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The influence of work shifts on burnout for millennial chefs in The Western Cape, South Africa

Ita Geyser [1]*, Nicola Wakelin-Theron [2], Nadia Esterhuyse [3]

[1,2,3] *University of Johannesburg, South Africa*

***Corresponding Author**: itag@uj.ac.za

Abstract: The purpose of this research was to determine whether longer work shifts of more than eight hours, contributed towards millennial chefs' burnout levels. For this study, a quantitative research approach was adopted. The study comprised of two groups of millennial chefs, aged 25 to 39, who worked long hours (more than eight hours) as well as millennial chefs who worked shorter hours (eight hours or less). The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory was the instrument that was used to measure the Burnout levels of the chef participants. The results indicated that the chefs who worked longer hours where more burnt-out than the chefs who worked shorter hours. Personal Burnout had a large effect on the Burnout levels of the two different groups. Therefore, shift length could be considered a predictor of Burnout. The working hours of chefs has a major impact on their Burnout levels. Managers and owners of restaurants and hotels should adapt their working hours to decrease the Burnout levels of the chefs in their employment. The findings from this study will assist chefs to renegotiate working hours with their respective employees.

Keywords: burnout, millennial chefs, stress, work hours, work-life balance

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Introduction

The overall number of Millennials struggling with work stress and job burnout is expected to grow because they are unfamiliar with the hospitality industry's work ethics, standards, and long work hours (Hammond et al., 2019). The hospitality industry is mostly an unpleasant work environment: the job is challenging, the guests' expectations are high, and poor wages are the norm (Ariza-Montes et al., 2018). Employees often face long hours on their feet, work overtime, and must deal with difficult superiors and demanding customers that add to the chefs' job stress (Ariza-Montes et al., 2018). Millennials also better known as Generation Y are considered optimistic people who do not value rules and need several career options (Yadav, 2021). For example, millennials demand gender equality, reasonable pay, the flexibility after Covid-19 to work remotely.

The long and unsociable working hours of chefs and high-pressure to provide quality culinary output, in an industry where transformation and innovation are essential to the outcome leads to job stress. Burnout is a term which describes an employee's, chronic and emotional stress which manifests itself at work. Subsequently a decrease in an employee's accomplishments is observed. Burnout is characterised by three elements namely, emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and lack of personal accomplishment (Maslach, 2003). Continuous stress leads to burnout if the chef does not receive support from his/her manager and peers (Ungar, 2019). When an employee loses the ability to connect with colleagues and the work environment in his/her professional capacity these relationships break down (Aycsegül & Erkan, 2018). Burnout furthermore leads to high staff turnover as well as high absenteeism due to a lack of motivation. As a result, employee turnover could affect the overall organisational performance (Azeem *et al.*,

2014). According to the Demerouti *et al.,* (2021), individuals who experience burnout often do not perceive any hope of positive change regarding their work environment.

Culinary work is fulfilling and provides benefits for society at large. Culinary work can be described as a calling as it provides meaning for the chef who is engaged in his/her occupation and contributes to the greater good in nourishing diners (Steger *et al.*, 2010). Cooking makes individuals happy, and the idea of providing nourishment through work as a calling takes on a literal meaning in commercial kitchens. In Traynor *et al.* (2022) study, Chef Michel explains: "not many jobs out there where you can go in and actually make people very happy and interact with people like you." He adds, "the food tastes better when you know it is made from passion." The energy and dedication put into the food production enhances the quality and the gastronomic experience for the diner who is eating the final product.

The French culinary term "mise en place" is described in the Larousse Gastronomique as follows: "...in the kitchen it means setting out the ingredients and utensils required for the preparation of the dishes on the menu" (Montagne, 2001). In the culinary environment mise en place is key to culinary success. A chef whose mise en place is successfully executed, realizes that he/she is in control of his/her time and has a subsequent flow experience (optimal experience) which is characterised by a state in which an individual is so deeply involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter. This activity is so enjoyable that individuals will execute it for the sheer sake of doing it, even at great personal cost with regards to time and effort within the culinary environment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Geyser *et al.* (2016) study, suggest that there are significant relationships between mechanics of time management perceived control of time and psychological well-being constructs such as flow.

