

Burnout Reduction and Employee Engagement Strategies Used by Some Human Resources Outsourcing Leaders

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How to cite this paper: Kilgore, A. R., & Critchlow, K. A. (2026). Burnout Reduction and Employee Engagement Strategies Used by Some Human Resources Outsourcing Leaders. *Open Journal of Business and Management*, 14, 3159-3186.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/ojbm.2026.146154>

Received: July 28, 2026

Accepted: October 11, 2026

Published: October 14, 2026

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Abstract

Employee burnout is caused by chronic work stress and can lead to increased absenteeism; decreased innovation; and decreased performance at the individual, team, and organizational levels. Human resources outsourcing leaders who fail to reduce employee burnout risk adversely affecting organizational performance. Grounded in job demands-resources theory, the purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry research project was to identify and explore effective strategies used by human resources outsourcing leaders to reduce employee burnout and increase employee engagement. The participants were nine human resources outsourcing leaders who effectively reduced employee burnout and increased employee engagement. Data were collected by conducting semistructured interviews and reviewing secondary data from publicly available sources. Thematic analysis yielded four themes: a) fostering supportive relationships, b) focusing on employee growth and development, c) provisioning for time away from work, and d) creating a culture of employee recognition. A key recommendation is that human resources outsourcing leaders address burnout and engagement as organizational outcomes through intentional leadership practices and strategic human resource initiatives. The implications for positive social change include the potential for human resource outsourcing leaders to create healthier workplaces that support employee well-being. As well-being improves, employees may extend these benefits to their homes and relationships, strengthening communal bonds, enhancing social functioning, and contributing to stability within communities.

Keywords

Burnout, Employee Engagement, Engagement at Work, Burnout Effects, Employee Burnout at Work, Job Demands-Resources Theory, Work Form

Home, Remote Work, Employee Well-Being, Human Resources Outsourcing, PTO, Work Relationships, Recognition, Communication, Engagement, Time Away from Work, Training and Development, Strategies, HRO, Leaders, Benefits, Wellness

1. Introduction

Some human resources outsourcing (HRO) leaders do not implement effective strategies that reduce employee burnout and increase engagement. Burnout is caused by chronic work stress and can have implications for employees beyond physical and emotional aspects, leading to increased absenteeism, decreased innovation, and decreased performance at the individual, team, and organizational levels (Gabriel & Aguinis, 2022). Disengaged employees experience negative emotions, health concerns, and have a higher rate of employee burnout than engaged employees; together, employee disengagement has financial implications costing \$8,800,000,000,000 dollars globally (Suma & Sunil, 2025). Although many HRO leaders may be aware of the concept of burnout, some do not fully understand its nuanced effects on individuals and the broader workplace culture. The general business problem was that some HRO leaders do not know how to reduce employee burnout and increase employee engagement.

Burnout is a workplace syndrome that occurs due to chronic workplace stress and a lack of tools to manage and cope with the stress. Job burnout is a state of physical, mental, and emotional depletion that results from prolonged stress and workplace strain, manifesting as feelings of being overwhelmed, detachment, or cynicism towards one's work (Awashreh & Al Ghunaimi, 2024). This seriousness is underscored by the World Health Organization's (2019) classification of burnout as an occupational phenomenon in the 2019 revision of the International Classification of Diseases. This official recognition validates the experience of many workers, affirming that burnout isn't merely personal exhaustion, but a systemic issue caused by the workplace environment itself. Consequently, the profound impact of this occupational phenomenon is far-reaching, extending beyond the well-being of individual employees to significantly affect organizations and the broader public.

Current data confirms that job burnout is prevalent and exists across various industries and sectors, having a debilitating impact on both employees and the organizations they work for. Industry reports indicate that many employees have experienced issues related to job burnout. Industry reports consistently suggest that burnout is widespread and far-reaching. 65% of employees surveyed reported experiencing burnout at some point in 2023. Fifty-two percent of employees surveyed reported feeling burned out due to their job, and 37% reported that they were so overwhelmed with work that it negatively impacted their performance of their regular job functions (National Alliance on Mental Illness, & Ipsos, 2024). In its Workforce Trends Report, which surveyed 1500 white-collar employees, DHR

Global (2024) found that 82% of employees have experienced employee burnout. Employee burnout continues to affect employees, with an increase in the rate of those experiencing burnout. Employee burnout not only impacts the individual's well-being but can also lead to decreased productivity, high turnover, and negative work environments, which can have significant consequences for the organization (Awashreh & Al Ghunaimi, 2024). The impacts of burnout on employees' physical, mental, and emotional states can negatively affect their ability to perform their job, leading to lower productivity and increased strain on other employees.

2. Literature Review

The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst, accelerating the rate of burnout by escalating workplace stressors and blurring work-life boundaries. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, job burnout rates have continued to increase, showing a concerning year-over-year rise since 2020. The psychological cost of COVID-19 was high, with 41% of U.S. employees feeling burned out, drained, or exhausted from work (SHRM, 2020). In 2021, nearly 3 in 5 employees reported experiencing the adverse effects of work-related stress, which include a lack of motivation, energy, and work effort (Abramson, 2022). Later data showed that the increase was sustained, with 77% of employees surveyed reported experiencing work-related stress within the past month, and 57% reported that they experienced adverse effects due to the work-related stress that they were under (American Psychological Association, 2023). The effects included emotional exhaustion, lack of motivation, an increased desire for withdrawal and isolation, wanting to quit, lower productivity, irritability with coworkers and clients, and feelings of ineffectiveness (American Psychological Association, 2023). This rise was partly attributed to factors exacerbated by the pandemic, such as teleworking conditions, increased job demands, and blurred boundaries between work and personal life (Lara-Moreno et al., 2025). The constant exposure to stress, without the physical separation of a traditional office, made it harder for employees to recover and separate their work from personal life. As workplace stressors increase in the post-COVID-19 world, so too do the rates of employee burnout.

