

Empowering frontline supervisors and the psychological health of mid-to-late career transition workers

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Abstract---In this descriptive qualitative study conducted among mid-to-late career transition workers at the company *CEVTAL* in Bejaia, we carried out thirty-five individual interviews to explore the role of managerial empowerment by immediate supervisors in preserving employees' psychological health. The findings reveal that the absence of recognition at work — including esteem, status, and non-monetary rewards — is associated with increased psychological distress. A lack of autonomy, particularly the absence of leeway to adapt cooperative procedures within the team and/or to adjust tasks in response to the gradual decline of psychological and physical resources with age, is linked to a heightened risk of burnout. Moreover, insufficient support — whether socio-emotional toward the individual or professional in nature — is associated with a deterioration in workplace well-being.

Keywords---career transition, managerial empowerment of immediate supervisors, psychological distress, well-being, burnout.

-Introduction :

Research in occupational psychology and contemporary models of workplace health mainly focus on large groups of workers in the industrial and economic sectors. As a result, employees transitioning toward the end of their professional careers are often overlooked in the current literature, even though this group faces multiple challenges. On the one hand, they experience the effects of normal aging — including physical, social, psychological, and cognitive decline — which constitute a psychosocial risk

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that remains largely underexplored. On the other hand, they must cope with profound transformations in the world of work, such as the rise of atypical employment, accelerated work pace, task intensification, the impact of new technologies, and disruptions in career paths, all of which lead to demotivation, disengagement, and an increased sense of insecurity. These factors make the prevention of psychosocial risks essential to maintaining overall health — particularly psychological health — at this stage of the career.

In Algeria, the issue of health in organizational settings has gained increased media attention in recent years, particularly thanks to various scientific events addressing topics such as stress, harassment, burnout, workplace violence, and quality of work life. Although awareness of these issues now appears to be established in most companies and knowledge on the subject continues to deepen, questions remain regarding intervention processes within organizations aimed at preserving employees' health in general — and, more specifically, the psychological health of older workers transitioning toward the end of their careers.

Alongside the question of intervention, a social consensus has been emerging in recent years: frontline managers are expected to play a central role in workplace health. The importance of this category of managers is reflected in the need to develop their skills in support, assistance, and expertise related to occupational health and safety within organizations. Through their managerial empowerment, first-line managers or immediate supervisors could thus make a significant contribution to preserving the psychological health of workers transitioning toward the end of their professional careers.

Given the individual and organizational consequences of health issues — particularly the psychological health of older workers experiencing a decline in resources — this research was designed to address the demands of this new reality. The role of managerial empowerment practices by immediate supervisors, such as support, autonomy, and recognition toward this category of workers, was selected as the focus of the study, as these dimensions represent essential aspects of frontline supervisory functions.

In summary, through a descriptive qualitative study involving a sample of thirty-five employees in the mid-to-late career transition phase from the company *CEVITAL* in Bejaia, the main objectives are, first, to preserve the psychological health of this population in order to restore their capacity for action, and second, to enable frontline supervisors to develop skills in workplace health prevention through an experiential pedagogical approach.

To achieve this, the first part of this research will present the state of the art, outlining the context and the conceptual framework used. Next, we will detail the methodology and techniques employed. Finally, the results obtained will be presented and discussed.

1. Research problem :

The literature in human resource management agrees on the importance of frontline managerial empowerment for preserving psychological health at work. Debard (2014) emphasizes that the deterioration of relationships between frontline supervisors and employees can lead to various dysfunctions, such as conflicts, dissatisfaction, demotivation, psychological disengagement, resistance to change, and lack of involvement. Moreover, researchers' growing interest in the concept of middle or frontline management is largely justified by its significant impact on employees' psychological health, which often manifests through symptoms of distress, burnout, and a decline in workplace well-being (Lagabrielle & Laberon, 2014).

These supervisors, often acting as agents of change, play a key role in linking organizational policies to concrete operations. Responsible for implementing projects decided by management, they use leadership practices to engage employees. With the current shift toward a participatory approach, their role is evolving into that of a trainer, guide, or coach, helping workers adapt to work-related constraints

(such as pace, workload, complexity, etc.) (**Rousseau, 2007**). This approach aims to maintain performance, improve quality of life, and protect workers' health.

In this study, we focus particularly on the managerial empowerment practices of autonomy, support, and recognition provided by frontline supervisors to workers in the mid-to-late career transition phase. These practices are not only inherent to the managerial role but are also considered in the social sciences literature — and more specifically within the field of work psychology — as key levers that managers can activate to protect this segment of the workforce from psychosocial risks (such as stress, burnout, psychological imbalance, and a decline in well-being) (**Labelle et al., 2000**). In this regard, the findings of the following studies are particularly noteworthy.

Recognition at work from frontline supervisors is a protective factor against stress, according to Siegriste (1996) and Dany and Livian (2002) (Chapelle, 2018). For example, Morin and Aubé (2007) show that employees working under supervisors with emotional intelligence feel psychologically well and are engaged in their work, which motivates them to go above and beyond. Conversely, the absence of social support from these supervisors — such as a lack of interactions or emotional support for individuals and their professional sphere — is associated with physical and mental health issues. A study by HSE (2009) identifies key behavioral competencies required of supervisors to prevent and manage stress, including integrity, emotional regulation, approachability, empathy, consideration, and the promotion of autonomy (**Lagabrielle & Laberon, 2014**).

