



INVESTIGATING THE PERCEIVED NEED FOR REST AS MODERATOR IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN USING VARIOUS COPING MECHANISMS AND BURNOUT

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Abstract

The current study aims to investigate the moderation effect of the perceived need for rest in the relationship between coping mechanisms and burnout in case of N=119 employees from various industries, in Romania. The results of 2 separate stepwise multiple regression analyses showed that employees preferring mostly passive coping mechanisms when confronted with a stressful situation at work are more prone to develop burnout symptoms when the need to rest is moderating this relationship, comparing with the employees investing active coping mechanisms and still having express their need to rest that are not prone to experience burnout. Results and discussions are presented along with potential implication for the organizational life.

Keywords: *Need to rest, Coping Mechanisms, Burnout, Full-Time Employees.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Two of the most important actions of the companies' strategic business priorities are to reduce costs and to retain their talent. This is in itself a difficult assignment, since, according to Talent 2020, a Deloitte report "Surveying the Talent Paradox from the Employee Perspective", 47% of the Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) region employees reported that morale has decreased or significantly decreased over the past years, whereas employee morale has been

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declining as Europe struggles with debt crises, the future of the euro, and increased borrowing costs (Kwan et al., 2012). Low morale is directly connected with greater layoffs (54% in EMEA comparing with 32% in the Americas and 38% in Asia Pacific region), that result in higher job loadings and higher proneness to experience burnout.

There is an increase of research interest around predictors and results of burnout, as one of the most negative organizational outcome, resulting in high absenteeism rates (Schaufeli, Bakker & Van Rhenen, 2009), low citizenship behaviour and poor job performance (Cropanzano & Byrne, 2003; Parker & Kulik, 1995), high intention to leave and low job satisfaction (Himle, Jayaratne & Thyness, 1986; Jayaratne & Chess, 1984; Abu-Bader, 2000), loss of productivity and efficiency (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Schaufeli 2003).

Still, the relationship between need for sleep and rest as perceived by individuals with various coping mechanisms with burnout was less investigated. As the lack of rest for a long time can lead to physical and mental disorders, especially for people with a fragile emotional balance, we found the study of this triad to be extremely important.

The current study investigates this relationship between the three variables (namely coping mechanisms, burnout and the need for rest). We explain the manner in which employees investing the preferred coping mechanisms succeed in fighting burnout as a function of the perceived level of the need for rest.

1.1. STRESS, COPING MECHANISMS AND BURNOUT

When a person claims to “get stressed”, says they feel the consequences of stressors. When it comes to considering certain “stressful” situations, in a certain moment, situational requirements may exceed our resources that help us manage the situation perceived as stressful or threatening. Individual resources were classified into: physical (i.e. financial) and psychic (such as lack of patience with others) (Scott, 2017).

Stressful situations are perceived in various ways, from extremely intense to highly non-invasive, as a function of some aspects related to individual differences and the environment. Lazarus (1991) discusses about stress as a process that implies a transaction between the individual and its working environment. Also, he introduces the distinction between stressors (stressful events as predictors), the cognitive evaluation of these events (that can be perceived as a threat) and the coping mechanisms, namely the individual resources that help the person manage the stressful situations.

The strength and maturity in managing stressful situations can predict the quality of sleep and the need for a person to rest. We understand by maturity in managing stressful situations, the collected and selected experienced coping mechanisms that would result in a preferred coping style (Lazarus & Folkman,

1984). In the case of people with mental disorders, there is an increased tendency towards anxiety, worries and sadness that they experience over a day, they will have a less restful sleep than people who had peace of mind and joy (Iamandescu, 2005).

Burnout is a measure of exhaustion and mental stress that is caused by demands and professional tasks that go beyond the personal or organizational resources that a person has at their disposal. This syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (or, as later defined by researchers, cynicism, a concept that includes more than detachment, posting) and professional inefficiency reaches its peak when it is no longer effective for work. A wide range of professions involve a lot of human interaction, often doctors, assistants and educators are experiencing burnout syndrome (Fares et al., 2016; Schaufeli, 2003). Emotional reactions, such as burnout, occur when the perceived threats cannot be managed with the available or preferred individual resources, namely coping mechanisms.

Coping is a regulatory process that can reduce the negative feelings of stressful events. Indeed, coping is a dynamic process that fluctuates over time, in response to requirements and appreciations in situational changes.

