

A Qualitative Analysis on Integrated Approach Towards Teachers' Burnout and Work Engagement in Indian HEIs

* *Rupesh Rajak*
** *Bibhas Chandra*

Abstract

This article attempted to extend the understanding of burnout and work engagement in teachers in higher educational institutions and to find out probable factors in the Indian context. Data were collected from 60 university teachers through unstructured questionnaires. Out of those 60 teachers, 33 were selected for follow up interviews. Inductive content analysis was used for data analysis using a CAQDAS package named ATLAS.ti 7. Five new factors from the Indian context emerged out from this study, that is, interaction with students, teaching methods, flexible timing and long break, unnecessary rules and regulations, and better HR policies. These factors could be the input towards future studies in academic development as well as for employee well-being and productivity.

Key words : academic stress, burnout, work engagement

JEL Classification : I230, I320, J810

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Of late, the test of a teacher is constrained to classroom address as well as improving the general advancement of his/her students. Also, teachers are credited with other scholastic obligations, for example, research exercises, arranging workshops and classes, and overseeing positions and other formative projects (Khatri & Raina, 20017). Nonetheless, concern has been communicated that teaching is measured as a standout amongst the most upsetting occupations (Janssen 2005), attributed to a high workload, insufficient compensation, huge class size, stimulating uneasiness, students' bad conduct, and declared low prominence of the calling (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006). Past studies have underscored that teachers in higher educational institutions (HEIs) score nearly high on burnout measure. They are sincerely depleted or feel void following a working day's timetable contrasted with representatives working in different commercial ventures (TNO, 2010). The reason may be the time spent all round for the advancement of students, which may bring about anxiety and burnout.

Teachers experience substantial work weight experience in light of arrangements of undertakings they need to do amidst the scholastic sessions, relatively low level of self-administration in their work, and the constrained bolster they get from establishments (OECD, 2004). A host of researchers have argued that the teaching occupation is susceptible to anxiety owing to burdensome nature of work, which triggers high turnover in the teaching profession (Kyriacou, 2000, 2001). Moreover, many studies evidenced a larger amount of anxiety experienced by higher educational institutions' teachers in connection to their employment obligations (Singh, 2011).

* *Senior Research Fellow*, Department of Management Studies, Indian Institute of Technology (ISM), Dhanbad-826 004, Jharkhand. E-mail : rupeshrajak1982@gmail.com

** *Assistant Professor*, Department of Management Studies, Indian Institute of Technology (ISM), Dhanbad-826 004, Jharkhand. E-mail : chandra_bibhas@yahoo.co.in

Studies have found that there is lack of exploration in burnout of college teachers with reference to India. For instance, there are studies conducted by Kumar (2007), Reddy (2007), Reddy and Poornima (2009, 2012) who concentrated on burnout of teachers working in essential, auxiliary, college, and unique schools. As per Azeem and Nazir (2008), the level of specific burnout among college teachers is high regarding enthusiastic depletion.

HEIs' teachers may reach burnout at any point of time. Burnout is conceived as a state of mental, physical, and emotional exhaustion, typically occurring as a result of long-term involvement with people in situations which are emotionally demanding (Sinha, 2010). Burnout is, for the most part, dictated by the testing bit of employment (e.g. workload, physical requests) ; work engagement is for the most part dictated by the accessibility of assets in the workplace (e.g. self-rule or backing). In this way, obviously, engagement can't be measured with the inverse scores of burnout, and ought to be measured all alone. Subsequently, Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) suggested that burnout and engagement ought to be considered as two separate ideas that ought to be measured autonomously with various instruments. It has been outlined by studies that the shortfall based investigation of burnout ought to be supplemented with a positive approach that spotlights on work engagement (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). In any case, we did not discover any study on coordinated methodology of representatives' burnout and work engagement of teachers in HEIs in the Indian setting. The present paper expands the comprehension of burnout, work engagement, and their incorporated methodology towards HEIs in the Indian context.

Methodology

The aim of a qualitative study is to explore the life world of interviewees and obtain an insider perspective (Patton, 2002). The responses for the present study were collected in two phases. Firstly, open ended questions were floated online to the respondents and secondly, interview questions were framed according to the responses given in the open ended questionnaire. Thirty three (33) teachers were selected and interviewed online. The interviews were aimed at getting participants' insights on pertinent issues. The format of the interviews was unstructured and the respondents were exposed to open ended questions. This open-ended format was chosen so that we could explore new predictors of employee's burnout and work engagement in HEIs in the Indian context.