In the same vein, other studies also highlight that the absence of room for maneuver or autonomy at work prevents employees from adjusting work procedures and team cooperation according to needs. The reduced ability to influence decisions, choose operational methods, or experiment with new ones has significant consequences, leading to a deterioration in quality of life and well-being at work (**Rousseau, 2007**).

In sum, the consequences of the lack of frontline managerial empowerment practices described above are diverse, ranging from simple relational difficulties to psychological distress — a situation frequently observed among workers undergoing a mid-to-late career transition. According to Schlossberg (2005), quality of life and psychological health are closely linked to factors of adaptation versus maladaptation to life transitions, among which career transitions are included (**Bernaud, Desrumaux & Guidon, 2016**). Against this backdrop, we assume that the effectiveness of frontline managerial empowerment practices aimed at facilitating adaptation to the conditions of this transition could have positive impacts on workers' psychological health during this period.

According to Schlossberg, a transition is defined as any event likely to significantly affect an individual's professional and personal trajectory. It is characterized by profound changes in daily work life, an alteration of self-image, a reduced sense of control over organizational changes, shifts in professional habits and attitudes, as well as a redefinition of intergenerational relationships and the meaning attributed to work. Added to these dynamics is often an intensification of workload, whose effects are amplified by the gradual decline in physical and psychological resources associated with aging. Schlossberg emphasizes that adapting to such a transition represents a stressful challenge and calls for consideration of the psychological factors at play — beyond mere functional adjustments — in order to fully understand its impact on quality of life and psychological health.

Thus, taking workers' psychological factors into account during this career transition is essential for maintaining long-term psychological health, as highlighted in the literature on the subject. This health is closely linked to recognition, autonomy, support, and the value placed on senior employees within the company through frontline managerial policies (**Faurie et al., 2008**). Socio-emotional support from frontline supervisors — including active listening, communication about personal and professional issues, schedule adjustments, and integration into the team — as well as providing room for maneuver

to adapt to work constraints and recognizing accomplishments, become particularly important during this mid-to-late career transition period (**Bernaud, Desrumaux & Guidon, 2016**).

The field of study is vast, and in light of the adaptation challenges faced by this category of workers, this research has focused on the emerging needs of this active population. Three major needs emerge at this stage of career transition, acting as protective factors for psychological health at work and becoming managerial empowerment requirements when integrated into the organization.

The first need concerns the level of autonomy granted to employees and teams. The second is support — social, technical, and emotional — which helps them overcome the challenges of career transition, according to Schlossberg (2005). Siegrist (1996) adds a third protective factor in his “effort-reward” model: recognition, which is assessed through three dimensions — esteem, status, and rewards (**Chapelle, 2018**).

In order to examine the possible links between frontline managerial empowerment practices and the psychological health of workers transitioning from mid to late career, we adopted the theoretical framework of Bakker and Demerouti (2017). This model, also known as the “Job Demands–Resources Model,” positions the worker at the center of two forces: demands and resources, which interact while having distinct effects. An imbalance between these two forces can have negative consequences on psychological health.

These interactions involve two types of factors. On the one hand, the resources provided by the organization — such as working conditions, the nature of tasks, organizational culture, or the social climate — play a decisive role. In our study, this refers to frontline managerial empowerment practices, namely autonomy, recognition, and support at work. On the other hand, an individual’s capacity to cope with the demands of the work environment — such as sustained effort, high work pace, night shifts, pressure, or contradictory demands — depends on several factors. It is influenced by their overall health status (in this case, various forms of incapacity or decline in resources associated with aging), as well as by personal and interpersonal skills, which are mobilized through various adaptation strategies such as coping, socioemotional selectivity, compensation, or optimization of available resources (**Lagabrielle & Laberon, 2014; Bernaud, Desrumaux & Guédon, 2016**).

As an outcome, psychological health, according to Bakker and Demerouti (2017), is reflected in two main indicators. On the one hand, it is expressed through various psychological states such as self-esteem and self-worth, fulfillment, life balance, and optimism, which in our study reflect well-being, as well as a moderate level of stress and anxiety, which helps prevent illnesses associated with these factors — in our case, the absence of psychological distress.

On the other hand, psychological health at work is manifested through the mastery of specific skills: maintaining positive motivation in one’s professional activity; effectively solving problems related to one’s field; knowing and developing one’s talents and competencies to put them to use; and seeking solutions to overcome one’s limitations in order to prevent burnout (**Lagabrielle & Laberon, 2014**). In our study, this corresponds to the absence of emotional exhaustion and the development of a sense of professional efficacy.

From this perspective, a qualitative, descriptive study was conducted with thirty-five workers undergoing a mid-to-late career transition at CEVITAL, a company based in Bejaia and specialized in the agri-food sector. The objective of this study is to analyze the role of managerial empowerment practices implemented by frontline supervisors — as perceived by the workers — in preserving their psychological health.

These practices are understood here as managerial empowerment requirements aimed at facilitating workers' adaptation to the conditions inherent to this phase of transition and, consequently, at supporting their psychological health. Particular attention is given to the perceptual dimension of these practices, as a gap may exist between the practices actually implemented and those perceived by employees. The research question and hypotheses are formulated accordingly.

