while 9.70% feel it daily, which is concerning. Although 7.27% never feel exhausted, the majority face this problem at varying frequencies. Strategies to reduce work stress and improve well-being need to be implemented.

24.85% feel tired a few times a week, followed by 19.24% who experience it daily. Only 3.94% never feel tired. This suggests that work fatigue is common and requires measures to improve energy and balance the workload.

22.73% feel fatigue a few times a year, while 17.12% feel it a few times a week and 7.88% feel it daily. Although fatigue at the start of the day is not constant for everyone, it affects a significant group, which could mean that respondents are not getting adequate rest.

45.45% of the sample does not feel frequent fatigue when working with people, while 30.05% does experience it regularly, indicating a risk of emotional exhaustion and the need to improve well-being at work.

41.82% do not feel frequent exhaustion, but 33.34% experience it regularly, indicating a risk of burnout and the need to improve well-being at work. 28.03% never feel frustrated at work, 19.24% mention that they feel frustrated a few times a year, and 6.06% feel frustrated every day.

20.91% feel they spend too much time at work every day, followed by 17.42% who experience it a few times a year and 17.12% who never feel this way. Although some do not see this problem frequently, a significant group faces this feeling on a daily basis, which could highlight work overload or a lack of work-life balance.

26.67% never feel stress from working directly with people, followed by 22.58% who experience it a few times a year. However, 9.70% face this stress daily.

33.33% never feel pushed to their limits at work, while 5.91% reported feeling pushed to their limits, and 19.85% experience this feeling a few times a year. Although extreme exhaustion is not common, a group faces this situation frequently, suggesting the need for measures to prevent work overload.

It was found that 41.21% of respondents show a high level of emotional exhaustion, which makes it essential to promote strategies to counteract this.

The results of this research showed that the respondents have a high level of emotional exhaustion, represented by 41.21% of the sample, and 38.79% represent a low level.

According to Chavarría, emotional exhaustion is due to an imbalance between personal and professional aspects, which has become a highly prevalent adaptive disorder today. This affects the quality of life of workers and interpersonal relationships within the organizational environment, in contrast to the information gathered in the interviews, since the work environment is fundamental for employees (Flores et al., 2023). Failure to achieve this triggers depersonalization, turnover, and a lack of fulfillment in the workplace. These findings agree with Landeo, who states that the work environment provides confidence within the organization, strengthening ties such as communication and participation. In this way, employees will feel involved and thus obtain a shared vision (Landeo et al., 2022).

Burgos points out that this syndrome causes a gradual loss of psychological strength, leading to negative effects such as low self-esteem, lack of motivation to perform tasks, and irritability when interacting with colleagues (Bracho, 2020). Without motivation, the tasks proposed by the organization will not be carried out. When surveying people, we found that 46.52% do not engage in any physical activity during the day, followed by 37.12% who engage in 30 to 69 minutes of physical activity.

According to a scientific study by St. Mary's University, physical activity in women relieves everything from menstrual pain to stress levels and emotional exhaustion. This is because the release of high levels of endorphins improves sleep quality, regulates the nervous system, and fills them with energy (Zurita & Ramos, 2022). Tapia mentions that physical activity is vital for humans, which is why it is a strategy commonly recommended for people with mental health problems, as there is a relationship between physical activity and the mind (Tapia, 2020). Failure to engage in physical activity and rest adequately during the day will lead to emotional exhaustion, fatigue, and stress.

Another relevant point in the research revealed that age is a key factor in emotional exhaustion, with 43.79% represented by those aged 25 to 34. According to the study by Barreto and Salazar, they concluded that people who experience emotional exhaustion range from those under 25 to those aged 35 (Barreto & Salazar, 2020).

Furthermore, while a majority experience high levels of emotional exhaustion and work-related stress, there is a significant proportion of employees who face constant challenges related to exhaustion, frustration, and interpersonal stress. It is essential to

implement strategies that reduce these feelings, such as encouraging active breaks, offering psychological support, balancing workloads, and promoting a healthy and motivating work environment. These actions would not only improve employees' quality of life, but also their performance and work engagement. This study highlights the need for comprehensive strategies that combine transformational leadership, gender equity, and inclusive work environments (Chiang et al., 2021).

CONCLUSIONS

The study identified and analyzed the factors that influence emotional exhaustion in women working in commercial enterprises. It was determined that this phenomenon is largely the result of organizational, personal, and social factors. Organizations that adopt clear policies and strategies focused on emotional well-being generate benefits for both their employees and the organization, improving productivity, reducing absenteeism, and strengthening talent retention. Mindfulness played a crucial role within organizations as a tool for managing stress. A positive work environment fosters motivation and commitment, and programs such as flexible schedules and emotional support reduce the risk of burnout syndrome. An inclusive and empathetic organizational culture is key to achieving the proposed objectives.

Throughout this research, multiple elements that contribute to emotional exhaustion were identified, such as task overload and the imbalance between personal and professional life. Physical activity is essential for coping with this syndrome. Leading a more active life will reduce burnout rates and, not only that, but it will also reduce stress levels. It is not necessary to do high-performance training; simply breaking out of the routine will counteract emotional exhaustion.

Likewise, by implementing emotional well-being programs within the company, employees will improve the organizational climate. Respondents mentioned that most days they felt they spent a lot of time at work. What could help mitigate emotional exhaustion is providing one-hour recreational breaks to manage stress and improve mood during working hours. Providing these breaks will lead to changes in employees and the organization.

This change must come from the leader of the organization. Their attitude towards employees is fundamental. If they are open to receiving feedback to improve the work environment, the confidence of their team will be strengthened. A leader should not only focus on results and productivity, but also on communication within the team. By knowing how our employees feel in the company, we will be able to address emotional exhaustion from the outset.

Finally, it is important to promote open channels of communication so that employees can express themselves freely without fear, practices such as active breaks, spaces for interaction in the workplace, training to manage stress, incentives, and psychological and emotional support to improve the work environment.

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