

## ANALYSIS OF RECRUITMENT CONSULTANTS' WORK CHALLENGES AND DEMANDS ON BURNOUT: A CASE STUDY AT NOVETRA CONSULTING

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### ABSTRACT

Globalization and technological advancements have transformed recruitment practices, increasing reliance on recruitment agencies. Recruitment consultants face high job demands, including dual roles in business development and recruitment, which often lead to stress and burnout. Despite existing research on internal recruiters and sales professionals, little is known about external recruitment consultants' challenges and coping strategies, particularly in multinational settings. This study aims to (1) analyze the job demands and challenges faced by recruitment consultants at NOVETRA Consulting, (2) explore how these demands contribute to burnout, and (3) identify the strategies consultants use to mitigate these pressures. A qualitative case study approach involved in-depth interviews with 12 recruitment consultants across three job levels at NOVETRA Consulting. Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data, grounded in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and theories of person-job and person-organization fit. The study reveals that recruitment consultants experience significant stress due to dual roles, high financial targets, and uncontrollable external factors (e.g., client and candidate behaviors). Misalignment between job expectations and realities exacerbates burnout symptoms, including anxiety and demotivation. Consultants cope through personal strategies (e.g., work-life balance) and colleague support, critical buffers against burnout. The findings contribute to the literature by highlighting the unique challenges of external recruitment consultants and the role of social support in mitigating burnout. Practical implications include recommendations for firms to align job expectations, provide mentorship, and foster supportive work environments. Future research could expand to comparative studies across firms or longitudinal analyses of burnout trends.

### KEYWORDS

*recruitment consultant, burnout, job demand, job resources, person-job (P-J) fit, person-organization (P-O) fit.*



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## INTRODUCTION

Globalization is increasingly affecting the job market, and the need for a highly qualified and competent workforce and rapid technological advancements has resulted in significant changes in recruitment practices worldwide. Currently, recruitment practices can be carried out internally (in-house) or externally by using a recruitment agency (recruitment agency). The growing need to recruit top talent makes companies compete to find and lure talent and executives to join and grow their businesses. This makes companies make this talent search one of the main agendas that must be achieved in their business. However, the complexity of the core activity process of strategic human resources causes companies to outsource the recruitment and selection of talent (Greer et al., 1999). Therefore, there is a third party, a company that specializes in providing recruitment and candidate selection services to help its clients find the best talent. This third party is known in the professional world as a recruitment agency.

According to Musa (2008), in Abdullah et al. (2013), recruitment agencies have different specialties, such as leading multinational agencies Korn/Ferry, Boyden, Spencer Stuart, and Russell Reynolds known as headhunters or executive search. They only work with the largest companies in the world and employ high-level executives such as CEOs and CFOs. Mid-tier agencies such as Kelly Services, Manpower, and Adecco handle recruitment for mid-level managers and senior executives with offices spread across the globe. Musa (2008) also states that recruitment agencies seek out and lure candidates through advertisements in newspapers, online job portals, company websites, and in-person interviews (Abdullah et al., 2013). Recruitment consultants or recruiters find candidates and fill job vacancies according to the client's needs. Mileham (2000) added that recruitment consultants must understand the needs and culture of the client's company to find ideal and competent candidates. The recruitment process through headhunters has become an established practice at home and abroad (Peltokorpi, 2022), including in Indonesia, which now has many national and multinational recruitment agency companies. However, as Weeks (2019) points out in Sparkhire, the recruitment industry has a high turnover rate due to misconceptions about the nature of the job, which often more resemble a sales role than a social job.