Interviews were arranged with each participant on online chatting platforms like Facebook messenger, Google hangouts, & Skype, as per his/her convenience, so that the follow up could be made seamlessly. Besides, such online platforms helped us to conduct face-to-face interviews, which pose the benefit of synchronicity (Opdenakker, 2006). The teachers were described the procedure and informed of their privileges to abstain or withdraw from answering any question at any time. The study was conducted in two phases. The meaning of employee burnout and work engagement was also explained to the participants so that they did not misunderstood or mislead the concept of burnout and work engagement. Brief profile of the teachers interviewed for the study is mentioned in the Table 1. The time period of the study is from January - June 2015.

Table 1. Brief Profile of the Teachers Interviewed for the Study

Designation	Age Group (in years)				Gender		Type of Institute	
	25-34	35-44	45-54	55 and above	Male	Female	Govt.	Private
Professor	0	0	3	5	6	2	3	5
Associate Professor	0	6	6	0	9	3	4	8
Assistant Professor	9	4	0	0	10	3	3	10
Total	9	10	9	5	25	8	10	23

Data Analysis

An inductive content analysis was performed to explore the contextual variables (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) that might be latent in the study of burnout and work engagement in higher educational institutions (HEIs) of India. The analysis was operationalized by a computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) package called ATLAS.ti 7. The Figure 1 illustrates the structure of codes and their relationships depicting the symptoms of burnout and factors leading to work engagement. The super-codes, that is, non- academic activities, academic related creativity, workload and timing, motivation and rules & regulations, and HR policies emerged out from the analysis, which are discussed below.

Discussion

Description and interpretation are directly related in qualitative research. We have included results and discussion section to avoid repetition and increase rationality. The findings of this study expose new variables for employees' burnout and work engagement in the Indian context with respect to : (a) interaction with students, (b) teaching methods, (c) flexible timings and long break, (d) unnecessary rules and regulations, and (e) better HR policies (see Figure 1).

