



# Burnout and Intimacy in a Sample of Health-care Workers: The Mediational Role of Psychological Flexibility

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## BACKGROUND

The predominant model of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001; Maslach & Goldberg, 1998) comprises three dimensions: Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (D), and lack of personal accomplishment (PA). Recent approaches from Contextual Behavioral Sciences (CBS; Hayes et al., 2012) point out that Psychological Flexibility (PF) may play a role in the development and maintenance of burnout. The Awareness, Courage, and Responsiveness model (ACR; Kanter et al., 2020) is a model of intimacy rooting in the principles of CBS, such as Functional Analytic Psychotherapy (FAP; Kohlenberg & Tsai, 1991; Tsai et al., 2009). Although the ACR model is a clinical model (Marín-Vila et al., 2020) interpersonal skills like those proposed by this model are receiving attention to approach a huge range of social issues, like burnout in mental-health professionals (Reyes-Ortega et al., 2019). Ortiz-Fune et al. (2020), with a large sample of Spanish mental health professionals, demonstrated that burnout (especially PA and D) can be better explained when introducing ACR skills using a CBS approach.

## OBJECTIVES

1) Obtain the significant relationships between each component of Intimacy, Burnout and Psychological Flexibility; 2) Explore the role of Intimacy ACR behavioral model components (X<sub>i</sub>) to predict Burnout (Y); and 3) Analyze the mediational role of PF (M) on significant relationships between Intimacy (X) and Burnout (Y) dimensions.

## METHOD

**PARTICIPANTS:** 120 health workers (77.5% female) between 24 and 65 years, working for the Spanish National Health System.

**PROCEDURE:** This is a cross-sectional study with intentional non-probabilistic sampling. Participants completed an online survey.

### INSTRUMENTS:

- *Maslach Burnout Inventory Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS; Maslach et al., 1996; Spanish version)*
- *Awareness, Courage, and Responsiveness Scale (ACRS; Kuczynski et al., 2020; Spanish version)*
- *Work-Related Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (WAAQ; Bond et al., 2013; Spanish version)*

**DATA ANALYSIS:** 1) Bivariate Pearson correlations; 2) Stepwise multiple linear regression analysis; and 3) Path analyses. All analyses were executed with JASP software (ver. 14.0). Values of  $p \leq .05$  were considered significant.

## RESULTS

1) PF only presented significant correlations with PA (burnout), and Others-Awareness (OA) and Courage (C).

Variable	Burnout (MBPI)			PF	Intimacy (ACRS)		
	EE	DP	PA		OA	SA	C
DP	.644						
PA	-.501	-.432					
PF	-.118	-.153	.365				
OA	-.194	-.250	.451	.250			
SA	-.003	-.104	.216	.170	.560		
C	-.188	-.317	.341	.284	.446	.492	
R	-.199	-.250	.407	.084	.585	.454	.542

Note: Non significant correlations ( $p \geq .05$ ) are in red

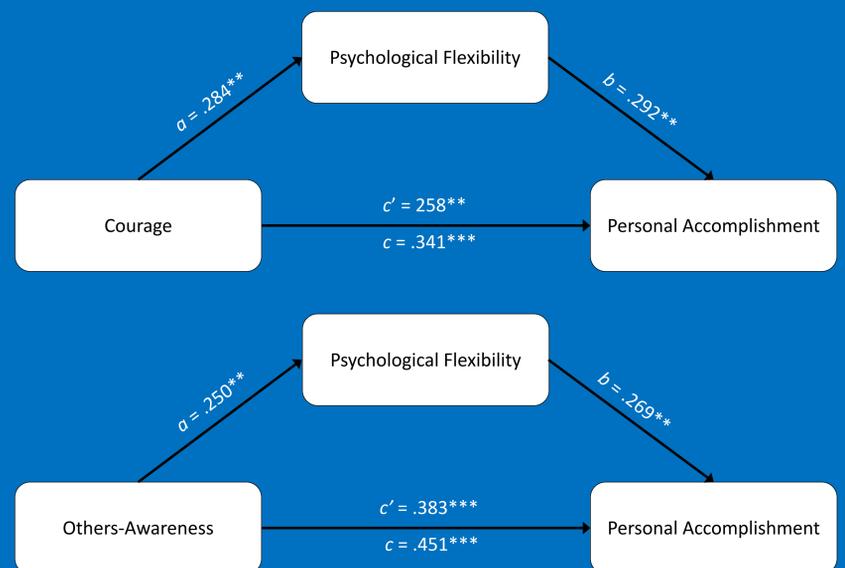
2) Courage was the most important dimension of the ACR to explain the three burnout dimensions. Others-Awareness also contributed to explain PA.

Burnout	ACR	B	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p
EE	C	-.238	.049	7.108	.009
D	C	-.346	.112	15.997	<.001
PA	OA	.333	.210	6.412	.013
	C	.226			

3) The role of PF as a mediator was only found when analyzing PA, and it resulted in a partial mediation of Courage and Others-Awareness contributions.

Table 3. Path analyses of Intimacy-ACR components (X) on Burnout dimensions (Y), with the mediating role of Psychological Flexibility (M)

PA (Y <sub>3</sub> )	Indirect effect		Total effect	
	ab	ab 95% CI	r <sup>2</sup>	p
OA (X <sub>1</sub> )	.067	[.011, .142]	.203	<.001
C (X <sub>3</sub> )	.083	[.020, .166]	.116	<.001



## CONCLUSIONS

We found an association between the ACR model of Intimacy and Burnout dimensions in a sample of health professionals in Spain. Psychological flexibility did not play a significant role on Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization. However, and in coherence con previous results (Ortiz-Fune et al., 2020) Psychological Flexibility in workplace behaviors seems important to explain Personal Accomplishment, playing a mediational role on the effects of Others-Awareness and Courage. Self-Awareness and Responsiveness did not result relevant variables to predict Burnout, so it seems that in the relations establish at workplace, it is more important to acknowledge another's thoughts and feelings than owns. Also, skills related with Courage (showing, regulated self expressions and being able to ask for what ones need) are more relevant behaviors than those related with Responsiveness.

## DISCUSION

These results contribute to understand the role of CBS related variables on burnout. At least two of the ACR dimensions (Courage and Others-awareness) play a significant role on burnout, especially on relation with PA, where psychological flexibility could mediate the effect of these variables.

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