JOB BURNOUT AMONG EMPLOYEES: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

Human resource is one of the most valuable assets for every organization and managing them efficiently and effectively leads to the success of an organization. One of the most critical problems that human resources are facing is job burnout. Job burnout can be defined as a state of mental weariness and has been used to describe the disconnect between the worker and the workplace. It is a state of physical and psychological stress in response to the consistent stressful demands at work. Working continuously for long hours under stressful circumstances can lead to physical and mental illness and a decline in the motivation and satisfaction of employees. Burnout not only induces negative emotions but can also diminish positive emotions. The current study is a review paper on job burnout to generate a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, to understand its various dimensions, the interrelationship between the dimensions and the impact of demographical factors and organizational factors on the three dimensions of job burnout. A total of 200 published articles published in the English language between the period 1981 to 2022 were downloaded. Keywords used for research were job burnout, workplace burnout, staff burnout, organizational burnout and burnout syndrome were used.

Keywords: Job burnout, Exhaustion, Depersonalization, Inefficacy

INTRODUCTION

The concept of burnout was coined by Herbert J. Freudenberger in the mid-1970s to denote chronic stress faced by employees due to chronic work and interpersonal stressors at the workplace which deteriorates the physical and psychological health of employees and has serious adverse consequences for both the organization as well as individual and society as a whole. Freudenberger in his research described the relation of burnout with the physical and behavioural symptoms and consequences. This research was further continued by Christina Maslach and her

colleagues to dive deeper into this phenomenon. Burnout has now become a buzzword but critics opined that burnout is not a new phenomenon, it is just a fancy term used in place of depression or identity crisis faced by some individuals when they were not able to bear chronic interpersonal stressors at work. It is different from acute stress that arises due to a specific incident, it accumulates over a long period and results in emotional exhaustion where the emotional resources of employees deplete continuously without any source of replenishment which may be due to long working hours, lack of resources, work overload, role conflict, role ambiguity. Some studies have also related it to the personality factors of the employees, cynicism or depersonalization where the employee detaches himself/herself from people at work i.e., colleagues, boss and clients too to protect his resources and finally a feeling of inefficacy get developed in the employees when they are not able to give their best and start doubting their capabilities. Research has concluded that emotional exhaustion is followed by depersonalization where employees tend to conserve their resources by giving the bare minimum and lack of self-efficacy moves parallel to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Burnout deteriorates both the physical and mental health of employees and if not managed effectively could adversely affect the organization in addition to the employees. The burnout phenomenon emphasizes on the psychological, physical and social outcomes of chronic job stress. Work culture has undergone several dramatic changes in the past few decades, especially after liberalization, privatization and globalization. Organizations nowadays are more focused on the needs of customers, creating and retaining them, and providing value service at the lowest possible cost and a tremendous increase in no. of organizations has increased the competition many folds. In addition to this growing recession and massive unemployment has resulted in a decline in the bargaining power of employees. Work culture is becoming more and more stringent, expecting to give organizations all they have, Layoff and organizational conflicts act as butter to the fire multiplying the stress level of the employees. The invention of the Internet and Mobile devices has weakened the work-life balance of employees. Unlike in the olden days, employees of the modern organization work more than 8 hours a day resulting in a reduction of the time they can spend with their family which is a source of replenishment of energy. Long working hours, extensive workload, massive unemployment and massive competition for getting and retaining a job lead to excessive stress among employees, they cannot afford the time to relax (Lee & Asforth, 1996). Consequently, employees undergo varying levels of occupational behavioural issues at the workplace. Long-term mental stress has been found associated with chronic diseases among employees (Kumar, Unnikrishnan, & Nagaraj, 2013). It can affect the work efficiency and physical and mental state of the employee.