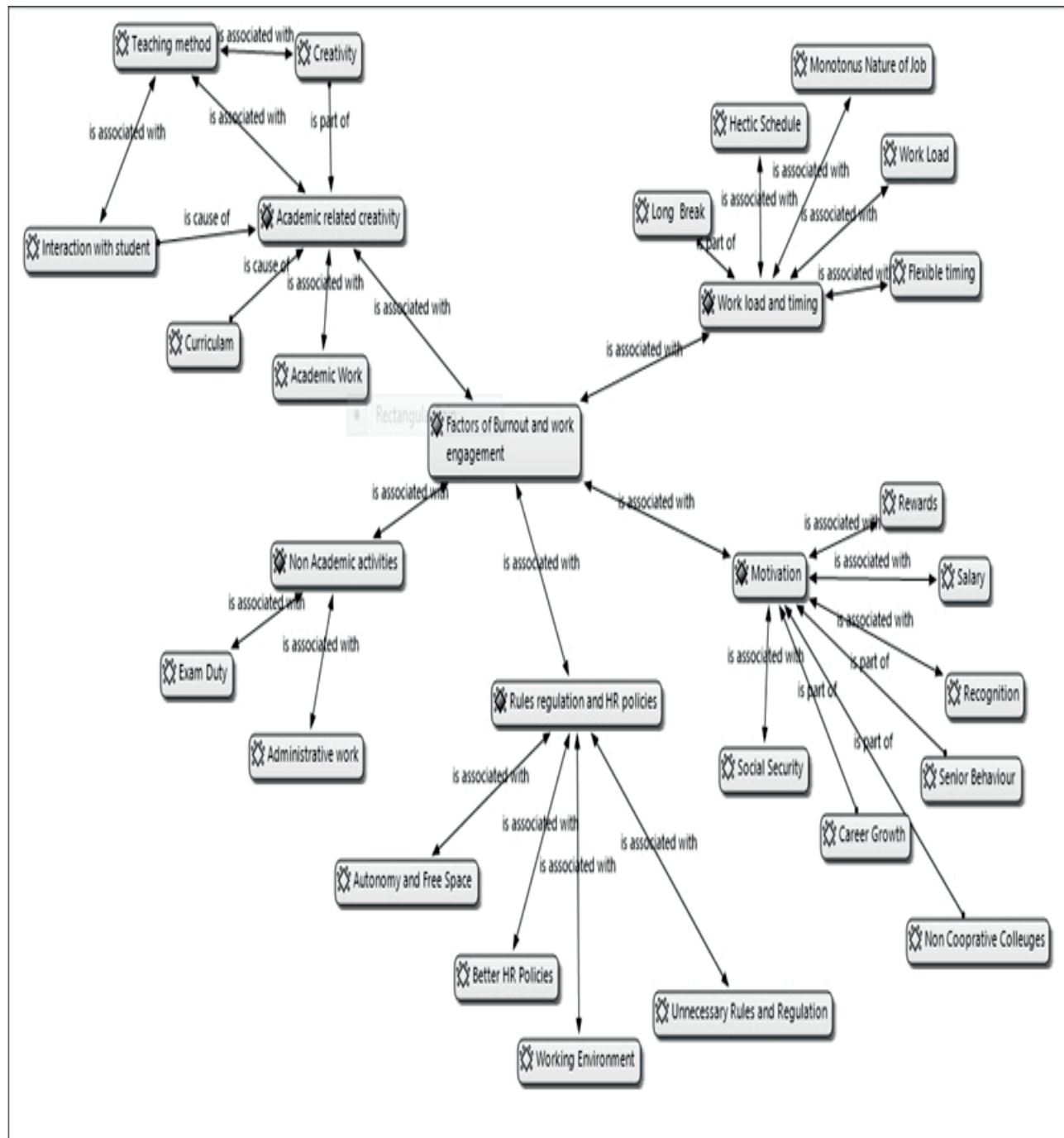
(1) Non - Academic Activities : Duties apart from academic work were reported as a cause of burnout by significant number of faculty members interviewed from different higher educational institutions. For example, a professor stated, "I hate doing assignments that are unrelated to academic work." Another professor said, "I find standardized tests, invigilation duties, and similar paper work hindering my interest in academic work." Similarly, another professor said, "Too much administrative load drains away my energy at the end of the day." In order to resolve this issue, a professor suggested, "Management should provide us assistants who can look after the non-academic activities." Hence, it is observed that teacher burnout is more likely to occur within HEIs' environments characterized by low levels of principal support (Howard, & Johnson, 2004 ; Timms, Graham, & Cottrell, 2007).

(2) Academics Related Activities

(i) Curriculum : Almost all teachers interviewed for this study mentioned that curriculum is an important factor for burnout as well as work engagement for the employees in HEIs. This can be understood by a professor's statement on burnout: "Repetitive course curriculum is not good, it must be changed in course of time so that our interest in teaching can be retained." As per the statement, we can understand that similar curriculum or no change in curriculum makes their job uninteresting and they get burned out. Therefore, some professors said that, "improving course curriculum," "introducing enriched curriculum," and "introducing interesting subjects" would motivate them and they felt that if these steps were taken by the management, they would feel engaged towards their work. Koruklu, Feyzioglu, Ozenoglu - Kiremit, and Aladag (2012) and Friedman (2000) also supported this understanding that with no change in curriculum, the role of the teacher gets negatively changed in a classroom.

(ii) Interaction with Students : Interaction with students was found to be a significant factor contributing towards work engagement for all teachers, as one professor stated, "interaction with students makes me feel good." Another professor said, "discussing new concepts with students and motivating them makes me more engaged towards my job." Many of the teachers described how spending time with the students motivated them and engaged them towards their job. One of them said, "chilling out with class and solving students' problems

Figure 1. Relationship Between Factors Affecting Burnout and Work Engagement in HEIs



make me happy.” Johnson (1991) found that when faculty use cooperative learning, it gives a chance to students to work together to maximize their own results and each other's learning. Cooperation can be just as empowering an activity among faculty as it is among students. Klassen, Perry, and Frenzel (2012) and Pianta, Hamre, and Allen (2012) proposed that teacher - student relationships may play the primary role in nurturing student engagement

and positive student outcomes. Those teachers tend to experience higher levels of well-being, and less emotional stress and burnout that devote energy towards forming warm and nurturing relationships with their students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). It has been also found that communication is also a key driver for the engagement, good communication between teachers, and students improve teachers' engagement (Pandita & Bedarkar, 2015).

