Leadership Impact on Employee Well-being:
The Growing Challenge of Burnout

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Abstract

Emotional labour and labour intensity are terms often heard in the context of hospitality and tourism industry. The low wages, instability of jobs, external threats and interpersonal conflicts are examples of the stressors that have led to extensive burnout in the industry. Organisational leaders have a detrimental impact on the well-being and efficiency of the subordinates; thus, this research aims to identify which leadership approach would best reduce burnout. Examining McGregor's X and Y theory, situational leadership theory and job demand resources (JD-R) theory allowed to identify key behaviours required to reduce burnout. After which different leadership styles were evaluated, to identify which possess these behaviours. Transformational leadership was identified to be positively associated with theory Y, situational leadership, and high organisational resources, all of which contribute to diminished burnout and higher organisational commitment. Hence, it emerged as the best fit. However, it was suggested that subordinates' personal resources, and organisational climate should be considered simultaneously to understand its' origin and impacts. This paper is a review article, which research is consisted of relevant data generated from online sources related to burnout, and leadership in hospitality and tourism industries.

Keywords: *Employee Well-Being; Burnout; Leadership Style; Leadership Theory; Employee Motivation; Organisational Effectiveness*

Introduction

Leadership's aim is to direct followers towards the organisation's goals (Belias et al., 2022). However, this requires a set of different behaviours and tactics from the leader (Baquero, 2023), which motivate subordinates to achieve these goals (Fiaz et al., 2017). The organisation must promote subordinates' well-being, to create a good working environment (Shoshan and Sonnentag, 2020). Not only does this lead to enhanced connection, and perceived value of the organisation (Fiaz et al.,2017) but higher customer satisfaction (Shoshan and Sonnentag, 2020). Thus, it comes as no surprise that a leader is argued to have a fundamental impact on the success of the organisation (Radwan,2020). However, as hospitality industries have faced increasing stressors, such as different crisis, terrorism, natural hazards, and job instability (Karsavuran, 2021), it is crucial to put more research on the well-being of employees and the impacts of leadership style.

This paper aims to identify what kind of leadership style could mitigate burnout and its organisational effects. This is conducted by analysing data from various recent sources from existing research, with an aim to provide new insights of leadership impact on reduction of subordinate burnout and overall organisational efficiency. First, different causes and dimensions of burnout are explained, after which relevant leadership theory is evaluated to understand what kind of behaviour could reduce burnout. Second, different leadership approaches are weighted together with dimensions of burnout and leadership theory. Lastly, some recommendations for improved leadership behaviour to mitigate burnout is provided.

Issue Statement

Burnout in hospitality and tourism

Hospitality and tourism industry is often associated with constant changes (Wen et al., 2020), vulnerability to crisis (Aguiar-Quintana et al., 2021), instability of jobs and emotional labour (Pienaar and Willemse, 2008) which has led to increased prolonged stress, known as burnout (Shoshan and Sonnentag, 2020). Consequently, the industry has been identified to have a notably higher burnout rate in comparison to other industries (Baker and Kim, 2021). For example, in 2019 the industry had the highest burnout rate globally, when approximately 80% of the workforce stated challenges with burnout, as illustrated in table 1.

Table 1.   Statista (2019) industries with highest burnout rates
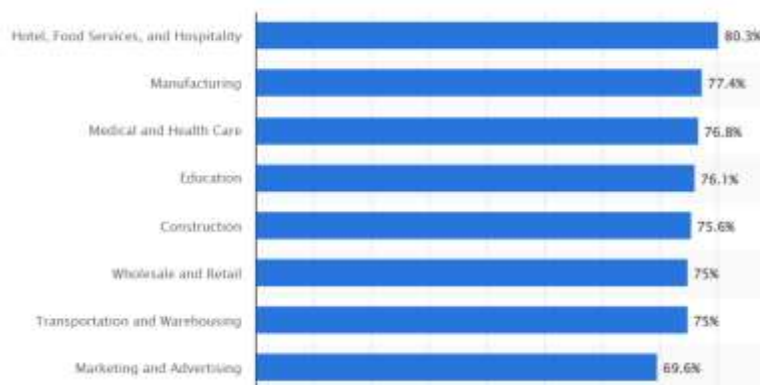
Burnout can lead to psychological and physical impacts (Densten, 2005) which consequently impacts the organisational efficiency (Wen et al., 2020) due to the following reasons:

- Decreased job satisfaction (Wong et al., 2021)
- High turnover (Wong et al., 2021)
- Absenteeism (Babakus et al., 2010)
- Diminished customer satisfaction (Shoshan and Sonnentag, 2020)
- Increased health care expenses (Pienaar and Willemse, 2008)

Aguiar-Quintana et al. (2021) suggest that in comparison to previous crises, Covid-19 (health crisis) will have more long-lasting impacts to physical and financial environment. Thus, it comes as no surprise that increased stress, has become more evident in recent research (Ayachit and Chitta, 2022; Wong et al.,2021).

