



Article

Burnout among Retail Workers in Spain: The Role of Gender, Personality and Psychosocial Risk Factors

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Abstract: This study examines the direct and interaction relationships between personality traits, psychosocial risk factors, and burnout among male and female workers in the retail sector in Spain. Through a cross sectional design involving 667 participants (241 men, 426 women), it employs self report questionnaires to measure these variables. In addition to a sociodemographic questionnaire, the MBI (burnout), NEO-FFI (personality), CarMen-Q (cognitive, temporal, emotional, and performance demands), and DECORE (support, control, and rewards) were administered. Results indicate that women exhibit higher emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Results from stepwise multiple regression confirmed that personality traits directly impact burnout dimensions and psychosocial risk factors. Specifically, neuroticism and emotional job demands significantly influence emotional exhaustion, while depersonalization correlates with neuroticism, agreeableness, temporal demands, and organizational support. Personal accomplishment links with extraversion, interacting with temporal demands in men and cognitive demands in women. Individuals high in neuroticism and low in extraversion tend to perceive elevated emotional job demands, leading to intensified emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. The study confirms that personality traits and working conditions affect burnout differently for men and women.



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Keywords: burnout; Big Five personality traits; mental workload; reward satisfaction; job control; organizational support; gender role

1. Introduction

Burnout is characterized as one of the most important factors related to employee experience since it can have serious consequences for the performance and well-being of staff. While various conceptualizations of this process have been developed over time, the last 30 years have seen researchers coalesce around the notion of job burnout. The concept of burnout can be defined as a psychological syndrome that involves multiple stressors, both emotional and interpersonal, that an individual can experience, leading to negative responses to themselves, their tasks, coworkers, clients, and the organization (Maslach 2003). Some of the most common symptoms of burnout include physical illnesses, sleep disturbances, work/family conflict, and substance abuse (Maslach and Leiter 2008). Burnout can be structured in three dimensions: (a) emotional exhaustion, which is the experience of being emotionally tired by the demands of work; (b) depersonalization, which is the degree to which the employee shows attitudes of coldness and detachment toward people; and (c) personal accomplishment, which are the feelings that the worker has of self-efficiency and fulfilment that occur in the workplace.

Originally, burnout was characterized as a disease typical of those who work in client-facing professions. This becomes especially important when considering that the commerce sector is one of the most important and dynamic sectors in the economy of any country,

both due to the volumes with which it operates and the number of jobs and opportunities it generates. In Spain, both Spanish and international large companies offer the same commercial proposals in different parts of the world, coexisting with a significant number of small companies that struggle to maintain their position in the market. According to (Caixabank Research 2024), the retail sector is one of the largest sectors of the Spanish economy in terms of business volume and employment. The data show that 12.7% of the total workforce in Spain works in this sector, providing employment to just over 2.2 million people in Spain, which represents 9.4% of the active population (INE (Instituto Nacional de Estadística) (2024)).

Currently, the retail sector is experiencing a complex situation; in just over two years, the sector, and society in general, has experienced a pandemic characterized by periods of total confinement, problems in the supply chain, an increase in the price of energy and services, and an increase in prices of consumer products, in addition to the war conflict with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Given these circumstances, workers are exposed to work pressures that demand constant and greater effort to promote the development of disorders that affect their health, such as burnout syndrome. According to (EURES (EUROPEAN EMPLOYMENT SERVICES) (2024)), 43% of Spanish professionals have a certain feeling of exhaustion or work fatigue. Most related studies have investigated burnout syndrome in the health and educational sector, where the prevalence of burnout is very high; these professional groups work in the most adverse environment in terms of psychosocial working conditions (Madigan 2019; Rotenstein et al. 2018; Willcock et al. 2004). However, in the retail sector, sales jobs require high personal involvement and exposure to high pressure to achieve sales objectives. Furthermore, dealing with clients involves additional effort by having to control emotions during face-to-face or telephone interactions with clients (Indregard et al. 2017; Low et al. 2001).

In general, working in the retail sector involves high emotional demands that often lead to physical and psychological burnout (Meliá et al. 2006). However, little research has analysed burnout in this specific sector. Rodríguez-López et al. (2021) and Rodríguez-López and Rubio-Valdehita (2021) evaluated the presence of burnout in a sample of fashion retail workers in Spain and its relationship with COVID-19 and reported that employees in the fashion sector present similar levels of burnout as healthcare workers. In other countries, Springer and Oleksa (2017) reported that when comparing the incidence of burnout syndrome between teachers and the retail sector, the incidence was similar. Kalinienė et al. (2021) studied burnout in Lithuanian retailers, and their results showed an incidence of 66.5%. In China, Wang and Wei (2018) studied burnout in sporting goods sellers and reported that a high level of burnout was positively correlated with work stress and negatively correlated with the social support perceived by employees.

1.1. Personality and Burnout

Individual factors play an important role in the development of burnout (Maslach and Leiter 2008). The first studies of burnout confirmed that while some individuals were clearly vulnerable, others maintained strong resistance to burnout (Cordes and Dougherty 1993). The relationship between personality and burnout has received special attention in numerous studies (Swider and Zimmerman 2010), although few studies have analysed this relationship in the commerce sector (Rodríguez-López and Rubio-Valdehita 2021). Most of the research analysing the relationships between burnout and personality is supported by the Big Five theoretical model which structures personality traits into five factors: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness (Wang et al. 2024).

Anxious, insecure, depressed, fearful, and nervous traits, which are characteristic of neurotic individuals, align with the components of job burnout, and several studies point to neuroticism as the best predictor of the different dimensions of burnout over time (Langelaan et al. 2006). Individuals with high scores in neuroticism have worse coping strategies for stressful situations, which increases their exposure to burnout. Thus, neurotic individuals tend to feel anxious and fearful at work, focus on the negative aspects of a

situation (Tamir 2016) and are more likely to recall negative feedback about the situation afterwards (Diener et al. 2020).