- what extent is the psychological health of workers transitioning from mid to late career affected by the interaction between the intensity of the conditions specific to this transition period and a limited perception of managerial empowerment practices?

2. Research Hypotheses:

H1. Burnout among workers transitioning from mid to late career increases when they perceive limited autonomy granted by their frontline supervisor in response to the intensity of the conditions inherent to this transition.

H2. Psychological distress among workers transitioning from mid to late career intensifies when they perceive a low level of recognition from their frontline supervisor in response to the intensity of the conditions inherent to this transition.

H3. The well-being of workers transitioning from mid to late career appears to be more negatively affected when they perceive insufficient support from their frontline supervisor in response to the intensity of the conditions inherent to this transition.

3. Research Objectives:

3.1. Theoretical Level:

With three theoretical objectives in mind, this study first seeks to provide a comprehensive and integrated understanding of psychological health at work by identifying its causes and specific characteristics. Secondly, it aims to anchor this concept within the managerial context of the organization by demonstrating the role of managerial empowerment practices in enhancing and maintaining the psychological health of workers undergoing a career transition. Finally, it aspires to facilitate the assessment of psychological health by proposing concrete and operational indicators. This approach is intended as an intervention tool to protect the psychological well-being of senior employees in the workplace, while emphasizing the central role of frontline management in this protection. It thus encourages the development of appropriate assessment tools and the identification of potential sources of risk.

3.2. Practical Level:

- Explore the relationship between workers' perceptions of frontline managers' empowerment practices and the preservation of their psychological health during the mid-to-late career transition phase.
- Support frontline managers in developing the essential skills needed to prevent psychological health issues among employees at work by adopting an experience-based approach.
- Update job descriptions, tasks, and responsibilities of frontline managers, with particular attention to empowerment practices related to recognition, autonomy, and support for workers in the mid-to-late career transition phase.
- Promote overall health — particularly the psychological well-being of senior employees — to encourage their continued employment for as long as possible, while facilitating the transfer of skills to younger employees, a key asset for the company's development.

4. Theoretical Framework of the Study and Conceptual Analysis:

In this section, we will present the various theoretical conceptions of the key variables of the study, while remaining grounded in their respective theoretical approaches.

4.1. Mid-to-Late Career Transition:

According to Schlossberg (2005), a career transition refers to any event — whether it occurs or not — that is likely to significantly alter an employee's daily life by impacting their roles within the organization. This career phase can be stressful, exhausting, and challenging to experience, but what is crucial is how the employee assigns meaning to this transition. The author explains that reactions to the same event vary depending on the presence of facilitating factors or obstacles (Bernaud, Desrumaux, & Guédon, 2016).

For the purposes of this study, two main categories of factors inherent to the career transition phase are considered: the **demands of the professional situation**, such as the triggering event, the degree of control over the change, and previous similar experiences, as well as other **sources of stress and burnout**, including workload, pace, conflicting demands, and night work.

Personal factors and resources include several dimensions. Biodemographic characteristics, such as physical resources related to age (e.g., strength, memory, etc.), are taken into account in this study. Psychological characteristics are also assessed, particularly attitudes toward work, such as resistance or adaptation to change, involvement, motivation, and organizational commitment. Finally, social characteristics, such as the nature of interpersonal relationships (conflictual versus harmonious), are also considered.

Taking the legal retirement age in Algeria — set at 62 years — and a total length of service of 32 years as a reference, the mid-to-late career transition phase can be defined as spanning from **16 to 32 years of service**, corresponding to an age range of **45 to 62 years**.

4.2. Empowerment Practices of Frontline Managers:

The empowerment of frontline managers — or direct supervisors — discussed in this study is considered one of the socio-structural conditions that can foster the **psychological empowerment** of employees in general, and of those undergoing a career transition in particular. It can be implemented on its own or combined with other elements as part of a deliberate organizational strategy.

Thus, empowerment must be distinguished from *structural empowerment*, as this form of empowerment refers specifically to the behaviors and actions of a frontline manager toward their subordinates. According to Amundsen and Martinsen (2014), **empowering leadership** can be defined as a process through which direct supervisors mobilize their subordinates by **sharing power, supporting motivation, and facilitating professional development**, thereby enabling them to work autonomously within the framework of the organization's boundaries, objectives, and strategies (Bernaud, Desrumaux, & Guédon, 2016).

The various operationalizations of empowering leadership found in the literature support this conception, in which **three main dimensions or empowerment practices** define the essence of this leadership style. Given the importance of these three dimensions, we will examine them in more detail in the following sections:

4.2.1. The Practice of Autonomy, refers to the freedom of teamwork collaboration and the development of self-management. Team collaboration is defined as the extent to which the frontline manager contributes to improving team members' ability to work together — that is, the degree of autonomy or flexibility allowed for adapting teamwork procedures such as mutual assistance, redistribution of roles and statuses within the group, and so on. Self-management development (or self-regulation) is defined as the extent to which the frontline manager helps enhance team members' ability to take responsibility for their team's functioning — that is, the level of autonomy granted to individuals and teams to adapt work execution procedures (e.g., work simplification, modification of work procedures as needed, etc.) (Rousseau, 2007).

