



JOB BURNOUT: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TO BROADEN HORIZON

Pavan Kumar Tiwari

Assistant Professor, S D Degree College, Muzaffarnagar, UP

1. ABSTRACT

This paper aims at developing a theoretical foundation and producing a comprehensive understanding by reviewing existing literature on job burnout. The study utilized only secondary data published between 1985 to 2022, accumulated from different scientific journals, books, and, websites. Job burnout is a psychological phenomenon caused by prolonged job-driven stress and can be described by its three dimensions emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and, reduced self-efficacy. This article also focused on antecedents of burnout in terms of job characteristics, role characteristics, and, personal characteristics that can lead to burnout and further elaborated consequences of burnout on organizational outcomes.

Keywords: Job burnout, emotional exhaustion, cynicism, efficacy

2. INTRODUCTION

In the current scenario, the work environment is very competitive and unsustainable which is very challenging for the employees. The world is full of talent, in which everyone is a competitor plus rival, wrestling to keep themselves pertinent, struggling to catch up with the target within the deadline, and working anytime & anywhere around the clock. In short, jobs are a prominent source of stress and burnout is a result of such prolonged stress. Further, burnout can be linked with several kinds of negative consequences such as absenteeism (Ybema et al. 2010; Gil-Monte et al. 2008), lower productivity (Dewa et al. 2014; Nayeri et al. 2009), low employees' retention (Thomas et al. 2014; Cooley et al. 1996) reduced innovative behavior (Karavasilis et al. 2019), numerous physical & mental health issues (Maslach et al. 2016; Schaufeli et al. 2001; Morse et al. 2012). Therefore, understanding and creating a burnout-free work- environment is advantageous for both employees and employers.

This article focuses on the theoretical foundation of job burnout and produces an outline of phases of job burnout, its leading factors, and repercussion for organizations and employees.

Burnout is a social phenomenon and existed long before it was documented in a systematic study by scholars. Initially, it was described as a feeling of disconnect between workers and the workplace (Leiter et al. 2003). Employees join an organization with a lot of positive expectations and passion, personal & professional goals, but with time, employees observed a change like they stop enjoying the work they do, they not be able to identify with the role anymore, they feel incompetent, they face physical problem like headache joint pain, etc., they feel sad, cynical, hopeless, and started fantasizing about quitting the job.

3. OBJECTIVE

The purpose of the paper is to produce a holistic review of existing literature in the field of Job burnout and develop a theoretical foundation for enhancing perspective related to phases of job burnout, its leading factors, and repercussion for organizations and employees.

4. Literary Support

4.1. Definition of Job burnout

The term “Burnout ‘’ was first coined by Herbert Freudenberger in the year 1974 and elaborated it as a specific kind of distress due to job (Freudenberger et al. 1974). Maslach described this appearance as the feeling of disrespect, incivility, and indifference (Jackson et al. 1981; Anvari et al. 2011). The major leading factor toward burnout is disharmony between job demand or the nature of the job and physical and psychological resources of employees or the nature of employees. In other words, the high disparity between job demand and Job holder's resources (both physical and psychological) causes burnout (Maslach et al. 2005)

Burnout is a result of prolonged stress that is solely driven by job- or job-related factors such as role conflict, role overload, role ambiguity, supervisor behavior, and personality characteristics (Babakus et al.1999; Zohar et al. 1997) and is summarized by three dimensions or phases (Leiter et al. 2005).

1. emotional exhaustion- this is where employees feel drained and worn out or strained;
2. cynicism or depersonalization- here employees are annoyed with colleagues, customers, and the organization and have shorter fuse;
3. inefficacy- in this phase, employees feel incompetent, start to consider themselves ineffective and, notice reduced personal accomplishment.

4.2. Antecedents of Burnout

Previous studies related to job burnout have mainly focused on job and allied factors as antecedents to job burnout. These factors can be summarized in three heads:

1. Role characteristic that consists of role ambiguity- here employees are confused regarding their work responsibilities (Brookings et al. 1985; Moore et al. 2000); and, Role conflict is when the expectation of different stakeholders such as colleagues, superiors, friends, and, family mismatch regarding employee’s role or behavior (Brewer et al. 2002; Singh et al. 2012)
2. Job Characteristics involved tight schedules or deadlines to complete a given task; irregular shifts (Ruby et al. 2009; Jamal et al. 1997); client pressure while interacting with the client (Rajeswari et al. 2005; Cordes et al. 1993); group conflict (Faraj et al. 2000); breach of psychological contract- it happens when employees perceived their employer is not interested in carrying out his or her obligation to compensate for their precious resource such as time, energy and, skill (Cantisano et al. 2007; Chambel et al. 2010; Ahmad et al. 2010)
3. Personal Characteristic comprises work-life conflict and are further bifurcated into: - family to work conflict-when personal life interferes with professional- life; work to family conflict- when professional life interferes with personal life (Keeton et al. 2007; Troppmann et al. 2017; Mahendran et al. 2019).

5. METHODOLOGY

The central point of the methodology is to synthesize, analyze, and review the existing stock of knowledge in the field of job burnout. To fulfill the objective, both national and international articles and research papers published between 1987 to 2022 were utilized. For comprehensive coverage of literature, the author has conducted online searches of various electronic databases and web-based search engines like Web of Science, Google Scholar, Shodh Ganga Scopus, research gate, by using the terms job burnout, emotional exhaustion, cynicism and, efficacy.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Job burnout is a psychological phenomenon caused by prolonged job-driven stress and can be described by its three dimensions emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and, reduced self-efficacy. It can be linked with various kinds of negative organizational outcomes such as absenteeism, lower productivity, low retention ratio, lower creativity, and, engagement. Job characteristics, role characteristics, and, personal characteristics can be considered as its antecedents. Majority of the employers do not know how to reduce burnout, so what is needed is awareness, and this is where HRs must step in. Understanding burnout is critical because if employees are burnt-out, then there is no way to retain them, hence the goal must be preventive in the first place and then diagnostic.

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