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Burnout during Early Career: Lived Experiences of the knowledge workers in India

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to explore the phenomenon of burnout during early career among knowledge workers in Information Technology (IT) services industry in India.

Design/methodology/approach: Grounded Theory Research design was used to explore the research phenomenon. The study was based on the analysis of fortythree in-depth interviews from employees, managers and human resource professionals in IT services industry in India. Purposeful and theoretical sampling designs were used to locate the participants for the study. Grounded theory analytical procedures - open, axial and selective coding were used to analyse and interpret the interview narratives. Atlas ti version 5.0. was used for qualitative data analysis.

Findings and discussion: The analysis of the interviews with the young knowledge workers reveal the following as the reasons for their burnout during early career: poor integration with the job and the organization at large, underemployment, stressful job and exhausting work environment, fear and insecurity of replacement of talent and downsizing.

Strategies are discussed to deal with burnout situations among the young knowledge workers for individual and organizational wellbeing.

Practical implications: The findings are relevant and useful in practice domain as they are grounded from the field reality. It provides directions for managerial and organizational practices in preventing burnout in early career among knowledge workers.

Originality/value: The paper is original and the present study is among the first attempts to investigate the nature of burnout through qualitative inquiry.

Limitations: The findings of the study is applicable to organizations like IT Services industry and thus the research outcome cannot be generalized. The study includes the lived experiences of employees only during their early career.

Keywords: Burnout, Early Career, Knowledge worker, Young Engineering Graduates, Grounded Theory, Qualitative Research Methodology, IT Services Industry, India

Paper type: Research paper

1. Introduction

Burnout refers to a state of exhaustion experienced by subjects when they do not get expected results even after investing a huge amount of effort (Freudenberger 1980). Early burnout literature referred to three dimensions of exhaustion, depersonalization and self-efficacy while examining experiences of burnout (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). Exhaustion relates to emotional and physical depletion, depersonalization relates to callousness towards job and self-efficacy identifies with feelings of self-worth due to substantial personal accomplishments in the work context (Leiter and Maslach, 2005).

We identify three important gaps in burnout literature. *First*, while there has been a lot of focus in burnout literature on the depletion of resources (Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009), this focus has not been connected to organisational experiences of professionals who find that the organisation does not offer them too many avenues of creative growth. *Second*, while reward imbalances and unfair appraisal processes have been known to cause burnout among professionals in innovative segments of the knowledge economy (Jianwu and Xiangqian, 2013), little is known about how the lack of professional managed induction processes which provide role clarity and resources to professionals to seek help from formal supervisors and informal mentors can structure experiences of burnout. *Third*, while it has been found that increasing job demands, especially in the IT industry have the potential to cause burnout (Gan and Gan, 2013), there are not enough studies that focus on how professionals may feel burnt out on account of performing monotonous, repetitive work instead of creative, innovative work.

Overall, we argue that burnout literature has focused on key variables such as job type, along with an emphasis on emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishments (Huang, 2001). Interaction with supervisors and work-family conflict have been shown to be important determinants of burnout (Shropshire and Kadlec, 2012). However, this focus has not extended to how identity is constructed for young professionals, and how they begin to feel that they are unwanted in the organisations they are joining. Gaps in literature pertain to experiences of professionals when organisations do not view them as sources of value, and instead view them as sources of cost minimisation (Deniz-Deniz and Saa-Perez, 2012). Gaps persist about how organisations structure the self-image of professionals (Rolling, 2004). We explore what happens to professionals when their self-image is structured as that of low cost factory workers rather than as active creators of value.

We attempt to bridge these gaps in the burnout literature by mobilising narrative experiences obtained from Indian information technology engineers. We obtained qualitative data from Indian IT engineers, especially from those in early phases of their careers to understand the processes and experiences that were contributing to burnout. We make two theoretical contributions to existing studies on burnout using our qualitative data. *First*, we extend findings from literature on early career burnout which focus on job stressors like overwork, role insufficiency and lack of clarity on role boundary (Jung, 2013) to incorporate experiences where young engineers find that they have to deal with supervisors who have little interest in their lives and careers, and who maintain a distance from them, even while using them to achieve their own deliverables within organisations. *Second*, while the literature on early career burnout has also focused on burnout resulting from experiences of professionals that they are losing control over their own careers (Armstrong *et al.*, 2015), we extend this focus to cover gaps in induction programs that make engineers feel unwanted right from the beginning and instead of integrating them into work processes, make them search for work, identity and agency.

