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## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB BURNOUT AND TURNOVER INTENTIONS AMONG EMPLOYEES IN THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

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### ABSTRACT

*Job burnout represents one of the most significant psychological phenomena in the modern work environment. It encompasses chronic workplace stress that leads to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. The hospitality industry, as a dynamic and demanding sector, has been recognized as one of the working environments where the risk of burnout is particularly pronounced. The conducted research analyzes the phenomenon of job burnout and its relationship with employees' intention to leave their jobs. The subject of this paper is the connection between burnout and turnover intention. The main objective of the study is to determine whether there is a correlation between burnout and the intention to leave the job among employees in the restaurant industry, as well as to identify the main causes of workplace stress. The survey was conducted anonymously among employees in hospitality establishments located in Novi Sad. The research included employees of different hierarchical levels and degrees of autonomy. Data were collected both in person and through an online questionnaire. Of the 150 questionnaires that were distributed, 120 were validly completed and incorporated into the analysis. The results revealed a moderate level of burnout among restaurant employees and a statistically significant positive relationship between burnout—particularly emotional exhaustion—and turnover intention.*

**Keywords:** stress, burnout, hospitality, turnover intention, hospitality employees

## INTRODUCTION

Job satisfaction in the hotel and restaurant industry is one of the key prerequisites for high employee performance. Companies engaged in food and beverage services, if they wish to achieve high levels of productivity among their staff, must pay attention to employees' job satisfaction. Satisfied employees who are content with their working conditions represent a vital link in achieving business success (Dorta-Afonso et al., 2021; Bello et al., 2021).

The hospitality industry is characterized by a high employee turnover rate, making employee care one of the primary goals of human resource management (Blomme et al., 2010; Kuria & Alice, 2012; Dwesin, 2019; Ghani et al., 2022). Companies that aim to retain workers and reduce their turnover intentions must invest more effort in increasing job satisfaction (Šmugović et al., 2020). Employee dissatisfaction can have numerous negative effects

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on an organization's functioning. Such employees not only exhibit a higher intention to leave their jobs and seek new ones but also show significantly reduced performance (Chuang et al., 2008; Ingish et al., 2022).

One of the main reasons for job dissatisfaction is work-related stress. The ways in which stress affects employees vary, but what they all have in common is that it increases the intention to leave the organization (Yousaf, 2020). Employee stress is particularly problematic in industries involving direct contact between employees and guests, such as hospitality and restaurant management, since the service quality of stressed employees is significantly lower than that of those who are not stressed (O'Neill & Davis, 2011; Chien et al., 2021).

Employee stress, burnout, and turnover intention are constructs that have individually, as well as collectively, been the focus of numerous studies recently (Antonova, 2016). The present research examines the relationship between job burnout and turnover intention among employees in the restaurant sector of Vojvodina, with particular focus on workers in Novi Sad. The paper aims to identify the main sources of stress in the hospitality industry and their impact on the occurrence of burnout, as well as to what extent these factors encourage employees to leave their workplaces.

The main goal of this paper is to determine whether there is a connection between burnout and turnover intention among employees in the restaurant industry and to identify the main causes of stress among hospitality workers.

The research seeks to answer the following three research questions:

1. What is the level of burnout, and to what extent is turnover intention expressed among employees in the restaurant industry of Novi Sad?
2. Is there a statistically significant relationship between burnout and turnover intention among hospitality employees, and which burnout dimension has the strongest influence on that relationship?
3. Which sources of workplace stress contribute the most to burnout among restaurant employees in Novi Sad?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Beehr and Newman (1978) defined work-related stress as a situation in which the interaction between job factors and an employee's personal characteristics leads to changes in their psychological and/or physiological state, negatively affecting their functioning.

A large body of research has demonstrated a strong correlation between job stress and job dissatisfaction, which consequently affects employee performance. Employees exposed to prolonged stress tend to exhibit lower productivity and a stronger intention to leave their jobs (Pathak, 2012; Yousaf, 2020).

Job-related stress typically originates from two main sources: occupational and organizational stressors, which vary depending on the nature of the profession and the specific organization, and individual personality traits, which determine how employees cope with stressful situations. The latter are largely influenced by employees' emotional intelligence and their reactions to particular stressors (Chiang et al., 2010).

Early studies identified two main forms of incongruence within the work environment as primary causes of stress: (1) the mismatch between employees' abilities and job demands and (2) the degree to which employees' needs are satisfied within the work environment (Caplan et al., 1975).