The traits of cheerfulness, enthusiasm, and optimism, which extraverts tend to manifest, make them more hopeful about their performance and evaluations; they have a positive view of their self-efficacy, have higher levels of ambition, and tend to look for positive interpersonal interactions, counteracting depersonalization processes (Judge and Ilies 2002).

The warm, supportive, and good-natured traits of agreeable individuals help them avoid frustration and emotional exhaustion (Zellars et al. 2000). Thus, they also tend to have a positive view of their jobs, to understand better the negative aspects of such work, and to look for positive interpersonal interactions, resulting in greater personal accomplishment (Zimmerman 2008). Agreeableness is characterized by altruism, empathy, cooperation, and helpfulness; individuals with high scores tend to be more able to create a supportive social network to cope with work overload and personal conflicts, so they appear to be more resistant to burnout (Swider and Zimmerman 2010).

Work ethic and perseverance are typical of conscientious individuals and prevent them from experiencing emotional exhaustion since they tend to be efficient and hardworking, which allows them not to distance themselves from their work and avoid feelings of low personal accomplishment (Judge and Ilies 2002). In addition, more conscientious workers are more likely to obtain positive responses from their bosses and coworkers, as they are perceived as more reliable, which has an impact on their personal accomplishment (Kim et al. 2007).

Individuals with high scores in the openness dimension are more intellectually curious and open-minded; thus, they tend to offer effective and creative solutions to manage work stressors and to show lower emotional exhaustion and greater personal accomplishment (Zellars et al. 2000). Therefore, they deal well with ambiguity and are less likely to become emotionally exhausted. They also tend to see their struggles as an opportunity to grow (Zimmerman 2008).

1.2. Organizational Factors and Burnout

Regarding the relationship between job characteristics and burnout syndrome, most studies have been conducted with professionals in the healthcare sector (Kemper et al. 2020; Navinés et al. 2021) since they tend to be exposed to long working hours, weekly guards and remuneration policies, and promotion systems that are usually quite rigid. In the retail sector, we find working conditions that are somewhat similar; for example, shifts are not consistent and are adapted to customer demand, and there is an important variable component in salary depending on performance (FeSMC 2024). In the Spanish retail sector, workers perform a variety of tasks, including customer service, sales, product restocking, and cash handling. This exposes them to a wide range of occupational hazards. In addition to common risks such as falls, cuts, impacts, and noise, employees in this sector are increasingly susceptible to health issues associated with psychosocial risks. Their multifaceted roles entail the following: constant shifts in schedules; high workloads that impede personal and family reconciliation, particularly during peak consumption periods such as Christmas and sales seasons; inventory periods involving longer hours and even holidays; emotionally charged tasks dealing directly with customers; and high physical and mental demands. The liberalization and extension of retail hours have directly impacted work schedules, with morning and afternoon shifts and workdays extending from Monday to Sunday, often including holidays, continuous shift changes, or extended hours to cover the entire commercial schedule due to typically understaffed teams. This situation can negatively affect the health of workers. Problems arising from psychosocial factors play a significant role in the health issues faced by retail workers in Spain. Work pace, excessive physical and mental workload, lack of effective breaks, and inappropriate relationships with superiors are among the most common risk factors for stroke, often leading to work-related stress, mental fatigue, and burnout (FeSMC 2024; UGT 2024). Workers in this sector are exposed to the following: 1. Work schedules from Monday to Sunday, with a rotating shift

system, often with unpredictable and unannounced changes. 2. High work-pace, especially during weekends, holidays, and peak consumption periods. 3. Social interactions, given the direct customer-facing nature of the job, necessitate the creation of specific impressions and the display of appropriate emotions in each situation. Workers must empathize with each customer to provide a service tailored to their needs, potentially leading to risky situations due to misinterpretation of verbal and nonverbal cues by customers, resulting in negative or even aggressive reactions. 4. Jobs involving direct customer service require effective emotional control. 5. Putting their memory, attention, and reaction capabilities to the test in challenging situations. In summary, the main occupational hazards arising from these working conditions are as follows (UGT 2024):

1. **Workload and Work Pace:** In the retail sector, especially during high-demand periods such as sales or holidays, workers may face intense workloads and fast-paced work rhythms. This can lead to stress and pressure in meeting sales targets or attending to a large number of customers. Several studies, based on the job demands–resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al. 2001), have examined the impact of job demands and resources on burnout syndrome (Bakker and de Vries 2021). In this context, job demands contribute to worker burnout when individuals perceive a lack of personal skills or resources necessary to fulfil their job responsibilities. Performance demands comprise the expectations and pressures imposed on employees to achieve specific job-related goals and standards within a designated timeframe. In the context of burnout, elevated performance demands can significantly contribute to heightened stress levels and emotional exhaustion among employees, ultimately leading to burnout. Recent studies underscored the adverse effects of high performance demands on employee well-being (Bakker and de Vries 2021). For instance, Fila and Eatough (2020) highlighted that excessive performance demands increase the risk of burnout as employees grapple with pressure to meet organizational expectations. Additionally, Schonfeld and Chang (2016) emphasized that the combination of high-performance demands and limited resources can exacerbate burnout, as employees may feel overwhelmed and unable to achieve their work goals within the constraints of available resources. These recent findings emphasize the importance of effectively managing performance demands to mitigate the risk of burnout and promote employee well-being in the workplace. Cognitive demands in the workplace refer to the mental effort, concentration, and complexity of tasks required from employees to perform their job duties effectively (Matthews and Desmond 2002). In relation to burnout, high cognitive demands can contribute to increased stress levels and mental exhaustion among employees, ultimately leading to burnout. Recent research has emphasized the impact of cognitive demands on burnout. For instance, a study (Schonfeld and Bianchi 2021) highlighted that high cognitive demands coupled with limited job resources can lead to burnout among employees, as they may struggle to manage complex tasks within the constraints of their available resources. Additionally, Leiter and Maslach (2016) emphasized that excessive cognitive demands can deplete employee mental energy, leading to emotional exhaustion and reduced job performance.
2. **Customer interactions:** Retail workers often interact directly with customers, and these interactions can sometimes become challenging. Conflict, complaint, or verbal aggression may contribute to the onset of stress and anxiety. Emotional demands in the workplace context include the expectations and requirements for employees to regulate their emotions and those of others as an integral part of their job responsibilities. These demands often entail the necessity of demonstrating empathy, understanding, and emotional support, especially in professions that involve frequent interactions with clients, patients, or customers (Cho and Choi 2021). In the context of burnout, high emotional demands can result in emotional exhaustion and elevated stress levels among employees, ultimately contributing to the onset of burnout. Recent research has underscored the impact of emotional demands on employee well-being and burnout. For instance, a study (Frögéli et al. 2020) highlighted that high emotional

