

Strategies to Reduce Burnout for Employees with High Workload Demands in the Event Planning Industry

Michelle Healy, Kim A. Critchlow

College of Management and Human Potential, Walden University, Minneapolis, USA
Email: michelle.healy1@waldenu.edu, kim.critchlow@mail.waldenu.edu

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Abstract

Ineffective strategies to reduce burnout for employees can decrease productivity and quality of work and can increase turnover. Event industry leaders who struggle to reduce burnout of employees with high workload demands are at risk of employee turnover. Grounded in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, the purpose of this qualitative, pragmatic inquiry research project was to explore effective strategies to reduce burnout for employees with high workload demands. The participants were eight event industry leaders who had effectively implemented strategies to reduce burnout. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and a review of public websites and documents. Using thematic analysis, three themes were identified: 1) prioritize the employee, 2) nurture communication, and 3) provide resources. A key recommendation is for event industry leaders to commit to a cadence of regular meetings with employees to ascertain their levels of strain and to be prepared to make changes to their workload to prevent employee burnout. The implications for social change include the potential for event industry leaders to promote and influence a community of healthy work balance and personal well-being among their employees, who may also live and work in the communities served by their work.

Keywords

Burnout, Job Demands-Resources Model, Event Planning Industry, Employee Retention, Workload Management, Organizational Support, Employee Engagement

1. Introduction

Some business leaders have struggled with employee burnout due to excessive

workload demands, which has resulted in reduced productivity, quality of work, and ultimately led to increased turnover. Burnout is not a single factor; rather, it is a complex syndrome comprising multiple factors. Demerouti et al. (2001) expanded on the earlier work by Maslach (1982). In his research, Maslach defined *burnout* as a syndrome comprising three distinct components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment rather than a singular condition. Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of being overextended and exhausted due to the emotional demands of work. Depersonalization refers to a feeling of detachment and cynicism towards one's work. A reduced sense of personal accomplishment indicates a feeling of no longer being effective in one's work or job responsibilities. Maslach found that burnout was exclusive to caring professions, such as social work, but Demerouti et al. asserted that burnout was not exclusive to caring professions. The overarching research question was: What effective strategies do business leaders use to reduce burnout for employees with high workload demands?

Employees are the most important part of an organization. Their unique skills and institutional knowledge have contributed to an organization's competitive advantage. Employee turnover, often referred to as employee churn, has increased a company's costs due to the loss of institutional knowledge and the associated expenses of recruiting, replacing, and training new employees (Prajith & Vigi, 2023). Employees have experienced burnout, which has led to issues with employee retention.

Employees in the event planning industry have been at a high risk of burnout due to the complexity of their work. Wallace and Michopoulou (2023) described event planning as complex planning that encompasses project management, stakeholder theory, and event management. The researchers found that event professionals' work often exceeds the complexity of projects, as they deal with a higher level of uncertainty in their work (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2023). Complicated project management has clear goals and timelines. Complex project management, which includes event planning, requires frequent pivoting to mitigate the often-competing priorities and timelines of internal and external stakeholders (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2023). Event planning employees work within project management, budget planning, and creative inspiration to launch a unique experience (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2023). The dependency upon stakeholders, which can have complementary and competing goals and timelines, to deliver an event experience, makes their work complex and could increase their risk of burnout.

One symptom of burnout has been the decline in employee engagement, which, in turn, can compromise an organization's competitive advantage (Nazir & Islam, 2020). Lombardi et al. (2024) found that 40% of current peer recovery support specialists (PRSS) employees have been at risk of burnout due to high job demands and low job resources. PRSS employees provide critical community support for people going through drug recovery and reduce the risk of hospitalization. Learn-

ing effective strategies to reduce burnout is important for individual employees and can benefit entire teams. Leaders must learn how to reduce burnout, which can spread from one employee to another (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022). Leaders who implement effective strategies can identify and address burnout in a single employee before it impacts the entire team.

The specific business problem was that some business leaders lack effective strategies to reduce burnout for employees with high workload demands. Workload demands were defined as those physical, social, or organizational parts of a job that require an employee to sustain physical or mental effort that are associated with physiological and psychological costs (Demerouti et al., 2001). High workload demands can occur when job resources are low (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Effective strategies were defined as actions taken by the leader that resulted in a measurable reduction in behaviors associated with burnout and an increase in the positive behaviors associated with employee engagement. The effectiveness was expressed by the event industry leaders during the qualitative interviews. The research explored strategies that business leaders used to reduce burnout for employees with high workload demands. The specific population group consisted of business leaders in the event planning industry. The theoretical framework used to view the phenomenon was Demerouti et al.'s (2001) Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model.

2. Literature Review

A comprehensive review of the recent professional and academic literature, online databases was conducted. Some of the keywords terms used were burnout, stress, productivity, work quality, retention, job demands, and job resources. The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry research study was to identify and explore effective strategies used by business leaders to reduce burnout for employees with high workloads.

As workload demands became increasingly complex in various industries, organizations faced challenges related to employee retention, engagement, and performance. Addressing these challenges required effective strategies that aligned workload management with organizational goals and employee well-being. Strategic leadership depended on maintaining transparency and promoting accountability while keeping employee well-being a priority. Establishing effective frameworks for managing burnout was essential to maintaining engagement, performance, and retention while reducing potential dangers and promoting responsible management practices.

This review also explored scholarly perspectives on and the applicability of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, which served as the conceptual framework that provided a foundation for the project. A systematic approach analyzed the conceptual framework; synthesized research related to themes and phenomena; and compared and contrasted perspectives from recent and historical literature to evaluate how evolving practices influenced the project's focus.

2.1. Conceptual Framework

The research was grounded in Demerouti et al.'s (2001) JD-R model to examine the impact of positive and negative factors on employee burnout. In this model, an employee's work environment comprises both physical and psychological factors that contribute to their work experience. The JD-R model provided the lens through which was viewed and analyzed the research project and the data uncovered. Demerouti et al. (2001) asserted that high job demands are associated with feelings of exhaustion, and low job resources are most associated with depersonalization. Leaders can utilize information about effective strategies to reduce burnout in employees with high workload demands, thereby improving organizational performance, see Figure 1.

Physical, social, and organizational requirements	Job Demands	Balance: Job-crafting and collaboration	Imbalance: Strain – Burnout and Exhaustion	Retention and Organizational Performance
Physical, psychological, social, and organizational	Job Resources	Balance : Support, Autonomy, motivation/engagement	Imbalance: Cynicism and Depersonalization	

Figure 1. Job Demands-Resources model.

