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# ANALYSIS OF ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF WORKPLACE-RELATED BURNOUT AMONG CROATIAN EMPLOYEES IN THE POST-COVID-19 ERA

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**Abstract.** Employee burnout is considered a serious problem in today's organizations, having severe repercussions both on individual and operational levels. A large number of studies have been conducted to identify antecedents and consequences of burnout but were mostly carried out in medical and other helping professions. This research aims to explore the burnout of employees working in Croatian companies by developing a multidimensional model that explores the influence of three elements that are considered typical features of today's modern, post-pandemic workplace: information overload, demands at work, and multitasking. In addition, it observes the influence of burnout on employee decision-making style and the moderating effects of information accuracy and time pressure on the burnout-decision-making relationship. A total of 567 employees working in various industries and carrying out different professions completed an online survey, and linear regression analysis was applied to analyze the data. The results confirmed the direct positive effect of information overload and demands at work on burnout and the direct positive effect of burnout on poor decision-making style. This study is one of the first studies conducted in Croatia on employees in the business sector, so it contributes to the field with important theoretical implications and practical and managerial recommendations.

**Keywords:** burnout, work-related stress, Croatian companies, information overload, demands at work, multitasking, decision-making style, information accuracy, time pressure.

**JEL Classification:** M12, M14, M21, M54, O15.

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## 1. Introduction

The year 2023 has brought numerous challenges to the business environment. The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are still visible in many organizations and have repercussions on daily work activities (Gabriel & Aguinis, 2022), which are further negatively influenced by other socioeconomic, geopolitical, and environmental changes, causing the slowdown of many business activities (International Monetary Fund, 2022). A post-pandemic context of the new normal has created an altered business environment (Raghavan et al., 2021) characterized by complexity, ambivalence, and unpredictability (Dorta-Afonso et al., 2023) in which many organizations deal with constant increases in business competition, rapid technological advances, demographic shifts, and volatile customer demands (Deloitte Development LLC, 2017).

The increasing pressure to meet business plans and expectations, combined with the heterogeneity and dynamism of workplaces, has become a daily challenge for many employees. Juggling through several projects at once in an "always online" and continuously connected work culture (Deloitte, 2022) can be overwhelming, impacting employee motivation and well-being (Leiter & Harvie, 1998). Consequently, many employees feel stressed, exhausted, and fatigued – both physically and emotionally – potentially leading to burnout, a severe occupational condition with negative consequences for individuals and organizations (Faisal et al., 2022). Recognizing the severity of the syndrome, the World Health Organization (2019) has classified burnout as an "occupational phenomenon" in the 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases. It manifests as intense workplace stress, resulting in feelings of exhaustion, cynicism towards work, and reduced professional performance.

Burnout is a syndrome that has no borders and is experienced by employees in all occupational sectors all around the globe. A Microsoft survey of 20,000 respon-

dents worldwide revealed that nearly 50% of employees and 53% of managers experience burnout symptoms (Segal, 2022). In the EU, work-related stress ranks as the second most prevalent work-related issue, affecting over 28% of employees (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2022). However, EU member states handle burnout differently; Germany, France, and Belgium have developed national policies and solutions, while countries like Croatia, Hungary or Greece lack a systematic policy response to addressing burnout (Eurofound, 2018).

In Croatia, the issue of burnout initially emerged in the context of the Croatian Homeland War (1991–1995), particularly affecting individuals in helping professions exposed to highly stressful situations (Stec, 2020). More recent research on burnout has shifted to a peacetime context, with a focus on diverse but primarily helping professions, including medical occupations (Ozvacic Adzic et al., 2013; Tomljenovic et al., 2014; Sviben et al., 2017) and educational occupations (Domovic et al., 2010; Martinko, 2010). However, scientific research in the business sector remains limited and fragmented, primarily covering employees in the banking sector (Horvat et al., 2016; Horvat, 2018) or sales professionals (Benazic & Ruzic, 2013; Ruzic, 2013). Despite over 30 years of study, the majority of research in Croatia is focused on the psychological characteristics of employees prone to burnout development, emphasizing the necessity to explore additional factors as burnout determinants and to examine the wider consequences of burnout syndrome (Stec, 2020). This research aims to fill the identified gap by addressing the issue of burnout, its antecedents and consequences, in companies operating in post-pandemic settings. Focusing on the modern work environment, it identifies information overload, demands at work, and multitasking as potential causes of burnout. The research also examines the impact of burnout on decision-making style and tests the moderating effects of time pressure and information accuracy on this relationship. The decision-making perspective was taken into account due to the indicated lack of research on this topic but also based on the fact that in the past three years, many employees were faced with countless challenging and stressful situations as a result of the pandemic that required taking ambiguous decisions in a short period (Al-Dabbagh, 2020).