demands particularly in professions such as healthcare and customer service can lead to emotional exhaustion and diminished job satisfaction among employees. Additionally, [Bakker and de Vries \(2021\)](#) emphasized that the effective management of emotional demands in the workplace is crucial for preventing burnout and promoting employee resilience and well-being.

3. **Lack of Autonomy and Control:** A lack of autonomy and control over work decisions can be stressful factors. In some cases, retail employees may feel that they have little influence on their work environment and decision-making. Job control refers to the extent to which employees can influence their work environment, make decisions, and have authority over their tasks ([Theorell et al. 1990](#)). In the context of burnout, job control plays a crucial role in determining an individual's susceptibility to burnout. Multiple studies ([Patel and Bartholomew 2021](#); [Taris et al. 2005](#)) have demonstrated that employees with high levels of job control generally experience a greater sense of autonomy and empowerment, leading to a lower risk of burnout. This autonomy enables them to manage effectively their workload, make decisions, and take advantage of their skills and abilities. Conversely, individuals with limited job control often experience feelings of powerlessness, resulting in increased stress, job dissatisfaction, and a greater likelihood of burnout. Overall, enhancing job control proves to be an effective strategy for preventing burnout by providing employees with a sense of ownership and the ability to manage their responsibilities in alignment with their capabilities and preferences. In turn, this fosters a healthier work environment and promotes greater job satisfaction and overall well-being ([Gameiro et al. 2020](#)).
4. **Irregular schedules and rotating shifts:** Variability in work schedules, especially with rotating shifts or constant changes, can negatively affect the balance between work and personal life, as well as adequate rest. The number of working hours is correlated with the presence of burnout, specifically, an increase in emotional exhaustion ([Buckley et al. 2020](#)). Working long hours, exceeding eight hours, signifies psychological overexertion, intensifying the sense of exhaustion ([Stewart and Arora 2019](#)). Burnout syndrome becomes more prevalent with extended work hours ([Al-Dubai and Rampal 2010](#)). In Switzerland, [Arigoni et al. \(2009\)](#) observed that doctors who worked more than 50 h per week faced the highest risk of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Another factor related to schedules is shift work, commonly found in sectors such as healthcare; this work induces significant disorders in workers subjected to this system, including reduced sleep, alterations in alertness and performance, cardiovascular and gastrointestinal issues, musculoskeletal disorders, increased medication consumption, and even premature aging. Regarding psychological disorders, burnout is another aspect linked to shift work. [Poncet et al. \(2007\)](#) demonstrated that night work was associated with greater exhaustion, with nursing staff working night shifts experiencing greater emotional exhaustion due to working against circadian rhythms and having fewer support staff available. Sleep habits are predictors of psychological health in healthcare professionals ([Díaz-Ramiro et al. 2020](#)). [Gómez-Polo et al. \(2022\)](#) evaluated burnout syndrome in a sample of 1300 workers, and their results indicated that those working fixed night shifts exhibited significantly greater levels of burnout than workers working rotating shifts or fixed day shifts. Additionally, those working shifts other than the night shift reported levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, similar to day shift and rotating shift workers.
5. **Lack of Recognition and Rewards:** The absence of recognition and rewards for effort and performance can contribute to job dissatisfaction and impact employee motivation. Regarding salary, the research results are contradictory. [Patel and Bartholomew \(2021\)](#) did not find any relationship between the salary received and the occurrence of burnout. However, other studies have described a significant relationship between salary and burnout since the lower the salary, the lower is the personal fulfillment ([Seijas-Solano 2019](#); [Vázquez-García et al. 2013](#)). In contrast, [Kim et al. \(2018\)](#) indicated that the greater the salary, the greater is the degree to which individuals are

experiencing depersonalization, revealing a positive relationship between salary level and burnout.

6. Lack of professional development and organizational support: A lack of professional development opportunities and continuous training can lead to demotivation and job satisfaction. Organizational support is defined as the perception that organizational policies and the work environment enable individuals to utilize their full capacities and abilities in a work situation. These factors include the following: adequate remuneration; job security; job instability; contractual precariousness; meaningful work; available material and informational resources; social recognition; functional relationships with workgroups, colleagues, and supervisors; and clean, healthy, orderly, pleasant, and comfortable working conditions (Podsakoff et al. 2007). A lack of organizational support can lead to low commitment, higher levels of absenteeism, an increased frequency of sick leave, and burnout (Meyer et al. 2002).

1.3. Differences between Men and Women in Burnout

Various studies indicate that women have between 20% and 60% higher chances of experiencing burnout. Specifically, women show higher levels of emotional exhaustion and greater depersonalization than men (Töyry et al. 2004; West et al. 2018). Additionally, it has been observed that men score higher in personal accomplishment (Brown et al. 2019).

