

Employee Burnout  
Within the  
Front Office Department

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## **DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY FOR BACHELORS IN INTERNATIONAL HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT STUDENTS**

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I hereby declare that I am the legitimate author of this Long Essay and that it is my original work.

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## Abstract

Employee burnout is a very difficult subject to discuss as it contains various information which has been gathered in the past and developed, and also researched now that the technology is more advanced. It has become very common, but many people prefer not to discuss it. In this dissertation, chapters will include different point of views but based at the hotel front office department.

The hospitality industry has changed as tourists are travelling more frequently on either leisure, business, and medical or educational tourism. In the past, hotels had peak season during summer months and Christmas holidays, but nowadays the whole year has become very busy for hotels.

Since the front office department is available for twenty-four hours seven days a week, managers seek to employ determined and loyal employees, but all employees seek something in return for their hard work. In this dissertation, the information will be gathered from employees and managers based on a set of questions.

Turnover could be very problematic and costly and therefore will also be mentioned in chapter two. Staffing should be a top priority for managers in charge of all departments and so the recruitment and selection should be a crucial point when looking to employ new people.

Analysing research from the past and developing new information always helps in creating various ways to tackle employee burnout, by assessing different perspectives and opinions regarding the workplace. In this research, the author has made sure that all questions were ethical as to cause no harm to anyone who participated in this research.

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# Table of Contents

## Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background Information .....	1-3
1.2 Problem Statement .....	3
1.3 Research Questions.....	3
1.4 Methodology .....	4
1.5 Structure .....	4

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 What is Work Psychology? .....	5
2.2 What is Employee Burnout.....	5-7
2.3 Employee Burnout in Malta .....	7
2.3A Times of Malta 2014 .....	7-8
2.3B Times of Malta 2017 .....	9
2.3C TVM Article 2018 .....	10
2.4 Recruitment and Selection .....	10-11
2.5 Attracting Candidates.....	12
2.6 Selection .....	12
2.7 Induction and Transition.....	13
2.8 Strategies to Prevent Employee Burnout .....	13-17
2.9 Support Organisations .....	17-20
2.10 Work-Related Statistics.....	21-28

2.11 Burnout Inventories, Scales, and Dimensions.....	28-33
2.12 Conservation of Resources Theory (COR) .....	33-35
2.13 COR in Relations to Employee Burnout .....	35-36
2.14 Conclusion .....	36-37

### Chapter 3: Methodology 38

3.1 Qualitative Research.....	39-41
3.2 Quantitative Research.....	41-42
3.3 Sample and Limitations.....	42-43

### Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Discussion of Results

4.1 Interview Results.....	44-52
4.2 Questionnaire Results.....	53-56
4.3 Interview Analysis .....	57-59
4.4 Questionnaire Analysis .....	60-61
4.5 Limitations and Conclusion .....	61-62

### Chapter 5: Recommendations and Conclusion

5.1 Research and Theories.....	63-64
5.2 Managers and Employees .....	64-65
5.3 Conclusion .....	66

## Chapter 6: References

67-69

## Chapter 7: Appendices

70

Appendix A – Interview Template .....	71-72
Appendix B – Questionnaire Template.....	72-76
Appendix C – Consent Form (Hotel A).....	77
Appendix D – Consent Form (Hotel B).....	78
Appendix E – Consent Form (Hotel C).....	79

# Chapter 1 – Introduction

## 1.1 – Background Information

Employee Burnout has become common, especially at work but was first researched in 1974 by Herbert Freudenberger. He was the first to publish in a psychology-related journal, a paper that used the term burnout. The paper was based on his observations of the volunteer staff, including himself, at a free clinic for drug addicts. He observed that the burned-out worker "looks, acts, and seems depressed". After the publication of Freudenberger's research paper, interest in occupational burnout increased. This was because the word "burnt-out" was part of the title of a 1961 Graham Greene novel, *A Burnt-Out Case*, which was based on a doctor working in the Belgian Congo with patients who had leprosy, and therefore the phrase may have been in use outside the psychology literature before Freudenberger employed it.

In order to study burnout, a number of researchers developed more focused conceptualizations of burnout. In one conceptualization, job-related burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (treating clients or students and colleagues in a cynical way), and reduced feelings of work-related personal accomplishment. In another conceptualization, burnout is thought to comprise emotional exhaustion, physical fatigue, and cognitive weariness. A third conceptualization holds that burnout consists of exhaustion and disengagement. The core of the three conceptualizations, as well as Freudenberger's, is exhaustion. Long limited to these dimensions, burnout is now known to involve the full array of depressive symptoms such as low mood, cognitive alterations, and sleep disturbance.



“Job burnout is a job-related syndrome known as emotional exhaustion and reduced personal efficiency. Emotional exhaustion is, in fact, an emotional detachment from work along with a negative attitude towards the workplace and employees. Reduced efficiency means that employees cannot work effectively. Job burnout mainly occurs due to various organizational and personal characteristics, such as high work pressure, lack of job independence, and improper workplace have been established as the main components of job burnout” (Demerouti et al., 2007). “Job burnout causes a high reduction of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Moreover, job burnout influences on any person’s wellbeing. It even disturbs family relationships as employees may neglect their family responsibilities because of high job pressure” (Borza et al., 2012). “Several definitions have been proposed for job burnout. In the 1970s, the term job burnout was first presented as physical and mental fatigue caused by the job which leads to demotivation for doing job-related tasks” (Hsu, 2013). “Job burnout is, in fact, a process in which behaviours and attitudes of employees become negative in response to job stresses. It is also defined as a long-term response to repetitive stressors in the workplace” (Meyer et al., 2014).

Maslach and Jackson defined burnout syndrome as a chronic, negative psychological experience that consists of three dimensions; emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (cynicism) and low personal accomplishment, occurring among individuals who work with people.

Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of being emotionally overextended and drained by contact with other people. As their emotional resources are depleted, workers feel they are no longer able to give of themselves at a psychological level. Emotional exhaustion is often seen as the main dimension in the burnout process. Depersonalization, or the display of negative attitudes to customers, co-workers or managers, accumulates in employees when they perceive a lack of control over key aspects of their job, such as the demands of the job. It represents a dysfunctional style of coping with work-related stressors. Personal non-accomplishment develops when

employees feel their best efforts are not producing intended results or are not being recognized.

Job performance is considered from three perspectives; the business perspective, customer perspective, and employee perspective. “Employees' job performance is defined as the overall performance level of staff in terms of quantity and quality of performance” (Di Pietro et al., 2014). “Employees' job performance plays a pivotal role in the overall efficiency of an organization. The employees who could not make a fruitful relationship with their jobs had lower job performance. In other words, the adaptation of a person with his or her job can be regarded as an important factor to enhance job performance” (Farooqui and Nagendra, 2014).

### 1.1 – Problem Statement

To what extent can the different types of factors of employee burnout influence the performance and satisfaction of employees in the front office department?

### 1.2 – Research Questions

1. What is employee burnout and how are its different factors related?
2. Why should managers and employees be aware of employee burnout?
3. How do the different factors of employee burnout influence employee performance?
4. What should be done to reduce the number of employee burnout at the workplace?

### 1.3 – Methodology

The aim of this research is to elaborate on the relationship between employee burnout, employee performance, and satisfaction and to provide hotel employees and managers useful information on this topic. The answers to all research questions will be based on literature research, and qualitative and quantitative data.

### 1.4 – Structure

In the next chapter, the concept of employee burnout is further explained in detail. After some basic information and definitions, the chapter will consist of comparisons of theories, factors affecting employees based on job performance and satisfaction in the front office department, past and current statistics based on mental and physical health being affected in Malta and abroad, news articles regarding employee burnout in Malta, and information regarding organisations based on helping people tackle stress and other related factors of employee burnout. Chapter three will explain how data was gathered in order to conduct this research, where qualitative and quantitative research used will be mentioned and also limitations. In chapter four the data gathered by the author will be shown and analysed as to further explain why the author has chosen to ask certain questions and also making sure of being ethical at all times. The last chapter will be based on what managers and employees should do based on the research gathered, where recommendations will be given for future purpose.

## Chapter 2- Literature Review

### 2.1- What is Work Psychology?

There are many definitions of psychology, but the easiest definition is “the science of mental life” by Miller in 1966 (Miller, 1966). Mental life has been divided into three phenomena: behaviours, thoughts and emotions, and the aims are to describe, explain, and predict these three phenomena. There are various opinions regarding the study of behaviours, thoughts, and emotions in a scientific manner. Some people believe that human behaviour is too complex as people’s behaviour changes in many ways especially when being observed.

Psychology can be divided into five approaches; physiological psychology which relates to the relationship between the mind and body, cognitive psychology which focuses on our thought processes, developmental psychology which focuses on people’s growth and change psychologically, social psychology which is based on how our behaviours, thoughts, and emotions affect and are affected by others, and personality psychology which focuses on people’s characteristics such as the way we behave, think, and feel in certain situations. Work psychology is the study of how people think and behave at work. It covers several issues such as recruitment, conflict resolution, and employee burnout.

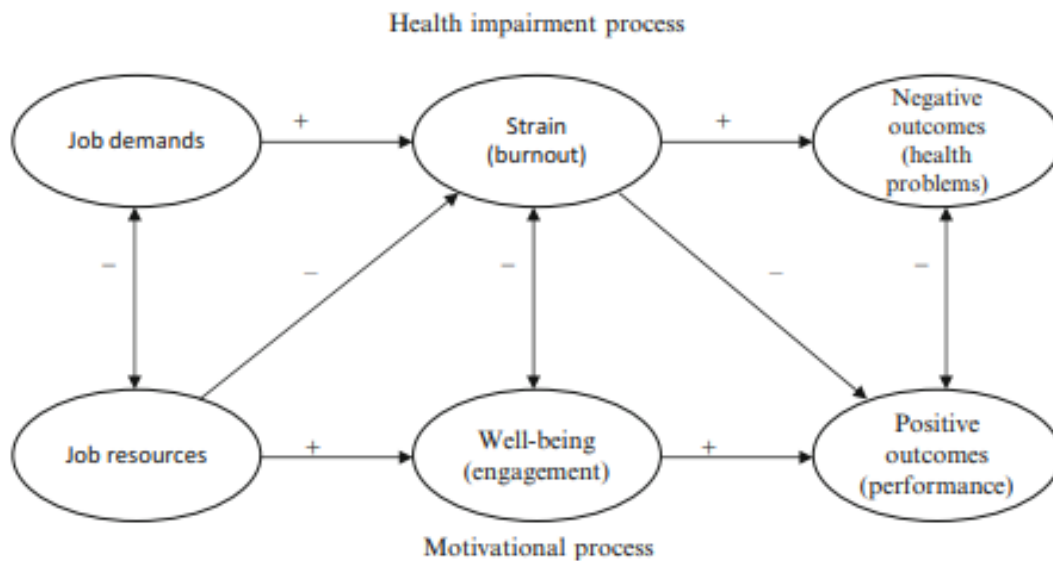
### 2.2 - What is Employee Burnout?

Employee burnout which is “also known as job burnout, is the state where we lose our motivation and incentive resulting to feelings of depression or stress” (Scott, 2018). Burnout is more than just feeling stressed out, it is also a feeling of dread and a lack of

enthusiasm and pleasure for your work and in the daily work routine. There are many other factors that cause employee burnout other than stress such as job-related features, lifestyle factors, and personality characteristics.

The following are some causes of stress; unclear requirements as it is harder to be confident, to enjoy work, and to feel like we're doing a good job if it is unclear how to succeed; impossible requirements as sometimes it's difficult to do everything as explained and if the responsibilities exceed an amount of time given then it's really difficult to do the job properly. Employees put in a lot of effort and still feel unsuccessful; high-stress times with no 'down' times since many hotels sometimes require long hours and a heavier workload it would be helpful if their time and work is recognised, appreciated, and compensated. Having this all year round would not help workers to recover.

Other factors are; big consequences for failure since all mistakes have consequences an example would be a lawsuit which causes stress and could lead to burnout; lack of personal control as when employees feel restricted and unable to have control on daily decisions are at a risk of burnout as well; lack of recognition as whenever employees aren't recognized and appreciated then there is a low morale and it is very difficult to change it; poor communication and an example would be job expectations, if a person does not feel at ease to discuss certain issues than this can lead to feelings of low personal control; insufficient compensation as sometimes there are high demands and low compensation; the last factor is poor leadership as employees may feel uncomfortable and treated unfairly without someone being in charge at the time and can contribute to employee burnout.



## 2.3 - Employee Burnout in Malta

### 2.3A - Times of Malta 2014

Mental health, especially at the workplace, is a continuous research all over the world. This is because all establishments have different policies and priorities, and various laws in each country which could lead to other factors adding to the ones mentioned before. In 2014 an article on the Times of Malta discussed the prevention of employee burnout on employees and employers. Some other factors of stress at work are high absenteeism, personal issues, and coping strategies. Ms Diane Xuereb, a Human Resources Manager at an International Information Technology Company said that "Employees have different personalities and coping strategies, so the sources of stress at work impact individuals differently" ( Xuereb, 2014).