The paper is structured as follows: after the introduction where the aims of the research are presented, a literature review follows that defines in detail the aspects of the research and presents the hypotheses. The third section outlines the methodology of the research, whereas the fourth section presents the results. A discussion is elaborated containing the theoretical and practical contributions of the study, and the conclusion systemizes the key findings of the research together with the limitations and recommendations for future studies.

## 2. Literature review and the development of hypotheses

Burnout is a psychological state characterized by exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy resulting from job-related stressors (Maslach & Leiter, 1999). Symptoms encompass mental, physical, and social issues, including headaches, fatigue, insomnia, and interpersonal problems (Chen et al., 2012). The costs are considerable on the organizational level as well, resulting in an increase in the sickness absence and loss of productivity which ultimately display negatively on the total organizational performance and financial success (Bakker et al., 2023). As explained by Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources (COR) model, burnout arises when individuals perceive a threat to important resources (Maslach & Leiter, 2016), such as objects, energy, conditions, and personal skills vital for acquiring additional valuable resources (Hobfoll & Freedy, 2018). Increased job demands deplete employees' resources, leading to chronic stress and, subsequently, burnout (Hobfoll, 2001). The study explores these dynamics within the COR framework.

### 2.1. The antecedents of burnout in the workplace

Workplace-related burnout is typically attributed to occupational, individual, and organizational factors (Chen et al., 2012). This study focuses on occupational elements tied to employees' perceptions of workplace complexity which affects their physical and mental well-being. The research considers employees working in the Croatian private sector, taking into account companies of all sizes (small and medium-sized enterprises and large companies). Croatia, as a developing country, faces numerous challenges in the labor market (Tomic et al., 2019). According to the ETUI's European Job Quality Index on working conditions (2005–2015), Croatia was the country with the sixth worst working conditions in the EU (Piasna, 2017), which was also indicated in the 2014 Eurobarometer survey, where 79% of respondents rated Croatian working conditions as bad (Tomic et al., 2019). Another survey, conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, showed that in 2021, over 30% of Croatian workers were employed in strained jobs, meaning they were experiencing more job demands than job resources (Eurofound, 2022). These findings provide a fruitful ground for conducting burnout-related research in a post-pandemic organizational context, to understand employees' capabilities of handling ongoing challenges imposed within their internal environments. As such, three independent variables were chosen as potential causes of burnout: information overload, demands at work, and multitasking, which are explained in detail in the following sections.

#### *2.1.1. Information overload and the effect on burnout*

Information overload (IO) is a stress-related syndrome resulting from an excessive amount of information (AlHeneidi et al., 2021). This typical feature of today's workplace

is caused by the rapid advancement of information and communication technologies, a trend further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Mannion, 2022). An enormous amount of data production, dissemination, and storage have affected the cognitive aspects of employees' well-being but have also raised questions about the productivity or efficacy of employees (Misra & Stokols, 2012). Faced with the avalanche of information from diverse sources, employees find it challenging to manage the influx, leading to "information fatigue syndrome" (Buchanan & Kock, 2001) which affects a person's ability to distinguish, categorize, organize, process, and learn from new information (Nowak et al., 2018). Excessive information has been linked to work-related stress, irritation, agitation, and depression (Alheneidi & Smith, 2021). Moreover, it unfavorably affects decision-making, innovative thinking, productivity, and motivation (Nowak et al., 2018), which can disturb workplace dynamics and negatively affect individual well-being. Therefore, the first hypothesis is proposed as:

*H1: Information overload positively affects employee burnout.*

#### 2.1.2. Demands at work and the effect on burnout

Globalization and digitalization have transformed work environments for many employees (Burr et al., 2019). Today's typical workplace encompasses three distinct "offices": the physical workplace, personal digital workplace, and shared digital workplace, often blurring professional and private spheres (Deloitte, 2021). The work-life boundaries were additionally erased during the COVID-19 pandemic which had negative effects on the working hours of employees (Adisa et al., 2022). Studies show that the average workday has been prolonged by 8.2% or 48.5 minutes (DeFilippis et al., 2022), which indicates that employees had to deal with additional job demands. This can result in exhaustion, leading to maladaptive behaviors (Bakker et al., 2023). Various research links workload to strain (Lo Presti & Nonnis, 2014), emotional and physical demands to burnout (Muhamad Nasharudin et al., 2020), and quantitative overload to higher exhaustion (Kouvonen et al., 2005). Therefore, the second hypothesis is proposed as:

*H2: Demands at work positively affect employee burnout.*

#### 2.1.3. Multitasking and the effect on burnout

Multitasking involves switching between several tasks (Su & Mark, 2008). Even though the ability to multitask is usually highly appreciated in the business environment for its perceived benefits in time management (Dean & Webb, 2011), research indicates that multitasking may not be as effective as commonly believed. Task-switching requires the brain to shift cognitive processes, impacting efficiency (Dean & Webb, 2011). This depletes mental resources (Kirchberg et al., 2015), and can lead to a loss of efficiency, slower learning, and poorer performance (Karpinski et al., 2013). When employees realize they have limited time to perform several tasks at once, they are required to increase their work pace to keep up with the work demands. Considering the fact that it takes as much as 25 minutes to return to the original task after a certain interruption (Iqbal & Horvitz, 2007), employees additionally lose their precious time, which can cause chronic stress (Robinson & Smallman, 2006) or anxiety issues (Becker et al., 2013). The third hypothesis is proposed as:

*H3: Multitasking positively affects employee burnout.*

### 2.2. The consequences of burnout in the workplace

A significant body of research has examined the outcomes of burnout, primarily focusing on individual psychological outcomes such as commitment and satisfaction (Shirom et al., 1997; Nagar, 2012; Tosun & Ulusoy, 2017). At the operational level, burnout has been linked to employee presenteeism (Demerouti et al., 2009), absenteeism (Dyrbye et al., 2019), turnovers (Rahim & Cosby, 2016), and job performance (Rahim and Cosby, 2016; Dyrbye et al., 2019). This study examines the influence of burnout on decision-making style, a construct highlighted in the literature as requiring a more in-depth understanding (McGee, 1989; Michailidis & Banks, 2016).

#### 2.2.1. The influence of burnout on decision-making style

Decision-making is the ability to choose between several alternatives based on their relative values and the perception of their consequences (Michailidis & Banks, 2016) to accomplish desired goals (Lunenburg, 2010). Effective decision-making is crucial for organizational success. Most employees make several decisions on a daily basis, and their response is usually based upon the many elements that come from their internal and external environments (Michailidis & Banks, 2016).

Several studies have observed a decision-making process under stress (Van den Bos et al., 2009; Young et al., 2012), thus accentuating their association. Psychological stress influences decision quality, leading to riskier choices, errors, stereotyping, and neglect of situational context (Phillips-Wren & Adaya, 2020). Thunholm (2008) found that high stress levels deter decision-making, while McGee (1989) linked burnout to making faster decisions and work avoidance. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis is proposed as:

*H4: Burnout leads to a poor decision-making style.*

### 2.3. The moderating roles of time pressure and information accuracy on burnout

Time constraints can distort the decision-making process (Soares et al., 2012). In time-pressured situations, individuals often rely on familiar techniques, which may not be effective in new settings. While time pressure in some cases may enhance idea generation (Noefer et al., 2009) and creativity (Amabile et al., 2002); burnout cancels

these benefits. Decision-making in the state of burnout consumes personal resources, undermining performance (Ceschi et al., 2017). When combined with time pressure, employees may perceive undesirable outcomes, negatively impacting decision quality (Moore & Tenney, 2012; Kocher & Sutter, 2006). Therefore, another hypothesis is proposed:

*H5: Time pressure moderates the relationship between burnout and poor decision-making style.*

The value and the success of the decision depend largely on the amount, type, and quality of information processed while making a decision (Jonas et al., 2005), which is constrained deeply by the human cognitive capacity to perceive and process information (Gamble et al., 2018). This capacity limit can be surpassed by relying on aid from the internal or external environment that can provide additional information or assistance. Perceived information accuracy can help in reaching faster and better decisions in times of stress or uncertainty as it increases levels of trust since decision-makers use the knowledge and experience from other sources to maximize their decision-making process (Lee & See, 2004). Another hypothesis is proposed:

*H6: Information accuracy moderates the relationship between burnout and poor decision-making style.*

## 3. Methodology

This study aimed to empirically identify the determinants and antecedents of burnout syndrome for employees working in Croatian companies. A survey research method was adopted to accomplish the objective, and the procedures were handled at the individual level.

### 3.1. Sample and data collection process

The sampling frame was taken from the database of the Finiinfo directory (El koncept d.o.o., 2023), which provides business information on companies operating in Croatia. A random sample of Croatian companies was chosen, taking into account their representation in the activity sector (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2023). The data collection started in March 2023 and lasted for about one month. Around 3000 e-mails were sent to companies operating in different sectors during that period. The details of the research were presented to the respondents, informing them that their answers were anonymous, as part of the ex-ante approach to avoid the development of common method bias (CMB) (Chang et al., 2020). As all the questions were marked as mandatory, there was no possibility of obtaining an uncompleted questionnaire. A total of 567 participants responded and filled out the survey (response rate around 18.9 %). Demographic data of the respondents (presented in the results section) show that the sample adequately represents the Croatian labor market when observing occupations in paid employment (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2023), which was the focus of this study.

### 3.2. Variables and measures

*Perceived information overload* was measured by 5 questions from Misra and Stokols scale (2012) which assesses cyber and place-based information overload. The scale was based on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Cronbach's α is 0.67.

*Demands at work* were measured by 8 items on a 7-point Likert-type scale (6 core items and 2 middle items) comprising the third version of the Copenhagen psychosocial questionnaire (Burr et al., 2019). Cronbach's α is 0.80. *Multitasking* was measured by 5 items on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Three questions were assessed from Kirchberg et al. (2015) scale, one question from Zika-Viktorsson et al. (2006) scale, and one question from Lojeski et al. (2007) study. Some questions were adjusted to avoid reverse coding. Cronbach's α is 0.769.

*Burnout* was operationalized with 15 items from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach et al., 1996), following the questions reported in the study by Bang and Reio Jr (2017). This self-report questionnaire has three subscales: Emotional Exhaustion, Cynicism, and Professional Efficacy. Each subscale was measured with 5 items on a 7-point Likert-type scale. Some questions were adjusted to avoid reverse coding. Cronbach's α is 0.931.

*Decision-making style* was measured with questions from the Melbourne decision-making questionnaire: an instrument for measuring patterns for coping with decisional conflict (Mann et al., 1997). The questionnaire has four subscales: Vigilance, Buck-Passing, Procrastination and Hypervigilance. Each subscale was measured with 5 items on a 3-point Likert-type scale. Some questions were adjusted to avoid reverse coding. Cronbach's α is 0.905.

*Time pressure* was measured with 4 items on a 7-point Likert-type scale, assessed from the Kinicki and Vecchio study (1994). Cronbach's alpha is 0.927. *Information accuracy* was measured with 4 items on a 7-point Likert-type scale, assessed from the O'Reilly and Roberts study (1997). Cronbach's α is 0.86.

### 3.3. Data analysis

A nonresponse analysis was performed to understand if the characteristics of non-respondents could impact the results of the survey (Phillips et al., 2015). A wave analysis was used to calculate the nonresponse bias value and the results indicated that there were no significant differences between respondents and nonrespondents. Additionally, Harman's one-factor test was performed as an ex-post procedure to control the CMB (Chang et al., 2020). A value of 24.263% of the first extracted factor indicates that the CMB is not present in this study, since it is lower than the threshold value of 50% (Eichhorn, 2014).