Finlay & Coverdill (2000) explain that headhunter companies work with results-based systems, where client payment is only earned if the proposed candidate accepts a job offer. This makes headhunter firms similar to third-party brokers that rely on their ability to match clients with candidates. An article from Indeed (2024) states that the work environment of recruitment consultants is similar to that of professional sales, which is full of pressure due to constant targets and competition between consultants. Armstrong (2015) says that high work pressure can lead to burnout, which is characterized by excessive work demands and hard-to-reach targets, leading to the intention to resign. Ivanovic et al. (2020) found that high job engagement can reduce burnout among recruiters, while high burnout rates increase the intention to quit. Hickey (2020) revealed that the global recruitment industry is facing a shortage of skilled workers, which makes recruitment consultants turn to internal positions such as talent acquisition. Staffing Industry Metrics (2017) reports significant turnover rates at recruitment agencies in Australia

(43-48%) and New Zealand (50%), reflecting the challenges the industry continues to face.

Based on previous research presented, researchers see a lack of information that needs to be explored more deeply. The research conducted by Finlay & Coverdill (2000) has sufficiently described the phenomenon and in-depth information about the challenges and risks of the headhunter business, but the research does not elaborate in sufficient detail regarding the challenges and work demands experienced by the recruitment consultants themselves, and only focuses on the challenges and risks of the headhunter business overall. Research conducted by Ivanovic et al. (2020) has described the relationship between burnout, work engagement, and turnover intention among recruiters in Serbia, but the research sample is only internal recruiters of companies that only focus on finding candidates for the benefit of the company and do not carry out 2 responsibilities like recruitment consultants or external recruitment. Research conducted by Matthew and Rutherford (2022) will be used as a reference in this study. Although Matthew and Rutherford's (2022) research examines the impact of job and resource demands on burnout among international salespeople, the research has adequately described the specific job challenges and demands experienced by international salespeople, exploring how these demands cause burnout, and how salespeople can buffer the impact of the demands of the work. This study will refer to research conducted by Matthew and Rutherford (2022), but focuses on recruitment consultants at a headhunter company as the research subject.

Research on the external recruiter profession remains limited, with only three key studies identified: Finlay & Coverdill (2000) examination of headhunter businesses, and Ivanovic et al. (2020) and Prusik & Szulawski (2019) investigations of burnout among internal recruiters, leaving Indonesia's external recruitment sector particularly understudied. Recognizing that recruitment and sales skills are not always interchangeable, based on the researchers' professional experience, this study examines recruitment consultants' perspectives on their dual roles in headhunting firms to enhance understanding of industry job demands and coping strategies. Focusing on NOVETRA Consulting's external consultants, the research addresses a critical gap by exploring their unique challenges (business development and recruitment) and higher demands compared to internal recruiters (Finlay & Coverdill, 2000; Ivanovic et al., 2020), while extending Matthew and Rutherford's (2022) work on job demands by specifically investigating recruitment industry pressures like uncontrollable external factors. Employing qualitative case study methods, it offers richer insights than prior quantitative approaches (Ivanovic et al., 2020), incorporates P-J/P-O fit theories Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) to analyze role expectations, and importantly, expands the geographical focus to Indonesia's recruitment landscape, complementing Western-centric studies (Finlay & Coverdill, 2000; Hickey, 2020).

## RESEARCH METHODS

The researchers used a qualitative approach with a case study method to obtain information, analysis, and a deeper understanding of phenomena and situations in the field. This research had an exploratory type that began with

obtaining the necessary information and served to develop the right foundation to conduct more detailed research in the future (Sreejesh et al., 2014). This type of research aimed to produce hypotheses, not to test hypotheses. Therefore, research questions needed to be structured so the researcher had enough flexibility and freedom to explore a topic in depth (Corbin & Strauss, 2014).

Sreejesh et al. (2014) Exploration research was conducted for three main reasons: to analyze problem situations, evaluate alternatives, and find new ideas. Sekaran & Bougie (2016) It was also noted that exploratory research often relied on qualitative approaches to collect data, such as informal discussions, interviews, focus groups, and/or case studies, and was usually flexible.

