

**IMPACT OF JOB BURNOUT AND BOREDOM ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN SELECT IT COMPANIES IN CHENNAI**

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**ABSTRACT**

The IT-ITES sector has become one of the most important growth drivers for the Indian economy. Indian information technology industry has also provided large scale employment to educated and skilled workforce. Burnout is used by professionals, particularly measured among individuals providing human services to explain the mental state of exhaustion. Boredom traditionally visualized as a situation of low arousal and dissatisfaction due to a light-demanding work situation also explored concerning monotonous and repetitive work nature. Employee engagement in their work has appeared as the reverse of burnout, which is “a state of mental energy”. For modern organizations, employees’ mental fitness provides a decisive competitive advantage. A simple random sampling method was used to collect data from six major information technology companies in Chennai. Results reveal that an inverse relationship is significant between Job Burnout and Employee Engagement to reject null hypothesis  $H_1$ . Likewise, an inverse relationship is statistically proved between Job Boredom and Employee Engagement is inferred. Therefore, it is evident that when the Burnout out increases by one-unit Employee engagement among respondents decreases by 1.071 units. Also, when the Job Boredom increases by one-unit Employee engagement among respondents goes down by 0.198 units. For instance, a disparity between giving and take has been uncovered as an explanation for burnout, which signifies that to decrease burnout the balance between giving and take should be reinstated. Boredom results from unchallenging jobs and thus making jobs more meaningful and challenging would decrease boredom. In a similar vein, the motivational potential of resources can be used to promote work engagement which can benefit the employee and the employer as well.

**Key Words: Burnout, Boredom, Engagement**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since Kahn (1990) first introduced the concept of employee engagement or the “harnessing of organizational members’ selves to their work role...physically, cognitively, and emotionally” (p. 692), the focus on what it takes to motivate employees has been en vogue in practitioner literature. Frederick Taylor’s principles of scientific management “provided the cornerstone of work design throughout the first half of the twentieth century” (Morgan, 2006, p. 23). These principles included: (1) shifting all responsibility for the organization of work from the worker to the manager; (2) using scientific methods to determine the most efficient way of doing work; (3) selecting the best person to perform the designed job; (4) training workers to do work efficiently; and (5) monitoring work performance to ensure prescribed processes are followed and resultant efficiency achieved (Morgan, 2006). More recent research, however, has indicated that employee burnout or disengagement can strike much earlier, even “as quickly as six months after an employee starts a new job” (Laff, 2007). Therefore, it would be helpful if organizations were able to identify and intervene when employees show early warning signs of disengagement. Therefore, this study is to identify the impact of burnout and boredom on employee engagement in select IT companies in Chennai.

### 1.1. BURNOUT

As mentioned earlier, burnout is a metaphor that is commonly used to describe a state or process of mental exhaustion, like the smothering of a fire or the extinguishing of a candle. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines ‘to burn out’ as ‘to fail, wear out, or become exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources’. Although various definitions of burnout exist, the most often cited academic definition comes from **Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1986)**: ‘Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do “people work” of some kind.’ So, burnout consists of three dimensions in this definition. Emotional exhaustion refers to the depletion or draining of emotional resources caused by interpersonal demands. Depersonalization points to the development of negative, callous, and cynical attitudes towards the recipients of one’s services. The term ‘depersonalization’ may cause some confusion since it is used in a completely different sense in psychiatry, namely, to denote a person’s extreme alienation from self and the world.

### 1.2. BOREDOM

Whereas much current psychological research focuses on the causes and consequences of overstimulation at work, including burnout, the problem of understimulation (boredom) has largely been neglected. Interestingly, the Merriam-Webster dictionary describes boredom as ‘the state of being weary and restless through lack of interest’. First, this suggests that the effects of overstimulation (burnout) and understimulation (boredom) seem to overlap to some extent since both are characterized by feeling worn out. Traditionally, two schools of thought exist when it comes to defining boredom. According to the first approach, boredom is associated with conducting monotonous and repetitive tasks (**O’Hanlon, 1981**). Second, it is suggested that the experience of boredom at work is due to an internal need for high stimulation; the greater this internal need, the more susceptible one would be to feeling bored (**Farmer & Sundberg, 1986**).

