

Unraveling the Link between Burnout and Employee Indifference: Exploring Pathways for Sustainable Quality Education in Business Schools

Merlin B Joseph^{1*}, Dr. F J Peter Kumar², Dr. S Senith³,
Dr. A G Sudha⁴

Received: 23- June -2023
Revised: 18- July -2023
Accepted: 22- August -2023

¹ Research Scholar, Karunya Institute of Technology and Sciences, Coimbatore, India
merlinb@sbcollege.ac.in

² Associate Professor, Karunya Institute of Technology and Sciences, Coimbatore, India

³ Assistant Professor, Karunya Institute of Technology and Sciences, Coimbatore, India

⁴ Associate Professor, Coimbatore Institute of Technology, Coimbatore, India

Abstract

Burnout has drawn a lot of attention as a detrimental consequence of ongoing workplace stress that negatively impacts employee well-being and organisational outcomes. According to recent research, employee indifference, which is epitomised by disinterest, disconnect and work detachment, may be a successor to burnout. However, there is no research that has specifically explored this relationship within the context of B-school teachers, where teachers face unique challenges and pressures in their job roles. This research primarily aims to unveil the relationship between burnout and employee indifference, among B-school teachers. The study is quantitative in nature and conducted among the B-school teachers. Validated scales were used to measure burnout and employee indifference of B-school teachers. Correlation and regression were used to examine the relation between the variables: burnout and employee indifference. The primary finding of the research revealed a positive relationship between burnout and employee indifference. Additionally, the study investigated the factors of burnout that explain the link between burnout and employee indifference, including emotional exhaustion, self-inefficacy and cynicism. It was found that cynicism was the most contributing factor of burnout towards employee indifference followed by self-efficacy and emotional exhaustion. These findings emphasize the importance of addressing burnout and employee indifference in an efficient way to enhance teacher well-being and ultimately foster the quality of education in B-schools. By unwinding the relationship between burnout and employee indifference, the study contributes to the body of literature by providing new perspectives and pathways for promoting quality education.

Keywords: Business school, indifference, sustainable education, stress, teachers.

1. Introduction

Burnout has become a widespread concern for both employees and organisations in today's fast paced and demanding work environments. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has officially recognised burnout as an occupational phenomenon and not a medical condition (WHO, 2019). Burnout has been extensively studied as an adverse side effect of continuous work stress, characterised by emotional weariness, depersonalization and decreased self-efficacy. Many studies on Burnout consider it as a psychological response to work stress. (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004). There are also studies which try to put light on the concept of burnout not only as a result, but also as a potential precursor to various adverse consequences, like job turnover, absenteeism (Felton, 1998), physical and emotional illness and cynicism (Shukla & Trivedi, 2008).

Employee indifference is that state of mind when an employee loses hope to accomplish his/her goals and tries to pull away from the source of disappointment. It is when one diverts his attention away from failing scenarios, or factors causing failure, and in exchange for an emotional response, becomes indifferent to those barriers (Malekzadeh & Golmohammadi, 2018). Feeling of injustice leads to feelings of worthlessness and low self-esteem and in turn makes employees indifferent. It is characterised by laziness, disrespect, fatigue, lack of sense of belongingness and other activities which are detrimental towards achieving organisational goals. Employee indifference is a relatively unexplored area from a research perspective. There are very few research studies done in the area of employee indifference and they mainly focus on the dimensions of indifference (Fard, Salarieh, &

Noruzi, 2011), indifference management (Keshavarz H M, 2012), issues related to indifference and challenges due to indifference (John & K, 2019). But these studies are very limited to make generalised conclusions on the concept. Employee indifference is a concept which can have a negative impact on the productivity, job satisfaction and well-being of employees and thus adversely influencing organisational effectiveness. Understanding the dynamics between burnout and employee indifference in the context of business schools (B-schools) teachers will help to improve the citizenship behaviour among teachers and thereby promote sustainable quality education.