1.1. Context to the study: Knowledge Workers in Indian IT Services Industry

The Information Technology and Business Process Management (IT-BPM) industry in India is acknowledged for its contribution to India's growing economy (Agrawal, Khatri and Srinivasan, 2012; Agrawal, 1999; NASSCOM, 2015). The Indian IT-BPM sector which are engaged primarily in outsourced 'knowledge work', have produced a highly visible new category of global 'knowledge workers' in India (Agrawal, 1999; Amar, 2002; Upadhyaya, 2009). The industry specializes in software products, IT services, IT Enabled Services, hardware & engineering and research & development services. The Indian industry has evolved from just being an outsourcing destination in the late 1990s to a desired destination for high end technology and consulting solutions.

Indian IT Services industry is the largest private sector employer with 3.5 million employees, contribution by Indian IT-BPM industry (NASSCOM, 2015). The employment opportunities provided to knowledge workers has gone up to 85 percent increase in IT-BPM sector between the year 2000-1 and 2013-14 (NASSCOM, 2008 & NASSCOM, 2015). The industry largely credits its growth and development to its Knowledge workers (Agrawal, 1999).

Though, the industry's growth is phenomenal, its human resource issues like stress, burnout, engagement and retention are always a concern to the researchers and practitioners (Agrawal, 1999; Agrawal, Khatri and Srinivasan, 2012). Knowledge workers, even though young, have superior knowledge and skills, more so than the managers who are supervising them and who have the responsibility to create the environment in which they work. If management understands their psychology and sociology and knows how to work with them, it can make them the super smart employees it dreams of, but if it does not understand them, then it can turn them into sloth (Amar, 2002).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Burnout

Burnout is defined as a state of exhaustion resulting from dedication to a work or a cause that did not give the expected results (Freudenberger, 1980). Consequently, burnout was investigated through the three dimensions of exhaustion, depersonalization and self-efficacy (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). Exhaustion relates to emotional and physical depletion, depersonalization relates to callousness towards job and self-efficacy identifies with feelings of self-worth due to substantial personal accomplishments in the work context. In this context, work engagement is another term which has been studied and on a continuum, is placed at the opposite end of burnout (Leiter and Maslach, 2005). A work engagement scale was developed to assess positive involvement like vigour, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli et al 2002).

Though burnout is a worldwide concept, it has been explained differently by researchers from different countries. While in some areas it has been used to denote medical issues, in other areas it is a non- medical term which indicates low engagement due to varied reasons and more of a social term (Schaufeli et al 2009). It can broadly be summarised as erosion of engagement leading to a failure to contribute meaningfully to work. Burnout is generally characterised by a sense of helplessness (Krug 1999). Burnout was seen to have positive correlation with excessive job demands among layoff survivors studied across several companies where downsizing was implemented (Cotter and Fouad, 2012). Extreme commitment to work and equity sensitivity are found to moderate the pathway between Effort-reward imbalance and burnout (Oren and Littman-Ovadia, 2013). Burnout was reported to be prevalent across various cultural groups (Pines, 2003). Burnout adversely correlated to relationship with superiors to employees (Pines, 2003). Employees who quit

their job had a higher burnout scores than those who stayed (Goodman and Boss, 2002). Burnout has an impact on the human and the systems and thereby influences the productivity and performance (Golembiewski and Munzenrider, 1988).

