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Article

Level of job burnout among employees of King Khalid University

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Abstract: This study aimed at measuring the level of job burnout among King Khalid University staff. The descriptive-analytical approach was employed to describe job burnout, determine its prevalence, identify its causes, and propose ways to address it. This method was used for comparison, interpretation, and generating information to assist in understanding the phenomena of job burnout and to devise recommendations for mitigating its prevalence. The results showed that the overall mean estimation of the dimensions of the level of occupational burnout from the perspective of university staff was (2.28), with a standard deviation of (0.81), indicating a low degree. The arithmetic means of the study sample responses to the dimensions ranged from (1.98–2.66). This provides a good indicator of the prevalence of occupational burnout. The findings showed that individuals in higher ranks experience higher levels of job burnout compared to the rest of the ranks classified in the study.

Keywords: burnout; job performance; university professors

1. Introduction

The study aims to reveal the levels of job burnout among employees of King Khalid University. To achieve the study's objective, a descriptive-analytical approach will be used, through the design of a questionnaire based on the Maslach Burnout Inventory.

Job burnout, as defined by Maslach (1998), refers to a combination of symptoms of stress, mental and emotional exhaustion, dissatisfaction with one's job and personal achievements, and a lack of confidence in one's abilities to perform the required tasks of their profession. Burnout occurs when there is a lack of alignment between the nature of the work and the nature of the individual performing it, and the disparity between these two attributes exacerbates job burnout (Abbad, 2023). Therefore, it is necessary for employees to maintain a psychological and motivational balance in order to be able to perform their work to the fullest extent.

Many studies indicate a clear impact between levels of job burnout and job performance, job satisfaction, leadership style, and managerial empowerment, which reflects on organizational happiness, job quality, and achievement levels. For example, Al-Shalan (2016) attempted to define job burnout as a psychological administrative phenomenon, identify its nature, causes, symptoms, and effects, and attempt to determine responsibility for dealing with it on both individual and leadership levels. The analytical approach was applied through a descriptive desk study, and the results were significant, including the finding that the state of job burnout is attributed to various factors related to the organization, its conditions, its treatment of employees, work pressure, lack of roles, lack of participation in decision-making, and absence of job rotation. Several measures of job burnout have been designed by scholars and can be used to measure the degree of burnout among workers in organizations, including

measures such as Maslach's, Banis's, and Shirom-Melamed's. It is assumed that the nature of the organization and its employees should be considered when selecting the scale for application.

Additionally, Al-Qasim (2007) aimed to identify the determinants of job burnout among employees in the public and private sectors in Saudi Arabia. The study sample consisted of 720 employees in both sectors, and a descriptive survey approach was used, with the Maslach Burnout Inventory as a data collection tool. The results showed that employees in both the public and private sectors experience moderate levels of emotional and physical exhaustion and low levels of personal accomplishment. There is an inverse relationship between democratic leadership style and the degree of job burnout among employees in both the public and private sectors. The results also demonstrated a negative relationship between formality and the degree of job burnout among employees in both sectors.

In a study by Dworkin et al. (2003), the impact of democratic leadership styles of government sector managers on job burnout was examined, along with the extent to which employee burnout affects democratic styles. The results showed that employees who perceive their managers as non-authoritarian, supportive, and involving them in decision-making within the organization are less susceptible to job burnout than those who perceive otherwise. However, both groups of employees experience job burnout.

Another study by Werang et al. (2012) demonstrated the relationship between job burnout, organizational commitment, and job performance. Among the most important results obtained were: a significant negative correlation between employees' job burnout and their organizational commitment and job performance.

The importance of studying job burnout among King Khalid University staff is evident in uncovering the level of job burnout to enhance psychological and job satisfaction.

Study problem:

Researchers have shown interest in studying the phenomenon of job burnout in various Western countries across different fields. Due to its significant impact on employee productivity, there is a need to understand the prevalence of this phenomenon, and its contributing factors, and to propose suggestions to mitigate its negative effects on employee performance. This study aims to answer the following question: What is the level of job burnout among King Khalid University staff?

Study objectives:

- Measure the level of job burnout among King Khalid University staff.
- Identify sources of burnout among King Khalid University staff.
- Develop recommendations and suggestions to overcome factors leading to job burnout to alleviate its negative impact on employee performance.

