

Contributed Article

Effect of Job Involvement on Burnout

Daisy Chauhan

This study was carried out to determine the level of Job Involvement and extent of Burnout among managers. The results revealed that the managers scored high on Job Involvement, low on De-personalization and Emotional Exhaustion and moderate on Personal Accomplishment. The study also found the correlation between Job Involvement and Burnout measured on three dimensions: two negative dimensions— De-personalisation and Emotional Exhaustion and one positive dimension - Personal Accomplishment. It was found that Job Involvement had a negative correlation with De-personalization and Emotional Exhaustion and positive correlation with Personal Accomplishment. The correlation results indicate that Burnout can be minimized/avoided if individuals develop a high level of involvement in their jobs and they are able to identify themselves psychologically with their jobs.

Daisy Chauhan is Assistant Professor, Management Development Institute, Gurgaon.
E-mail daisy@mdi.ac.in

Introduction

High levels of stress can ultimately cause exhaustion and break-down. Excess stress can lead to Burnout, the fall-out being low levels of Job Involvement or rather low levels of Job Involvement leading to Burnout. Like the proverbial chicken and egg story, it is difficult to establish a cause-effect relationship between Burnout and Job Involvement. Burnout can have serious implications for the managers as it can lead to chequered promotion avenues and slow career progression. It could also affect their productivity and thereby affect the organisations adversely. It is not the complacent, easy going individual who runs the highest risk of Burnout. Instead, it is those with high expectations and a sense of purpose who are the greatest victims, people with high standards for themselves and for others.

Burnout is a severe psychological and physical outcome of prolonged and high levels of stress at work.

Concept of Burnout

Substantial research work is being done to study Burnout. Individual

Burnout has received considerable attention (Adams 1978, Lauderdale 1982). Kim (1990) calls Burnout an index of organizational quality of life. According to Leatz and Stolar (1993) Burnout is a physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in stressful and emotionally demanding situations, combined with high personal expectations for one's performance. It happens when work loses its meaning, and the ratio of stress to rewards leans heavily towards stress. Burnout is a severe psychological and physical outcome of prolonged and high levels of stress at work. It commonly occurs among employees who are unable to cope with extensive work pressures which demand on their energy, time, and resources and among employees whose work requires dealing with people. Researchers have found that Burnout brings enormous costs to both organizations and individuals because it negatively impacts employees' job attitudes and leads to undesirable behaviours, such as lower job involvement, reduced task performance, and increased turnover intentions (Jackson & Maslach 1982, Leiter & Maslach 1988, Motowidlo & Packard 1986, Shirom 1989, Wright & Bonett 1997, Wright & Cropanzano 1998).

Several studies (Etzion 1984, Maslach & Jackson 1984) have raised the question of vagueness of the term Burnout as well as of job stress. However, several definitions and models have emerged to serve as a basis for further research attempts. Maslach and Jackson (1982) and Etzion (1984)

have defined Burnout as a syndrome or a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion, and cynicism towards one's work in response to chronic organizational stressors. Maslach and Jackson (1981) conceptualized Burnout as consisting of the following three components: (1) *Emotional Exhaustion* refers to mental and physical tension and strain resulting from job-related stressors; (2) *Depersonalization* refers to distancing of oneself from others and viewing others impersonally; and (3) *Diminished Personal Accomplishment* is a feeling of negative self-evaluation. Emotional Exhaustion, one of the most extreme varieties of work-related strain, manifests itself in employees as a general loss of feeling, concern, trust, interest, and spirit (Maslach 1982).

Etzion (1984) relates the Emotional Exhaustion dimension of Burnout to "feeling depressed, trapped, hopeless." Etzion (1988) further emphasized on Burnout syndrome's dynamic aspects as a process of energy depletion and deterioration of performance caused by continuous daily pressures, rather than discrete critical life events. In this process, enthusiasm wanes while previous involvement, initiative, seriousness, and sense of responsibility are gradually replaced by patterns of routine and indifference. Clearly, this definition goes beyond the early research by Maslach (1976, 1982) and Maslach and Jackson (1982), which were based mainly on people employed in care or service professions.

Burnout is the culmination of a long term process.