4.2.2. The Practice of Work Support:

In this study, we highlight the multidimensional nature of frontline managers' support practices by specifying their main attributes as follows:

- **Technical support** (or instrumental support) within the professional sphere refers, according to the specialized literature, to three more specific sub-dimensions. The first sub-dimension concerns alignment of contributions, meaning the guidance provided to team members regarding the work to be performed. The second involves information sharing, i.e., communicating relevant information to team members about the work context. Finally, the third sub-dimension refers to feedback, meaning the transmission of ideas to team members aimed at improving their work performance. In practical terms, this includes assistance with task completion, scheduling adjustments, support for professional adaptation, assignment of roles, provision of feedback, training opportunities, and similar forms of support.

- **Socio-emotional support** in the professional sphere generally refers to supportive behaviors that an individual can rely on when needed. In practical terms, this includes work schedule adjustments to facilitate work–life balance, social integration within the team, reassurance regarding professional skills, and expressions of positive affect such as listening to work-related concerns, providing encouragement, and offering protection. Finally, it also involves reciprocity, which encompasses trust, respect, and open communication about work-related issues.

- **Socio-emotional or affective support** for the individual involves empathy, a caring and reassuring attitude, and the creation of a climate of trust that fosters emotional expression and release, according to Rodriguez et al. (1998). More specifically, this includes active listening and communication regarding personal issues, help in putting situations into perspective, and personal encouragement (Alis, Dumas, & Poilpot-Rocaboy, 2010).

4.2.3. The Practice of Recognition:

In this study, this practice is assessed through the two sub-dimensions considered to have the greatest influence on psychological health, as suggested by Siegrist's model (1996) and the relevant literature in this field, namely:

- **Esteem:** This involves reassuring an individual about their skills and values by providing recognition that can strengthen their self-confidence — particularly in moments of doubt, when they fear that the demands of a situation may exceed their resources and abilities (e.g., work overload, role conflicts, fatigue, etc.).

- **Status:** This includes praise, distinctions, and promotion opportunities (Chapelle, 2018, p. 114).

4.3. Psychological Health:

According to Bakker and Demerouti (2017), two key factors highlight the importance of protecting the psychological health of workers undergoing a career transition: the costs associated with its potential deterioration and the benefits of its reinforcement. The negative aspect of psychological health is represented by the harm an individual may experience — such as psychological distress and burnout — while its positive aspect is reflected in psychological well-being and the factors that contribute to its development. Given the importance of these three indicators, we will examine them in more detail separately:

- **Burnout** is explained through the harmful effects it produces on the psychological balance of organizational actors. According to Maslach and Jackson (1981, 1986), burnout is a syndrome resulting from a psychological reaction to intense and prolonged occupational stress (Alis, Dumas, & Poilpot-Rocaboy, 2010). In summary, burnout is composed of three dimensions according to these authors. However, in the context of the present research, only two of these dimensions will be considered: Emotional exhaustion — feeling emotionally drained, experiencing psychological fatigue, chronic tiredness, and a sense of work-related strain. Professional efficacy — referring to one's personal contribution to work, sense of achievement, effectiveness, perceived usefulness, and the ability to solve

work-related problems. In our theoretical model, burnout results from an imbalance between job demands and available resources, which undermines employees' ability to adapt and leads to the development of emotional exhaustion and a decrease in professional efficacy (Lagabriele & Laberon, 2014).

- **Psychological distress** refers to an unpleasant feeling or a sense of suffering and serves as an indicator of poor psychological health. According to Karasek and Theorell (1990), it results from the combination of high psychological demands, low decision-making latitude, and a lack of social support and recognition. Although it is often assessed through measures of depression and anxiety (Labelle et al., 2006), symptoms of aggressiveness (such as irritability or hostility) are also key indicators of distress. As recommended by Gilbert et al. (2011), the simultaneous consideration of these three dimensions is used to optimize the assessment of psychological distress among workers in the career transition phase.

- **The concept of psychological well-being**, rooted in the eudaimonic perspective, refers to the ability to engage in activities that are aligned with one's interests, values, and life goals. From this standpoint, well-being has been approached in terms of individual motivation and the pursuit of optimal functioning Ryan & Deci, (2001). By integrating both hedonic and eudaimonic approaches, this study adopts five dimensions to define well-being: self-acceptance, purpose in life, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, and personal growth. These dimensions have already been validated by Ryff and Keyes (1995) and further supported (Bernaud, Desrumaux, and Guédon, 2016).

5. Research Context and Methodology:

5.1. Context:

This research was conducted among employees in the mid-to-late career transition phase working in the production and marketing departments of the company *CEVTAL* in Bejaia, which specializes in the agri-food sector. The choice of this research setting is justified by the numerous constraints it presents, particularly the 24/7 service continuity, which creates challenging working conditions.

Preliminary interviews conducted with a group of five participants revealed that they face specific scheduling constraints, such as irregular working hours, early morning and late evening shifts, as well as work on weekends and public holidays, all of which affect their family and social lives. They expressed a need for support, recognition, and autonomy to better adapt to their work.