2.2 Sectors prone to maximum employee burnout and its related consequences

Employees in the service sector are generally most prone to pressure from gruelling workloads, decision making situations and constant learning demands (Kubicek et al, 2014). Stress and burnout have been well documented in the field of medical practice (Alacacioglu et al, 2009; Beckman, 2015; Braunstein-Bercovitz, 2013; Cedfeldt et al, 2010; Creed et al, 2014; Dunn et al, 2008; Dyrbye et al, 2014; Gulalp et al, 2008; Hammader and Noehammer, 2013; Lefebvre, 2012; Mortada and El Seifi, 2012; Munyewende, 2014; Tjldink, 2014). Demographics, duty hours and lifestyle factors were found to have negligent effect on burnout while, significant role was seen to be played by issues like lack of career feedback, career uncertainties and personality factors among resident doctors (Ripp et al, 2011). Burnout was found to be prevalent among human services professionals like staffs working in residential rehabilitation and medical health centers (Leiter and Meehan, 1986). Teaching profession also has a long standing record of burnout instances (Bumen, 2010; Dicke et al, 2014; Dombrovskis et al, 2011; Ferguson-Patrick, 2010; Joneas and Youngs, 2012; Philipp and Kunter, 2013; Rad and Nazir, 2010; Richardson et al 2013; Schaefer et al, 2012; Schutz. Paul A and Zembylas, 2009; Skaalvik and Skaalvik 2011). Long working hours, erratic schedules, remuneration not equitable to work done, close supervision, lack of clarity on career growth is seen to lead to stress and burnout among chefs (Mkono, 2011). Long working hours and night shifts leading to burnout and job dissatisfaction was found to be prevalent among flight attendants (Kim and Back, 2012). Call centre employees were found to exhibit severe burnout due to the typical nature of their work (Harry, 2015; Harry et al 2013). Significant burnout and fatigue was reported to be experienced by employees who have been displaced from their jobs (Lim et al, 2015). Suicide ideation was reported among medical students due to burnout and barriers to seeking medical help was due to possible impact on career (Downs et al 2014). Among physicians suicide ideation is more prevalent among women than men, as a consequence of job stressors (Frindner et al, 2008). Burnout was to seen to lead to risk of decreased professional functioning among professional psychologist (Barnett et al 2007). Low satisfaction with job was found to directly result in turnover intentions among part-time sales employees in retailing sector (Noh et al, 2015).

Burnout decreased the hotels staff's willingness to provide high quality service to customers and the level of reduction in willingness was moderated by internal commitment, supervisor support and organizational support (Humborstad et al 2008).

2.3. Burnout during Early career

Burnout at the starting stage of career has been sufficiently researched across sectors (Beltman et al 2011; Cranley et al, 2016; Dicke et al, 2014; Dombrovskis et al, 2011; Dunford et al, 2012; Dyrbye et al, 2014; Ferguson-Patrick, 2010; Kelly and Northrop, 2015; Schaefer et al, 2012; Schutz and Zembylas, 2009). Burnout is noticed to be relatively stable for employees who have worked with the company for some years, while it was dynamic and more exhausting for the new recruits and internal job changers (Dunford, 2012). It has been recorded that younger and single professionals experienced more burnout than the older and married ones (Alacacioglu et al, 2009). Factors related to early career stage like younger age, fewer years since appointment and younger family were seen to greatly affect burnout (Tijdink, 2014). The long hours of work in case of physicians during their early career leads to difficulty in physically and emotionally detaching from work leading to exhaustion. (Cranley et al 2016). Teacher attrition is close to 50% within the first five years of employment (Schutz and Zembylas, 2009). Teacher resilience especially during the early stressful years of career is attributed to individual characteristics like self-efficacy and the support received from the organisation (Beltman Susan et al, 2011). The early career negative experiences have a profound impact on career success in later life (Yoo, 2011). In a study of teachers with less than 5 years of experience it was found that emotional exhaustion was highly correlated to need for career growth and economic requirement (Dombrovskis et al, 2011). Burnout seems to peak during early career and training phase among physicians compared to other career groups (Dyrbye et al, 2014). The tendency for teachers to quit their job early in their career is attributed to emotional labour which involves exhibiting socially desirable emotions during interpersonal interactions.

2.4. Knowledge, Knowledge Work and Knowledge Worker: Concepts

Today's emerging age of knowledge economy has created a new class of employees, knowledge workers, whose intellectual capital is the accumulated experience, commitment, and potential for developing and maintaining the learning organization (Awad 2004). Though, the term sounds contemporary in academics and practice, the terminology

knowledge worker goes way back in 1960s when Machlup (1962), the economist's contribution on production and distribution of knowledge development in United States gave way to series of contribution to knowledge, knowledge work, knowledge worker, knowledge organization, knowledge economy and knowledge society.

In the new economy, knowledge is not just another resource alongside the traditional factors of production – labour, capital and land – but the only meaningful resource today. The fact that Knowledge has become the resource, rather than a resource, is what makes the new society unique (Drucker 1993). Knowledge is a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. It originates and is applied in the minds of knowers. In organizations, it often becomes embedded not only in documents or repositories but also in organizational routines, processes, practices and norms (Davenport and Prusak 2000). Knowledge work is gaining more momentum in the present business arena mainly because of the impact of globalization, increased competition and higher industry standards. Knowledge work is increasingly regarded as an important contributing factor to business survival and success (Drucker, 1999).