Cooper (1983) identified six main sources of work-related stress, including:

1. Job-related factors,
2. Organizational role,
3. Career development,
4. Interpersonal relationships at work,
5. Organizational structure, and
6. Work interface.

Job-related stressors include long working hours, work overload, monotonous and repetitive tasks, and the physical characteristics of the work environment. The organizational role refers to the level of responsibility, authority, and decision-making power. Many employees experience stress related to career development, most commonly due to a lack of opportunities for growth and advancement. Stress caused by interpersonal relationships primarily stems from dynamics between managers and employees, as well as among colleagues themselves. An unclear organizational structure and undefined positions within the company are also frequent sources of workplace stress (Ravenio, 2017; Singh & Verma, 2019).

Work-related stress has become an increasingly discussed topic in the past three decades. Among the occupations most affected by job stress are chefs and other service employees (Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007; O'Neill & Davis, 2011). The hospitality industry is recognized as a sector with a particularly high level of stress among employees (Duffour et al., 2019), with major sources of stress including long working hours, limited social life, and a shortage of qualified staff (Cheah et al., 2018). Since interaction with guests is one of the defining characteristics of the restaurant industry, unpleasant encounters with customers can be highly stressful for employees, leading to job dissatisfaction and turnover intention (Sliter et al., 2012).

The work of chefs and kitchen staff is generally characterized by a high-stress environment where even minor mistakes are intolerable (Chuang et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2020). The stress level they experience is typically very high, with key stressors including excessive workload, lack of feedback from management, staff shortages, and insufficient respect or recognition for their efforts (Zopiatis et al., 2011; Kim & Qu, 2019; Cerasa et al., 2020).

Numerous factors affecting the quality of service experienced by guests stem from employees' own work conditions and attitudes. For this reason, managers must minimize the sources of stress among employees to maintain job satisfaction and prevent burnout (Schwepker Jr. & Dimitriou, 2021).

Burnout remains one of the least understood phenomena in occupational psychology, despite decades of research and measurement efforts (Maslach et al., 2009; Lubbadah, 2020). One of the earliest definitions of burnout was proposed by Maslach (1982), who described it as a response to chronic job stress, characterized by three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment.

Within this framework, *emotional exhaustion* refers to a lack of energy and motivation resulting from excessive psychological demands. *Depersonalization* involves a decline in empathy and the tendency to treat others within the organization impersonally, reflecting difficulties in interpersonal communication. *Reduced personal accomplishment* manifests as a diminished sense of success and a tendency to undervalue one's professional achievements (Maricuțoiu et al., 2016; López-Núñez et al., 2020).

Burnout negatively affects not only the employees' mental and physical health but also the overall workplace atmosphere and organizational performance, as it increases employees' intention to leave their jobs (Demirdag et al., 2020). The main cause of burnout is work-related stress, which leads to inefficiency, lack of concentration, emotional detachment, and decreased energy (Maslach et al., 2001).

Workplace stress represents one of the greatest challenges of modern business, affecting not only individual performance but also the overall success of organizations (Chirico, 2016). An increasing number of companies have recognized the negative consequences of employee stress and are approaching this issue more seriously (Zoni & Lucchini, 2012; Adeyi et al., 2023).

Ullah and Kundi (2023) emphasize that employees who are dissatisfied with their jobs tend not to perform to the best of their abilities and are more likely to experience conflicts with colleagues, which can have adverse effects on organizational functioning. Several studies have shown that job-related stress is closely linked to and strongly influences turnover intention (Tongchaiprasit & Ariyabuddhiphongs, 2016).

Turnover intention represents the final point at which management can intervene before an employee leaves the organization. Employees who frequently contemplate leaving are, in most cases, the ones who eventually do (AlBattat & Mat Som, 2013). Numerous factors influence turnover intention, with the most prominent being the work environment and job dissatisfaction (Kuria & Alice, 2012; Christensen & Knardahl, 2022).

Job crafting, defined as the physical and cognitive changes employees make to their job tasks and interpersonal relationships (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), can positively affect work-related stress and reduce the likelihood of burnout (Cheng & Yang, 2018; Petrou et al., 2018).