The research was conducted at NOVETRA Consulting, a multinational headhunter company that is well established and well known in the professional recruitment industry. The object of this study is recruitment consultants who work at NOVETRA Consulting, both fresh graduates who have just entered the industry and consultants who already have work experience. This research focuses on understanding how recruitment consultants face job demands as they gain more work experience.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Result

This study focuses on finding out the perspective of recruitment consultants about their work in the very dynamic *headhunter* business and investigating more deeply the demands and pressures of work as a recruitment consultant. As explained at the beginning of this chapter, this study focuses on recruitment consultants working at NOVETRA Consulting, a multinational *headhunter* company located in DKI Jakarta, and interviews were conducted with 12 key speakers from 3 job functions and 6 different teams.

Based on the thematic analysis used in the qualitative research, the author has formulated three main themes as findings of this study. The main themes were "Taking on Dual Roles and High Expectations to Achieve," "Limited Business Experience and Knowledge, Performance Pressure, and the Influence of External Factors," and "Personal Strategy and Support from Colleagues." The following sub-chapters will discuss a more detailed explanation of the three themes.

#### **Key Theme 1: Performing Dual Roles and High Expectations to Achieve**

The first finding in this study will address the first main theme: recruitment consultants must perform dual roles, and companies have high expectations that recruitment consultants must achieve. Recruitment consultants at NOVETRA Consulting must carry out 2 activities in their work process. The company expects the targets set from both activities to be achieved monthly. The main theme of **Doing Dual Roles and High Expectations to Achieve** is formed by the theme of **meeting financial and non-financial targets**; besides that, **financial targets are prioritized to be achieved** by the company rather than non-financial targets, and recruitment consultants are expected to be able to **guide the level of Associate Recruitment Consultants**.

The first main theme highlights the dual roles that recruitment consultants at NOVETRA Consulting are expected to perform, along with the high monthly

targets set by the company. As "*360-degree consultants*", they handle *business development* and recruitment activities, where recruitment consultants are required to achieve financial targets in the form of income from *placement fees* equivalent to 6 times the basic salary of recruitment consultants every month. In addition, they also have non-financial targets, such as the number of CVs sent, candidates interviewed by clients, and successful clients. Although both types of targets are expected to be achieved by the company, it turns out that NOVETRA Consulting prioritizes financial results more, which reflects a sales-based approach where revenue is the main and most important thing over the process.

Beyond these responsibilities, more senior recruitment consultants are informally expected to mentor Associate *Recruitment Consultants* (ARCs), guide them to adapt to the headhunter business, and manage their targets. Although the mentor role is not part of the formal KPIs, it has added to their workload as they still have to balance meeting personal goals while supporting junior team members.

This theme illustrates high expectations in the *headhunter* business, where consultants struggle in client acquisition, perform candidate placement to earn *placement fees*, and meet high performance standards while navigating a continuous cycle of dual role demands.

### **Theme 1: Meeting Financial and Non-Financial Targets**

This section discusses the first major theme in the research, "Meeting Financial and Non-Financial Targets," which covers the two main responsibilities of recruitment consultants at NOVETRA Consulting: business development (BD) and recruitment. This role is known as a "*360-degree consultant*," where the consultant performs the recruitment function and is responsible for finding new clients, negotiating, and maintaining relationships with clients to get job orders. The work process starts with BD activities, including cold calling and LinkedIn outreach, and continues with conducting business meetings to offer recruitment services. After getting the job order, the consultant conducts end-to-end recruitment, from candidate search and interviews to candidate onboarding arrangements at the client company. Financial targets that must be achieved include a placement fee equivalent to six times the consultant's monthly basic salary, while non-financial targets include submitting a minimum of 52-60 CVs per month, the first 10-20 interviews with clients, and onboarding 1-3 new clients every quarter depending on the level of the position. This target is a key element in performance evaluation and promotion and the risk of entering the PIP (Performance Improvement Plan) program if it fails to achieve it. Consultants recognize that these two roles complement each other in a continuous work cycle, but high workloads and strict expectations often lead to significant stress and emotional demands. The resource person emphasized that although this role includes many aspects, the support from the team, organized work strategy, and team spirit help them survive in this competitive work environment.