The JD-R has deep roots in how scholars and practitioners view employee support in the modern workplace. The JD-R was created by Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli in 2001. Maslach and Schaufeli (2018) defined burnout as a syndrome that occurs only within human services professions. Demerouti et al. (2001) asserted that there was little empirical evidence to support the notion that burnout occurs exclusively in caring professions. Demerouti et al. asserted that burnout occurs regardless of the profession when limited job resources deplete employees' energy and motivation.

Burnout does not occur as a single factor; instead, it is a complex set of factors that comprise a syndrome. Demerouti et al. (2001) expanded on the earlier work by Maslach (1982). In his research, Maslach defined burnout as a syndrome comprising three distinct components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment rather than a singular condition. Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of being overextended and exhausted due to the emotional demands of work. Depersonalization refers to a feeling of detachment and cynicism towards one's work. A reduced sense of personal accomplishment indicates a feeling of no longer being effective in one's work or job responsibilities. Maslach found that burnout was exclusive to caring professions, such as social work, but Demerouti et al. asserted that burnout was not exclusive to caring professions.

The work environment comprises numerous interactions of job demands and resources. In the JD-R model, burnout can occur when there is an imbalance between the job resources (low) and demands (high) (Demerouti et al., 2001). Job demands refer to the physical, social, and organizational requirements that neces-

sitate continuous effort and can lead to exhaustion. Demerouti et al. asserted that the greater the job effort, the greater the psychological costs to the employee.

Job resources can mitigate the psychological and physical costs of the employee. Job resources encompass physical, psychological, social, and organizational aspects that enable employees to achieve work goals, mitigate the cost of job demands, or foster personal growth (Demerouti et al., 2001). Job resources can be individual or grouped to reduce the cost to the employee; for example, having an empty office to use during a big deadline can provide a quieter environment and improved concentration. Leaders who implement effective strategies to balance work demands and job resources among their employees can reduce burnout.

2.2. High Workload Demands

Understanding the definition of workload is imperative for analyzing how high load demands can lead to burnout. Webster and Weller (2018) differentiated the workload definitions according to the subject's self-reporting level in an editorial about the different workload measurement tools. The authors defined the fundamental concept of workload as the demands placed on an individual to meet a task and the individual's skills required to complete it. Employees could reach their maximum physical and mental capacity as tasks increase. Overload occurred when tasks exceeded an employee's available resources. However, not all employees measure the same way.

Employees can differ in how they view their workload. Webster and Weller (2018) compared experienced employees who may be able to complete complex tasks efficiently with newer employees who struggle with more straightforward tasks due to their learning curve. They asserted that workload demands should include a self-reporting dimension on a Likert scale, much like a pain scale, to communicate how employees view their workload. Employees can respond differently to job demands, which could lead to burnout.

2.3. Job Burnout

Leaders implementing effective strategies to reduce burnout may also effectively strengthen their organization's financial performance. There is a link between the adverse effects of burnout and the positive effects of employees achieving decent work. Burnout is a syndrome of ongoing work stress that employees can no longer manage (Dinis et al., 2024). Dinis et al. (2024) studied the relationship between decent work and burnout in a sample of 727 academics from Portugal and Brazil. Dinis et al. defined decent work as the right of all human beings to decent and productive work conditions. Dinis et al. found that decent work dimensions were significantly and negatively related to burnout. Burnout does not occur in isolation, but it can affect many employees simultaneously.

It can be perilous for a leader to view burnout as a one-employee-at-a-time syndrome. Instead, one employee's stress can lead to stress and burnout in another employee. Auer et al. (2024) found that a psychological contagion can occur, mean-

ing that an employee may exhibit stress when observing another employee's stress. The researchers recruited 30 male college students and divided them into two groups: one experiencing a stress-inducing scenario and the other a placebo scenario with minimal stress. The researchers found that when observing stress in a colleague, nonverbal communication, such as the fight-or-flight biological responses, can be present. Shared stress can lead to shared burnout, which in turn can harm employee retention.

2.4. Retention

An organization comprises employees, customers, and the physical work environment. Losing and replacing employees costs an organization time and money (Prajith & Vigi, 2023). Prajith and Vigi (2023) analyzed the relationship between turnover intention, working conditions, burnout, and the mediating factor of social support. Prajith and Vigi used a simple sample of 324 healthcare workers in India. The researchers found a positive correlation between turnover intention, burnout, and working conditions. Social support played a mediating role in reducing the relationship between burnout and working conditions. Leaders should consider how to model and reward social support to reduce burnout and intention to turnover.

Retaining employees saves an organization money. Schaechter et al. (2023) investigated methods to enhance retention by fostering a sense of belonging in the workplace. The cost to recruit and hire new physicians was estimated to be between \$25,000 and \$1,000,000 per physician and could cost as high as \$50,000 for an experienced nurse. Schaechter et al. analyzed a sample of 366 physicians, 99% of whom were women, regarding their intent to leave within two years. Schaechter et al. found that a greater sense of workplace belonging was associated with a reduced intention to leave. Workplace belonging included interpersonal relationships and organizational policies. Leaders can implement social support systems, such as mentoring, to enhance retention and reduce the likelihood of employees intending to leave.

2.5. Reducing Burnout through Job Resources

The negative impacts of burnout in high-workload-demand jobs can be felt by staff and measured by leaders. Reduced retention and productivity are symptoms that impact the business. In the JD-R model, the researchers referred to burnout as an imbalance between job demands and resources (Demerouti et al., 2001). Leaders could improve organizational performance by understanding the importance of regulating job resources as an effective strategy to reduce burnout.

Employees can feel overwhelmed due to a lack of job resources. Bakker et al. (2005) examined the job demands of university faculty in a prominent institute for professional education in applied science in Netherlands. The faculty's job demands included work overload, student emotional demands, physical demands, and work-home interference. Bakker et al. employed the JD-R as their conceptual framework and the Maslach Burnout Inventory as their measurement instru-

ment. Bakker et al. found that job resources could buffer the impact of workload on exhaustion and depersonalization.

Burnout can occur when job demands exceed job resources. Bakker et al. (2005) found that additional job resources can reduce burnout and that combining resources, such as autonomy and a high-quality relationship with their supervisor, could mitigate high job demands. Bakker et al.'s research demonstrated the importance of the relationship between supervisors and their employees. Leaders could learn about job resources they could apply in combination to mitigate job demands and reduce burnout.

Balance is at the core of an engaged employee. According to the JD-R model, burnout arises from an imbalance between job demands and job resources (Demerouti et al., 2001). Hoare and Vandenberghe (2024) surveyed 364 full-time employees to investigate the relationships between job demands, personal and job resources, turnover intention, and emotional exhaustion. Hoare and Vandenberghe found that job resources had a more significant impact on reducing turnover intention than job demands. Job resources have a significant impact on the increase in emotional exhaustion (Hoare & Vandenberghe, 2024). These research findings suggest that leaders should prioritize ensuring job resources over reducing job demands to reduce burnout.