Job burnout has been recognized as a most common occupational hazard by World Health Organization and has been a hot topic of discussion among researchers, academicians and socialists but there is no standard definition of burnout, different people have their definition some correlate it with the personality, others correlates it with demographical features. Some correlate it with a mismatch between person and job, job demand-resources, job demand-control and resources, social support, job satisfaction, work-life balance, mindfulness, career plateau and organizational environment, but there exists a consensus regarding the three dimensions of job burnout i.e., emotional exhaustion, Cynicism which is also known as depersonalization and lack of efficacy or poor self-efficacy. Further opinion differs regarding the series of dimensions, some researchers opine that emotional exhaustion is a predecessor of

depersonalization and lack of self-efficacy moves parallel to both dimensions while others suggested that three dimensions move in the continuum.

Dimensions of Job Burnout:

- **Emotional Exhaustion-** Emotional exhaustion is the psychological and most visible dimension of job burnout where employees start feeling exhausted when they Fail to manage their work despite working for long hours due to heavy workload where the ratio of job demands and resources available at the job varies significantly. Moreover, continuous interaction with people and the unsaid norm to be selfless and give their hundred per cent while providing service to the customers, and going the extra mile to solve their problems results in continuous deterioration of their resources without any source of replenishment. Role conflict and role ambiguity also act as a mediating factors between job demands and emotional exhaustion (Maslach,2001).

- **Depersonalization-** Depersonalization dimensions of job burnout are also known as "cynicism" where employees try to detach themselves from the job and the people at the job. This dimension is a continuum of emotional exhaustion dimension. This is the dehumanization phase of job burnout where employees tend to treat people at work as objects, begin to cut back the time and energy and give their bare minimum efforts to conserve their emotional and psychological resources. Based on the conservation of resources (COR) model which emphasizes self-protective at first (Maslach, 1996).

- **Inefficacy-** Inefficacy or lack of accomplishment represents the third dimension of job burnout. It is a situation when an employee starts evaluating themselves negatively in the context of their achievements and accomplishments. It can also be defined as the feeling of incompetence and lack of achievement and productivity in work. This mostly happens due to the unavailability of required resources at the job, lack of social support and opportunities to grow. In such a situation employees start reconsidering their job alternatives and start disliking the person they had become (Maslach, 2003).

Factors affecting Job Burnout: Burnout is a multidimensional psychological syndrome resulting from a multiplicity of factors like demographic factors, organizational factors, and personality traits.

Demographic Factors and Job Burnout:

- **Age:** The age of an employee is consistently related to job burnout. There is a lack of consensus among researchers regarding the role of age in job burnout some studies consider it as moderating variable while others consider it as a confounding variable with experience. Young employees tend to be more emotionally exhausted (Maslach,2001), while aged employees tend to be more cynical. The self-efficacy dimension depicts a similar trend among all age groups.

- **Gender: G**ender has been a strong predictor of burnout. Commonly, it is assumed that burnout is higher among working females. Early research conducted by different researchers revealed Females score high on

emotional exhaustion and self-efficacy (Caccese & Mayerberg, 1984) and males score high on depersonalization and lack of accomplishment (Aslam & Haque, 2011).

- **Marital Status:** Marital status of an individual also impacts the possibility of burnout among employees. A clash of opinion exists among researchers, Aslam and Haque (2011), found no significant difference between married and single employees in different dimensions of job burnout while Maslach et al. (2001) revealed that unmarried employees tend to be more burnout than married employees.

- **Qualification:** Qualification and job burnout have an inverse relationship, highly qualified employees score high on emotional exhaustion and lack of accomplishment in comparison with less qualified individuals (Maslach et al, 2001; Aslam & Haque, 2011).

- **Experience:** Past research has shown an inverse relationship between experience and job burnout. The possibility of burnout is more in the early career stage, employees with no or little experience score high on the emotional exhaustion dimension, employees having experience of more than 5 years scores high on depersonalization and those having experience of more than 10 years score high on lack of accomplishment dimension of job burnout (Aslam & Haque, 2011).