All employees have different behaviours and approaches towards their work life and sometimes it may be overwhelming. "There are employees who are able to separate their private life from work, whereas others tend to bring their personal problems to the workplace. At the same time, there are people who 'switch off' from their work-related stress when they leave the office, while others find it difficult to do so" (Xuereb, 2014). Ms. Xuereb believes that stress can be a serious health hazard if not managed properly. "Stress can be manifested in minor complaints of illness, serious ailments or social problems that impact both the employee and family members to different degrees. Research shows that stress at work is associated with physical symptoms, mental health problems, and negative behaviour. These can impact directly one's health, such as insomnia, headaches, high blood pressure, heart disease, nervous twitches, and other conditions. It also plays a key role in several types of chronic health problems, including cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal problems, and psychological disorders" (Xuereb, 2014).

Some of the factors which were mentioned also affect the employers and because of the employees' burnout "stress at work costs a lot of money to companies in the form of sickness absence, high turnover, lost productivity, increased recruitment and selection costs and healthcare expenses" (Xuereb, 2014).

Ms. Xuereb also believes that the best way is to create and maintain a positive work environment. Some examples of how to do so which were mentioned in the article are fostering good employee or manager communication; creating realistic deadlines for projects; promoting a no-blame culture across and within departments; allowing flexible work arrangements; empowering employees; coaching managers to recognise and deal with stress, and offering family-friendly measures. In this article, Ms Xuereb points out some tips for employees such as talking to Human Resources staff or else seeking psychological help to also deal with personal issues. She also points out some guidelines for employers to decrease and to manage work stress.

### 2.3B - Times of Malta 2017

In 2017 an article on the Times of Malta discussed the hours employees should work. A European Commission conference about healthy work environments was organized by the Consumer, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency in collaboration with the Directorate General for Health and Food Safety and the Portuguese Directorate for Health. Dr. Gregor Breucker, from Germany's BKK Federal Association, a sickness insurance fund, referred to the Joint Action on Mental Health and Well-being, in which Malta is an associate partner.

The EU Joint Action referred to ways to prevent mental disorders and improve social inclusion, with a focus on promoting mental health at work. Dr. Breucker also pointed out that many employers fail to prevent mental issues. He said that "the most important thing is to ensure good work organisation. And avoid long working hours – the danger with new technology is to misuse the freedom of staying online and not switching off" (Breucker, 2017). He also suggested to "never work more than 10 hours a day and be strict with yourself – every minute that goes beyond that can be dangerous" (Breucker, 2017).

In the article retirement was also mentioned and "according to European data, by 2030, workers aged between 55 and 64 are expected to make up a third of the workforce in many European countries. The retirement age is increasing, and many workers are likely to face longer working lives. However, a quarter of EU workers already believe that their work affects their health negatively" (Breucker, 2017). Richard Wynne, from the Work Research Centre in Dublin, pointed out that chronic illnesses affected up to a quarter of the European workforce. He also mentioned that "rather than focusing on employees' illnesses or what they could not do, employers should focus on their



capabilities. He insisted on a move away from sickness certification towards fitness certification, which is already practised in some countries.”

### 2.3C - TVM Article 2018

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2018, the day before World Mental Health Day, unions and social partners signed a joint declaration to act to protect the mental health of employees. Dr. John Cachia, the Commissioner for Mental Health said that 20% of employees suffer from mental health issues including stress. The article mentioned that ten unions and social partners who represent employers have signed a joint declaration with a commitment to protect their employees’ mental health at work.

Dr. Noel Vella said that “we have to be ready to accept the individual as a normal person just like when someone who is suffering from heart disease or diabetes or has broken his arm it is treated as a medical condition – mental problems are also health conditions which can be treated” (Vella, 2018). He also mentioned that the main two causes of mental health issues are family problems and work problems. “We need to accept the fact that factors outside of the workplace can also affect a person’s mental condition as well as his productivity and the way he reacts with his friends, etc.” (Vella, 2018). Finally, Dr. Cachia said that employers should not keep treating mental health problems of their employees as an inconvenience.

### 2.4 - Recruitment and Selection

Previously, recruitment was mentioned as one of the factors resulting from employee burnout. These processes have both positive and negative aspects, as Pilbeam and

Corbridge believe that “the recruitment and selection of employees is fundamental to the functioning of an organisation, and there are compelling reasons for getting it right. Inappropriate selection decisions reduce organisational effectiveness, invalidate reward and developmental strategies, are frequently unfair on the individual recruit and can be distressing for managers who have to deal with unsuitable employees” (Rees and French, 2016).

Each organisation has its own process of recruiting and selecting their prospective employees. Normally a staged approach is used and is referred to as the resourcing cycle. It is a sequential with distinct and interlinked stages. This process begins with the identification of a vacancy and ends when the successful candidate is performing the job to a suitable standard, which is post-selection. It is a two-way process as both the organisation and the candidates are evaluating and scrutinising one another. There has been an increase in focusing on employer branding and image in attracting candidates. An example of employer branding is when an organisation is well known for treating people well, offering a secure employment with the opportunity to progress which leads to retention of employees.

All the recruitment and selection processes should be in a professional and timely manner. After the identification of a vacancy, a more strategic and questioning approach may be held. Whilst doing the vacancy advert the employer must include the job description and job specification. This helps the candidates to understand what is required for the job and helps the employers in deciding the qualities and skills candidates should have in order to employ them.

## 2.5 - Attracting Candidates

Attracting candidates is the major factor in order to find an employee but one must understand that there are cost constraints as well. Pilbeam and Corbridge in 2010 noted that “there is no ideal number of applications and no intrinsic value in attracting a high volume of candidates, and neither is there a single best way to recruit applicants” (Rees and French, 2016). They also point out that employers should be careful in having enough suitable qualified candidates from which they can select without having too many applicants who are not suitable for the position. Organisations can ask recruitment agencies to find a certain number of candidates that may be more cost-effective and efficient than an online advert which could have a large response from unsuitable candidates.

## 2.6 - Selection

Selection is one of the last stages of the recruitment process. This is when an employer reduces a short-listed group after the recruitment stage which leads to an employment decision. Recruitment can be seen as a positive activity as it is generating an optimum number of jobseekers. Selection can be seen as a negative activity as it probably involves rejection. Selection decisions should be made based on a range of selection tools as some employers have poor predictive job ability. Interviews should be conducted or supervised by trained people, it should be structured and based on the job description and job specification and allowing candidates to ask questions. The interview is a way of communicating information about the job and the organisation.

## 2.7 - Induction and Transition

The next step is the induction and transition. Many organisations make a longer term of production of a new employee's capability which leads to the probationary period in which the employees' performance and future potential can be assessed at work. This is the post-selection phase and the induction period, in which the employees are also assessed on the integration into the workplace culture and their development. The final step of the resourcing cycle is the evaluation of the process and reflection on what has been learned from the process and the implications for future reference.

## 2.8 - Strategies to Prevent Employee Burnout

There are various ways to decrease or prevent employee burnout but according to Ms. Paula Davis-Laack, there are seven specific strategies or action steps in order to do so. Before explaining the seven strategies Ms. Davis-Laack explains that she had experienced employee burnout and had to stop working.

The first step she explains is to increase your self-efficacy since it means having the belief in your own ability to accomplish and exercise control over personally meaningful goals and tasks. "People who have a stronger level of perceived self-efficacy experience less stress in challenging situations, and situations, in turn, become less stressful when people believe they can cope" (Bandura, 1989). The most direct and effective way to have better self-efficacy is through performance mastery experiences. Another way is to find a self-efficacy model. In 1997 Bandura said that "simply observing a friend or work colleague accomplish something meaningful is contagious and increases your ability to meet challenges head-on" (Bandura, 1997).

The second step is to identify what you need from your work. According to an article by Harvard Business Review, it is said that there are six rules of a dream company and were compiled by from a list of many executives. The six steps are as follows:

1. You can be yourself
2. You're told what's really going on
3. Your strengths are magnified
4. The company stands for something meaningful
5. Your daily work is rewarding
6. Stupid rules don't exist

These steps can be used as a starting point to create a rewarding and engaged workplace.

To have creative outlets is the third strategy and since burnout interferes with the ability to perform well it is very useful to have some type of creative outlets to keep engaged and motivated.

The fourth step is to take care of yourself. Whenever someone feels that he or she needs to have a break it is always to take that time to relax for a little bit and it is helpful to process everything later during the day.

The fifth step is to get support wherever you can find it. "The number of people who say they have no one with whom they can discuss important matters has nearly tripled in the past two and a half decades" (McPherson et al., 2006). This is because many

people refuse or are scared to discuss what they're feeling with someone else. It is easier not to discuss it rather than expressing thoughts and emotions.

The sixth step is to get real and go there. In order to prevent or decrease employee burnout, one must have an internal and external observation to realise what is or are causing employee burnout. One must really think about what he or she wants in life, both personally and at work.

The last step is to increase your diet of emotions. It has been said that increasing your diet of positive emotion builds your resilience, creativity, and ability to be solution-focused. These three points are lacking when there is employee burnout. According to Fredrickson, it is better to "aim for a ratio of positive emotions to negative emotions of at least 3:1, which is the tipping point to start experiencing increased resilience and happiness" (Fredrickson, 2009). Not being so hard on oneself and recognizing other people's work is an example of decreasing and preventing employee burnout.

**Figure 1. Model of causes and consequences of work-related stress**  
 (adapted by Houtman, 2005 from Kompier and Marcelissen, 1990, [11]).

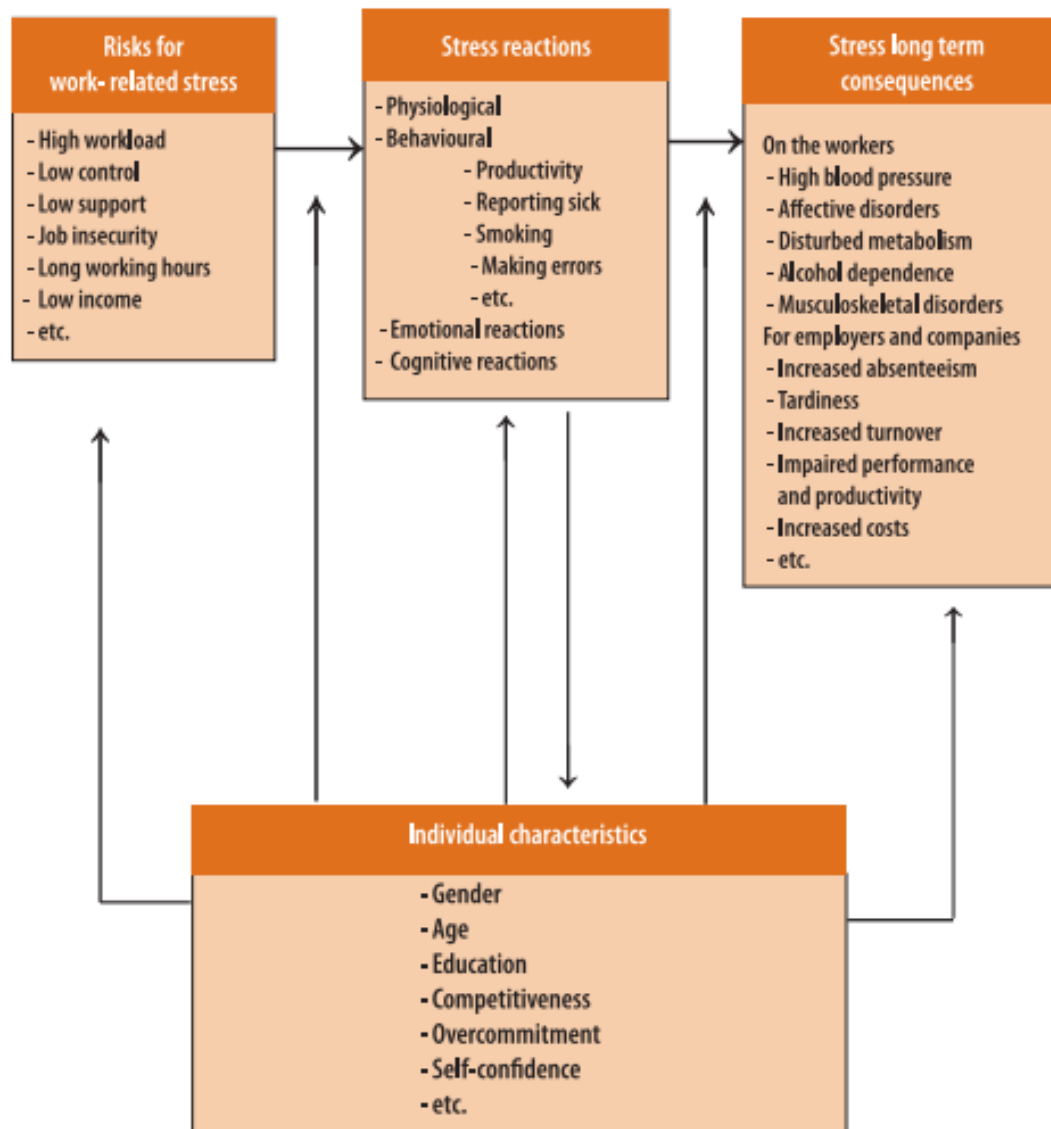
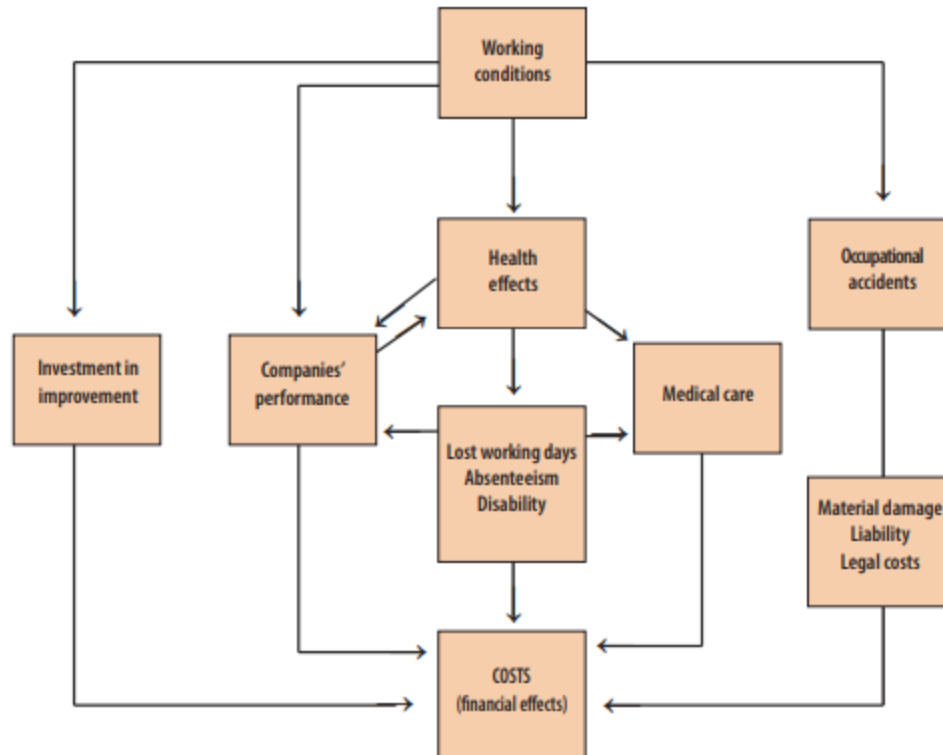