The most important, and indeed the truly unique, contribution of management in the 20th century was the fifty-fold increase in the productivity of the manual worker in manufacturing and that of the 21st century is to increase the productivity of knowledge work and knowledge workers (Drucker, 1999). The success of Japanese companies is not due to their manufacturing prowess; access to cheap capital; close and cooperative relationships with customers, suppliers and government agencies; or lifetime employment, seniority system, and other human resources management practices-although all of these factors, of course, are important. Instead we make the claim that Japanese companies have been successful because of their skills and expertise at organizational knowledge creation (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995).

2.5. Burnout among knowledge workers

The duration of service, reward imbalance, unfair appraisal, lack of career autonomy among other factors lead to stressful conditions resulting in burnout among R and D employees in Hitech industries (Jianwu and Xiangqian, 2013). Direct link has been seen between job demands and burnout in the IT sector (T Gan and Y Gan, 2013). Job stressors like overwork, role insufficiency as a result of felt inadequacy and lack of clarity on role boundary lead to

burnout among IT professionals (Jung, 2013). Burnout and turn-away intentions are a consequence of employee perception of job demands and control over their career among Information systems employees (Armstrong et al 2015). The level of burnout among Information systems employees varied based on their job type, but overall the burnout score was fairly high among the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishments which were investigated (Huarng, 2001).

Several employees in the IT sector are seen to consider leaving their company or sometimes even the IT sector altogether. While excessive work, learning requirements and work-family conflict is shown to lead to intention of job change, burnout, perceived superior interaction, lack of role clarity, lack of job satisfaction among other factors lead to intention of leaving IT industry (Shropshire. J and Kadlec, 2012).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The review of literature reveals analysis and discussion of employees' concerns through positivistic paradigm and has not paid significant attention to study the *lived experiences* of employees. In contrary, the present study focuses on the assumption that reality is subjective, multiple and socially constructed by its participants (Bryman, 1984; Guba and Lincoln, 1994) and thus directed the researcher to use a qualitative research design to understand the lived experiences of research participants. The research theme purports to study the lived experiences of employees in IT Services industry who are at the entry level, who have witnessed challenges and difficulties in their employment and career. Thus, the paper addresses the research concern through grounded theory approach. Grounded theory is a qualitative research method in which the theory emerges from the rich data collected from multiple stakeholders. It is an inductive, theory discovery methodology that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop a theoretical account covering the features of a topic while simultaneously grounding the account in empirical observations of data (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

3.2. Participants for the Study

The primary participants for the study are the knowledge workers (Number – 17: Female -8, Male - 9) employed in IT Services industry in India. The study has operationally defined knowledge worker for the study as an 'an employee who leverages information, distributes

value-added deliverables by capitalizing knowledge and remains as an asset to the organization.’ The participants chosen for the study are employees with professional qualification in engineering discipline and who are in their initial phase (maximum of five years after graduation) of their career. The unit of analysis for the study is the individual participant and not the organization. To understand more about the experiences of employees, data were also collected from their managers (Number – 16: Female - 2, Male - 14) and HR managers (Number – 10: Female - 5, Male - 5).

Criterion sampling and Snow ball sampling (Patton 1990) and theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) were used to identify the research participants. The criterion sampling helped to identify and review the research participants’ critical incidents regarding the research theme. Snow ball sampling helped to identify the individuals with the relevant knowledge and experience about the research theme. Theoretical sampling was used to collect data for generating theory. This sampling design directed the researcher to collect and analyse the data simultaneously, and to decide what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop the theory as it emerged (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This supports the tenets of grounded theory which is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents through constant comparative analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

3.3. Data Collection Method

The data was collected primarily through unstructured in depth interviews that helped the researcher to describe and get the meanings of burnout as felt by the participants. The duration of the interviews were ranging from ninety minutes to three hours. The method was chosen because of its in-depth nature which fostered eliciting each participant’s interpretation of his or her experience focusing on burnout during early career.

The intensive interviews Charmaz (2006) conducted went beyond the surface to get an in-depth exploration of retention with the researched; therein it differed from the traditional interviews which are more of a directed conversation. Following are the broad questions/triggers used in the study:

- Please narrate your experiences in your organization?
- Recall important incidents that had happened in your job/career?
- Can you narrate the most significant moment during your first few years in your organization?
- Narrate your experiences about your expectations in building your career?
- Discuss the challenges that you have faced in your initial career?
- What are your expectations from your organization to deal with difficulties and challenges that the employees face during their initial career?

