

Leader emotive awareness, burnout, and work-family conflict

Robert G. Jones, & Michelle Visio Missouri State University
Heather King, U.S. Cellular

Presented at the Fifth Conference on Emotions in Organizational Life, Fontainebleau, France

Abstract

This study looks at the combined contributions of emotional labor, emotional awareness and job burnout to well-being in a sample of business entrepreneurs. Results support the notion that the emotionally demanding job of business leadership demonstrates a pattern where work-family stress is separately influenced by emotive awareness and burnout.

Burnout

- “A prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job” (Maslach, 2003) that is characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism, loss of personal efficacy
- Shown to result from variously-defined and measured emotional labor
- Depletion from burnout associated with unmet expectations, problems at home that may spill over to work and vice versa

Work-Family Conflict

Conflicts between family and work roles associated with strains in one or the other domain, time pressures, and relationship problems

Methods

- Sample: 128 business leaders (20 Female, 106 male; age range 35-76, M = 54) working in the documents management industry.
- Measure: A mailed questionnaire burnout (MBI; Maslach & Jackson, 1986), work-family conflict (Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian; 1999), Alexithymia (Taylor, Bagby, and Luminet, 2000) , and Emotional Work Requirements (Jones & Best, 1995).

Emotional awareness

- Ability to understand others’ motives by means of their emotional expressions. Also encompasses abilities to integrate others’ displays into a given social context and accurately infer the motives underlying these displays (emotive perception accuracy)
- An extension of two components of the emotional intelligence construct
- 1) ability to identify one’s own emotions
- 2) ability to identify others’ emotional experience
- Thought to precede ability to appropriately communicate motives to others
- Used alexithymia index to measure

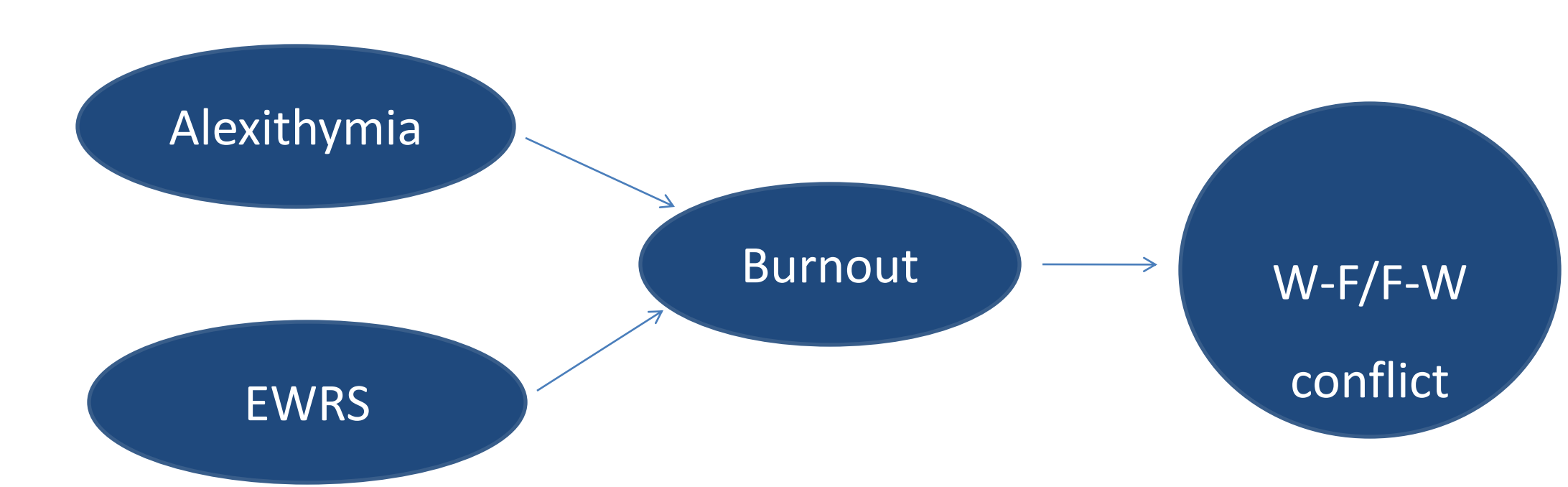
Emotional labor

Requirement to display or suppress emotions as part of job

Emotional work requirement scale (EWRS) used for this; has three dimensions:

- 1) Displaying integrating emotions
- 2) Displaying differentiating emotions
- 3) Suppression of emotional displays

Hypothesized model



Hypothesis 1: Emotive awareness will relate negatively to burnout.

Hypothesis 2: Emotional labor will relate positively to burnout

Hypothesis 2: Work-family conflict will be related positively to leader levels of job burnout.

Hypothesis 4: Burnout will mediate the relationships between emotional labor and awareness (on one hand) and work family conflict

Results

All hypotheses were supported except hypothesis 4, which showed only partial mediation (goodness of fit index = .81). A modified model, with a direct path between emotive awareness and work-family conflict had modestly acceptable fit (GFI = .91).

Discussion

Understanding the emotional context within which one operates may be important to business leaders. Emotional awareness (alexithymia) and perceptions of display rules predict the extent to which business leaders experience job burnout and work family conflict. Leadership expectations for the display of differentiating emotions may carry significant costs in terms of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion. Display expectations for integrating emotions were predictive of loss of sense of accomplishment. This suggests that people who are able to readily identify and communicate emotions may find greater inter-personal satisfaction in the leadership role.