

Unlocking Employee Engagement: The Role of Job Burnout as a Moderator

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ABSTRACT

Employee engagement is still a challenge for many industries in the world, including the health sector, especially for nurses, because nurses often face high pressure, long working hours, and high emotional levels, which reduce their engagement. This study aims to examine the effect of Interpersonal Relationships, Transformational Leadership, and Career Development on employee engagement of nurses with job burnout as a moderator. The research method uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory method. The population is all nurses working at XYZ Hospital with the target population being inpatient nurses with a sample of 173 nurses. Data collection using questionnaires and multiple linear regression analysis techniques and regression analysis of moderating variables using the residual method. The results of the study indicate that Interpersonal Relationships, Transformational Leadership, and Career Development have a significant positive effect on employee engagement of nurses. In addition, job burnout served as a significant moderator, weakening the influence of all three factors on engagement. These results emphasize the importance of creating a supportive work environment to enhance nurses' engagement, even though they face the challenge of job burnout.

Keywords: *Interpersonal Relationships, Transformational Leadership, Career Development, Employee Engagement, Job Burnout*

1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of employee engagement is still a challenge for many industries in the world. According to a Gallup report, in 2023, the percentage of employee engagement in the US is 33%, while globally it is 23%. In Indonesia, the figure is lower, where only 24% of employees feel engaged in their work. On the other hand, 68% of employees are said to be unengaged (Gallup, 2023).

The challenges of employee engagement in the healthcare sector, especially in hospitals, are increasingly complex because nurses often face high pressure, long working hours, and high emotional levels, which reduce their engagement (Goyal & Kaur, 2023). Research shows that nurses with high levels of engagement tend to provide better care and have higher patient satisfaction (Hetzl-Riggin et al., 2020), but nurses often experience low engagement due to heavy workloads (Goyal & Kaur, 2023; Moscelli et al., 2022). These factors have a negative impact on patient care outcomes and the nurses' job satisfaction (Van Bogaert et al., 2017), this shows the importance of investing in employee engagement in the healthcare industry.

According to various studies, factors such as interpersonal relationships, transformational leadership, and career development have a significant influence on the level of employee engagement, especially among nurses (Al-Ahmari & Kattan, 2024; Assi et al., 2024; Bhagra

et al., 2020; Boakye et al., 2019; Duque et al., 2020; Gameda & Lee, 2020; YB Kim & Lee, 2023; Othman et al., 2019; Szilvassy & Širok, 2022; Yang et al., 2023).

Although many studies have identified various factors that influence employee engagement, especially among nurses, there are several theoretical gaps that need to be addressed. Such as research Kurniawan & Anindita (2021), indicating that supervisor support does not affect employee engagement. The study also found that Contreras et al. (2021), support from superiors does not have a significant effect on employee engagement. Research Pronajaya et al. (2021), found that career development has no effect on employee engagement. The following is a summary of the Theoretical Gap according to previous research. While research Ni et al. (2023), found that the nurses' work practice environment had no effect on work engagement.

Based on previous studies, it shows inconsistent results related to factors that influence employee engagement. These factors do not always have an effect, providing a picture of the complexity in measuring employee engagement. This gap indicates the need for a more comprehensive and contextual approach in understanding employee engagement in the health sector, so this study proposes job burnout (occupational burnout) as a moderator variable that can influence the relationship between factors that influence nurse engagement.

Job burnout is a psychological condition commonly experienced by nurses due to high work pressure, emotional burden, and heavy physical demands. This fatigue can affect the way nurses interact with their work environment and, in turn, affect their level of commitment to the organization (Hetzel-Riggin et al., 2020). Thus, job burnout can function as a moderator that changes the strength or direction of the relationship between factors that influence employee engagement.

Nurses are often exposed to situations that are physically and emotionally demanding. Job burnout can reduce nurses' motivation and commitment to the organization. When nurses experience burnout, their attachment to their work and organization tends to decrease, thus affecting their effectiveness in providing services (Mohamed et al., 2022).

Nurses are often faced with high levels of job burnout that can reduce their engagement. Job burnout is often caused by prolonged stress and heavy workloads, resulting in feelings of helplessness and apathy among nurses. Several previous studies have shown that job burnout has a strong negative relationship with employee engagement, including nurses (Castro et al., 2020; Contreras et al., 2020; Hetzel-Riggin et al., 2020; Mohamed et al., 2022).

The researcher added job burnout variables outside the previous research model as a form of research novelty whose results can later be reviewed as a new model that can be tested in future studies. Another novelty in this research model lies in the combination of these variables in an integrative model framework that considers the complex relationship between leadership, interpersonal relationships, career development, job burnout, and employee engagement.