The interviews also highlighted constraints related to the effects of career transition, including increased physical, mental, and psychological workload, exacerbated by a low degree of control over changes, work pace, conflicting demands, night shifts, and the decline of personal resources associated with aging. These factors make the work environment one with a high risk of stress, burnout, and reduced well-being. Thus, these potential risks to the psychological health of employees confirm the relevance and foundation of our research problem.

5.2. Research Methodology:

For this study, we conducted thirty-five semi-structured interviews. We used a targeted sample, selected through the snowball sampling method. This approach allowed us to focus our study on workers aged 45 to 62 who are in a transitional phase between mid- and late-career stages.

The interview method was preferred in this study because it enables authentic exchanges with the employees. To ensure that participants remained focused on the topic, we developed an interview guide based on the four dimensions under study, consisting of 12 questions. Some questions allowed more freedom of response, while others required participants to choose among given options. Finally, we employed content analysis, a method particularly well-suited for studying discourse and qualitative data. Three factual questions regarding age, seniority, and department assignment were included at the end of the interview guide to prevent participants from misunderstanding the type of responses expected of them throughout the interview.

6. Research Results:

6.1. Presentation of the Socio-Professional Characteristics of Participants:

Our sample consists of thirty-five workers divided between two departments: twenty-three in the production department and twelve in the marketing department of the company *CEVITAL*. The participants are all over forty-five years old, belonging to a group of employees in the transitional phase between mid- and late-career, with more than 16 years of seniority within the company.

6.2. Presentation of the Results for the First Hypothesis:

The results for the first hypothesis show that twenty-eight out of thirty-five participants consider a lack of autonomy at work to be a significant factor contributing to burnout. In contrast, seven participants did not share this view. The majority emphasized that their immediate supervisors do not provide them with the flexibility to adjust cooperative or supportive procedures within the team, nor to adapt work methods to their psychological, physical, and cognitive resources—particularly during this career stage, which is marked by the decline of physical and psychological resources with age.

In this regard, a 56-year-old respondent noted that the autocratic leadership style of his direct supervisor limits his freedom in organizing his work, both in choosing how to carry out tasks and in adapting objectives according to needs. Similarly, a 58-year-old participant attributed his burnout to the fact that his immediate supervisor does not allow him to adjust execution procedures based on his current physical and psychological capacities. Three other respondents, all aged 57, reported that their supervisor does not give them the opportunity to adapt their mode of cooperation within the team, nor to emphasize certain aspects of work according to their available resources. Along the same lines, two 60-year-old employees mentioned that the lack of encouragement from their immediate supervisor for mutual support among colleagues hinders their ability to recover after a workday.

When asked about the link between the autonomy granted by immediate supervisors and their own burnout at this stage of their careers, several respondents expressed a negative view. One participant explained that his emotional exhaustion is mainly due to the rigidity of instructions imposed by his hierarchy, which prevents him from feeling relaxed at work. Two employees from the production department reported having difficulties managing their emotions, moods, and professional attitudes because they are not allowed to adjust the execution procedures of their tasks, which, in their view, become increasingly difficult with age. A 54-year-old worker mentioned a constant state of worry, attributed to the lack of leeway in organizing his work. Two other employees, aged 49 and 58, emphasized that the authoritarian leadership style of their direct supervisors creates a constant sense of overload and a persistent feeling of lacking time.

Moreover, three 57-year-old respondents reported that the inability to regulate cooperation within their group—particularly regarding mutual support or role distribution—leads to significant physical fatigue by the end of the day. A 60-year-old employee stated that he feels emotionally drained by his work, experiencing fatigue from the moment he wakes up. Finally, another respondent, aged 50, concluded that he feels exhausted from working without any freedom of action.

On another note, four participants aged 48 to 60 expressed their frustration over the lack of decisions made collaboratively, which led them to question the value of their contributions and the very usefulness of their work. Another respondent, aged 51, reported gradually losing interest in his profession due to the lack of freedom of action he experiences with his current supervisor. In the same vein, two 56-year-old employees indicated that they doubt their effectiveness at work, particularly because of frequent interruptions and repeated requests from their hierarchical superiors.

The lack of autonomy was also highlighted by a 54-year-old respondent, who stated that he is unable to solve problems effectively within his area of work and does not feel he provides real added value to his

company. Finally, another participant, aged 60, emphasized that the absence of control over the planning and sequencing of his tasks fosters a sense of devaluation.

In light of the above, this study highlights that the lack of autonomy granted by immediate supervisors to workers in the career transition phase increases their risk of burnout. This situation is explained by the absence of flexibility in adapting work methods to age-related limitations and the specific demands of the transition. Restrictions on choosing work methods, rigidity in cooperative procedures, lack of control over task sequencing and planning, as well as the inability to adjust objectives according to transition conditions, are all factors that exacerbate this burnout. These findings confirm the study's first hypothesis.

When examining why a group of seven individuals, out of a sample of thirty-five, are able to perform their work without showing signs of burnout—despite aging, career transition constraints, and lack of autonomy at work—the results reveal two distinct strategies.