In contrast, the physical environment where chefs function affects their job performance as well as their job satisfaction The environment is often highly stressful, erratic, and unpleasant as the physical working environment is crowded, hot and loud coupled with hostile chef behaviours in which in turn leads to high levels of work pressure (Thayer *et al.*, 2010). Similarly, Kohli & Mehta (2022), suggest that physical, psychological, mechanical, and chemical hazards coupled with a high workload, repetitive and monotonous tasks and low remuneration are major stressors in the culinary production environment.

The working hours of millennial chefs affects this group's burnout levels. Shift lengths are believed to be a predictor of burnout as millennial chefs who work longer than eight hours per day are often more burnt-out than the chefs who work less than eight hours per day. Understanding the work culture of millennial chefs would advance the organisational culture in the long run and this could possibly lead to better work engagement and productivity in commercial kitchens.

The owners and management of restaurants of hotels and hotels should therefore amend working hours to decrease the Burnout levels of the chefs in their employment. This can be done through better shift roster planning and by rotating chef employees to allow them to work shifts of eight hours or less at a time.

This work adjustment could lead to increased staff retention and better work-life balance for millennial chefs which would benefit management and will assist chefs to renegotiate working hours with their respective employers.

As a result of the above, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H1: Long shift lengths contribute to the burnout levels of millennial chefs.

The millennial executive chefs and chefs de partie

The Millennial generation were born between 1981 and 1994, thus a millennials age range in 2023 between 23 and 41 years (Dimock, 2019) and are currently replacing the Baby Boomers in the workforce (Wubbe, 2014). Thus, almost 50% of the workforce now are millennials. Millennial employees share many of the following characteristics - they value social connections, enjoy working in groups (Sánchez-Hernández *et al.,* 2019) and are considered as creative, energetic, and charismatic (Ray & Wakelin-Theron, 2018). These employees are expected to have a wide variety of skills and attributes to work in the changing tourism industry that is often volatile, unknown, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) (Wakelin-Theron *et al.*, 2019). It is, however, possible to mentor them to become competent employees in a changing environment (Satterly *et al.*,

2018; Wakelin-Theron, 2021). Millennials are often younger than some of their managers and supervisors and have not experienced difficult times in an environment that is not conducive, and these chefs are not as resilient as the older generations who have learnt how to handle stressful situations (Liebenberg & Moore, 2018).

Millennials place their families first and need work life-balance (Sánchez-Hernández *et al.*, 2019; Waworuntu *et al.*, 2022). This is in contrast with their older, managers and supervisors as millennial employees are not prepared to work long hours, on the weekends and public holidays for little compensation, millennials become impatient and frustrated as they want career advancements early in their career (Cerasa *et al.*, 2020; Sánchez-Hernández *et al.*, 2019). Millennials are furthermore not prepared for the industry norms and leave the hospitality industry due to their pessimistic view regarding high levels of job stress and burnout (Nurdin & Rohaeni, 2020). It is essential to have the right set of skills to work within the tourism and hospitality environment (Wakelin-Theron *et al.*, 2019).

Millennials employees do not hesitate to leave their employer if their remuneration and purpose in the organisation do not align. For this generation, inclusive benefits go further than time off for parenthood as they demand time off for other pursuits such as pet care. The millennial employees are furthermore focused on gender equality and equal pay among genders for equal work output. They also desire to continue with flexible work arrangements after the Covid-19 pandemic and embrace hybrid work models. The organisational culture should be a welcoming environment, where they can ask questions, be heard, and have a sense of shared ownership together with their employers. This generation wants to be creative, explore new ideas, push boundaries, and disagree with the status quo (Sánchez-Hernández *et al.,* 2019).

Work hours

Aksu & Temeloglu (2015) study suggests that lengthier work hours contribute to burnout. Most individuals who work long hours are dissatisfied with their working hours which typically occur in industries such as farming, retail, and hospitality, where the workers must work inflexible hours taking on more than what and individual employee can handle (Fabian & Breunig, 2019). The employees in these industries are considered to have low levels of formal schooling and rely on their on-the-job knowledge and skills at work (Fabian & Breunig, 2019).