Organizational factors and Job Burnout:

- **Workload:** Workload refers to a situation when demands at work or responsibilities at work are more than time and resources available when targets and deadlines at the job are unrealistic and beyond the capacity of employees. The requirement of doing too much work in too little time with little resources and authority makes the employees more susceptible to burnout. It has a significant positive relation with emotional exhaustion and lack of accomplishment dimension of job burnout (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Maslach et al., 2001). Working continuously for long hours leads to chronic stress resulting in job burnout if the opportunity to replenish energy is missing and could adversely affect the quality of the work and relationships between people at work. In contrast to this, Landsbergis (1988) opined that the workload is sustainable providing learning opportunities to the employees. Chronic workload also leads to depersonalization where employee cut back their contribution to the bare minimum instead of working to his/ her full capacity.

- **A mismatch between Job Demand and Job Resources:** A mismatch between job demand and job resources leads to a high rate of emotional exhaustion and lack of accomplishment as the employee starts doubting himself for inefficiency, initially employee tries to put more effort to compensate for the deficiency of resources but beyond a certain level when he or she is not able to see visible positive results it leads high level of job burnout (Maslach & Lieter,2004).

- **Working hours:** No. of hours worked has a direct and significant relationship with the emotional exhaustion dimension of job burnout. An average employee spent at least eight at his workplace and some roles and duties at work require employees to work for more than forty hours a week. Working Continuously for such long hours on daily basis could result in chronic body pain, headache, sleep deprivation, loss of concentration, a decline in creativity and results in poor relations with other people at work and with family and friends too.

- **Control:** Karasek & Theorell (1990) founder of the demand-control theory of job stress signifies the mediating role of control in job burnout. Employees thrive and feel less stressed when they get the autonomy to make their decision. The problem of control occurs when they don't possess the authority to influence their working environment and have no or minimum authority, they feel exhausted and in absence of required resources and authority, employees tend to rate their efficacy negatively. Cordes & Dougherty (1993) found a strong positive relationship between role conflict and job burnout. They defined role conflict as situations at work where there is a contradiction in demands at work and values of employees or employees receives multiple order from more than one authority making it difficult to prioritize, this represents a problem of authority at work. Sufficient control leads to job satisfaction and reduces emotional exhaustion among employees. (Maslach, 1996).

- **Reward:** The reward dimension denotes the monetary, social and intrinsic benefit employees receive in place of their services. Rewards have a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction and significant negative relation with emotional exhaustion and the inefficacy dimension of job burnout (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Recognition denotes the social dimension of reward where employees feel less exhausted when they get sufficient recognition for their efforts and achievement. Inappropriate or insufficient recognition and rewards lead to depersonalization and lack of accomplishment.

- **Community:** It denotes the social dimension of the workplace. It denotes the perception of employees regarding the amount of support they get from people at work i.e., boss, colleagues and clients. Cordes & Dougherty (1993) signifies the importance of support from the immediate boss or supervisor. People thrive in a community where they feel appreciated and can exchange their emotions with others. Jobs that isolate employees from their colleagues and people at work result in unresolved conflicts and exhaustion among employees. support from supervisors is closely associated with the emotional exhaustion dimension, whereas support from coworkers has close relation with the inefficacy dimension of job burnout (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Maslach et al., 1996).

- **Fairness:** The perception of employees toward fairness and equity in the workplace has a significant relation with job burnout. Equality in rewards, recognition, workload, growth opportunities and justice is closely related and central to the equality theory (Walster et al., 1973). Chances of burnout are less among employees who perceive their supervisor as fair and feel consistency among efforts and rewards (Leiter & Harvie, 1997, 1998; Siegrist, 2002). When employees feel a lack of equality, it often leads to workplace conflicts, emotional exhaustion and poor self-efficacy among employees and employees tend to cut back their efforts and do the bare minimum required. They feel less satisfied with their job.

