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CORRELATION BETWEEN PERSONNEL' AUTHENTICITY IN THE WORKPLACE, BURNOUT AND WELL-BEING

Raina Vīra

Linda Pīpkalēja

Solveiga Blumberga
RISEBA, Latvia

Abstract. *To be authentic is to be oneself, needs, true and original, to be aware of one's identity, to act in accordance with values, needs and desires, which naturally contributes to quality of life. Well-being is a universal life goal and one of the most important strategic priorities and human resource trends in organizations today. A large part of people's lives is spent at work, which today is characterized by uncertainty, competitiveness, and stress, so it is in the interest of organizations to contribute authentic expressions in their employees, making them feel better and thus more productive, while attracting new talents who value authenticity at work as a psychological benefit. The aim of the research is to explore personnel' authenticity in the workplace in relation to burnout and well-being and to develop proposals to human resource managers and managers for enhancing personnel' authenticity and well-being and reducing burnout. Three research questions: Are there correlations between personnel' authenticity in the workplace, burnout, and well-being; Are there differences in variables between age groups, by organization size, between seniority groups and different types of work models; Does authenticity in the workplace affect burnout and well-being. The following methods were used: Relational Authenticity Questionnaire; Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey; Index of Psychological Well-Being at Work; two open questions created by the authors of the study and socio-demographic survey. Based on the results, it was found that there are correlations between variables, namely, a positive relationship between relational authenticity and well-being and a negative – between both exhaustion and cynicism burnout subscales. There are differences in variables between age groups, seniority groups and different types of work models, and the impact of authenticity on both burnout and well-being was found. Results help to draw the attention of employers to promotion of authenticity as a tool for enhancing well-being and preventing burnout, proposals can be used for aforementioned purposes in organizations.*
Keywords: *authenticity in the workplace, burnout, personnel, well-being at work.*

Introduction

According to one of the world's leading publications of business and economic sector "Forbes", the prevailing trends in human resources management for the year 2023 underscore the imperative and significance of enhancing employee well-being. Escalating workplace tensions highlights the importance

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for businesses to establish roles that serve as catalysts for employee well-being (Forbes, 2023). Over the past decade, it has transitioned from a benevolence-focused program to a strategic initiative for organizational success (Mehta, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the problem of employee burnout (Moss, 2021), accelerating the high burnout levels that were reported previously. These developments have underscored the significance of authentic leadership in fostering a psychologically safe working environment (Yan-qiao & Xiong-ying, 2020). The competitiveness of the workplace can now be determined by the degree to which the working environment ensures the authenticity and well-being of its staff (Reis, Braga, & Trullen, 2017). Organizations are literally fighting for talents (Bérubé, Maor, Mugayar-Baldocchi, & Reich, 2022), who have become far more demanding (Finizio, 2023). The current evolution of employees shows that it is essential to aspire to authenticity at work as an important factor in attracting and sustaining employees.

The aim of the research is to explore personnel' authenticity in the workplace in relation to burnout and well-being and to develop proposals to human resource managers and managers for enhancing personnel' authenticity and well-being and reducing burnout. The authors formulated three research questions: (RQ1) Are there correlations between personnel' authenticity in the workplace, burnout, and well-being; (RQ2) Are there differences in variables between age groups, by organization size, between seniority groups and different types of work models; (RQ3) Does authenticity in the workplace affect burnout and well-being? The online questionnaire method on Webropol Surveys was used. The survey included three original measuring instruments.

Literature Review

Authenticity describes the awareness of one's true self and the ability to act in accordance with it (Knoll, Meyer, Kroemer, & Schröder-Abé, 2015; Metin, Taris, Peeters, van Beek, & Van den Bosch, 2016). Authenticity has gained heightened recognition in the working environment given its positive impact on well-being (Kuntz & Abbott, 2017). Empirical research suggests that experience of authenticity at work improves the use of cognitive, emotional, and physical abilities, which in turn affects engagement, creativity and innovation, job performance, retention at work and overall well-being (Kuntz & Abbott, 2017; Metin et al., 2016; Menard & Brunet, 2011). Organizations that support self-awareness and empower the self-expression of values, beliefs and interests promote authenticity (Gagne & Deci, 2005). The resulting inauthenticity of the employee is due to burnout and alienation from itself, contributing to customers distrust towards both the workers and organization (Yagil & Medler-Liraz, 2014; Kim, David, Chen, & Liang, 2023). An important aspect of authenticity at work involves relations with others (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). The authenticity of

relationships is defined as how true (real) an individual is in their relationship with colleagues and managers. The conceptualization of relational authenticity is more akin to an individual's characterization within a specific organizational context rather than being a rigid, consistently resilient personality trait (Ostermeier, Medina-Craven, Camp, & Davis, 2022). Age is an important factor to consider when examining whether authenticity will affect an organization's results (Ostermeier, Medina-Craven, Camp, & Davis, 2022).