Stress

Stress often happens when individuals experience something for the first time, which can either be a pleasant surprise or it could be a threat to the individual. According to Demerouti *et al.,* (2021) every individual manages his/ her stress in a unique way. The human body generates a stress hormone when the body is stressed out and this stress hormone helps individuals to push through a challenging situation and the flight-or-fight response is triggered. Very high levels of stress, however, causes hopelessness and depression. Some warning signs in individuals include poor attitude, low morale, lack of interest in daily performance issues as well as a lack of care towards customers. In summary, from the discussion above long-term stressful environments affect mental and physical health (Okely *et al.*, 2017; Demerouti *et al.,* 2021).

Types of stress

Selye (1976), distinguished two types of stress and named them eustress, which is a desirable kind of stress such as looking forward to a vacation, and distress, which is an undesirable or unpleasant type of stress such as writing an exam. The bodily responses to both types of stress are nearly the same non-specific reactions to the many positive or negative provocations that an individual encounters constantly from his/her environment. In an earlier work Selye (1976) explained that the origin of eustress causes less harm than distress and it is up to an individual's response of "how you take it" that defines whether an individual could become accustomed to changing conditions and subsequently successfully adapt to these changing conditions.

Ungar (2019) reports that there are different kinds of stress. The first type is known as eustress or positive stress as explained by Selye (1976). This is when an acceptable amount of stress is present for a brief period. The second kind of stress that one can experience is tolerable stress. It can negatively affect a person but can be managed by adequate resources, health care

as well as relationships. The third type is considered 'toxic stress' and is tough to manage and to cope with (Kalisch *et al.*, 2015). Toxic stress happens when there is a lack of resources to manage stress and as a result compromises an individual's health. It furthermore amplifies helplessness and can contribute to an individual's forming addictive habits (Kalisch *et al.*, 2015; Pidd *et al.*, 2015). Stress is, however, not always bad and can sometimes be helpful. Based on the discussion, it is therefore crucial to balance stress, resources, and resilience to manage one's own wellbeing (Ungar, 2019).

Stress in the kitchen

Chefs work in a high-stress work environment (Cerasa *et al.*, 2020; Pidd *et al.*, 2015). The difficulties they face include but are not limited to the following: blocked sinks, inadequate work surface, lousy ventilation, cluttered spaces, a shortage of storage, dirty surfaces, and bad lighting (Ungar, 2019). Chefs furthermore work with severe heat and with dangerous equipment such as hot ovens, sharp knives, and gas, all whilst guarding against greasy floors (Ariza-Montes *et al.,* 2018), with limited smart technology at hand, or in some cases the inadequacy of the appropriate use of these innovative mediums. Therefore, there is an increased risk of suffering injuries and illnesses. Chefs can also burn themselves on gas flames or slip on fallen food and sustain injuries (Ariza-Montes *et al.*, 2018). They perform intensive physical labour such as picking up and moving large equipment and standing for the whole shift (Ariza-Montes *et al.*, 2018; Okely *et al.*, 2017). Prolonged periods of this kind of exposure have a negative effect on the mental as physical wellbeing of chef employees.

New employees and employees who have little to no experience needs intensive training and need to be carefully supervised by a senior chef. Chefs with inadequate skills are less productive due to an absence of knowledge, training, and practical work experience than those with sufficient skills. The skilled, experienced chefs therefore assist their less experienced colleagues, act as mentors and provide on the job training to those chefs with who has limited skills while still performing at their own jobs (Marinakou, & Giousmpasoglou, 2022). This extra burden during a kitchen shift adds to an already stressful situation at work.