Burnout Stages

Burnout is the culmination of a long term process and occurs over a long period of time and passes through different stages (Matteson & Ivancevich 1987).

- (1) The first stage is characterized by “stagnation” in which signs of fatigue and de-pression appear. They are hardly noticeable to the outsiders.
- (2) The second stage takes the form of “detachment” when signs of Burnout becomes apparent, characterized by psychological and physical withdrawal, apathy, and below average performance.
- (3) The final stage is where an individual is completely “burned out and emotionally exhausted”. He is de-personalized, apathetic, doubtful about his self-efficacy, devoid of a sense of accomplishment, and becomes a poor performer.

Burnout Symptoms

Leatz and Stolar (1993) have explained Burnout in terms of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion.

(I) *Physical exhaustion* is characterized by fatigue, nausea, muscle tension, changes in eating and sleeping habits, and generally a low energy level. Probably the first symptom, most

sufferers notice, is a general malaise with no apparent cause. Sometimes people say “I don’t know. I just get tired by lunch or early afternoon” (Leatz & Stolar 1993).

(ii) *Emotional exhaustion* is characterized by a number of negative feelings. These are expressed as feeling frustrated, hopeless, trapped, helpless, depressed, sad, and apathetic towards work. People say they feel that their “soul is dying” or report frequently feeling irritated or angry for no specific reasons. The scariest part is when they just don’t care any more about parts of their job that were really important to them earlier in the cycle (Leatz & Stolar 1993).

(iii) *Mental exhaustion*. Leatz & Stolar (1993) claim that mentally exhausted people are found to be dissatisfied with themselves, their jobs, and life in general, while feeling incompetent or inferior - even though they are not any of those. Over time, mental exhaustion causes people to see customers, clients, or colleagues as sources of irritation and problems rather than as challenges or opportunities. They also tend to believe that there is something wrong with themselves because the work that once gave them such pleasure has become boring and burdensome. This negative self-image gets further eroded as they tend to blame themselves for their present state. Managers who reach this state often no longer care about their goals or the people they manage. The demands of family and friends are perceived to be

taxing on them in terms of time, patience and they feel obliged to fulfil their demands.

A variety of individual and organizational factors contribute to “Managerial Burnout”.

Factors Leading to Managerial Burnout

A variety of individual and organizational factors contribute to “Managerial Burnout”, which manifests itself in terms of lack of initiative, rapid employee turnover and low motivation and low productivity. Seven major organizational factors have been identified which lead to Burnout among managers: lack of autonomy, high stress level, ineffective communication, organization-person misfit, job-person misfit, ad-hocism, authoritarian leadership style, and lack of participation in decision-making. Broadly, Burnout could be due to two types of factors: some relating to the environment/organisation and others to the person himself. Some of these factors are detailed below:

Environmental/Organisational Factors

i) Organizational Climate: According to Leatz and Stolar (1993) it is important to understand two things about Burnout. First, the root cause does not lie within the person suffering from it. The biggest cause is a dysfunctional work environment that permits un-

relenting levels of stress, frustration, and pressure for long periods of time, yet offers few rewards to people for putting up with all of that. Second, if we subscribe to the learn-do-teach cycle theory, there is the potential that Burnout can occur several times during our working lives - as we master each new job function we are given. Work environment can significantly affect the Burnout rates of highly motivated people by helping or preventing them from utilizing their potential for peak performance for achieving organisational/personal goals. Given the high costs of lost motivation, turnover, tardiness, absenteeism, poor delivery of services, and so on, organisations have a high stake in trying to prevent Burnout (Pines & Aronson 1981).

(ii) Management Support: Drory and Shamir (1988) found management support to be a major correlate of Burnout. Other variables that have been found to have an effect on Burnout include: role conflict; role ambiguity; the task dimension of autonomy; variety; task significance and extra-organizational variables of community support; and family role conflict. Golembiewski, Munzenrider and Stevenson (1986) suggested that poor work conditions modified by work group and personal characteristics lead to Burnout and other outcomes, such as physical symptoms, poor performance, and low productivity. Moreover, supervisory style and practices are inversely related to Burnout (Seltzer & Numerof 1988).

A tension-producing bosses is the one who does not communicate.