Not only is employee burnout a prevalent issue that organizations face, but they also face a decline in employee engagement. Employee engagement rates have also declined since the COVID-19 pandemic. The decline in employee engagement is a persistent and costly issue that organizations worldwide are currently experiencing. Globally, there has been a decline in employee engagement numbers, marking this the second decline in 12 years; the first was in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns, when the rate dropped from 23% to 21% (Gallup, 2025). This evidence demonstrates that a substantial amount of the global workforce is not fully engaged in their work. In the United States, the situation is similarly concerning, with only 31% of employees being engaged, while 52% are not engaged, and a troubling 17% are actively disengaged, meaning they are unhappy

with their work and are acting out on their dissatisfaction (Gallup, 2025). This widespread detachment from work is not an abstract concept; Gallup (2025) reported that global employee engagement declined last year, resulting in a loss of \$438,000,000,000 in productivity for the global economy. Employees who are engaged in their work are more likely to be productive and have a positive impact on their coworkers and organization. Increasing employee engagement has a positive effect on job satisfaction and reduces the likelihood of turnover intentions. Fostering engagement is fundamentally necessary to secure organizational productivity and finance that transform operational vulnerability into a source of competitive advantage.

Conversely, a high level of employee engagement acts as a powerful tool that positively influences individual and organizational outcomes, from improved mental health to preference metrics and profitability. Heightened employee engagement is associated with improved well-being at work, increased job satisfaction, enhanced performance, and a reduced likelihood of employee burnout (Sinclair et al., 2024). Job satisfaction is directly linked to employee engagement. Engagement is fostered by resources that support employees in performing their tasks, such as access to support, opportunities for socialization, and a sense of belonging. These feelings, when combined, help increase employee engagement, drive productivity, and foster a sense of community.

One of the most critical factors identified as driving the decrease in employee engagement is the decline in engagement among management. Gallup (2025) posited that one of the leading causes of the drop in engagement stems from a decline in management engagement, resulting from increased demands by executives and employees' expectations. This places managers in a stressful and challenging position, causing their own work stress and subsequent disengagement to spill over into their interactions, behaviors, and the quality of support they provide to the team. A decrease in managerial engagement is likely to result in a corresponding reduction in employee and team engagement. The data shows that there has been a decrease in management engagement, dropping from 30% to 27% while employee individual contributor engagement remained at 18%. This is significant because managerial engagement is a large determinant of team engagement. Gallup (2025) further noted the importance of leadership styles and the impact that it has on employee engagement. A lack of managerial and organizational support, as well as a mismatch between employee values and job demands, has been strongly linked to decreased employee engagement (Awashreh & Al Ghunaimi, 2024). Effective leadership is a driver of the employee experience, and failure to support managers will inevitably result in a corresponding collapse in overall team engagement.

2.1. Remote Work

Remote work has emerged as a double-edged sword, profoundly influencing employee well-being, where the relationship between burnout and work engagement

is contingent upon the balance of new job demands and job resources (Demerouti & Bakker, 2025). On the positive side, remote work offers significant job resources that are strongly correlated with increased work engagement and a reduction in certain stressors (Delanoeije & Verbruggen, 2020; Ali et al., 2022). The primary benefit is the increased job autonomy and flexibility in controlling one's work schedule and environment, which allows employees to modify work methods to suit their preferences, making it a powerful driver of engagement (Ali et al., 2022). For many, the elimination of the commute and flexible scheduling leads to an improved work-life balance, which is positively associated with engagement and negatively related to stress (Ali et al., 2022). Furthermore, establishing a functional and personalized home workspace has a favorable effect on the development of long-term work engagement (Bergefurt et al., 2022; Mäkikangas et al., 2022). For employees who desire it, remote work serves as a valuable resource, offering comfort and convenience without the need to commute to the office.

Conversely, remote work introduces unique job demands that can deplete resources, activating the health impairment process leading to psychological distress and burnout (Demerouti & Bakker, 2025). The most significant and frequently cited job demand is the blurring of boundaries between professional and personal life, resulting in increased work-home interference (Pluut & Wonders, 2020). The difficulty in disconnecting often drives employees to work longer hours, a core contributor to emotional exhaustion and burnout (Semaan et al., 2025). This remote environment also strains social connections, as reduced face-to-face interaction often leads to feelings of social isolation and detachment from the organization. The subsequent lack of consistent organizational support and social connectedness is a significant factor in elevating job demands and intensifying burnout (Jimenez-Gomez et al., 2021). The reliance on digital tools introduces technostress as a new demand, negatively relating to well-being and positively to burnout, a stressor often exacerbated by insufficient technical support (Rahman & Singh, 2024; Singh et al., 2022). Remote work also introduces a layer of complexity and new demands for managers, particularly when monitoring low-performing employees or when a lack of resources affects both individual and team levels (Weeratunga et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the necessity of frequent videoconferencing introduces an additional layer of complexity. At the same time, in-person meetings were a source of stress for some; many are now experiencing increased stress from videoconferencing, which leads to greater fatigue and burnout for both managers and employees alike (Luebster et al., 2023). This highlights that for some, the forced change to remote work is not perceived as a resource but as a challenging demand, causing fatigue from this new way of working life.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework for this research was job demands-resources theory (JD-R). Demerouti et al. (2001) developed JD-R to respond to the concept of burn-

out, as introduced by Maslach (1982), who identified burnout as a syndrome characterized by feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a decline in personal accomplishment among individuals who perform work. To address burnout, Demerouti et al. developed the JD-R theory, which categorizes work characteristics into two distinct categories: job demands and job resources. Job demands refer to the physical, cognitive, and emotional costs associated with performing work, which can deplete both physical and psychological resources (Demerouti et al., 2001). Job resources refer to the physical, psychological, social, and organizational aspects of work that help motivate, are essential to achieving work goals, reduce the impact of job demands, and stimulate learning and personal growth (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

The JD-R theory comprises two core concepts: a) job demands and resources and b) their role in employee burnout and engagement. Under the JD-R theory, there are two distinct processes that job demands and resources have that shape and impact employee well-being. Process 1 is the health impairment process; increased effort caused by frequent and intense job demands depletes the employee's physical, emotional, and cognitive skills, resulting in stress, exhaustion, and health problems (Bakker et al., 2023). Process 2 is the motivation process, where employee psychological needs are met through resources, fostering work engagement, which in turn leads to creativity and improved work performance (Bakker et al., 2023). The JD-R theory provides a framework for understanding how job demands and resources impact work performance and employee well-being, as well as how employees' proactive and reactive use of work behaviors influence job demands and resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). JD-R theory posits that the increase in job demands is positively related to employees experiencing the effects of burnout.