### 1.3. ENGAGEMENT

In contrast to burnout and boredom, everyday connotations of engagement are positive. It is associated with involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, focused effort, and energy. In a similar vein, the Merriam-Webster dictionary describes engagement as ‘emotional involvement or commitment’ and ‘the state of being in gear’. In the academic

literature, work engagement is either considered as the positive antithesis of burnout or as a distinct concept. Engagement is characterized by energy, involvement, and perceived efficacy. In fact, they are the direct opposites of the three burnout dimensions (**Maslach & Leiter, 1997**). Put differently, burnout is seen as an erosion of engagement; energy turns into exhaustion, involvement turns into cynicism and perceived efficacy turns into ineffectiveness. By implication,

## 2. IMPACT OF IT INDUSTRY ON INDIAN ECONOMY

The IT-ITES sector has become one of the most important growth drivers for the Indian economy. The industry has been positively influencing the lives of people in active direct and indirect ways such as by providing employment, improving the standard of living, and diversity, among others. The industry has played a significant role in transforming India's image from a slow-moving bureaucratic economy to a land of innovative entrepreneurs and a global player in providing world-class technology solutions and business services. The industry has helped India transform from a rural and agriculture-based economy to a knowledge-based economy.

### 2.1. CONTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY IN EMPLOYMENT

Indian information technology industry has also provided large scale employment to educated and skilled workforce. This is the fastest-growing sector which is providing large employment opportunities. The very success of the information technology industry in India is in fact due to the availability of a highly skilled workforce. The IT/ITES workforce is becoming increasingly diverse in terms of socio-economic, linguistic, multinational, and regional backgrounds.

## 3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Burnout Symbol is used by professionals, particularly measured among individuals providing human services to explain the mental state of exhaustion. Boredom traditionally visualized as a situation of low arousal and dissatisfaction due to a light-demanding work situation also explored concerning monotonous and repetitive work nature. *Employee engagement in their work* has appeared as the reverse of burnout, which is "a state of mental energy". For modern organizations, employees' *mental* fitness rather than their mere physical fitness provides a decisive competitive advantage. In this regard, job burnout and job boredom having an impact on employee engagement are analysed among employees of select IT companies in Chennai. Engagement is assessed by the opposite pattern of scores on the three dimensions of the MBI: low scores on exhaustion and cynicism, and high scores on professional efficacy. Boredom at work is characterized by low arousal and dissatisfaction, which results from under-stimulation. Engagement is inversely related to burnout and boredom. Hence, it is important to understand that

- 1) Does the Burnout and Boredom have a significant relationship?
- 2) Does the Burnout have an inverse relationship with Employee Engagement?
- 2) Does the Boredom have an inverse relationship with Employee Engagement?

## 4. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To study the impact of Burnout and Boredom on Employee Engagement in select IT Companies in Chennai.

## 5. METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive and depends upon primary data. Both Primary and Secondary data are used for the study. Research instruments are prepared based on the objectives set for the study. Job Burnout and Boredom influencing Employee Engagement measured among employees working in select IT companies, Chennai. This was pre-tested for face validity and some modifications were made in the content of the questionnaire and positioning of the questions to make it easier to answer. The final questionnaire was then framed based on the inputs from the initial survey. The data collected during the pilot study are subjected to a reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha test. A simple random sampling method was used to collect data from six major information technology companies in Chennai. 612 sample respondents were concluded for the study and statistical analysis. Tools used are chi-square test, correlation, and Regression Analysis.

## 6. HYPOTHESES

H<sub>1</sub>: Negative relationship expected between Job burnout and employee engagement

H<sub>2</sub>: Negative relationship expected between Job boredom and employee engagement

## 7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study is limited to Chennai geographical location and hence the demographic profile of the respondents is restricted to the city alone. The respondents may have a personal bias in answering the questionnaire as it may affect their relationship with their superiors.

## 8. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Considering the employees working in select IT and ITES companies, employee engagement is taken as a dependent variable while the explanatory variables are Job Burnout and Job Boredom which are predicting the level of engagement. For this purpose, correlation and regression analysis are used.