The first strategy is based on resource optimization. Members of this group efficiently mobilize their skills through practices such as time management, judicious distribution of effort, targeted allocation of resources, and task prioritization. For example, a 58-year-old worker explained that, through experience, he has learned to organize his priorities according to the urgency and importance of each task. Every morning, he creates a list of activities, starting with those that have the greatest impact or need to be completed quickly. He also adjusts the intensity of his efforts based on his energy levels, reserving the most complex tasks for times of the day when his concentration is optimal. He delegates what can be delegated (redistributing certain tasks within the team according to the type of personal resource decline), avoids dispersion, and remains realistic about what he can reasonably accomplish in a day. His goal is to progress efficiently without overload, while maintaining a balance between work activity and rest to preserve his long-term performance.

The second strategy, based on a principle of compensation, aims to mitigate the effects of emotional exhaustion. It relies on anticipating errors and urgent situations, which helps reduce cognitive load and psychological stress in an organizational context characterized by limited leeway.

6.3. Presentation of the Results for the Second Hypothesis:

The results show that the majority of respondents—thirty-one out of thirty-five—perceive the lack of recognition from immediate supervisors negatively, considering it a factor that increases their psychological distress at work, while only four participants did not share this view.

In this regard, many workers expressed a sense of injustice due to the lack of recognition from their hierarchy. A 55-year-old employee highlighted the absence of respect he feels he deserves from his immediate superiors, while another employee of the same age reported being treated in a manner perceived as unfair in the context of his work. Two other employees, aged 46 and 53, expressed similar dissatisfaction, mentioning the lack of recognition and esteem despite their efforts.

When asked about the link between managerial recognition practices and psychological distress at work at this stage of their careers, several employees reported clear manifestations. A 58-year-old employee stated that the lack of consideration from his direct supervisors contributes to a sense of uselessness in his department. Another employee of the same age described profound despair in response to his hierarchy's indifference, despite satisfactory performance. Two other employees, aged 54 and 57, reported frequent agitation attributed to the absence of recognition, which can lead them to exhibit aggressive behavior toward colleagues.

A production department employee associated the lack of acknowledgment of his work with a persistent state of low mood, difficult to alleviate during the day. Finally, a 60-year-old employee in the

commercial department reported that the failure to recognize his achievements, despite the constraints of career transition, generates constant nervousness, hindering his ability to detach from work-related concerns outside of working hours. These empirical observations support the validity of the second hypothesis.

When it comes to understanding how a group of four respondents aged 58 to 60 manage to overcome psychological distress despite the lack of recognition at work and the demanding conditions of career transition, the results reveal that they employ emotion-focused coping strategies. These generally gentle strategies include avoiding confrontations with their direct supervisors, managing conflicts by maintaining distance, accepting the situations they experience, and positively re-evaluating their professional experiences.

For example, one respondent reported that in the absence of recognition for his efforts from his immediate supervisor, he prefers to ignore the situation and not react. Two others indicated that they systematically strive to adopt a positive attitude, attempting to learn from even negative experiences. Another participant explained that in the event of a conflict with his supervisor or colleagues, he tries to control his impulsive reactions, which, in his view, contributes to strengthening his resilience.

It should be noted, however, that the majority of participants experiencing psychological distress—thirty-one out of thirty-five—tend to adopt problem-focused coping strategies. These strategies involve directly confronting difficulties, seeking information to develop action plans, and relying on social support through the formation of workplace coalitions. Three respondents indicated that in cases of tension with their hierarchy, they strive to resist and actively defend their objectives. Another participant mentioned that he prefers to discuss situations with colleagues in order to better understand conflicts and develop appropriate strategies to address them.

6.4 – Presentation of the Results Related to the Third Hypothesis:

The results for this hypothesis reveal that twenty-six out of thirty-five respondents experience a sense of ill-being at work, while nine report the opposite. The most harmful factors affecting their well-being are the lack of socio-emotional support in both the professional and personal spheres. In contrast, all participants agree that they do not require technical support, due to their extensive professional experience at this stage of their careers.

One respondent, aged 49 with 23 years of seniority, highlights the absence of socio-emotional support in the professional sphere. He explains that his immediate supervisor shows no willingness to listen to his professional difficulties. He also laments the lack of comfort provided to team members during challenging situations, as well as the absence of encouragement during stressful periods.

Similarly, a 54-year-old employee with 28 years of service points out a lack of organizational flexibility, particularly concerning work schedule arrangements, which, in his view, undermines the balance between professional and personal life. Along the same lines, another respondent, aged 51 with 24 years of seniority, emphasizes that his direct supervisor does not pay attention to his adaptation difficulties and shows no willingness to address his professional problems openly.

Moreover, the majority of participants reported that they do not receive respectful and considerate treatment from their immediate supervisors. A 57-year-old employee with 30 years of service emphasized that his direct superior shows him neither respect nor consideration and does not acknowledge his rights as an experienced, long-serving worker. Another respondent, aged 50 with 25 years of seniority, highlighted another aspect of the lack of socio-emotional support at work. He lamented the absence of reassurance regarding his professional skills, as well as the lack of constructive feedback on the results of his work, which, according to him, limits his opportunities for improvement.

Regarding socio-emotional support in the personal sphere, the results show that the majority of respondents — twenty-six out of thirty-five — express a need for emotional support. They view this support as a way to express themselves freely, maintain psychological balance, and promote their well-being at work. However, they do not trust their direct supervisors enough to easily discuss their personal issues (such as financial difficulties, family problems, social isolation at work, deterioration of family relationships, tensions with younger colleagues, or the low level of control over organizational changes related to the decline of physical and psychological resources at this stage of life).