- **Values:** Value denotes the congruency between the work employees want to do and what they had to do. If the personal goal of employees and organizational goals are in sync with each other, the chances of burnout decrease and if there is inconsistency or wide disparity between organizational goals and individual goals it affects all dimensions of job burnout (Leiter & Harvie, 1997). Moreover, if there exists inconsistency between the mission of the organization and actual practices it could also lead to burnout among employees. Value act

as a motivational factor for employees. Employees evaluate their accomplishments when they realize their aspirations for their careers do not match the values of the organization which leads to a high level of exhaustion (Stevens & O'Neill, 1983).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Friedman (1991) demonstrated environmental factors could also contribute to teacher burnout. He found that organizational climate led to teacher burnout. Finally, personal factors contribute to burnout. Gender and age were found to be significant predictors of burnout. **Maslach and Lieter (2004)** have structured a framework for considering six areas of work life (workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values) their interrelationship as well as their overall relationship to the three aspects of burnout in their study of "Areas of work life: A structured approach to organizational predictors of job burnout". The study aimed to discover solutions to the problem of job burnout. Results of the study show that workload is highly correlated with the exhaustion dimension of burnout, and values mediate the relationship with all three Facets of burnout. **Jong and Peper (2006)** explored the impact of communication variables on job burnout in combination with other antecedents of burnout like employee personal satisfaction and employee engagement. Data was collected from 954 employees of the Dutch subsidiary of an international financial consultancy firm through a web- a based questionnaire. The level of burnout was measured through the Dutch version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). Two perspectives of organizational communication namely functional perspective and interpretive perspective were used, where functional perspective represents information overload or underload and interpretative perspective includes communication climate and communication satisfaction among employees. Results revealed a positive relationship between the two perspectives of communication and job burnout. **Aslam and Haque (2011)** studied the relationship between demographical variables and job burnout. They analyzed the effect of gender, age, marital status, qualification, work experience, salary structure and working hours on three dimensions of job burnout**. Gorji (2011)** examined the effect of the Job burnout dimension on employees' performance of bank personnel of Mellat bank in Golestan province of Iran. 250 respondents were randomly selected out of 500 employees and data for research was collected through two questionnaires and later analyzed through spearman's correlation test. Results revealed that in addition to the high amount of job burnout among personnel other factors like emotional exhaustion and depersonalization have a reverse impact on the performance of bank personnel. **Jankome et al. (2013)** conducted a study on 100 employees of Botswana Power Corporation (BPC) to analyze the impact of job stress and job burnout on employees' performance. The convenience sampling technique was used for the collection of data due to time and cost constraints. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection consisting of two sections: the first section includes questions regarding the demographic profile and others related to stress, burnout, and performance. Captured data was analyzed with the help of MS Excel 2007 and Statistical Analysis System (SAS) version 9.2. Results revealed that 73% of employees face stress at the workplace due to the job environment and this stress led to physiological and mental illness in the employee which results in an increased rate of absenteeism and employee turnover. Results also unearth that there is a significant negative relationship between stress, burnout, and employee performance. **Laurent et al. (2014)** in their