3. Methodology

The researchers used a qualitative pragmatic inquiry research design approach to explore the strategies event industry leaders use to develop ethical frameworks for reducing employee burnout. The pragmatic inquiry design was suitable for my research project because it allowed the exploration of the effective strategies employed by business leaders to reduce burnout. This research design enabled me to explore the actions and changes that occur, as they can be experienced differently within various organizational settings. In addition, the pragmatic inquiry approach was suitable for this study, as it did not assume a single finding, but rather multiple findings that could be valid. The pragmatic inquiry takes environmental factors into account, such as systems and activities that are governed by the organization (Nzembayie, 2017). This approach was suitable given the diverse range of organizations that employ event planners.

Professional networks were used to identify and invite individuals across diverse roles and perspectives to participate in interviews. Snowball sampling was also used to have qualified participants provide the contact information of other potentially qualified industry leaders to include in the research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight event industry leaders selected through purposive sampling. The criterion for inclusion is that business leaders must have at least 5 years of experience working in the field, have led or managed a team of at least three employees, and have demonstrated effective strategies to reduce burnout among employees with high workload demands. Data saturation was reached at the sixth interview; two more were conducted to ensure data saturation. Participants self-reported the effectiveness of their strategies. This was a study boundary.

The event industry leaders interviewed for this study represented different organizational settings and subsectors in the industry. Participants resided around the U.S. and planned events that were held around the country and internationally. The event industry subsectors included association, corporate, self-owned, planners, suppliers, and event production. The years of experience with industry leaders ranged from ten years to 35 years.

Member checking was used to enhance the reliability of the data collection. Member checking enables the researcher to confirm their interpretation of the data (Nassaji, 2020). Member checking was an essential step in the research to ensure the reliability of qualitative results. Although member checking can involve sharing the full transcript, this method may cause discomfort for the participant by having them hear their own words verbatim (Motulsky, 2021). The participants' responses were summarized, and each participant was asked to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations of their key points. The participants did not provide any feedback that changed the interpretation of the interview responses.

Data collection involved interviews conducted via Microsoft Teams, which were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed, publicly available and relevant secondary documents and artifacts. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes across the interview and secondary data, following the process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006).

The thematic analysis process involved familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining the themes, and producing the report. Codes from the interview codes were compared to the secondary data codes and used for methodological triangulation to enhance the completeness and credibility of the findings.

The contents in the interview transcripts were reviewed several times and color-coded to identify the initial emergent themes. The reflexive notes in the log that contained unexpected keywords or those words that were used multiple times were reviewed and included in the coding and triangulation process. The secondary data, such as industry best practices regarding high workload jobs and event planners, as reported in association reports and association and industry websites, were also coded and triangulated to identify themes. To strengthen the methodological transparency and reliability of the qualitative coding process, the researchers employed Holsti's method of intercoder reliability assessment. This approach measures the consistency and trustworthiness of the coding process by comparing the degree to which multiple coders assign the same codes to the same data units, providing a quantitative measure of coding reliability within the qualitative research framework.

The intercoder reliability process involved two experienced researchers independently coding a subset of the interview transcripts using the established coding framework. Following Holsti's method, reliability was calculated (Holsti, 1969).

Ethical research practices were used at all times; maintaining the participants' confidentiality and anonymity through masking their identity, minimizing any risk to the participants by obtaining signed informed consents, and upholding the

utmost of respect for the participants by informing them that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from participation anytime without consequence. Trustworthiness was enhanced through member checking to verify the researcher's interpretations of the participants', triangulation of interview data with industry reports, and detailed documentation (research log and reflexivity journal), which served as an audit trail to support dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability.

4. Findings

The purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to explore effective strategies to reduce burnout. The literature review provided a deep understanding of the syndrome of burnout, its roots in Maslach's (1982) original description of burnout, which could occur when job demands exceeded job resources, and the conceptual framework of the JD-R (Demerouti et al., 2001) to explore efficient strategies to reduce burnout in employees with high workload demands. Maslach asserted that burnout results in employees experiencing feelings of emotional exhaustion, detachment, cynicism, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. Maslach also asserted that burnout was exclusive to the human services professions. Demerouti et al. (2001) expanded on Maslach's original work and asserted that burnout can occur in any profession and created the JD-R model. Demerouti et al. and Maslach agreed that burnout has negative implications for leaders, as it is associated with poor engagement, resulting in decreased performance, increased absenteeism and turnover, and lower retention rates. Additionally, Demerouti et al. expanded on Maslach's original model by adding organizational support as a job resource.

In this study, the sample for the semi-structured interviews consisted of event industry leaders. This study provides new insights into effective strategies for reducing burnout within the event industry. As event professionals work within complex project management, it is understandable that the themes that emerged from my research are all centered on the needs of the employee. The thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed three themes: prioritizing the employee, nurturing communication, and providing resources.

The overarching research question was, "What effective strategies do business leaders use to reduce burnout for employees with high workload demands?". The sources of primary data collection included semi-structured interviews with eight participants. The secondary data consisted of journals, digital articles, and industry articles, which were used to corroborate the themes identified from the participants' responses. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to maintain their confidentiality. Data collected from interviews were transcribed using the Microsoft Teams transcription service.

The JD-R model (Demerouti et al., 2001) served as the framework through which the research problem was viewed. In the JD-R model, increasing job resources is effective in offsetting job demands and reducing burnout. An imbalance between

job demands and available resources can lead to burnout. The more complex the work is, the higher the psychological strain on employees; therefore, job resources become more important (Demerouti et al., 2001).

The participants shared that when they implemented effective strategies to reduce burnout, they were able to maintain highly skilled employees who could meet the demands of the complex work environment. Event planning work is similar to traditional project management, but it has additional complexity (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2023). Whereas event planners work through their chronological timelines, they must also mitigate the changing and sometimes competing timelines of stakeholders (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2023). Event planning professionals can experience psychological strain in their work as they must excel in both divergent thinking, which they express through creativity, and convergent thinking, which they express through prioritizing their knowledge and resources to establish priorities (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2023).

In a study of event management companies located in the United Kingdom, the United States, Greece, and Australia, the researchers found that focusing on the needs of the employee was effective in retaining event professionals and was demonstrated by getting to know the employees, empowering employees, fostering a good level of internal communication, and supporting good work-life balance (Marinakou, 2019). Retaining employees with the skills to complete the complex work required in the event industry is crucial for event industry leaders to ensure the successful execution of their organization's events. The researchers also found that event management leaders took an exclusive approach to retention, creating special initiatives to retain a select group of employees with outstanding talent. The participants identified that employee-centered strategies were shown to be effective in reducing burnout.