Marchand et al. (2018) conducted a longitudinal study of 2026 Canadian workers over four years. Their results indicate that women are more vulnerable to showing more emotional exhaustion and lower personal accomplishment than men. This vulnerability is attributed to the fact that women, in general, have less likelihood of promotion, leading to increased frustration and stress. Moreover, women often experience more tension related to childcare, invest more time in domestic tasks, and have lower self-esteem, factors that may contribute to a higher level of burnout. In Spain, León-Rubio et al. (2013) studied burnout differences among teachers and found that men exhibited higher scores in depersonalization. This was explained by their more intense experience of work conflicts, as well as expressing greater discomfort with work supervision and lack of professional recognition. Also, differences have been found between men and women in their perception of the psychosocial factors of their jobs. Differences have also been found between men and women in their perception of the psychosocial factors of their jobs. For example, De Sio et al. (2018) found that women perceive worse working conditions than men, which is explained by the authors due to the fact that women generally have worse employment contracts—more temporary and part-time—and greater job insecurity than men, making them more vulnerable to experiencing work-related stress.

Understanding how individual and organizational factors influence burnout syndrome in workers is key for preventing and intervening in workers' health, but in the literature reviewed, there is some controversy about which variables have more strength in predicting the occurrence of this syndrome. Moreover, most related studies have been conducted with samples of healthcare and education workers, but very few have examined these relationships among workers in the retail sector. Therefore, the main objective of this research is to examine burnout syndrome in a sample of retail sector workers and to determine which specific variables predict the occurrence of perceived burnout syndrome from two broad categories: personality and organizational factors. As previous studies have identified differences in burnout levels between men and women, we also analyze whether the relationships between personality variables, psychosocial risk factors, and burnout dimensions differ between the two genders.

Based on the reviewed literature, we propose the following general hypotheses:

H1. *Women will score higher in burnout because they are expected to exhibit higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, as well as lower personal accomplishment compared to men.*

H2. Psychosocial risk factors are anticipated to have direct effects on burnout. Participant being exposed to more adverse working conditions or greater psychosocial risks (higher demands, less support, job control, and satisfaction with rewards) will lead to higher burnout scores, particularly higher emotional exhaustion.

H3. Participants who are more extroverted and less neurotic will show significant lower burnout.

H4. Additionally, we expect to identify significant interaction effects between personality traits and psychosocial risk factors. These effects will be more pronounced between neuroticism or extraversion and emotional demands and support. Individuals high in neuroticism and low in extraversion tend to perceive heightened emotional job demands and less social support, resulting in increased emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Participants and Procedure

A cross-sectional design was established, which involved a sample of 667 commerce workers. Participants were recruited through LinkedIn and from disseminating this research through other social networks (i.e., Instagram, Twitter). It was necessary to be employed and to have at least six months of seniority at the time of participation. Those who wished to participate accessed a link through a post or message that led to a Google Forms questionnaire. On the Google Forms Questionnaire, participants first provided informed consent to participate in the study. We collected data from October 2020 until July 2023. The sample's mean age was 30 years, ranging from 18 to 65 years.

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Psychology at the Complutense University of Madrid (Ref. 2019/20-022). All participants provided informed consent to participate in the study. Table 1 displays the main characteristics of the participants. The association between gender and the rest of the sociodemographic characteristics was analyzed using chi-square. Statistically significant associations were only found in the percentage of sick leaves, with some higher frequency in women ($\chi^2 = 5.67, p = 0.02$) and in the type of employment contract, with temporary contracts being more frequent among women ($\chi^2 = 17.70, p < 0.001$).

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the participants.

		N (%)
Gender	Male	241 (36.1)
	Female	426 (63.9)
Educational level	Primary	59 (8.8)
	Secondary	159 (23.8)
	University	449 (67.3)
Civil status	Single	359 (53.8)
	Married	279 (41.8)
	Divorced	29 (4.3)
Children	Yes	168 (25.2)
	No	499 (74.8)
Sick leave	Yes	192 (28.8)
	No	475 (71.2)
Type of contract	Permanent	496 (74.4)
	Temporary	171 (25.6)
Seniority	<1 year	174 (26.1)
	1–2 years	126 (18.9)
	3–5 years	191 (28.6)
	>5 years	176 (26.4)

2.2. Measures

Participants completed an online self-report survey that consisted of the following instruments:

- Sociodemographic variables: Participants had to indicate their age, sex, educational level, civil status, whether they had children, employment position, whether they had taken sick leave during the last year, cause of sick leave, seniority, and type of contract.
- Psychosocial risk factors. To assess the psychosocial working conditions perceived by participants, we used the CarMen-Q questionnaire (Rubio-Valdehita et al. 2017), which evaluates cognitive, emotional, temporal, and performance demands, as well as the control, reward, and organizational support scales from the DECORE questionnaire (Luceño Moreno et al. 2005). The CarMen-Q was developed for the Spanish population and consists of 29 multiple-choice response items. The item response format was a Likert frequency scale of four alternatives in which 0 meant never, 1 rarely, 2 often, and 3 always. The CarMen-Q questionnaire contains the following subscales. The factor “cognitive demands” consists of 10 items related to the processing of complex information, difficulties in perceiving information, complex decision making, memory load, and the amount of information that needs to be considered when performing job tasks. The factor “temporal demands” was constituted by 7 items that asked about work rhythm, the presence of annoying interruptions, or the possibility of taking breaks when the worker needs it. The factor “emotional demands” was formed by 7 items related to the job’s emotional and health consequences. Five items constituted the “performance demands” factor, which asked about the performance requirements at the level of responsibility, the required accuracy of responses, and the severity of the error. In our sample, the CarMen-Q had high reliability: $\alpha(\text{Cognitive}) = 0.90$; $\alpha(\text{Emotional}) = 0.90$; $\alpha(\text{Temporal}) = 0.83$; and $\alpha(\text{Performance}) = 0.79$. The DECORE scales included 5-point Likert-type response items. The satisfaction with rewards scale consists of 11 items; it evaluates the perception that the worker has about the benefits that they receive for their contribution to the organization, and its reliability in the study sample was $\alpha = 0.88$. The organizational support scale assesses the quality of relationships established with colleagues and supervisors and is composed of 12 items with a reliability of $\alpha = 0.81$. The control scale consists of 9 items that assess the extent to which workers can determine the tasks they perform, as well as the work methods, locations, and, in general, all decisions that impact the ultimate purpose of the work itself, and its reliability was also high ($\alpha = 0.80$). The two instruments (the CarMen-Q and DECORE) were developed and validated for use in the Spanish working population.
- Personality: The Spanish version of the NEO-FFI (Costa and McCrae 2008) was used to evaluate five major personality traits: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. This tool consists of 60 Likert-type response items and allows for a straightforward assessment of the normal personality of adults. The NEO-FFI meets the criteria for factor validity and internal consistency. For our sample, we obtained satisfactory reliability: $\alpha(\text{Neuroticism}) = 0.85$; $\alpha(\text{Extraversion}) = 0.87$; $\alpha(\text{Openness}) = 0.83$; $\alpha(\text{Agreeableness}) = 0.75$; and $\alpha(\text{Conscientiousness}) = 0.82$.
- Burnout: We used the MBI-GS Burnout Syndrome Inventory (Gil-Monte 2011), which consists of 22 multiple-choice response items and is evaluated using a Likert scale with response options ranging from “never” (0) to “every day” (6). The questionnaire included the following subscales: (1) Emotional Exhaustion, which assesses experiences of being emotionally exhausted by the demands of work; (2) Depersonalization, which evaluates the degree to which the employee shows attitudes of coldness and detachment that occur in the workplace; and (3) Personal Accomplishment, which assesses the feelings that the worker has of self-efficiency and fulfilment that occur in the workplace. The MBI for the Spanish population was used, and it met enough requirements for both factor validity and internal consistency (Gil-Monte 2011). In our sample, the MBI had good reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.82$).

2.3. Data Analysis

After the raw scores were obtained, the corresponding norms for each test for the Spanish population were applied, resulting in percentile scores (ranging from 0 to 100). All the statistical analyses were conducted using these norm-based scores. First, descriptive statistics, comparisons in burnout between men and women (*t* test), and correlations between the variables were calculated. As significant differences were obtained between men and women, several stepwise multiple regressions were performed for each group following the procedure described by (Toothaker et al. 1994) for testing and interpreting interaction effects. Multiple linear regressions (stepwise) were performed on each burnout dimension for each sex-group to test the direct effects of personality traits. Similarly, multiple linear regressions (stepwise) were performed on each burnout dimension for each sex-group to test the direct effects of working conditions. Also, multiple linear regressions (stepwise) were performed on each working condition for each sex-group to test the direct effects of personality traits. Finally, multiple linear regressions (stepwise) were performed on each burnout dimension for each sex-group to test the interaction effects of personality traits and psychosocial working conditions.

All analyses were performed using SPSS 25.0.

3. Results

The descriptive statistics and correlations between variables for all participants are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Means (*M*), standard deviations (*SD*), and correlations of the burnout, personality, and perceived working conditions variables. * *p* < 0.05, ** *p* < 0.01, *** *p* < 0.001.

	<i>M</i> <i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Neuroticism	62.09 35.27														
2. Extraversion	49.43 35.42	−0.16 ***													
3. Openness	53.48 34.73	0.27 ***	0.30 ***												
4. Agreeableness	39.12 32.30	−0.08 *	0.39 **	0.28 **											
5. Conscientiousness	42.25 34.51	−0.28 ***	0.37 ***	0.12 **	0.33 ***										
6. Cognitive demands	52.80 22.48	−0.02 **	0.16 **	0.01	−0.02	0.22 ***									
7. Temporal demands	53.16 22.98	0.20 ***	−0.03	0.15 ***	−0.04	0.10 **	0.40 ***								
8. Emotional demands	48.38 25.30	0.26 ***	−0.22 ***	−0.01	−0.21 ***	−0.16 ***	0.35 ***	0.51 ***							
9. Performance demands	64.94 21.22	−0.01 **	0.13 **	0.07	0.06	0.27 ***	0.68 ***	0.48 ***	0.30 ***						
10. Support	59.56 22.99	−0.14 ***	0.28 ***	0.14 ***	0.26 ***	0.23 ***	−0.08 *	−0.29 ***	−0.45 ***	−0.09 *					
11. Control	44.22 23.60	−0.34 ***	0.15 ***	−0.18 ***	0.10 *	0.12 **	0.04	−0.48 ***	−0.36 ***	−0.12 **	0.40 ***				
12. Rewards satisfaction	53.80 22.43	−0.19 ***	0.12 **	−0.07	0.12 **	0.11 **	0.01	−0.24 ***	−0.36 ***	−0.05	0.45 ***	0.44 ***			
13. Emotional Exhaustion	61.68 29.39	0.36 ***	−0.24 ***	0.06	−0.21 ***	−0.23 ***	0.14 ***	0.45 ***	0.74 ***	0.13 **	−0.45 ***	−0.38 ***	−0.40 ***		
14. Depersonalization	52.78 29.92	0.34 ***	−0.24 ***	0.04	−0.25 ***	−0.25 ***	0.07	0.26 ***	0.39 ***	0.06	−0.35 ***	−0.30 ***	−0.22 ***	0.47 ***	
15. Personal accomplishment	47.48 27.54	−0.28 ***	0.36 ***	0.07	0.27 ***	0.32 ***	0.24 ***	0.07	−0.12 **	0.25 ***	0.27 ***	0.20 ***	0.16 ***	−0.21 ***	−0.21 ***

It was tested whether the perception of psychosocial working conditions and personality have direct effects on burnout, and additionally, whether the influence of personality on burnout is mediated by the individual perception of working conditions. Gender is considered as a variable that may lead to differences in the levels of the three factors and in the relationships between them.