### **Theme 2: Financial Targets Are Prioritized to Achieve**

As mentioned in the previous subchapter, recruitment consultants at NOVETRA Consulting have financial and non-financial targets that must be achieved monthly as part of their work process. However, the company's management prioritizes the achievement of financial targets, namely a placement

fee of six times the recruitment consultant's monthly basic salary, compared to non-financial targets such as the number of CVs sent, the first interview with the client, and the onboarding of new clients. The consultants revealed that management is more focused on the money generated through placement fees than on the work process that must be passed to achieve it. Although non-financial targets remain part of the KPIs that must be met, ultimately, financial results become the main indicator assessed by the company. Some consultants stated that the achievement of non-financial targets is considered less important if the placement fee has been achieved. If the placement fee target is achieved, the shortage in CV delivery or the number of interviews is often overlooked. The speakers also highlighted that management looks at the performance of consultants primarily from the revenue generated, while work processes such as building relationships with clients or maintaining a pipeline of candidates do not get the attention they deserve. This shows that the work culture at NOVETRA Consulting is very financially results-oriented, creating great pressure for recruitment consultants to generate maximum revenue each month.

### **Tema 3: Supervise Associate Recruitment Consultant**

In addition to having to achieve the financial and non-financial targets that the company has set, recruitment consultants with the positions of Recruitment Consultant and Senior Recruitment Consultant at NOVETRA Consulting have an additional responsibility expected by management, namely guiding Associate Recruitment Consultants (ARC). Although these tasks are not listed in official performance evaluation sheets or KPIs, management informally assigns more senior consultants to mentor their junior colleagues. This mentorship aims to help ARCs adapt to the dynamic headhunter work environment and understand their job responsibilities. Some sources refer to this task as a "buddy system," where they mentor one or more ARCs to provide guidance, answer questions, and monitor the achievement of non-financial targets such as the number of CVs submitted each week. They also conduct one-on-one sessions to ensure ARC stays on track in achieving targets. Senior consultants stated that even though this assignment is unofficial, they still feel responsible because their experience is essential to help juniors new to the headhunter industry, especially those unfamiliar. These additional responsibilities often create an extra workload that is not formally appreciated by the company, but is still considered an important part of the team culture and cooperation at NOVETRA Consulting.

### **Key Theme 2: Limited Business Experience and Knowledge, Performance Pressure, and the Influence of External Factors**

The second main theme in this study discusses the challenges faced by recruitment consultants at NOVETRA Consulting, covering three main aspects: limited business experience and knowledge, high performance pressure, and the influence of external factors that are difficult to control. Many recruitment consultants enter the business world of headhunters, assuming that their job will focus solely on recruitment. However, reality shows that they also have to do business development that requires sales and negotiation skills. This mismatch between initial expectations and the reality of the job leads to a difficult adaptation period, especially for those without a business or sales background. Performance

pressure from the company further aggravates the situation, where financial targets become the top priority without considering the obstacles that arise during the work process. Consultants often face challenges from external factors such as uncertainty of client needs, unpredictable candidate attitudes, and sudden changes in hiring requirements. This creates a stressful work environment where success depends not only on professional skills but also on the ability to manage external variables beyond one's control. The combination of these three challenges reflects how complex and demanding the job of a recruitment consultant can be in the highly competitive headhunter industry.

**Theme 1: Ignorance of How *Headhunter Businesses Work***

The first challenge faced by recruitment consultants at NOVETRA Consulting was ignorance of how the headhunter business works, which was exacerbated by misunderstandings regarding their role. Many of them think that the job of a recruitment consultant only includes recruitment activities, without realizing that the role also involves sales and business development activities. Based on the results of the interviews, the two types of recruitment consultants who face this challenge are fresh graduates who have just graduated from university and recruitment consultants who previously worked as internal HR. Fresh graduate recruitment consultants generally do not have an adequate understanding of the headhunter business. Some of them do not even know that their role involves sales targets until they start working. They admitted that they were surprised to learn that the position they applied for demanded the achievement of specific financial goals, such as the number of CVs submitted, the number of candidates interviewed, and the placement fee that must be achieved each month. Recruitment consultants who have experience as in-house HR also face similar misconceptions. Although they already know the world of headhunters, they do not expect the job to be more focused on sales than recruitment itself. Some of them revealed that their expectations of the targets to be achieved were not in line with reality, especially regarding the high amount of financial targets and a strict performance evaluation system. The combination of insufficient information and unrealistic expectations led to a difficult adaptation period and high work pressure for the recruitment consultants at NOVETRA Consulting.