Burnout is a psychological syndrome that occurs as a long-term response to chronic interpersonal stressors at work (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). The basic dimensions: feelings of exhaustion and fatigue, feelings of cynicism and alienation from work. This model includes an experience of individual stress in a social context and an individual's perception of themselves or others (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). The volatile context forces organizations to look for new ways to boost profits and productivity, thus creating additional work stress and overload, leading to widespread employee burnout (Fastje, Mesmer-Magnus, Guidice, & Andrews, 2023). It is assumed that the initial development of exhaustion arises in response to elevated demands and excessive workload. Subsequently, this can lead to alienation and negative reactions towards both individuals and work, manifesting as depersonalization or cynicism (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). High levels in any of these three dimensions suggest burnout (Pemberton & Kisamore, 2023).

In literature, psychological well-being and psychological tension are key references to psychological health indicators (Nelson et al., 2014). Psychological well-being at work is associated to internal states of happiness contributing to satisfaction with life, conviction, and a sense of joy (Nelson et al., 2014; Li & Lin, 2021). It describes an individual's subjective positive experience at work (Morin et al., 2017; Gilbert, Dagenais-Desmarais, & Savoie, 2011). The psychological well-being of employees can serve as the foundation for fostering innovation, the highest outcomes and unlocking the full realization of human potential (Hannah, Perez, Lester, & Quick, 2020). The framework includes five dimensions: 1) interpersonal fit at work 2) thriving at work 3) feeling of competency at work 4) perceived recognition at work 5) desire for involvement at work (Dagenais-Desmarais & Savoie, 2012). Well-being can create courage to be authentic (Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, & Joseph, 2008), or it can be a two-way interaction (Knoll et al., 2015) wherein well-being facilitates self-expression, and the resulting knowledge contributes to higher self-awareness.

Numerous studies associate the personnel' authenticity in the workplace with burnout as an integral facet of employee well-being, with low levels of authenticity linked to higher burnout rates (van den Bosch & Taris, 2014; van den Bosch & Taris, 2018). By promoting psychological well-being, organizations can optimize the utilization of human resources, mitigate the risk of burnout, and enhance the authenticity of staff at work, creating a mutual relationship.

Methodology

Sample: The sample of the study consists of 259 Latvian employees (88% of women, 12% of men), the most respondents are in the group 26-35 years (30.1%), the type of work performed: in-office (48.3%), hybrid (42.8%), remote (8.9%).

Measure: The following were used for data extraction: a survey of psychological well-being at work (Index of Psychological Well-Being at Work; IPWBW, Dagenais-Desmarais & Savoie, 2012) is a self-assessment survey for evaluating psychological well-being at work, consisting of 25 allegations. The allegations contain five factors: (1) interpersonal fit at work, (2) thriving at work, (3) feeling of competency at work, (4) perceived recognition at work, (5) desire for involvement at work. The allegations are assessed with a 5-point Likert scale. In addition, paper includes relational authenticity survey and Maslach burnout poll. Relational Authenticity survey is adapted by K. Ostermeier with colleagues (Lopez & Rice, 2006, cited by Ostermeier, Medina-Craven, Camp, & Davis, 2022). The self-assessment survey consists of 7 verses of the same scale. Maslach burnout poll contains 16 allegations (Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey; MBI – GS, Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Statements should be evaluated with the original 7-point Likert scale. The allegations form three subscales: emotional exhaustion, cynicism, or depersonalization, and professional efficiency, or personal achievement.

Procedure and analysis methods: The survey was conducted anonymously using the online questionnaire method on the Webropol Surveys platform. The survey took an average of 15 minutes to complete. The data processing programme "JAMOVI 2.2.5" was used. Methods used for data analysis include Spearman's rank correlation, Kruskal–Wallis H test, Linear multi-factor regression model and coding.

Results

A Spearman's rank correlation analysis (Table 1) was conducted to investigate the relationship between authenticity at work, burnout and well-being (RQ1). The coefficients show a statistically significant positive, very weak relationship between relational authenticity and well-being subscales (r_s=0.15*–0.30***), which means that the well-being may slightly improve as the relational authenticity increases, and vice versa. Negative, moderate correlation of well-being with burnout exhaustion subscale (r_s=-0.38***– -0.50***) has been observed, and exhaustion is most likely to decrease as well-being improves. Perceived recognition at work is most closely linked to exhaustion (r_s = -0.50***), i.e., it is the feelings of evaluation and recognition of investment that can help to prevent burnout risk. A statistically significant negative, very weak correlation has been observed between relational authenticity and exhaustion (r_s = -0.29),

indicating that exhaustion may decrease or be less pronounced as the employment relationship becomes more authentic.