Following are the probes used in the study:

- Please share your experiences as an employee during your probation?
- Can you recall incidents where you felt insecure about your job confirmation?
- Can you narrate incidents of ‘Lay off’ or termination of employees at the entry level in your organization?
- Please narrate incidents where you felt managers have supported you during difficult times
- Please narrate incidents where you felt the management has supported you during difficult times
- Can you recall incidents how the entire event of layoff or any other similar initiatives was handled in your organization?

The questions which were used in the interviews were more open ended, broad, general and non - leading. For instance, triggers and probes like ‘please narrate any critical incidents’, ‘can you please elaborate.....’, ‘how?’ ‘when?’ ‘at what circumstances?’, ‘what did you feel?’, ‘who were the other people involved’, ‘what made you to do so?’ ‘how did you deal with that?’, ‘What do you think the reasons for his actions?’ and other similar questions were used to get deeper insights into the phenomenon under study. This necessitated the researcher to adopt constructivist paradigm. Constructivism is a social scientific perspective that addresses how realities are made. This perspective assumes that people, including researchers, construct the realities in which they participate. The inquiry starts with the experience and asks how members construct it. To the best of their ability, constructivists enter the phenomenon, gain multiple views of it, and locate in its web of connections and

constraints. Constructivists acknowledge that their interpretation of the studied phenomenon is itself a construction (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007).

The interviews were the major source of the data set. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim for further analysis. Interviews were analysed based on the words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs and other segments. The analysis made the researcher to listen closely to what the interviewees were saying, how they were saying it, and how they were interpreting certain events.

3.4. Analysis of data

The data was analysed through principles of grounded theory: open, axial and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) and facilitated by the software Atlas ti version 5.0. In the open coding phase, the text (interview transcripts, field notes and documents) were analysed for important information pertaining to the study. This phase facilitated the study to uncover, name and develop concepts by analysing the text and exposing the thoughts, ideas and meanings which are embedded in the data. This first analytic step led to the rest of the analysis. During this phase, data (the interview transcripts) were broken down into discrete parts, closely examined and compared for similarities and differences. The researcher's written *memos* after each interview which include record of analysis, thoughts, interpretations, questions and directions helped in further data collection and analysis. Theoretical memoing is the core stage of grounded theory methodology. Memos included the theorizing write-up of ideas about substantive codes and their theoretically coded relationships as they emerge during coding, collecting and analyzing data, and during memoing (Glaser, 1998). It is also important to note that some participants explained the concepts in *vivo codes* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987) that had further stimulated the analyses. These are the words or phrases or jargons used by the research participants which are attractive and appealing. In axial coding phase, events, happenings, observations, incidents, actions and interactions that were found to be conceptually similar in nature or related in meaning were grouped under more abstract concepts termed 'categories'. Selective coding was used to identify the interlinkages and relationships among the categories identified during the axial coding phase. The inter-rater reliability was checked by asking a fellow researcher to do the coding for a segment of the data. The data collection and analysis came to an end when the data collection fulfilled the criterion of theoretical saturation.

Theoretical saturation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) was achieved when additional analysis no longer contributed in discovering anything new about a category. Details of concepts and categories emerged from analysing the narratives through open and axial coding are presented in Table I.

3.5. Ethical Concerns

The researchers' values during the course of the research were non-normative, non-hierarchical, interpretive and self-reflective and the researcher strived to be equi-distant from all the stakeholders involved in the study. The nature of the research concern demanded the researchers to get the data which are not public version of the reality. Following are some of the statements mentioned by the participants during the course of the interviews which demanded high level of confidentiality and trust from the researcher:

People may say anything, but this is the reality...

Not sure whether my other colleagues whom you have interacted are as honest as I am.....

Hope you don't share with my manager.....

I have not even shared with my colleagues.....

Thus, the researchers maintained the following four guidelines (Christians 2000) across different phases of proposed research. *Informed consent*: Research subjects were fully informed about the objectives, nature and results of the study in which they were involved. Voluntary participation and their agreement to be the subject for the study were obtained. *Non-deception*: Deliberate misrepresentation of the data was not done and the data collected for research will not be used for any other commercial purposes or against the interest of the company. *Privacy and confidentiality*: Identity of the research locations and researched (department, division, hierarchical level) was not disclosed to others. Anonymity was maintained and pseudonyms were assigned to all the research participants. Confidentiality was ensured as the primary safeguard against unwanted exposure. Professional etiquette was uniformly retained to see to that no one was harmed or embarrassed. *Accuracy of data*: Fabrications, fraudulent materials, omissions, and contrivances are both non-scientific and unethical and were not followed in any phases of the research.