(iii) *Organisational Commitment:* Jackson, Turner, and Brief (1987) and Leiter and Maslach (1988) found Burnout to be associated with low organisational commitment. As such, Burnout serves as a trigger for job turnover. Clearly, from an organisational perspective, the outcomes of Burnout are costly, either from the negative attitudinal aspects or from the behavioural aspects of job performance and eventual turnover.

(iv) *Non-communication:* Veninga and Spradley (1981) found that a tension-producing bosses is the one who does not communicate. In some ways it is easier to work for an openly hostile boss; at least you know where you stand. The silent boss creates tension in three ways. First, silence places you squarely in a situation of "role conflict" and lack of clarity on expectations. Second, most silent bosses produce "occasional panics." Since they are non-communicative, they seldom let subordinates know about future plans and corresponding work-flow patterns. Consequently, subordinates find themselves having to deal with new demands unexpectedly. A third point of tension comes from the fact that except for your salary, the silent boss does not provide rewards for working.

Person Related Factors

i) Stress: While some tend to view Burnout and stress as identical concepts

that can be used interchangeably, recent studies have distinguished between the two, emphasizing their differences and, in some cases, their causal relationship. Maslach and Jackson (1982) view work pressure as one of the determinants of Burnout. Friesen and Sarros (1989) have found that only one Burnout dimension, i.e. emotional exhaustion, was closely related to work stress. Etzion (1988) argues that the accumulation of empirical data calls for a re-definition of the Burnout concept as a separate entity, different from, but related to stress. Unlike explicit stressors on the job, Burnout is caused by vague and elusive stressors, has more of a psychological orientation and difficult to identify and record, creating psychological erosion in a slow and subtle manner. This process of erosion can continue for a long time without being detected. Consequently, a person may arrive at exhaustion without going through the alarm stage and therefore may fail to develop resistance to or mechanisms for dealing with stress.

ii) Job Involvement is defined as the degree to which one identifies with one's present job (Kanungo 1982, Lawler & Hall 1970). Despite the importance of the concept, relatively little attention has been paid to the question of how *job involvement* is related to physical and mental well-being. Well-being is a multifaceted and value-laden concept (Campbell 1976, Jahoda 1958), but its primary indicator is its affective level and quality, in terms of positive affect (e.g., feelings of happiness, satisfaction, high self-esteem) and feelings of distress

(e.g., anxiety, depression, sense of hopelessness) (Warr 1987). Burnout affects the well-being of an individual adversely. The relation between *job involvement* and well-being may also be confounded by *job satisfaction*, a “positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s *job experiences*” (Locke 1976). *Job satisfaction* may contribute to well-being (Warr 1987), but a high level of satisfaction does not necessarily signify a high level of involvement (Rabinowitz & Hall 1977).

Job Involvement has been conceptualised as a personal characteristic and has been perceived as a response to organisational conditions (Dangwal 1995). It is the degree to which a person identifies psychologically with his job or the importance of work in his total self-image. In a study by Hackman & Lawler, (1971), *job involvement* was found to be significantly correlated with five job dimensions, viz., task variety, autonomy, task identity, feedback and friendship opportunities.

Cordes and Dougherty (1993) proposed that Burnout would lead to negative employee attitudes or behaviour towards customers, work, and the organization (e.g. diminished service quality, reduced degree of job involvement, or increased absenteeism, turnover, and decreased task performance). Wright and Bonett investigated 44 professional employees of a public human-services department and found that emotional exhaustion was related negatively to task performance, whereas de-personalization and diminished

personal accomplishment had no effect on task performance. *Job involvement* is the extent to which employees psychologically identify with their job, or the degree of importance of the job in employees’ self-image (Lodahl & Kejner 1965). Burnout may have negative effects on employee job attitudes e.g. reduction in job involvement, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction (Burke & Richardsen 1993, Kahili 1988). EUoy et. al (1991) surveyed 387 non-union ore-processing plant employees and demonstrated a negative relationship between Burnout and *job involvement*.

Sample

The present study was carried out on a randomly selected sample of 200 managers belonging to the government, public and private sectors. Majority were from the middle level of management. However, there was a general mix when it came to the functional areas, age groups, years of experience, educational background and income groups.