The coping mechanisms were clustered in various ways. There are authors that discuss about three main styles of coping: problem-centered coping, emotion-centered coping and avoidance coping (Afshar et al., 2015). Other authors depict two dimensions: a “passive” or emotion-focused coping strategy and an “active”, cognitive and interpersonal coping strategy in which efforts were made to do something actively in order to alleviate the problem causing the distress (Sørli & Sexton, 2001). For the current study, we are going to consider this last classification since it serves better to our research objectives.

1.2. NEED FOR REST

Fatigue can be defined as “a loss or a temporary reduction of mental or physical resources, determined by wear or failure to recover after effort” (Popa, 2008).

Primary insomnia is the most common and owing to psycho-stressful situations. This is described as a difficulty in initiating or maintaining sleep at least three times a week for one month. It affects the socio-professional activity and produces a mental discomfort. The effects of psychological stress are manifested primarily in people with a specific psychological condition, namely, a hereditary or traumatic predisposition, where behavioral dysfunctions are observed (Iamandescu, 2005).

There are several industries (such as healthcare), where employees have to experience occasional sleep loss (Barger et al., 2005). Still, not only those employees could be also exposed to acute stress (Dias & Scalabrini Neto, 2017). Authors point out that the combination of sleep deprivation and acute stress may be particularly detrimental and can possibly lead to a less adaptive stress response (Schwarz et al., 2018).

Some authors consider that sleep deprivation causes increased activation in brain centers involved in stress and emotional regulation (Yoo et al., 2007). Still, other authors found that sleep deprivation did not significantly moderate the response pattern for any of the outcome measures (Schwarz et. al., 2018).

In the current study, we seek to investigate whether the perceived need for rest moderates the relationship between the coping mechanisms and burnout.

2. STUDY OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTESIS

2.1. OBJECTIVES

Building on the assumption of the current literature in the field of stress, coping mechanisms, burnout and the need for rest, the present study aims to investigate whether the perceived need for rest moderates the relationship between the coping mechanisms and burnout

Therefore, we would determine the perceived need for sleep (NFS) contribution on each of the two dimensions of coping mechanism: passive coping mechanisms (PCM) and active coping mechanism (ACM) on the outset and experience of burnout.

2.2. HYPOTHESES

Taking into account the above theoretical considerations we formulate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The ACM would be negatively correlated with burnout.

Hypothesis 2: The PCM would be positively correlated with burnout.

Hypothesis 3: NFS will moderate the relationship between ACM and burnout.

Hypothesis 4: NFS will moderate the relationship between PCM and burnout.

3. THE METHOD

3.1. PARTICIPANTS

The present study used a total of 119 people from Romania (47.1% women; age between 18 and 50 years old), from ten industry sectors. The data were collected among. The respondents have completed an online survey, using a virtual testing platform. The recruitment and inclusion of the online subjects were made on a voluntary basis, under confidentiality assurance.

3.2. MEASURES

All measures were Romanian versions translated according to recommended testing guidelines (Hambleton, 2005).

Burnout was measured with the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), made by Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach and Jackson in 1996, containing a total of 16 items ($\alpha =$

.93) in the form of assertions and having as subclasses: Exhaustion with 5 items of the type: “I feel squeezed / squeezed emotionally because of my work” ($\alpha = .86$), Cinism with 5 items like: “I doubt by the significance of my work” ($\alpha = .82$) and the professional inefficiency with 6 items such as “They are not effective in solving the problems that arise in connection with my work” ($\alpha = .86$). Response variants are made on the Likert scale in 7 steps, ranging from (“Never”) to 6 (“Daily”).

The coping mechanisms were measured by the Ways of Coping Questionnaire (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). The questionnaire has 66 items, grouped in eight subscales, as follows: 1) *Problem-focused coping*, a subscale with 11 items such as “I tried to analyze the problem to understand better” ($\alpha = .80$); 2) *Wishful thinking* a 5 items scale, such as “I hoped that a miracle will happen” ($\alpha = .79$); 3) *Detachment*, a 6 items scale, with items like “I felt that, with time, there will be a difference - the only thing to do was to wait” ($\alpha = .63$); 4) *Seeking social support* with 7 items like: “I spoke with someone to find out more about that specific situation” ($\alpha = .76$); 5) *Focusing on the positive*, a scale with 4 items, such as: “I’ve always tried to see the good part in things” ($\alpha = .56$); 6) *Self-blame*, a 3 items subscale, with items like “I was self-critic towards myself” ($\alpha = .48$), 7) *Tension Reduction*, a scale with 3 items like: “I’ve been away for a while; I tried to rest or take a vacation” ($\alpha = .51$) and 8) *Keep to self* with 3 items like “I tried to hide my emotions”. ($\alpha = .51$). Scoring is done on a 4 point Likert type scale ranging from 0=“I did not use that behavior” to 3=“I used the behavior a lot”.