It was examined whether there were significant differences between men and women in each of the three dimensions of burnout using the independent samples t-test. Signifi-

cant differences were found in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, with women obtaining a higher mean score than men in both dimensions, confirming our Hypothesis 1. No significant differences were found in personal accomplishment, although women obtained a lower average score (see Table 3).

Table 3. Mean comparisons between men and women in burnout.

		Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Emotional exhaustion	Women	63.40	31.19	2.12	0.034
	Men	58.64	25.67		
Depersonalization	Women	55.51	29.76	3.17	0.002
	Men	47.92	29.61		
Personal accomplishment	Women	46.52	27.44	−1.19	0.234
	Men	49.16	27.68		

Table 4 shows the direct effects of personality and perceived working conditions on burnout for men and women. Regarding personality, direct effects on burnout were found for both groups for extraversion, neuroticism, and agreeableness (confirming our second hypothesis), while the openness variable did not prove significant. As expected, based on the reviewed literature (Hypothesis 3), having a personality profile that is more extraverted, emotionally stable, responsible, and agreeable, prevents the onset of burnout. Conscientiousness was only associated with personal accomplishment in the women’s group. Regarding working conditions, emotional demands were the factor most strongly associated with all three dimensions of burnout in both men and women. Different effects were found between men and women regarding the impact of some working conditions. For instance, while for men, higher temporal demands are associated with greater personal accomplishment, women associate it with increased emotional exhaustion.

Table 5 summarizes the significant direct effects of personality on perceived working conditions for men and women. Overall, the results indicate that personality influences the perception of working conditions, with certain significant differences between men and women. In this sense, cognitive demands are higher in men who are more extraverted, but in women who are more conscientious. Women who are more neurotic and more conscientious perceive higher temporal demands. Satisfaction with rewards is also influenced by different personality variables according to gender. Specifically, extroverted men are more likely to be satisfied with the rewards they perceive for their work, whereas in the case of women, emotional stability and agreeableness are the factors that influence this perception.

As we found that personality directly influences burnout and the perception of working conditions, and this, in turn, is affected by personality, the effects of interaction between factors with direct effects on burnout were analyzed. Table 6 summarises the significant interaction effects of personality and working conditions on each dimension of burnout for men and women. Similar interaction effects were found for women and men in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, but not in personal accomplishment. Individuals who are more neurotic perceive higher emotional demands, leading to greater emotional exhaustion. Regarding depersonalization, the same interaction effect between neuroticism and emotional demands was found, but additionally, it was found that less agreeable individuals perceive less support and more depersonalization. In the case of men, additionally, the more introverted ones perceive less support, leading to higher depersonalization. Regarding personal accomplishment, extraverted men perceive more temporal demands, while extraverted women perceive more cognitive demands, leading to greater feelings of personal accomplishment. These results generally confirm Hypothesis 4.

Table 4. Standardized direct effects (β) of personality and perceived working conditions on burnout. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ for men and women.

	Man			Woman		
	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal Accomplishment	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal Accomplishment
Neuroticism	0.28 ***	0.20 ***	-0.25 ***	0.35 ***	0.35 ***	-0.19 ***
Extraversion	-0.16 ***	-0.15 ***	0.27 ***	-0.13 ***	-0.09 ***	0.26 ***
Openness	0.04	0.12	0.06	-0.07	-0.01	-0.01
Agreeableness	-0.16 ***	-0.22 ***	0.18 **	-0.13 ***	-0.22 ***	0.08
Conscientiousness	-0.07	-0.07	0.07	-0.07	-0.09	0.19 **
Adjusted R ²	0.19	0.17	0.27	0.17	0.17	0.18
Cognitive demands	0.02	-0.05	-0.02	-0.16 ***	-0.02	0.20 **
Temporal demands	0.08	0.02	0.35 ***	0.16 ***	0.04	0.01
Emotional demands	0.72 ***	0.33 ***	-0.20 **	0.58 ***	0.23 ***	-0.13 *
Performance demands	0.16 **	0.02	0.26 ***	-0.07	-0.05	0.16 *
Support	-0.10	-0.20 **	0.19 **	-0.10*	-0.20 ***	0.18 ***
Control	-0.09 *	-0.12	0.20 ***	-0.01	-0.13 **	0.13 *
Rewards satisfaction	-0.10 *	-0.12	0.00	-0.11 **	-0.06	-0.04
Adjusted R ²	0.59	0.19	0.29	0.53	0.20	0.14

Table 5. Standardized direct effects (β) of personality on perceived working conditions for men and women. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

	Men	Women
Cognitive demands	Extraversion (0.23 ***)	Conscientiousness (0.24 ***)
Temporal demands	---	Neuroticism (0.27 ***) Conscientiousness (0.14 **)
Emotional demands	Neuroticism (0.19 **) Agreeableness (-0.14 *) Extraversion (-0.17 *)	Neuroticism (0.23 ***) Agreeableness (-0.14 **) Extraversion (-0.13 **)
Performance demands	Conscientiousness (0.29 ***)	Conscientiousness (0.24 ***)
Support	Extraversion (0.30 ***) Agreeableness (0.22 ***)	Extraversion (0.16 **) Agreeableness (0.17 **) Neuroticism (-0.12 *)
Control	Neuroticism (-0.19 **) Extraversion (0.22 **)	Neuroticism (-0.35 ***)
Reward satisfaction	Extraversion (0.26 ***)	Neuroticism (-0.22 ***) Agreeableness (0.11 *)

Table 6. Standardized interaction effects (β) of personality on burnout mediated by perceived working conditions. $p < 0.001$ in all cases.