Figure 43. Model of costs of poor working conditions [72]



## 2.9 - Support Organisations

There are different ways to tackle employee burnout as individuals try to find the best way to understand the symptoms and changes happening physically and mentally. Some people prefer to create a blog to share their experiences and help other individuals, others prefer writing in a diary or going to therapy sessions which could be useful but could also be quite costly. Other people choose to join organisations such as Richmond Foundation to conquer employee burnout and to also promote health and mental awareness.



Richmond Foundation was founded in the 1980s by Anthony Guillaumier who started becoming aware of the lack of community support for people with mental health problems. In the past, Mr. Guillaumier, a businessman, noticed that some of his employees struggled with mental health problems but had no one to turn to. Meanwhile, a close relative of his battled with depression and the stigma surrounding the condition.

It was round about that time that he came across an advert of the United Kingdom-based Richmond Fellowship, a voluntary sector provider of mental health services, while on a business flight to London, and reached out to the fellowship.

The foundation was set up on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 1993 and was backed by the Maltese government that recognized the gap in services. Today the foundation, a registered non-governmental and non-profit making organisation has established itself as Malta's leading Non-Governmental Organisation in the provision of community services for people with mental health problems. It is at the forefront of the promotion of good mental health and the prevention of mental illness amongst the public. It is a member of the Global Alliance of Mental Illness Advocacy Networks–Europe (GAMIAN-Europe), the European Anti-Poverty Network, the Malta Federations of NGOs and the Malta Health Network.

Richmond Foundation offers support at work and therefore the Employment, Training and Organisation Support Unit was established in 2001 following a need to provide services related to stress and mental health at the workplace. The aims are to identify sources of stress within organisations, maximise employees' wellbeing and minimise the occurrence of mental health difficulties. It also provides training and promotes best practices to prevent and manage stress and mental health issues throughout the organisation and in individual employees.

Throughout the years the Unit was involved in supporting and training managers and employees from many organisations in equipping them with skills and knowledge that

enhance their people management skills. The main services offered are the Staff and Organisation Support Programme (SOSP) which is one of the largest Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) on the island, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), Crisis Prevention Intervention, and other awareness sessions and training workshops.

The Staff Organisation Support Programme (SOSP) aims to promote mental wellbeing at work. This programme helps organisations to foster a healthy work environment and offers support through training and counselling. This service is provided to any organisation who wishes to promote mental well-being, but the organisation must first enter into an agreement with the Foundation. The agreement includes the provision of the following;

### **Policy Consultancy**

The programme helps the organisation develop and implement a tailored Mental Health Policy.

### **Stress Prevention**

It teaches management how to identify sources of stress in employees and provide them with the skills to deal with issues. It consists of one-hour group information sessions about the effects of stress on mental health and each session takes a maximum of fifteen employees.

### **Employee Counselling**

In this service, it offers support to employees experiencing stress due to life

experiences, to avoid problems becoming serious. This is done through sessions with one of the counsellors, psychologists, and therapists.

### **Prevention and Training Sessions**

These sessions help to educate management and employees on a specific aspect related to mental health such as work-life balance, stress, and wellbeing. The aims of these sessions are to promote mental health and prevent the development of mental illnesses by identifying different sources that might be causing mental health problems. Using an approach tailored to each individual company's needs, the training also equips all workers with the skills to combat stress and mental ill health and so work productively.

### **Personalised Support**

The officers together with the relevant professionals required provide personalised support for employees returning to work following long sick leave due to mental health problems. It is strictly confidential and free of charge for the individual.

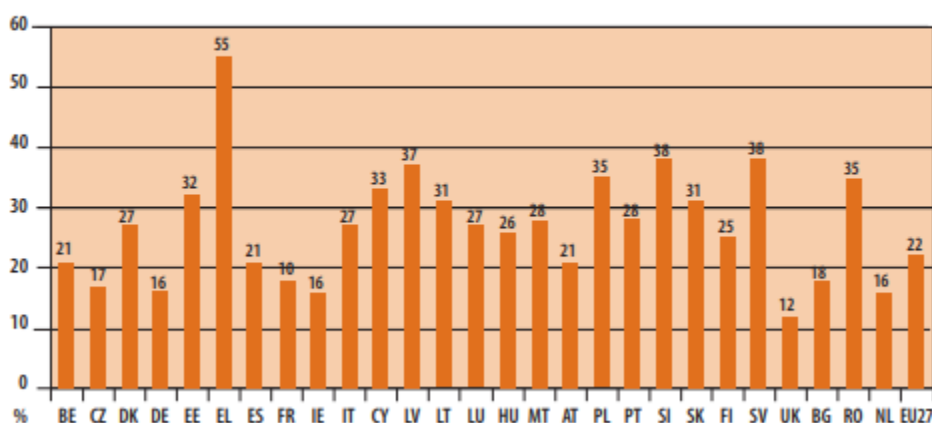
The individual is free to choose either way to understand why employee burnout happened and what should be done before to prevent it. By recognising the symptoms, it is easier to conquer it.

## **2.10 - Work-Related Statistics**

In 2009, The European Risk Observatory Report regarding stress at work was published by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. According to the European Working Conditions Survey in 2005, stress was experienced on average by 22% of workers from twenty-five Member States and two Acceding Countries of the

European Union (EU 27 from January 2007). In this survey work-related stress was reported by 20% of workers from the fifteen old member states, 30% of workers from the ten new member states, and 31% of workers from acceding countries. However, significant differences were also observed among the countries within these three groups. The highest level of stress was reported in Greece (55%), and then in Slovenia, Sweden (38%), and Latvia (37%). Lowest stress levels were noted in the United Kingdom (12%), Germany, Ireland, and the Netherlands (16%), in the Czech Republic (17%), and in France and Bulgaria (18%).

Figure 2. Work-related stress by countries (2005) [14]



Other stress-related outcomes are also at higher levels in the new European Union countries. In 2005, overall fatigue was reported by 18% of workers from EU15, 41% from EU10, and 44% from AC2. The level of irritability and anxiety was similar in all groups of countries - 10-12% reporting irritability and 7-9% reporting anxiety.

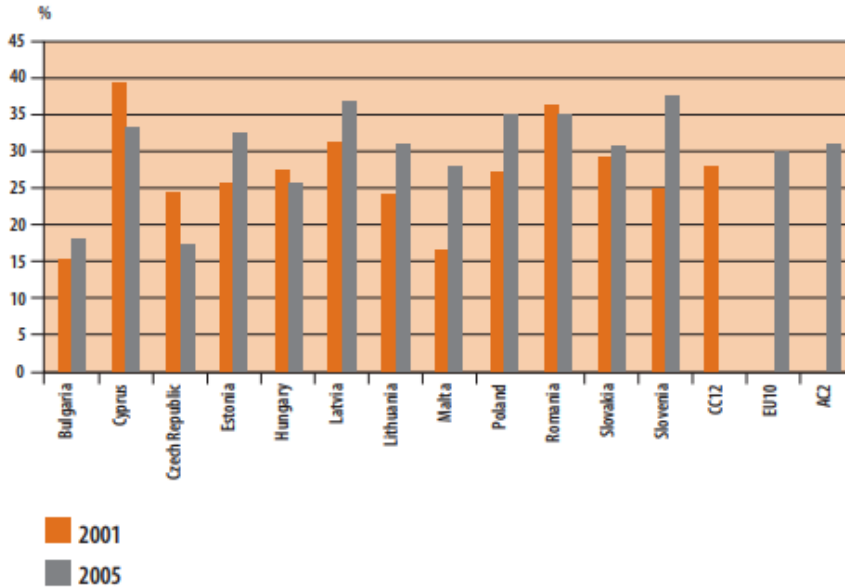
**Table 1. Stress and stress-related outcomes - prevalence and time trends (% yes) [13, 15, 16, 17]**

Question	EU15			CC12	NMS10	AC2
	1995	2000	2005	2001	2005	2005
Does your work affect your health	57	60	31	69	56	53
Stress	28	28	20	28	30	31
Overall fatigue	20	23	18	41	41	44
Headaches	13	15	13	15	24	28
Backache	30	33	21	34	39	39
Irritability	11	11	10	11	12	11
Sleeping problems	7	8	8	8	12	16
Anxiety	7	7	8	7	7	9
Heart disease	1	1	1.4	4.8	5.6	8.1

These figures are based on information from countries already in the European Union and those who joined in May 2004.

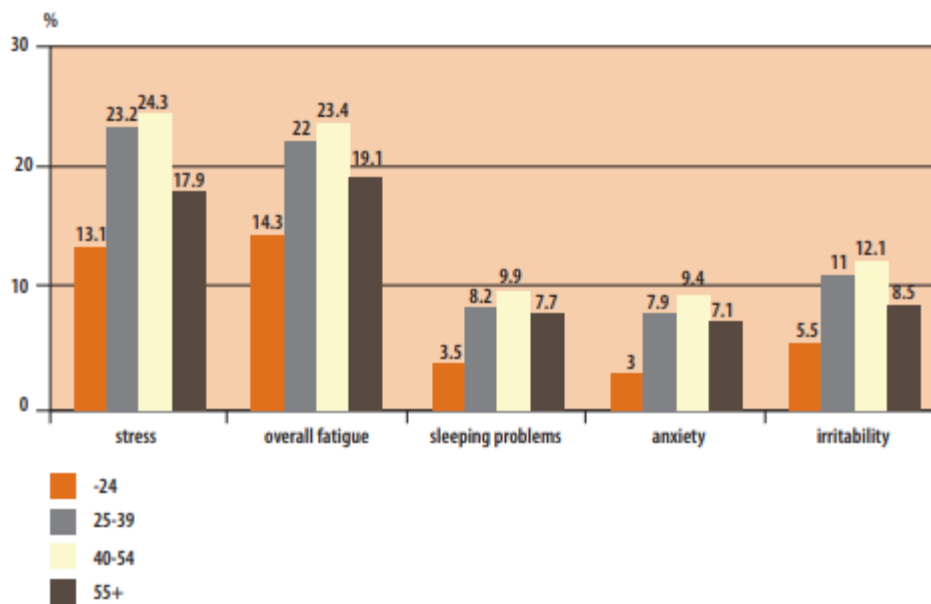
In the statistics shown below, among the EU10 countries, higher levels of stress were reported in Slovenia (13% higher), Malta (12%), Poland (8%), Lithuania (7%), Estonia and Latvia (6%), Bulgaria (3%), and Slovakia (2%). Lower levels of stress were observed in the Czech Republic (7% drop), Cyprus (6%), Hungary (1.5%), and Romania (1%).