To obtain the two main sub-scales used in the analysis, we grouped three sub-scales, namely *Wishful thinking*, *Detachment* and *Keep to self* under the scale passive coping mechanisms (PCM) and two other sub-scales, namely *Problem-focused coping* and *Seeking social support*, under the scale active coping mechanism (ACM), according to the cited authors (Sørli & Sexton, 2001).

The need for rest was evaluated through the sub-scale with the same name from the Questionnaire on Experience and Assessment of Work (QEAW, Veldhoven and Meijman, 1994). The Need for Rest subset contains 11 items, with items like: “I think it's difficult to relax at the end of the working day”. Alpha Cronbach calculated for this sub-scale for our sample (N=119) was $\alpha = .83$. A 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“Always”) to 4 (“Never”) was used.

3.3. DATA ANALYSIS

The hypotheses were tested using the SPSS program. Each of the two coping mechanisms dimensions was analyzed separately in correlation with burnout and the need for rest. The correlation matrix is included in Table 2.

The facets of the two coping mechanisms were introduced as predictors in the regression procedure, the Process package, v. 16.3 (Hayes, A.F.), model number 1. The total burnout was considered the outcome and the need for rest was considered the moderator in both cases.

Also, we verified the results by conducted a series of stepwise regression analyses with the two coping mechanisms and need for rest as predictors and the burnout as the criterion variable. To eliminate as much as possible the eventual biases in creating and testing the determined models by using the stepwise method, we analyzed the residual values, we verified the data base to identify the outlier values. All obtained values have met the necessary conditions in order to avoid multicollinearity.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations and Intercorrelations of the two coping mechanisms scales, four Burnout dimensions and Need for Rest, N=119

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	EXH	CYN	RPA	Burnout	Need for rest
1 Active Coping Mechanisms (ACM)	4.15	.91	.01	.07	.01	.03	-.02
6 Pasive Coping Mechanisms (ACM)	5.14	1.51	.45**	.45*	.39**	.46**	.38**

Note. EXH = Exhaustion; CYN = Cynicism; DEP = Depersonalization; RPA = Reduced Professional Accomplishment; * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

4. RESULTS

4.1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 2 shows (a) the means and standard deviations of the coping mechanisms variables and (b) the correlations of those with between burnout components and burnout as total factor and the perceive need for rest.

4.2. REGRESSION ANALYSES OF NEED FOR REST AND COPING MECHANISMS ON BURNOUT

We predicted relationships between the two forms of coping mechanisms, ACM and PCM will correlated with burnout. In fact, ACM was not significantly correlated with each of the four burnout dimensions. In this way, Hypothesis 1 was not validated. Also, we stated, in Hypothesis 2, that PCM would be positively correlated to burnout. As shown in Table 2, the second hypothesis was validated.

To test Hypotheses 3 and 4, we run the moderation model in the Process Tool and the results shows are shown in the Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Figure 1: Moderation Model for Passive Coping Mechanisms (PCM) and Burnout, moderated by the Need for Rest (NFRest)

Outcome: Burnout Total						
Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.7042	.4960	.8427	39.8397	3.0000	115.0000	.0000
Model						
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	1.5842	.0907	17.4764	.0000	1.4047	1.7638
NFRest	1.1573	.1509	7.6696	.0000	.8584	1.4562
PCM	.2435	.0565	4.3076	.0000	.1315	.3555
Inter.	.2324	.0935	2.4838	.0144	.0471	.4177
Product terms key:						
int_1 PCM X NFRest						
R-square increase due to interaction(s):						
	R2-chng	F	df1	df2	p	
int_1	.0290	6.1694	1.0000	115.0000	.0144	

Figure 2: Moderation Model for Active Coping Mechanisms (ACM) and Burnout, moderated by the Need for Rest (NFRest)