**Theme 2: No Experience in *Business Development***

The second challenge faced by recruitment consultants at NOVETRA Consulting is the lack of experience in conducting business development, which is one of the main activities in their work process. As previously explained, recruitment consultants have to carry out two key activities, namely business development and recruitment, but most of them have no prior experience in the field of business development and only have a background in the field of recruitment. This causes misunderstandings regarding their roles, which involve sales activities. Many recruitment consultants reveal that they do not like business development because they feel the role does not match their skills and interests. Some of them openly stated that they did not feel suitable to be a salesperson and had difficulty carrying out this task. Activities such as finding new clients, negotiating, and promoting company services are considered a heavy burden because they require a high level of communication and negotiation skills that not all consultants have.

The pressure to meet business development targets and recruitment demands overwhelms them. The mismatch between job expectations and actual duties, coupled with the psychological burden of having to do something undesirable, worsens the work experience of recruitment consultants. The combination of a lack of skills and a dislike for business development creates significant challenges in their jobs, potentially demotivating them and increasing the risk of work burnout.

### **Theme 3: Uncontrollable External Factors**

The third challenge faced by recruitment consultants at NOVETRA Consulting is external factors that cannot be controlled, including client attitudes, candidate behavior, and unpredictable X-factors. From the client side, challenges include unclear communication, such as clients that are difficult to contact, sudden changes in candidate criteria, unrealistic expectations, and budgets that do not match market standards, which hinder the search for qualified candidates. The passivity of some clients who delayed the recruitment process, even though the position had been declared urgent, further aggravated the situation. On the candidate's side, consultants face unexpected behaviors such as rejection of a job offer in the final stages of the recruitment process or even the disappearance of a candidate without news after expressing a willingness to accept an offer. This makes the consultants' long efforts futile and hinders the achievement of their financial targets. In addition, X-factors such as luck and market dynamics are also significant challenges. Changing client needs, market fluctuations, and sudden halts to the recruitment process create uncertainties that are difficult to anticipate. Some consultants feel that despite having worked hard according to procedures and meeting the company's requirements, the achievement of the target still depends on luck and unpredictable market conditions. This combination of various external factors creates a work environment full of uncertainty and adds to the psychological burden of their work.

### **Theme 4: High Performance Pressure from Companies**

The high performance pressure at NOVETRA Consulting is a serious challenge for recruitment consultants, especially due to the difficult financial and non-financial targets and the lack of management attention to the obstacles they face. The company focuses more on the final result in the form of placement fees than on the work process that must be passed. Recruitment consultants' efforts are often overlooked if financial targets are not met, even if non-financial targets such as CV submission and a number of interviews have been met. Management tends to judge results in terms of numbers without considering the difficulties of the recruitment process, including obstacles from clients and candidates. The inability to meet targets for three consecutive months puts consultants at risk of entering the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) program, which requires achieving higher targets with strict supervision. If the target is still not achieved, they are asked to resign to avoid formal termination of employment voluntarily. The fear of getting into PIP creates significant anxiety and mental stress, leaving the consultant constantly worried and stressed. This condition triggers burnout, which is characterized by anxiety, demotivation, and a strong desire to stop working. Some consultants experience excessive anxiety to the point of being carried away in dreams or feeling anxious every time they start a new work week. Repeated target

cycles with no certainty of results worsened their mental state. Constant burnout makes them lose motivation to work and consider switching to a more stable and sales-pressure-free internal recruitment role, showing the negative impact of high job demands without adequate management support.