Figure 4. Work-related stress, New Member States [14, 16]



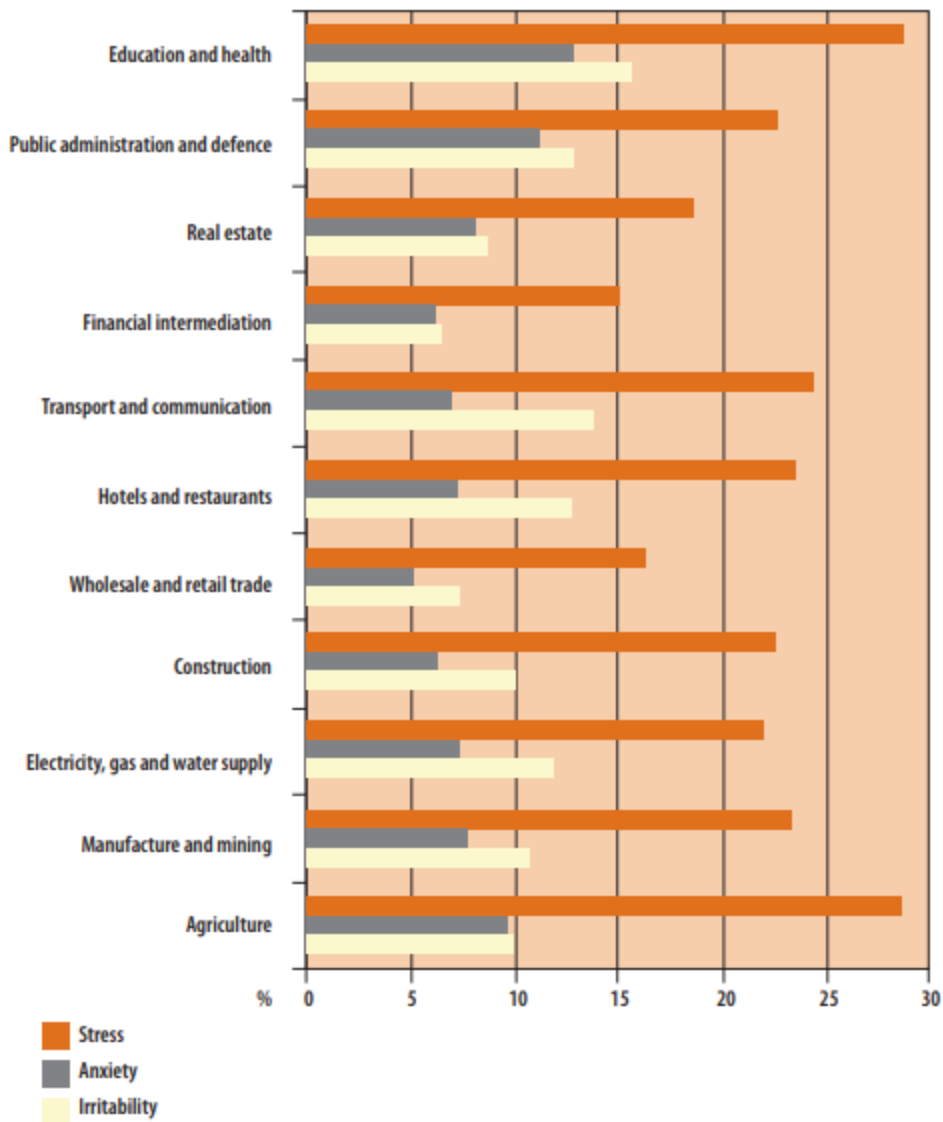
According to data from 2005 shown below, stress was most often reported by workers in the 40-54 age category (24%), followed by the 25-39 age group (23%). A lower percentage of workers older than 55 years (18%) or younger than 24 years (13%) believed that their health was at risk because of work-related stress. Similar trends were observed for other stress-related symptoms such as overall fatigue, sleeping problems, anxiety, and irritability.

Figure 12. Workers (%) reporting stress, overall fatigue, sleeping problems, anxiety, and irritability by age (2005) [14]



Data from 2005 as shown below, indicate that stress was most prevalent in the education and health sectors, as well as in agriculture, hunting, forestry & fishing (28.5%). The largest group of employees who suffered from anxiety at work were those employed in education and health (12.7%), public administration and defence (11.1%) and those in agriculture, hunting, forestry & fishing (9.4%). Irritability was most common in education and health (15.5%), transport and communication (13.6%), and hotels and restaurants and public administration and defence (12.6%).

Figure 19. Prevalence of stress, anxiety and irritability by sectors (2005) [14]

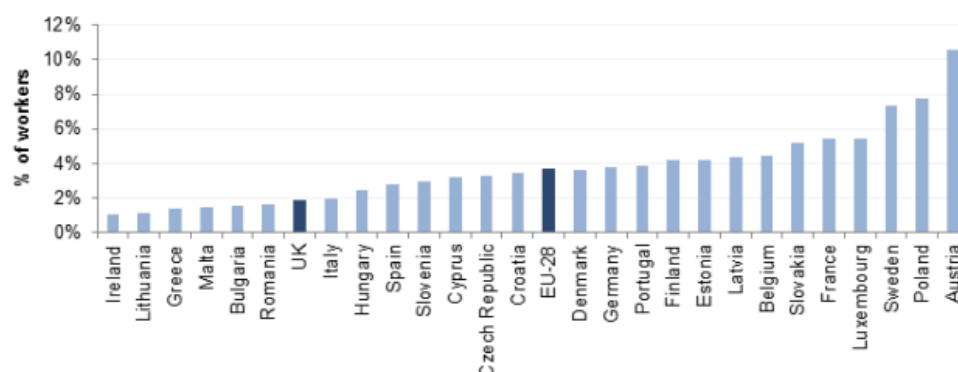


According to an article published by The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in the United Kingdom, there are various work-related issues that affect employees in Malta and other countries in the European Union.



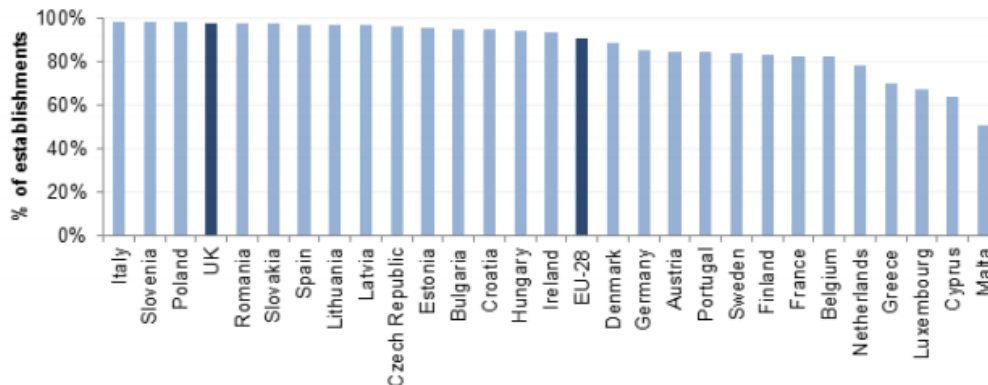
In 2013, statistics for work-related health problems in the EU showed that Malta had one of the least percentages of workers with one or more work-related health problems resulting in sick leave. Ireland had the least percentage resulting in approximately 1% and Austria had the biggest percentage resulting above 10%.

**Figure 4 - Workers with one or more work-related health problem resulting in sick leave (%) (LFS, 2013)**



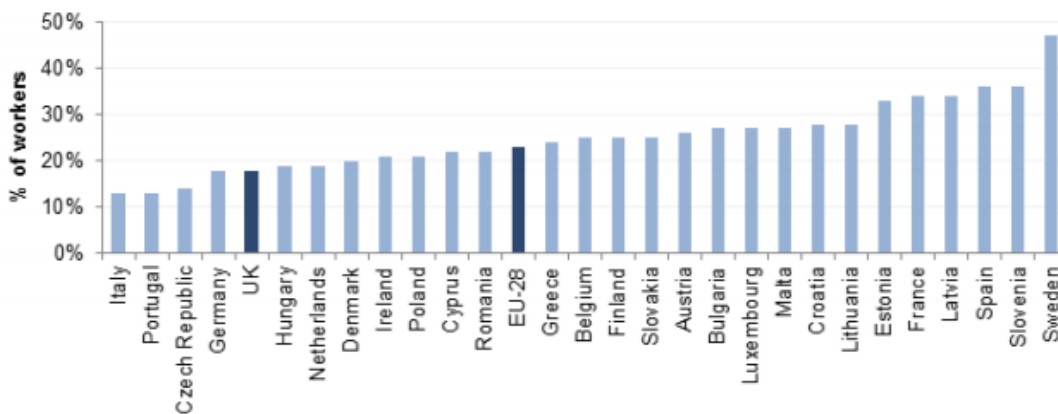
In 2014 establishments, as shown below, were asked whether a document on health and safety procedures and responsibilities is available to all employees. The statistic showed that Malta had the least percentage of almost 60% and the highest was Italy with almost 100%.

**Figure 6 - Is a document that explains responsibilities and procedures on health and safety available to the people working in your establishment? (%) (ESENER, 2014)**



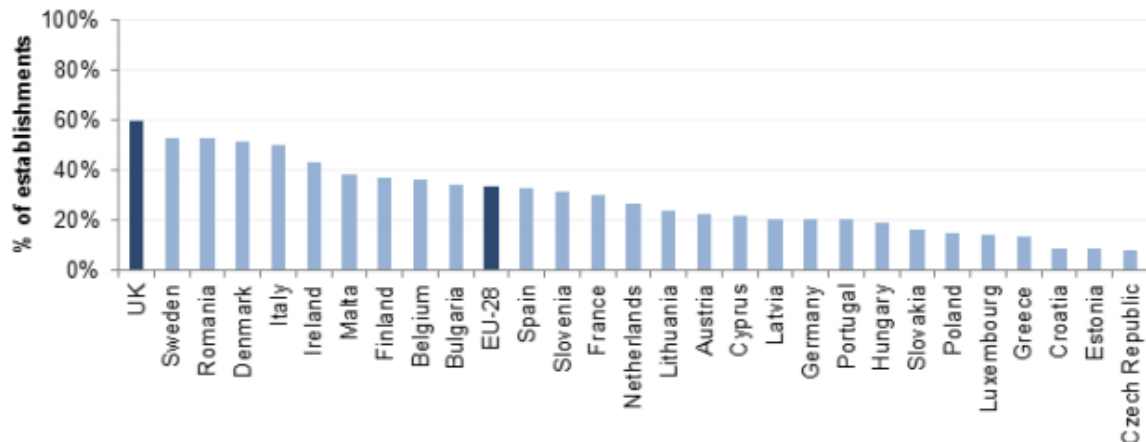
In 2015, statistics for the health and safety practice in the EU, people were asked if they think their health and safety are at risk because of work. Malta had approximately 30% and was almost one of the highest countries. Sweden resulted in the most concerned with almost 50% and the least concerned was Italy with just above 10%.

**Figure 5 - Do you think your health or safety is at risk because of your work? (%) (EWCS, 2015)**



Another statistic is regarding having an action plan to prevent work-related stress. Malta resulted in almost 40% but the United Kingdom had 60% and the Czech Republic had one of the least percentages which resulted in approximately 1%.

**Figure 8: Does your establishment have an action plan to prevent work-related stress? (%) (ESENER, 2014)**



## 2.11 - Burnout Inventories, Scales and Dimensions

There are several types of research regarding employee burnout, but some are more in-depth than others as they also analyse what is triggering the burnout. The five most widely applied inventories of questions are the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI), but the Shirom-Melamed Burnout Measure (SMBM) is most widely used, around 50%, in studies on the association between burnout and risk to health. The scales used in these inventories are often adapted and given a large number of alternative inventories, measures, and scales it can be very difficult to make comparisons between different studies. Most recently, the Austrian Burnout Dimensions Inventory 'BODI' or the 'Burnout assessment tool', led by KU Leuven has been developed to measure burnout.

A number of major cross-sectoral representative studies in the European Union using or basing themselves on a variant of the MBI have been carried out, in Finland, the Netherlands (based on the Netherlands Working Conditions Survey 2007–2016) and Portugal. Other burnout measurement instruments have been used in cross-sectoral studies in Austria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Luxembourg, and Sweden.

<b>Maslach – MBI</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional exhaustion</li> <li>• Depersonalisation</li> <li>• Personal accomplishment</li> </ul>	<b>Copenhagen – CBI</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal burnout</li> <li>• Work-related burnout</li> <li>• Client-related burnout</li> </ul>	<b>Oldenburg – OLBI</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exhaustion</li> <li>• Disengagement</li> </ul>
<b>Shirom-Melamed – SMBM</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical fatigue</li> <li>• Emotional exhaustion</li> <li>• Cognitive weariness</li> </ul>	<b>Burnout Dimensions Inventory – BODI</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced resilience, resistance and overload</li> <li>• Insufficient capability of dissociation, dissolution of the boundary between work, leisure and family</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Dysfunctional compensation</li> </ul>	

The table above shows the factors of employee burnout analysed in five measurement inventories.

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is an introspective psychological inventory consisting of twenty-two items pertaining to occupational burnout. The original form of the MBI was constructed by Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson with the goal to assess an individual's experience of burnout. The MBI measures three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The MBI takes between ten to fifteen minutes to complete and can be administered to individuals or groups.

As part of the research, a group of people was asked to describe how they felt at the place of work, as the result is shown in the table below.

