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From Enthusiasm to Exhaustion: Job Contentment and the Moderating Role of Workplace Conflicts

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Abstract

Numerous studies have examined the inceptions and outcomes of functioning at work. Prior research establishes interpersonal conflict as a significant workplace stressor that negatively correlates with job satisfaction and drives burnout via emotional exhaustion and reduced professional efficacy. The present study aims to investigate the complex relationships between workplace psychological states, professional inefficiency, and emotional exhaustion dimensions among 640 Romanian employees, with particular emphasis on how interpersonal conflicts influence these dynamics. The data analysis was conducted using PSPP, yielding the following results. Interpersonal conflict, emotional exhaustion, and professional inefficacy were negatively related to job satisfaction, with interpersonal conflict serving as a key moderator of burnout and predictor of reduced anxiety–contentment and depression–enthusiasm. Job satisfaction was significantly predicted by both the anxiety–contentment and depression–enthusiasm dimensions (of affective well-being), with the latter emerging as the stronger predictor. Furthermore, interpersonal conflict positively predicted both emotional exhaustion and professional inefficacy, establishing it as a critical pathway through which workplace conflicts contribute to burnout. Gender-based analyses revealed that male employees consistently reported more favorable psychological states and lower emotional exhaustion, while experiencing similar levels of interpersonal conflict and professional inefficacy as their female counterparts. Work experience and tenure significantly predicted job satisfaction and burnout outcomes. Managerial roles conferred psychological advantages despite similar levels of interpersonal conflict. Overtime work has a pervasive negative impact on both well-being and workplace functioning, and combined work–study demands increase workplace stress and burnout. These findings underscore interpersonal conflicts as a key mediator of Romanian employees' exhaustion.

Keywords: Burnout; Job satisfaction; Professional Inefficacy; Romanian Employees; Well-being