In this regard, a 54-year-old participant with 28 years of seniority reported experiencing significant concerns related to family problems but stated that he does not feel confident enough to discuss them with his direct supervisor. Another participant, aged 57 with 30 years of experience, reported a feeling of double isolation — both within his family sphere and in relation to the younger colleagues on his team.

When asked about the possibility of communicating such issues to their immediate supervisor, three participants stated that their manager pays no attention to this type of concern and that they lack a trusting relationship that would facilitate such an exchange. Regarding the reasons behind the deterioration of trust in their direct supervisors, twenty-six respondents identified two main causes. On the one hand, they consider their supervisors to be overly authoritarian; on the other hand, living in the same city or neighborhood leads to reluctance to discuss personal matters, out of fear that such information might be disclosed. This hesitation persists, even though such exchanges are crucial for their psychological balance and well-being at work.

Among the thirty-five participants questioned about the relationship between support from immediate supervisors and well-being at work, twenty-six believe that the lack of communication regarding their personal difficulties undermines their ability to cope with new professional demands associated with the career transition phase, combined with the systematic decline of resources with age. One participant pointed out that the daily workload is a significant source of stress, while another reported feeling anticipatory fatigue at the very start of the day, linked to the amount of work ahead. Two participants, both aged 57, associated the absence of support with a growing tendency toward pessimism in their professional experience. Furthermore, four production department employees highlighted the negative effects of restrictions on schedule adjustments and the lack of flexibility in work organization, which they see as an obstacle to balancing personal life with professional obligations, directly impacting their well-being.

In the same vein, twenty-six out of thirty-five respondents unanimously confirmed that the lack of support at work generates a sense of personal dissatisfaction: disappointment with their career paths, frustration with certain practices of their immediate supervisors, and a desire for early retirement. They also mentioned a feeling of stagnation, with no progress or development of new skills, and reported becoming progressively indifferent toward their professional lives. This lack of support also affects their relationships with their immediate supervisors, making them more limited and characterized by feelings of distrust and isolation. Finally, they expressed the absence of a clear direction or vision that would give meaning to their professional lives during this career transition phase. For them, these feelings have significant consequences, leading to difficulties in managing daily tasks, a lack of control over their work, and an inability to improve their work environment. These findings therefore confirm the third and final hypothesis.

To maintain their psychological well-being despite the limited support from their immediate supervisors, a subsample of nine respondents adopts a selection strategy. They focus their energy on goals and priorities that match their personal and professional resources and prioritize emotionally meaningful tasks (multi-skill tasks). This selection also involves positive social comparisons, such as

relating to their own age group and working with colleagues from the same age range, which helps them achieve better emotional regulation and preserve their well-being.

For instance, two participants reported that they try to avoid, as much as possible, collaborating with the younger generation, believing that this strategy helps prevent misunderstandings and tensions in the workplace. These tensions stem from a perceived sense of injustice, linked to the seemingly more favorable attitude of immediate supervisors toward younger employees. According to the respondents, this disparity could be explained by the younger workers' higher educational levels as well as their greater ease with digital technologies. Another participant takes a different approach, explaining that, given his current skill level, he systematically prioritizes tasks that require a certain degree of versatility.

7. Discussion of the Study Results:

The findings of this research reveal that the psychological health of senior employees, that is, workers in the mid-to-late career transition phase, depends on the three managerial practices studied. It appears that the lack of recognition at work is the most detrimental factor to psychological health, followed by a lack of autonomy, and then insufficient support from immediate supervisors.

Employees' psychological distress was attributed to the lack of recognition from their immediate supervisors. The majority of participants confirmed that this deficit exacerbates their psychological distress due to the absence of esteem, status, or non-monetary rewards. Thirty-one of them reported feeling an imbalance between their efforts and the recognition received, leading to negative effects such as nervousness, loss of hope, isolation, agitation, and fatigue. These findings are consistent with the work of Siegrist (1996).

The burnout experienced by the majority of participants is attributed to the lack of autonomy granted by immediate supervisors. This deficit is primarily reflected in a limited capacity to adapt modes of cooperation and mutual support within the group in response to new professional demands specific to the career transition period, compounded by the gradual decline of physical and psychological resources associated with aging. Thus, the absence of opportunities to adjust tasks according to available resources during this transition contributes to the professional burnout of this population. This observation aligns with the conclusions of Schlossberg (2005) and Rousseau (2007).

The deterioration of well-being at work is attributed to a lack of support, particularly deficiencies in two key dimensions of frontline supervisor support. The first concerns the absence of socio-emotional support for the individual, notably the lack of empathy, care, reassurance, and the erosion of trust, which hampers the expression and management of emotions. This finding echoes the conclusions of previous studies, particularly those by Rodriguez et al. (1998). Participants also reported a lack of active listening, communication regarding personal problems, and support during difficult moments.

The second dimension of socio-emotional support concerns the assistance provided in the professional sphere, on which workers can rely. Participants reported that their immediate supervisors do not facilitate schedule adjustments to balance personal and professional life, nor do they support social reintegration within the team. They also highlighted a lack of reassurance regarding their professional skills, poor communication about work-related problems, a lack of encouragement, and the absence of protection and trust. These findings confirm the conclusions of previous research reported by Alis, Dumas, and Poilpot-Rocaboy (2010).