## 1. Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)

<b>Description</b>	The Maslach Burnout Inventory is designed to measure an enduring state of experienced burnout, an assumption that is borne out by the stability of its scores over time. It was also designed to assess levels and patterns of burnout among groups of workers but not to assess individual distress. To determine the risk of burnout, the original Maslach Burnout Inventory explores three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment.		
<b>Questionnaire – three sub-dimensions</b>	<b>Section A – Emotional exhaustion</b>	<b>Section B - Depersonalisation</b>	<b>Section C – Personal achievement</b>
<b>Examples of questions</b>	◦ I feel emotionally drained by my work.	◦ I don't really care what happens to some recipients	◦ I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job
<b>Scoring scale:</b> Never (0); A few times per year (1); Once a month (2); A few times per month (3); Once a week (4); A few times per week (5); Every day (6).			
A high score in the first two sections and a low score in the last section may indicate burnout.			

The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory is a questionnaire that measures the psychological fatigue experienced in three sub-dimensions of burnout; personal, work-related, and client-related burnout. A set of questions was asked to further analyse everyone's psychological perspectives as shown in the table below.

## 2. Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI)

<b>Description</b>	The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) is a public domain questionnaire that measures the degree of psychological fatigue experienced in three sub-dimensions of burnout: personal (PB), work-related (WB), personal (PB), and client-related burnout (CB).		
<b>Questionnaire – three sub-dimensions</b>	<b>Work dimension</b>	<b>Personal dimension</b>	<b>Client-related dimension</b>
<b>Examples of questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Does your work frustrate you?</li> <li>◦ Do you feel that every working hour is tiring for you?</li> <li>◦ Do you have enough energy for family and friends during leisure time?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ How often do you think 'I can't take it anymore'?</li> <li>◦ How often do you feel worn out?</li> <li>◦ How often do you feel weak and susceptible to illness?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Does it drain your energy to work with clients?</li> <li>◦ Do you feel that you give more than you get back when you work with clients?</li> <li>◦ Do you sometimes wonder how long you will be able to continue working with clients?</li> </ul>
<b>Response categories:</b> To a very high degree; To a high degree; Somewhat; To a low degree; To a very low degree. Always; Often; Sometimes; Seldom; Never/almost never. Reversed score for last question.			
Scoring as for the first scale. If fewer than four questions have been answered, the respondent is classified as a non-respondent.			

The third inventory is the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory which consists of positively and negatively framed items to assess the two core dimensions of burnout; exhaustion and disengagement from work. Four positive and four negative statements were given to further develop the analysis as shown below.

### 3. Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI)

<b>Description</b>	The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory includes positively and negatively framed items to assess the two core dimensions of burnout: exhaustion and disengagement (from work). Exhaustion is defined as the consequence of intense physical, affective and cognitive strain, i.e. as a long-term consequence of prolonged exposure to certain job demands.	
<b>Questionnaire – two sub-dimensions</b>	<b>Exhaustion (eight questions)</b>	<b>Disengagement (eight questions)</b>
	Refers to general feelings of emptiness, overtaxing from work, a strong need for rest, and a state of physical exhaustion.	Disengagement refers to distancing oneself from the object and the content of one's work and to negative, cynical attitudes and behaviour towards one's work in general.
<b>Examples of questions</b>	'After my work, I regularly feel worn out and weary' and 'After my work, I regularly feel totally fit for my leisure activities' (reversed).	'I frequently talk about my work in a negative way' and 'I get more and more engaged in my work' (reversed).
<b>Scoring scale</b>	1 = strongly disagree; 4 = strongly agree	The answer categories are the same as for exhaustion.
For both sub-dimensions, four items are positively worded and four items are negatively worded.		

The Shirom-Melamed Burnout Measure (SMBM) was developed to assess exhaustion and energy resources. It includes three sub-dimensions; physical fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and cognitive weariness. A set of statements was given to describe different feelings at work based on a period of thirty days.

#### 4. Shirom-Melamed Burnout Measure (SMBM) Version of 2 July 2005 in English

Description	The Shirom-Melamed Burnout Measure was constructed to assess exhaustion – or the dwindling of energy resources – regardless of occupational context. It includes three sub-dimensions: physical fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and cognitive weariness.						
Below are a number of statements that describe different feelings that you may feel at work. Please indicate how often, in the past 30 workdays, you have felt each of the following feelings:							
Questionnaire – three sub-dimensions	Physical fatigue (P)		Emotional exhaustion (E)			Cognitive weariness (C)	
Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ I feel tired.</li><li>○ I have no energy for going to work in the morning.</li><li>○ I feel physically drained.</li><li>○ I feel fed up.</li><li>○ I feel like my 'batteries are dead'.</li><li>○ I feel burnt out.</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ I feel I am unable to be sensitive to the needs of co-workers and customers.</li><li>○ I feel I am not capable of investing emotionally in co-workers and customers.</li><li>○ I feel I am not capable of being sympathetic to co-workers and customers.</li></ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ My thinking process is slow.</li><li>○ I have difficulty concentrating.</li><li>○ I feel I'm not thinking clearly.</li><li>○ I feel I'm not focused in my thinking.</li><li>○ I have difficulty thinking about complex things.</li></ul>	
Scoring scale	Never or almost never	Very infrequently	Quite infrequently	Sometimes	Quite frequently	Very frequently	Always or almost always
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The last measurement inventory is the Burnout Dimensions Inventory and it is a research survey created by the Austrian Society for Work Quality and Burnout based on burnout in Austria in 2013 as shown below.

#### 5. Burnout Dimensions Inventory (BODI)

<b>Description</b>	Research survey developed by the Austrian Society for Work Quality and Burnout (Österreichische Gesellschaft für Arbeitsqualität und Burnout) on the prevalence of burnout in Austria in 2013 on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (Bundesministeriums für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz) and in cooperation with the Anton Proksch Institute Vienna.			
<b>Questionnaire: four sub-dimensions and descriptions of impact on the individual – 40 questions in total.</b>	<b>1. Reduced resilience, resistance and overload</b>	<b>2. Insufficient capability of dissociation, dissolution of the boundary between work, leisure and family</b>	<b>3. Depression</b>	<b>4. Dysfunctional compensation</b>

Many countries have participated in the research on burnout by Eurofound in 2018 which included countries such as Belgium, Italy, The Netherlands, and also Malta. The research mentioned that the focus on burnout in Malta, United Kingdom, Ireland, and

Bulgaria seems to be restricted to certain occupational groups often to health professionals and those working in public services.

## 2.12 - Conservation of Resources Theory (COR)

Conservation of Resources Theory is a stress theory that describes the motivation that drives humans to both maintain their current resources and to pursue new resources. In 1989, Dr. Stevan E. Hobfoll proposed this theory to expand on the literature of stress as a construct. Hobfoll argued that psychological stress occurred in three instances.

1. When there was a threat of a loss of resources.
2. An actual net loss of resources.
3. A lack of gained resources following the spending of resources.

From this perspective, resources are defined as things that one values, specifically objects, states, and conditions. COR states that the loss of these types of resources will drive individuals into certain levels of stress.

COR was developed from various theories on the cause of stress. The development goes back to 1932 when Walter Bradford Cannon was one of the first researchers to study the concept of stress as it applies to humans, specifically in how stress can be withstood. In 1950, Hans Selye took on Cannon's research on stress as a response and indicated that stress was designed to protect the body from environmental challenges.



In 1982, other researchers such as Elliot and Eisdorfer defined stress as specifically being the stimulus and not the response, which had been accepted by some of the scientific community. However, this theory is largely based on the homeostatic model of stress developed in 1970 by Joseph McGrath. It is in this theory that stress is defined as an imbalance between the environmental demand and the response capability of an organism.

COR covers two basic principles involving the protection of resources from being lost.

1. The Primacy of Resource Loss - This principle states that it is more harmful to individuals to lose resources compared to when there is a gain of resources. This means that a loss of pay will be more harmful than the same gain in pay would have been helpful.

2. Resource Investment - This principle states that people will tend to invest resources in order to protect against resource loss, to recover from losses, and to gain resources. Within the context of coping, people will invest resources to prevent future resource losses.

From these two principles, COR has suggested several propositions that can be applied to resource changes. They are as follows:

- a. Individuals with higher resources will be set up for gains in resources. Similarly, individuals with fewer resources are more likely to experience resource losses.
- b. Initial resource loss will lead to resource loss in the future.
- c. Initial resource gains will lead to resource gains in the future.

d. A lack of resources will invariably lead to defensive attempts to conserve the remaining resources.

### 2.13 - COR in relation to Employee Burnout

COR has been utilized when studying work or family stress, burnout, and general stress. In work or family stress, COR research has looked at how the distribution of one's resources has affected their home life, with some articles finding that putting too much of one's resources into one's work may lead to family problems at home. Research into COR and burnout has examined how the use of resources has impacted one's mood, with recent research finding that emotional exhaustion had the strongest relationship with depressive symptoms.

Regarding general stress, research has explored how the loss of resources impacts the levels of one's stress. It should be noted that COR has primarily been studied within the burnout and job fields, as the following meta-analyses will demonstrate. There are currently no meta-analyses on COR within other areas of stress research.

Multiple meta-analyses have been conducted with COR, specifically related to burnout. In 1996, one meta-analysis by Lee and Ashforth examined the relationship between demand and resource correlate, behavioural and attitudinal correlate, and three different dimensions of job burnout. It used COR as the basis for this research and found that the primacy of the resource loss principle is supported. It showed that, over fifty-eight sources, individuals tend to be sensitive to increased demands rather than resources received.

Job control and COR have been studied through a meta-analysis conducted in 2009 by Park, Baiden, Jacob, & Wagner. This study tested COR using all constructs involved in job control and burnout which included constructs of autonomy, authority, skill discretion, and decision latitude. Results indicate that the construct of job control, or the ability that one must choose their actions from multiple options at their job, is related to depersonalization and personal accomplishment. This study stated that COR is related to burnout in this way, but further studies should be conducted that use non-human service occupations.

## 2.14 - Conclusion

Mental Health Awareness seems to be one of those subjects where some people feel ashamed and to choose to ignore the resources offered to the public. Everyone is sometimes stressed from work and personal issues, but no one should be scared to open up to discuss these issues. It is hard to be courageous as it is as if the person is admitting defeat, but it is quite the opposite as the individual is admitting needing help from colleagues and the family. Some people might say it is just a phase and that it would pass and shouldn't worry about but, in reality, whenever someone admits he or she needs help then the other person should ask how they're feeling and what might have triggered those feelings. Whenever someone admits that due to employee burnout the person is suffering from depression or other mental and physical problems, it is as if it is something to be ashamed of and should not be discussed in public. It is quite the contrary as that person is showing that he or she tried to battle and conquer employee burnout but couldn't completely do so as the person did not understand and was not informed.

Understanding the factors of employee burnout is very important both personally and also on other people. The management or supervisors should monitor the work and

performance and if for instance, someone is not doing the job the right way, the supervisor should discuss it with that particular person to understand and to create ideas on how to improve the performance and to lower the pressure on the employee.

There are many reports and other researches based on employee burnout analysing different perspectives and factors contributing to employee burnout. Some information based on these reports and theories were previously mentioned and as time passes each theory and research is re-analysed and re-developed especially, to create new ideas for each individual. Technology has become of utmost importance in everyone's daily life and many people find different ways to cope and to also inspire people not to give up.

Having different coping mechanisms is a positive thing and one may choose an organisation or online counselling. An organisation such as Richmond Foundation which was previously mentioned offers various ways to support employees and to inform the management of establishments regarding mental health issues and awareness, and why it is so important to notice every single thing at work. In many establishments whenever a new employee is employed the human resources executive mentions that they have an open-door policy, but since the employee could be working in a different department it is very hard to explain what's going on. All managers should be aware and should also conduct one-to-one meetings to establish what needs to change or improve at work.

The author's inspiration to further research on employee burnout within the front office department was based on personal experience and has also witnessed it on other people as well. Work is part of our lives, but no one should be destroyed because of it. Mental and physical health should be the top priority. It takes time to finally understand what happened and to try and live a normal comfortable life.

## Chapter 3 - Methodology

Anyone in Malta and around the world can suffer employee burnout; be it working in the education sector, information technology sector, or the hospitality industry. Managers and all employees have their work life and personal life and sometimes they collide which may cost employee burnout. Many complain of certain issues they encounter at work which are affecting them personally.

Some issues may be the working hours, the amount of work, the environment they work in, and the colleagues as well to mention a few. Many believe that working office hours from Monday to Friday is not as hard as working different shifts, but it doesn't really matter as any work could cause a strain on anyone. Any job requires commitment especially in certain sectors such as the hospitality industry where there are no weekends off and holidays. Certain departments in a hotel are open for long hours such as the restaurant and front office department. The front office department is available at any time and requires the management and employees to work together to achieve guest and departmental satisfaction.

Through this research project, the author wanted to analyse whether both the management and employees in Malta are knowledgeable enough regarding employee burnout in the front office department. The author also wanted to analyse whether there have been any cases of employee burnout and what was done to help these employees and to also decrease the pressure on all employees.

In order to conduct this research, the author decided to take a qualitative and quantitative approach to gather information and different perspectives from the management and front office employees. To conduct research, one should understand the difference between qualitative and quantitative research methods.

### 3.1 - Qualitative Research

“Qualitative research is primarily exploratory research. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It provides insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research. Qualitative research is also used to uncover trends in thought and opinions, and dive deeper into the problem. Qualitative data collection methods vary using unstructured or semi-structured techniques. Some common methods include focus groups, individual interviews, and participation/observations” (DeFranzo, 2011).