By considering job burnout as a moderating variable, this study can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of employee engagement in the healthcare

sector. This will help in formulating more appropriate interventions to improve employee engagement, especially among nurses who often face severe challenges in their work. This study aims to fill this gap and provide deeper insights into the challenges faced by nurses at XYZ Hospital and offer recommendations to improve the level of nurse engagement.

2. METHODS

2.1. Hypothesis

Based on the previous discussion, this study was designed to test a hypothesis model in which job burnout moderates the relationship between interpersonal relationships, transformational leadership, and career development on employee engagement (see Figure 1). Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

1. Interpersonal relationships have a significant influence on employee engagement
2. Transformational leadership has a significant influence on employee engagement
3. Career development has a significant impact on employee engagement
4. Interpersonal relationships, management support, transformational leadership, career development, and work environment have a significant simultaneous influence on employee engagement.
5. Job burnout weakens the relationship between interpersonal relationships and employee engagement
6. Job burnout weakens the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement
7. Job burnout weakens the relationship between career development and employee engagement.

2.2. Design

An explanatory quantitative research with a cross-sectional design was applied using data collected through an offline survey at XYZ Hospital.

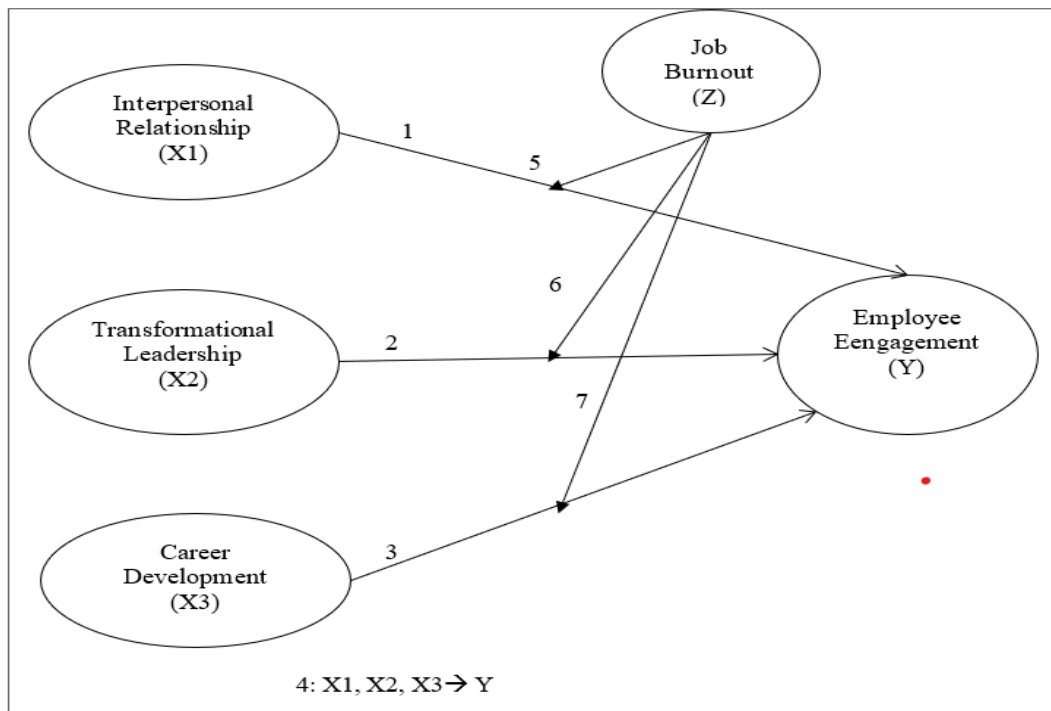


Figure 1.Conceptual Framework

2.3. Participants

The target population is inpatient nurses working at XYZ Hospital, with the following criteria: male and female gender, age range 20-45 years, minimum education level D3, and minimum length of service 2 years.

2.4. Data collection

Eligible participants were given a face-to-face recruitment request to complete a questionnaire. Participants were given a brief description of the study, study objectives, and inclusion criteria. The survey included an informed consent letter explaining the risks and benefits of participating in the study and the steps taken to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of respondents (e.g., no names or electronic tracking of information). After reading the informed consent, participants had the option to withdraw from the survey or agree to participate by completing the survey. Six weeks were allocated for completion of the survey between February and April 2025, to optimize the response rate and ensure adequate sample size. The sample size calculation in this study was obtained using the formula suggested by Taro Yamane (1967) cited in Nanjundeswaraswamy and Divakar (2021), so that 173 respondents were obtained from a population of 302.