Leadership and Dimensions of Burnout

Many researchers have identified the core dimensions of burnout being emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and diminished personal accomplishment (Ayachit and Chitta, 2022; Johnson and Park, 2020). The stressors are driven from the organisational climate (Harjanti and Todani, 2019) and personal well-being of the subordinate (Maamari, 2016), which Tromp and Blomme (2013) argued being indirectly impacted by the leader. The characteristics of each dimension are illustrated in graph 1.
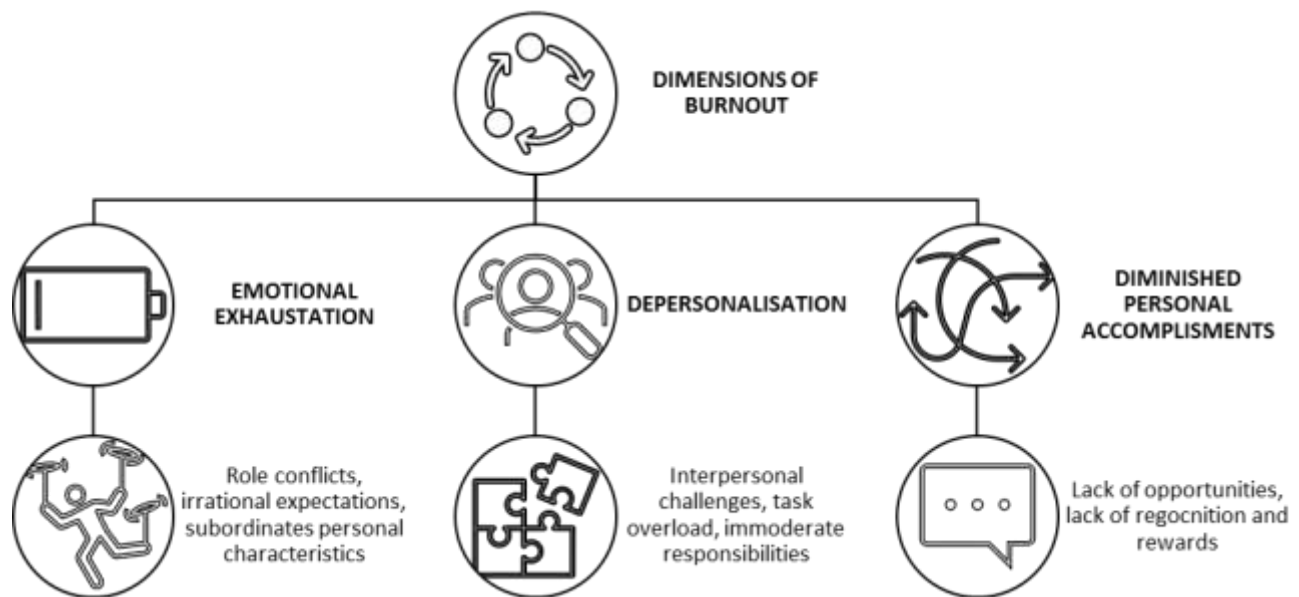
Graph 1. Dimensions of burnout adapted from Ayachit and Chitta (2022); Johnson and Park (2020)

Emotional Exhaustion

Wen et al. (2020) identified how unclear roles, and high expectations, lead to subordinate being overwhelmed. This is often a result of feeling that the skills and abilities obtained are not enough to meet the organisational anticipation (Baquero, 2023); which indicates lack of confidence. Consequently, subordinates feel confusion, and frustration, which can lead to interpersonal conflicts with colleagues (Skogstad et al., 2007). However, the interpersonal conflicts can also impact customer relations. Emotional exhaustion can lead to fatigue, negative and cynical behaviour (Abubakar et al., 2022), which consequently, can result to diminished service quality (Shoshan and Sonnentag 2020), this indicating negative impact on organisations' success.

