



Job Satisfaction and Burnout: A Study on the Executives of the Tea Industry

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Introduction

General History of the Tea Industry in India

The tea industry in India is about 172 years old. It occupies an important place and plays a very useful part in the national economy. Robert Bruce in 1823 discovered tea plants growing wild in upper Brahmaputra Valley. In 1838 the first Indian tea from Assam was sent to United Kingdom for public sale. Thereafter, it was extended to other parts of the country between 50's and 60's of the last century. However, owing to certain specific soil and climatic requirements its cultivation was confined to only certain parts of the country.

Tea plantations in India are mainly located in rural hills and backward areas of North-eastern and Southern States. Major tea growing areas of the country are concentrated in Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The other areas where tea is grown to a small extent are Karnataka, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Sikkim, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Bihar.

History of Tea Industry in Assam

The history of Tea plants in Assam goes back a little less than 200years ago when it all started. The story picked up after plants quite similar to Tea plants in neighboring China were seen sparsely in the North east corner of Assam.



The tea industry happens to be the one of the oldest plantation industry in the country, and it has tremendous socio economic impact into the economy of Assam. The tea plantation workers are low paid and the industry is highly capitalist in character.

The researcher will try to study how executives perceive their job and that whether the job provides them with what is important to them. The study will job satisfaction, whether the nature of an employee's environment off the job indirectly influences his or her feelings on the job. So the research and study will generally help the tea industry as a whole to identify the socio- economic conditions responsible to identify the job dissatisfaction if any and try to arrest the same to enhance job satisfaction.

Rationale of the Study

The researcher proposes to study the various facets of job satisfaction in the tea sector amongst the executives. This study focuses on the influence of job satisfaction on burnout among tea garden executives.

Background to the Research

Job Satisfaction is the fulfillment and the gratification that comes from work. It is not the money, the benefits or the vacations. It is the general good feelings we receive from doing the work itself. It is achieved daily by digging out satisfier's wherever they can be found.

It can be concluded that tea industry tea garden executives might not find their jobs satisfying and the nature and environment of a their job are a good "breeding" ground for burnout inclined stress. If burnout is influenced by job satisfaction, there is even more reason to believe that tea industry tea garden executives might be experiencing high levels of burnout inclined stress with consequences to their company and themselves.

The following research questions are formulated for this study:

- (1) What does job satisfaction mean and what constructs are involved?
- (2) What does burnout mean and what constructs are involved?
- (3) Is there a theoretical relationship between job satisfaction and burnout?
- (4) What are the levels of job satisfaction and burnout among tea industry tea garden



executives?

- (5) Is there is a relationship between job satisfaction and biographical characteristics?
- (6) Is there a relationship between burnout and biographical characteristics?
- (7) Can job satisfaction act as a predictor of burnout among tea industry tea garden executives?
- (8) What recommendations can be made for future research and for the management of job satisfaction and burnout?

Objectives

1. The general objective of this study is to determine the influence of job satisfaction on burnout amongst the tea garden executives.
2. To define the concept of job satisfaction through literature survey.
3. To define the concept of burnout through literature survey.
4. To determine the theoretical relationship between job satisfaction and burnout.
5. To determine the level of job satisfaction and burnout through empirical study.
6. To determine the relationship between job satisfaction and biographical characteristics through empirical study.
7. To determine the relationship between burnout and biographical characteristics through empirical study.
8. To determine whether job satisfaction predicts the level of burnout through empirical study.
9. To formulate recommendations on the management of job satisfaction and burnout in a tea company.

Research Design

The research design involves a literature review and an empirical investigation to determine the predictive value of job satisfaction for burnout. For this study, job satisfaction will be the independent variable and burnout will be the dependent variable. The study will also be confined to the individual level of analysis.



Research Methodology

This research will be presented in two phases, namely a literature review and an empirical study.

Phase 1: Literature Review

The literature review will consist of three steps:

Step 1: Job satisfaction will be defined.

Step 2: Burnout will be defined.

Step 3 : The theoretical relationship between job satisfaction and burnout will be determined.

Phase 2: Empirical Study

This empirical study will consist of the following:

Step 1: A random sample of 139 participants comprising of tea garden executives will be selected.

Step 2: The job descriptive index and burnout index will be discussed and justified as instruments to assess job satisfaction and burnout.

Step 3: The Job descriptive index and the burnout index will be administered.

Step 4: The research hypothesis will be formulated.

Step 5: The data will be analysed using a correlation and regression analysis, and the results will then be reported and interpreted.

Step 6: The research findings will be integrated.

Step 7: The limitations and conclusions of the research will be discussed.

Step 8: Recommendations will be made for the management of job satisfaction and burnout, topics for future research.

Definition of Job Satisfaction



There are various definitions of job satisfaction. Most authors define it in terms of feelings, attitudes and beliefs. George and Jones (1996:70) define it as “the collection of feelings and beliefs that people have about their current jobs”.

There seems to be consensus that the five crucial dimensions of Ivancevich and Matteson (2005) are the core dimensions of job satisfaction (Toposky, 2000; Wealleans, 2003; Lockburn & Terry, 2004). For the purpose of this study, the five dimensions will be regarded as, pay, job, promotion, supervisor and co-workers.