Study Importance:

Job burnout has become a prevalent issue in today's era characterized by scientific advancements, pressure, and rapid changes. Therefore, studying this problem among King Khalid University staff is essential:

1) Researchers play a significant role in addressing the issue of job burnout in many Arab countries due to its profound impact.

2) Scientific studies have shown numerous factors and causes contributing to job burnout, such as limited job authority, lack of social relationships, work pressure, value conflicts, lack of positive reinforcement, organizational conflict, managerial empowerment, and job satisfaction.

3) Decision-makers can benefit from developing employee skills and work procedures to reduce job burnout.

Study limitations:

Objective limitations: Measuring the level of job burnout among King Khalid University staff.

Human limitations: All university staff.

Spatial limitations: King Khalid University.

Temporal limitations: The duration of the research conducted during the academic year 2023–2024.

Research methodology: The descriptive-analytical approach was employed to describe job burnout, determine its prevalence, identify its causes, and propose ways to address it. This method was used for comparison, interpretation, and generating information to assist in understanding the phenomena of job burnout and to devise recommendations for mitigating its prevalence.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Concept of job burnout

Before the 1970s, the term "job burnout" did not exist in psychological studies. Terms such as stress and tension describe many of the symptoms associated with it, but these terms could be misleading, as stress and tension can have both positive effects, such as increased motivation and personal growth, and negative effects. The term "job burnout" first appeared in 1974 when Herbert Freudenberger wrote an article titled "Staff Burnout" for the Social Issues journal. He described the sensitivity of caregivers and the process that led them to burnout. Freudenberger emphasized that burnout is entirely different from depression, overwork, or mental stress. He described it as a profound process in which individuals experience emotional exhaustion and complete depletion of energy. From this perspective, various studies and research have defined job burnout from different angles. For example, Carrie Gliss defined it as emotional or affective exhaustion resulting from excessive job demands. Similarly, it is described as a state of fatigue and lack of interest in work due to excessive and unexpected work requirements. In addition, it has been defined as a condition of physical, mental, nervous, and emotional stress that arises from prolonged interaction with people and situations requiring high effort.

2.2. Dimensions of job burnout

Maslach (1998) defined job burnout as a set of symptoms characterized by emotional exhaustion, depletion of emotional energy, depersonalization, and a sense of reduced personal accomplishment. It can occur in individuals who engage in jobs requiring direct interaction with others. According to the previous conceptual analysis conducted by Werang et al. (2012), burnout is considered a syndrome consisting of

three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization or emotional detachment, and reduced personal accomplishment.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between job burnout and work pressure:

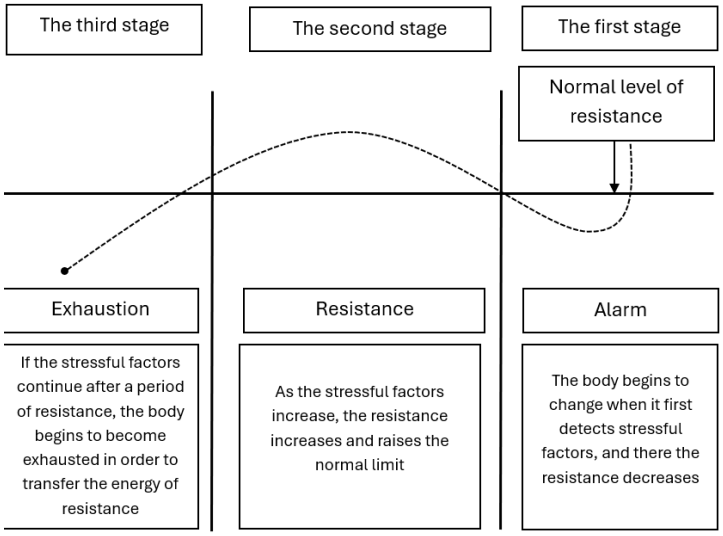

Figure 1. Illustrating the relationship between job burnout and work pressure.

2.3. Stages of job burnout

Job burnout is a gradual phenomenon that manifests its symptoms progressively, rather than all at once. Several researchers have divided the stages of job burnout into three sections, as follows (Al-Nafie, 2001).

1) Alarm stage: This stage involves the body's alert or warning response to the threat of job burnout. The body prepares itself to face the threat of job burnout through chemical reactions, resulting in increased heart rate and breathing rates due to the anxiety and disturbance experienced by the individual.