study " Is burnout solely job-related" attempted to deconstruct the traditional limited view of burnout being solely related to job-specific factors irrespective of the fact that it may relate to other spheres of life as well. The author challenged the existing practice of rejecting the context-free approach to burnout by claiming that it is incompatible with the multidimensional definition of the construct and is not appropriate. This study strives to set up a generic approach to burnout beyond the multi-domain definition given by Christina in her Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). **Zeinalpour et al. (2014)** attempted to investigate the effect of job stress components (physical environment, job conflicts, and role ambiguity) on job burnout and to provide useful tactics to reduce or eliminate job burnout. Data was collected through a job stress questionnaire and job burnout questionnaire from 705 employees of Islamic Azad University through a random sampling technique and analysis of data was done with the help of Pearson correlation coefficient and regression and t-test. Results of the study claimed that all three components (physical environment of job, job conflicts, and role ambiguity) have a significant positive relationship with job stress and job burnout. This study also mediated the role of age and gender on burnout. **Yu, Wang, et al. (2014)** analyzed the impact of work stress on job burnout. Data were collected by using the perceived stress scale, General self-efficacy, and Maslach Burnout Inventory- General Survey from 387 middle school teachers (183 men and 204 women). The results discovered that job burnout is significantly correlated with work stress and self-efficacies. Perceived stress was positively correlated with job burnout and was negatively correlated with self-efficacy. **Bakker and Costa (2014)** discussed the role of individual employees in the development of/job burnout. They tried to review the antecedents and consequences of burnout. Results of the study revealed that chronic burnout weakens the job gain cycle. It can also be concluded that the level of burnout in employees can be reduced by altering their work environment. **Khamisa et al. (2015)** conducted research to indicate the relationship between various variables such as work stress, job satisfaction, job burnout, and the overall health of nurses in four hospitals in South Africa. A total of 1200 nurses were selected as respondents. The research claimed a negative relationship between job burnout and job satisfaction and a positive relationship between work stress, resource inadequacy, and job burnout. **Hao and Hong (2015)** aimed to explore the mediating and moderating effect of the relationship between resilience, stress, and burnout among civil servants in Beijing, China. A total of 541 civil servants completed a self-report questionnaire including three scales measuring civil servants 'resilience, stress, and burnout. The data were analyzed with the help of correlation, multiple regressions, and structural equation modelling. The results revealed that work stress could significantly predict burnout. Resilience played a partially mediating role between work stress and burnout. Work stress played a partial mediating role between resilience and burnout. These results suggested the importance of alleviating work stress and combating burnout of civil servants in Beijing. **Abarghouei et al. (2016)** conducted a cross-sectional descriptive analysis of hospital personnel in Yazd. Data was collected through the Demographic Questionnaire, Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), and Hospital stress (HSS-35) and analyzed with the help of SPSS-16 software and Pearson-Product moment correlation and independent samples t-test. This study aimed to examine the rate of job stress and burnout in healthcare personnel and its impact on their social, physical, and psychological life. Pearson correlation pointed significant positive relationship between job stress, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization, and there exists a negative relationship between job stress and personal accomplishment. Independent samples t-test results illustrated

that the rate of job stress, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization in women is lower than in men, and the level of emotional exhaustion is lower among singles as compared to married. **Ashrafi et al. (2018)** conducted a cross-sectional study on nurses of Imam Hossein Hospital, Iran to examine the relationship between quality of work life and burnout among hospital staff. Data were collected from 134 nurses using a combination of a personal demographic questionnaire, Walton's quality of work life questionnaire, and Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). Data was collected through convenience sampling but analyzed through descriptive statistics (absolute and relative frequencies, mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistical tests like Pearson correlation, chi-square test, t-test, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Results revealed a significant negative relationship between quality of work life and burnout. The author suggested improvement in the quality of work life as an important measure to increase the level of personal achievement and to reduce or eliminate the level of burnout. **Bianchi and Brisson (2019)** in their article "B*urnout and Depression: casual attributions and construct overlap"* examined the extent to which individuals with burnout and depressive symptoms attribute these symptoms to their job. A convenience sample of 468 health professionals, employed in the French-speaking part of Switzerland took part in the study. Data were analyzed with the help of a chi-square test, and analysis of variance and association between burnout and depression symptoms were examined through correlation analysis on one hand and a two-step cluster analysis on the other hand. Data was collected through an Internet survey i.e., an online questionnaire. The findings of this research suggested that burnout may not be specifically job-induced syndrome, both occupational and non-occupational stressors also play role in job burnout. **Alice Gonçalves et al. (2019),** had studied burnout and stress among professionals in the healthcare sector. This study aimed to analyze the relationship between burnout and stress in professional healthcare. The study was done on 221 persons employed in hospitals in north Portugal selected through convenience sampling. The findings showed that the stress elements like the intention to leave the job, instability of the contractual status, work burden, inability to balance work and home, work relationship, leading activities in training, and dealing the clients were the factors that predicted cognitive weariness, emotional exhaustion, and physical fatigue. **Saravanabavan et al. (2019)** conducted a cross-sectional study among the clinical pharmacists, nurses, doctors, physiotherapists, and respiratory therapists in the ICUs of a multispecialty hospital in southern India on a sample size of 204. Tools like a scale for job satisfaction, the scale for perceived stress, and the Maslach burnout inventory– human service survey were used to assess the prevalence of burnout and stress among the doctors and professionals of healthcare in the intensive care unit. The findings of the study revealed a correlation between job satisfaction level and burnout level. **Santos et al. (2020)** conducted a study on 89 contractual workers employed in malls and concluded that physical and emotional exhaustion reduced work performance and work alienation from workmates. Contractual workers have an average degree of burnout based on the combined four different symptoms physical, and emotional exhaustion, reduced work performance, and alienation from workmates. **Turek (2020)** explained the relationship between job burnout (JB), Organizational citizenship behaviours (OCBs), and Counterproductive workplace behaviours' (CWBs). The research confirmed a statistically significant relationship between JB and all the studied variables. It may be concluded that JB increases the probability of CWBs and decreases employee readiness for OCBs. **Bebiroglu et al. (2021) i**n their study aimed to develop a valid and reliable instrument