One of the most effective ways to protect employees from burnout is through the development and application of emotional intelligence (Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017). In sectors such as hospitality and restaurant

management, where emotional control and expression are crucial, emotional intelligence enables employees to cope with stressful situations without negatively affecting guest experience (Jung & Yoon, 2016).

One of the most influential modern theoretical frameworks for understanding burnout is the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, developed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007:2017). According to this model, every job can be described in terms of two categories of factors: job demands and job resources. When job demands are high and resources are insufficient, employees experience energy depletion and the development of burnout symptoms. Conversely, when resources such as managerial support, feedback, and professional development opportunities are abundant, they foster engagement and reduce turnover intention. Applying this model within the hospitality industry enables managers to identify key factors influencing employee satisfaction and their intention to remain within the organization.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### *Characteristics of the Study and Sample*

The research was conducted using a survey method, selected as the most appropriate technique for collecting data on employees' attitudes and experiences in the restaurant industry. The survey was carried out anonymously among employees working in hospitality establishments located within the municipality of Novi Sad, one of the most developed gastronomic and tourism centers in Vojvodina.

The study included employees from different hierarchical levels: managerial staff (food and beverage managers, head chefs, and restaurant supervisors), operational employees (chefs, waiters, and bartenders), and support staff (kitchen and bar assistants), without any restrictions regarding gender or age.

Data collection was performed both in person and through an online questionnaire. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed, of which 120 were validly completed and included in the analysis. Such a sample design allowed for a representative overview of the attitudes and experiences of employees working in different types of restaurants—*à la carte*, fast-food, pension-based, and mass-catering establishments.

### *Instruments and Data Analysis Procedures*

The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section included socio-demographic data, covering variables such as gender, age, level, field of education, years of work experience in the hospitality industry and in the current establishment, current job position, and type of restaurant.

The second section measured the degree of job burnout and turnover intention. To assess burnout, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was used. This instrument consists of 22 items divided into three dimensions:

- *Emotional exhaustion* (first 9 statements),
- *Depersonalization* (5 statements), and
- *Personal accomplishment* (8 statements).

This instrument, developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981), was adapted based on the research conducted by Demirdag et al. (2020) in the Turkish hotel industry.

To assess turnover intention, the Intention to Leave Scale developed by Yorgun et al. (2009) was applied. This scale includes three statements designed to measure the degree to which employees consider leaving their current jobs.

The third section of the questionnaire focused on identifying sources of workplace stress among hospitality employees. Respondents were able to select one or more factors contributing to stress at work. This section provided more in-depth insight into the context in which burnout and turnover intentions emerge.

All items in the second part of the questionnaire were rated on a six-point Likert scale, where 1 represented “never” and 6 represented “every day.”

Data were analyzed using SPSS statistical software, applying the following analytical techniques:

- Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) to describe participants' demographic characteristics;
- t-test and one-way ANOVA to examine statistically significant differences between groups;
- Correlation and regression analysis to determine the relationship between burnout and turnover intention.

The reliability of the applied instruments was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, which indicated high internal consistency of the scales ( $\alpha > 0.70$ ).

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### *Analysis of Socio-Demographic Characteristics*

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic structure of the respondents. A larger proportion of participants were male (54.17%) compared to female respondents (45.83%). The majority belonged to the 21–30 age group (42.50%), while the smallest proportions were those aged under 20 (4.17%) and over 51 (10%).

Regarding education, most respondents had secondary education (72.5%, or 87 respondents), which indicates that restaurant employees in Novi Sad are predominantly young individuals who enter the workforce immediately after finishing secondary school. A total of 27 respondents had higher education (bachelor's or equivalent), and 6 respondents held master's or doctoral degrees—mostly those in managerial positions.

The field of education for 68 participants (56%) was hospitality and tourism, followed by economics and law (19.17%). It is noteworthy that 23 respondents came from unrelated disciplines such as electrical engineering, tailoring, and mechanical work, indicating employment migration from other sectors.

In terms of work experience, the majority of respondents (37.5%) had less than five years of experience in the hospitality industry, which aligns with the overall young age of the sample. More than 41% of respondents had been working in their current establishment for less than one year, reflecting the high employee turnover rate characteristic of the hospitality industry. Another 30% had between one and five years of tenure, meaning that 71% of participants had been employed in their current position for less than five years.

