

# A Study on Burnout among HR Recruitment Professionals: A systematic review of causes and mitigation strategies

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## Abstract

*Employee burnout is the most sought problem in recent years and is gradually considered as an occupational hazard. Organizations around the world have started seeing this as a much-needed issue to be addressed among their workforces. Burnout is viewed as a chronic disorder that may lead to serious consequences if not addressed timely. The modern prevailing trend in the job market across industries is paving a stronger path pushing employees into the state of burnout due to the circumstances around them. The ever-increasing instinct for survival among the working population has brought them into an environment of competition which naturally causes increasing levels of stress among them irrespective of the industries they are in. Measures have been taken by the organizations around to address this through their wellness programmes which pay for the good for their employees. The categories of employees prone for burnout don't limit with any specific job responsibilities. The post pandemic situations and the changing dynamics of modern recruitment practices have increased the scope of burnout spread among all levels of employees and this paper focuses on the level of human resource recruiters exposed to it as the job market has taken a newer trend.*

**Key words:** Burnout, Post pandemic, stress, human resource recruiters

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## INTRODUCTION

Various studies have existed for decades about the burnout among employees in organizations across industries. Researchers in the past have revealed the need and requirement to view burnout a modern disorder created due to the occupation that causes serious consequences to employees who are prone to it. Increasing the mindset of survival in the job among the employees has contributed a lot to the growth of burnout among them. The rising unbalanced competition in the prevailing industry has ramped the spread of burnout among all levels of employees irrespective of the industries they belong. The post pandemic situations have brought in various unprecedented challenges in human resource management and moreover the ethical practices involved in hiring have diminished in the recent days as the number of open positions have seen a steeper rise though on the other side great resignation trends. Recruitment, a key function of the human resources department, evidently attracts the highest level of importance, and it is a vital contributor to business success. The responsibility of bringing in the required talent into the organization lies in the hands of the recruiters who bridge the gap between the organizational manpower demand and supply with the most desired talent available in the market. The stiffer competitive environment has been taking a toll on the recruitment professionals who both internal to the company and external recruiters suffer in sourcing the right candidates for the client or company.

## Literature Study

Existing literatures around burnout defines it be a tridimensional aspect. Primarily it said to be a syndrome due to exhaustion, depersonalization accompanied with lack of accomplishment prevailing among human services personnel who predominantly interact with workers (Maslach and Jackson, 1986).

Burnout as a terminology rose into existence since 1980s which indicates the healthcare and human services personnel experiencing emotional loss and reduced motivation. Human service is the sector where burnout is more innumerable Maslach and Jackson (1981) as its uniqueness enables its evolution (Hills, 2019).

Literatures available shows burnout to be a work-related syndrome that started due to personal and interpersonal attributes strongly influenced by emotional demands and organizational reasons (Schaufeli and Enzmann, 2020)

Findings show exhaustion combined with that of depersonalization and inefficacy leading to a sense of reduced accomplishment in an individual are burnout symptoms. (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

Ever expanding expectation in any individual's employment may pave the way for emotional exhaustion (Leiter & Maslach, 2016). Emotional exhaustion is the primary cause of burnout among people experiencing it which makes this the highly studied reason (Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

The act of avoiding and isolating others at workplace is a way individuals take to stay away from emotional damage and doubting oneself is said to depersonalize or cynicism which stands as the next cause of burnout (Thomas *et al.*, 2014). and this is linked to emotional exhaustion (Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

An individual experience of personalization at work would face severe impact in effectively executing the duties and also on well-being (Jiménez-Ortiz *et al.*, 2019).

Depersonalization disables a person in meeting the job demands and would lessen the ability to support others and mostly will make him stay away from other individuals at work (S. Kumareswarn, 2023)

Reduced sense of accomplishment among individuals is termed as inefficacy and it is considered to be the third symptom of burnout. One feels highly burdened and less accomplished when there is a reduction in the level of job satisfaction which leads to inadequacy (Manafi & Subramaniam, 2015).

Through the study conducted by Maslach and Lieter (2004) for evaluating the three facet aspects of burnout, their conclusion showed, workload as the major contributor towards exhaustion, one of the elements of burnout and this is done with an established framework having various areas of work life such as workload, fairness, reward, values and community.

When the trust level of the people surrounding it reduces, an individual is expected to lose confidence and research into the past states complex natured relationship is found between inefficacy and other pointers of burnout. Reaching the level of inefficacy may be due to exhaustion and depersonalization (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009).