4. Findings: Lived experiences of young Engineering Graduates in IT Services Industry

The Indian economy has been driven by an expansion in the service sector. Key to the expansion of the Indian economy has been the mobilisation of young engineering talent. Yet, the lack of professional human resource scapes has often meant that the young engineering talent is burnt out too soon. This is not only inefficient for organisations but also leads to sub-optimal outcomes for the economy. We explore the experiences of young engineering talent that lead to burnout and contemplate on organisational initiatives that can address these issues.

Ankita recalls her joy when she received her first job offer,

I was very excited by the opportunity provided by a leading Indian IT firm, as not only it was employment right after graduation but it also meant staying alone in a new city for the first time in my life.

At that point in time the world was a great place and nothing could compare to the joy I felt. Many of my friends (for they were not yet differentiated as colleagues) felt the same way.

This was my first taste of corporate world..... first in my extended family to be working in corporate sector).

Thus, for a young Indian engineer, the first job is a world of possibility. It is an adventure of economic independence and discovery of the self. If Indian corporations can tap this joyous spirit and keep alive the sense of discovery and agency, they can produce organisations that can create unparalleled value. The Indian engineer embarking on her first job does not need any additional motivation or incentives. Yet, what can often happen is a deflation of the motivation with which she enters the workplace.

4.1. Training hard, but hard landings

The Indian engineer entering the industry demonstrates willingness to be trained and learn. There is a hunger to contribute. There is a yearning to be a world class engineer who can make a difference to the world of information systems. The desire is also to work for a creative organisation that creates avenues for contributing value. The need is felt for collegial ecologies through which learning, creativity and value can be constantly multiplied.

Arjun spoke about his experiences,

I have completed my engineering degree in Electronics and Communication. I got job in this organization through our campus placement. This organization has recruited 91 students out of 220 from my organization. They have taken students from Computer Engineering and also from other specialization like Civil, Instrumentation, Electronics and Communication. We were told by our placement officer that we'll be given training.

There is a promise of training and transformation that Indian corporations offer to the young engineer. Indian engineering education often does not offer avenues for practical execution of engineering knowledge. The young Indian engineer hopes that the corporation will finally offer an opportunity to learn to work and contribute. There is a hope of finally becoming an engineer and a knowledge worker after joining the corporation. There is an aspiration to be a transformed from a dormant consumer of textbooks to an active creator of knowledge and value. Ankita described her thoughts,

First day in this firm was an eye opening in multiple ways. The first impression I had was that we were like ants in that huge field. I could see thousands of people filing into the offices of the Electronic City campus of my organization in Bangalore, India.

I was also aware of the newfound freedom and responsibility that living independently brings with it.

There is a sense of being small when the young Indian engineer walks into the corporation. The hope is of being transformed and making a mark. Yet, the first day in office is also something of a reality jolt. Reality begins to dawn on the young Indian engineer that perhaps she is merely a factory worker. Perhaps, she is only one irrelevant chip in the assembly line of the knowledge economy.

Aseem described his experiences,

Three months of training were like an extended college which further fuelled our corporate dreams. After training we were assigned to the clients and had our first actual taste of the IT industry at work. The work was intensive but the support of people around helped me find a foothold.

The time we spent during our orientation programme was awesome. We were taken care as if we are the ones who are really needed by the company and going to be tomorrow's leaders.

What motivating speech by the CEO! We were in cloud 9.

The training experience itself conceals the competitiveness of the corporate world. It conceals the politics and rationalities that can create anxieties for workers. The engineer feels valued by the organisation. She feels like she is attending a carnival where the organisation will create a variety of stimulating experiences for her. Rituals like the CEO's speech appear to create a civic space of inspiration where the employee can feel as a citizen of an organisational republic that is going to take off to new heights of value.

But, employees' perceptions get changed immediately after the training program. Jacyntha voiced her feelings,

Immediately after our training programme, the life was different. We were given projects neither studied in our engineering curriculum, nor discussed during our orientation programme. It is completely different. When asked, it was replied saying these are the demands from our clients.

We approached our manager for clarity on our roles, and again to our shock, he was neither technology specialist, nor domain specialist. But, he is a sweet talker. We managed it ourselves.

We were not given appropriate and adequate roles.

Towards the end of seventh month, he called us and explained us why we may not be continuing a career in this organization.