The three themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews all centered on how a leader should treat an employee to effectively reduce burnout: 1) prioritize employees, 2) nurture communication, and 3) offer resources. The first theme, *prioritize the employee*, was referenced 23 times by the participants, whereas the second theme, *nurture communication*, was referenced 13 times. The third theme, *provide resources* was referenced nine times. Table 1 provides a visual representation of the themes and their corresponding references. Following that, the analysis and discussion of the themes and the findings in relation to the themes are presented. Table 1 lists the themes and the number of times they arose from the coded data.

Table 1. Major themes.

Themes	References
Theme 1: Prioritize the Employee	23
Theme 2: Nurture Communication	13
Theme 3: Provide Resources	9

4.1. Themes

4.1.1. Theme 1: Prioritize the Employee

The first emerging theme, Prioritize the Employee, was identified by 87% of the participants and refers to focusing on the needs and preferences of the employees. Event industry leaders are responsible for delivering events and services to customers, which is an external focus. Paradoxically, the participants spoke about the importance of their strategy to prioritize the employee, which is an internal focus.

Demerouti et al. (2001) built their JD-R model on the foundation of Maslach's (1982) definition of burnout as a syndrome. Within the syndrome of burnout, employees can experience emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduction in personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1982). However, whereas Maslach asserted that burnout is a syndrome specific to the human services profession, Demerouti et al. asserted that burnout could occur in any profession and expanded Maslach's research to create the JD-R. In the JD-R model, organization support has been identified as a job resource (Demerouti et al., 2001). It fits with the current literature that *prioritize the employee* is the strongest theme in effective strategies to reduce burnout in employees with high workload demands, as it is aligned with the needed support for these employees, as they have complex work. The *prioritize the employee* theme, being the highest occurring theme, aligned with the JD-R model to increase job resources to balance high workload demands to reduce burnout. The participants discussed how they provided job resources and organizational support, which they demonstrated through supportive leadership, to balance job demands, as exemplified within the JD-R model, thereby reducing burnout among their employees.

Event industry leaders who expressed the *prioritize the employee* theme focused on providing supportive leadership to reduce burnout in their employees. The *prioritize the employee* theme aligned with the JD-R model as the leaders supported the physical, psychological, social, and organizational factors that impact an employee's work environment (Demerouti et al., 2001). P2 articulated, "So some of the strategies that we used...was an...over [sic]arching theme of the company that the employees were to be treated...the same as our clients".

As the event planning industry is a service-based industry, customer service is a key focus. However, events are not only built around logistics planning, budgets, room layouts, and contractual deadlines; they are also shaped by subjective factors such as attitude and expression when dealing with the changing priorities and timelines of stakeholders (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2023). The competing demands of the event planning timeline and the stakeholders' expectations increase the complexity of the work and can lead to an employee's increased stress at work. Thus, event industry leaders who provide organizational support by treating the internal employees similarly to the external clients can reduce burnout. Providing job resources can help to reduce burnout.

The *prioritize the employee* theme aligned with the JD-R by providing the job resources of supportive leadership, professional development, and organizational

support to reduce burnout in employees. The secondary research further supported the alignment between the *prioritize the employee* theme and the JD-R. Masuku et al. (2025) studied the factors that influence employee engagement and satisfaction among 184 administrative employees in the South African municipality of eMalahleni. Masuku et al. found a significant relationship between the work environment and employee engagement, with employee satisfaction improving as the work environment improved. In addition to improving employee engagement, supportive leadership, employee autonomy, and professional development, motivation can lead to employee innovation, which was shown to increase employee satisfaction (Masuku et al., 2025). As the work of event industry employees is complex, innovation is valuable. Employee innovation can lead to increased competitive advantage of the organization by making its services better than its competitors or by creating niche services that are unique within the event industry. Fostering employee innovation can keep employees challenged and empowered. As the work of event professionals is complex, providing job resources to support autonomy and innovation is essential to reduce burnout. Additionally, leaders can reduce employee burnout by supporting innovation in job demands as well.

A leader demonstrates the *prioritize the employee* theme by being open to change in the kinds of resources needed to balance an increase in job demands. When leaders are open to change, they foster psychological safety within their team and offer the job resource of organizational support to balance high-load work demands. The secondary research expanded on the *prioritize the employee* theme demonstrated by leaders being open to change to foster innovation. Brassey et al. (2023) asserted that leaders' emotions can have a multiplier effect for their team, meaning that if the leader is having a bad day and is impatient with an employee, the employee can experience that negative emotion even more strongly due to the power differential. When a leader fosters a safe environment to innovate, challenge current processes, and ask questions, they create an environment in which employees can innovate. By nurturing a safe and creative environment, a leader can support employees' growth from single loop learning, how to solve a problem, to double loop learning, using experience to re-envision the overall landscape in which we work (Brassey et al., 2023). The complex work of employees within the event profession increases job demands.

Event industry leaders must also consider the unique demands of their employees' complex work and provide opportunities for them to improve work processes, thereby reducing job demands. In the JD-R model, employee dissatisfaction can occur when there is an imbalance in job demands and resources. With this in mind, event industry leaders should save space for their employees to have a voice in how they do their work. Leaders being open to change aligned with the JD-R model, as the leader supports the employee's autonomy through job resources, thereby reducing burnout. During P2's interview, they emphasized the importance of being open to change by supporting employees' suggestions for process and workflow improvements. They asserted that a contributing factor to employee

burnout is witnessing a process that is not working well, having to repeat it over and over, yet not feeling empowered to share their input on improvement. P2 described saving space for employee suggestions, testing the recommendations, analyzing the results with the employee, and deciding together whether to keep the improvement. Being open to change by giving employees input on how they perform their work can help reduce job resources by achieving increased efficiency in a work process and also assuring employees that their time is not being wasted. Being open to change to employee input can be one factor in the *prioritize the employee* theme. Considering how to support employees during the long work hours required to plan and support events is another factor in the *prioritize the employee* theme.