Burnout has its impact on both the individual and the organization he belongs, and it has significant impact on society also through the means of the individual's family members (Cox *et al.*, 2008). A trend of ascending sense will be found highly in the aspect of absenteeism and turnover and simultaneously the levels of involvement and negative trend will be found over performance leading to troubled production and increasing workplace accidents will be faced by the organization as a result of burnout Ridzuan *et al.* (2018). Organizations will see their employees receiving stress from those who are experiencing burnout in their environment (Leka & Kortum, 2008)

Speaking in performance terms, burnout influences organizational success. Effects vary from low moral (Sutherland & Cooper, 1992), lesser job satisfaction, lower productivity, self-restraint from the job and increased attrition (Croome, 1999). While closer association exists between the varying reasons among individuals and the success of the organization, performance may be affected due to the organizational effects. Absenteeism, higher attrition, poor labor health, performance errors and increasing customer dissatisfaction will be viewed as an effect of burnout as per Michie (2002) which results in poor performance of the organization.

Increased cholesterol and higher blood pressure are results of burnout Sutherland and Cooper (1992). Immunity degradation, heart problems, ulcers, cancer, allergies, gastrointestinal disorders and anemia are resulting due to burnout (Kumareswaran *et al.*, 2022).

The effect of burnout includes higher effects on the human body by means of higher agitation, lack of relaxation, exhaustion, insomnia, anxiety, depression, reduced job satisfaction and increased job difference (Kumareswaran *et al.*, 2022).

From the recent research in Jakarta, conducted among headhunters revealed that the demands prevalent in the job role have higher levels of burnout especially among the recruitment professionals. (Dharmawan & Zamralita, 2025)

### **Research Gap**

Most of the existing research was focused on healthcare professionals across the world over a broader topic of health services employees. Above this many articles are about teaching professionals as their numbers are vast in every country. Human resource professionals are new to this issue and post pandemic circumstances have raised an alarming amount of focus on the stress levels being addressed among employees across verticals and the responsibility of this major falls in the hands of human resource professionals who are less trained or lacking awareness, naturally seeking external help thus making the recent group of professionals prone to attract burnout. This paper aims to see various reviews available enumerating the levels of HR professionals affected by burnout in the recent times.

### **Burn out among HR Professionals**

The start of the pandemic in 2020 paved the way for a new level of stress to prevail among all professions irrespective of verticals or industries. The trend of work from home being considered as a new normal then seemed to have influenced a greater change in the employment expectation among the employees especially in that of the IT and ITES sector. The ever-changing demand of resources for the organizations has increased the hunt of talent in the job market which in turn led to various issues for the organizations such as increased cost, higher turnover especially the trend of great resignations is severely damaging the organization's HR dynamics. On the other side the moral support required for the entire human resources of every organization has fallen into the shoulders of the human resources department, adding more weight to the levels of engagement the human resource professionals have.

As per the study conducted by workvivo, one of the leading employee communication application company in the early 2022, the impact of great resignation was too high on the working HR professionals who bore the burden of abridging the employee and employer, involving in holding the culture of the organization uplifted, has gradually attracted burnout coming into prevalence among HR professionals where about 88% of them expressed sense of fear is in them over their job and a humongous percentage of 97% have expressed fatigued

emotionally and thus contributing to an overall 97% of HR professionals having burnout and reasons revolve not only the great resignations but also on the cultural changes due to the pandemic which caused increased work by means of recruitment. Human resource professionals, the flag bearers of humane strength among the employees, have been made to be considered truly human themselves too and moreover 97% of them expressed their desire to leave their jobs.

Adding fuel to fire, the last 12 months have been termed the most challenging period for all HR professionals as many unseen instances have risen, focusing on the impact of return to work, inflation and the constant rise in the cost of living. A cultural change of increase workload among the employees and their expectations has transformed the role of balancing it has fallen heavily on the HR leaders. The past 2022, is a transformational year for the entire sector of human resources as the HR individuals are deployed to attend all functions of the organization.

The changing dynamics of human resources post 2022 is making the HR professionals to take the role of the leading from the front in all stages as the trend is forcing HR professionals to establish a defined value proposition thus presenting how one can join the organization and HR commitments to the employees and creating a culture of inclusiveness and development of the employees and to ensure proper compensation for all. This makes HR leaders display their success stories at the front which needs to be the ultimate for the HR sector to develop. This shows that too many roles to be played by the HR professionals which is causing more stress for them resulting in burnout.

As per the lattice report 2021, multiple responsibilities added with increased project handling work were viewed as the most challenging one for over 40% of teams handling human resources. The increasing need to looking after the remote working was the priority at the beginning of the pandemic and the past year was into great grieve of layoff and the current HR leaders are posted the hefty challenge of hiring qualified resources at a very swifter timeframe and ensure the onboarding is taken care promptly and hiring in the current market is considered as an enabling factor of burnout. Moreover, adding to this the team responsible for assures the learning is taken for the entire organization itself is very less staffed compared and these plays crucial role in the belief of being exhausted emotionally by many HR leaders.