2) Resistance stage: In this stage, individuals experience anxiety, disturbance, and fatigue. They attempt to repair any damage or harm resulting from the previous stage but may lose their ability to concentrate, leading to negative effects on both the individual and the organization they work for.

3) Exhaustion stage: In this stage, individuals continue to suffer for a long time from the causes of job burnout without being able to overcome them. This leads to the depletion of their emotional, psychological, and physical energy, making them vulnerable to diseases resulting from job burnout, such as heart attacks, high blood pressure, and others.

It is evident from the above that job burnout is a gradual, stage-based phenomenon, and each stage has its treatment due to its symptoms and causes. Likewise, there are methods for preventing it from progressing to the next stage.

2.4. Symptoms of job burnout

There are various symptoms and indicators indicating the presence of job burnout, as outlined by Ramadan and Attia (2019), including:

1) Psychological and emotional symptoms: These include psychological and emotional exhaustion, feelings of psychological dissatisfaction, aggression,

helplessness, inferiority, distress, tension, anger, the tendency to justify shortcomings, blaming others, decreased levels of motivation, daydreaming, mental distraction, lack of attention to details, forgetfulness, and decreased ability to remember.

2) Physical symptoms: These include physical exhaustion, psychological isolation, headaches, high blood pressure, muscle aches, body stiffness, stomach pains, sleep disorders, or insomnia.

3) Social symptoms: These include feelings of love and problems in social relationships with others, suppressed feelings, reluctance to talk to others, and social isolation.

4) Work-Related symptoms: These include indifference, absenteeism, tardiness, desire to quit work, and lack of creativity.

Table 1 provides job burnout as characterized by anxiety, stress, physical and emotional exhaustion, and negative attitudes resulting from workplace pressures. Some of these symptoms can be summarized as follows.

Table 1. types of job burnout

Types of symptoms	Symptoms
Behavioral symptoms	Frequent absence from work
	Low level of performance
	Looking at the clock from time to time
	It is calculated continuously for holidays
	He does not care about his general appearance
Emotional symptoms	Irritability
	Lack of flexibility in treatment
	Frequent feeling of frustration
	Increase psychological defense tricks when dealing with others
	Feeling depressed
	Negative view of oneself
	A feeling of despair, helplessness and failure
Physical symptoms	Hypertension
	Fatigue when doing the least effort
	Increased heart rate
	Boredom and forgetfulness

3. Study methodology

3.1. Study approach

The descriptive-analytical approach was used to describe burnout and determine its prevalence. This approach was employed for comparison, interpretation, and analysis of results to reach explanations regarding burnout. It enabled the generation of proposals and recommendations to mitigate its prevalence. The duration of collecting data was one month during the academic year 2023–2024.

3.2. Study population and sample

The study population consisted of King Khalid University and its affiliated provinces and centers. The research sample included all university affiliates, with 996 respondents participating in the survey. The sample was selected using a random sampling method, and the survey was distributed electronically to the study population.

3.3. Study instruments

The questionnaire was the data collection method, and after reviewing references and international scales, the Schaufeli Burnout Inventory (SBI) was adopted.

Part one: Participants' Personal Data included (position, distance between work and home, marital status, age, years of experience, educational qualification, administrative level).

Part two: Burnout scale:

This was measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), consisting of three main dimensions:

- Emotional Exhaustion (9 items);
- Depersonalization (5 items);
- Personal Accomplishment (9 items).

Participants indicated their level of burnout using a Likert scale with five levels (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree), as shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Agreement level and relative weights.

No	Relative weight	Weighted average	The level
1	20%–35.9%	(1) to -less than (1.8)	very low
2	36%–51.9%	(1.8) to – less than (2.6)	low
3	52%–67.9%	(2.6) to less than (3.4)	Medium
4	68%–83.9%	(3.4) to – less than (4.2)	high
5	84%–100%	(4.2) to (5)	very high

4. Results analysis

Firstly: Demographic variables.

It is evident from the **Table 3** that:

1) The number of participants was 996, including inquiries about (position, distance between work and home, marital status, age, years of experience, educational qualification, and administrative level).

2) Most respondents were ranked ninth or below, lived less than half an hour away from work, were married, had 11 to 20 years of experience, held a diploma or lower qualification, and worked as administrative employees, as shown in **Table 3** and **Figure 2**.

Table 3. Participants' variables regarding burnout level.