(iii) Teaching Methods : The teachers described different teaching methods and requirement for training and development for them so that they can improve their teaching methods and they deliver more to their students. One professor said that effective training and development programmes for professors must occur from time to time because they need to know and update ourselves with new teaching methods. Technological aids for teaching were emphasized by some as one of them remarked, "use of new technologies like projector and smart class is need of time and these technologies help us to improve our teaching style and help students to grasp the concepts easily." New technologies also help teachers to remain engaged in their work.

(iv) Academic Work : Academic work seemed to be an important factor which leads to both burnout and work engagement. Burnout can be illustrated by some statements like, "assigning me a paper which is not in my domain makes me uncomfortable and exhausted." Another professor said, "the institute's management must ensure that teachers' interests and job role matches."

However, work engagement too can be caused by academic work which can be depicted by comments like :

"I engaged myself by exchanging ideas about my subject topics through interactions with students." One professor wanted intervention by management to get them engaged in academic work as he said, "management should develop interest of professors in the work that one is required to perform." One of them linked the academic work with the opportunity to be engaged with research work as he remarked, "I engage myself towards my work by doing research work or due to my interest towards research."

(3) Workload and Timings

(i) Hectic Schedule : Hectic schedule is a very important factor for employee's burnout in HEIs. Continuous classes and other long administrative work don't allow the teachers to relax and they feel exhausted at the end of the day. A professor commented regarding this by saying, "I am over burdened with work in my institute, I don't get the time for my family, and I feel frustrated at the end of the day." Such frustration of teachers can be caused by a number of factors like lack of interval between classes, shortage of faculty, and teachers being burdened by administrative work. It has been empirically proven by many studies that hectic schedule leads to incidence of stress and burnout in the workplace (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993).

(ii) Work Load : Another important factor we came across during our study is work load. Almost all teachers complained that they had too much of workload in their profession, which leads to burnout. Workload can include many other activities other than teaching. As one commented, "Workload from allied activities, not only from teaching, makes me exhausted at the end of the day." People have to do too much in too little time with too few resources. Increasing workload has a consistent relationship with burnout, especially with the exhaustion dimension (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). However, interestingly, a professor commented, "Reducing administrative work by management will help us to engage in our own work more." This statement shows that how workload is the mediating factor between burnout and work engagement.

(iii) Flexible Timing & Long Breaks : Another important factor we came across during our study is flexible timing and long breaks. One professor said, "Management should provide flexible work hours so that we do not exhaust ourselves by taking back to back classes." This statement shows that when faculty members get flexible timings

to take classes, they feel comfortable and they don't get exhausted during teaching. Similarly, another professor said, "Flexible working hours give us more energy to take another class with full energy and we feel engaged towards our work."

So, it is clear from the above statements that when management gives flexible timing to teachers, they don't get exhausted from taking classes and at the same time, they remain engaged towards their work. Second factor which we came across is long break. A professor said, "We need long vacation at some point of time, but that many leaves are not approved by the management." Another professor said, "We need to spend long breaks with family and friends so that we can overcome our stress."

(4) Rules, Regulations, and HR Policies

(i) Unnecessary Rules and Regulations : Another important factor for burnout found in our study were too many unnecessary rules and regulations for the employees in HEIs. One professor said, "Too many unnecessary rules and regulations make me burned out at end of the day." This statement states that too many unnecessary rules and regulations do not make employees comfortable while working ; rules and regulations make them uncomfortable during work and then lead to burnout at the end of the day. Another professor said, "Most importantly, we should keep in mind that rules are made for people and people are not made for rules." These statements depict that unnecessary rules and regulations make their daily working life tough.