Positive, very weak to moderately close (r_s =0.40***–0.62***) associations of professional efficiency with well-being were also revealed, as well as positive, very weak associations of professional efficiency with relational authenticity (r_s = 0.27***), suggesting that an increase in relational authenticity may contribute to the feelings of professional efficiency.

Table 1 ***Spearman's rank correlation coefficients***

Variable subscale	M	SD	Spearman's rank correlation								
			IFW	TW	FCW	PRW	DIW	RA	E	C	*PE*
interpersonal fit at work (IFW)	4.09	0.68	1								
thriving at work (TW)	3.87	0.88	0.68***	1							
feeling of competency at work (FCW)	4.13	0.73	0.65***	0.70***	1						
perceived recognition at work (PRW)	3.86	0.82	0.72***	0.76***	0.70***	1					
desire for involvement at work (DIW)	3.88	0.79	0.62***	0.68***	0.56***	0.60***	1				
relational authenticity (RA)	2.35	0.86	0.26***	0.25***	0.29***	0.30***	0.15***	1			
exhaustion (E)	3.92	1.57	-0.43***	-0.49***	-0.40***	-0.50***	-0.38***	-0.29***	1		
cynicism (C)	3.43	1.48	-0.47***	-0.62***	-0.39***	-0.52***	-0.42***	-0.38***	0.69***	1	
professional efficiency (PE)	5.72	0.99	0.45***	0.57***	0.62***	0.48***	0.40***	0.27***	-0.32***	-0.44***	1

*Note: N=259, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001*

Kruskal–Wallis H test was conducted to investigate differences between age groups, by organization size, between seniority groups and type-of-work groups (RQ2). The results show statistically significant differences in thriving at work, perceived recognition, and all burnout subscales across age groups ($p \leq 0.05$) (Table 2). This suggests that age is an essential aspect of these investigational variables.

Table 2 ***Differences in variables between seniority groups (N = 259)***

Variable subscale	Kruskal–Wallis H criterion	p
Thriving at work	15.58	**0.008**
Perceived recognition at work	18.57	**0.002**
Exhaustion	12.54	**0.028**
Cynicism	12.66	**0.027**
Professional efficiency	20.31	**0.001**

In the context of thriving at work, the average scores across six age groups reveal that older respondents, specifically those in the 56–65-year group, report the highest opportunities to express their potential, experience personal growth, and receive a sense of fulfilment from meaningful work (M = 4.21). This can be attributed to increased appreciation and enjoyment of work, as well as mastery of life. The younger generation (18-25 years) exhibits the least experience of thriving at work or positive work assessment, reporting the highest burnout rate. Employers should draw attention to the fact that it is also essential for young people to be assessed for doing well as such evaluation can foster engagement and job performance.

The results do not show statistically significant differences in variables across groups by organization size, broken down into eight groups of every 700 employees ($p \geq 0.05$). To analyze variations within the organization's staff (1 to 30 009), an approach was employed to segment them into eight equitable groups, each comprising approximately 700 employees. This indicates that the quantity of employees in the current research is not a critical factor in relation to the variables being examined.

There are statistically significant differences in most well-being subscales ($p \leq 0.05$), except for the desire for involvement at work, in fourteen seniority groups (up to 6 months, 6 months to 1 year, and every 3 years) (Table 3).

Table 3 ***Divergences in variable indicators among seniority groups (N=259)***

Variable subscale	Kruskal–Wallis H criterion	p
Interpersonal fit at work	24.31	0.028
Thriving at work	25.01	0.023
Feeling of competency at work	36.60	< .001
Perceived recognition at work	30.15	0.004
Desire for involvement at work	19.65	0.104
Relational authenticity	8.10	0.837
Exhaustion	16.18	0.239
Cynicism	12.65	0.475
Professional efficiency	34.62	<.001

The average for recognition at work shows that respondents with work experience from 18 to 21 years, express the highest level of satisfaction regarding their progress (M = 4.80), as they also report more pronounced feelings about the realization of potential (M = 4.67). The 6 months to 1 year group shows the lowest feelings of appreciation (M = 3.24). Thus, emphasizing the evaluation of progress during the initial year of employment becomes crucial. Statistically significant differences have been identified in perceived recognition at work and exhaustion subscales ($p \leq 0.05$) across three working model groups (in-office, hybrid,

remote). The results show that remote workers are most sensitive to the work evaluation (M = 4.10), the hybrid model also reports a close value (M = 3.97).

The lowest perceived recognition at work is observed among in-office workers (M = 3.72). An interesting trend emerged - with the increased popularity of remote working, individuals working in physical office spaces appear to be somewhat overlooked in recent years. The data for exhaustion averages reflect the fact that in-office workers estimate exhaustion the most (M = 4.17), while for remote workers it is the lowest (M = 3.22).