Employees in the event industry are often required to work long hours, including weekends and holidays. Event leaders demonstrated the *prioritize the employee* theme through the job resources they provided to balance the job demands of their employees' work schedules. The secondary research further supported the alignment of the *prioritize the employee* theme through the effective management of employees' work schedules. In a study examining the impact of shift work on the sleep quality and safety of shift workers, leaders found that improved management of shift work schedules led to increased employee satisfaction (Hulsegge et al., 2023). Different professions encounter work schedules that are unique to their professions, including nurses who work 12-hour shifts, firefighters who work 24-hour shifts, and petroleum workers who can work 14 consecutive days (Hulsegge et al., 2023). Hulsegge et al. (2023) found that limiting the number of successive night shifts and avoiding short intervals between shifts increased employee satisfaction. Event professionals can work long hours to finalize the event's planning and then work even longer hours to support the event on-site. On-site support includes event set-up, providing logistics support during the event, and breaking down the event. P2 spoke about trying to avoid assigning an employee to work a late shift to support an event, and then also an early morning shift to set up for the next event. When event industry leaders attempt to schedule employees' work shifts to provide rest and recovery, they align with the JD-R model by seeking to reduce job demands and thereby minimize strain, burnout, or exhaustion. When leaders demonstrate organizational support by trying to balance long work hours by avoiding scheduling employees to work back-to-back late nights and early mornings, they are aligning with the *prioritize the employee* theme. Wallace and Michopoulou (2023) asserted that conflicts in the chronological timeline of events, how they are planned, and when they are held, can conflict with stakeholders' timelines. The conflict of the different timelines is referred to as Kairos (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2023). Kairos describes the qualitative aspect of time, in contrast to Chronos, which represents the chronological aspect of time (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2023). An example of the qualitative aspect of time in event planning is a last-minute request from a stakeholder that requires additional work hours for employees. Encouraging employees to take time off to rest and recover is an example of a job resource to balance job demands.

Event industry leaders should be aware of the time their employees are taking off and, often more importantly, when they are not taking time off from work. The secondary research further supports the *prioritize the employee* theme when leaders maintain their employees' work-life boundaries to reduce the risk of burnout, and some employees may require assistance in adhering to these boundaries (Kloepple, 2023). P6 articulated,

When we are on-site, I kick my staff out as soon as they're done with their work. I do not want them just sitting in the staff office with us to be there because I'm there. So I try to make sure they know my expectation is not [sic] that they are working to a point of burnout.

When employees fail to take time off from work to rest and recover, they may begin to exhibit signs of burnout, such as a cynical attitude or feeling detached from their work and colleagues. Leaders demonstrate the *prioritize the employee* theme by encouraging their employees to take time off. P2 spoke about clarifying that when employees are off, they should not call into meetings or send work emails, so they are truly off from work. The *prioritize the employee* theme aligned with the JD-R model by leaders providing organizational support as a job resource by demonstrating a supportive work environment to reduce job demands. Demerouti et al. (2001) posited that high job demands can lead to feelings of emotional exhaustion, burnout, and turnover. P6 articulated,

You are the best employee if you [sic] have burnt yourself, which is *not* [emphasis added] something I think is actually a good brag. I think that is counterintuitive to actually staying around for a long time. ... I'm not. I'm not gonna give you [sic] a prize for being the most [sic] burnt-out [sic] employee I have.

The participant prioritized the employee by actively working to prevent overwork and burnout among their staff. Although it may not always be possible to reduce job demands, leaders need to create a positive work environment by seeking additional resources, negotiating deadlines and priorities, or providing supportive leadership to acknowledge the peak times for job demands. Monitoring how employees feel when job demands are high is critical to reducing burnout, but it is not a one-size-fits-all approach for all employees.

Encouraging employees to take time off to rest and recover is aligned with the current literature about the complexity of the work required of employees. Wallace and Michopoulou (2023) described the skills required of event professionals to excel at complex project management, which include managing stakeholders' changing priorities, as well as social and communication skills, and emotional intelligence. The complex work of these employees increases job demands, which could lead to psychological strain. When leaders demonstrate the job resource of organizational support by encouraging employees to take time off from work to rest and recover, they are reducing job demands.

Another way a leader demonstrates the *prioritize the employee* theme by treating employees with respect, which in turn demonstrates organizational support. The secondary research further aligned with demonstrating the *prioritize the employee* theme by treating employees with respect because when employees feel respected, they are more resilient (Gallup, n.d.). Resilience can be associated with the positive personal job resources included in the JD-R model that include support, autonomy, motivation, and engagement (Demerouti et al., 2001). P7 articulated,

You know, most of the people that we have are really great professionals, and when a mistake is made, it's a mistake. And we try to correct that, of course, any mistake that's made, but we don't need to berate the employees or treat them disrespectfully because a mistake was made.

Due to the complex nature of their work, event professionals find resilience to be a valuable personal resource. Demonstrating respect for the employee as a factor in the *prioritize the employee* theme aligned with the current literature. As event professionals have complex work to achieve the success factors of a live event that include not only quality, budget, and meeting the timeline, they also have to achieve more subjective measurements that can include how the event enhances the image of a local community or an organization, how it fosters relationships, or how the event creates an identity that attendees want to return to (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2023). Leaders who expressed the *prioritize the employee* theme expressed the importance of demonstrating respect for their employees to reduce burnout.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the United States in March of 2020, the event industry almost ceased to exist as in-person events were prohibited. Both individual event professionals and the event industry needed to be resilient in order to pivot to digital events and podcasts, find alternative work temporarily, or change careers altogether. Event industry leaders can support the personal job resources of motivation, autonomy, and engagement that contribute to resilience by getting to know the needs of their employees.

The *prioritize the employee* theme can also be demonstrated by getting to know the different preferences of employees to reduce burnout. Employees can react to increased job demands with strain, burnout, or exhaustion (Demerouti et al., 2001). P7 described an employee who felt strongly about the difference between using vacation time after working over a weekend on an event and being given time off to acknowledge the weekend days. P7 articulated, "I came to the conclusion that we can change our thinking. And not everybody thinks like us, but the goal is to keep an employee, keep them around, and keep them engaged". The secondary research further demonstrated the alignment between the *prioritize the employee* theme with the importance of understanding the different needs of employees. Parker and Knight (2025) introduced a proactive work environment model called the SMART Work Design model, which stands for stimulating work, mastery, autonomy, relational work, and tolerable demands. The researchers combined elements

from the Job Characteristics and the JD-R models to support employee well-being (Parker & Knight, 2025). The SMART Work Design elements include stimulating work, based on a variety of tasks; mastery, clarity in role within the organization; autonomy, giving the employee control over how they work, innovate, and make decisions; relational work, fostering a supportive environment from peers and leaders; and tolerable demands, ensuring a manageable level of effort in the employees workload (Parker & Knight, 2025). The common thread running through all these factors is the leader's need to understand the preferences of each employee and adjust to their needs to reduce burnout. An employee's preferences for a supportive environment may differ from those of another employee. A leader cannot effectively demonstrate organizational support as a job resource if they do not understand the different needs of the employees, both in the work environment and in communication.