Defining Burnout

Empirical evidence has shown that burnout has important dysfunctional ramifications, implying substantial costs for both organizations and individuals because of, for example, increases in turnover, absenteeism, reduced productivity, and human considerations (Jackson & Maslach, 1982; Leiter & Maslach, 1988; Shirom, 1989).

Dimensions of Burnout

A review of the literature suggests that there is some congruency of view between three core dimensions of burnout, namely emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and mental exhaustion.

The Empirical Study

The Sample

A critical component of the employees who provide the know-how, innovation and entrepreneurship are the tea garden executives. At the time of this study, the organizations chosen had a total complement of 460 tea garden executives. The questionnaire was distributed to 180 tea garden executives but 139 questionnaires were found to be completed



and fit to be taken for the study. The study constituted 30% of the total population of tea garden executives. The ratios of executives versus the workers are very high in each of them. The research was only on executives which were quite few in comparison to the number of workers.

The major organizations whose gardens have been chosen for the study were Williamson Magor, Jayashree Tea and Industries, Amalgamated Plantations Private Limited (formerly Tata Tea Ltd. , Assam Frontier Tea (now Apeejay Tea Limited) and Rosell Industries.

Measuring Instruments

The Pines, Aronson & Kafry (1981) Burnout Index and The Smith, Kendall & Hulin (1969) Job Descriptive Index were chosen to measure employee burnout and job satisfaction respectively.

Research Findings

Biographical Variables as Predictors of Job Satisfaction

Most of the biographical variables do not have a significant influence on job satisfaction. This is confirmed by the p value in all the biographical variables excluding position with a large practical significance value of 0,43. The p value for position is $<0,05$ at 0.001. It should also be noted that the variable (position) has many categories that could have influenced the p value ($p = 0.001$).

Another biographical variable, age at the p value of 0.0620 is significant at $p < 0.10$. However further analyses were not done on age because of the high p value.

The general level of job satisfaction is high (scores between 150 and 210). Also, middle management and senior management experience an even higher level of job satisfaction at an average mean of 180. The theoretical review suggested that the greater the challenge and acceptable complexity of the job, the more satisfaction employees experience (Seon-Lee,



2001). High level jobs are normally expected to be more challenging and complex hence the higher level of satisfaction (Goode, 2000).

This is contrary to the Account Managers , Factory managers and the Field managers , who display a lower level of job satisfaction compared with General Managers , Doctors and Deputy Managers. Their mean average is 161.

Most of the biographical variables are not a significant predictor of burnout among tea industry tea garden executives. This finding is confirmed by the p value of <0.05 . This, however, does not hold for position ($P = 0.0006$).

One may conclude that the participants experienced a high level of job satisfaction as measured by the Smith et al, (1969) JDI (the mean of 171,388 is between 150 and 210 and considered to be high) (Leiter & Maslach, 2005). The burnout scores on the other hand, should be analysed more closely to check the frequency distribution of scores and percentages.

A breakdown of the burnout score also shows that the general score is low. About a third (27%) of the participants have a score higher than 3 and are therefore suffering from burnout. The above table also shows that 6% would favourably need some kind of intervention. This could also suggest that the organisation is managing the levels of burnout among the staff adequately.

The number of participants experiencing burnout is not necessarily high. However, the fact that 22.3% of participants are placed on the border of burnout and experiencing significant burnout or being in a bad state needs to be carefully considered. Of concern is the fact that the number could escalate if no proper interventions are forthcoming. A total of 22.3% of the respondents appear to be doing well, and very few (3.6%) are exhibiting minor symptoms of burnout and need to examine their worklife and make changes. The following section explores the correlation between job satisfaction and burnout.

There is a significant correlation between the independent variable (job satisfaction) and dependent variable (burnout). In principle one may conclude that the higher the level of job



satisfaction the lower the level of burnout hence there is an inverse relationship between the two variables.

one may conclude that a moderate relationship exists between burnout and job content. The scores seem to suggest that if tea industry tea garden executives are satisfied with the job content, there is little chances that they will experience burnout. The other moderate inverse relationship is depicted between promotion and burnout. This depiction seem to suggest that employees for whom there is a possibility of promotion based on their efforts, are unlikely to experience burnout because their energies are mobilised towards what may be lie ahead. The section below explores the nature of the relationship between components of job satisfaction and burnout.

Conclusion

Through the empirical study, information was obtained regarding the job satisfaction of executives and their burnout levels. The conclusions drawn for the literature review and empirical study will now be discussed.

Four hypotheses were proposed.

- Firstly, it was hypothesised that biographic variables predict job satisfaction. The analysis of variance reveals that biographical variable overall does not predict job satisfaction. Thus, the hypotheses is not rejected.

This confirms research findings by Johns (1992) that biographical variables have been shown to relate to job satisfaction, although the relationships are weak and variable. Christensen (1997) suggests that the main factor relating to the above finding is that biographical variables are influenced by a number of social, political, economic, physiological dynamics that vary from one person to the next.