2.5. Data analysis

The analysis in this study uses multiple linear regression and moderated regression analysis (MRA) to test the existence of moderating variables using the residual test method

through the assistance of the SPSS v30 program. Variable Z is said to be a moderating variable if a variable is carried out with a residual test with the results of the parameter coefficient value being negative and significantly smaller than 0.05.(Suliyanto, 2011).

2.6. Validity and Reliability

The results of the validity test of the Interpersonal relationship variable show a Corrected Item-Total Correlation value above 0.3 so that the seven measurement items are said to be valid and the Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.920. The transformational leadership variable shows a Corrected Item-Total Correlation value above 0.3 so that the eight measurement items are said to be valid and the Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.925. The career development variable shows a Corrected Item-Total Correlation value above 0.3 so that the six measurement items are said to be valid and the Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.893. The job burnout variable shows a Corrected Item-Total Correlation value above 0.3 so that 12 measurement items are said to be valid and the Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.983. The employee engagement variable shows a Corrected Item-Total Correlation value above 0.3 so that the nine measurement items are said to be valid and the Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.927.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Demographic characteristics

Of the 173 eligible participants invited, all responded, giving a 100% response rate. The majority of participants identified themselves as female (82.1%) and only 17.9% as male. In terms of age, the majority of participants were in the 26-35 age range (76.3%), followed by the 36-45 age group (19.7%). Only 4% of respondents were 20-25 years old. In terms of education, the majority of respondents had a D3 education (60.7%), while 39.3% had completed a S1 education. In terms of length of service, 25.4% of respondents had less than 2 years of work experience, while 37.6% had between 2 and 4 years of experience. Around 12.7% had 5-7 years of work experience and the same number for 8-10 years, while 11.6% had worked for more than 10 years.

3.2. Multiple Regression Analysis and Moderation

This research analysis of independent variables (interpersonal relationships, transformational leadership, and career development), moderator (job burnout) and dependent variables (employee engagement). The results of the analysis are as follows:

Table 1. Hypothesis Test Results

	Regression coefficient	P-Value
(Constant)	5,019	
Interpersonal Relationship	0.220	0.016
Transformational Leadership	0.338	0,000

Career Development	0.504	0,000
F Statistics	48,965	
R Square	0.465	
ABRES1 – Moderation 1	-0.745	0,000
ABRES2 – Moderation 2	-0.669	0,000
ABRES3 – Moderation 3	-0.740	0,000

Table 1 shows that all path estimates in this study are significant and in line with the proposed hypotheses. Interpersonal relationships show a significant effect on employee engagement ($\beta = 0.220$, $p = 0.016$), which supports hypothesis 1. In addition, transformational leadership has a significant effect on employee engagement ($\beta = 0.338$, $p < 0.05$), supporting hypothesis 2. Career development also contributes significantly to employee engagement ($\beta = 0.504$, $p < 0.005$), supporting hypothesis 3.

Simultaneous analysis shows that all variables, including interpersonal relationships, management support, transformational leadership, career development, and work environment, have a significant effect on employee engagement with an F statistic of 48.965 with $p < 0.005$, thus supporting hypothesis 4. The R Square test result is 0.465, which indicates that 46.5% of employee engagement variables can be explained by this model.

Furthermore, the results of the moderation test with the residual test showed that job burnout functions as a moderator that weakens the relationship between interpersonal relationships and employee engagement ($\beta = -0.745$, $p < 0.05$), between transformational leadership and employee engagement ($\beta = -0.669$, $p < 0.05$), and between career development and employee engagement ($\beta = -0.740$, $p < 0.05$), thus supporting hypotheses 5, 6, and 7. These findings emphasize the importance of paying attention to job burnout factors in the context of interpersonal relationships, leadership, and career development to improve employee engagement.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. The influence of interpersonal relationships on employee engagement

The results of interpersonal relationship research show a significant influence on employee engagement. Strong interpersonal relationships between employees and coworkers and superiors have been shown to contribute positively to the level of employee engagement. The higher the quality of interpersonal relationships in the workplace, the higher the level of employee engagement. This is in line with research Boakye et al. (2019), shows that interpersonal support not only increases employees' sense of connectedness, but also motivates them to be more engaged in their work. This is in line with the findings of the study Szilvassy & Širok (2022), Yang et al. (2023), which states that good interpersonal

relationships create a supportive work environment, which in turn facilitates effective communication and collaboration, thereby increasing employee engagement.