This research aims to comprehensively explore the relationship between burnout and employee indifference and also to understand the extent of contribution of the underlying factors towards this relation. It also tries to expand the understanding of the dynamics between the burnout and employee indifference, thereby providing significant insights for both practitioners and researchers.

In order to accomplish this goal, the study first tries to establish a theoretical framework by analysing the existing and relevant literatures on employee indifference and burnout. It also elucidates the empirical data that contribute to the understanding of burnout-indifference link.

The article also highlights the gaps in the existing literature and suggests possible research ideas as opportunities for future study, with an aim to inspire further research in the field. This will help as a guide for developing evidence-based remedies for burnout that will improve employee well-being, create more engaged work environments and foster sustainable quality education.

2. Literature Review and hypothesis development

Burnout is an extensively researched area in the field of occupational health. Burnout is defined as a condition of physical, emotional and mental tiredness brought on by sustained involvement in demanding work circumstances. It represents the shells of emotionally destroyed people once damaged by job stress (Gerada, 2020). Maslach and Jackson (1981) have developed Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), which is now one of the most popular tools for assessing burnout. According to the Maslach burnout is a three construct variable which includes emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation (cynicism) and self-inefficacy. Although the severity, length and consequences of burnout vary from person to person, the factors of burnout remain the same with a varying intensity for each factor from individual to individual.

There are several researches that have investigated the significance of workplace conditions in the emergence of burnout (Lam, Lam, Reddy, & Wong, 2022). Xu and Yang (2021) has mentioned that burnout is frequently attributed to causes like excess workload, unscientific control, inappropriate rewards and insufficient organisational support (Beheshtifar & Omidvar, 2013). These causes foster a culture of chronic stress and dissatisfaction resulting in emotional tiredness, cynicism and reduced personal accomplishments. There are also several studies done on the consequences of burnout including lower job satisfaction (Piko, 2005), reduced organisational commitment, absenteeism (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010) and lower job performance (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). However, the specific link between burnout and employee indifference has not been extensively investigated, especially within the specific context of B-School teachers.

Ghasemi, Sheikh, & Mir (2016) says that organisational indifference is a state in which the achievement or non-achievement of organisational goals or the success or failure of the organisation does not matter to an employee. People who do repetitive and boring tasks will tend to be burnedout and hence indifferent. Employee indifference is characterised by a lack of emotional investment in one's work and a sense of disengagement. A reduced sense of dedication, lack of interest and enthusiasm for work related tasks are its defining characteristics (Fard & Eslami, 2010). An indifferent employee will be emotionally disconnected from one's job and organisational goals and will have lower organisational commitment. Employees who are indifferent to their jobs work less efficiently and generally act carelessly about their duties as they are less invested in the organisation's goals and outcomes (Meimand, Aidi, Shiri, & Darabifar, 2012).

Emotional exhaustion is the key highlight of burnout. This will deplete a person's energy and drive, restricting him from fully participating in their work, which can result in indifference. Employee indifference can be exacerbated by cynicism and by a sense of reduced self-efficacy that comes with burnout because people may no longer see a meaning or purpose in their work when they are in the state of indifference (Ghasemi, Sheikh, & Mir,

2016). Cynicism increases with stress levels and it results in the decline in health of the individual (Viljoen & Claassen, 2017). Additionally, burnout is likely to damage workers' affective and cognitive connections to their job, which will lower their commitment and motivation for their work. Employee indifference is consistent with this decreased interest in duties and obligations associated with the workplace.

Based on the existing literature, the following hypothesis is framed, H1: burnout is positively correlated with employee indifference among b-school teachers. Along with the hypothesis which is formulated based on the existing literature, the specific context of B-school teachers may create new variables and dynamics in the relationship between burnout and employee indifference. Although employee indifference and burnout are conceptually distinct, they may be related as burnout can lead to disengagement and indifferent mindset of employees. This study aims to find whether burnout acts as an antecedent to employee indifference and also intends to find the extent of influence of burnout factors on employee indifference in the specific context of B-school teachers.

