



Burnout as a Cause for Job Dissatisfaction

Christa Banton, EdD. & Jose Garza, DHA

Center for Workplace Diversity and Inclusion Research

University of Phoenix

Abstract

Job burnout has become a worldwide concern that the World Health Organization (2019) identifies it as a health issue in connection to the workplace. Burnout occurs when workers perceive their working conditions are unfavorable or inadequate work-life balance. Burnout is widely connected to job satisfaction encompassing many factors such as career mobility, well-being, and mentorship. To address burnout, it is imperative to understand the facets of job satisfaction and create solutions to improve job satisfaction and overall burnout.

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Introduction

Burnout has become a topic of much concern worldwide due to its negative impact on the well-being of individuals and organizations. It is one of the most associated characteristics in connection with job dissatisfaction. In addition, it is a multidimensional concept encompassing emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and low self-esteem in connection to accomplishments at work (du Bois et al., 2023). The reactions to an employee's working environment can lead to burnout if the working conditions are unfavorable or the worker perceives that the job does not meet their work-life balance. Reactions to burnout are "characterized by emotional exhaustion, a distanced, indifferent, cynical attitude towards work and other people, and a decline in personal accomplishment" (Westermann et al., 2014, p. 64). However, understanding the consequences of job dissatisfaction and tracking the organization's level of work-life balance can provide an early indicator of intervention to improve job satisfaction, retention rates, and decrease overall burnout. According to Moon et al. (2023), "...burnout refers to a state of being depleted of physical and emotional energy and reflects a chronic stress syndrome" (p. 1).

Background

In March 2023, the University of Phoenix conducted the Career Optimism Index 2023, surveying five thousand United States workers for career-related optimism. The University of Phoenix (2023) found that 47% of workers surveyed experienced burnout in their current positions. However, they also found that 80% felt hopeful about the future of their careers (University of Phoenix, 2023, p. 8). This goes on to reflect that many workers would leave their positions for better working conditions without having another job lined up; however, 68% would stay in their current position if things changed for them (University of Phoenix, 2023). Certainly, we saw this occurring more often during the Great Resignation when people were

resigning from positions at an exceedingly high rate during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic (Moon et al., 2023). According to Moon et al. (2023) “One of the main reasons believed to underlie the Great Resignation is prolonged distress, or burnout...” (p. 1). In addition, burnout is such a critical issue in workspaces that the World Health Organization (2019) recognizes it as a health issue and classifies it as a workplace concern. “Burn-out is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed” (World Health Organization, 2019, para. 3).

Proposed Solution

The concept of burnout often coincides with many factors, including employee job satisfaction associated with career mobility, mental health and wellness, and mentorship opportunities. In order to create solutions, we need to understand how each area impacts workers' overall job satisfaction. In addition, it should be noted that there is a clear disconnect between what workers feel about their jobs and how employers think workers feel (University of Phoenix, 2023). This is important because it means that employers might believe that a workspace is supportive, but it may not be perceived that way.

Job Satisfaction and Career Mobility

We understand job satisfaction as a subjective view of the ways in which our work impacts our lives. It is often connected to areas such as financial stress, housing, career mobility for advancement, and feelings of isolation and quality of life (University of Phoenix, 2023). There are areas in which an organization can have an influence, such as finances and career mobility. One way in which this can be done is by ensuring equality of opportunity and pay rates between staff. If workers feel they are being paid fairly and equitably, then they perceive the employer as being impartial (Greenberg, 1990; Singh et al, 2013). This then leads to

the overall connection of the staff to the organizational structure. This also pertains to the equality of opportunity such that hiring practices fairly assess for skill over personality and social connections. According to Singh et al. (2013), “Work can have a positive impact on health and psychological well-being. Fair organizational practices (organizational justice) is one of them which might help in promoting psychological well-being in organization” (p.244).

Mental Health and Wellness

We often do not connect mental health and wellness to our workspaces, but since the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become an ever-increasing need within workspaces. In addition, we cannot ignore the fact that the mental health and wellness of employees does impact the overall functioning of an organization. It can also affect employee retention, use of sick leave, and overall production (Trotter, et al., 2009). According to Dang et al. (2022), “...people who are already weighed down by job insecurity and job stress are likely to have a lower mental strength reserve to deal with negative shocks, even if those shocks are not related to their employment” (p. 10). Feelings such as isolation, boredom, anxiety, and stress may contribute to underlying mental health conditions. With this in mind, we know that the better employees feel, the better their work product will be (Trotter, et al., 2009).

Further research suggests that if the workspace were more flexible (i.e., work from home or hybrid models) it would allow for a worker to be able to mitigate their stress levels (Ali et al., 2023). If stress can be better controlled, then an increase in stability of mental health and wellness would be assumed. However, it should be noted that flexibility of the workspace does not address differences in stress levels associated with full versus part-time work. In fact, in a study done by du Bois et al. (2023), they found that part-time employees struggle with the same

amount of stress as full-time employees, and thus there were no differences in stress levels between these groups.

It is suggested that we should not be using a one size fits all solution to workplace burnout. It would be more beneficial to look at ways to create a subjective experience for each employee. This could be done by providing various options such as employee assistance programs, sick/vacation time, paid health benefits, fair pay and financial security, wellness programs, and work time for professional development.

Mentorship

Additionally, the University of Phoenix (2023) connected the availability of mentoring relationships in the workspace to an overall increase in job satisfaction and retention; however, 56% of those surveyed stated they did not have a mentor (p. 36). Therefore, we know that mentorship is needed within organizations, but it is not being provided from the employee's perspective. Interestingly, according to the University of Phoenix (2023) survey, 43% of workers were offered a mentor, while 70% of employers provided mentoring to their employees (p.40). There is a clear disconnection here between employees feeling they have support and employers feeling they provide support. In addition, workers feel like the lack of mentorship holds them back from career success which emphasizes the importance of these networking connections. According to Yang et al. (2022), if “employees feel that their organization is willing to support and reward them for their work, and in return, they are willing to put more effort in working for their organization” (p.198).

Conclusion

Overall, burnout in the workplace is a major concern and must be addressed. The disconnect between employees and employers regarding how they feel in the workplace is

undeniable. Burnout heightened in correlation to the Great Resignation, highlighting the need to create solutions. Notably, increasing job satisfaction, creating a career-mobile environment, providing mental health and wellness programs, and promoting mentorship are ways to reduce burnout and promote an adequate workplace.

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