4.2. The influence of transformational leadership on employee engagement

The results of the transformational leadership study show a significant influence on employee engagement. Transformational leadership has a significant impact on the level of work engagement. The higher the level of transformational leadership applied in an organization, the higher the level of employee engagement. This is in line with research Assi et al. (2024), that authentic leadership of nurse managers is positively related to work engagement of registered nurses in Jordan. The study Gameda & Lee (2020), also explains that leaders who are able to inspire and motivate teams contribute to increasing employee engagement in the organization. Kim et al. (2023), Othman et al. (2019), also highlights the need for a supportive leadership style to create a positive work environment, which in turn increases employee engagement.

4.3. The influence of career development on employee engagement

The results of the career development study showed a significant influence on employee engagement. The greater the support and opportunities for career development provided by the organization, the higher the level of employee engagement. This is in line with research Bhagra et al. (2020), organizational career development support helps employees gain competence and perform tasks more efficiently, which in turn increases their self-confidence. Employees who see a clear career path tend to develop psychological attachment to their employers, especially when their work potential increases. This attachment encourages employees to meet the requirements set and contribute more to the organization as a form of return for the support received.

A study exploring employee engagement among Saudi nurses revealed that nurses with long tenure, those in managerial positions, and full-time employees showed higher levels of engagement, highlighting the influence of professional development and work environment on engagement. These findings suggest that fostering work engagement among nursing staff requires attention to career development opportunities (Al-Ahmari & Kattan, 2024).

4.4. The simultaneous influence of interpersonal relationships, transformational leadership, and career development on employee engagement

The results of the study showed that simultaneously all variables, including interpersonal relationships, management support, transformational leadership, career development, and work environment, had a significant effect on employee engagement. The higher the quality of interpersonal relationships, management support, transformational leadership, career development, and work environment, the higher the employee engagement of nurses.

Employee engagement is greatly influenced by various interrelated factors (Elliott & Corey, 2018). Good interpersonal relationships between nurses and coworkers create a positive work atmosphere, where open communication and collaboration can occur. When nurses feel supported by their colleagues, they tend to be more engaged in their work, which

in turn increases their commitment to the organization (Boakye et al., 2019). Transformational leadership, which drives innovation and provides inspiration, also contributes to employee engagement (Gemeda & Lee, 2020). Good career development is also a key factor that influences employee engagement (Al-Ahmari & Kattan, 2024; Duque et al., 2020). When nurses feel there is an opportunity to grow and learn, they are more likely to invest in their work (Al-Ahmari & Kattan, 2024).

4.5. Job burnout as moderation

The results of the moderation test showed that job burnout was a moderator that weakened the relationship between interpersonal relationships, transformational leadership, and career development with employee engagement. Job burnout can be a barrier that reduces the effectiveness of interventions or factors that should increase engagement. This situation suggests that although factors such as transformational leadership and career development have the potential to increase employee engagement, their effectiveness can be reduced if nurses experience significant fatigue. Therefore, it is important to consider the condition of job burnout in designing HR management strategies aimed at increasing engagement.

Job burnout is a negative psychological disorder that arises as a result of prolonged response to emotional and interpersonal stress related to work (Maslach et al., 2001). Several previous studies have shown that job burnout has a strong negative relationship with employee engagement, including nurses (Castro et al., 2020; Contreras et al., 2020; Hetzel-Riggin et al., 2020; Mohamed et al., 2022). In addition, several previous studies also found that leadership, interpersonal relationships, management support, career development, and work environment also influence job burnout (Amin et al., 2019; Apaydin et al., 2023; Boamah, 2022; Buckley et al., 2020; Sheng et al., 2023; Takemura et al., 2020). Thus, work engagement increases when job burnout can be minimized through appropriate interventions on these factors. Conversely, if job burnout increases, it will weaken the relationship between leadership, interpersonal relationships, management support, career development, work environment with nurse employee engagement.

5. CONCLUSION

The results presented in this study make an important contribution to the employee engagement literature with a particular focus on the moderating role of job burnout. From a theoretical perspective, these findings deepen the understanding of how job burnout may influence the relationships between interpersonal relationships, transformational leadership, and career development with employee engagement. This research shows that job burnout not only negatively impacts engagement, but can also weaken the positive effects of these factors, challenging the assumption that these relationships are always strong.

From a practical perspective, the results of this study suggest that managers should not only improve interpersonal and leadership aspects, but also pay attention to job burnout factors in human resource planning and management. Strategies to reduce burnout, such as wellness programs and work flexibility, can help maximize the positive impact of transformational leadership and career development on employee engagement.

For further research, it is recommended to explore more deeply the mechanisms behind job burnout as a moderator, as well as consider other variables that may interact with burnout, such as social support and organizational culture. Research across industry contexts can also provide additional insights into how job burnout affects employee engagement in different situations.

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