In contrast, an increase in resources acts as a buffer to mitigate the impacts of increased job demands. Job demands are correlated with burnout, while resources have a positive correlation to engagement. Job resources reduce the impact of job demands and mitigate the adverse effects of job demands on employee perceptions and feelings (Bakker et al., 2005). Job demands and resources influence employee well-being, impacting their health and job performance (Bakker et al., 2023). An employee's performance at work is influenced by both the demands and resources associated with their job. Job demands or stressors can negatively impact both the performance of work and its quality. When demands are high, they can lead to negative feelings of exhaustion and cynicism towards the work, potentially resulting in health-related problems. When resources are scarce, they exacerbate these negative feelings in the employee. When resources are high, even with increased demands, they act as a mediator of the heightened job demands. When job demands are consistently challenging to employees, they can benefit from increased resources, such as job training, autonomy, job crafting, feedback, and support (Bakker et al., 2023). When job demand is high, resources are most important to the employee. Job resources and engagement serve as stimuli for positive em-

employee behavior, whereas job demands may lead to negative behaviors, stress, exhaustion, and health-related issues.

Several advancements have been made to the JD-R theory since its original conception in 2001. The first advancement was made by [Schaufeli and Bakker \(2004\)](#), which included the concept of work engagement. Engagement is defined as an affirmative and rewarding state of mind in relation to work, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption ([Bakker & Demerouti, 2024](#)). Engagement is positively linked to enthusiasm, drive, and fulfillment in employees' work and serves as a positive motivator, as opposed to burnout, which is a negative contributor. The JD-R theory was modified by [Bakker et al. \(2005\)](#) to incorporate the interactions between bodily demands and resources as predictors of stress and motivation in relation to burnout. This was alluded to in 2001 but was not formalized as part of the theory until 2005. The concept of personal resources was introduced by [Bakker and Demerouti \(2007\)](#), who identified personal resources as including self-efficacy, organization-based self-esteem, and optimism. When job resources are combined with individual resources, they collectively have a positive impact on increasing work engagement.

Additional advancements were made to the JD-R theory since the 2007 revision, including the roles of self-undermining and self-reinforcement ([Bakker & Costa, 2014](#)), the relationship between resource increase and higher motivation ([Bakker & Demerouti, 2017](#)), the expansion of control over the environment through resources ([Bakker & Demerouti, 2017](#)), and the potential for additional tasks to restate self-undermining ([Bakker & Wang, 2020](#)). Advancements in the JD-R theory since its 2001 inception have included knowledge of several different theories relating to work-related stress and motivation, including the job characteristics theory ([Hackman & Oldham, 1976](#)), the effort-reward imbalance model ([Siegrist, 1996](#)), the two-factor theory ([Herzberg, 1966](#)), and the conservation of resource theory ([Hobfoll et al., 2018](#)), which have all helped to expand the theory ([Bakker et al., 2023](#)). These revisions have helped expand the JD-R theory to provide a more holistic understanding of employee well-being and performance and to identify and address the conditions that may lead to burnout, as well as the mitigators that can transition employees from burnout to engagement.

The JD-R theory applied to my project because it emphasizes the impact of job demands and resources on employee well-being and job performance. To reduce employee burnout and increase engagement, it is crucial to understand how job demands and work resources influence employee well-being, which in turn leads to burnout and reduced engagement. This theoretical framework examines how physical, social, and psychological factors of both the job and the work environment impact employees' overall well-being, health, behaviors, attitudes, and performance. The application of this theory may enable leaders to employ effective strategies that increase resources, such as tools, social support, mentoring, and feedback, which are linked to enhanced employee engagement and reduced burnout.

3. Methods

A qualitative research method was selected as the best approach and was used for the research. The qualitative research methodology enables researchers to employ inductive reasoning to gain a thorough understanding of the responses and information provided by the study participants (Chivanga & Monyai, 2021). The research conducted was to explore effective strategies to reduce employee burnout and increase employee engagement. The pragmatic inquiry research design was employed based on its roots in pragmatism. There are three principles of the pragmatic inquiry research design that are critical for studies: an emphasis on actionable knowledge, recognition of interconnectedness between experience, knowing, and watching, and a view of inquiry as an experimental process (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). The target population consisted of HRO leaders who have used effective strategies to reduce employee burnout and increase employee engagement. The eligibility criteria comprised three intentional steps: 1) had a LinkedIn presence detailing their name, and professional role; 2) an HRO leader with 5 years of experience; 3) responded with interest in taking part in the research, and 4) indicated successful outcomes relative to the research topic in response to qualifying question. The effectiveness of the reported burnout-reduction and engagement-enhancement strategies could not be independently verified because the relevant organizational data were proprietary and unavailable to the researchers. Consequently, findings regarding effectiveness are based on participant self-reports and perceptions. The effectiveness of the burnout-reduction and engagement-enhancement strategies was assessed differently across organizations and leaders. The most frequently used measure was employee engagement survey data. Participants also reported using a variety of organizational indicators, including reductions in employee call-outs and absenteeism, improvements in team morale, employee feedback obtained through roundtables and feedback sessions, client satisfaction survey results, employee satisfaction reports, turnover and attrition metrics, benchmarking data, management-by-objective outcomes, and key performance indicators such as employee retention, client retention, productivity, and engagement measures.

Purposeful and snowball sampling were used to access participants through LinkedIn connections, professional associations, and referrals from other qualified participants. Sources of data included semistructured interviews with nine participants and secondary data, including scholarly and professional publications on employee burnout and engagement. Secondary data comprised publicly available documents, industry reports, professional publications, and scholarly literature focused on employee burnout and employee engagement published within the previous 5 years. These sources were selected through purposeful identification of industry-specific and cross-industry literature addressing workplace trends, employee well-being indicators, burnout prevalence, engagement outcomes, and occupational stress factors. The secondary data were used to provide contextual understanding of the research problem, support interpretation of in-

interview findings, and compare participant perspectives with existing professional and scholarly literature. The secondary data were not used as an independent source of evidence for theme development; rather, they served to contextualize and corroborate findings derived from the semistructured interviews.

Interview data were transcribed using Zoom transcription and converted to Microsoft Word documents. Data saturation was reached after the eighth interview; however, one more interview was conducted to be sure. Pseudonyms were assigned to the participants to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. Member checking was used after each interview to confirm the accuracy of the researchers' interpretations of the participants' responses. Participants were identified to throughout the research project as P1 through P9.