to operationalize the balance between job demand and resources to predict job burnout conducted a cross-sectional study on 656 participants (study 1) and then conducted a longitudinal study on 882 participants (study 2). In study 1, the imbalance between risk and resources explained a high percentage of variance in job burnout. in study 2, results indicated that a change in balanced produced a significant change in job burnout scores over time. **Bansal and Aggarwal (2021)** in a research study evaluated the phenomenon of burnout among teachers in the province of Jaipur. The results of the study showed that the rate of burnout among teachers was high. Among 100 people who participated in the survey, 69.8 % have a high degree of burnout, 51%of of professionals have a high degree of depersonalization and 44 % have a low degree of personal achievement. **Ayalp et al. (2021)** in their study conducted on 360 architects at a design firm identified burnout with 39 criteria. Among these excessive disrespect by individuals outside the profession, the demand for perfection by the customer instead of little money and lack of promotion opportunities were the most significant factors that cause burnout. **Mohammadi et al. (2022)** in their study titled "Job burnout and its related factors among surgical technologists" aimed to determine the degree of burnout and its related factors among surgical technologists conducted a cross-sectional study in hospitals affiliated with Iran university on 125 surgical technologists and concluded that novice workers and operating room BScs suffered more form job burnout than those with an associate degree and experienced workers. **Abdalltef and Ahmed (2022)** analyzed the relationship between the organizational variable and job burnout in a sample of 50 faculty assistant members through a survey and concluded that there is a statistical correlation between role conflict and job burnout. **Liu et al. (2022)** in their study titled "A meta-analysis of teachers' job burnout and big five personality traits" explored the relationship between teacher burnout and big five personality traits through meta-analysis. In their study total of 28 literature comprising 12,103 sample size, they found that emotional exhaustion and depersonalization were moderately negatively correlated with conscientiousness, openness, extroversion, and agreeableness but a low sense of achievement was negatively correlated with five Facets of personality i.e., conscientiousness, openness, neuroticism, extroversion, and agreeableness. **Liu and Zhang (2022)** in their study titled "Investigation on psychological status and job burnout of managers in petroleum enterprises" conducted on 240 managers in petroleum enterprises concluded that the phenomenon of job burnout and some psychological health problems existed and the level of psychological health could predict job burnout in managers of petroleum enterprise.

Research Gap: Researchers have studied this phenomenon at different times relating it to different variables like demographic factors, personality, organizational and situational factors in different professions like teaching, nursing, physicians, IT professionals, police etc. in different countries and related it to various other variables like job satisfaction, job engagement, job turnover but only a limited no. of studies have considered job burnout among bank employees. The majority of researchers have used Maslach Burnout Inventory(MBI) or its adapted version. Few researchers have used Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) but for evaluating burnout among bank employees a specific questionnaire needs to be developed.

Conclusion: Job burnout is a burning concern among organizations as well as employees because burnout has adverse consequences on both the organization like decrease in productivity, frequent turnover of employees, internal

conflicts in the organization and the employees like headaches, back pain, loss of memory, frequent anger, loss of motivation etc. The current paper focused on the three dimensions of job burnout and its relation with demographical as well as organizational factors. It was found that organizational factors like workload, control, reward and community have direct significant relation with job burnout whereas values and fairness are indirect relations with job burnout. The impact of demographical factors varies and can play a moderating role in job burnout.

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