**Table 1: Correlation between Job Boredom, Burnout and Employee Engagement**

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables (Job Burnout)	Descriptive Statistics		Correlation (r)	Sig. (P-value)	Result
		Mean	Std. Deviation			
	Burnout	27.83	4.080	-0.629**	0.000	Significant
	Boredom	26.03	3.283	0.168**	0.000	Significant
Employee Engagement		24.67	7.070			

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Result shows (Table 1) there is a significant negative correlation ( $r=-0.629$ , Sig.0.000) between Job Burnout and Employee engagement rejecting H<sub>01</sub>. Likewise, there is a significant low negative correlation ( $r=-0.168$ , Sig.0.000) that exist between Job Boredom and Employee engagement rejecting H<sub>02</sub>.

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted using the enter method that predicts the relationship between Job burnout and Job boredom which are the independent variables having an impact on Employee engagement (dependent variable) among respondents working in select ITES companies in Chennai.

**Table 2: Model showing relationship between Job Boredom, Burnout and Employee Engagement**

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	SE	F (2,609) Sig.
0.636 <sup>a</sup>	0.404	0.402	5.466	206.429 (0.000)

**Predictors: (Constant), Boredom, Burnout**

**Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement**

Initially, the model summary reveals predictors that are Job burnout and Job boredom explaining the percentage variance in the engagement of employees working in select ITES companies. Overall correlation ( $r=0.636$ ) is found to be strong and the  $R^2=40.4\%$  explaining the percentage variance by the predictors (job burnout and job boredom) among respondents of select ITES companies towards Employee Engagement is found to be reasonably strong in explaining the model. Model fitness  $F(2,609) = 206.429$ ,  $Sig.0.000$  is statistically proved significant proving model fitness. As prescribed by (Ghozali, 2006) the variance inflation factor (VIF) is not found between job burnout and job boredom when predicting employee engagement which falls below the thumbnail ( $VIF < 5$ ) ensuring multi-collinearity does not exist to conduct multiple-regression. By predicting the set-out hypothesis, the equation formed between the predictors viz. job burnout and job boredom having an impact on employee engagement (DV).

$$Y = 59.621 - 1.071 (\text{Job Burnout}) - 0.198 (\text{Job Boredom})$$

**Table 3: Coefficients predicting the relationship between Job Boredom, Burnout and Employee Engagement**

Constructs	Unstandardized Coeff.		Std. Coeff. of Beta	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error				Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	59.621	2.196		27.144	.000		
Burnout	-1.071	.055	-.618	-19.599	.000	.985	1.015
Boredom	-.198	.068	-.092	-2.912	.004	.985	1.015

**Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement**

Results shows (Table 3) a negative relationship exists between Job burnout and Employee Engagement ( $\beta=-1.071$ ,  $t=-19.599$ ,  $Sig.0.000$ ) statistically proving significant to reject the null hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ). Also, a negative relationship exists between Job Boredom and Employee Engagement ( $\beta=-0.198$ ,  $t=-2.912$ ,  $Sig.0.004$ ) statistically proving significant to reject the null hypothesis ( $H_2$ ).

**9. SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

**9.1 FINDINGS**

- There is a significantly strong negative correlation exists between Job Burnout and Employee Engagement
- There is a significant weak negative correlation exists between Job Boredom and Employee Engagement

- Results reveal that an inverse relationship is statistically proved between Job Burnout and Employee Engagement to reject null hypothesis  $H_1$ . Likewise, an inverse relationship is statistically proved between Job Boredom and Employee Engagement to reject null hypothesis  $H_2$ . Therefore, it is evident that when the Burnout out increases by one-unit Employee engagement among respondents decreases by 1.071 units. Also, when the Job Boredom increases by one-unit Employee engagement among respondents in the select ITES companies goes down by 0.198 units.

## 9.2. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The disadvantages of burnout and boredom are pessimistic, whereas the outcome of work engagement is optimistic. Burnout and boredom direct to the feeble health situation of employees that can increase the cost in the organizations, for example in terms of illness, absence, and weak performance in their work. Therefore, there is a need to prevent burnout and boredom. Distinctively, work engagement is related to the positive outcome of individuals and organizations as well, which needs promotion. The result shows evidence of several motives of psychological means that may comprise as the basis for inhibiting burnout and boredom, and for enhancing work engagement among employees of the select IT companies in Chennai. For instance, a disparity between giving and take has been uncovered as an explanation for burnout, which signifies that to decrease burnout the balance between giving and take should be reinstated. Boredom results from unchallenging jobs and thus making jobs more meaningful and challenging would decrease boredom. In a similar vein, the motivational potential of resources can be used to promote work engagement which can benefit the employee and the employer as well.

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