- Secondly, it was hypothesised that biographical variables predict burnout. The analysis of variance reveals that the biographical variables as a whole do not predict



burnout. Position was found to influence the levels of burnout, but one needs to take cognisance of the fact that positions encompass broad categories and some may have few participants. Thus the hypotheses is not rejected.

Some studies confirmed a weak correlation between biographical variables and burnout (Shirom, 1989; Brown, 1992). However one should bear in mind that this study focussed on the overall prediction of the biographical variables of burnout.

- Thirdly, it was hypothesised that job satisfaction (job content, supervision, co-workers, pay and position) predicts burnout. The Pearson correlation suggests that there is a correlation between job satisfaction and burnout.

The findings also suggest an inverse relationship between job satisfaction that is, the higher the level of job satisfaction, the lower the level of burnout. It should also be noted that there is a split between the components of job satisfaction and the way they predict burnout. The correlation between the two variables is however not strong. The hypotheses is therefore rejected.

The results can be summarised as follows :

- The results suggest that if executives are satisfied with their job content, they will hardly experience burnout.
- The results also suggest a significant but weak correlation between supervision and burnout.
- The findings suggest a significant but weak correlation between co-workers and burnout.
- The findings suggest a significant but weak correlation between pay and burnout.
- The results suggest a significant and moderate correlation between promotion and burnout.



The overall conclusion is that some components of job satisfaction, mainly job content and promotion, could predict levels of burnout. The other components, namely supervision, co-workers and pay, do not predict burnout.

In general therefore, the null hypotheses are also rejected because, some components of job satisfaction do predict the levels of burnout.

The above findings confirm the findings of Chernis, (1980), Pauw, (1991), Pugh, (1991) and Pons at al (1998) who suggests that there are certain variations on how the components of job satisfaction predict burnout.

- Fourthly, it was hypothesised that there is a significant correlation between job satisfaction and burnout. The Pearson correlation suggests that some level of correlation between job satisfaction and burnout does exist. The findings also suggest an inverse relationship between job satisfaction that is, the higher the level of job satisfaction the lower the level of burnout. It should also be noted that there is a split between the components of job satisfaction and the way in which they predict burnout hence a weak correlation between the two variables. Hence the hypotheses is therefore rejected.

This finding is confirmed by earlier research by Stout and Williams (1983) who concluded that some components of job satisfaction (job content and promotion) could be valid predictors of job satisfaction. They also concluded that job satisfaction is a weak predictor of burnout because burnout is also affected by other organisational factors such as job commitment and organisational design. Hence, the research questions were answered and the objectives of the study achieved.

Job satisfaction does not necessarily have a strong relationship with burnout per se. However, two components of job satisfaction combined with other factors could influence burnout. Further research is necessary to explain and explore those variables and their influence on burnout in more detail. It may also be concluded that the influence of job satisfaction on



burnout will be as important as all other significant factors in the relationship, as highlighted above. Therefore job satisfaction has some influence on the levels of burnout, but it is not the only factor that accounts for the level of burnout. In point of fact, some components (supervision and co-workers) of job satisfaction do not even have any significant correlation with burnout.

One may therefore conclude from the above that an organisation can not really afford to operate with low levels of job satisfaction or high levels of burnout. This chapter will therefore conclude with suggestions on how the organisation could enhance the level of job satisfaction and programmes to deal with the levels of burnout.

The main objective of this study, namely to answer the research question, “What is the influence of job satisfaction on burnout amongst tea garden executives ?” was therefore achieved. The levels of burnout and jobsatisfaction were established, and the role of biographical data investigated. The components of job satisfaction and the way in which they relate to burnout were also determined.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study are indicated below:

Limitations of the literature review

The literature dealing with the concepts is somewhat outdated with few recent sources. There is little literature relating specifically to the job satisfaction of executives working in tea gardens and in matter of fact precisely plantation industry, more specifically in the Indian context.

The same applies to burnout.

Recommendations and Suggestions

- The findings of this study do suggest that job content and promotion as components of job satisfaction are strong predictors of burnout. Since job satisfaction is generally



not a strong predictor of burnout, it is recommended that the management of job satisfaction, specifically components of job satisfaction, may not be sufficient to counter burnout. It is thus recommended that a holistic approach should be followed with specific interventions aimed at countering burnout. Such interventions could include didactic stress management, self-monitoring, promotion of a healthy lifestyle and integrated organisational programmes (Reinhold, 1997).

- Last but not the least, the management and owners of the tea gardens should put its sincere efforts to match the expected levels of job satisfaction of their executives and take adequate measures to counter burnout for the benefit of the executives in their personal front , the organization and the society as a whole.
- Some literature and research studies aptly confirmed that the *yoga* way of life can play in managing stress and burnout among managers. Yoga happens to be fitting in the best , mainly because of its ability to change positively individual responses to stress stimuli.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations for future research are suggested :

- Job satisfaction and burnout in the tea gardens or any plantation industry have not been studied intensively in the Indian context , hence the need for future research in this area.
- A more comprehensive Job Satisfaction questionnaire can be designed keeping in mind the inherent needs of the tea garden executives.
- A larger sample size should be used in any future research to enable a factor analysis.

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