Data were statistically analyzed using IBM SPSS software (IBM Corp, 2019). First, descriptive statistics were obtained. To detect the associations among the variables, correlation analysis was performed. Multiple

linear regression analysis was used to test the relationships between the independent variables of information overload, demands at work and multitasking, and burnout, as a dependent variable (model 1). Moderated regression analysis was used to test the relationship between burnout (independent variable) and poor decision-making style (dependent variable), and to analyze the moderation effects of information accuracy and time pressure (model 2). Before testing for moderation, the variables were mean-centered, allowing a better interpretation of the results.

To evaluate if the chosen models fit the data and to verify the assumptions underlying multiple regression, the values of normality, homoscedasticity, and linearity were observed (Hair et al., 2019). Durbin-Watson statistics, maximum Cook's distance and variance inflation factors (VIF) were also obtained. For model 1, Durbin-Watson statistics is 1.774, the maximum Cook's distance is 0.024, and VIFs are below 3. In model 2, Durbin-Watson statistics is 2.038, maximum Cook's distance is 0.112, and VIFs are below 1.5, indicating that all the observed values are within their target thresholds (Rutledge & Barros, 2002; Tranmer & Elliot, 2008). The obtained results show that the models provide an appropriate fit to the data, allowing for further statistical analysis, in order to test the proposed hypotheses (Eberly, 2007).

## 4. Results

Results of descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1, which outlines in detail the characteristics of the respondents. Out of 567 respondents, 59.3% are women, and 40.7% are men. The majority of respondents are aged 31–51 (70%) and have higher education (82.9%). The respondents are employed in different departments, in companies of various business activities, ranging from manufacturing, construction, and trade to service industries, such as information and communication, and hospitality. Most respondents work around 8 to 9 hours a day (65.3%).

To understand the relationships between the variables, correlation analysis was performed, whose results are presented in Table 2 and show that a statistically significant positive correlation is found between all the variables. Correlation coefficients range from 0.095 to 0.787.

The positive relationship between the variables indicates that an increase in the value of one variable leads to an increase in another variable as well (Schober et al., 2018). The analysis of the strength of their relationship shows a strong positive correlation between demands at work and information overload (r = 0.718) and time pressure (0.787); and moderate positive correlations between information overload and multitasking (r = 0.550), burnout (r = 0.532), and time pressure (r = 0.641). The other values show weak positive correlations between the variables (r = 0.10–0.39) (Schober et al., 2018).

**Table 1.** Characteristics of the respondents (n = 567) (source: the authors)

| Construct | Characteristic | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Women | 336 | 59.3 |
| | Men | 231 | 40.7 |
| Age | <25 | 17 | 3.0 |
| | 26–30 | 77 | 13.6 |
| | 31–40 | 229 | 40.4 |
| | 41–50 | 168 | 29.6 |
| | 51–60 | 65 | 11.5 |
| | 61+ | 11 | 1.9 |
| Education | Elementary school | 0 | 0 |
| | High school | 97 | 17.1 |
| | Undergraduate | 123 | 21.7 |
| | Graduate | 315 | 55.6 |
| | Postgraduate | 32 | 5.6 |
| Position in the company | Owner | 70 | 12.4 |
| | Director | 64 | 11.3 |
| | Manager | 219 | 38.6 |
| | Administration | 214 | 37.7 |
| Industry | Manufacturing | 112 | 19.8 |
| | Construction | 47 | 8.3 |
| | Trade (retail/ wholesale) | 95 | 16.8 |
| | Energetics | 9 | 1.6 |
| | Logistics | 17 | 3.0 |
| | Hospitality | 25 | 4.4 |
| | Info and Communication | 59 | 10.4 |
| | Financial/ Insurance | 46 | 8.1 |
| | Real Estate | 1 | 0.2 |
| | Technical/ scientific | 37 | 6.5 |
| | Administrative services | 14 | 2.5 |
| | Art, entertainment, recreation | 7 | 1.2 |
| | Other | 98 | 17.2 |
| Company size | Micro | 96 | 16.9 |
| | Small | 109 | 19.2 |
| | Medium | 187 | 33.0 |
| | Large | 175 | 30.9 |
| Department | R&D | 16 | 2.8 |
| | Procurement | 40 | 7.1 |
| | Production | 48 | 8.5 |
| | Sales | 164 | 28.9 |
| | Finance | 75 | 13.2 |
| | Marketing | 61 | 10.8 |
| | Human Resource | 30 | 5.3 |
| | Other | 133 | 23.4 |
| Work Hours/Day | Less than 8 | 74 | 13.1 |
| | 8–9 | 370 | 65.2 |
| | Over 9 | 123 | 21.7 |