A person may arrive at exhaustion without going through the alarm stage and therefore may fail to develop resistance to or mechanisms for dealing with stress.

Measurement

Two questionnaires were used for the present study. These were: (1) “Job Involvement Questionnaire (JIQ)” developed by Kanungo, Gorn, and

Dauderis (1982) and (2) “Maslach Burnout Inventory” by Maslach & Susan (1981). The Job Involvement Questionnaire measures the cognitive state of the psychological identification of a person with the job and depends on the person’s salience of needs and, on the perception of the job’s need satisfying potential (Kanungo 1982). According to Dangwal (1995) Job Involvement has been a personal characteristic and has been perceived as a response to organisational conditions. It is the degree to which a person identified psychologically with his job or the importance of work in his total self-image.

Job Involvement Questionnaire (JIQ) contains 15 items, out of which five items are filler items. There are six types of graded responses from ‘Strongly Agree’ to ‘Strongly Disagree’. The scores decrease from 6 for the most desirable state to 1 for the least desirable one, thus maximum and minimum scores of 60 and 10, respectively, are feasible. The scale consists of statements such as “The most important things that happen to me involve my present job” and “To me, my job is only a small part of who I am”.

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is a six-point scale (0= Never; 1= A few times a year or less; 2= Once a month or less; 3= A few times a month; 4= Once a week; 5= A few times a week; and 6= Every day). MBI contains 22 statements of job related feelings and is designed to assess three aspects of the Burnout syndrome: Emotional Exhaustion (EE),

De-personalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA). Each aspect is measured by a separate sub-scale. The EE sub-scale which contains 9 items assesses feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one’s work. De-personalization contains 5 items and measures an impersonal response towards recipients of one’s service, care, treatment, or instruction. The Personal Accomplishment contains 8 items and assesses feelings of competence and successful achievement in one’s work with people. Burnout, here, is conceptualized as a continuous variable, ranging from low to moderate to high degree of experienced feeling. It is not viewed as a dichotomous variable, which is either present or absent.

- A high degree of Burnout is reflected in high scores on the EE (High: 27 or over, Moderate: 17-26, and Low: 0-16) and De-personalization (High: 14 and above, Moderate: 9-13, and Low: 0-8) sub-scales and in low score on the Personal Accomplishment (High: 0-30, Moderate: 31-36, and Low: 37 and above) sub-scale.
- An average degree of Burnout is reflected in average scores on the three sub-scales.
- A low degree of Burnout is reflected in low scores on the EE and De-personalization sub-scales and in high score on the Personal Accomplishment sub-scale.

Reliability & Validity

JIQ has got an internal consistency coefficient of .87, test-retest coefficient of .85, and thus a high reliability. The convergent and discriminant validity of JIQ scale have also been found adequate (Kanungo 1982). Internal consistency of MBI was established by Cronbach's coefficient alpha ($n=1316$). The reliability co-efficients for the sub-scales were: .90 for Emotional Exhaustion; .79 for De-personalization; and .71 for Personal Accomplishment. The test-retest reliability coefficients for the sub-scales were: .82 for Emotional Exhaustion; .60 for De-personalization; and .80 for Personal Accomplishment. Although these coefficients range from low to moderately high, all are significant beyond the .001 level.

Results

i) Job Involvement: The scores for Job Involvement (JI) and the three dimensions of Burnout were computed to find the Mean and SD for the entire sample and also for the various sub-groups across different functional areas, levels of management, age groups, experience, qualification and income groups. Further the extent of significance of variance across different groups was also determined by calculating the F-Value. The details are given in Table 1. The mean of the entire sample for Job Involvement (JI) was found to be 43.95 which can be considered to be a high score as the range of scores is 10 to 60. Across functional areas the JI score was found to be highest among managers from

the R&D Area (48.08) and lowest among managers from the HRD/Personnel Dept. (41.55). However, the variance was not found to be significant across functional areas as the F-Value was 1.56 which is not significant. An explanation for the high level of JI among managers from the R&D Dept. could be attributed to the fact that their job is challenging and innovative and thereby could be viewed by them to be more meaningful.

