


Chapter 2

Reviving the Public Sector: Leadership's Key Role in Managing Burnout

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the significant issue of public sector burnout in the public sector through the lens of the Job Demands-Resources Theory. The chapter highlights the essential role of effective leadership and professional development in mitigating burnout and enhancing employee motivation and satisfaction. Key leadership theories and core competencies are discussed, emphasizing the need for communication, continuous learning, adaptability, and the creation of supportive environments. The chapter calls for systematically integrating leadership and professional development into public sector practices to build resilient, engaged, and motivated teams, ultimately improving public service delivery and employee retention. To conclude, it provides key considerations and guiding principles to consider when developing

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-0169-3.ch002

a public sector leadership and professional development program to be used by any leader in their practice.

REVIVING THE PUBLIC SECTOR: LEADERSHIP'S KEY ROLE IN MANAGING BURNOUT

Sarah, a highly competent and committed program manager for a city's department for urban development, starts her day like any other, pouring over project files and coordinating with her team. Sarah has always been passionate about urban development, believing in its power to transform communities. Despite her dedication and consistent performance for over eight years, Sarah notices that promotions and professional development opportunities often bypass her. But her manager, Mr. Hargrove, seldom provides constructive feedback or acknowledges the efforts of his team; Sarah has not even had a performance review for almost two years. Sarah is increasingly confused and frustrated on how she can position herself as an ideal candidate for promotion. After all, Sarah is already completing the work of three full-time employees since her colleagues quit months ago and no replacements have been found.

As her day progresses, Sarah finds herself in various perfunctory meetings, relaying the latest findings in a report she disseminated to leadership last week. She poses several challenges uncovered in her report and even went the extra mile to highlight several low-cost solutions to implement. Unfortunately, Mr. Hargrove swiftly dismisses Sarah's ideas and tells her he will come up with another solution to these problems. Sarah leaves the meeting knowing that Mr. Hargrove will not follow through on his promise, since it is well known that he prefers to keep the department running "the same way it always has been". She is even more upset that her efforts went unrecognized, and she wasted time brainstorming innovative solutions hoping that Mr. Hargrove would acknowledge her contributions and hard work.

Feeling dejected, Sarah goes back to work tackling day-to-day tasks that she can complete with her eyes closed. She decides that it's not worth her time or effort to go above and beyond in her role, since she doesn't see how it benefits her or leads to change. Her work performance, once stellar, begins to suffer as she struggles to concentrate and meet deadlines. Sarah is not surprised when Mr. Hargrove doesn't even seem to notice, let alone ask her if she needs support.

Over the next few months, Sarah starts to experience chronic fatigue, finding it increasingly difficult to get out of bed each morning. Her enthusiasm for work diminishes, replaced by a sense of dread and disengagement. She starts to suffer from headaches and insomnia, symptoms she initially dismisses but which begin to impact her daily life. The final straw comes when a less experienced and skilled

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