**Table 2.** Means, SD and correlations (n = 567) (source: the authors)

| | Mean | S.D. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Information overload | 3.13 | 0.79 | 1 | | | | | | |
| 2. Demands at work | 4.47 | 1.09 | .718** | 1 | | | | | |
| 3. Multitasking | 4.11 | 0.72 | .550** | .653** | 1 | | | | |
| 4. Burnout | 3.42 | 1.25 | .532** | .487** | .351** | 1 | | | |
| 5. Poor dec.-making style | 1.46 | 0.37 | .213** | .134** | .095* | .462** | 1 | | |
| 6. Info. accuracy | 4.01 | 1.47 | .356** | .358** | .264** | .490** | .196** | 1 | |
| 7. Time pressure | 4.45 | 1.53 | .641** | .787** | .690** | .478** | .125** | .359** | 1 |

*Notes*: *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01.

## 4.1. Results of regression analysis

Table 3 shows the results of multiple linear regression analysis for model 1, where burnout is the dependent variable, while information overload, demands at work, and multitasking are independent variables.

**Table 3.** Multiple linear regression analysis (dependent variable: burnout) (source: the authors)

| | | Model 1 | | p-value | Result |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | β | S.E. | | |
| | Direct effects | | | | |
| H1 | Information overload | 0.375** | 0.081 | 0.000 | **Supported** |
| H2 | Demands at work | 0.214** | 0.065 | 0.000 | **Supported** |
| H3 | Multitasking | 0.004 | 0.082 | 0.934 | Not supported |
| | R square ($R^2$) | | 0.305** | 0.000 | |
| | Adjusted $R^2$ | | 0.302** | | |

The results presented in Table 3 demonstrate that information overload (β = 0.375, p < 0.001) and demands at work (β = 0.214, p < 0.001) have a statistically significant and positive impact on burnout, thus confirming hypotheses H1 and H2. On the other hand, multitasking was found insignificant in the influence of burnout (β = 0.004, p = 0.934), meaning that hypothesis H3 could not be confirmed.

Table 4 presents the results of moderated regression analysis for model 2 where burnout is the independent variable and poor decision-making style is a dependent variable, while time accuracy and time pressure are moderators.

The results show that burnout (β = 0.460, p < 0.001) has a statistically significant and positive impact on poor decision-making style, thus confirming hypothesis H4. The results didn't confirm the existence of the moderation effects of either time pressure (β = –0.033, p = 0.441) or information accuracy (β = 0.026, p = 0.549) on the relationship between burnout and poor decision-making style.

**Table 4.** Moderated regression analysis (dependent variable: poor decision-making style) (source: the authors)

| | | Model 2 | | p | Results |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | β | S.E. | | |
| | *Direct effects* | | | | |
| H4 | Burnout | 0.460** | 0.011 | 0.000 | Supported |
| | *Moderation effects* | | | | |
| H5 | Time pressure x burnout | –0.033 | 0.008 | 0.441 | Not supported |
| H6 | Info. accuracy x burnout | 0.026 | 0.008 | 0.549 | Not supported |
| | R square ($R^2$) | | 0.214** | 0.000 | |
| | Adjusted $R^2$ | | 0.210** | | |

## 5. Discussion

This study tested six hypotheses to determine (1) the impact of information overload, demands at work and multitasking on burnout, (2) to examine the impact of burnout on decision-making style, and (3) to understand whether time pressure and information accuracy moderate the relationship between burnout and poor decision-making style. The study has been conducted among the employees in Croatian companies, based on the indicated lack of research in this sector.