4.1.2. Theme 2: Nurture Communication

The second emerging theme, *Nurture Communication*, was identified by 62.5% of the participants. This theme aligned with the current literature, which describes the complex project management that employees must execute within the event industry (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2023). Event professionals must balance their chronological event planning work with the changing priorities and timelines of stakeholders (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2023). This complex work increases the potential for psychological strain (Wallace & Michopoulou, 2023). Nurturing communication by saving space for it—both in time and intention—is aligned with the need for additional job resources to balance the job demands for these employees to reduce burnout. Leaders who nurture communication, specifically positive communication, with their employees working on complex project management can reduce burnout among their staff.

Whereas communication can occur in formal meetings, on-site during events, or during informal hallway chats, the participants spoke about how they prioritized a regular cadence of one-on-one meetings so they could be aware of what was happening with the employee. The secondary data further supported the participants' assertions about the need for leaders to be intentional in their communication to reduce burnout. Young et al. (2024) investigated how burnout in employees can be reduced by implementing training for leaders in positive communication through a program called *Positively Energizing Leadership*. The study subjects were radiology employees working in a breast imaging department at an academic medical institution during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers performed a pretest survey in 2021, introduced the new leadership training over the next two years, and performed a post-test survey in 2023. The researchers found a significant reduction in burnout and intent to leave, as well as improved engagement. Maintaining a balance between job demands and job resources is at the heart of the JD-R model. Young et al. found that implementing the positive leadership program improved the employees' perception of job resources, which the employees perceived as improved transparency and more frequent and consistent

communication. The participants emphasized the intentionality behind creating opportunities for communication as a key differentiator in their effective strategies to reduce burnout.

A leader demonstrates the *nurture communication* theme by committing to a dependable cadence of meetings with employees. By nurturing regular communication, a leader can build relationships with their employees, better understand employees' needs and act, and positively contribute to improving retention (Marinakou, 2019). P3 talked about the importance of holding regular one-on-one meetings with employees and asking about work-related and non-work-related topics. P5 described how important it is to know about the employee's home life because of the long hours required to support events. P7 articulated,

So I think one of the most effective ways is to make sure that open communication is available and an employee is [sic] welcome to raise their hand and say, "Hey. I need a break. I need help. I need a little time off. I need to re-energize, regroup. I'm burned out".

The common thread through the *nurture communication* theme was that of intentionality on the part of the leader in how they planned and executed their communication with employees to reduce burnout. P7 spoke about their technique of sometimes meeting with an employee without an agenda, just to talk and get to understand the employee. P3 spoke about the importance of using the meeting time with employees to acknowledge with the employee that the work is stressful. P8 spoke about asking the employee what topics they would like to discuss to get the support they needed. By nurturing communication with employees, leaders can create an open, supportive environment, and employees can feel comfortable coming to their leader when they are beginning to experience the symptoms of burnout (Arnold, n.d.). When employees feel they are being heard, they feel more engaged, motivated, and can have higher job satisfaction (Arnold, n.d.). These findings align with the JD-R model to reduce burnout by increasing job resources to offset job demands. Demerouti et al. (2001) asserted that job resources could be internal resources within the employees, such as cognitive abilities, or external resources, such as organizational support. Nurturing communication is a type of organizational support.

4.1.3. Theme 3: Provide Resources

The third emerging theme, *provide resources*, was identified by 50% of the participants and could include additional personnel, technology, or anything that decreases an employee's workload. Job resources are crucial in the event industry, as employees often work long hours during peak times. Leaders should focus on personal and job resources as they can reduce employee turnover intention (Hoare & Vandenberghe, 2024). Within the JD-R model, job resources can be personal characteristics within the employee, such as optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience, or resources made available within a supportive work environment (Demerouti et al. 2001). P1 explained that when they see signs that an employee is feeling over-

whelmed, they look to increase resources. Increasing resources can involve a long-range strategy to add headcount or, in the short term, redistributing work among current employees within the team or seeking assistance from employees in other departments. Adding job resources to balance high job demands aligned with the JD-R model. A leader can also increase job resources by supporting the employees' personal resource of autonomy.

When leaders support the personal job resource of autonomy in employees, they can mitigate or buffer the imbalance between job demands and resources, thereby reducing burnout. In a study of 1912 employees at an Australian higher education organization, Bakker et al. (2005) investigated the buffering capability of reducing burnout among employees. The researchers found that job resources are not a linear single addition to peak work time but instead can work in combination to reduce employee strain. Autonomy was found to be the most common buffering resource, and a leader could support autonomy best by providing process and role clarity. Clarity in process and role is essential to support employee autonomy. When an employee has autonomy, they can avoid spending time waiting for their leader's approval or feedback. Also, the employees feel empowered to move forward with their work tasks and projects. Another positive aspect of employee autonomy is the foundation of trust between the employee and the leader, which is aligned with the JD-R model to create a supportive work environment as a valuable resource. When a leader introduces technology or empowers employees to adopt it to solve simple, redundant tasks, the leader supports the employee's autonomy in higher-level planning and decision-making, thereby buffering job demands.

Event industry leaders demonstrated the *provide resources* theme by offering tools and technology to their employees to make their work smoother and more efficient. Technology is an example of how a leader can support an employee to buffer the risk of burnout when job demands and job resources are out of balance (Bakker et al., 2005). P2 articulated, "So one of the things [sic] that we did really well [sic] is we made sure that [sic] if they ever needed anything to do their job, [sic] we got it in their hands as quickly as possible".

Artificial intelligence (AI) can be positioned as a job resource to increase efficiency in simple, day tasks. One participant mentioned using AI daily to create initial drafts of event planning documents. By freeing employees from these mundane tasks, they can have more time for other, more thoughtful work, which can reduce job demands and lower the risk of burnout. AI can also be used as a tool to detect and reduce burnout in employees.

As burnout is a syndrome of characteristics rather than a single factor, it can be challenging to judge if an employee is at risk of burnout. The secondary research expanded on P2's use of AI as a job resource to reduce burnout. Omoso and Iku-yinminu (2024) explored the introduction of AI-powered predictive analytics into corporate environments to detect signs of burnout before it occurs in an employee. Over the course of 3 years, predictive AI monitored data including email

response times, meeting attendance, absentee trends, and engagement scores. Using AI-powered predictive analytics, cases of burnout, 40% in the first year, were reduced to 25% in the second year, and 10% in the third year. The diverse preferences, work styles, and personalities of employees mean that reducing burnout is not a one-size-fits-all approach. During peak times, one employee can feel challenged, trusted, and in their flow, whereas another can feel pressured, targeted, and overwhelmed. Using predictive AI in the workplace can provide leaders with an earlier warning that an employee is at risk of burnout. With an earlier warning about signs of burnout, a leader has an improved opportunity to avoid the associated negative behaviors rather than planning how to recover from them. Reducing burnout can also decrease employee turnover, thereby reducing the extra costs associated with recruiting and hiring new employees. When comparing the three themes—prioritize the employee, nurture communication, and provide resources—to the current literature, similarities and differences are evident.