Variable	Variable type	Number	Percentage
Rank	Ten or higher	85	8.5
	Nine or less	789	79.2
	item	116	11.6
	a contract	6	.6
The distance between work and home	Less than half an hour	384	38.6
	More than half an hour to an hour	327	32.8
	more than an hour	285	28.6
Marital status	bachelor	140	14.1
	married	856	85.9
Years of Experience	From 1 to 10	268	26.9
	From 11 to 20	408	41.0
	From 21 and over	320	32.1
Qualification	Diploma or less	610	61.2
	Bachelor's	320	32.1
	Master's or PhD	66	6.6
Administrative level	General manager	29	2.9
	Director of the Department	111	11.1
	Head of the Department	83	8.3
	Head of unit	71	7.1
	administrative employee	702	70.5

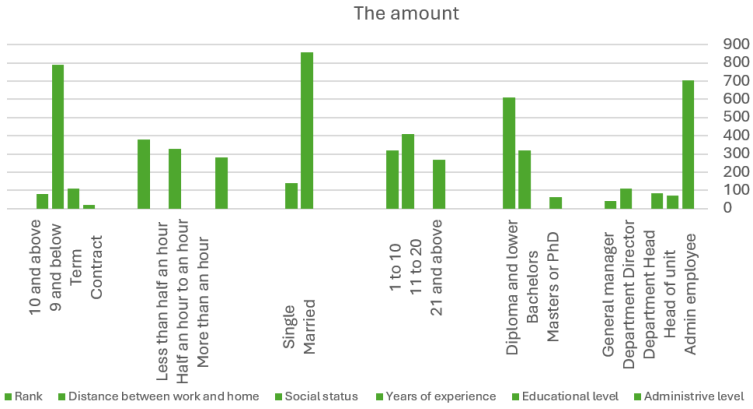

Figure 2. variables of burnout.

Secondly: Burnout level among university staff.

To answer this question, the mean sensitivity and standard deviations for each dimension of the three-dimensional scale were calculated. Additionally, the arithmetic means and standard deviations for items in each domain of the first axis of the study were calculated separately, as shown in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Arithmetic means and standard deviations for study sample responses to burnout level dimensions.

No of Statements	Statements	Job burnout level			
		Weighted average	standard deviation	Relative weight	Degree
The first dimension: emotional stress					
1	I feel emotionally drained as a result of the work I do	3.10	1.32	61.92	Medium
2	I feel completely exhausted at the end of the day	3.48	1.32	69.52	high
3	He felt exhausted when waking up to start a new work day.	2.55	1.27	51.04	low
4	I feel stressed from dealing with auditors all day long	2.23	1.17	44.54	low
5	I feel bored and fed up with my work	2.26	1.27	45.10	low
6	I feel frustrated in my work	2.55	1.45	51.00	low
7	I feel like I'm exhausting all my effort in my work	3.14	1.37	62.72	high
8	I feel a lot of pressure from dealing with reviewers directly	2.36	1.18	47.12	low
9	I feel the end of my career is near.	2.30	1.20	45.96	low
Total first dimension		2.66	0.97	53.22	Medium
The second dimension: weak human relations:					
10	I feel like I treat some reviewers in vain	2.18	1.04	43.64	low
11	I have become a harsh person towards people in general since I started this job	1.80	0.98	35.94	low
12	I worry that this work will cause me harshness and insensitivity	2.03	1.15	40.60	low
13	I feel indifferent to what happens to others in the work environment	2.01	1.09	40.26	low
14	I feel like reviewers blame me for some of the problems they have	2.29	1.18	45.86	low
Total second dimension		2.06	0.87	41.26	low
The third dimension: low personal achievement					
15	I cannot understand how others feel about my profession.	2.00	1.19	39.90	low
16	I deal with people's and clients' problems with low efficiency	1.80	0.94	36.06	low
17	I feel that I am negatively impacting the lives of others through my work	1.75	0.91	34.96	Very low
18	I do not feel active and energetic in my profession	2.06	1.19	41.24	low
19	I cannot create the right atmosphere to do my job well.	2.19	1.22	43.82	low
20	I do not feel comfortable and happy with my work and my dealings with auditors	1.99	1.10	39.70	low
21	During my work, I deal nervously with psychological problems.	1.81	0.97	36.10	low
22	I haven't achieved many commendable things in this job	2.22	1.12	44.44	low
Total third dimension		1.98	0.82	39.53	low
Total		2.28	0.81	45.52	low

The results in **Table 4** indicate the following:

1) The overall mean estimation of the dimensions of the level of occupational burnout from the perspective of university staff was (2.28), with a standard deviation of (0.81), indicating a low degree. The arithmetic means of the study sample responses to the dimensions ranged from (1.98–2.66). This provides a good indicator of the prevalence of occupational burnout.