Since the research needed both perspectives, as part of qualitative research, the author decided to contact hotels in Malta to conduct interviews with the front office or guest relations managers. Three hotels accepted and interviews were conducted and therefore by doing so, the author could gather information regarding the policies and procedures being held at that specific hotel and their opinion regarding employee burnout overall.

The following questions were asked to the front office or guest relations managers:

1. What do you understand by the term “Employee Burnout”?
2. How do you feel at your place of work?
3. Do you feel that the employees have an adequate amount of work?
4. Do you feel that the employees are satisfied and accomplished with their work?

5. In your opinion, what are the main causes of employee burnout within the department?
6. What did you do to prevent or decrease employee burnout within the department?
7. Are there any incentives being implemented now, and should there be other incentives to prevent and decrease employee burnout?
8. Are you satisfied with your employees' work? If yes, how do you show your appreciation and recognition to the employees? If no, what can be done to change this perspective?
9. Are you willing to listen to your employees' ideas regarding the standard of work?
10. Were there any Front Office employees that have left because of employee burnout?
11. Did the number of employees with burnout remain the same, increase, or decrease?
12. Work performance is very important but is there constant monitoring of the employees or is it just when the work performance is becoming poor?
13. What is your opinion regarding employee burnout within the Front Office department, should there be more awareness?

When developing the interview questions the author decided to base on both open and close-ended questions. These questions were also developed based on personal experiences working in the front office department. The author wanted to really make the managers think, reflect, and analyse what is happening in the department; such as the work performance level, if everything is up to standard but at what cost, the relationship between the managers and employees during work shifts and on a personal level. All hotels sometimes suffer miscommunication between managers and employees and therefore things that should be changed or improved were also asked. Questions were also about monitoring the employees, incentives being implemented or that should be implemented, the amount of work, whether they think the employees feel accomplished at work, showing the managers' satisfaction and appreciation, prevention of employee burnout, and awareness to all employees in the front office department and throughout the hotel. Since managers have to take care of a group of employees, assist them, and other work such as budgeting and maintain a good level of customer care with guests, it could also stress them out. They could also suffer from burnout and therefore this research is based on both aspects and how to tackle it in different situations and hotels.

### 3.2 - Quantitative Research

"Quantitative research is used to quantify the problem by way of generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into usable statistics. It is used to quantify attitudes, opinions, behaviours, and other defined variables; and generalize results from a larger sample population. Quantitative research uses measurable data to formulate facts and uncover patterns in research. Quantitative data collection methods are much more structured than qualitative data collection methods. Quantitative data collection methods include various forms of surveys, longitudinal studies, online polls, and systematic observations" (DeFranzo, 2011).



As part of the quantitative research, questionnaires were distributed to employees working in the front office department. All questions were based on what they understand by the term employee burnout, how they feel at the place of work, what are the positive and negative aspects occurring in this specific department, and what and how they feel should be implemented to motivate and decrease the number of employees suffering from employee burnout.

In the questionnaire distributed to employees, questions were based on their experiences working in the front office department in different hotels, not just the specific hotel they're currently working at. A brief definition of employee burnout was given to make sure that the employees have understood the meaning of employee burnout. The first section was based on demographics such as age, gender, whether they're working full-time or part-time, and experience working in the front office department. The first question, in the second section based on employees' feedback, asked was what they understood by the term employee burnout. The next questions were based on the Likert scale system as they had to rate from one being highly dissatisfied to five being highly satisfied regarding how they felt at work and whether they feel accomplished. The last four were multiple choice questions and they had to tick next to the statement and comment or else they had the opportunity to mention other factors. These questions included whether they have ever experience factors of employee burnout, what they have done to prevent or decrease it, their opinion on the main causes of employee burnout, and incentives the management should implement to prevent or decrease it and why. In the last section, employees were free to write any other feedback and comments related to this research. Certain questions in the questionnaire were similar to the ones in the interview as they were arranged to have both aspects regarding the topic.

### 3.3 - Sample and Limitations

All interviews and questionnaires were conducted during December 2018 and January 2019. Both male and female employees were requested to participate as long as they were over sixteen years of age. Unfortunately, during this research, there were some limitations. Many hotels were contacted but only three hotels accepted to help conduct this research. The author would have liked to conduct this research with hotels from different locations, but the three hotels are situated at St. Julian's and two of them are five-star and one of them is a four-star hotel. All managers and employees were requested to be honest when being interviewed and answering the questionnaire. The author believes that there might have been some bias from the managers as they have not been working there for a long time and to also protect and promote a comfortable and friendly hotel. It was hard to conduct these interviews and questionnaires as they were limited to three hotels since the other hotels did not contact the author to explain whether they were interested or not. After the three hotels contacted the author it was very easy to schedule the interviews and to distribute the questionnaires as they were very pleased that they were contacted and were very interested in the research subject.

Although conducting interviews and questionnaires takes time from work, any research concerning any department should be of interest as new ideas could be implemented to improve their work experience and the guests' experience as well.

## Chapter 4 - Analysis & Discussion of the Results

### 4.1 - Interview Results

#### Interview with Front Office Manager of Hotel A

1. What do you understand by the term “Employee Burnout”?

Employee Burnout is working more than one should and being over-exhausted.

2. How do you feel at your place of work?

As a Front Office manager having to work for long hours is challenging, tiring, busy, and tense.

3. Do you feel that the employees have an adequate amount of work?

Shift leaders and managers may have more work than receptionists and therefore delegation is key.

4. Do you feel that the employees are satisfied and accomplished with their work?

Yes, they are satisfied and accomplished as they are given the standard operating procedures (SOP) to follow but there is always room for improvement.

5. In your opinion, what are the main causes of employee burnout within the department?

Not being explained what and how anything should be done which leads to not being motivated and being short staffed as well.

6. What did you do to prevent or decrease employee burnout within the department?

Employees were given more training and were encouraged and motivated by shift leaders and managers.

7. Are there any incentives being implemented now, and should there be other incentives to prevent and decrease employee burnout?

The current incentives are more based on upselling but different methods are being considered.

8. Are you satisfied with your employees' work? If yes, how do you show your appreciation and recognition to the employees? If no, what can be done to change this perspective?

Yes, vouchers are distributed to the employees and they could also be chosen as the employee of the month.

9. Are you willing to listen to your employees' ideas regarding the standard of work?

Yes, an open-door policy is offered.

10. Were there any Front Office employees that have left because of employee burnout?

No, but have been working in this hotel for just a few months.

11. Did the number of employees with burnout remain the same, increase, or decrease?

No information was given.

12. Work performance is very important but is there constant monitoring of the employees or is it just when the work performance is becoming poor?

There is always constant monitoring of employees.

13. What is your opinion regarding employee burnout within the Front Office department, should there be more awareness?

Could not say but more awareness would be useful.

## Interview with Front Office Manager of Hotel B

1. What do you understand by the term “Employee Burnout”?

Not enough support is offered in the labour market and being completely disengaged leading to not being interested and not up to criteria.

2. How do you feel at your place of work?

Feeling happy as there is very good value, the feeling of belonging, being recognised, being engaged, and being given feedback motivates to improve.

3. Do you feel that the employees have an adequate amount of work?

Yes, there is a fair share as the managers and shift leaders observe the amount of work they have to input.

4. Do you feel that the employees are satisfied and accomplished with their work?

Yes, as they are offered several soft skills training and online training on various other topics and they are also having one on one meetings with Human Resources personnel.

5. In your opinion, what are the main causes of employee burnout within the department?

Not being recognised, the feeling of just being another number, and not being given tasks to complete.

6. What did you do to prevent or decrease employee burnout within the department?

Asked the employees what they really feel, for reasons not being motivated, and also asked for their opinion regarding tasks and every-day routine.

7. Are there any incentives being implemented now, and should there be other incentives to prevent and decrease employee burnout?

There are financial and service incentives such as rewards for upselling, restaurant incentives, being mentioned on the champions board, and creating a healthy competition.

8. Are you satisfied with your employees' work? If yes, how do you show your appreciation and recognition to the employees? If no, what can be done to change this perspective?

Highly satisfied as it feels more like a family. Appreciation and recognition are shown by making them feel they belong by organising outings together which leads to everyone being more energised. One to one conversations, compliments, thanking them, and award ceremony every three months are also ways how to do so.

9. Are you willing to listen to your employees' ideas regarding the standard of work?

Yes, through job chats to discuss any difficulties starting with the Guest Relations Manager to also discuss certain departmental issues and then with the Front Office Manager not to put any pressure on them.

10. Were there any Front Office employees that have left because of employee burnout?

No, but have been working at the hotel for almost one year.

11. Did the number of employees with burnout remain the same, increase, or decrease?

No information was given.

12. Work performance is very important but is there constant monitoring of the employees or is it just when the work performance is becoming poor?

Monthly monitoring but are still being observed regarding tasks and maintaining some discipline.

13. What is your opinion regarding employee burnout within the Front Office department, should there be more awareness?

Awareness is important but is not discussed in the Front Office department since there were not any employees suffering from employee burnout. General awareness and discussions should be carried out especially when an employee decides to terminate the employment.



## Interview with Front Office Manager of Hotel C

1. What do you understand by the term “Employee Burnout”?

Losing motivation and the enthusiasm and pleasure of work.

2. How do you feel at your place of work?

Satisfied.

3. Do you feel that the employees have an adequate amount of work?

Yes, obviously it can increase during the pick time but overall is adequate.

4. Do you feel that the employees are satisfied and accomplished with their work?

Yes overall.

5. In your opinion, what are the main causes of employee burnout within the department?

Would say a lack of communication between managers and line staff, and lack of incentives.

6. What did you do to prevent or decrease employee burnout within the department?

Trying to engage with the employees to better understand their needs, one to one meetings, and sharing results and goals.

7. Are there any incentives being implemented now, and should there be other incentives to prevent and decrease employee burnout?

The reward schedule for upselling has increased.

8. Are you satisfied with your employees' work? If yes, how do you show your appreciation and recognition to the employees? If no, what can be done to change this perspective?

Overall satisfied. Engaging with everyone.

9. Are you willing to listen to your employees' ideas regarding the standard of work?

Yes, sharing ideas is always a good start to improve and prevent burnout.

10. Were there any Front Office employees that have left because of employee burnout?

Would think so, mainly whenever someone leaves a company is because of a lack of motivation and passion for their job.

11. Did the number of employees with burnout remain the same, increase, or decrease?

Not able to reply with details to this answer.

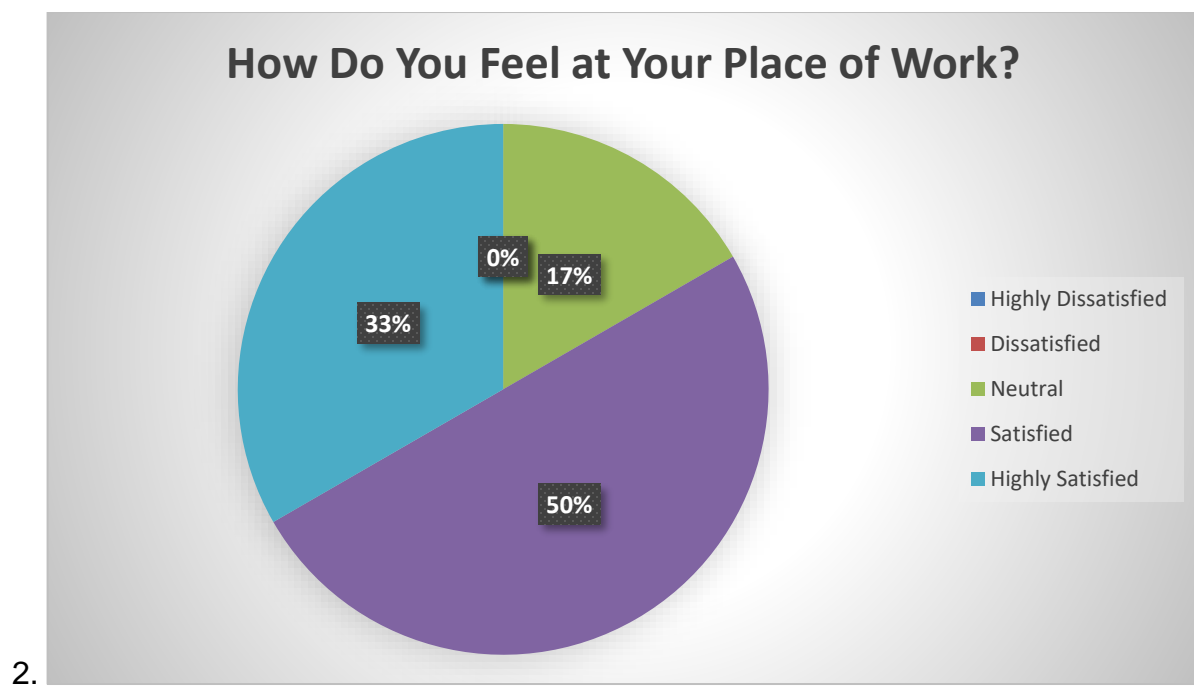
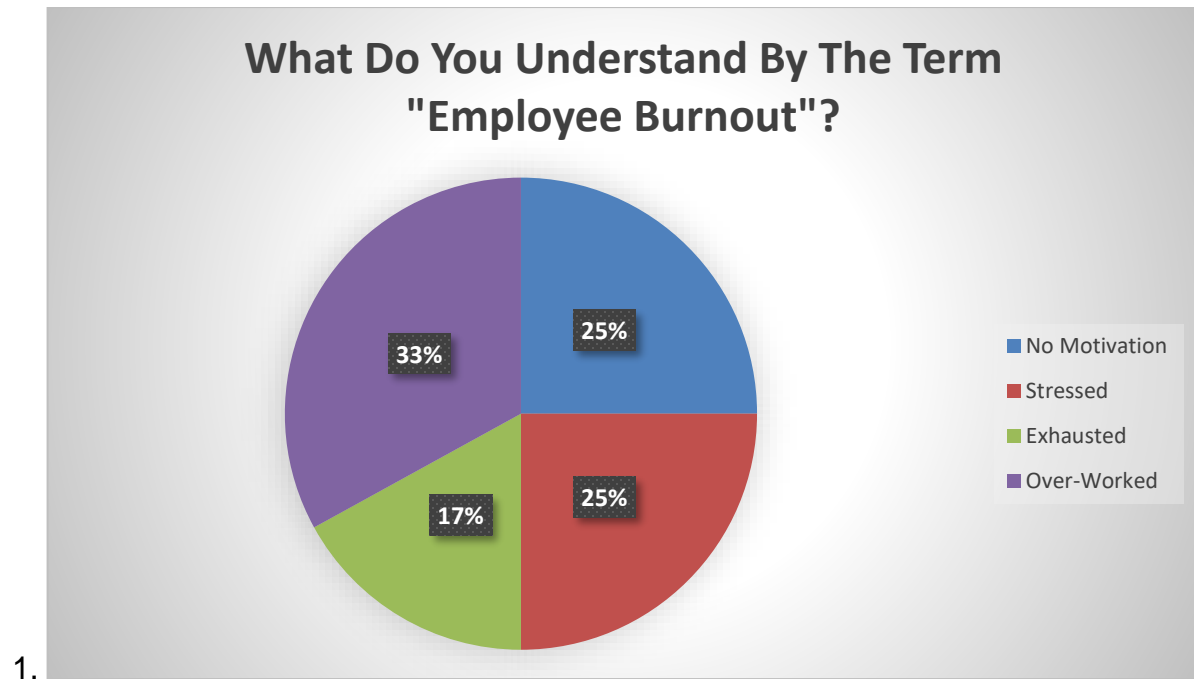
12. Work performance is very important but is there constant monitoring of the employees or is it just when the work performance is becoming poor?