Recruitment, being a part of overall human resource function, is assumed to be the biggest reason for stress among human resource professionals. Around 54% of human resource leaders expressed that the reason for their recent job shift is because of the increasing stress related to hiring in their previous organization as per the Karmcheck. The most sighted parameter in HR metrics, cost per hire, is largely missed by 51% of the respondents and the time taking for position closure has seen as diminishing effect as expressed by 47% and 42% of them indicated there is increasing failure in attracting the desired talent for the current requirement. These unforeseen failures in combination with lesser efficient processes and turbulent talent market are contributing to the higher burnout levels resulting serious trouble to human resource professionals and the teams. Nearly two out of three human resource professionals expressed their willingness to quit during the previous year where 73% resorted on hiring burnout with 51% expressed they are frequently facing burnout and moreover 22% are experiencing it daily.

Briefing about the burnout in HR leaders, Vishwanath Sheety of Mastech Digital expressed that human resource professionals experience higher burnout and are being under continuous pressure. The competitive hiring environment is contributing more towards the increasing stress and pressure on HR professionals in recruiting the best talent. More job

opportunities in the current market and increasing demand in hiring top talent, thus resulting in the loaded responsibility of HRs to be in a pressurized zone of retaining and hiring. The final moment backing out by employees at the last moment that too on the very date of joining influences higher pressure on the recruitment teams.

Mahalia Mayne in 2025 stated that pandemic is not only the sole contributor to HR burnout and it is getting worse. Increased administrative workload is forcing HR team members into a crisis and 50% of HR individuals expressed being burned out and it is leading to people quitting the job completely ranging around 34%.

### **Causes of HR burnout**

As per Jennifer Kraszewski, there are different sources of human resource stressors depending on the various businesses, which have given the following causes of HR burnout

#### **1. Heavy Workload**

Human resource professionals are often found juggling between various functions ranging from recruitment, compliance, employee relations, training and payroll. These make them tightly scheduled and moreover all these responsibilities don't fall under their strengths too and on the other hand they lack focus on their needs be it profession or their personal life.

#### **2. Layoffs & Attrition**

The post pandemic situation accompanied with the degrading economic situation, the duties of layoffs fall on the HR leaders and just like any other employees the HR professionals also fall under the same category to face resignation and prone to be laid off thus leading to make the remaining employees to take up the stress created.

#### **3. Lack of Resources**

As per the Workvivo study, many of the HR professionals, ranging from about 73%, expressed themselves that they are not equipped with the needed resources to practice their job responsibilities effectively.

#### **4. Emotional Exhaustion**

The ethical method of prioritizing the employees above their personal need among HR professionals are always commendable and sometimes it is most needed too, but frequently tackling crisis continuously results in draining HR professionals emotionally. HR professionals are less equipped with choices of quitting or stepping away from their duties and thus pushes them into a state of lesser protection of their health.

#### **5. Lack of appreciation**

HR responsibilities are always not recognized as like any other functions in an organization. As always perceived non-billable, the return on investment is impossible to showcased and there is a high need for the right tool for this.

The above is fewer in number, but various reasons prevail across various verticals where HR professionals face different challenges, especially in the post pandemic era where they are pushed to their limits due to the uncertainty in the business environment.

#### **6. Lesser Support and resources**

As per Starred (n.d.), recruiters are found working with no proper tools to recruit, less collaboration with the teams and workflows that have no proper streaming. This is adding pressure and forcing them to juggle on many unrealistic tasks in hiring and moreover they are exposed to multitasking from their managers.

## **7. Poor Work-life balance and no paid overtime**

Sam Forsdick stated that it is predominantly found that there is an unavoidable extension of work hours among the HR and recruitment professionals, which attracts no monetary recognition, and it extends beyond five hours per week. This contributes to the imbalance in their work-life and aggravates burnout.

## **8. Monotonous Tasks and repetitive works**

HR tasks and functions are very process oriented and as per HR Lineup, the recruitment process attracts highly repetitive works that hover around various jobs such as parsing resumes, contacting candidates for interview schedules and these contribute to higher disengagement and increase burnout.

### **Burnout among HR recruiters**

In recent years there has been an increasing trend of competition where the recruitment practices among the companies in the same verticals have unfurled standards of ethics followed in hiring candidates. To ensure the sustainability of their business and their jobs, the recruitment professionals are forced to break the ethics followed or taught.