### **Key Theme 3: Personal Strategy and Support from Colleagues**

The third theme will discuss how resource persons face the demands and challenges of their work as recruitment consultants, namely, by **Personal Strategy and Support from Colleagues**. Based on the interview results, the interviewees finally understood the process and work pattern of a recruitment consultant after several months of working in the business of a *headhunter*. Even though in the end the resource person already understood the process and work pattern as a recruitment consultant, they still felt *Burnout* caused by high job demands and difficult challenges. Therefore, recruitment consultants must have a way to deal with the feeling of *burnout* and resume their activities and work processes. Resource persons are considered effective in dealing with the demands and challenges of their work through supportive **personal and co-worker coping strategies**. This theme shows that the combination of personal coping strategies and supportive peer support goes a long way in helping recruitment consultants cope with high demands and maintain motivation in this challenging industry.

### **Theme 1: Personal Countermeasures Strategy**

As can be seen in the identity table of the resource persons, the shortest working period was owned by resource person 1, which was 1 year and 3 months and the longest working period was owned by resource person 9, which was 5 years and 2 months. Despite the demands and challenges faced by the interviewees, they managed to survive and work at NOVETRA Consulting during their tenure. This is because the speakers have found the best way to process the fatigue that arises from their work, one of which is with **personal coping strategies**. The personal strategies referred to by the speakers were taking time off, doing hobbies, *having a positive mindset, working only according to working hours, working from Home (WFH)*, and reducing effort at work.

### **Theme 2: Support from Positive Coworkers**

In addition to personal support strategies, the resource persons also felt that their colleagues were one of the *support systems* that enabled them to face the demands and challenges of their work as recruitment consultants. The resource persons felt a high sense of family, togetherness, and solidarity from their colleagues and considered that they could face the demands and challenges of their work together. Some quotes from the speakers' statements regarding support from colleagues are positive.

## **Discussion**

In this sub-chapter, the author will present the findings presented in the previous sub-chapter, which are associated with literature on job demand resources, person-job fit, person-organization fit, and burnout. In addition, this section will also answer the research questions the author has submitted in Chapter I. This research aims to find out recruitment consultants' perspectives on their work in the dynamic *headhunter* business. Furthermore, this study will answer three research

questions, namely (1) what are the job demands given to recruitment consultants and how these demands contribute to *burnout*, (2) what do recruitment consultants face the challenges in doing the work and how these demands contribute to *burnout*, and (3) how recruitment consultants face the demands and challenges of the job.

### **Performing Dual Roles and High Expectations to Achieve**

The first main theme of the study, "Taking on Dual Roles and High Expectations to Achieve," highlights the complexity of the responsibilities of recruitment consultants at NOVETRA Consulting, including business development and recruitment. As a "360-degree consultant," the consultant must find new clients, negotiate contracts, and manage candidates. Job demands that involve physical, emotional, and cognitive aspects are in accordance with the definition of job demands from Demerouti et al. (2001). The contingency business model used by the company makes financial targets, such as placement fees, a top priority. This strategy makes the company pay only if the candidate is successfully placed, so financial targets take precedence over the work process itself. To achieve these targets, consultants must meet non-financial targets such as the number of CVs sent, candidate interviews with clients, and the acquisition of new clients. This high workload reflects quantitative role overload, as described by Fineman & Payne (1981), which arises when the work demands exceed the available time capacity. In addition, higher-ranking consultants, such as Recruitment Consultants and Senior Recruitment Consultants, should also mentor more junior colleagues, which worsens their workload. Mentoring responsibilities not listed in these KPIs increase job demands that pose a risk of burnout. The company's indifference to the consultant's work process and focus only on financial results exacerbates the situation. The work cycle that continues to repeat every month makes consultants feel tired and anxious about entering the PIP program if the target is not achieved. Symptoms of burnout, such as emotional and physical exhaustion, appear due to high demands and a lack of company support. This phenomenon corresponds to the theory of Maslach et al. (2001), who defined burnout as a syndrome characterized by chronic fatigue, cynicism, and decreased work effectiveness. The combination of dual roles, high expectations, and minimal work resources makes the work environment unpleasant, as revealed by Yanyan & Xueyan (2024), who stated that stress due to excessive demands can make employees feel overwhelmed and vulnerable to burnout.