It is important to mention that there is a continuous need to develop skills of subordinates to adapt to the changing environment of hospitality and tourism. For example, Baker and Kim (2021) identified how consumer behaviour is becoming considerably more demanding, whereas Liu-Lastres et al. (2023) discussed challenges of new technological innovations changing the industry. It is crucial that the subordinates feel confident in the task provided, to reduce anxiety and stress (Baquero,2023), some of which are a reason Densten (2005) summarised the key role of leader as a ''sense-making role''. If leadership is neglected, its role is lacking to provide direction, which leads to decreased motivation and organisational commitment (Bhatti et al., 2012). In addition, Wong et al. (2021) findings demonstrate how poor balance between work and personal life in a challenging work environment leads to emotional exhaustion. All of which contribute to higher absenteeism, and turnover (Pienaar and Willemse, 2008).

On a similar topic Liu-Lastres et al. (2023) highlights the essential need for the organisation to also consider the changing needs of the subordinates, not just customers, to promote health and well-being. Hence it is evident the following is required from the leader to reduce emotional exhaustion and enhance organisational effectiveness:

- Clear roles (Kang et al., 2016)
- Clear organisational vision (Densten, 2005)
- Flexibility (Haid et al., 2022)

Moderating Role of Personality and Demographics

It is important to note that perception of leadership style and its efficiency is also dependent on followers' personality and demographics such as age, gender, work experiences, attitudes, and values (Abubakar et al., 2022). According to Kim et al. (2007) differences in personality influences how a stressful situation is perceived and processed (i.e. difficult customer interaction). To further discuss Rathi and Lee (2016) study found how people who have high extroversion are less likely to burnout in comparison to individuals who are introverted (i.e. higher neuroticism). This was explained with extroverts' sociability, and preferences of large groups which makes it easier to face customers, in comparison to more introverted individuals who find social interactions more exhausting. In addition, it was argued that extroverts have more positive outlook and attitude which impacts the level of stress and anxiety. It is evident that managing of one's own emotions is crucial to overcome these stressors, which indicates active involvement from both subordinate and the leader. Stress management training has been suggested in previous literature (Diebig et al., 2017), however according to Johnson and Park (2020) the industry is still lacking implementation of such practices.

Depersonalisation

Depersonalisation is especially affecting interpersonal communication. Subordinates can feel high pressure to perform well in customer service, due to its direct impact on customer satisfaction (Kim et al.,2007). The rapid interactions with customers can sometimes feel incivil and humiliating, but the employee must ''pretend'' through these interactions, to maintain a good customer service (Baker and Kim, 2021). Kim and Qu (2019) explain these interactions being challenged by the following:

- Difficult questions
- High demands
- Insulting behaviour

According to Similidou et al. (2020) a leader should be able to advice subordinates how to act in these demanding situations. Furthermore, it was advised that acts of empathy and sharing experiences would allow to resonate with subordinates. According to Namasivayam et al. (2013) leader's empowerment behaviours such as delegation of tasks and showing accountability (i.e. decision making) would provide subordinate more freedom to act in these demanding situations. The feelings associated with such responsibilities are also referred to as psychological ownership (Dai et al.,2020). However, if the leader is not able to provide the subordinates with a good organisational environment consisting of good support and communication, the effect can be seen as low satisfaction, thus high turnover (Wen et al., 2020).

Reduced Personal Accomplishments

Abubakar et al. (2022) found how followers can perceive declined motivation and performance, if the job doesn't create feelings of importance, or opportunities to develop. This can be a result of:

- Inability to express opinions (Hayat and Afsari, 2020)
- Lack of training (Karatepe and Uludag, 2007)
- Lack of feedback (Wen et al., 2020)

Unfortunately, leadership in hospitality industries is often associated with centralised decision making (Huertas- Validivia et al., 2019), which calls for drastic changes. It is crucial to create a personal and organisational goal for the subordinate to motivate to achieve exceedingly, and to create feelings of accomplishment (Abubakar et al., 2022). Thus, it is fundamental that the leader provides followers enough challenges (Abubakar et al., 2022), individualised consideration (Morgeviciute et al., 2018), ability to innovate (Ayachit and Chitta, 2022), and opportunities to develop (Shehawy, 2022). The term intrinsic motivation was used by Karatepe and Uludag (2007) of the subordinates perceived meaningfulness, and challenge, which leads to lower levels of burnout. As intrinsic motivation is driven from personal enjoyment, it is associated with high commitment (Babakus et al., 2008). In contrast, extrinsic motivation can be thought of as the opposite, as it motivates through rewards and other benefits (Stravrinoudis et al., 2022).