Emotional stress at work

The kitchen brigade system is a hierarchical system developed by Auguste Escoffier. He served in the French army and brought his military hierarchical experiences to the Ritz hotel kitchen in the 1800s. This system streamlined kitchen duties and has prevented chaos in commercial kitchens globally for many years (Aron, Botella & Lubart, 2019). The kitchen brigade hierarchy system runs on fear and not encouragement and chefs tolerate being bullied and harassed by their superiors. Due to the high levels of pressure and stress, conflicts may causing a lack of creativity and purpose in preparing food, and an overall loss of enthusiasm (Ariza-Montes *et al.*, 2018; Pidd *et al.*, 2015).

Job burnout

Burnout is defined as the mental, physical, and emotional exhaustion that comes from long-term stress (Aycsegül & Erkan, 2018; Maslach, 2003). Furthermore, job burnout can be explained as a psychological disorder that is a delayed response to job stress (Hadi *et al.*, 2018; Maslach, 2003). Someone who experiences burnout will also experience fatigue and exhaustion that stems from continuous stress that is emotionally draining (Aycsegül & Erkan, 2018). Some consequences of burnout lead to excessive stress, dizziness, fatigue, headache, insomnia, alcohol or substance abuse, digestive issues, high blood pressure and in some cases heart disease (Esterhuyse *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, burnout has a physical and a psychological component regarding exhaustion (Robins *et al.*, 2018). Job burnout is furthermore considered as an occupational hazard (Hadi *et al.*, 2018; Koc & Bozkurt, 2017; Maslach, 2003).

Continuous work stress leads to burnout (Azeem et al., 2014). This type of stress can be reduced by adjusting. The adjustment to stress varies on how much the environment benefits or fails an individual, and results in neurological, genetic, and behavioural changes (Ungar, 2019). Employees who work under severe work pressure and continual stress can be psychologically drained and are likely to develop burnout (Maslach, 2003). For example, burnout has a higher

incidence for the following occupations: line workers, managers, and service industries professionals (Maslach, 2003). Many chefs who experience burnout have a desire to resign but continue at their current job for personal, financial, and geographical proximity reasons (Hadi et al., 2018; Koc & Bozkurt, 2017).

Coping mechanisms

Numerous chefs use alcohol and drugs as a coping mechanism to deal with the long working hours, bullying and kitchen stress as well as smoking cigarettes to decrease individual stress levels to combat burnout. Often chefs also use drugs and alcohol as a sleeping aid (Pidd *et al.*, 2015). An optimal employability skill set which include soft skills such as interpersonal skills, customer orientation and conflict resolution skills could assist chefs in their quest to overcome burnout symptoms (Wakelin-Theron *et al.*, 2019).

Resources and support

Efficient job resources support hospitality employees to reduce their burnout levels and stress. Job resources such as feedback, career opportunities, job security and reward will enhance an employee's working environment (Ah et al., 2022; Trépanier et al., 2020). Moreover, technical resources in the kitchen environment similarly assist chefs to work more efficient and effectively by minimising the workload and stress through the implementation of smart kitchens, or autonomous services (Wakelin-Theron, 2021). The technical resources for example may include appliances such as smart ovens and digital inventory systems (Gössling, & Hall, 2021).

The support and recognition of superiors is paramount to an employees' wellbeing. Management needs to monitor staff, alleviate workplace pressure, and act before the situation becomes unmanageable. By providing support, resources as well as opportunities for growth and additional learning in a positive social and work environment that promotes productivity, improves mental health, and reduces job stress is created (Ungar, 2019; Wakelin-Theron, 2021). Numerous individuals experience stress but have the necessary resources and support not to experience burnout (Ungar, 2019). Good organisational support may retain valuable chefs and minimise staff turnover (Ah *et al.*, 2022; Trépanier *et al.*, 2020).

Many chefs have been criticised for perpetuating a toxic work environment where employees were expected to work long hours for no remuneration, strict rules, and employee harassment and bullying of staff (Iqbal, Asghar & Asghar, 2022).

Methodology

For this quantitative research study an existing questionnaire, namely the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) was used. Convenience sampling was furthermore used to collect data from 150 chefs between the ages of 25 and 39 in the Western Cape, South Africa. These chefs were employed in sit-down restaurants that served at least two meal courses. The sample was divided into two groups: one group (75 respondents) worked up to eight hours; the second group (75 respondents) who worked more than eight hours.

The Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) (Kristensen *et al.*, 2005), was employed to measure the burnout levels of the chef participants. The CBI comprises of 19 items and 3 subscales for the 3 dimensions of life: Work-related burnout, client-related burnout, and personal burnout. The work-related burnout subscale discovers the participant's emotional and physical tiredness and exhaustion experienced at work. For example, "Does your work frustrate you?" The client-related burnout subscale processes burnout related to dealing with clients, for example, "Are you tired of working with clients?" Lastly, the personal burnout subscale is generic and investigates the general tiredness and exhaustion of an individual, for example "How often do you feel worn out?" The questions are rated on a five-point Likert scale were 5=Always and 1=Never (Kristensen *et al.*, 2005).

The study was conducted during Covid-19 and numerous restaurants had to close during this period. Restaurants that were still open and functioning during the pandemic was approached to participate. The data collection was done in the same manner as pre-pandemic procedures were followed. The geographical area of the restaurants that were targeted to participate in the

Western Cape, South Africa was enlarged to enable the collection of a robust sample. The manager had to give permission for the chefs to participate. However, the chefs could still choose not to participate and ultimately had the final say. The study used a pen and paper method because chefs do not work in an office and do not always have access to electronic devices. The questionnaire consisted of a consent letter which outlined the purpose and aims of the study. The questionnaire was collected a few days later and captured on Excel spreadsheet for further statistical analysis. The SPSS statistical version 27 was used to perform further statistical analysis.

Ethical principles were maintained to ensure that no damage was done to the participants, such as notifying the participant about the purpose of the research, protecting anonymity, and not deceiving the participants (Bryman *et al.*, 2014). The study followed the Covid-19 regulations provided by the Research Ethics Committee of the tertiary institution where this study was registered. The respondents were informed of the reasons they were partaking in the study. The respondents also had a choice to participate and were permitted to withdraw without negative concerns. Furthermore, the respondents were not compelled to answer any questions that made them uncomfortable. The researcher did not influence their answers.

Results and Discussions

Results

The collected data was analysed with SPSS version 27 to determine if shift length contribute to burnout in millennial chefs. Factor analysis was used to reduce the data and explore the theoretical structure (Mayers, 2013). Moreover, the t-test was utilised as well as a pairwise comparison to test the statistical significance.

The first section of the questionnaire consisted of background questions about the millennial chefs such as gender, age, length of shifts an experience. See Table 1 for the composition of the sample.

Table 1. The composition of the millennial chef sample

	Frequency	Percent
Gender (*n* =150)		
Male	80	53.3
Female	70	46.7
Age (*n* = 150)		
25–28	61	40.7
29–32	39	26
33–36	25	16.7
37–39	25	16.7
The average length of shifts (*n* = 150)		
8 hours or less	75	50
More than 8 hours	75	50
Years' experience (*n* = 150)		
Less than one year	6	4
1–3 years	26	17.3
4–6 years	45	30
7–9 years	26	17.3
Ten years or more	47	31.3

There were 150 chef respondents whereby 53.3% were male and 46.7% were female. The sample predominantly consisted of the younger millennials as 40% of the sample were between the ages of 25-28 and both age brackets, 33-36 and 37-39 consisted of 16.7% each of the sample.

Half (50%) of the respondents worked eight hours or less and 50% of the respondents worked more than eight hours. There were 47 respondents (31.3%) who had more than 10 years' experience and only 6 respondents (4%) who had less than a year's experience.

An existing questionnaire was used to determine the burnout levels of the chefs. However, some of the questions were rephrased. For example: "worked for clients" to "work with clients". Thus, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used to measure the burnout items. The EFA indicated that there were 3 subscales for burnout and 2 items had low factor loadings and was omitted. The new subscales that had eigenvalues higher than 1, were different from what the CBI authors intended. The KMO was administered to test for multi-collinearity for overall Burnout. The test for multi-collinearity as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Test for multi-collinearity

KMO and Bartlett's test		
KMO measure		.919
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approx. chi-square	1339.390
	Df	136
	Sig.	.000

The KMO must be greater than 0.6. The new subscales were renamed to Clients Contributing to Exhaustion, Personal Exhaustion and Worn out.