	Men	Women
Emotional exhaustion	Neuroticism X Emotional demands (0.81)	Neuroticism X Emotional demands (0.88)
Depersonalization	Neuroticism X Emotional demands (0.43) Agreeableness X Support (−0.38) Extraversion X Support (−0.38)	Neuroticism X Emotional demands (0.45) Agreeableness X Support (−0.58)
Personal accomplishment	Extraversion X Temporal demands (0.49)	Extraversion X Cognitive demands (0.26)

4. Discussion

The current study examined the predictive role of personality and organizational factors in burnout among retail workers in Spain from a gender-based perspective. While previous research has concentrated on the healthcare sector, education, and managerial positions, studies addressing workers in retail companies have been exceptional (Chacón et al. 2024). Given the identified differences in burnout in prior research, we considered the relationships between these variables in both men and women.

The observed incidence of burnout in the total sample closely mirrors early findings in the same sector across different countries (Indregard et al. 2017; Kalinienė et al. 2021). Consequently, there is a prevalent pattern of high emotional exhaustion, moderate levels of depersonalization, and low scores in personal accomplishment. Consistent with previous research, women exhibited higher burnout than men, particularly demonstrating elevated levels of emotional exhaustion and increased depersonalization (León-Rubio et al. 2013; Marchand et al. 2018). Although women also presented lower scores in PA, this difference was marginal. Furthermore, women showed a higher percentage of sick leave than men, and their employment contracts were more temporary. These findings agree with other studies highlighting the gender disparities prevalent in the European labour market. A comprehensive systematic review conducted by Campos-Serna et al. (2013) revealed that women experienced higher levels of job insecurity, less JC, inferior contractual working conditions, and poorer self-perceived physical and mental health compared to men.

In line with previous research (Jacobs and Dodd 2003), neuroticism was the most predictive personality trait for personal accomplishment and depersonalization. Behaviours associated with neuroticism, such as underestimating one's own performance, heightened emotional reactivity, and self-criticism in stressful situations (Carver and Connor-Smith 2010), are linked to increased susceptibility to burnout. Our findings corroborate this viewpoint, indicating that more neurotics are more prone to experiencing emotional exhaustion and depersonalization while perceiving lower personal accomplishment.

Results suggest that extraverts are less prone to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and more likely to personal accomplishment. Bühler and Land (2003) describe extraversion as a protective factor, noting a strong negative relationship between extraversion and emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

Our results show that agreeable individuals are less likely to experience emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and more likely to perceive personal accomplishment. Agreeableness, characterized by altruism, empathy, cooperation, and helpfulness, allows individuals to create a supportive social network to cope with work-related challenges and personal conflicts, increasing resilience to burnout (Swider and Zimmerman 2010).

Openness did not have effects on burnout. Although openness is related to adaptability and resilience, it appears to be the weakest predictor of burnout (Swider and Zimmerman 2010), with some studies suggesting little theoretical relevance in depersonalization (Alarcon et al. 2009; Kim et al. 2007).

The psychosocial risks obtained similar levels to those found previously.

In general, being exposed to adverse psychosocial work conditions (higher mental load, lower autonomy, insufficient organizational support, and inadequate rewards) is associated with higher emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and lower personal accomplishment. High personal accomplishment plays the main role and is especially associated with customer-related burnout (Indregard et al. 2017). In addition, high emotional demands are strongly associated with greater emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment. Finally, organizational support, job control, and rewards satisfaction are associated with positive aspects of well-being, with lower emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and greater personal accomplishment (Kalinienė et al. 2021).

Relationship between personality and perceived working conditions was also found in our research. Recent studies confirm that different personality types perceive the work environment and work demands differently (Kang and Malvaso 2023). Li et al. (2023) in analysing the relationships between workload and personality in nurses, found high correlations with neuroticism, as well as negative correlations with agreeableness, openness, and extraversion.

In the present study, neuroticism, agreeableness, and extraversion demonstrated significant direct effects on emotional demands in the workplace, both in men and women. Similarly, in both the men and women groups, performance demands were associated with conscientiousness. However, differences between the two groups were found in the personality traits associated with the rest of the psychosocial conditions. Higher cognitive demands were associated with more extraverted men, but with more conscientious women. More extraversion and agreeableness were associated with greater organizational support in both groups. However, for women, neuroticism was also significant, indicating that women with higher neuroticism perceive less support. In the women's group, neuroticism stands as the exclusive personality variable with direct effects on job control. Contrastingly, in the men's group, significant effects of extraversion and neuroticism were found. Finally, rewards satisfaction was positively associated with extraversion in men, but with agreeableness and neuroticism in women. These results suggest a nuanced interplay between personality traits and the perception of work, with gender-specific variations in the salience of these traits.

The results obtained about direct and interaction effects between personality and work conditions from a gender-based perspective allow us to draw the following main conclusions:

- Emotional exhaustion is associated, both in men and women, with neuroticism and emotional demands, as well as their interaction. Individuals with higher neuroticism are more susceptible to experiencing emotional exhaustion, especially when the emotional demands of the job are higher. Extraversion and agreeableness also had direct effects on emotional exhaustion. Similar results were found earlier. O'Neill and Xiao (2010) found that hotel managers who are more introverted and neurotic exhibit greater emotional exhaustion, and Ghorpade et al. (2007) came to similar conclusions in a sample of instructors of a large state university.
- Depersonalization also showed very similar results for both groups (men and women) regarding the variables associated with this dimension of burnout. Neuroticism, agreeableness, emotional demands, and organizational support had direct effects on depersonalization. Individuals with higher neuroticism exhibit higher scores in depersonalization, while agreeable individuals show lower depersonalization. High emotional demands, as well as low organizational support, are associated with increased depersonalization. In the men's group, a direct effect of extraversion and agreeableness on the perception of organizational support was found. This means that more extraverted and agreeable men feel more supported by their colleagues and the organization they work for. This relationship was also found in the women's group, although the coefficients obtained were lower. Additionally, neuroticism was also significant, indicating that more neurotic women perceive less support. The interaction between neuroticism and emotional demands was significant, indicating that being more neurotic, coupled with a work situation characterized by higher emotional

demands, is associated with increased depersonalization. Similarly, the interaction between agreeableness and support reveals that more agreeable individuals perceive greater support from their colleagues and experience lower depersonalization. In the men's group, it was also found that the interaction between more extraversion and more organizational support is linked to lower scores in depersonalization. Similar findings were reported by [Ghorpade et al. \(2007\)](#), where depersonalization was found to have a negative correlation with agreeableness and emotional stability.