Most respondents (49.17%) worked in operational roles such as chefs, waiters, and bartenders, followed by support staff (23.33%), operational management (head chefs, sous chefs, and restaurant supervisors, 15%), and middle or top management (12%). This distribution corresponds to typical restaurant organizational structures, where operational and support roles constitute the majority of the workforce, while managerial positions represent a smaller segment. The largest portion of respondents were employed in **à la carte restaurants (46.67%)**, followed by fast-food restaurants (20%), pension and mass-catering restaurants (12.5% each), and other establishments (8.33%), mainly cafés and pubs that also serve food.

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

		Број (n)	Удео (%)
<b>GENDER</b>	Male	65	54.17
	Female	55	45.83
<b>AGE</b>	≤20 years old	5	4.17
	21-30	51	42.50
	31-40	33	27.50
	41-50	19	15.83
	≥51	12	10.00
<b>LEVEL OF EDUCATION</b>	Secondary education	87	72.50
	Higher/University degree	27	22.5
	Master's/Doctoral degree	6	5.00
<b>FIELD OF EDUCATION</b>	Hospitality, tourism	68	56.67
	Economics and law	23	19.17
	Food technology, Agriculture, Chemistry	6	5.00
	Other fields	23	19.17
<b>WORK EXPERIENCE IN HOSPITALITY</b>	≤5 years	45	37.50
	6-10	32	26.67
	11-15	11	9.17
	16-20	17	14.17
	≥21	15	12.50
<b>WORK EXPERIENCE IN THE CURRENT ESTABLISHMENT</b>	≤1 year	50	41.67
	1-5	36	30.00
	6-10	20	16.67
	11-15	8	6.67
	≥15	6	5.00
<b>CURRENT JOB POSITION</b>	Support Staff	28	23.33
	Operational Staff (Chef, Waiter, Bartender)	59	49.17
	Operational Management	18	15.00
	Middle and Top management	15	12.50
<b>TYPE OF HOSPITALITY ESTABLISHMENT</b>	Pension Restaurant	15	12.50
	Mass catering restaurant	15	12.50
	À la carte Restaurant	56	46.67
	Fast food restaurant	24	20.00
	Other Types (e.g., Cafés, Pubs)	10	8.33

Source: Author's research (2025).

## Analysis of Burnout and Turnover Intention

To gain a clearer understanding of the degree of burnout among respondents, the statements evaluated on a six-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 to 6) are presented descriptively in Table 2. The average score for the 22 items related to burnout was 2.86, which is below the medium level, while the average score for the turnover intention scale was 3.06, slightly above the medium level.

These results suggest that employees working in restaurants in Novi Sad do not exhibit a high level of burnout, whereas their intention to leave the job is moderately expressed.

**Table 2.** Statements Related to Burnout (Items 1–22) and Turnover Intention (Items 23–25)

M= 2.86 SD=1.42				1	2	3	4	5	6	M	SD
EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION M=3.13 SD=1.49	1	I feel emotionally exhausted because of my work.	f	10	32	16	37	22	3	3.32	1.33
			%	8.33	26.67	13.33	30.83	18.33	5.00		
	2	At the end of the day, I feel drained and used up.	f	20	20	30	29	18	3	3.12	1.38
			%	16.67	16.67	25.00	24.17	15.00	2.50		
	3	I feel tired as soon as I wake up in the morning.	f	9	27	14	25	31	14	3.70	1.53
			%	7.50	22.50	11.67	20.83	25.83	11.67		
	4	After working for some time, I feel the need to withdraw from everything.	f	23	17	38	22	13	7	3.05	1.44
			%	19.17	14.17	31.67	18.33	10.83	5.83		
	5	I feel depressed and indifferent.	f	41	42	23	5	9	0	2.16	1.17
			%	34.17	35.00	19.17	4.17	7.50	0.00		
	6	My work is becoming increasingly disappointing to me.	f	34	39	25	14	7	1	2.37	1.22
			%	28.33	32.50	20.83	11.67	5.83	0.83		
	7	It seems to me that I am working too hard.	f	18	9	20	15	31	27	3.94	1.73
			%	15.00	7.50	16.67	12.50	25.83	22.50		
	8	I want to be alone and take a break from everyone and everything.	f	9	24	19	43	18	7	3.48	1.33
			%	7.50	20.00	15.83	35.83	15.00	5.83		
	9	Things that used to interest me about my job no longer do.	f	18	23	38	17	22	2	3.07	1.35
			%	15.00	19.17	31.68	14.17	18.33	1.67		
DEPERSONALIZATION M=2.54 SD=1.33	10	I feel that I communicate with my colleagues as if they were objects.	f	30	29	42	9	7	2	2.50	1.21
			%	25.00	24.17	35.00	7.50	5.83	1.67		
	11	Lately, I have become harsher toward the people I work with.	f	33	32	27	26	1	1	2.44	1.18
			%	27.50	26.67	22.50	21.67	0.83	0.83		
	12	I have the impression that my work is making me emotionally colder.	f	28	28	27	22	15	0	2.73	1.34
			%	23.33	23.33	22.50	18.33	12.50	0.00		
	13	I am becoming less interested in what happens to other people.	f	18	24	26	30	19	3	3.14	1.38
			%	15.00	20.00	21.67	25.00	15.83	2.50		
	14	I feel guilty about other people's problems.	f	63	30	11	9	6	1	1.90	1.23
			%	52.50	25.00	9.17	7.50	5.00	0.83		

PERSONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT M=2.76 SD=1.34	15	I find it difficult to understand other people's feelings.	f	27	33	35	19	6	0	2.53	1.15
			%	22.50	27.50	29.17	15.83	5.00	0.00		
	16	I do not find effective solutions to others' problems.	f	23	47	22	17	11	0	2.55	1.22
			%	19.17	19.17	18.33	14.17	9.17	0.00		
	17	I do not feel that I have a positive impact on other people's lives.	f	18	49	26	16	11	0	2.61	1.17
			%	15.00	40.83	21.67	13.33	9.17	0.00		
	18	I do not have enough energy within me.	f	15	14	16	38	30	6	3.61	1.43
			%	12.40	11.67	13.33	31.67	25.00	5.00		
	19	I am unable to create a relaxed working atmosphere.	f	24	44	27	13	7	5	2.58	1.31
			%	20.00	36.67	22.50	10.83	5.83	4.17		
	20	I notice a lack of enthusiasm after completing tasks with other people.	f	13	30	42	14	15	6	3.05	1.33
			%	10.83	25.00	35.00	11.67	12.50	5.00		
	21	I feel that the tasks I perform at work have little value.	f	19	37	28	13	15	8	2.93	1.47
			%	15.83	30.83	23.33	10.83	12.50	6.67		
	22	I am not able to handle emotional problems calmly and rationally.	f	36	48	16	12	7	1	2.24	1.20
			%	30.00	40.00	13.33	10.00	5.83	0.83		
TURNOVER INTENTION M=3.06 SD=1.50	23.	If I had the opportunity, I would leave my current job.	f	6	16	33	39	12	14	3.64	1.31
			%	5.00	13.33	27.50	32.50	10.00	11.67		
	24.	Over the past year, I have increasingly thought about resigning from my job.	f	16	22	44	15	11	12	3.16	1.45
			%	13.33	18.33	36.67	12.50	9.17	10.00		
	25.	I am actively looking for a new job.	f	43	33	17	13	9	5	2.39	1.46
			%	35.83	27.50	14.17	10.83	7.50	4.17		

Source: Author's research (2025).

When examining the subcategories of the Maslach Burnout Inventory, only the dimension of emotional exhaustion recorded an average score above the mid-level (3.13), while depersonalization and personal accomplishment were below the average level, with mean values of 2.54 and 2.76, respectively.

Among individual items, the statement related to the feeling of excessive workload received the highest average score (3.94).

High ratings were also given to statements reflecting fatigue and lack of energy, indicating that employees often feel both physically and emotionally drained.

In contrast, the lowest average score (1.90) was recorded for the statement referring to feeling guilty about other people's problems, with fewer than 14% of respondents rating it above 3. Within the depersonalization dimension, only the statement describing a reduced interest in what happens to others had an average value above 3 (3.14).

Regarding turnover intention, the highest-rated statement was the one indicating that respondents would leave their current job if they had the opportunity (3.64).

The lowest average value was recorded for the statement related to actively searching for a new job (2.39).

These results suggest that while many respondents express a desire to change their workplace, this intention appears to be more theoretical than practical, as most employees are not taking concrete steps toward finding a new job.

## Correlation and Regression Analysis between Burnout and Turnover Intention

To examine the relationship between burnout and turnover intention, methods of linear correlation and regression analysis were applied.

Table 3 presents the relationship between overall burnout and turnover intention, as identified through simple linear analysis, as well as the relationships between each burnout subcategory and turnover intention, analyzed using multiple linear regression and correlation analysis.

