



CIPRIANI COLLEGE
OF LABOUR AND CO-OPERATIVE STUDIES

MANAGING WORKPLACE BURNOUT

WORK MATTERS

MAY 2026

COLUMN

Managing workplace burnout

Kofi McMillan, Elma Francois Institute CCLCS

Have you ever felt a sudden wave of exhaustion and fatigue engulfing you whilst at your workplace? In today's fast-paced professional landscape, I do believe that these sentiments have become all too common. Moreover, with a greater integration of technology along with the imposition of artificial intelligence combined with ever-increasing organizational demands, it is fair to say that workers are at a critical juncture in their professional trajectories. How these unprecedented changes are handled by workers will have significant implications not only for the functionality of the world of work, but also for their overall productivity and the quality of professional life.

In further dissecting this subject matter, it is paramount to examine some of the root causes of this fatigue. Such issues may vary from worker to worker, depending on a myriad of factors which include, but are not limited to, their physical well-being, emotional and mental state which can also be linked to ineffective management of stressful workplace circumstances. I argue that issues such as unsustainable workloads, toxic and unsafe working conditions, poor workplace communication and even persistent underutilization and undervaluing of skills can often coalesce to the detriment of workers and their occupational aspirations. Moreover, experience outside of work must also be considered when examining the entire gamut of burnout in the workplace. In this regard, workers who find it difficult to allocate sufficient time to their personal lives in the form of spending valuable time with family and friends, exercising regularly and even sleeping regularly and inability to prepare meals for proper nutrition may also be afflicted with burnout. In such a situation, employees who have exerted themselves beyond measure for the sake of their

organizations may have nothing left to give to the other spheres of their lives, leading to strained relationships, emotional dysregulation and interpersonal dissonance.

Given these causes and their negative consequences, it is crucial that both employees and employers accurately identify signs of workplace burnout from an early stage. Some of the most common signs of burnout include, but are certainly not limited to, chronic fatigue, irritability with coworkers and customers, apathy or detachment from work responsibilities as well as difficulty with focusing and with critical decision making. These signs can manifest themselves in a myriad of ways and there is even the possibility that employees could conceal these symptoms out of fear of performance criticisms from management or worse yet, job loss.

From a solutions-based perspective, it can be stated that addressing this endemic of workplace burnout requires a holistically systematic approach which not only considers the unique realities of the contemporary world of work but also values the synergy between the worker and workplace fit. From the worker standpoint, greater emphasis and value has to be placed on prioritizing consistent self-care for their physical, emotional and mental well-being through regular exercise and meditation, establishing and communicating fixed and reasonable boundaries between work time and personal time so as to properly "unplug" from work programmes, allocating time to meaningfully connect with nature and even normalizing micro-recovery in the form of mini-breaks after work activities to effectuate a more manageable and sustainable work day. Conversely, as it relates to the practical steps which employers can take, there is a burgeoning need for them to be innovative and robust in their strategies and approaches. To inform policy and better understand the issue at hand, employers can empirically and systematically measure the incidence of workplace burnout through the targeted dissemination of surveys

and interactive consultations with their staff members. This approach can provide organizations with the timely and valid data needed to strategically address the main causes of workplace burnout, thereby adapting operations for greater employee engagement and overall organizational resilience. Additionally, employers can implement wellness programmes, provide greater mental health support and other resources to their workers (allocate designated areas in the office as ergonomic social lounges where workers can effectively decompress and mentally reset during the workday when needed).

Further, fostering a supportive culture will also go a long way. It is important to impart on workers that reaching out for support and guidance is not a sign of weakness but an indicator of strength and bravery. These types of interactions can not only aid workers in properly treating their burnout, but can also engender feelings of trust and confidence in one another, thereby strengthening institutional cohesion and creating a healthier and more inclusive workplace for one and all. Thus, while it is crucial that workplace burnout be viewed as a significant challenge to organizational success and growth, it is equally important that a holistic and integrated effort is made to address it recognizing the causes, consequences, signs as well as the plethora of strategies available to those who are impacted.