2) The arithmetic means for the first dimension, Emotional Exhaustion, was (2.66), indicating a moderate level. The statements "I feel completely drained at the end of the workday" and "I feel I have used up all my energy in my work" received high scores. This indicates internal consistency and emphasizes the importance of taking breaks between work periods. On the other hand, the statement "I feel tense due to dealing with clients all day" received the lowest score, indicating that university staff exhibit patience and responsibility.

3) The arithmetic means for the second dimension, Depersonalization, was (2.06), indicating a low level. All statements received low scores, with the lowest score for the statement "I have become more callous toward people since I started this job." This confirms the ability of university staff to handle clients effectively.

4) The arithmetic means for the third dimension, Reduced Personal Accomplishment, was (1.98), indicating a low level. The statement "I feel I am negatively impacting people's lives through my work" received a very low score, followed by "I deal efficiently with people's and clients' problems" with a low score. This emphasizes university staff's awareness of their role.

Thirdly, statistically significant differences were found in the study sample responses.

1) Significant differences were found in the study sample responses according to the variable of rank.

Table 5 shows that there are statistically significant differences in the study sample responses based on the rank variable in the first and third dimensions in favor of ranks tenth and above. This indicates that individuals in higher ranks experience higher levels of job burnout compared to the rest of the ranks classified in the study.

Table 5. Anova results.

		Sum of Squares	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Atot	Between Groups	824.799	3	274.933	3.669	0.012
	Within Groups	74,339.381	992	74.939	-	-
	Total	75,164.180	995	-	-	-
BT	Between Groups	123.773	3	41.258	2.166	0.090
	Within Groups	18,893.235	992	19.046	-	-
	Total	19,017.008	995	-	-	-
CTot	Between Groups	591.894	3	197.298	4.603	0.003
	Within Groups	42,518.620	992	42.862	-	-
	Total	43,110.514	995	-	-	-
TOTAL	Between Groups	3683.285	3	1227.762	3.883	0.009
	Within Groups	313,626.365	992	316.156	-	-
	Total	317,309.650	995	-	-	-

2) Significant differences were found in the study sample responses according to the variable of distance between work and home.

Table 6 shows that statistically significant differences were found in the study sample responses based on the variable of distance between work and home in the first dimension: emotional stress in favor of distances of one hour or more.

Table 6. Anova results for the distance between work and home.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Atot	Between Groups	1979.741	2	989.870	13.431	0.000
	Within Groups	73,184.439	993	73.700	-	-
	Total	75,164.180	995	-	-	-
BT	Between Groups	491.321	2	245.660	13.168	0.000
	Within Groups	18,525.687	993	18.656	-	-
	Total	19,017.008	995	-	-	-
CTot	Between Groups	974.259	2	487.129	11.480	0.000
	Within Groups	42,136.255	993	42.433	-	-
	Total	43,110.514	995	-	-	-
TOTAL	Between Groups	9522.849	2	4761.424	15.362	0.000
	Within Groups	307,786.801	993	309.956	-	-
	Total	317,309.650	995	-	-	-

3) Significant differences were found in the study sample responses according to the variable of years of experience.

Table 7 shows that statistically significant differences were found in the study sample responses based on the variable of years of experience in the second dimension, with weakened human relations in favor of experience ranging from one to ten years. This might be attributed to individuals with more experience having lower job burnout. Moreover, those with less experience may require training programs in audience management, interpersonal skills, communication skills, as well as social gatherings to enhance the human aspect.

Table 7. Anova results for the years of experience.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Atot	Between Groups	31.176	2	15.588	0.206	0.814
	Within Groups	75,133.004	993	75.663	-	-
	Total	75,164.180	995	-	-	-
BT	Between Groups	175.626	2	87.813	4.628	0.010
	Within Groups	18,841.382	993	18.974	-	-
	Total	19,017.008	995	-	-	-
CTot	Between Groups	197.368	2	98.684	2.284	0.102
	Within Groups	42,913.146	993	43.216	-	-
	Total	43,110.514	995	-	-	-
TOTAL	Between Groups	1059.609	2	529.805	1.664	0.190
	Within Groups	316,250.040	993	318.479	-	-
	Total	317,309.650	995	-	-	-

4) Significant differences were found in the study sample responses according to the variable of educational qualification.