3. Methods

3.1 Methodology

A cross sectional study was conducted to study the influence of burnout on employee indifference. The population for the study includes the teachers of B-schools in the state of Kerala, India. The sample was collected from various B-schools located across the state. Data were collected from both male and female teachers belonging to various age groups and years of experience, in order to ensure diversity in the sample. Teachers with a minimum of one-year experience at their current organisation were included for the study because employee indifference is a state that an employee arrives at after a protracted interaction with various challenging environments at the workplace. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants for the sample, which consisted of 237 B-school teachers.

The study adhered to the ethical practices and guidelines of research, and necessary approvals were obtained from the institutions from where data were collected. Prior to the data collection, the teachers were asked for their informed consent and the same was obtained after ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

The data were collected using structured questionnaires. A comprehensive survey questionnaire was developed based on the established scales on burnout and employee indifference. Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) - General survey, the validated scale developed by Christina Maslach and Susan E Jackson was used to measure the burnout of the teachers (Christina Maslach, 1981). MBI measures burnout in three sub factors: emotional exhaustion, Self-inefficacy and cynicism each measured with a 7-point Likert scale indicating the levels of burnout ranging from 0 to 6 (0 = never, 1 = a few times a year or less, 2 = once a month, 3 = a few times a month, 4 = once a week, 5 = a few times a week and 6 = every day). The scale developed by Hasan Danaee Fard et al on measuring employee indifference was used to collect data on the indifference of teachers. The five point Likert scale measures indifference in five dimensions such as indifference towards manager, indifference towards workplace, indifference towards clients, indifference towards colleagues and indifference towards job (Fard, et.al 2011). A pilot study was conducted with a small group of teachers to identify any problems with the questionnaire and ensure the items are clear and relevant for the targeted population. After finalising the questionnaire, the data for the study were collected by phone conversations and personal visits. Wherever the researcher couldn't make a direct visit, Google forms were used; in such cases they were sent after explaining to the respondent the purpose and objective of the study over telephone. To those who agreed questionnaires in google form were emailed and responses were collected.

3.2 Reliability

Reliability indicates consistency of a method in measuring something. "A reliability coefficient demonstrates whether the test designer was correct in expecting a certain collection of items to yield interpretable statements about individual differences" (Cronbach, 1951). The reliability of scales of the questionnaire was checked using

Cronbach's alpha and was found to be 0.901 for burnout and 0.945 for employee indifference, which shows that the survey instrument is reliable and consistent (Taber, 2017) (refer Table 1).

Table 1. Reliability Analysis

Variable	Burnout	Employee Indifference	N of Items
Cronbach's Alpha	0.901	0.945	21, 39
Emotional Exhaustion	0.910		9
Self-inefficacy	0.903		7
Cynicism	0.806		5
Indifference to Workplace		0.794	8
Indifference to Job		0.828	9
Indifference to Colleagues		0.813	6
Indifference to Managers		0.884	10
Indifference to Clients		0.859	6

3.3 Data analysis

Exploratory study methods are used in the research. The data were analysed using SPSS 20.0 for windows. Descriptive statistics were used to examine the levels of burnout and employee indifference among B-school teachers. Correlation, regression and confirmatory factor analysis were employed to investigate the relationship between burnout and employee indifference, to understand the factor structure of the variables and to provide empirical evidence on this relationship among B-school teachers, and also to identify and estimate the most contributing factor of burnout towards employee indifference. A level of significance of 0.05 was established as priori for determining statistical significance.

4. Results and Discussion

A sample of 237 B-school teachers in the state of Kerala was selected for the study. The sample consists of 124 male (52.3%) and 113 female (47.7%) teachers. 43 (18%) teachers out of the total sample worked in aided (Government aided) B-schools and the remaining 194 (81.9%) teachers worked in private or self-financing B-schools.