The primary researcher initially coded the data; the secondary researcher then reviewed the same data and independently coded the data. There was discussion about the outcomes and then a few adjustments were made as a result. **Braun and Clarke's (2006)** six-step approach to qualitative data analysis was used to conduct thematic analysis. The thematic analysis process involved becoming familiar with the data, generating an initial set of codes, refining the themes, reviewing the coded data sets, identifying patterns across participants' responses, and organizing those patterns into themes that address the research question. Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel was used, initially, to manually code and conduct thematic analysis and identification of the data. MAXQDA software was used, secondarily, to support the manual coding and thematic analysis process. Initial codes were assigned to recurring concepts within the participants' responses. These codes reflected frequently mentioned concepts, which included relationships, time away from work, training, development, recognition, appreciation, communication, and listening. A rigorous process that included systematic coding, thematic development, member checking, and methodological triangulation.

4. Results and Discussion

The analysis of the data revealed four major themes: 1) fostering of supportive relationships, 2) focus on employee growth and development, 3) provisions for time away from work, and 4) creation of a culture of recognition and appreciation. **Table 1** includes the themes and their corresponding codes. **Table 2** includes the themes, the percentage of participants who referred to each theme, and the number of times each theme was referenced. Overall, the findings demonstrated that effective strategies for reducing employee burnout and increasing employee engagement necessitate a comprehensive approach that incorporates employee growth and development, supportive relationships, time away from work, and employee recognition and celebration. The following sections offer an in-depth exploration of these identified themes, utilizing participant quotations and insights triangulated from secondary data sources. **Table 1** depicts the participant demographics; **Table 2** comprises the themes and code, and **Table 3** shows the distribution of the themes in the participant responses.

Table 1. Participant demographic.

Participant	Organization Size	Leadership Role	HRO Service Type	Geographic Setting
1	500 - 1000 employees	Client Service Manager	HR and Benefits Administration	Mississippi
2	1500 employees	Director of Culture	Payroll, Retirement, and Benefits Administration	Illinois
3	7000 employees	HR Manager	Retirement, Recruiting, and Benefits Administration	Arizona
4	5000 employees	Director	Payroll and Benefits Administration	Arizona
5	1000 - 15,000 employees	Client Manager	HR and Benefits Administration	Texas
6	500 employees	Service Manager	Benefits and Retirement Administration	Nevada
7	2000 employees	Manager	Benefits and Retirement Administration	Texas
8	250 employees	Director	Retirement and Benefits Administration	Tennessee
9	1500 employees	Manager	HR, Payroll, Retirement, and Benefits Administration	Arizona

Table 2. Themes and codes.

Theme	Representative code
1) Fostering of supportive relationships	Communication, transparency, clear expectations, trust, support, understanding, listening
2) Focus on growth and development	Training, development, mentoring programs, role clarification
3) Provisions for time away from work	Paid time off (PTO), flexible work schedule, work-life balance, self-care
4) Creation of a culture of recognition and appreciation	Culture, recognition, appreciation, celebration, social activities

Table 3. Distribution of themes in participant responses.

Theme	Percentage of participants referencing theme	No. of references
1) Fostering of supportive relationships	89%	125
2) Focus on growth and development	89%	34
3) Provisions for time away from work	78%	40
4) Creation of a culture of recognition and appreciation	56%	57

4.1. Theme 1: Fostering of Supportive Relationships

The first theme was the importance of fostering supportive relationships. Eighty-nine percent of participants identified relationships as a crucial component of

strategies to reduce burnout. The data revealed that relationships centered on core attributes such as open communication, transparency, clear expectations, support, understanding, and listening were essential for reducing employee burnout and increasing employee engagement. Consequently, fostering supportive relationships built on these elements is essential for reducing employee burnout and improving overall engagement levels.

Participant 4 noted that if a leader listens, the employees will tell them what they need, and an essential component of the leader-employee relationship is listening to understand what the employees are saying and to find ways to support or deliver on what they hear. This response highlights the important role of listening in relationships. A key component is that listening is about understanding what employees are communicating, not just responding. The leader needs to not only listen to employees but also to act on what the employees shared, finding ways to deliver or support.

Participant 6 posited, “relationships will save you every time, being in tune with your staff to recognize when something is happening in their lives and providing compassion, empathy, and support for them through it.” This response illustrates the importance of relationships as a tool for connection that may help leaders identify changes in employee behavior and show up for the employee in the way they need in that moment. P7 noted that strong relationships make a difference in the business, not just for employees and customers, but also for coworkers. Relationships are key because supportive relationships lead to high engagement, better morale, and reduced burnout. This response illustrates the importance of relationships as a driver of employee engagement and morale and underscores their essential role in reducing employee burnout.

These findings align with Bakker & Demerouti (2007) JD-R theory, which identifies two distinct aspects of one’s work: demands and resources. Demands are the physical, emotional, and psychological aspects that deplete resources. Resources are the components that aid workers in performing their work, including support, training, and psychological safety. Supportive relationships serve as resources for employees, providing them with stability, psychological safety, and support. Job resources function as drivers of work engagement, as reflected in the findings, where P7 noted that supportive relationships lead to high engagement and better morale. The JD-R theory emphasizes social support as a resource, which aligns with the response of P4, who highlighted that when a leader listens to demands and takes action to support or deliver on what they hear, it provides the resources for employees to meet their needs. Within the JD-R theory, emotional and social support acts as a resource that buffers the effects of stressors on employees. Together, these resources help reduce employee burnout and also increase engagement. Participants’ descriptions of support, listening, understanding, trust, and transparency illustrate how organizations can operationalize these strategies into practice.

The study’s findings align with current research on supportive relationships as

a tool for reducing employee burnout and increasing engagement. [Iqbal et al. \(2025\)](#) established a framework on conversation, active listening, leadership, and feedback mechanisms (CALM), which identified active listening and leadership engagement as core components that enhance employee well-being and long-term resilience. The research shows that leadership communication contributes to a respectful work culture and positively impacts employee burnout and engagement. [Saud and Rice \(2024\)](#) noted that supportive relationships act as a buffer to the negative impacts of increased work stress and reduce the likelihood of employee burnout. [Huang et al. \(2025\)](#) highlighted that supportive relationships between leaders and employees directly impact job performance by fostering employees' psychological empowerment and engagement. The effectiveness of supportive relationships is not simply rooted in their existence, but in the quality of their attributes, including open communication, transparency, mutual understanding, and active listening. By moving to substantive interaction, leaders create a culture that addresses the psychological needs of the workforce, transforming these relationships into a functional job resource that actively supports employees' well-being. Consequently, fostering supportive relationships is essential to organizations' strategies to reduce employee burnout and increase employee engagement:

Secondary data, professional and scholarly literature aligns with the findings of this research project that compassionate leadership, active listening, and empathetic supervision support are fundamental relational resources for reducing employee burnout and fostering. [Labidou-West \(2026\)](#) noted that active listening provides essential validation, clarity, and emotional support that mitigates the strain of high workloads and role ambiguity, which correlates to Participant 4's account that true leadership requires active listening and a genuine understanding and responsive action rather than passive acknowledgment. Additionally, [Belgasm et al. \(2025\)](#) emphasize the psychological value of empathetic awareness. They reported that leaders who demonstrate empathy and tune in to their employees' personal and professional circumstances foster higher levels of dedication, vigor, and psychological well-being. The sources confirm that participants' insights demonstrate that supportive relationships and proactive listening are not luxuries but crucial management tools. When leaders actively tune in to staff needs and deliver tangible support, they address employees' psychological safety needs, which directly buffer against emotional exhaustion and high turnover. Ultimately, adding active listening and compassionate engagement into leadership frameworks equips leaders with a powerful tool to sustain morale and protect against burnout over time.

4.2. Focus on Employee Growth and Development

The second theme was focusing on employee growth and development. Eighty-nine percent of participants identified the importance of growth and development as a tool for reducing employee burnout and increasing engagement. The participants viewed employee training, development, mentoring, and role clarification

as critical components for reducing employee burnout and increasing engagement. Emphasis on employee growth and development suggests that burnout can be mitigated when employees feel their professional trajectory is supported by leadership, mentoring, and clear role expectations, thereby addressing employees' need to feel competent and valued. Therefore, prioritizing employee growth and development is a necessity for leaders and organizations to reduce employee burnout and increase engagement. P7 stated that "development looks different for each person, but understanding what the person's goals are with the long-term, short-term, and career-wise helps to shape what development looks like for that employee." This response suggests that development is not a one-size-fits-all approach but should be tailored to each employee's developmental needs, goals, and aspirations.

Participant 2 noted that investing in employee growth has proven profitable because it demonstrates commitment. As a result, the employees look forward to coming to work because they have something to look forward to. Being able to identify employee strengths and opportunities, and to be able to grow and develop from that increased employee effort, as they felt that someone believed in them. Similarly, P4 noted that people want to feel invested in, and when they feel that they are being invested in, they show up differently, and this has been a tool we have used to address burnout and raise engagement. These responses illustrate the importance of investing in employees through development and training opportunities and how those investments foster deeper work commitment, which can reduce burnout and increase engagement. Investments in employees foster psychological safety and empowerment.

Participant 9 discussed how reducing burnout starts from the beginning; if employees see that during their training periods, leaders are really there for their success, they are less likely to burn out. That looks like giving employees breaks from training to do side-by-sides and listen and learn, while they are out of the classroom and beginning to gain experience, so that when they come back into the classroom, they can ask questions. Participant 2 noted that training is about giving employees the tools that they need to be successful and ensuring that the tools are adequate for them to do their jobs. These responses highlight the role of training as a tool to reduce employee burnout by providing employees with the key tools and information to do their jobs, while showing commitment to them through quality training programs centered around their experience.

Participant 5 articulated that once leaders have identified those employees who are strong in certain areas, they should use them as mentors for others who may not be as strong in that area. Mentoring is mutually beneficial for both the mentor and mentee, as it helps them both grow and develop. This response illustrates the interconnection of the benefits of training for both the mentor and mentee as tools of growth and development.

These findings align with Bakker & Demerouti (2007) JD-R theory, as training falls under the category of resources, which are components of one's work that

help complete it. In the context of the JD-R theory, growth and development initiatives function as critical job resources that fuel employee motivation. While job demands, such as heavy workloads, can impair health, resources like mentoring, training, and development satisfy the psychological need for competence. As noted by P2, organizations provide a resource that buffers the impact of work stressors by providing employees with the tools that they need to be successful. Further supported is P2's position that when employees see that organizations are there for their success from the beginning, it creates a sense of psychological safety that prevents the onset of emotional exhaustion and cynicism associated with burnout. Ultimately, tailored growth and development opportunities are essential for reducing employee burnout and increasing engagement.

The study's findings align with existing research on employee growth and development as tools for reducing employee burnout and increasing engagement. [Rutherford et al. \(2025\)](#) found that mentorship creates a psychological safety net for employees. When employees know they have a mentor to guide them, they are more willing to stay engaged and dedicated because they have less fear of failure. [Rutherford et al. \(2025\)](#) also noted that structured mentorship serves as an intervention for burnout, addressing a declining sense of competence by providing support without the fear of punishment, as if a manager or supervisor were providing it. [Neufeld et al. \(2026\)](#) classified development as a job resource and argued that leaders fulfill employees' innate need for competence by developing them. When an employee feels competent, their resilience against stress increases. [Neufeld et al. \(2026\)](#) further noted that tools and growth opportunities trigger the motivational process that leads to job satisfaction and high engagement. [Özdemir \(2024\)](#) posited that workplace training is critical to enhancing employee retention and that employees who receive adequate training feel valued, motivated, and committed to their organizations, thereby increasing job satisfaction and engagement. By focusing on employee growth and development as a fundamental resource, organizations can counteract the declining sense of competence that characterizes burnout. Mentorship effectively bridges the gap between supervisory oversight and emotional support, enabling growth in low-stakes environments. Ultimately, when employees are equipped with the right tools and growth opportunities, their increased job satisfaction and engagement create a buffer against organizational stressors.

Further, the research findings align with scholarly and professional sources confirming the importance of investing in employee development, mentoring, and continuous growth opportunities to mitigate employee burnout and foster engagement. [Cavanaugh et al. \(2022\)](#) confirmed that structured career support serves as a buffer against occupational stress, noting that employees participating in mentoring relationships are significantly less likely to report burnout than non-participants. Additionally, [Weng et al. \(2023\)](#) emphasized the psychological power of institutional investment, reporting that investing in employee development signals organizational commitment and increases perceived organizational

support, which reduces emotional exhaustion. These sources demonstrate that professional growth is not a one-size-fits-all initiative but a crucial structural resource. When leaders provide customized developmental pathways, adequate training tools, and supportive mentorship, they address foundational needs for competence and value, empowering employees to navigate high-demand environments without succumbing to burnout. Conversely, integrating robust talent development and mentoring frameworks into human resources strategies provides a proactive approach for leaders to enhance organizational commitment and long-term workforce sustainability.