The results of statistical analysis show that information overload has a significant positive impact on burnout (β = 0.375; p = 0.000), thus confirming hypothesis H1 and indicating that an excess of information at the workplace affects the employee's mental and physical capacities and impacts the development of burnout. The findings align with Cho et al.'s (2019) study, linking mobile instant messaging and information overload to increased burnout. Another parallel can be drawn to research connecting information overload with negative well-being (Alhenieidi & Smith, 2020) and higher stress levels (Misra & Stokols, 2012). Often referred to as a disease or a virus of the modern era (Roetzel, 2019), and yet very much neglected or perceived as an issue in the organization, information overload requires greater attention at the workplace since it poses a threat to concentration and productivity for many employees.

The positive impact of demands at work on burnout was found significant (β = 0.214; p = 0.000), meaning that hypothesis H2 was also confirmed. These findings are consistent with several studies conducted so far (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Bakker et al., 2004; Lee & Eissenstat, 2018; Adil & Baig, 2018) that tested different elements of job demands and proved their positive impact on the development of workplace-related burnout. Since intense work demands reduce the energy and drain the resources to perform all the job-related tasks, employees can experience different levels of stress that in the long-term lead to burnout. This also supports the foundation of the COR model, upon which this study was built.

On the other hand, multitasking did not show a statistically significant influence on burnout (β = 0.004; p = 0.934 > 0.05), failing to support hypothesis H3. While no direct studies on workplace multitasking and burnout were found, parallels can be drawn to Reinecke et al.'s (2017) study on internet multitasking and its indirect effects on burnout. Kirchberg et al. (2015) found a link between multitasking and lower affective well-being, especially for those with low multitasking preferences. In this study, despite frequent multitasking among respondents in Croatian companies, it did not seem to influence burnout. The possible explanation could be found in the fact that certain people perceive multitasking as a positive job feature as it breaks boredom and brings dynamism to the work environment.

When it comes to exploring the consequences of burnout, this research has proven that burnout leads to poor decision-making style (β = 0.460; p = 0.000), therefore confirming hypothesis H4. The findings are in line with previous studies (McGee, 1989; Michailidis & Banks, 2016), which tested the relationship between decision-making styles and the dimensions of burnout, demonstrating that burnout contributes to irrational decision-making. This indicates that when employees experience burnout, their ability to make sound decisions is compromised, with potentially severe implications for their daily work activities.

The results of the moderation analysis did not show enough statistical evidence to support the moderating effects of time pressure (β = –0.033; p = 0.441 > 0.05) or information accuracy (β = 0.025; p = 0.549 > 0.05) on the relationship between the burnout and poor decision-making style, meaning that hypotheses H5 and H6 could not be confirmed. Since no previous studies were found that tested these moderating effects in the workplace, additional research is required to reach relevant conclusions.

## 5.1. Theoretical and practical implications

This research provides both theoretical and practical contributions. On the theoretical side, it is one of the first studies in Croatia to explore the antecedents and consequences of burnout syndrome, offering a multiple-perspective framework. It, thus, introduces new insights for burnout-related studies and empirically tests the model on Croatian employees, contributing to a better understanding of burnout in other developing European countries. The results have shown that information overload and demands at work significantly contribute to the development of burnout syndrome, while multitasking doesn't have such an effect. Since previous research didn't extensively observe the effects of information overload and multitasking on burnout syndrome, this study makes an important contribution to the theory by taking into account the typical characteristics of today's modern, post-pandemic workplace. Moreover, the research has shown that burnout leads to poor decision-making style, while information accuracy and time pressure do not have moderation effects on the indicated relationship, which makes an additional important contribution to the theory.