Some studies have identified generation being a moderating factor in perceived meaningfulness and satisfaction. Bayighomog and Arasli (2020) compared babyboomer's to millennials and identified quite different perceptions of work. Babyboomer's had very high meaningfulness to work, whereas millennials viewed it rather as an obligation. To provide another example related to generational differences, study by Liu-Lastres et al. (2023) provided insights from generational motivation from Gen Z perspective. Gen Z were argued to be less satisfied with work and likely to switch jobs, in comparison to previous generations. This could potentially predict how industries will face an increasing competition to gain and remain workforce in the future.

Leadership Theory

Leadership role in burnout has been identified to be complex as it is affected by many factors including the nature of the situation, the different dimensions of burnout, and the leadership approach (Kanste et al., 2007). This review aims to identify behaviour that potentially mitigate the discussed dimension of burnout through the following leadership theories:

- Situational theory
- McGregor's X and Y theory
- Job demand- resources (JD-R) theory

Situational Leadership Theory

Situational leadership believes that there is not just one correct type of leadership, but it is dependent on the environment, situation, and the skills of subordinates (Perna, 2016). Furthermore, it allows to comprehend the tolerance levels of the subordinates, and provide support, coaching, directive behaviour, or delegation accordingly (Thompson and Vecchio, 2009), hence could especially reduce depersonalisation. The theory is illustrated in table 2, in which the readiness level of the subordinate is presented on the left side and the required behaviour of the leader on top. For example, someone who is a beginner, has lower skills but is motivated require more directive behaviour from the leader, in contrast to someone who has reached high maturity in terms of skills and confidence, and requires delegation.

Table 2. Situational leadership behaviours adapted from Thompson and Vecchio (2009); Perna (2016)

McGregor's Theory X and Y

McGregor developed theory X and Y in the 1960's to explain how leaders choose one of two assumptions (X and Y) on subordinates, which then impacts their behaviour (Arslan and Staub, 2013). In theory X leader has high autonomy and control, as the subordinates are presumed to be lazy and must be motivated for example through rewards and punishments (Kopelman et al., 2008). In contrary, theory Y assumes that people are trustworthy, capable of decision and perceive rewards inessential (Sabri et al., 2019). Furthermore, Arslan and Staub (2013) note that not only is theory Y associated with high connection towards the organisation, but innovative behaviour. However, conveying that theory X is essential, as the efficiency is dependent on the organisation size, culture, and its surroundings. As previously identified, a good organisational environment to mitigate burnout requires support, communication, participation, and innovation, thus it can be concluded that theory Y is the most suitable to diminish burnout.

Table 3. Theory X and Y adapted from Sabri et al. (2019); Kopelman et al; (2008)
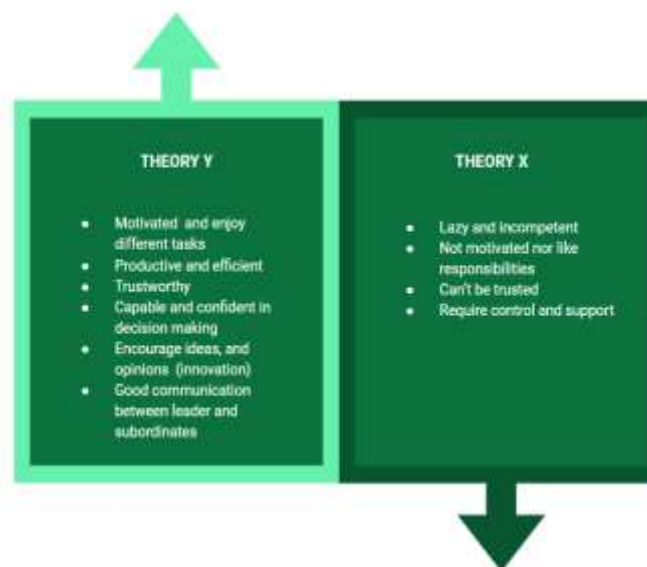
Job Demand- Resources (JD-R) Theory

JD-R theory can be used to explain how the leadership style and organisational environment impacts subordinate well-being and burnout (Moriano et al., 2021). To further explain, if organisational

demands such as workload and expectations are high, but the organisational and personal resources are low, the subordinate is likely to burnout (Rabiul et al., 2022.B). In contrast if organisational resources such as development opportunities and support are high, it can further enhance personal resources. Therefore, it is fundamental to balance the moderating factors, as otherwise subordinates can lose motivation and sense of meaning towards work (Tummers and Bakker, 2021). The same effect was similarly identified in the burnout dimension of diminished personal accomplishments. As personal resources are a significant factor in JD-R, it is important to mention that individuals with high intrinsic motivation tend to have higher personal resources (Khan et al.,2020). As previously discussed, it is more likely that individuals high on extroversion have higher personal resources due to more positive and confident behaviour (Rathi and Lee , 2016). These theories will be further explored in the discussion of different leadership approaches. More detailed information of the moderating factors can be examined in table 4.