Training sessions are always carried out as well as in-department monitoring.

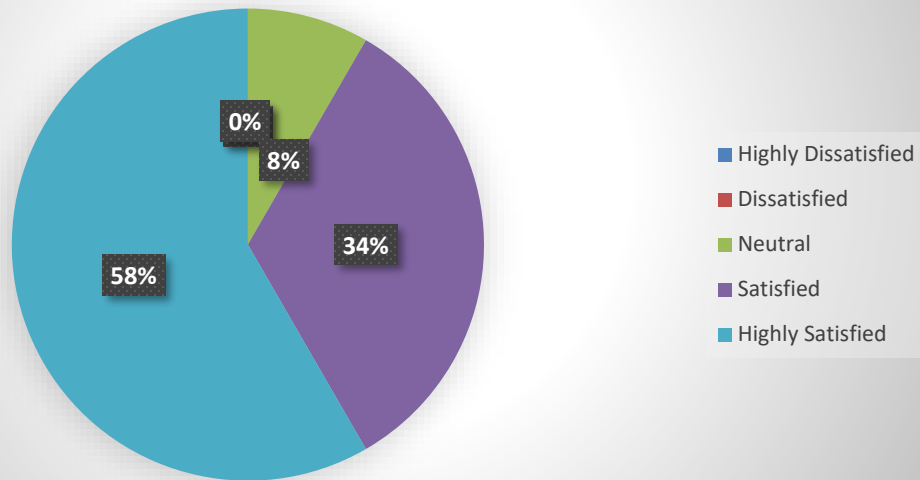
13. What is your opinion regarding employee burnout within the Front Office department, should there be more awareness?

Not just the Front Office department but all the departments should be more aware of it as it is the main reason that drives the employees to lose their sense of belonging towards the company and their passion for the job.

## 4.2 – Questionnaire Results

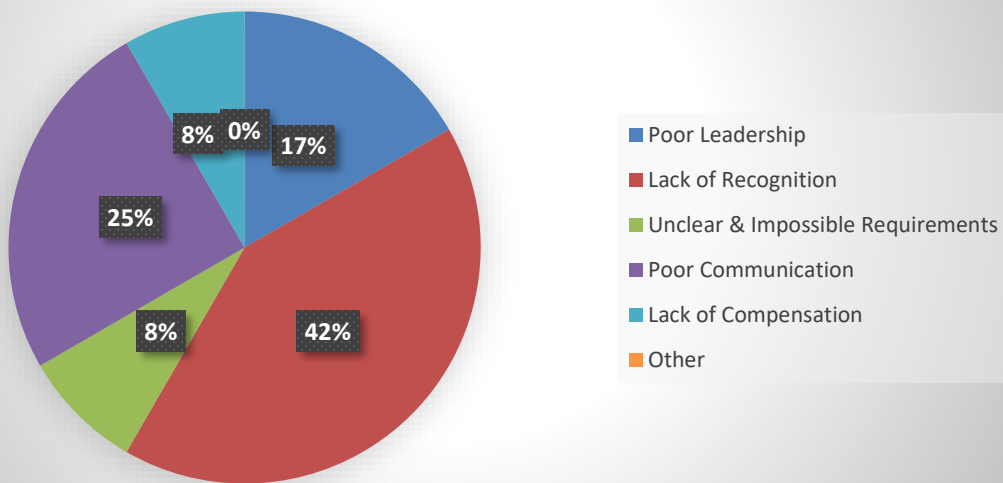


### Do You Ever Feel Accomplished at Your Place of Work?



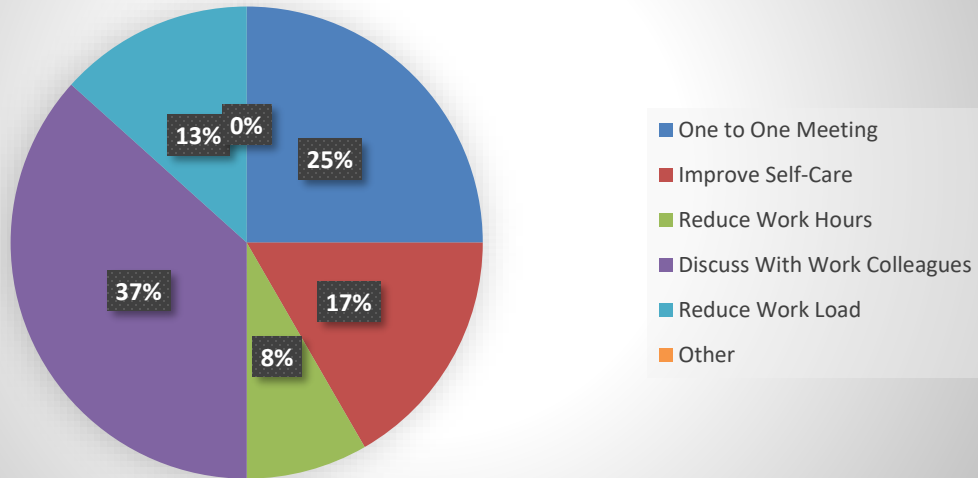
3.

### Have You Ever Experienced Factors of Employee Burnout?



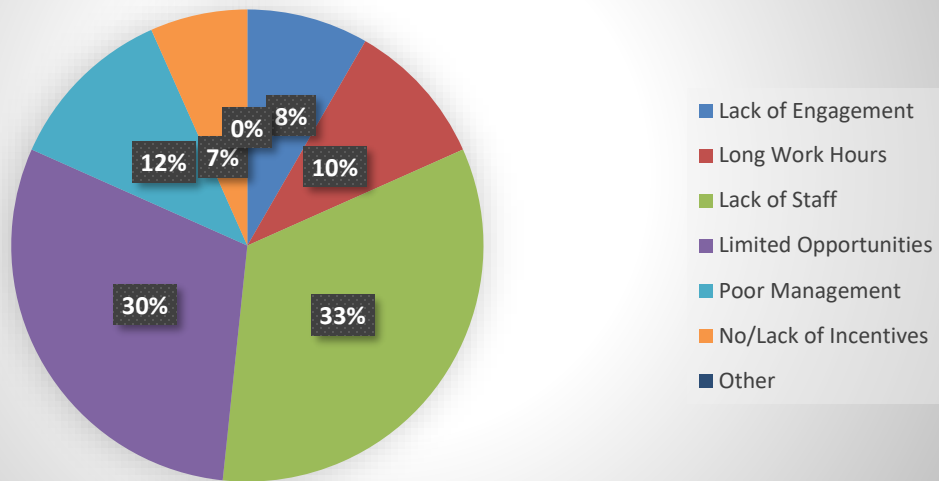
4.

### What Did You Do to Prevent or Decrease Employee Burnout?



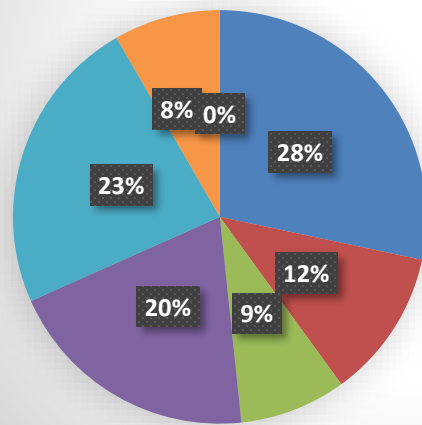
5.

### In Your Opinion, What Are The Main Causes of Employee Burnout?



6.

## Which Incentives Should The Management Implement To Prevent & Decrease Employee Burnout?



- Career & Personal Development
- Flexible Schedules
- Cash Bonuses & Gift Cards
- Periodic Staff Training at Work
- Weekly/Monthly Staff Departmental Meetings
- Off the Job Training
- Other

7.

### 4.3 – Interview Analysis

The three interviews were conducted with the front office and guest relations managers. The answers were based on their knowledge and experiences. Conducting research interviews helps managers analyse their work, environment, and the department as a whole.

The first question asked was what they understood by the term employee burnout. Their answers were almost similar as they mentioned no motivation to work, lack of support, and being over exhausted and completely disengaged. This question was asked to know whether they have ever experienced it themselves or on someone else, and how aware they are about it especially in the front office department in the hospitality industry.

They were then asked how they feel at their place of work. Three different answers were given as hotel A explained the negative side and hotel B explained the positive side of working, hotel C did not specify why he is satisfied. The front office manager at hotel A did say that she feels it is sometimes challenging, tiring and tense whereas of hotel B mentioned that he feels he belongs and engaged, and recognised as well.

When asked regarding the employees' amount of work, they all agreed that it is quite adequate as it is a fair share and depends on certain situations such as peak time. Hotel A did mention that delegation is key and sometimes shift leaders may have more work than other receptionists as they are the ones responsible for the department most of the time. Hotel C mentioned peak time but did not elaborate on what happens in situations when the hotel is very busy, such as scheduling staff and distributing work.



They were also asked whether they feel their colleagues are satisfied and accomplished at work. The three managers said they are satisfied and mentioned that standard operating procedures and trainings do help them with their daily work although there is always room for improvement. Hotel C did not explain why.

The next question was regarding the main causes of employee burnout and different points were mentioned, such as lack of communication and incentives, not being recognised, short staffed, and feeling like a number. They did mention very important points but what are they doing to prevent it?

Preventing and decreasing the number is valuable at the hotels as they mentioned their procedures, such as engaging with them by doing one on one meetings, sharing results and goals, and encouraging and motivating them. Although these points are helpful there are also other ways they could help on a more personal level other than based on a group of people.

Incentives can be motivating and demotivating, but the author decided to take the motivational side for employees. They all mentioned rewards for upselling but Hotel B did mention others such as restaurant service offered to employees, competition, and being mentioned on the champions board. The employees can see these points as positive or negative as those who are not as comfortable with upselling could feel demotivated and unrecognised when seeing other people's photos on the champions board. Hotel A did mention that the hotel is currently looking for other methods to be implemented.

The managers are overall satisfied with their employees and mentioned ways of showing their appreciation such as handing vouchers, being employee of the month, organising departmental outings, and award ceremonies.

The next question was regarding whether they are willing to listen to their colleagues regarding the standard of work. They all said yes and agreed on job chats, discussions and having an open-door policy.

When asked whether there have been any employees that have left because of employee burnout, both hotel A and B said no but they have been working at the hotels for a few months and one year. Hotel C did mention that there were some employees who have left because of a lack of motivation and passion.

All three managers did not answer the next question regarding the increase or decrease in the number of employees with burnout as they had no information.

When asked about constant monitoring they all agreed about it as it shows discipline and could be seen as a training method.

The last question was regarding awareness of employee burnout. They all agreed that there should be more awareness and not just based on the front office department. Hotel B did mention that it is usually discussed whenever one employee terminates employment.