(ii) Better HR Policies : Many teachers from different institutions want a change in the HR policies which can make HEIs better places for them to work. As per them, change in HR policies motivates them to get engaged towards their work. One of them said, "There is a need to change the policies of educational institutions towards a student centric educational model and not on bureaucratic or corporate models of education." This statement shows how teachers want institutions to devise such a model which is educational and not bureaucratic or corporate in nature. Such a model would help both teachers as well as students. Another professor said, "There must be better HR policies and man power planning so that the work load does not come on a single individual." Here, we find that there is lack of better HR policies and man power planning in the institutions. If the institution's management or institution's HR department make better HR policies and man power planning, it helps employees to engage in their work. Another professor said, "Clear hierarchy and defined roles must be implemented." Here, we can see that some teachers wanted clear hierarchy and role of their job so that they could perform their duty freely and independently.

(5) Motivation

(i) Non Cooperative Colleagues : Another factor we found in our study for burnout is "non cooperative colleagues". Many teachers complained that when their colleagues are not cooperative, they get burned out. One of them said, "lack of cooperation and support from colleagues leads to burnout." Another professor said, "In environment like this, when your colleagues are not supportive and cooperative, I feel exhausted and alone." However, another professor said, "when you have supportive colleagues and good team across, the faculty members get an engagement boost and you are more engaged towards your work." This statement shows that when colleagues are supportive and work in a team, they are more engaged towards their jobs.

(ii) Career Growth : Another factor which we came across in our study is "career growth" which leads to both burnouts as well as work engagement. For example, a respondent said, "Scope for self development and growth is very low, no promotion in the last 4 years." Another professor said, "career growth opportunity is not here, we have to work very hard for growth." These statements clearly show that teachers were not happy with their current job due to lack of self development and growth opportunities, which leads them to burnout. On the other hand,

some teachers said, “Career clarity and good career growth plan from management helps us to remain engaged in our work.” Employees who have had greater growing profession movement may experience less burnout (Maslach, 1982).

(iii) Rewards : Reward is another important factor for burnout and work engagement which we came across in our study. It leads to burnout as well as work engagement. One of the professors said, “we must get rewards for good work by providing proper benefits and remuneration.” Another professor said, “when you get proper rewards and recognition from the employers, you will not get burned out.” Another professor said, “There are many factors which motivate employees like good facilities, which we are not getting in the present institute.” However, another professor took this in a positive manner, “doing work without expectations motivates me and keeps me engaged towards my work.” Another professor said, “self motivation and passion towards work act as motivating factors for me for doing good work.”

Managerial Implications and Conclusion

This study attempts to identify the underlying causes of burnout and work engagement of teachers in the current teaching - learning milieu in India. The findings of the study would provide substantive insights to those exploring issues pertinent to burnout and well-being of teachers of higher educational institutions in India. The top managements of HEIs may use these inputs to develop a preventive strategy to mitigate the stress level and maximize the teachers' engagement in the present scenario.

This paper explores five new variables of employee burnout and work engagement in the Indian context : (a) interaction with students, (b) teaching methods, (c) flexible timing and long breaks, (d) unnecessary rules and regulations, and (e) better HR policies. It is worth mentioning that our findings are related to teachers in the Indian higher educational institutions system that might ,therefore, not be applicable to other settings. Our findings are also important for higher educational institutions because Indian HEIs are different from other countries HEIs' setup. Moreover, qualitative research preserves potency to produce rich and relative data with a goal of producing local knowledge (Marecek, 2003). The findings of this study can later be validated quantitatively and causal attributions among the variables can be explored.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

Since the study is explorative and qualitative in nature, primitively aimed at identifying variables causing burnout and work engagement in higher education institutional framework, a quantitative study would be desirable to achieve the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the study has been conducted in a limited universe and time span ; hence, a comprehensive study is needed for further elaborations and insights. The study can be further used to conceptualize a robust theoretical framework encapsulating the current findings in the existing models pertinent to burn out and work engagement.

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About the Authors

Rupesh Rajak is a full-time doctoral student in the Department of Management Studies, Indian Institute of Technology (ISM) Dhanbad, Jharkhand. He received his Master's Degree in Business Administration from India. His research areas of interest are Human Resource Management and Organizational Behaviour. He has published papers in reputed journals and has also presented papers in premier national and international conferences.

Dr. Bibhas Chandra is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Management Studies, Indian Institute of Technology (ISM) Dhanbad, Jharkhand. He is faculty of Marketing Management and Consumer Behaviour. He has published several papers in journals of repute. He has also presented papers in premier national and international conferences.