4.3. Provisions for Time Away from Work

The third theme was time away from work. Seventy-eight percent of participants identified the importance of time away from work as a tool for reducing employee burnout and increasing engagement. Analysis of the interview data revealed that participants viewed time off, work-life balance, flexible work schedules, and self-care as crucial components for reducing employee burnout and increasing engagement. Analysis of the interview data revealed that time away from work through flexible work schedules, paid time off (PTO), and maximum-hours-worked policies helps create work-life balance for employees, is an act of self-care, and is essential for reducing employee burnout and increasing employee engagement. Consequently, implementing time-away-from-work strategies built on these elements is essential for reducing employee burnout and improving overall engagement.

Participant 3 noted that they firmly believe that when employees utilize PTO and are able to actually step away from work, there is an opportunity for employees to recharge, do whatever they enjoy outside of work, and return better and ready to take on the challenges of work. Similarly, P4 noted that, for employees to be the best versions of themselves, they need to take time away from work to reset and recharge, as work can be draining physically, mentally, and emotionally. These responses illustrate that time away from work allows for the recovery needed for employees to be and perform as their best selves.

Participant 8 shared that work-life balance has become more and more important, noting that humans need to have an appropriate balance with work and the things that provide personal satisfaction outside of the workplace, which is accomplished through time away from work. Similarly, P2 commented that work-life balance often requires flexibility; it involves understanding that employees need to be away from work to care for children and family members, attend games and be present, and that leaders need to allow for life to happen with their employees. Additionally, P9 noted that hybrid work schedules that allowed employees to have days in the office and days working from home helped improve employees' work-life balance. These responses highlight that work-life balance is important to employees, and while work-life balance may look different for each employee, leaders need to allow flexibility in how work-life balance manifests.

Participant 9 discussed that time away from work also includes flexible schedules, such as working 10-hr days 4 days a week to create an extra day off, and that working this schedule had higher success rates and lower burnout. Similarly, P8 explained that the human element is important, creating flexible work arrangements where possible, such as 4-day work weeks and working 10-hr days, has created better employee engagement and helped to reduce burnout by creating an additional day off that employees can use to do whatever they like. These responses illustrate that the traditional 5-day work structure may not optimize employee energy and morale, and that flexible work schedules enable employees to restore depleted resources while balancing work and life demands.

These findings align with Bakker & Demerouti (2007) JD-R theory, which suggests that time away from work functions as a critical resource that enables employees to recover from work demands. Detachment from work supports the restoration of employees' physical, psychological, and emotional well-being and serves as an important mechanism for mitigating the effects of workplace stressors. Although work demands can deplete these resources, time away from work replenishes them and interrupts the health impairment process. Recovery periods give employees the opportunity to fully recharge their cognitive and emotional capacities, thereby reducing burnout and fostering psychological safety and vitality. In addition, providing employees with control over when, where, and how they work enhances autonomy, a key resource that helps them manage their workloads without depleting their personal reserves.

The project's findings are consistent with the current literature on the benefits of time away from work for employees, indicating that flexible scheduling, PTO utilization, and work-life balance are effective in mitigating employee burnout and increasing engagement. Sinsky et al. (2024) posited that time away from work is a critical restorative activity that provides employees with an opportunity to rest and recharge and is associated with benefits for both employees and employers, including lower burnout rates, higher job satisfaction, improved creativity, and greater productivity. Sinsky et al. (2024) further noted that failing to take time away from work exacerbates the effects of chronic work overload and increases the risk of burnout. In Ray and Pana-Cryan's (2021) study, employees who were able to adjust their work schedules were 20% less likely to experience work-related stress and 62% more likely to report higher job satisfaction and engagement. Further, Çivilidağ (2026) posited that granting employees flexibility and greater control over their work hours and locations enhances employee engagement and motivation. Saragih et al. (2026) indicated that when employees experience a healthier work-life balance, they also report higher job satisfaction and greater engagement. Employee burnout reflects a resource deficit that cannot be resolved solely through internal coping strategies but instead requires deliberate periods of cognitive and physical detachment. Time away from work serves as a mechanism for rejuvenation, helping to reduce burnout and increase employee engagement. Ultimately, comprehensive time-away-from-work initiatives that support work-life

balance and self-care practices represent a critical business strategy for sustaining peak performance, enhancing job satisfaction, reducing burnout, and increasing engagement.

Scholarly and professional literature support the research findings that providing structured time away from work and flexible scheduling modules are crucial for enabling employees' psychological recovery and reducing burnout. Stoddard Dare et al. (2026) note that robust time-off frameworks are vital operational tools rather than employee perks for providing the psychological recovery needed to prevent burnout and voluntary resignations. Similarly, Sloan et al. (2024) posited that varying schedule configurations can significantly affect an employee's ability to replenish depleted mental and psychological energy, which aligns with Participant 9's statement about the success of alternative schedules such as compressed workweeks. These empirical studies align with the perspectives of participants in this qualitative research project, demonstrating that traditional five-day work structures often fail to optimize human energy. By integrating flexible hours, paid time off, and compressed work schedules, organizations can provide the essential operational resources that allow employees to restore depleted resources, manage personal life demands, and maintain engagement. Consequently, embedding flexible time away from work strategies into organizational frameworks offers a powerful tool for leaders to foster sustainable work-life balance and protect against burnout.

4.4. Creation of a Culture of Employee Recognition and Appreciation

The fourth theme that emerged from the qualitative data was creating a culture of employee recognition and appreciation. Fifty-six percent of participants identified the importance of recognition and appreciation in reducing employee burnout and increasing engagement. Analysis of the interview data revealed that participants viewed social engagement activities, recognition, appreciation, celebration, and culture as crucial components for reducing employee burnout and increasing engagement. Consequently, implementing time-away-from-work strategies grounded in these elements is essential to reducing employee burnout and improving overall engagement.

Participant 7 noted the following:

While showing appreciation may seem like a simple gesture, it goes a long way. I show appreciation by thanking them every day for coming and working hard to do their best. I thank them for the hard work they do day to day and let them know they are appreciated and doing a great job. As a result, engagement and morale increase.

This response highlights the importance of leaders showing appreciation to employees and suggests that employees respond positively when they feel valued and appreciated.

Participant 4 noted that culture is not what a leader says; it is what they do. When culture is rooted in celebration, rewards, and recognition, it sets the tone for the team. Participant 7 explained that culture is critical to the success of any highly productive, highly successful team with high engagement and low burnout. Employees know when they are in a good or bad culture, and that directly impacts their engagement and burnout. These responses highlight the importance of culture as a moderator of burnout, which can increase or decrease employee burnout and engagement.

