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Exploring Occupational Burnout Relationship on The Bidirectional Interplay Between Cognitive Emotional Functions and Emotional Regulation Strategies

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Abstract

Background

Occupational burnout (OBO) is increasingly acknowledged as a complex, multidimensional work-related phenomenon that arises in response to prolonged, chronic work and interpersonal stressors, rather than classified as a clinical pathology as is depression, mood disorders, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or anxiety (Bianchi et al., 2021). In the current context of a rapidly evolving service-based, and artificial intelligence driven economic environment, compounded by the prevailing geopolitical uncertainty, professionals are increasingly compelled to constantly manage both cognitive and emotional performance, while simultaneously meeting the demands of their roles (Godelieve et al., 2021). While empirical evidence has extensively documented the effects of burnout on service provider professions, such as healthcare workers, first responders, and teachers, by emphasizing the effect of OBO on cognitive performance or emotional function, there is notably a gap in research investigating the relationship of OBO and the bidirectional interplay between cognitive performance and emotional functions among C-suites.

Methods

Grounded in the Job Demand-Resource Theory framework an interconnected three-sectional methodological study design will be used to explore the relationship of OBO and the bidirectional interplay between cognitive executive functions and emotional regulation



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strategies. The first section of this study focused on the systematic literature review using the PRISMA guidelines of 17 peer-reviewed studies. This will be followed with an exploratory section using semi-structured interviews to understand how C-suites perceive their personal OBO symptoms and progression. The third section will be a mixed-methods, between-group cross-sectional study to address the gap in the empirical findings to discuss the question on the relationship OBO and the bidirectional interplay between cognitive executive functions and emotion regulation strategies.

Results

The systematic review findings consistently demonstrate that impairments in cognitive processing and emotional regulation negatively influence decision-making, long-term cognitive abilities, and increase emotional exhaustion (Eskildsen et al., 2015; Hanna et al., 2021; Rydmark et al., 2006; Savic et al., 2018). Notably, only eight studies have investigated the impact of burnout on emotional regulation strategies and nine on cognitive executive functions. However, none have focused specifically on how occupational burnout influences the bidirectional relationship between emotional regulation strategies and cognitive executive functions among top management or executive board members (C-suites). This oversight is surprising, given the critical role that cognitive-emotional performance plays in high-stakes executive decision-making.

Conclusion

C-suites operate in environments characterised by high demands, rapid change, with tremendous responsibility for organisational outcomes. The lack of research on the relationship of occupational burnout on cognitive and emotional functioning represents a critical gap, as these impairments can have cascading effects on organisational performance, employee well-being, team, family, and broader economic outcomes.

Keywords: occupational burnout, cognitive executive function, emotional regulation, leaders, C-suite, executive management.