The great resignation trend during the past 3 years has had a huge impact on human resource professionals. Jori Hamilton states that hiring managers are facing difficult times as the organizations are involved in cutting costs, changing location and facing challenges due to inflation and supply, which leads to increased pressure among the recruiters who were assigned to bring in the resources to meet the business requirements. Nearly 61% of recruiters stated that their stress levels were higher and around 19% indicated their stress levels are ramping up drastically. These are the reasons that will lead to increased employee turnover due to the increasing stress resulting in employee burnout. Just like another employee, recruiters are put into huge challenges as every resignation requires to be filled which piles up their workload.

Recruitment by its nature itself is filled with lots of challenges from sourcing till onboarding, the present market situation is not convenient to get the same sort of importance or respect among the potential job seekers as the dynamics of job seeking has changed due to the competition and the candidates enjoy unlimited upper hand thus enabling them to defy any recruiter at any point of their hiring process. This leads to an increased level of stress among the recruiters, especially in the IT industry where the competition has grown way higher due to the increased demand during the pandemic and the later stage the trend has taken a new path where the great resignation became a past, and layoffs and downsizing have started affecting even the recruitment professionals also.

As there is very limited research focused on HR recruiters, highly valuable insights are taken from professionals that has higher stress levels. Zhao et al. (2021) identified job stress as the major contributing factor for burnout, and it found relevant to the recruitment professionals who encounter target achievement, targets and boundary less work life.

Just like the impacts on other professions due to burnout, it also causes decreased performance level of recruiters as they face challenges in bringing in the right and top profiles into the organization due to the uncertain market and competition.

### **Strategies to mitigate Burnout among HR Recruiters**

#### **1. Transformational Leadership**

To mitigate the effects of burnout among recruitment professionals, many ways are practiced like implementing transformational leadership. This is characterized by an individual's inspiration, stimulation of intellectual aspects and person specific focus, which

together contribute to reducing the job stress and its effects. According to Pladdys, 2024, the leadership that promotes engagement with a sense of empathy and inspires with a vision to ensure emotional safety and these people with such leadership style are found to be influential in creating an environment that enables the extended support and value employees which in turn reduces the level of burnout (Kaluza et al., 2020).

## **2. Recovery Experiences**

To ensure the recovery of mental energy and the required focus in everything, there is a true need to have participation in recovery activities that range from recreational activities, time off from works that extract higher emotional energy, involving in mindfulness programmes. These help in equipping the individuals to relieve stress from work and aid in achieving back their emotional resources (de Bloom et al., 2018).

Recruitment landscape attracts recovery needs as the job by nature is highly monotonous facing tighter deadlines and fatigue due to engagement with candidates. According to Demerouti, 2015, burnout levels can be managed well if the employees are allowed to proper time offs, involve in personal care and actively participate in wellness programs.

## **3. Organizational Interventions**

Employers from their operational standpoint can be involved in addressing this burnout by means of offering workloads that are manageable, encourage open discussions about mental health and by providing flexible work options. The use of technology to automate fewer routine tasks that would minimize the monotonous jobs and will enable the HR recruiters to focus on much strategic roles. A combination of the above and with a holistic approach, a resilient team of recruiters' team can be built with increased engagement and reduced burnout (Pladdys, 2024; Han et al., 2019).

## **4. Fostering Gratitude Culture**

Burnout and job satisfaction is highly influenced by the very positive psychological trait, gratitude. According to research, people involved in regular gratitude-related activities and practices have shown lesser levels of emotional exhaustion and have exhibited increased engagement at work (Lanham et al., 2012).

In the case of HR Recruitment, which is labor intensive and has increased workload, inculcating an environment that possesses positivity through appreciation, recognition and rewards will stand against any chronic stress.

## **CONCLUSION**

Burnout among HR recruiters is a highly evolving and pressing issue to be addressed to ensure the well-being of the HR professionals, which may lead to detrimental effect on both the employees and employers they are working for. This paper emphasizes the requirement to have a proactive approach, especially for the betterment of the HR professionals in the present unbalanced job market and the ever-changing mindset of the job seekers. The HRs will play a role in relieving other employees from burnout and they can achieve this only and only if they are properly equipped with proper training that would benefit primarily themselves first. There is a high need for promoting measures to address burnout among HR professionals which may include promoting mental health, work-life balance and skill development for them. Further research in this area, especially focusing on the burnout among the HR professionals, will contribute to more understanding about the

various causes prevailing across the industries and the ways these can be eradicated. Addressing burnouts among HR professionals will lead to a more balanced and productive workforce with ensured health, thus contributing to the benefits of the organization and the employees.

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