Overall, the interview answers were quite similar but there may have been some biases especially when answering certain questions regarding their employees suffering from burnout.

#### 4.4 – Questionnaire Analysis

Sixty questionnaires were distributed to employees working in the front office department. There were some positive and negative information and also new ideas which could be implemented at the hotels.

The first question asked was what they understood by employee burnout and everyone did mention some of the main aspects of employee burnout which could be based on their personal experience. Many other people would say exhaustion, but these employees mentioned other factors which lead to exhaustion such as overworking, which was the highest percentage, no motivation, and being stressed. They understood the concept of the question.

Then they were asked how they felt at their place of work. Half of the employees who answered this questionnaire are satisfied at their workplace. Since there were not any dissatisfied and highly dissatisfied employees, it seems that they all feel at ease at the hotel but other questions which will be analysed will mention certain points which could make their experiences even better.

They were also asked whether they felt accomplished and the majority feels highly accomplished. In this question, there were not any unaccomplished employees. The next questions are more specific as they were required to reflect and think in depth about what is lacking and what could be changed.

Employees were asked whether they have ever experienced factors of employee burnout. The highest percentage was lack of recognition and the least was lack of

compensation and unclear and impossible requirements. Being recognised is a motivator itself as employees would keep working harder to achieve personal and professional goals.

Regarding preventing or decreasing employee burnout, the highest percentage was discussing with work colleagues and the least was working hours. By discussing with colleagues, they could discover what they are feeling and thinking and then discuss everything with the manager, which was the second highest percentage.

When employees were asked about the main causes, the lack of staff was the highest percentage and the least no or lack of incentives. The majority of hotels try to implement incentives and managers may think that by doing so the employees are satisfied. In certain situations, employees might be satisfied but by analysing this question staffing is the most important. Turnover is quite high because of employees leaving and limited opportunities, which was the second highest percentage.

The last question was based on incentives that should be implemented by the management. The highest percentage was career and personal development and the least were cash bonuses and gift cards and off the job training. All employees who participated in this research are willing to learn and develop new skills.

#### 4.5 – Limitations and Conclusion

Whilst conducting this research there were some limitations. As part of some of the questions, they were requested to explain their reason for choosing one answer and not the other. Some of the employees did mention why but many of the employees did not.

It could have been because they were busy or because they did not fully understand or feel comfortable enough to explain their answer.

## Chapter 5 - Recommendations & Conclusion

There are many different types of employee burnout and different ways to tackle them, which were mentioned in the previous chapters. Many people have suffered and others are still suffering from employee burnout. In the past, there might not have been any or were limited to ways to tackle it. Nowadays, technology has progressed and still is and therefore new ways could be developed which could be easier for everyone. There is still a lack of knowledge on this subject as many people may consider it the usual daily stress and exhaustion of having to do the same job every day. It is very unfortunate that people refuse or are ashamed to acknowledge employee burnout.

### 5.1 - Research and Theories

Conducting this research has proved that employee burnout is not just stress and exhaustion, it is also about having a positive physical and mental stability. Managers may think that giving them an increase in salary is enough but as shown in the questionnaire results, employees want motivation, a comfortable environment, training, and management. Research shows that employees who are not trained and acknowledge that fact could suffer from employee burnout. Being shown how to do something once is not enough to learn as an employee may feel uncomfortable in trying. To some people, it may seem like they are not interested but in reality, these employees are just afraid to make mistakes, therefore could cause stress.

There is lots of research on employee burnout in the hospitality industry and other sectors as well. There are theories that have been tested on certain factors such as motivation, but more research should be conducted as time goes on. Certain theories were based on one another but since technology has advanced so should these

theories. When conducting research on employee burnout and creating new theories one should be ethical especially asking certain questions. Some people may be too vulnerable or may be offended. Other people may be interested to participate as it would help make everyone aware of what it consists of and why it happens.

## 5.2 - Managers and Employees

Certain managers may be aware of what is employee burnout as they might have experienced it themselves but being the one who suffers and being the one who may help prevent it is another aspect. All managers and employees could suffer from it, but this research was mainly based on the employees working in the front office department. In the questionnaire some employees have been working in a specific hotel for quite a number of years, others a bit less, and there were others who worked part-time. Certain employees could notice some negative factors at work which others could not do so immediately, which could be because they have been working there longer. Having poor management was mentioned in the questionnaire and more training.

Managers should invest in their employees if they prove that they are interested in reaching personal and professional goals, therefore training on-the-job and off-the-job should be given. Off-the-job training could be very useful as some employees may feel less pressured. This type of training could consist of skills training by organising workshops and other group activities and most importantly teamwork. These workshops and activities could help develop better communication skills and also develop better work relationships, therefore understanding each other better.

Many employees mentioned that they discuss with their colleagues and they also have one on one meetings with managers. There could also be departmental meetings discussing different subjects. It would not be helpful by having employees just mentioning different subjects at the same time, therefore managers could ask

employees to write the subject they would like to discuss and then the meeting would depend on the majority. Another idea could be that the manager could distribute a schedule of these meetings consisting of different subjects the manager feels need to be discussed. All employees should feel free to make any suggestions.

Appraisals should be done frequently but by someone who works closely with the employees and not just by any other manager or human resources manager. The employee might feel more at ease to discuss certain remarks and comments given by the front office or guest relations manager. If need be an employee could always discuss with the human resources manager as well. Hotel B did mention that other than the one-on-one meetings, group outings, and departmental meetings, there are termination interviews. All hotels should conduct termination interviews as all employees have their reasons for leaving. By doing so, the managers could get to know what should change and improve to decrease the number of turnover and to create a stable environment for everyone.

By conducting this research, the author has established that the employees are satisfied at work, but their experience could be much better. Although it is difficult to implement everything and to satisfy everyone, managers could always show their appreciation for their work and dedication to the team. Managing a team is hard for managers but if the manager is not dedicated then employees sometimes feel they should not bother either, which creates a negative ambience for staff, their work performance, and the guests' experiences as well. Many hotels complain about high turnover and high expenses to employ and train new employees. If hotels do not train employees then negative factors will affect their employees and the hotels, and ultimately their reputation as well.



### 5.3 - Conclusion

In conclusion, mental and physical health should be of the utmost importance to all hotels in Malta and in every country. Being aware and knowledgeable about employee burnout helps in maintaining a positive attitude towards the team. Awareness and knowledge show that employees are not just numbers, but they are individuals working together to achieve their goals, in a healthy and trusted way as possible. No-one should be scared or ashamed to say they have or are suffering from employee burnout.

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## Chapter 7 - Appendices

## Appendix A: Interview Template

1. What do you understand by the term “Employee Burnout”?
2. How do you feel at your place of work?
3. Do you feel that the employees have an adequate amount of work?
4. Do you feel that the employees are satisfied and accomplished with their work?
5. In your opinion, what are the main causes of employee burnout within the department?
6. What did you do to prevent or decrease employee burnout within the department?
7. Are there any incentives being implemented now, and should there be other incentives to prevent and decrease employee burnout?
8. Are you satisfied with your employees’ work? If yes, how do you show your appreciation and recognition to the employees? If no, what can be done to change this perspective?

9. Are you willing to listen to your employees' ideas regarding the standard of work?
10. Were there any Front Office employees that have left because of employee burnout?
11. Did the number of employees with burnout remain the same, increase, or decrease?
12. Work performance is very important but is there constant monitoring of the employees or is it just when the work performance is becoming poor?
13. What is your opinion regarding employee burnout within the Front Office department, should there be more awareness?

## Appendix B: Questionnaire Template

To whom it may concern,

My name is Diane Marie Debono, I am a 3rd-year B.IHM (Hons) student at the Institute of Tourism Studies. I am currently working on my thesis regarding Employee Burnout within the Front Office department.

I would very much appreciate if you would please take a few minutes of your time to provide feedback about your experience of employee burnout.

Thank You.

Employee burnout is the state where we lose our motivation and incentive resulting to feelings of depression or stress. Burnout is more than just feeling stressed out, it is also a feeling of dread and a lack of enthusiasm and pleasure for your work and in the daily work routine. There are many other factors that cause employee burnout other than stress such as job-related features, lifestyle factors, and personality characteristics.

### Section A: Personal Details

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Experience in Front Office: \_\_\_\_\_

Fulltime or Part-time: \_\_\_\_\_

### Section B: Feedback

1. What do you understand by the term "Employee Burnout"?

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2. How do you feel at your place of work? (Please underline or circle the level of your satisfaction and explain the reason)

- 1 – Highly Dissatisfied
- 2 – Dissatisfied
- 3 – Neutral
- 4 – Satisfied
- 5 – Highly Satisfied

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3. Do you ever feel accomplished at your place of work? (Please rate your overall accomplishment by underlining or circling the number and explain the reason)

- 1 – Highly Dissatisfied
- 2 – Dissatisfied
- 3 – Neutral
- 4 – Satisfied
- 5 – Highly Satisfied

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4. Have you ever experienced factors of employee burnout? (Please tick any of the below statements and state the reason)

- Poor Leadership ☐ Lack of Recognition ☐
- Unclear & Impossible Requirements ☐
- Poor Communication ☐ Lack of Compensation ☐ Other ☐

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5. What did you do to prevent or decrease employee burnout? (Please tick any of the below statements and explain the reason)

One to one meeting with Manager ☐ Improve Self-Care ☐

Reduce Work Hours ☐

Discuss with work colleagues ☐ Reduce Workload ☐ Other ☐

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6. In your opinion, what are the main causes of employee burnout? (Please tick any of the below statements and explain the reason)

Lack of Engagement ☐ Long Work Hours ☐ Lack of Staff ☐

Limited Opportunities ☐ Poor Management ☐ No/Lack of Incentives ☐

Other ☐

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7. Which incentives should the Management implement to prevent and decrease employee burnout and why should they be implemented? (Please tick any of the below statements and explain the reason)

Career & Personal Development ☐ Flexible Schedules ☐

Cash Bonuses & Gift Cards ☐ Periodic Staff Training at Work ☐

Weekly/Monthly Staff Departmental Meetings ☐

Off the Job Training ☐ Other ☐

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### Section C: Comments and Feedback

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Consent Form for Undergraduate Research Study

Title of Research- Employee Burnout within the Front Office Department

Researcher - Diane Marie Debono (105595M)

Degree - Bachelor in International Hospitality Management (Hons)

Dear Sir / Madam,

I, Diane Marie Debono, a student at the Institute of Tourism Studies am currently in the final year of my *Bachelor in International Hospitality Management (Hons)*. I am carrying out research on Employee Burnout within the Front Office Department. I would like to explore your views on this matter by asking you some questions. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information so you can decide whether to participate in this study. Any questions you may have will be answered by the researcher.

There are no known risks related with this research project other than possible discomfort with the following:

- You will be asked to be honest when answering questions.

The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential. All data will be stored securely and will be made available only to those individuals conducting the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study.

Your identity will not be revealed in any publications that result from this study.

You can terminate your participation at any time without prejudice. You also do not have to answer individual questions you don't want to answer. Your name will not be attached to the questionnaire and I will ensure that your participation remains confidential.

Participant's declaration

I have read this consent form and am giving the opportunity to the researcher to ask questions. I hereby grant permission to use the information I provide as data in the above-mentioned research project, knowing that it will be kept confidential and without use of my name.

Angele Malla  
(Participant's name)

[Signature]  
(Participant's signature)

29/01/19  
(Date)

Diane Marie Debono  
(Researcher's name)

[Signature]  
(Researcher's signature)

14th January 2019  
(Date)

**Consent Form for Undergraduate Research Study**

Title of Research- Employee Burnout within the Front Office Department

Researcher - Diane Marie Debono (105595M)

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 (Participant's name)	 (Participant's signature)	 (Date)
Diane Marie Debono (Researcher's name)	 (Researcher's signature)	14th January 2019 (Date)

### Consent Form for Undergraduate Research Study

Title of Research - Employee Burnout within the Front Office Department  
 Researcher - Diane Marie Debono (105595M)  
 Degree - Bachelor in International Hospitality Management (Hons)

Dear Sir / Madam,

I, Diane Marie Debono, a student at the Institute of Tourism Studies am currently in the final year of my *Bachelor in International Hospitality Management (Hons)*. I am carrying out research on Employee Burnout within the Front Office Department. I would like to explore your views on this matter by asking you some questions. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information so you can decide whether to participate in this study. Any questions you may have will be answered by the researcher.

There are no known risks related with this research project other than possible discomfort with the following:

- You will be asked to be honest when answering questions.

The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential. All data will be stored securely and will be made available only to those individuals conducting the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study.

Your identity will not be revealed in any publications that result from this study.

You can terminate your participation at any time without prejudice. You also do not have to answer individual questions you don't want to answer. Your name will not be attached to the questionnaire and I will ensure that your participation remains confidential.

#### Participant's declaration

I have read this consent form and am giving the opportunity to the researcher to ask questions. I hereby grant permission to use the information I provide as data in the above-mentioned research project, knowing that it will be kept confidential and without use of my name.

Nicola Ruchia  
 (Participant's name)

N Ruchia  
 (Participant's signature)

14/01/2019  
 (Date)

Diane Marie Debono  
 (Researcher's name)

D.M. Debono  
 (Researcher's signature)

14<sup>th</sup> January 2019  
 (Date)