Regarding technical assistance — including help with task execution, planning, professional adaptation, and information sharing — the results indicate that it is not perceived as a factor contributing to decreased well-being. Respondents believe that, at this stage of their careers, they possess the experience and skills necessary to meet the demands of their positions.

It should be noted, however, that in the face of challenges related to aging and the decline of resources during this career transition period, some workers manage to maintain their professional life while sustaining their development, performance, and psychological health through cognitive, emotional, and behavioral adaptive strategies to cope with stressful situations. According to this study, successful adaptation and the maintenance of this type of occupational health rely on strategies such as selection, optimization, compensation, and emotion-focused coping, including gentle approaches like conflict avoidance and positive reappraisal of experiences.

In contrast, those whose psychological health is deteriorated — the majority of respondents — rarely rely on such strategies. Instead, they tend to use problem-focused coping strategies, such as direct confrontation and seeking help through the formation of workplace coalitions. These observations are widely highlighted in the specialized literature (**Bruchon-Schweitzer & Boujut, 2014**).

In summary, the deterioration of psychological health among workers in the mid-to-late career transition phase appears to be primarily linked to a lack of recognition, autonomy, and support from immediate supervisors. These dimensions, however, fall within managerial empowerment practices, which are considered fundamental for promoting employee engagement, motivation, and well-being, particularly toward the end of their professional careers. These findings extend previous research conducted in this field (**Detchessahar, 2012; Debar, 2014**).

8. Conclusion:

In conclusion, the negative perceptions expressed by respondents regarding the empowerment practices of immediate supervisors — particularly in terms of recognition, autonomy, and workplace support — appear to be key factors in the deterioration of the psychological health of CEVITAL employees transitioning toward the end of their careers. Deficiencies in these three managerial practices have led to psychological health problems and difficulties in adapting to work demands. Moreover, this situation is exacerbated by the systematic decline of psychological and physical resources associated with age during this career stage.

To improve the psychological health of this category of workers and support their prolonged employment, it is crucial to optimize their overall health and performance. This would enable them to continue contributing productively to the company while preserving the experience they have accumulated over the years. Based on participants' testimonies in this study, as well as insights drawn from the literature review, several potential courses of action can be considered:

To address the need for recognition expressed by this active workforce and reduce their distress, concrete actions must be implemented. It is first essential to provide them with positive treatment so that they feel valued, encouraged, and confident. For immediate supervisors, this involves acknowledging employees' potential by inquiring about their wishes and ambitions and setting appropriate and motivating goals based on their energy and available resources at this stage of their careers.

To reduce professional burnout, it is crucial to satisfy the need for autonomy at work by increasing choices regarding the organization and execution of tasks, both at the individual level and within teams. This involves promoting mutual support, collaboration, and self-management among group members. By providing leeway to adapt cooperative procedures, adjust work execution methods, and the freedom to express opinions on work scheduling and recovery periods, a healthy work environment is fostered. Conversely, prohibiting task adaptation or the reorganization of roles according to available resources can exacerbate burnout, affecting both emotional load and work efficiency.

To improve the well-being of workers transitioning toward the end of their careers, frontline supervisors must provide two types of support: socio-emotional support in the individual sphere, which

promotes communication about personal issues to maintain psychological balance, and socio-emotional support in the professional sphere, which includes the organization of work schedules to reconcile personal and professional life. Effective support may also involve proactive conflict management by ensuring respectful and fair treatment, as well as regular monitoring of problematic relationships. It is crucial to identify individuals in difficulty, listen to them, and guide them, while raising colleagues' awareness so they can provide appropriate social support.

Overall, adapting the managerial practices of immediate supervisors to the needs of workers in the career transition phase represents a key organizational resource for combating psychological distress and burnout while promoting workplace well-being. Therefore, the organization's priority should be oriented toward health and the engagement of all levels of management in ensuring the health and safety of this category of workers. Policies and procedures should be concretely directed toward actions such as training immediate supervisors on the new needs of this active workforce, establishing anti-harassment units, implementing burnout prevention campaigns, and providing listening and support mechanisms.

Finally, we note that this study has two main limitations. First, the chosen qualitative method limits the generalizability of the results, highlighting the importance of conducting further case studies to verify their reproducibility. Second, the preservation of psychological health at work is not limited to meeting the fundamental needs identified in this study (recognition, support, autonomy). It also requires addressing an essential need widely expressed by participants: organizational justice. This involves integrating a variety of personal and organizational factors that may play a moderating role between the empowerment practices of immediate supervisors and the health of older workers. Consequently, adaptive strategies — such as coping, selection, optimization, or compensation — as well as dimensions related to development, skill recognition, and the management of age diversity in the workplace, deserve particular attention in future research on psychological health at work.

Nevertheless, this study remains a valuable contribution to the analysis of the various dimensions of the role of immediate supervisors and their impact on preserving the psychological health of workers, particularly during career transition phases. It also opens avenues for research on the development of new roles, such as empowerment leadership, which promotes professional well-being for senior employees and enhances their image within the organization.

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