An explanation for the high level of JI among managers from the R&D Dept. could be attributed to the fact that their job is challenging and innovative.

Across the three levels of management, managers belonging to the senior level scored the highest on JI (46.26) followed by middle level managers (43.97) and junior level (41.71). The variance across levels of management was found to be remarkable as the F-Value was 3.30 which is statistically significant at .01 level. A possible explanation could be that it takes time for managers to develop one's identity with their jobs.

It was found that the highest level of JI was among managers with over 10 years of experience (a score of 44 plus), followed by those with 6-10 years of experience (43.20) and lastly those with 1-5 years of experience (36.82). The F-Value was found to be 4.40 which is statistically significant at .01 level. A possible reason could be that with experience one develops mastery over

Table 1: Mean & SD & ANOVA of Job Involvement & Burnout

	JOB INVOLVEMENT		BURNOUT					
			Depersonalisation		Emotional Exhaustion		Personal Accomplishment	
	10-60		5-30		9-54		8-48	
Range	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Entire Sample	43.95	7.03	5.66	4.90	13.64	8.77	35.87	7.36
FUNCTIONAL AREAS								
Finance	43.46	7.19	6.25	5.20	14.07	8.27	34.61	7.62
HRD/Personnel	41.55	7.19	7.27	6.48	17.00	13.57	34.00	11.32
Production	44.32	6.94	7.42	5.25	15.21	7.79	35.00	9.70
Marketing	46.00	5.80	5.06	6.24	13.39	8.73	37.83	6.56
R&D	48.08	5.43	5.00	4.79	12.00	8.75	37.75	6.96
Others	43.46	7.21	4.88	3.94	12.85	8.65	36.46	6.07
F-Value	1.56		1.43		0.69		1.05	
LEVEL								
Junior	41.71	7.74	6.19	5.11	15.24	10.06	33.00	7.83
Middle	43.97	6.86	5.99	4.84	13.84	8.51	35.82	6.85
Senior	46.26	6.06	4.08	4.62	11.31	7.75	39.10	7.20
F-Value	3.30*		1.50		0.58		6.40**	
EXPERIENCE								
1 - 5 Years	36.82	7.09	7.82	5.09	15.27	8.49	34.73	7.21
6 - 10 Years	43.20	7.36	8.60	5.85	17.93	10.37	33.93	7.25
11 - 15 Years	44.09	7.78	5.71	4.04	14.06	8.80	33.54	7.70
16 years & above	44.55	6.53	5.16	4.86	12.94	8.54	36.76	7.19
F-Value	4.40*		3.10		1.66		2.32	
AGE								
Upto 35 Years	40.70	7.39	8.12	4.99	17.00	8.78	34.15	7.22
36 - 49 Years	44.47	6.60	5.25	4.75	13.21	8.92	36.31	7.51
50 Years & above	45.09	7.69	4.84	4.77	11.97	7.33	35.77	6.75
F-Value	3.15		4.19*		2.17		1.15	
QUALIFICATION								
Graduate	44.55	7.48	6.59	6.72	15.14	10.19	33.77	8.06
Post Graduate	43.86	6.70	5.65	4.44	13.85	8.90	35.72	7.28
Above PG	43.93	7.98	5.18	5.29	12.10	7.40	37.55	7.07
F-Value	0.33		0.60		0.72		1.46	
INCOME								
Upto Rs.20,000 pm43.45	7.21	6.13	4.78	14.54	9.05	35.39	7.31	
20,001 - 25,000	44.93	6.20	5.07	5.26	12.42	8.42	36.93	7.22
25,001 and above	44.04	7.92	4.80	4.49	12.16	7.93	35.72	7.92
F-Value	0.13		0.22		0.29		0.46	

N = 200

* significant. at .01;

** significant. at .001

the job and also develops multiple skills and competencies which is likely to lead to more job involvement. However, the variance across different age groups, different levels of education and income was not found to be significant as the F-Values were 3.15, 0.33 and 0.13 respectively. Almost similar scores among the three sub-groups could be attributed to the fact that age, qualification and income may not be so relevant when it comes to one's involvement in the job as compared to their level of competence and nature of job.