Jacyntha describes the horror of landing hard after training hard while joining the industry. The landing is terrifying as the training period begins to appear as a distant fairy tale which has taught you nothing. The Indian engineer is badly in need of a technological mentor and a managerial figure who will buffer her from organisational uncertainties. She is in need of a craft culture where she will slowly begin to evolve as a technological genius. Instead, she gets a career manager as a boss who is out to preserve his own interests, relatively unskilled in technology, and completely unconcerned about the fate of young people who have joined the organisation.

4.2. High on knowledge, but low on job roles

Joining the organisation after the training is over leads to a new phase of life for the young Indian engineer. Suddenly, she feels unwanted, abandoned, orphaned. There is a sense of being a refugee in the organisational republic. She feels that all the rhetoric during the training program was an act of cheating, a play. In organisational republic, she is treated as an inferior asylum seeker, who is inadequate and who does not know how to create value for the organisation.

Arul spoke about his journey,

I remember my first day in our office, soon after my initial training programme. I was asked to report to Kolkata office. I was not provided with any other details. My other colleagues and I, were clueless and approached the receptionist. We gathered courage and spoke to her in 'English' (we were strictly instructed during our training programme that English is our only official language and we should speak only in English) and enquired about our joining formalities. She replied in Bengali that we should contact 'RMG'. One of my colleagues, who is fairly knowledgeable than all of us, decoded and said 'Resource Management Group'.

We contacted RMG. We were told that every day we should report at 9 a.m. and enquire about our projects. We come in full formals (as per the instructions – dress code). We come in the morning, report to the RMG, spend time in the canteen and return home after spending nine hours (minimum required number of working hours in a day). The worst period was between 1p.m. and 2p.m. during which we are asked to leave the canteen space as other 'employees (who have work - projects) need to use the space for having lunch.

We did this enquiry duty for fifteen days, then we realised. We started taking turns and we explored the beauty of the city during office hours.

Thus, the transformation of the young Indian engineer into an asylum seeker is complete. She is unwanted in the organisation. She must make room for other employees, the real people doing real work during lunch hour. The reality begins to dawn, that the young Indian engineer needs to perform, needs to attract attention in order to join the organisation in reality. Currently, she only has a toehold inside the organisation and occupies an extremely

vulnerable position which makes her liable to be terminated at any moment. Chandrima echoed these sentiments,

I have completed my engineering degree from one of the top institutes on the country. I am a rank holder. Its been two years that I have joined this organization. I do the same task, same coding, same technology..... and even work for the same client. Its very boring. My qualification has no relevance here.

Even when you survive and are able to join the organisation, the young Indian engineer quickly finds her energy dissipating. She is no longer joyous about the work she is doing. She is a factory worker doing repetitive, monotonous, boring work. There is no space for discovering her creative self. She is no longer sure about her agency as an engineer and a professional.

4.3. High on job demands, but low on life

The reality is not one of monotonous work alone. The pile and intensity of monotonous work keeps on expanding. There is an escalation of job demands and the Indian engineer is soon expected to hang around for long periods of time after her defined job hours inside the organisation. If she leaves as soon as her job hours are over, she is made to feel guilty. Soon, there is a sense of anxiety, there is a necessity to be seen to signalling to managers an overzealous sense of loyalty and commitment that begins to gnaw the psyche of the engineer. As one of the managers in the industry stated,

Our employees deliver four people's work and paid two people's salary. No wonder, our salary is more than the industry's average.

Yes, it is better to slog than remain unemployed...

With the experience of becoming a factory worker doing repetitive worker, the industrial worker's subjectivity also begins to grow. The consciousness of inequality and exploitation begins to make a mark. Once the engineer realizes that the organisation does not treat her as a creative citizen contributing value, she begins to wonder what her place in the organisation is. She begins to wonder whether the organisation treats her as a low cost resources from which

surplus value can be extracted. She begins to wonder if the organisation treats her as a machine who will produce a predictable, low amount of value for eternity.

Alka points out,

Most of the days that we were required to work for than 14 – 16 hours in a day. Late nights in office were a given and many times we had to sleep in office. I once slept on my worktable too. Being at the bottom of the food chain, we were constantly pushed around and generally felt not cared for. There were just too many who could replace me. Conference calls at midnight were the norm to please the onsite managers. Foreigners were much better than ex pats in this and were mindful of our timings.

Health was also a concern as almost half of us were hospitalised within 2 years for some reason or the other. For me being sick without family is a double burden. The 4 year bond kept many of us back but eventually some just had to leave due to various reasons that I believe could have been avoided only if the HR was a bit more protective of us and prevented the managers from exploiting us too much. They interacted with us every week during classes and were aware of our issues informally but they failed to intervene.