Table 4. Factors of JD-R Theory adapted from Osei et al. (2023); Rabiul et al. (2022.B)

MODERATING FACTORS		CHARACTERISTICS
1	JOB DEMAND	• Intensity and complexity of work • Workload • Expectations • Interpersonal conflicts
2	ORGANISATIONAL RESOURCES	• Opportunities • Empowerment (communication and participation) • Training and development opportunities • Supportive climate
3	PERSONAL RESOURCES	• Level of positivity • Level of self-efficacy • Level of confidence

Leadership Styles and Burnout

Transformational Leadership Style

Transformational leadership (TF) was chosen as the best approach to mitigate burnout. TF is positively associated with theory Y, which owes to its high trust towards subordinates and space where discussion and innovation can flourish (Sahin et al., 2017). Innovation is also crucial in terms of high global competition within the industry (Su et al., 2020). Consequently, TF has been associated with high subordinate satisfaction (Ayachit and Chitta, 2022) and high perceived organisational meaningfulness (Dai et al., 2022). Nielsen and Daniels (2012) explain this being a result of the four main behaviours of TF inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, and idealised influence as further illustrated in table 5. In contrast, Endriulaitiene and Morkeviciute (2020) explain this being driven from high intrinsic motivation of the subordinates.

Table 5. Main characteristics of Transformational leader adapted from Nielsen and Daniels (2012); Babakus et al. (2008); Arnold (2017)

In addition, Moriano et al., (2021) emphasised how TF is often associated with high organisational resources some of which can be identified from the individualised consideration character (Khajeh,2018) from table 5. However, as TF nature inspires the followers to achieve with maximum effort through intellectual stimulation it can lead to emotional exhaustion (Hoogh and Hartog, 2009). The following section will discuss different leadership approaches to further justify the decision. However, to look at more specific characteristics of leadership styles discussed look at *appendix A*.

Different Leadership Styles and Emotional Exhaustion

Transactional leadership (TA) is associated with provision of clear goals, and expectations (Abdullahi et al., 2022) which is similar with autocratic leadership (AL) which is especially efficient during the time of crisis due to rapid actions (Rao and Zaidi, 2020). As identified before, these are characters that reduce emotional exhaustion. AL is also identified to be a good option, when the organisational focus is on being effective (Bhatti et al.,2012). However, AL is associated with poor work and home balance, whereas TF and TA have been found more flexible (Tromp and Blomme, 2014), which is crucial to support the evolving needs of subordinates. On the other hand, servant leadership (SL) can be seen both as service focused, and subordinate focused as it has high focus on growing and training individuals in accordance with ones needs (Su et al.,2020), which can then translate to excellent customer service. Endriulaitiene and Morkeviciute (2020) identified how TA motivates subordinates to work with maximum effort. However, differing from earlier study by Hoogh and Hartog (2009) on TF, the study explained that by performing exceedingly individuals feel less anxious and guilty.

The reduction of emotional exhaustion requires actions and motivation from the subordinates. Abdullahi et al., (2020) suggest that TF ability to gain higher trust from followers, could encourage subordinates to develop inter and intrapersonal skills, which allow to cope with stress. Furthermore, Diebig et al. (2017) found how TF is often associated with good self-care, which for health-related resources are likely to be adapted to the organisational structure.

In oppose to TA and TF, Laissez-Faire (LF) was identified to increase emotional exhaustion due to:

- Detachment and slow decision making (Erkutlu, 2008)
- Poor communication (Zopiatis and Constanti, 2009)
- Unclear roles (Zopiatis and Constanti, 2009)
- Lack of feedback and recognition (Skogstad et al., 2007)

Different Leadership Styles and Depersonalisation

Similarly, to TF, Servant leadership (SL) is focused on individual consideration and psychological needs of subordinates, thus creating a positive work environment (Cai et al., 2023). The high focus on individuals allows to explore the interests, expectations, and any obligations of the subordinate (Su et al.,2020). As identified earlier it is critical to meet the changing needs of the subordinates, which for it can be argued that SL has a strong position in supporting these needs.