Empowerment, which is associated with the job resource of autonomy, can reduce burnout. In the JD-R model, autonomy is considered a personal job resource that can balance high job demands (Demerouti et al., 2001). The secondary research further supported the job resource of autonomy to reduce burnout. In a study of female public-school principals, Smadi et al. (2025) found a significant relationship between job empowerment and reduced burnout. Some of the examples of how the principals felt empowered included establishing formal programs for information sharing among female principals. This was like my findings in the participants' responses in the *prioritize* theme, which described the effectiveness of being open to change by implementing employees' ideas. Additionally, supporting the autonomy of employees was also identified as effective in reducing burnout under the *provide resources* theme.

Reducing an employee's workload to mitigate the risk of burnout aligned with the *provide resources* theme; however, the secondary research findings about the buffering effect of help from coworkers in reducing burnout differed from my research. Goebel et al. (2025) studied hospitalists in a community hospital who were experiencing burnout due to their workload. Whereas their finding that doctors identified workload as the cause of their burnout was like my research, the role of teamwork in reducing burnout differed. The hospitalists cited the work required to complete exit paperwork for each patient, specifically Form 3122, as a strain because it took a significant amount of time and was not directly related to patient care. Members of different teams in the hospital offered to complete parts of the forms; for example, the social workers took responsibility for completing the section of the form that dealt with patients' activities of daily living, required therapies, and home care needs. During my semi-structured interviews, some leaders described asking for help from other teams during peak times, taking on some of the work themselves, and redistributing work within the team to demonstrate organizational support to reduce workload. However, none of the participants discussed how support between coworkers can help reduce workload and mitigate burnout. Resources to reduce burnout can also be found in technology.

Implementing AI technology as a resource to support employee mental health is aligned with the *provide resources* theme. In the JD-R model, leaders who can assess when an employee is feeling out of balance with their job demands and resources can take action to reduce burnout. The secondary research supported the theme of *provide resources* by leaders providing AI as a tool. In their research on how AI chatbots and wearable technology can reduce employee burnout, [Tito et al. \(2025\)](#) found that providing employees with AI resources can enable them to address mental health strain before it develops into burnout. The researchers found that employees could avoid the perceived stigma of reaching out for help and valued the anonymity offered by the chatbot model. This secondary research expanded on my findings from one participant regarding how AI can be utilized to automate simple tasks and reduce burnout, which aligns with my previous discussion on how predictive AI can mitigate burnout in the workplace.

5. Discussion

The secondary research data further supported the participants' assertions that effective strategies to reduce burnout could retain highly skilled employees. The secondary research data consisted of approximately 30 event industry publication articles and online articles. They were reviewed to discern whether they corroborated the research. The search criteria, keywords used were: Burnout, Job Demands-Resources Model, Event Planning Industry, Employee Retention, Workload Management, Organizational Support, Employee Engagement. The result of the secondary data search yielded sources that were reviewed to contextualize the research findings within the existing secondary literature, thereby clearly highlighting the study's actual empirical contributions. The secondary data was included in a triangulation process with the primary data and supported the identification of the emergent themes, thus providing a wide scope on the impact of burnout on organizations across numerous industries and the unique nuances within the event industry. Many of the secondary sources, some industry publications and websites also easily supported the "balance" components of the tenet in the Jobs Demands Resources model with verbiage such as collaboration, support, autonomy, motivation, and engagement, which emerged as key elements in the themes.

6. Business Contributions and Recommendations for Professional Practice

The project findings in this qualitative pragmatic inquiry project offer critical business contributions and recommendations. Leaders who understand effective strategies to reduce burnout can retain employees. One participant described their business goal as keeping employees and keeping them engaged. The participants discussed the high job demands on employees in the event industry, which included long hours spent planning and supporting events. These demanding schedules are multiplied during the peak times of event planning, when employees must work long hours in back-to-back shifts to support numerous events. Business

leaders need to maintain a team of employees to complete the work required to plan and support events, while also meeting their customers' needs. Focusing on the needs of employees to reduce burnout is aligned with the JD-R model. During peak times and long hours required in the event industry, increased job demands and limited job resources can lead to burnout. Leaders who focus on increasing job resources will be more effective in reducing burnout and retaining employees.

The significant economic impact of the event industry makes it worthwhile to understand effective strategies for reducing burnout among event professionals. In the 2023 Global Economic Significance of Business Events study ([Events Industry Council, n.d.](#)), business events supported a total global impact of \$2.8 trillion in business sales, \$27.5 million in jobs, and \$1.6 trillion of GDP contribution to global gross domestic product in the U.S. in 2019 ([Events Industry Council, n.d.](#)). The COVID-19 pandemic created a historic standstill across the event industry, as travel was prohibited and shelter-in-place directives were in place, resulting in a loss of \$1.9 trillion in event spending from 2020 to 2022 ([Russell, 2023](#)). The event industry is not only characterized by its economic reach, but it is also comprised of highly skilled employees who operate within distinctive job demands and resources. Understanding effective strategies to reduce burnout will enable event industry leaders to retain and support their employees.

The project findings aligned with the JD-R model, which emphasized the balance between job demands and resources to reduce burnout. The findings showed that the most effective strategy to reduce burnout in event professionals with high-demand jobs is to prioritize the employee. The three themes identified for effective strategies to reduce burnout included *prioritize the employee*, *nurture communication*, and *provide resources*. The most important takeaway was that central to the three themes was the need for event industry leaders to support their employees in reducing burnout, which in turn helped reduce turnover and improve engagement.

The most prominent theme identified by the participants in the study was the *prioritize the employee* theme to reduce burnout. One participant described treating employees like clients, which is an example of using supportive leadership to reduce burnout among employees. The secondary research data further supported the *prioritize the employee* theme. [Sørengaard and Langvik \(2022\)](#) investigated the effect of fair and supportive leadership on reducing burnout and insomnia among Norwegian police employees. The researchers found that the scales for fair leadership and supervisor support were highly correlated, so they combined them in their study ([Sørengaard & Langvik, 2022](#)). The researchers found that fair and supportive leadership had a significant impact on reducing burnout but not on insomnia ([Sørengaard & Langvik, 2022](#)). Additionally, the researchers found that fair and supportive leadership could buffer the adverse effects of high job demands, thereby reducing burnout, which aligned with the JD-R model. Event industry leaders could demonstrate supportive leadership through their work processes, such

as understanding the work cycles and peak times for event planning.