Table 8 shows that there are statistically significant differences in the study sample responses based on the qualification variable in the first dimension, Emotional Exhaustion, in favor of Bachelor's degree holders.

Table 8. Anova for the qualification variable.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Atot	Between Groups	2316.856	2	1158.428	15.791	0.000
	Within Groups	72,847.323	993	73.361	-	-
	Total	75,164.180	995	-	-	-
BT	Between Groups	331.479	2	165.740	8.808	0.000
	Within Groups	18,685.529	993	18.817	-	-
	Total	19,017.008	995	-	-	-
CTot	Between Groups	594.769	2	297.385	6.946	0.001
	Within Groups	42,515.745	993	42.815	-	-
	Total	43,110.514	995	-	-	-
TOTAL	Between Groups	8121.937	2	4060.968	13.042	0.000
	Within Groups	309,187.713	993	311.367	-	-
	Total	317,309.650	995	-	-	-

5) There are statistically significant differences in the study sample responses based on the variable of managerial level:

Table 9 shows that there are statistically significant differences in the study sample responses based on the managerial level variable in the first dimension, Emotional Exhaustion, and the total score in favor of department managers. This may be due to their managerial nature, as they serve as the link between upper management and executive management.

Table 9. Anova for the managerial level variable.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Atot	Between Groups	1248.355	4	312.089	4.184	0.002
	Within Groups	73,915.825	991	74.587	-	-
	Total	75,164.180	995	-	-	-
BT	Between Groups	153.823	4	38.456	2.020	0.090
	Within Groups	18,863.185	991	19.034	-	-
	Total	19,017.008	995	-	-	-
CTot	Between Groups	393.663	4	98.416	2.283	0.059
	Within Groups	42,716.851	991	43.105	-	
	Total	43,110.514	995	-	-	
TOTAL	Between Groups	4015.090	4	1003.773	3.175	0.013
	Within Groups	313,294.559	991	316.140	-	-
	Total	317,309.650	995	-	-	-

5. Conclusion

The study aims to reveal the levels of job burnout among employees of King Khalid University. Job burnout has become a prevalent issue in today's era characterized by scientific advancements, pressure, and rapid changes. Therefore, studying this problem among King Khalid University staff is essential. The results showed that the overall mean estimation of the dimensions of the level of occupational burnout from the perspective of university staff was (2.28), with a standard deviation of (0.81), indicating a low degree. The arithmetic means of the study sample responses to the dimensions ranged from (1.98–2.66). This provides a good indicator of the prevalence of occupational burnout. The findings showed that individuals in higher ranks experience higher levels of job burnout compared to the rest of the ranks classified in the study. In addition, those with less experience may require training programs in audience management, interpersonal skills, communication skills, as well as social gatherings to enhance the human aspect.

6. Recommendations

At the individual level:

1) Focus on psychological and physical well-being and self-esteem.
2) Maintain principles, values, and work towards professional goals.
3) Be open to new situations and opportunities for development.
4) Maintain personal and professional relationships.
5) Achieve work-life balance and engage in activities that replenish emotional and physical energy.

At the managerial level:

1) Flexibility, adaptability, and support for successful individuals while providing support for less efficient ones.
2) Improve relationships among all employees.
3) Enhance performance evaluation, clarify promotion criteria, change salary and incentive systems, and analyze roles.
4) Focus on job enrichment and career advancement.
5) Place the right person in the right position, as it's better to assign tasks that match an employee's qualifications, initiatives, and inclinations.
6) Develop a monitoring model that can be filled out by the department manager in case of burnout among colleagues.

At the organizational level:

1) Redesign and redefine job descriptions.
2) Utilize advanced training systems.
3) Establish support programs for employees.
4) Restructure roles and responsibilities.
5) Identify sources of pressure and implement necessary programs to manage them.
6) Develop a monitoring model to be filled out by the HR department in case of employee burnout, whether it's requested transfer, frequent leave, absenteeism, or any observed behavior.

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