From the descriptive statistics of the data it was found that the mean score of burnout is measured at 2.24 ± 1.32 on a 7-point scale. This shows the employees experience burnout almost once in a month as per the interpretation of MBI scale. The factors of burnout are measured as emotional exhaustion at 3.04 ± 1.2 , self-inefficacy at 3.17 ± 1.41 and cynicism at 2.02 ± 1.36 . This shows that the B-school teachers are found to have higher levels of emotional exhaustion among the three factors of burnout. As a result of the demanding nature of their roles and responsibilities teachers are shown to have a high level of emotional exhaustion at work. This result is consistent with the previous research which highlights how emotionally drained the teaching profession is on a regular basis (Keller, et al., 2014; Teles, Valle & Rodriguez, 2020). The factor self-inefficiency was identified as the second most prevalent among b-school teachers after emotional exhaustion. This suggests that teachers feel less personally accomplished in their work, ineffective and lacking confidence in their abilities. This may be due to the challenges and pressures they experience in living up to the expectation of their roles or because they believe that they lack the support and resources to excel in their teaching duties.

When compared to emotional exhaustion and self-inefficiency, depersonalisation (cynicism) which refers to the development of a sense of detachment from students and colleagues, was discovered to be substantially less common among the teachers. This indicates that despite the emotional exhaustion and self-inefficacy that the B-school teachers experience, they have not yet reached to those high levels of depersonalisation which dilutes their

commitment towards their student community. However, it is crucial to address the early signs of depersonalisation to prevent its escalation and potential detrimental effects on teacher-student relationships, general job satisfaction and sustainable maintenance of quality education in B-schools.

The employee indifference is measured at 2.64 ± 0.81 on a scale of 1 to 5, which scores to 52.8%. Also the factors of employee indifference are measured as: indifference to workplace at 3.05 ± 0.831 , indifference to job at 2.96 ± 0.78 , indifference to manager at 2.86 ± 0.75 , indifference to colleagues at 2.38 ± 0.84 and indifference to clients at 1.95 ± 0.81 (refer Table 2). The analysis of the data revealed that among the five dimensions of indifference, indifference to the workplace was found to be highest. This indicates that the teachers are disengaged and apathetic more towards their workplaces compared to other factors. This may be the result of a number of reasons such dissatisfaction with the physical work environment, lack of prospects for professional advancement and limited organisational support (Ghasemi, Sheikh, & Mir, 2016). Following employee indifference to workplace, indifference to job, managers and colleagues were found to have high scores in the respective order. This shows that teachers' sense of interest, motivation and commitment towards their job responsibilities has reduced. They feel disconnected from their superiors and colleagues. This may be due to ineffective communication, insufficient support and lack of teamwork which the teachers experience in the organisation. Interestingly, indifference to clients was found to be with the least score among the dimensions of employee indifference. This indicates that the teachers continue to be more involved and enthusiastic regarding their interactions with clients such as students and external stakeholders, which could be attributed to the value placed on providing high-quality education and maintaining positive relationships with students and external stakeholders.

The association between burnout and employee indifference among B-school teachers was further investigated using Pearson's correlation and regression. Employee indifference was found to be positively correlated to burnout with a Pearson correlation co-efficient value ($r = 0.685$, P-value < 0.001). Further a SEM analysis was conducted to evaluate the mathematical relationship between the variables. From table 2 the regression estimate of relationship between burnout and employee indifference is found to be significant ($\beta = 0.730$, p-value < 0.01). Employee indifference is linked to higher degrees of burnout, which includes emotional exhaustion, self-inefficacy and cynicism/depersonalisation. Burnout can cause a person to feel emotionally disconnected and disengaged from their job, which can lead to increasing degrees of indifference towards their job and workplace. Indifferent behaviour of superiors can be more attributed to depersonalisation which is defined by cynicism and detachment. Depersonalised teachers would view their superiors as being impersonal which would make them feel uninterested in this association. Hence burnout in teachers can cause them to believe their efforts are fruitless, which makes them disconnected and indifferent towards workplace elements. From the SEM it is discovered that cynicism ($\beta = 0.545$) is the most contributing factor towards employee indifference, followed by self-inefficacy ($\beta = 0.466$) and emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.429$).