Table 3 describes the descriptive statistics for the overall burnout and include the mean and Standard Deviations.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of burnout

Item	Mean	SD	α>	Skewness Less than 8 hours	Skewness More than 8 hours	Kurtosis Less than 8 hours	Kurtosis More than 8 hours	Number of items
Burnout (overall)	2.56	0.76	0.92	0.34	0.22	0.37	0.16	17
Clients contributing to exhaustion.	2.55	0.84	0.85	0.14	0.22	-0.30	-0.28	7
Personal exhaustion	2.57	0.77	0.86	0.46	0.18	-0.06	0.10	7
Worn out	2.70	1.00	0.85	0.32	0.04	0.15	0.55	3

Notes. SD: Standard deviation, α: Cronbach Alfa.

The overall mean score for Burnout was 2.56 (SD: 0.76). The Burnout subscales had the following mean scores: Clients contributing to exhaustion: 2.55 (SD: 0.8), Personal exhaustion: 2.57 (SD: 0.77) and Worn out: 2.70 (SD: 1.00). The skewness, kurtosis, and the alpha coefficients confirmed the reliability of the CBI. Pyzdek and Keller (2003) suggest that skewness is a measure of asymmetry, where zero is considered ideal symmetry. The skewness in the present study was positive. The skewness was within the parameters of 0.46 for shifts of eight hours and less and 0.22 for shifts longer than eight hours.

The Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to calculate the reliability of the CBI. The Cronbach alpha was calculated for each item and then an average value was calculated. The reliability of the scales was good, as the alpha coefficients were greater than 0.70 (Pallant, 2016)

The KMO test for multi-collinearity was ordered to establish if there was a sufficient relationship between the variables of Burnout (Mayers, 2013). It indicated an appropriate fit. According to Pallant (2016), the KMO should be greater than 0.6. The next table displays the T-Test of significance for Burnout.

Table 4. T-test of significance for Burnout

	Burnout									
Variable	8 hours or less			More than 8 hours			t	df	p-value	d
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD				
Client related exhaustion	75	2.32	.798	75	2.78	.835	-3,429	74	0.001**	0.56
Personal exhaustion	75	2.31	.649	75	2.85	.804	-4,500	74	0.000**	0.73
Worn out	75	2.50	.877	75	2.90	1.090	-2,447	74	0.016*	0.40

Table 4 displays the T-test for significance for overall Burnout and the Burnout subscales. Higher mean scores were found for Worn out, 2.9; Personal exhaustion, 2.85 and Client-related exhaustion, 2.78 for chefs who worked shifts longer than eight hours. The chefs who worker eight hours or less had the following means score for the Burnout subscales: Worn out, 2.5; Personal exhaustion, 2.31 and Client-related exhaustion, 2.32.

Significant differences between the lengths of the shifts for the two groups was found. The p-values shown in Table 4 were smaller than 0.05 for Client-related exhaustion (0.001), Personal exhaustion (0.000), and Worn out (0.016). Thus, there were noteworthy differences between the respondents regarding shift length.

Furthermore, a Pairwise Comparison was administered to establish the difference between the variances for the dependant variable Burnout for the two different shift length groups. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Pairwise comparison

(I) A3	(J) A3	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	df	Bonferroni Sig.
2	1	.4104[a]	.11470	1	.000
1	2	-.4104[a]	.11470	1	.000

Notes. A3=Shift lengths, 1=eight hour of less shift, 2=more than eight-hour shifts

The mean score is significant when $p<0.05$, therefore, shift length is a significant predictor of burnout.

Discussions

It is evident that the chef work force is almost equally divided as the sample consisted of 46.7% females and 53.3% males. In 2018 a chef sample consists of 31% females and 69% men (Haddaji et al., 2018). Many of the respondents have been working in the kitchen environment for 10 years or more. Half of the sample worked more than eight-hour shifts and the other half worked eight hours or less shifts.