TA also reduces depersonalisation, due to goals set together with subordinates which creates meaningfulness and motivation (Abubakar et al., 2022). However, it is more focused on self-interest, and motivates through fear (Sahin et al., 2017), and control over the actions of subordinates (Ogaard et al., 2008) thus associated with theory X (Odumeru and Ogbonna, 2013), which was earlier identified to lead to burnout. In addition, AL is associated with conflicts in organisation, and reduced motivation (Khajeh, 2018). AL was identified to increase depersonalisation due to:

- No trust to followers (Fiaz et al., 2017)
- Centralised decision making (Khajeh, 2018)
- Limited subordinate participation and creativity (Radwan, 2020)
- Motivation through punishments (Fiaz et al., 2017)

Different Leadership Styles and Diminished Personal Accomplishments

AL has been associated with lack of personal consideration, and low support (De hoogh and Den Hartog, 2009), hence it is often associated with theory X (Sahin et al., 2017). This also indicates poor organisational resources as discussed in JD-R theory. TA is characterised with return and benefits between followers and leaders, thus high efficiency (Rao and Zaidi, 2020). However, it is often criticised with the lack of innovation, and creativity (Khajeh, 2018), which are crucial factors for organisational satisfaction (Gui et al., 2020), and individual development (Belias et al., 2022). Furthermore, TA motivation is based more on extrinsic motivation, thus lower commitment to organisation (Kloutsiniotis et al., 2022). In comparison SL is characterised with intrinsic motivation, and followers willing to part take in innovative discussions (Su et al.,2020), thus presenting a good competitive advantage for the organisation. Despite LF association with emotional exhaustion, it is not associated with lacking development opportunities. According to Radwan (2020) LF is associated with high trust, and allowing subordinate creativity, which can lead to higher organisational commitment. In addition, Babakus et al. (2010) found SL has been found to be efficient to mitigate burnout (Babakus et al.,2010) however, as it is not focused on organisational goal (Rabiul et al., 2022. A), TF was found as a stronger leadership style for overall organisational efficiency.

Conclusion

Burnout has been a growing challenge in the hospitality and tourism industry, and it remains as a compound phenomenon. As identified in the article personality, gender, age, generation, culture, and environment play a major role in burnout. In addition, different external factors such as crisis, disaster, and changes in the organisation, makes it difficult to choose a ''right leader''. Based on the analysis

conducted, transformational leadership was identified as the most sufficient approach to mitigate burnout due to positive association with theory Y, high organisational resources, and situational leadership. In addition, the main four characteristics of transformational leader led to higher intrinsic motivation of subordinate, which was identified to diminish burnout. Another possible leadership style identified to reduce burnout, was servant leadership style. However, as servant leaders are more focused on development of the subordinate not the organisational goal, transformational leader was found to be most sufficient. Despite burnout being a complex challenge, there are some ways leaders could reduce burnout, thus the negative impacts it has on the organisational effectiveness.

Suggestions for Transformational Leadership

The following recommendations for transformational leader are based on the research conducted for this review. First, the subordinates' personal resources, and organisational climate should be weighted together to understand burnout causes, and effects. The subordinates should be asked regularly, about personal well-being and satisfaction towards the leader's behaviour. This would encourage discussion, feedback and boost idea sharing on how to make the organisational environment thriving. However, this requires a safe environment where individuals feel comfortable to share challenging feelings whether it is related to over demanding tasks or interpersonal conflicts. Furthermore, as organisations cannot impact the personality or personal resources of the subordinate, provision of stress management training and access to mental health services would be sufficient as this would allow to regulate emotions especially during interpersonal conflicts, and adaptation to the ever-changing environment of the industry.

Recommendations for Future Studies

This review article came with many limitations. This review gave a broad view of burnout within the hospitality and tourism industry, rather than focusing on one sector such as hotels or restaurants. As the research was done by exploring various articles from online sources, there were some limits with finding recent data. Many recent studies were conducted closer to Covid-19 crisis, which had a detrimental impact to the stability of industry, thus impacted the workforce more critically. More recent data would be beneficial to get insight from the current environment of the industry. Furthermore, qualitative methods could provide meaningful aspects, as they allow to explore personal feelings, insights, and experiences, which are critical in topics related to well-being, as well as perceptions of leadership. Lastly, this study identified how one big element in burnout and overall organisational commitment was motivation. It would be beneficial if future studies explored how leaders could motivate work force to enhance organisational commitment and create a more attractive industry for future generations.

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APPENDICES
Appendix A: Behaviours of different leadership styles