Table 2. The Regression Co-efficients

Path	Estimate (Regression coefficients)	Critical Ratio (CR)	P	Variance explained (%)
Burnout → Employee indifference	0.730	14.207	<0.001	53.3

Cynicism → Burnout	0.545	9.350	<0.001	29.7
Self-inefficacy → Burnout	0.466	7.724	<0.001	21.7
Emotional exhaustion → Burnout	0.429	7.016	<0.001	18.4
Indifference to Managers → Employee indifference	0.885	21.391	<0.001	78.3
Indifference to Colleagues → Employee indifference	0.865	20.083	<0.001	74.8
Indifference to Job → Employee indifference	0.846	18.998	<0.001	71.6
Indifference to Workplace → Employee indifference	0.695	13.118	<0.001	48.3
Indifference to Clients → Employee indifference	0.678	12.626	<0.001	46.0

5. Implications and Future research

The findings of this research can have major implications for promoting sustainable quality education in B-schools. Educational institutions can establish focused interventions and methods to improve teacher well-being, engagement, and ultimately the quality of education by understanding the link between burnout and employee indifference. B-schools can take measures to reduce burnout among teachers by identifying the causes, which include emotional exhaustion and a sense of reduced personal accomplishment. This might entail employing techniques for managing workloads, offering resources and support, promoting work-life balance and cultivating a good workplace culture and practices. In order to address employee indifference in an effective manner, organisations should take efforts to increase teacher enthusiasm and motivation. Educational institutions can concentrate on developing a healthy work environment by fostering effective communication and teamwork, recognising and respecting the achievements of teachers, facilitating chances for professional growth and promoting a sense of empowerment and autonomy in their work. A supportive learning environment, encouraging positive teacher-student interactions, and creating meaningful connections with students are all strategies that can improve the quality and ensure sustainability in the educational process.

Although there is extensive research done on burnout and related concepts, the relationship between burnout and employee indifference is an area yet to be explored in terms of research. The current research opens avenues for future investigations into several areas related to burnout, employee indifference and sustainable quality education in B-schools. Deeper understanding of the dynamics of these dimensions can be gained by conducting longitudinal studies to look at the causal relationship between burnout and employee indifference over time. Such research can be used to find potential early warning indicators and develop successful intervention strategies. A deeper understanding of burnout and employee indifference can be gained by examining the impact of cultural and contextual factors on these phenomena. Investigating how cultural values, educational policies and organizational structures affect burnout and employee indifference in various B-school environments can also be insightful. Studying how the demographic factors of the respondents moderate the relationship between burnout and employee indifference can be helpful for the organisations to design appropriate strategies and methods that could match the specific requirements as per its employee population. The study can also be done across various educational sectors and disciplines in order to compare and contrast the relationship between burnout and indifference across sectors.

6. Conclusion

The current research provides valuable insights into the factors influencing burnout and employee indifference among teachers and highlighting the significance of addressing these issues for promoting sustainable quality education. The findings can help educational institutions and policy makers to develop targeted interventions and policies to mitigate burnout and employee indifference and thereby promote employee well-being, ultimately improving the quality of education and the teaching-learning environment in B-schools.