Outcome: Burn_T							
Model Summary							
	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
	.6423	.4126	.9821	26.2040	3.0000	115.0000	.0000
Model							
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
constant	1.6581	.0925	17.9233	.0000	1.4749	1.8414	
NFRest	1.4640	.1715	8.5338	.0000	1.1242	1.8038	
ACM	.0507	.0983	.5157	.6071	-.1440	.2454	
Inter.	.0632	.1745	.3621	.7179	-.2824	.4087	
Product terms key:							
int_1 ACM X NFRest							
R-square increase due to interaction(s):							
	R2-chng	F	df1	df2	p		
int_1	.0007	.1311	1.0000	115.0000	.7179		

Also, we obtained graphical forms for these two moderation models, where the results are displayed in a comprehensive manner (Figure 3 and Figure 4).

Figure 3 – Graphic representation for moderation with PCM as independent variable, Need for Rest as moderator and Burnout as dependent variable

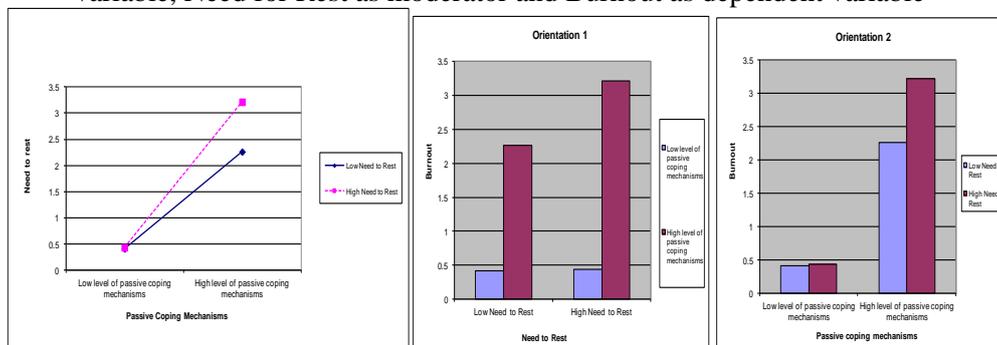
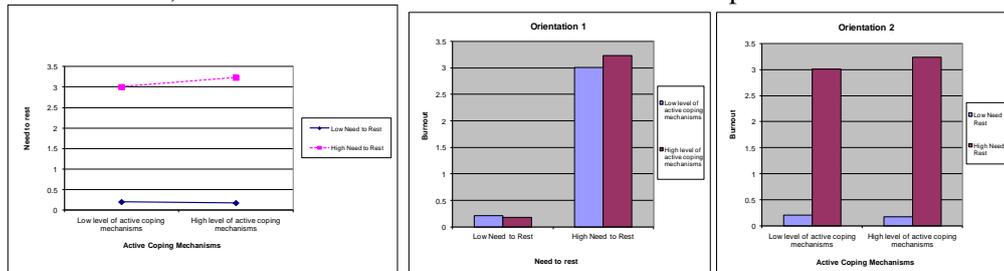


Figure 4 – Graphic representation for moderation with ACM as independent variable, Need for Rest as moderator and Burnout as dependent variable



5. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

One of the main conclusions of this research is that people that have a passive manner of reacting to stressful situations will experience with or without perceiving the need for rest, burnout. In the model included in Figure 1, is shown that the need for rest moderates the relationship between PCM and burnout ($p < .001$). Also, from the results included in Table 2, we draw the conclusion that all the dimensions of burnout and, also, the need for rest, correlates only and highly significantly with the passive coping mechanisms, whereas no even one of the burnout dimensions or the need for rest do not correlate with ACM.

In other words, irrespective of the people with ACM will not experience burnout, even if they perceive the need for rest. In the model in which ACM as independent variable, Need for Rest as moderator and Burnout as dependent variable (Figure 2), is shown that the interaction is not statistically significant ($p = .7179$).

The results shown also in Figures 3 and 4 are supporting the Hypothesis 3 as well as Hypothesis 4.

In the light of these results, the companies may consider involving their employees in activities and projects as well as career plans that would stimulate their active attitudes, that could prove to be extremely important when managing burnout.

6. LIMITATIONS

One important limitation of the current research is constituted by the lack of comparison with participants from various industries and the lack of control for age and gender. Still, the literature presents mixed opinions in this aspect. We admit that the main limit of this study could be seen in the transversal and not longitudinal design as well as rather limited sample ($N=119$), which do not help in extending our conclusions to a general Romanian population and to have causal inferences.

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