### **Limitations of Business Experience and Knowledge, Performance Pressure, and Influence of External Factors**

The second main theme in this study underscores the challenges faced by recruitment consultants at NOVETRA Consulting, including limited headhunter business experience and knowledge, high performance pressure, and the influence of uncontrollable external factors. These challenges are explored through the theories of person-organization fit (P-O fit) and person-job fit (P-J fit), highlighting the fit between individuals, jobs, and organizational environments. Many interviewees, who previously worked as internal HR and fresh graduates, expressed their surprise that their role was more focused on sales than recruitment. This misconception reflects the P-J fit mismatch, where their skills and expectations are

not aligned with the job demands. They also feel burdened by business development activities that are not in accordance with their interests and expertise. On the other hand, performance pressure from company management exacerbates this mismatch, especially since the company's main focus is on achieving financial targets without considering the obstacles experienced. The fear of entering the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) program further increases anxiety and stress in the workplace. The interviewees also identified external factors such as client behavior, candidate attitudes, and factor X (luck) as challenges that complicate achieving targets. Based on the P-E fit theory, the mismatch between individual and organizational values leads to significant mismatches, increasing the potential for burnout. The impact can be seen in the form of anxiety, demotivation, and a strong desire to stop working. Although the interviewees had not yet reached the full burnout stage, symptoms such as emotional exhaustion, withdrawal, and job dissatisfaction were already visible. This supports the view that mismatches between individuals and organizations can lead to significant psychological distress, which, if not addressed, will lead to burnout. These findings align with previous research that suggests that mismatches between job demands and individual abilities can trigger emotional exhaustion and decreased work commitment.

### **Personal Strategy and Support from Colleagues**

The third main theme in the study, "Personal Strategy and Support from Colleagues," highlights the efforts of recruitment consultants at NOVETRA Consulting to face the demands and challenges of their work. Based on the Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) model proposed by Demerouti et al. (2001), job resources such as physical, social, and organizational aspects play an important role in buffering the negative impact of job demand. The study's findings show that recruitment consultants use various personal strategies to manage work stress, such as taking time off, doing hobbies, maintaining a positive mindset, working hours, working from Home (WFH), and reducing effort at work. These strategies help them recover the energy and cognitive resources that have been used, in accordance with the concept of recovery proposed by Sonnentag (2003) and Sonnentag & Fritz (2007). In addition, colleague support is a significant social resource when dealing with work pressure. The speakers revealed that the high sense of togetherness, solidarity, and emotional support from colleagues creates a supportive and fun work environment. This support is one of the reasons they stay in the company. These findings align with the social support theory of Cohen and Syme (1985), which asserts that social support helps reduce stress through real help and emotional support. Bakker & de Vries (2021) also emphasized that job resources can weaken the relationship between job demand and burnout by facilitating more efficient handling of job demands. As such, personal strategies and support from colleagues are important buffers against work pressure and help recruitment consultants achieve a match for their work at NOVETRA Consulting.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study explored recruitment consultants' perspectives on job demands, challenges, and coping strategies at NOVETRA Consulting, a multinational headhunting firm, using a qualitative case study approach with 12 participants across different seniority levels. Key findings revealed that consultants face high expectations as "360-degree professionals," balancing business development and recruitment under significant cognitive and emotional pressure, alongside challenges like inexperience, value mismatches, and performance stress. Despite these pressures, they relied on personal strategies (e.g., work-life balance) and colleague support to mitigate burnout. The research fills gaps in understanding burnout causes in the recruitment industry and highlights the role of social support as a psychological resource. Future studies could expand by comparing firms, conducting longitudinal or quantitative burnout analyses, examining organizational policies' impact, assessing leadership's role, exploring automation's effects, investigating cross-cultural differences, or evaluating the efficacy of personal resilience strategies.

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