References

1. Beheshtifar, M., & Omidvar, A. R. (2013). Causes to Create Job Burnout in Organizations. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 3(6). From www.hrmar.com/journals
2. Christina Maslach, S. E. (1981). The measurement of experienced burnout. *Journal of Occupational Behaviour*, 2, 99-113. From <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.4030020205>
3. Cordes, C. L., & Dougherty, T. W. (1993, October). A review and an integration of research on job burnout. *The Academy of Management Review*, 18(4), 621-656. doi:DOI:10.5465/AMR.1993.9402210153
4. Cronbach, L. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. *Psychometrika*, 16(3), 297-334. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02310555>
5. Fard, H. D., & Eslami, A. (2010). Discovering Theory of Organizational Indifference: A Grounded Theory Strategy. *European Journal of Scientific Research*, 40(3), 450-460. From <http://www.eurojournals.com/ejsr.htm>
6. Fard, H. D., Salarieh, N., & Noruzi, M. R. (2011). Exploring Organisational Indifference: Creating and validating a Measure. *African Journal of Business Management*, 5(31), 12381-91. doi:10.5897/AJBM11.1819
7. Felton, J. S. (1998). Burnout as a clinical entity—its importance in health care workers. *Occupational Medicine*, 48(4), 237-250. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1093/occmed/48.4.237>
8. Gerada, C. (2020). Clare Gerada: Understanding burnout. *British medical journal*, 1595. doi:10.1136/bmj.m1595
9. Ghasemi, M., Sheikh, s., & Mir, A. (2016, March). Studying the extent of indifference among the staff of Zabol University of Medical Sciences in 2015. *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies* (2016), 841. From <http://www.ijhcs.com/index.php/ijhcs/index>
10. Halbesleben, J. R., & Buckley, M. R. (2004). Burnout in Organizational Life. *Journal of Management*, 30(6), 859-879. doi:doi:10.1016/j.jm.2004.06.004
11. John, S. P., & K, M. (2019). Employee Silence: A Meta-Analytic Review. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 7(1). doi:10.25215/0701.040
12. Keller, M. M., Keller, M. M., Becker, E. S., Goetz, T., & Frenzel, A. C. (2014). Teachers' emotional experiences and exhaustion as predictors of emotional labor in the classroom: an experience sampling study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5, 1442. doi:<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.01442>
13. Keshavarz H M. (2012). Presenting of employees' organizational indifference management pattern (case study of a private bank). *The seasonal journal of human resources management research of Imam Hossein public university*, 4(2), 183-202.
14. Lam, L. T., Lam, M. K., Reddy, P., & Wong, P. (2022). Factors Associated with Work-Related Burnout among Corporate Employees Amidst COVID-19 Pandemic. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(3), 1295. doi:10.3390/ijerph19031295
15. Malekzadeh, G., & Golmohammadi, M. (2018). Conceptualization of organization. *Opción*, Año, 110-132.
16. Meimand, M. M., Aidi, M., Shiri, A., & Darabifar, H. (2012). Effect of Organisational indifference dimensions on the organisational commitment of gas company employees in Ilam province. *Procedia - Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 62, 666.
17. Piko, B. F. (2005). Burnout, role conflict, job satisfaction and psychosocial health among Hungarian health care staff: a questionnaire survey. *The International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 43(3), 311-318. doi:10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2005.05.003
18. Shukla, A., & Trivedi, T. (2008, August). Burnout in Indian teachers. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 9, pages320-334. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03026720>
19. Swider, B. W., & Zimmerman, R. D. (2010, June). Born to burnout: A meta-analytic path model of personality, job burnout, and work outcomes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 76(3), 487-506. From <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2010.01.003>
20. Taber, K. S. (2017, June). The Use of Cronbach's Alpha When Developing. *Research in Science Education*, 1273-1296. doi:10.1007/s11165-016-9602-2
21. Teles, R., Valle, A., & Rodriguez, S. (2020, July). Burnout among Teachers in Higher Education: An Empirical Study. *International Journal of Management Science and*, 7-15. doi:10.18775/ijmsba.1849-5664-5419.2014.65.1001
22. Viljoen, M., & Claassen, N. (2017). Cynicism as a subscale of burnout. *Work*, 56(4), 1-5. doi:DOI:10.3233/WOR-172518

23. WHO. (2019, May 28). Burn-out an "occupational phenomenon": International Classification of Diseases. From WHO International: <https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases>
24. Xu, Z., & Yang, F. (2021). The impact of perceived organizational support on the relationship between job stress and burnout: a mediating or moderating role? *Current Psychology*, 40(1), 1-12. doi:10.1007/s12144-018-9941-4.