These findings align with Bakker & Demerouti (2007) JD-R theory by showing that an organizational culture grounded in recognition, appreciation, and intentional social activities functions as a vital job resource. Within this framework, practices such as acknowledgment, celebration, and consistent positive feedback from leaders help meet employees' psychological needs for competence and relatedness while also strengthening their sense of connection to the organization. As a result, these resources buffer the effects of work demands, reduce employee burnout, and increase engagement. In particular, regular appreciation and recognition from leaders can help offset day-to-day emotional exhaustion and sustain motivation before burnout takes root.

The research findings align with current scholarship demonstrating the impact of recognition and culture on employee burnout and engagement. Employee recognition and appreciation are vital tools for increasing engagement and reducing burnout. Jo and Shin (2025) found that recognition significantly boosts employee engagement, highlighting the psychological importance of feeling valued and acknowledged in the workplace. Jo and Shin further noted that when employees feel their efforts and results are recognized, they experience a greater sense of worth and validation, which fuels motivation and commitment to their work. Yang and Jiang (2023) posited that recognition affects not only individual employees but also the broader team. Yang and Jiang further explained that when employees observe a coworker being recognized, their own well-being and engagement can also increase. Similarly, Presslee et al.'s (2023) study on team-based recognition found that when employees received nonmonetary recognition, such as thank-you cards or small gestures, engagement increased for both individual employees and the team as a whole. Overall, the literature underscores the psychological impact of validation in the workplace; when effort is openly acknowledged, it fosters a shared sense of worth that strengthens intrinsic motivation, increases engagement, and reduces burnout. Ultimately, integrating both team-based and individual recognition into organizational culture on an ongoing basis serves as a critical mechanism for driving employee engagement and reducing burnout.

Further, the research findings align with the data uncovered in another review of the professional literature, confirming the importance of employee recognition and culture on employee burnout and engagement. Gallup and Workhuman (2023) reported that employees who strongly agree that recognition is an im-

portant part of their organization's culture are 37 times as likely to be engaged, 3.8 times as likely to feel connected to their culture, and half as likely to experience frequent burnout as those who do not. Additionally, the [Incentive Research Foundation \(2025\)](#) emphasized that recognition that is perceived as authentic has a stronger emotional and motivational effect than its tangible value. This highlights the power of sincere and everyday acknowledgments from leaders. These empirical data validate the findings of this research project, demonstrating that recognition is not simply a superficial gesture, but a critical operational resource. When leaders actively cultivate an environment that is rooted in celebration and visible appreciation, it counters the emotional exhaustion of high-demand roles and fulfills foundational human needs for values and psychological safety. Ultimately, aligning organizational culture with structured appreciative strategies provides leaders with a practical tool to drive workforce engagement and protect against systemic burnout.

5. Professional Practice and Implications for Social Change

The findings of this research contribute to improved HRO leaders business practice by highlighting that employee burnout and engagement are not simply individual concerns but responses to organizational outcomes that can be moderated through intentional management and human resources strategies. For business and organizational leaders, the practical contribution of this project is the identification of interconnected strategies that can be implemented to improve employee well-being and performance: fostering supportive relationships, focusing on employee growth and development, incorporating time away from work, and creating a culture of recognition and appreciation. Instead of treating burnout as a weakness or engagement as an attitude, the findings show both as conditions that can be moderated by leadership behavior, workplace systems, and organizational culture. This contribution is relevant to competitive business environments where organizations are under pressure to maintain performance while addressing growing concerns about employee well-being, turnover, and workforce stability.

The first major contribution to professional practices is the finding that fostering supportive relationships is a response that leaders can intentionally strengthen to reduce employee burnout and increase engagement. For a leader, this means communication, listening, transparency, and empathy are not merely soft skills, but they are business practices that impact morale, retention, and daily employee performance. The findings are consistent with recent scholarship highlighting that leadership communication and active listening improve employee well-being and resilience ([Iqbal et al., 2025](#)), Supportive relationships buffer the effects of work stress and reduce the risk of burnout ([Saud & Rice, 2024](#)). [Huang et al. \(2025\)](#) further noted that supportive leader-employee relationships strengthen psychological safety, empowerment, and job performance. A practical recommendation for leaders is to implement relational practices through regular check-ins, feed-

back systems, manager training, and communication business norms that encourage trust, psychological safety, and responsiveness. For the research community, this finding reiterates the importance of exploring leadership relationships beyond the interpersonal dynamics, but also as tools that organizations can use to allocate job resources in ways that affect both employee well-being through the reduction of employee burnout and increasing engagement, and business outcomes.

A second contribution to improved business practice is the finding that focusing on employee growth and development acts as a motivational resource that helps to reduce employee burnout and increase engagement. Leaders who provide tailored developmental opportunities, role clarification, mentoring, and training create conditions where employees feel competent, supported, and invested in by their organization. This finding aligns with [Rutherford et al.'s \(2025\)](#) conclusion that mentorship serves as a psychological safeguard and can act as an intervention against burnout. It further aligns with [Neufeld et al. \(2026\)](#), who identified development as a job resource that strengthens competence and resilience, and [Özdemir \(2024\)](#), who found that adequate training enhances retention, motivation, and commitment. The practical recommendation for business leaders is to move beyond generic training and instead design individualized development systems that are career-oriented, goal-focused, and integrated into the employee experience. Also, creating mentoring programs to align employees with mentors for career progression. For Scholars, these findings contribute to the literature, showing how practice operates as strategic well-being interventions with implications for organizational sustainability.

A third contribution is that finding that time away from work should be understood and used as a core business strategy rather than a peripheral employee benefit. Participants' emphasis on PTO, flexibility, hybrid scheduling and self-care demonstrates that recovery is essential to sustaining employee energy, attention and productivity, as well as reducing employee burnout and increasing engagement. This insight is supported by [Sinsky et al. \(2024\)](#), who found that time away from work is associated with lower burnout, higher job satisfaction, improved creativity, and greater productivity, as well as by [Ray and Pana-Cryan \(2021\)](#), whose findings connect scheduled flexibility to reduced work-related stress and increased job satisfaction. More recent scholarship also shows that flexible work arrangements and healthier work-life balance strengthen employee engagement and motivation ([Çivilidağ, 2026](#); [Saragih et al., 2026](#)). The recommendation for business leaders is to establish recovery-supportive practices in operations through policies that normalize the use of PTO, provide workload boundaries, and allow for flexible scheduling where feasible. For the scholarly community, the findings support the argument that recovery and detachment are organizational concerns that are beyond personal time management and should be studied as part of effective business systems.