In the literature review it is evident that work stress is higher for chefs for various reasons, with the main reason being long working hours (Pidd *et al.*, 2015), and currently need to do more with less resources at hand due to the load shedding crises, failure of electrical appliances stressors in South Africa which is crippling the South African economy. Furthermore, constant job stress without support and less resource and failing electrical equipment, load shedding leads to job burnout. In addition, an individual's job burnout levels can be influenced by his/her co-workers as well as the work environment (Ah *et al.*, 2022).

The present study indicated that there was a significant difference in means scores for Burnout between the different shift length groups. The burnout subscales Client-related exhaustion, Personal exhaustion and Worn Out were higher for the group that worked more than eight-hour shifts. Therefore, the group that worked eight hours or less were displaying lower burnout levels than those who worked more than eight hours. In addition to this result, further tests were

conducted to determine whether the working hours contributed to the burnout levels of the chefs. The results indicated that shift length is a significant predictor of burnout. The hypothesis is therefore accepted.

The results of the study is supported by the literature, which indicated that millennials are more probable to experience job stress and burnout because of the difficulties accepting the hospitality industry norms. The hospitality industry norms include long and unsociable hours, high physical endurance, overtime and being on your feet. Furthermore, the hospitality industry is a customer-orientated industry; therefore, chefs need to present high-quality food timeously. These aspects place extra stress on the employees when performing in their jobs (Hammond *et al.,* 2019; Trépanier et al., 2020; Arzia-Montes *et al.,* 2018)

Furthermore, it is important that individuals experience manageable stress to build resilience and to learn how to deal with stress (Ungar, 2019; Esterhuyse et al., 2022). Toxic stress as well as continuous stress has a negative effect since individuals, in this case chefs, turn to alcohol and drugs or nicotine to deal with the stressors of the kitchen, and subsequently shows signs of physical deterioration for example headaches, insomnia, mood swings and depression (Pidd *et al.*, 2015).

Burnt-out individuals should receive the necessary support and resources to assist them in the workplace and to reduce stress and burnout at work. The resources may include more personnel, better equipment such as smart ovens, operating systems, and adjustments to their working conditions such as a reduction in work hours. The use of new, innovative electrical technology or clamping down on load shedding will assist chef employees and enforce break times. The water crisis in South Africa caused by water scarcity and mismanagement is severely hampering future economic growth as water supply to cities are on the brink of total collapse (Rawlins, 2019). Management needs to act before staff become unmanageable by becoming more employee focused. Employers as well as employees need to check on labour laws and align them accordingly to their respective operations.

Managers and supervisors may use the results of the study to amend their work schedule and shifts by reducing long working hours and in return reduce the number of burnt-out employees, which will ultimately reduce staff turnover and create a better working environment. Moreover, managers may provide stress management training to chefs so that the chefs could learn how to positively cope with stress and reduce the number of burnt-out employees in the hospitality industry. Management should provide clear job expectations, use capacity planning, and resource management to get ahead of burnout, or assist with the redistribution of work as required, or to assist the team to prioritise their work better. This study, furthermore, contributes to the hospitality industry since it provides insight into wellbeing, work-life balance, and mindfulness to create a positive work environment in the industry.

Conclusions

The research study was conducted during the first half of Covid-19; therefore, numerous restaurants were closed or worked with a reduced kitchen brigade. It was challenging to get chef participants since managers were reluctant to let their chefs answer questions about stress and exhaustion. Some managers did not want to give permission for chefs to participate if they were aware that the chefs were stressed and burnt out. Thus, the result does not show an accurate picture of burnout in millennial chefs.

Moreover, the CBI is a self-assessing burnout questionnaire. The chefs had answered the questions from their own perception and was not clinically assessed by a psychologist. The study has limited application since it only included chefs in a specific area, namely the Western Cape in South Africa.

It is recommended that managers adjust their work hours of chefs to reduce the probability of chefs to develop burnout and provide stress management training to their employees. It is recommended that future studies make use of a reduced questionnaire, as many chefs did not participate since it was too long, and they did not have time to waste. Future studies can make use of a mixed method approach by incorporating psychologist to analyse the chefs clinically.

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