**Table 3.** Correlation and Regression Analysis between Burnout and Turnover Intention

Variables	Coefficients	Standard Error	t	P	r	R <sup>2</sup>	ANOVA
Turnover Intention	0.914	0.344	2.654	0.009	0.549	0.302	F=16.698 p=0.000*
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	0.573	0.114	5.021	0.000			
Depersonalization (D)	0.182	0.142	1.281	0.203			
Personal Accomplishment (PA)	-0.039	0.158	-0.244	0.807			
Turnover Intention (TI)	0.883	0.351	2.517	0.013	0.510	0.260	F=41.495 p=0.000*
Burnout (B)	0.761	0.118	6.442	0.000			

p<0.05; \*p<0.0001

Source: Author's research (2025).

In this study, turnover intention was defined as the dependent variable, while job burnout and its three dimensions—emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment—were treated as independent variables.

The results of the simple linear regression analysis showed a positive and statistically significant correlation of medium intensity between burnout and turnover intention ( $r = 0.510$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.260$ ) indicates that approximately 26% of the variability in turnover intention can be explained by the level of job burnout.

The obtained simple regression model was also statistically significant ( $F = 41.495$ ;  $p < 0.0001$ ), confirming the existence of a meaningful relationship between the analyzed phenomena.

In the multiple linear regression analysis, the individual relationships of each burnout dimension with turnover intention were examined. A moderate overall correlation was established ( $r = 0.549$ ), but a statistically significant relationship was found only for the emotional exhaustion dimension ( $p < 0.05$ ). Depersonalization and personal accomplishment did not show significant effects ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, the overall model proved to be significant ( $F = 16.698$ ;  $p < 0.0001$ ), confirming that burnout serves as a relevant predictor of employees' intention to leave their current workplace.

Based on the conducted analyses, the following regression models were obtained:

$$\text{Turnover Intention} = 0.914 + 0.573 \times \text{EE} + 0.182 \times \text{D} - 0.039 \times \text{PA}$$

*(Multiple Linear Model)*

$$\text{Turnover Intention} = 0.883 + 0.761 \times \text{B}$$

*(Simple Linear Model)*

The results indicate that within the simple linear model, an increase in the overall level of burnout by one unit leads to an increase in turnover intention by 0.761 units.

In the multiple model, the individual burnout dimensions showed different directions and intensities of influence:

- An increase in emotional exhaustion by one unit resulted in an increase in turnover intention by 0.573 units,
- Depersonalization had a smaller but positive effect (+0.182),

- While personal accomplishment showed a slight negative effect ( $-0.039$ ), indicating that employees who perceive a higher level of professional achievement tend to show a lower intention to leave their workplace.

Overall, the findings confirm that higher levels of job burnout, particularly in the domain of emotional exhaustion, significantly increase the likelihood that hospitality employees will develop the intention to leave their current positions.

### Analysis of Stress Sources

Since stress represents one of the key factors influencing both the occurrence of burnout and the development of employees' turnover intentions, the third part of the research examined the main sources of stress among hospitality employees in Novi Sad.

Respondents were allowed to select one or more factors that they perceived as the most significant contributors to workplace stress. The results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Sources of stress

Sources of stress	n	%
Excessive workload	39	32.50
Lack of feedback on work performance	8	6.67
Shortage of trained staff	43	35.83
Feeling undervalued	25	20.83
Repetitive or monotonous work	25	20.83
Insufficient management support	21	17.50
Low salary	35	29.17
Limited opportunities for promotion	18	15.00
Poor communication among employees	3	2.50
Inadequate or low-quality equipment	7	5.83
Lack of proper training	5	4.17
Inability to participate in decision-making	8	6.67
Lack of control over one's work tasks	7	5.83
Other sources of stress	0	0.00

Source: Author's research (2025).

The results indicate that the most prominent sources of stress among respondents were the lack of trained staff (35.83%) and excessive workload (32.50%), followed by low salary (29.17%) and feeling undervalued at work (20.83%).

Factors such as insufficient managerial support, monotonous work, and poor communication among employees had noticeably lower shares.

These findings indicate that operational working conditions and work overload represent the dominant sources of stress in restaurant establishments.

## DISCUSSION

The first research question was: "What is the level of burnout and to what extent is the intention to leave expressed among employees in the restaurant industry of Novi Sad?"