The fourth contribution to professional practice is that found that recognition

and appreciation are strategic tools that shape culture, impact motivation, and protect against burnout. Leaders who consistently acknowledge effort, celebrate contributions, and foster a culture of appreciation help reinforce employees' sense of value and belonging, thereby strengthening engagement and morale. This finding is consistent with Jo and Shin's (2025) conclusion that recognition significantly increases employee engagement, as well as Yang and Jiang's (2023) work showing that recognition can positively affect both the recipient and the observers within the team. Similarly, Presslee et al. (2023) found that team-based nonmonetary recognition can increase engagement across teams. The practical recommendation for business leaders is to build recognition into everyday management practices, ensuring that appreciation is timely, authentic, and responsive to employee preferences. For researchers, this finding extends scholarship on organizational culture, showing how recognition practices serve as tangible job resources that connect employee motivation, engagement, and cultural climate.

Together, these findings suggest that improved business practice requires an integrated leadership approach rather than isolated interventions. Organizations are unlikely to reduce or sustain engagement in a single initiative if supportive relationships, development, recovery, and recognition are not part of the coherence of people's strategies. For leaders, the central responsibility is to design workplace systems that create employees as people and supporting assets; whole well-being is directly tied to organizational performance, culture, and continuity. Equipping managers to lead in the real world, embedding mentoring, and skill development into business operations. Normalizing PTO use and recovery practices and creating recognition systems that support both individual and team contributions. For the research community, the findings offer evidence that complements the JD-R theory by highlighting how multiple job resources can work together in practice to reduce employee burnout and increase engagement. In this way, the project contributes to both scholarship and professional application by linking evidence-based leadership behaviors with practical strategies for building healthy, more effective, and more sustainable organizations.

The findings of this research project have meaningful implications for social change for businesses and organizations, employees and their families, and the scholarly community. On the organizational and business levels, the findings demonstrate that employee burnout and engagement are not simply individual concerns but responses to organizational conditions that can be influenced by internal leadership practices and workplace design. When leaders foster supportive relationships, focus on employee growth and development, provide time away from work, and create a culture of recognition and rewards, they improve the employee experience in tangible ways. These strategies can help strengthen psychological safety, increase job satisfaction, reduce emotional exhaustion, reduce burnout, increase engagement, and improve the employees' ability to positively and effectively contribute to their work and personal lives. For the organization, the practical value of these findings is the opportunity to create healthier, sustainable

work environments that improve morale, employee well-being, strengthen employee retention, and support long-term productivity goals.

Beyond the organizational level, the findings of this research project suggest that reducing employee burnout and increasing engagement can produce positive effects that extend beyond employees into families, communities, and institutions. Employees who experience healthier workplace environments are more likely to carry that well-being into their homes, relationships, and personal lives, which can strengthen communal bonds and provide stability and social functioning. When organizations adopt people-centered strategies, they may also help normalize core values of empathy, flexibility, development, recognition, and supportive relationships, which, in turn, influence expectations for how employees and others should be supported and treated. The findings point to social change through shifts in behavior and culture as leaders move from reactive burnout management to proactive systems that promote employee well-being, human sustainability, and dignity.

Lastly, at the scholarly community level, these findings contribute to the growing body of scholarship that frames employee burnout and engagement as outcomes arising from the interplay between job demands and organizational resources. The project offers practical evidence that social support, development opportunities, restorative time away from work, and recognition are not isolated interventions but interconnected leadership practices that can reduce employee burnout, increase engagement, improve organizational performance, and enhance social well-being. These insights may guide future research on how leaders operationalize supportive workplace cultures across industries and how these strategies influence not only employee outcomes but also organizational health. This project reinforces the importance of research that links business agencies with meaningful social change.

6. Directions for Further Research

Future research on reducing employee burnout and increasing engagement should continue to build upon the four strategies identified in this project by examining how supportive relationships, employee growth and development, time away from work, and recognition systems can be implemented and sustained across different industries. This project focused on the HRO sector; future research could explore whether the same strategies are as effective in other industries, various organizational sizes, and workforce structures. Expanding the study across different industries could help business leaders determine which practices are transferable and which require industry-specific modifications based on operational demands and organizational culture. By expanding the inquiry, researchers would strengthen the practical relevance of these findings by providing leaders with guidance for tailoring strategies to reduce burnout and increase engagement in their own business settings.

This project used qualitative pragmatic inquiry; another recommendation for

future research is to adopt a quantitative or mixed-methods research design. As qualitative research cannot be statistically analyzed or quantified, using a quantitative method will provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of these strategies for both employees and leaders. Additional research could investigate how leaders assess the effectiveness of mentorship programs, flexible scheduling, resourcing within practices, and supportive relationships using outcomes such as retention, absences, engagement, and burnout indicators. The use of longitudinal studies would be useful in determining whether these strategies produce long-lasting improvements or depend on consistency, leadership capacity, or organizational follow-through. Quantitative or mixed-methods research could provide business leaders with actionable evidence to inform scalable interventions that not only improve employee well-being but also strengthen performance, culture, and organizational sustainability.

7. Limitations

In scholarly investigations, limitations are inadequacies in the research design that may affect the outcome (Montgomery, 2023). A limitation was that the population consists of HRO leaders and is not representative of leaders or employees across industries.

8. Conclusion

The findings from this qualitative pragmatic inquiry underscore that no single initiative is sufficient to sustainably reduce burnout or increase engagement; instead, an integrated approach that weaves together relationships, development, recovery, and recognition is required. When leaders communicate transparently, invest in tailored growth opportunities, normalize and protect time away from work, and embed authentic recognition into everyday practice, they create systems that support both employee well-being and organizational performance. These strategies not only mitigate burnout and elevate engagement within the HRO sector but also contribute to broader social change by fostering healthier, more humane workplaces whose benefits extend to employees' families and communities. As organizations continue to navigate evolving workforce expectations and intensifying competitive pressures, the practical implications of this study suggest that prioritizing people-centered, resource-rich environments is not just ethically responsible—it is a strategic imperative for long-term sustainability and success.

Author Contributions

Anthony Kilgore was the primary researcher. Dr. Kim A Critchlow was the mentor, reviewer, editor and approver.

Conflicts of Interest

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

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