- For personal accomplishment, a negative relationship was found with neuroticism and emotional demands, and a positive association with extraversion, agreeableness, temporal demands, organizational support, job control, and personal accomplishment. Furthermore, the interaction between extraversion and temporal demands was also significant in the men's group, indicating that more extraverted men perceive higher time demands, and this is associated with greater personal accomplishment. In the women's group, personal accomplishment was also associated with neuroticism and extraversion, organizational support, and job control, similar to what was found in the men's group. However, in women, there were also significant effects of conscientiousness and cognitive demands, while no associations were found with temporal demands. The effects of the interaction between extraversion and time demands (for men) and cognitive demands (for women) were significant in their association with personal accomplishment. This difference seems to indicate that while men feel more personally accomplished when they dedicate more time to their work, women experience greater personal accomplishment when they perceive their work as more challenging or complex from a cognitive perspective. This effect is more pronounced in more extraverted individuals, regardless of gender. Research across different regions in America and Africa highlights positive correlations between conscientiousness and personal accomplishment and negative correlations with depersonalization ([Swider and Zimmerman 2010](#)). [Ghorpade et al. \(2007\)](#) found that personal accomplishment is positively related to extroversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotional stability.

The results of our study confirm those of previous research studies in which individuals with a high degree of agreeableness, extraversion, and low neuroticism cope to a greater extent with pressure at work and perceive high organizational support; thus, they have a high ability to withstand pressure and play a mediating role in workload ([Wang and Wei 2018](#)).

The identified prominence of emotional exhaustion as the dimension most directly affected by both personality and working conditions corresponds with the established literature ([Arigoni et al. 2009](#); [Gómez-Polo et al. 2022](#)).

The present study has several limitations. First, the sample size of retail workers should be expanded to better capture the diversity within the population of retail workers in Spain. The retail sector encompasses a wide range of job functions and organizational structures which may impact the generalizability of the findings. Future research could explore the applicability of our results in other countries, considering potential cultural and contextual differences. Our study provides a snapshot of the current situation, highlighting the need for longitudinal studies to elucidate the temporal dynamics of the observed associations.

5. Conclusions and Implications

The results obtained allow us to draw the following main conclusions:

- Gender Differences: Significant differences were observed between men and women regarding the level of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and about the influence of personality and psychosocial risk factors on burnout. In general, women experience higher levels of burnout.
- Emotional exhaustion and depersonalization: Neuroticism, extraversion, and agreeableness showed significant direct effects on emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and emotional demands at work. However, gender differences were found in variables associated with other psychosocial conditions, such as autonomy and organizational support.

- **Personal accomplishment:** Women exhibited a positive association with extraversion, conscientiousness, and cognitive demands, while men showed greater personal accomplishment with higher levels of extraversion, agreeableness, and temporal demands.
- **Organizational support and rewards satisfaction:** In men, extraversion was positively associated with rewards satisfaction, while in women, agreeableness and neuroticism played a significant role. This suggests that women may perceive organizational support and rewards satisfaction differently based on their personality traits.
- **Complex Interactions:** Interactions between personality and psychosocial work risk factors are complex and vary by gender. These complexities underscore the importance of addressing burnout from an integrative and gender-sensitive perspective, recognizing the different ways variables interact in men and women.

As practical implications, our findings suggest that focusing on previously identified significant relationships between gender, personality traits, psychosocial factors, and dimensions of burnout is a fruitful approach to understand better burnout and can provide a basis for intervention. Companies can implement measures such as emotional support programs, training in communication skills, stress management, work-life balance policies, and the promotion of a healthy work environment. Furthermore, it is crucial for companies to comply with labour regulations and foster a work environment that encourages respect and collaboration among employees. Numerous interventions can be tailored to individuals' unique needs based on their personality traits, enhancing burnout prevention. As examples, for those high in extraversion, group activities fostering social connections and workplace support are beneficial. Individuals high in neuroticism benefit from stress management programs, mindfulness sessions, or individual counseling to address specific concerns. High conscientiousness individuals benefit from time management training, effective delegation, and leadership development. Those low in agreeableness gain from communication training, participation in community activities, and personal development sessions focused on self-awareness and relationship-building. Regarding personnel selection and development, organizations may consider assessing employee personality traits during the hiring and development process to identify those at higher risk of experiencing burnout and provide them with necessary support. Our findings could support the implementation of workplace policies promoting a balance between work and personal life, while acknowledging and addressing gender differences in burnout experiences. Lastly, our results could be utilized to educate both employers and employees about the importance of burnout management and workplace well-being promotion, taking into account individual differences in personality and gender.

The differences found between genders in burnout and its relationship with personality are important as they allow for a better understanding of gender disparities, the identification of differences in the prevalence or manifestation of burnout between genders (higher in women), and the early detection and prevention through the implementation of specific preventive measures for each group with more equitable work practices tailored to the needs of each gender. In this regard, for example, our results indicate that an increase in temporal demands will have a very negative impact on women, while men will experience greater personal accomplishment (women will feel higher personal accomplishment as cognitive demands in their work increase). While extraversion and neuroticism are confirmed as the personality variables most related to burnout, conscientiousness is a personality trait particularly protective against burnout specifically for women.

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