A linear multi-factor regression model has been performed to investigate the effects of authenticity at work on burnout and well-being (RQ3). A statistically significant negative effect of relational authenticity on burnout was found ($p < 0.001$), the model determination factor $R^2 = 0.09$ shows that 9% burnout can be explained by the relational authenticity. The biggest significance for burnout is the relational authenticity for verse 3, "I purposefully hide my true feelings about some things so as not to upset my manager," so suppressing true feelings can contribute to emotional exhaustion that aligns with other studies. The statistically significant positive effect of the relational authenticity on the well-being, 8% of the well-being can be explained by the relational authenticity.

Discussion

The study found out the relationship of staff authenticity with well-being and burnout. In particular, as the authenticity of the relationship increases, the well-being can improve, the feelings of professional efficiency can increase, and burnout can decrease. This finding, as well as the finding of the effect of relational authenticity on burnout and well-being, is consistent with the positive effect of authenticity on well-being found by other researchers (Kuntz & Abbott, 2017) and several studies that express the relationship of staff authenticity in the workplace with burnout as an integral aspect of employee well-being, linking low levels of authenticity with higher levels of burnout (van den Bosch & Taris, 2014; van den Bosch & Taris, 2018). Researchers have linked employee inauthenticity to burnout and alienation from themselves (Yagil & Medler-Liraz, 2014; Kim et al., 2023). The findings support the existing literature's assertion that well-being can foster the courage to exhibit authenticity (Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, & Joseph, 2008), or it can be a bidirectional interaction (Knoll et al., 2015).

Age, seniority and way of performing work have been found to be capable of leading to significant differences in the rates of merits and burnout. This is in line with previous well-being studies that have linked well-being to job characterization (Li & Lin, 2021).

Social well-being, which reflects positive functioning in society, namely social integration, feelings of belonging, is clearly associated with age differences, as a higher level of education promotes social relations (Keyes, 1998). Although

other studies confirm that age differences influence perceptions of authenticity and are a significant factor in examining the effects of authenticity on organizational outcomes (Ostermeier, Medina-Craven, Camp, & Davis, 2022), this study's measures of relational authenticity did not demonstrate such associations, possibly due to the limited sample size. It would be useful to study the differences in the authenticity of relationships in different occupational groups, examining how the appropriateness of work roles and the availability of work resources (autonomy, training and development opportunities, supervisor, colleague support) affect authenticity (Kuntz & Abbott, 2017; Metin et al., 2016).

Conclusions and recommendations

There exists a relationship between the researched variables (RQ1), characterized by a positive relationship between relational authenticity and well-being, and a negative relationship between the exhaustion and cynicism burnout subscales. As the relational authenticity grows, well-being may slightly improve, exhaustion may decrease, and feelings of professional efficiency may increase. The perceived recognition at work primarily serves as a significant factor in mitigating the risk of burnout.

The response to RQ2, exploring variations in variable rates among groups, indicates that age, work experience, and work methodologies may result in noteworthy differences in well-being and burnout rates. However, these factors do not appear to yield significant variations in the rates of relational authenticity. The size of the organization, or the number of employees in the department, does not emerge as a determining factor for any of the variables being studied. The most noteworthy findings refer to the age group from 56 to 65 years, indicating the highest levels of prosperity and work appreciation. On the other hand, the 18–25 year old group expresses the least opportunities to showcase their potential, reports minimal job performance assessment, and registers the highest burnout levels. The 6 months to 1 year seniority group show the lowest assessments of interpersonal fit at work, thriving, sense of competence and sense of recognition. Remote workers exhibit the highest sensitivity to the investment assessment, whereas in-office workers, who concurrently report the lowest assessment of the investment, also experience the highest levels of exhaustion.

The relational authenticity affects burnout and well-being (RQ3). This may explain the research data: 9% burnout and 8% well-being. Increasing the relational authenticity reduces burnout and its risk. The primary factor to burnout development is the suppression of feelings, that can lead to emotional exhaustion as it consumes significant cognitive and emotional resources. The most common theme for research open questions is centered around communication, openness and trust, what also aligns with the literature's reported importance of these factors in boosting authenticity. It is advisable to implement awareness practices aimed

at fostering the authenticity of personnel, such as incorporating regular team sessions scheduled at least once a month. It will help become more conscious and accept yourself and be more present and truer every day. Based on responses from respondents, it is recommended to build new habits such as informal meetings, where individuals can openly and honestly share their feelings, challenges, and recommendations. To foster a positive shift and encourage more authentic expressions from younger staff, it is recommended to place a strong emphasis on effective onboarding processes throughout the initial year of employment.

It is advisable to offer consistent, growth-oriented feedback and job evaluations to enhance overall well-being, with a specific emphasis on in-office workers. In the context of burnout prevention, it is recommended to intensify the focus on the professional development of the 18-25 age group and restrict working overtime.

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