The results revealed that restaurant employees in Novi Sad do not exhibit a high level of burnout, although emotional exhaustion was slightly above the average level, while depersonalization and personal accomplishment were below the midpoint. Turnover intention was moderately expressed, suggesting a present but not critical level of workforce fluctuation.

This outcome may be attributed to the specific characteristics of the hospitality sector, which involves a dynamic work environment combined with significant physical and psychological strain (Zhang et al., 2020). Although employees face demanding working conditions, the moderate burnout level may reflect the younger workforce, which was dominant in the sample and tends to have higher stress tolerance. Previous studies confirm that younger employees show greater resilience to work demands but may experience a faster decline in motivation and increased turnover intention over time (Miao et al., 2020; Christensen & Knardahl, 2022).

The second research question was: *“Is there a statistically significant relationship between job burnout and turnover intention among hospitality employees, and which burnout dimension has the strongest effect on that relationship?”* The results indicated a positive and statistically significant correlation of moderate intensity between job burnout and turnover intention. The simple regression model showed that an increase in total burnout by one unit leads to an increase in turnover intention by 0.761 units, meaning that as burnout intensity grows, employees are more likely to express a desire to leave their jobs.

Such patterns are particularly evident in labor-intensive industries like hospitality, consistent with numerous studies (Wen et al., 2020; Salama et al., 2022; Üngüren et al., 2024; Moustafa et al., 2024). In the multiple regression model, emotional exhaustion had the strongest impact on turnover intention, indicating that an increase in emotional exhaustion by one unit increases turnover intention by more than half a unit. Depersonalization had a positive but statistically insignificant effect, while personal accomplishment showed a slight negative influence, suggesting that employees who experience greater professional fulfillment are less likely to consider leaving, which is consistent with other research (Andriani et al., 2023; Sudiarta et al., 2025). These results confirm that employees exposed to prolonged stress, physical and emotional strain, and insufficient managerial support most often develop feelings of exhaustion, which lead to reduced engagement and a greater tendency to leave. Similarly, Han et al. (2020) emphasize that emotional exhaustion represents the most significant mediating factor between stress and employee turnover in the hospitality industry.

The third research question was: *“Which sources of workplace stress contribute most to burnout among employees in restaurant establishments in Novi Sad?”*

The results indicated that the lack of trained personnel and excessive workload were the most significant sources of stress, followed by low salary and feeling undervalued.

This structure of stressors reflects the nature of restaurant work, where insufficient staffing and high work dynamics result in intense psychophysical strain. The lack of managerial support and job monotony further reinforce frustration and reduce motivation. These findings are in line with previous studies identifying work overload, long working hours, and labor shortages as the main stressors in hospitality (Park et al., 2020; Park & Min, 2020). Similarly, Day et al. (2017) highlight that chronic understaffing and insufficient supervisory support directly increase the risk of burnout.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study confirmed a clear relationship between job burnout and employees' intention to leave in the restaurant industry. Emotional exhaustion emerged as the most significant factor driving turnover intention, while operational working conditions, such as work overload, lack of trained staff, and low wages, were identified as the main sources of stress. Although the overall burnout level was moderate, the findings indicate that employees often work under unsustainable conditions in the long term.

To reduce burnout risk and retain skilled employees, several organizational measures are recommended. First, improving shift planning and workload distribution is essential to prevent excessive fatigue and promote a better work-life balance. Managers should ensure continuous communication and feedback, as the lack of recognition and managerial support often leads to demotivation. Special attention should be given to training and staff development, since the shortage of qualified workers increases pressure on current employees and contrib-

utes to dissatisfaction. Investing in professional development and teamwork can generate long-term benefits such as stronger employee loyalty and a more positive work climate.

This research provides practical implications for the operation of restaurants in Novi Sad and beyond. Understanding the main sources of stress and the reasons why employees wish to leave can help management address these issues effectively. Employee training, adequate staffing, and higher financial compensation can reduce stress levels and consequently lower turnover intention.

## RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The study sample included employees working exclusively in hospitality establishments in Novi Sad, so the results cannot be fully generalized to the entire hospitality industry in Serbia.

Additionally, the data were collected through self-assessment, which may affect objectivity and introduce bias due to socially desirable responses. Future research should include a larger and geographically more diverse sample, as well as a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, to gain a more in-depth understanding of both employee and managerial experiences.

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