On the practical side, this study can help human resource managers and other key people in business organizations in pointing to the occupational elements that contribute to burnout development. Being aware that information overload and high job demands can lead to burnout can help in creating an organizational culture focused on minimizing the influence of the mentioned factors. The speed of change happening in today's organization can be overwhelming for employees who are often required to plan fast, work fast, decide fast, and perform better year by year, which can be a tremendous burden for them. Creating a supportive organizational culture that recognizes basic human needs and constraints of employees can make a great deal in fighting mental and physical workplace-related stress that leads to burnout. Education, particularly in information literacy, is crucial, given the widespread use of information and communication technologies in offices. Unfortunately, few employees have received adequate training on managing information overload and lack skills in retrieving, organizing, interpreting, and managing incoming information (Hoq, 2014).

The results of this study are important for policy-makers as well and can help in understanding that dealing with burnout is necessary at the national level. That includes policies on improving work quality, occupational health support, implementing active programs to recognize and deal with the symptoms of occupational stress, and developing the support system to successfully integrate those employees who return to work after being absent due to burnout issues (Boyce & Mustajbegovic, 2019). Preventing burnout from happening can benefit employees, organizations, and the national economy, especially since this study proved that burnout leads to poor decision-making style. Making a good decision is a key element for the success of any organization, so by bringing employees into a state of burnout, many companies risk their future. Creating a healthy workplace where employees thrive in their projects and feel fulfilled, while also maintaining their physical and mental stamina is the prerequisite for every successful organization.

## 6. Conclusions

Although burnout as a syndrome has been observed in Croatia for over 30 years, its implications for business organizations are not extensively covered in professional or scientific literature. Understanding the occupational factors contributing to burnout is crucial for fostering a healthy organizational culture that motivates long-term employee commitment. This research explored the impact of various constructs on burnout development, examined the relationship between burnout and poor decision-making styles, and tested moderation effects of information accuracy and time pressure. Results indicate that information overload and workplace demands positively influence burnout in business organizations, with burnout contributing to poor decision-making styles.

The nature of the study is cross-sectional, which is its main limitation since it provides just a fraction of the current state of mind of employees working in business organizations. Additionally, the results are based on self-report data, which can lead to bias development. Thus, recommendations for future studies go in the direction of conducting longitudinal research, to get a real picture of the working conditions in Croatian companies and the way they affect the health of employees. The online questionnaire, as a survey method, has its constraints, including potential technical issues with internet service providers and users' lack of knowledge in completing online surveys (Lefever et al., 2007). With over 60 items in the questionnaire, it's possible that some respondents lost interest, impacting the accuracy of the data. The sample for the research was limited to individuals with publicly available email addresses on the company's website, potentially excluding employees who could be experiencing burnout issues but were not reached by the survey.

This study observed burnout as one comprehensive construct and decision-making style, also as one comprehensive construct, not distinguishing the relationships between their sub-scales. It is recommended to include these observations in future studies, to realize which element of burnout influences a particular decision-making style. Future studies could also observe these variables through the job demands-resources model, as another prevalent model in the burnout scientific literature (Bakker et al., 2004).

Multitasking also needs further exploring and is encouraged to test its effects on burnout. While this research did not find a positive influence on burnout, it did not examine the psychological characteristics of respondents, such as their preference for multitasking. Previous research has indicated that these psychological aspects can influence individual well-being or stress levels (Kirchberg et al., 2015; Reddy & Kumar, 2020). Given that multitasking has become almost a norm in today's working environment, the lack of research on this topic emphasizes the need for detailed investigation in future studies.

Another limitation of the study is that it observed only one consequence of burnout and two moderators. Future studies conducted in Croatia are encouraged to explore other consequences as well, such as absenteeism, motivation, organizational commitment, employee turnover, or company performance, and add more moderators such as organizational support, employee autonomy, or work-life balance. Future research could also observe burnout by outlying differences between the companies based on their size (small and medium-sized enterprises and large companies), demographic characteristics of employees, and workers in different sectors and industries, or to see whether there are differences between product or service-based organizations.

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## Author contributions

Conceptualization: B. M. M. and M. C.; methodology: B. M. M. and M. C.; software: M. C.; validation: M. C.; formal analysis: M. C.; investigation, M. C.; resources: B. M. M and M. C.; data curation: M. C.; writing – original draft preparation: B. M. M. and M. C.; writing – review and editing: B. M. M. and M. C.; visualization: M. C.; supervision: B. M. M.; project administration: B. M. M. and M. C.

## Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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