Another example of the *prioritize the employee* theme was for leaders to be thoughtful in how they create work schedules to support long hours for events and when multiple events occur. Participants shared examples of trying to avoid scheduling the same employee for late-night work and then for early morning work the next day. The goal was to provide employees with an opportunity to rest and recover between work shifts. Developing work schedules was an example of how to prioritize employees. Offering a compressed work schedule would provide employees with more time off and could contribute to reducing burnout. Interestingly, the secondary research did not align with the participants' assertions. In a study of IKEA employees in Belgium, [du Bois et al. \(2025\)](#) found that although a compressed work schedule improved the employees' ability to detach from their work responsibilities, it did not reduce burnout. The researchers found that, because the contributing factors to burnout—namely, an imbalance in job demands and resources—continued to exist, there was no reduction in burnout. Encouraging employees to take vacation time can improve their psychological renewal from work, but this can also be a challenge for leaders.

Event professionals must excel in meeting the changing priorities of both internal and external stakeholders. One example shared by a participant on how to prioritize the employee was to be open to change. A leader could be open to change by giving employees a voice in planning and negotiating deadlines to manage their workloads. The secondary research further demonstrated the participant's assertion of being open to change to reduce burnout. Event professionals can feel outnumbered by opinions from C-suite leaders. Managing expectations for timelines and deadlines could reduce burnout ([Cvent, n.d.](#)). The project timelines for events are interconnected with multiple dependencies. Although it can be satisfying for employees to check items off the list, a leader must also monitor a healthy flow of work to reduce the risk of burnout among employees. Like monitoring workflow, leaders should monitor an employee's time off to reduce the risk of burnout.

Another example of the *prioritize the employee* theme shared by the participants was to encourage employees to take time off to reduce the risk of burnout. P2 articulated that they asked staff not to call into meetings or respond to emails when the staff were off. The secondary research further supported encouraging employees to take time off to demonstrate the *prioritize the employee* theme. To fully rest, employees need to be fully off ([Saunders, 2025](#)). Leaders can prioritize their employees' needs by demonstrating organizational support in different ways during regular work and also during a crisis, such as a global pandemic.

The themes *prioritize the employee*, *nurture communication*, and *provide resources* that emerged from the participants' responses align with the JD-R model. The secondary research further supported the alignment of the themes with the expanded JD-R dimensions identified by [Li et al. \(2022\)](#) among healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Li et al. expanded the JD-R model by adding

the dimensions of perceived organizational support, employee care, and turnover intention. During the critical role of healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, how leaders cared for their employees was crucial to reducing burnout and protecting patient safety. Li et al. defined employee care as an informal way for managers to listen to employees' concerns, value their work, enhance well-being, and support employees' career development. Li et al. found that employees' perception of a high level of organizational support was associated with a reduced intention to turnover. Li et al.'s research aligned with the project findings in this qualitative pragmatic inquiry, which highlights the importance of focusing on employees' needs through thoughtful leadership, effective communication, and adequate resources to reduce burnout. Losing employees due to burnout can be costly to the organization. Reducing burnout to retain employees is crucial for both business performance and its impact on the community.

7. Implications for Social Change

Planning events fosters meaningful engagement, allowing people to come together and connect. Event professionals design experiences to bring people together to learn, connect, and grow their businesses. An event creates communities—both the short-term community that is formed during the event and a larger, shared community connected by the common interest of the attendees. People come together during an event to advance industries, innovate, and adapt as the world continues to change (Events Industry Council, n.d.). By understanding effective strategies to reduce burnout in event professionals, event industry leaders can ensure the event industry thrives and continues to create opportunities for people to come together.

When people attend events, they can further their careers. Events offer people opportunities to learn about new job opportunities and expand their professional development, preparing them for a new role. Networking opportunities are a key component of events, enabling attendees to grow their businesses.

Scientific conferences and tradeshow are the cornerstone for the sharing of research and furthering academic knowledge. Healthcare professionals, such as physicians and nurses, attend conferences to complete continuing education that is required to maintain their licenses. Healthcare professionals can apply their new knowledge to enhance the care they provide to patients in their community.

8. Limitations and Future Research

This study has some limitations. The sample size of eight executives, while sufficient for a qualitative study, may not represent the experiences of all event industry professionals. Future studies might include a larger sample and a quantitative approach in order to generalize the results. Further, since the event industry encompasses a wide range of events, there is an opportunity in future research to explore effective strategies for reducing burnout within specific event types, such as comparing academic events with incentive events.

As large annual events are cyclical, event leaders often hire seasonal or contract employees. Because of this, there is an opportunity to explore reducing burnout in seasonal or contract employees, as this study explored effective strategies to reduce burnout in full-time employees. Finally, given the high number of women working as event professionals, it would be valuable to expand on this study by exploring how effective strategies to reduce burnout differ for male and female employees with high workload demands.

9. Conclusion

This study aimed to identify and explore the practical strategies that event industry leaders employ to develop and apply effective frameworks for reducing employee burnout, while maintaining organizational performance. Ethical challenges related to high workload demands, long hours, and complex stakeholder management have emerged with the unique demands of event planning, while potential employee well-being issues threaten organizational performance unless these issues are addressed.

Three themes emerged from the analysis and outline the approach of event industry leaders to these strategies: 1) Prioritize the Employee which focused on key considerations in supportive leadership, being open to change, and managing work schedules appropriately; 2) Nurture Communication which involved maintaining regular cadence of one-on-one meetings and intentional communication practices; 3) Provide Resources which included adding personnel, technology, and supporting employee autonomy.

These findings demonstrate that the implementation of burnout reduction strategies in event planning is not merely a technical issue, but a complex organizational endeavor that requires a balance between operational demands and employee well-being. The themes align with the principles of the Job Demands-Resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001), emphasizing the importance of balancing job demands with adequate resources, organizational support, and fostering employee autonomy.

The implications for practice are significant. Event industry leaders should establish clear strategies for prioritizing employee needs, ensure regular communication channels are maintained, and provide adequate resources to support their teams. Managers and their organizations should invest in training and tools that support effective burnout reduction practices, which include creating regular check-in processes and being responsive to employee needs.

In conclusion, this study provides a foundational understanding of the strategies employed by event industry leaders to reduce employee burnout. By integrating the Job Demands-Resources model with practical strategies, organizations can leverage effective management approaches while preserving employee well-being and fostering organizational success. The findings could potentially refine and extend the understanding and application of the JD-R model, particularly in the realm of complex project management environments.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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