Qualification and income may not be so relevant when it comes to one's involvement in the job

ii) Burnout: Burnout was measured on three dimensions, the negatively correlated De-personalisation and Emotional Exhaustion and the positively correlated Personal Accomplishment. The mean for the entire sample on De-personalisation was 5.66, on Emotional Exhaustion 13.64 and on Personal Accomplishment 35.87. Thus it is quite evident that as the score on Job Involvement was high, the managers scored low on De-personalisation and Emotional Exhaustion and moderately on Personal Accomplishment.

iii) De-personalisation: To find out the variance across sub-groups F-Value was calculated. The F-Value was not found significant across functional groups, levels of management, years of experience, levels of education and income levels. Only across different age groups there was significant variance,

the F-Value being 4.19, significant at .01 level. Here it was found that managers belonging to the lower age group (up to 35 years) scored the highest on de-personalisation (8.12) followed by those in the age group 36-49 (5.25) and 50 years and above (4.84). This could be attributed to the fact that the young managers have very high expectations from self and from the organisation which could lead to some amount of de-personalization but over time they tend to become more realistic.

iv) Emotional Exhaustion: On Emotional Exhaustion the score for the entire sample was 13.64 which is a very low score. There was no significant variance across sub-groups (function, level, experience, age, qualification or income) as the F-values were 0.69, 0.58, 1.66, 2.17, 0.72 and 0.29 respectively.

One tends to contribute more as he/she advances in career from lower to middle and senior levels of management leading to sense of accomplishment.

v) Personal Accomplishment: The mean score for the entire sample was a high 35.87. Here again the variance was significant only across the three levels of management. The F-Value, 6.40, was found to be significant at .001 level. Managers in the senior level scored the highest (39.10) followed by those in the middle level (35.82) and junior (33.00). This is quite understandable as one tends to contribute more as he/she advances in career from lower to middle

and senior levels of management leading to sense of accomplishment.

Correlations

Job Involvement had a negative correlation with the two negative dimensions of Burnout-De-personalisation and Emotional Exhaustion and positive correlation with Burnout – Personal Accomplishment (Table 2). The correlation between Job Involvement and Personal Accomplishment was found to be significant at .001 level. De-personalisation has a positive correlation with Emotional Exhaustion and negative correlation with Personal Accomplishment which is again significant at .001 level. Emotional Exhaustion has a negative correlation with Personal Accomplishment which is significant at .001 level. Job Involvement has a negative correlation with De-personalisation and Emotional Exhaustion, though not statistical significant.

Table 2: Correlation of Job Involvement with Burnout

Dimension	Job Involvement	Burnout		
		DP	EE	PA
Job Involvement	1.00			
Depersonalisation	-.04	1.00		
Emotional Exhaustion	-.06	.58**	1.00	
Personal Accomplishment	.23**	-.26**	-.38**	1.00
Mean	43.95	5.66	13.64	35.87
SD	7.03	4.90	8.77	7.36

N=200

** Significant at .001

Implications & Recommendations

It was found that managers had a high level of involvement in their jobs as manifested by no signs of Burnout among them. Conversely it can also be said that the managers in the present study did not experience Burnout due to their jobs and therefore they had a very high level of job involvement. If managers experience Burnout i.e., high levels of De-personalisation and Emotional Exhaustion and low levels of Personal Accomplishment it is likely that they would have low levels of job involvement which may result in low job performance. Though the study did not indicate any sign of Burnout among the managers the correlations point towards its negative impact on job involvement leading to lower productivity. Some measures that could be considered are:

1. Do a SWOT analysis of self and spend some time thinking, planning and setting goals, both short-term and long-term.
2. Reflect upon one's thinking patterns to see whether one is embarking into too much negative self talk and harbouring self-defeating attitudes of becoming a perfectionist.
3. Develop a healthy work-life balance and try not to be a workaholic. Spend sufficient time with family and friends.
4. Develop interests outside work and spend time on some activity which gives you satisfaction.
5. Develop a social support system of people on whom you can rely to discuss your problems.

At the organisational level interventions can be planned so that Burnout can be avoided. These could be ensuring person-job fit, providing challenging work, clarity on career path and training for managers as and when they are assigned responsibilities of a significantly higher level.

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