The experience on the whole was rewarding as it taught a lot but the abuse of work-life balance is not something that everybody can endure and maybe they should not have to endure it.

However, most HR policies were for us on paper. Flexi hours were not exactly allowed and frowned upon by many. This was especially painful on the bench. There was also fear of layoff, as some of my colleagues have not got their confirmation. Some of the trainees got suspended on thin grounds and we were unable to grasp this change. The R&R was mostly a matter of relations with the manager and not work output. Everything boiled down to connections rather than talent at the end of the day.

Thus, the Indian engineer experiences sweatshop like conditions and discovers that survival occurs on account of protection that is rendered as a personal favour. Thus, the rationality of organisations soon yields to the problematic of personal relationships. Under any circumstance, lack of concern about the lives of engineers and nastiness is normalised. The Indian engineer soon begins to feel like a prey who is being hunted. She feels that she is inhabiting a ghetto where everyday survival is difficult, and patronage networks rather than talent is the way ahead for surviving.

Amandeep's experience is important for understanding the difficulties that employees face at the entry level during their onsite assignments,

I got an onsite opportunity recently within one year of completion. Five other colleagues of mine have also got it. Later on, we came to know we are the replacement of our seniors with six to eight years of experience. This is mainly to cut down on the projects' costs. We were very nervous. There was no mentor to guide us. We had to struggle and find our ways. The assignment was for nine months. When we came back, almost two third of us have got a rating of 'D'. And one more 'D', we are out.

Career in this industry is worth only when you got onsite or deputation work. This was because the extra benefits augmented the meagre salary (not equitable with the quantum of work) and made life bearable.

The young engineer is soon drawn into organisational games of substituting for others who are senior and therefore more expensive for the organisation. Yet every opportunity obtained on account of substitution also yields a new peril. Ratings are hard to come by and survival is extremely difficult. Organisations are playing the game of substitution and renewal to such an extent that the elimination of the slightly old engineer becomes a normal event. Thus, the young Indian engineer ages very fast within organisations, and the anxieties of being on the threshold of being shown the door become a gnawing reality.

Bhavin, a System Engineer working with an American Multinational technology and consulting firm stated,

Onsite posting was also a carrot for many used liberally to extract max work out of trainee donkeys.

But things changed when I was assigned to a different manager. I got reassigned on his request as he found my work to be good but soon after he kept pushing for more and more.

I kept on increasing the output without complaint and without appreciation until one day, it went beyond my capacity to endure. I was tasked with completing a piece of code in 4 days in finished it in 2. I went to my manager and submitted the work immediately. He checked the code and asked me to take on half the work of another trainee who was lagging behind. When I completed the new task after three days and submitted it my manager told me that I should work hard and try and be on time. I was shocked and expressed it. But he just said that your deadline was 4 days and you missed it. I never submitted my work before target after that.

The Indian engineer soon begins to learn the games that supervisors on the shop floor play. There is a sense of injustice in the experience of stretching oneself very hard and not receiving a word of appreciation in return. The engineer soon begins to be educated about the instrumental habitus in which she is residing. The carnival at the time of joining then soon begins to appear as a narcotic ecology that sustains energy in the young engineer joining the organisations. But narcotic illusions soon take their toll on young people, and they are soon on their way to burnout and exiting the organisation.

Abhijeet, who has just completed his Initial Learning program (ILP) in Trivandrum and now placed in Chennai says,

When I got my first appraisal, I was shocked. I got 'D' (equivalent to 2 on a scale of 5). I strongly feel that my performance was too good to get a rating 'D'. But, I was not in good terms with my manager. May be the reason that I have got 'D'. Even my colleagues share the same views.

I also understand from my other friends here, that the rating what I have got now, will be the base for subsequent rating. And this is not going to be forgotten.

Now, my promotion will be delayed by a year or two. And now, I hear about this layoff in my organization everywhere. I am worried that whether they'll sack me.

Realities of organisational politics also dawn on the engineer. There is a game of pleasure, massaging and ego that is being played in the organisation. When the engineer is a resource to be preyed upon, there is a voyeuristic pleasure in seeing different engineers battling each other out in the game for survival. There is a close space of suffocation and pleasing in which the engineer is surviving. Spaces of creative communities holding professional dialogues about information systems begin to appear as a utopia.

Dreams are shattered for Julie, failing to manage her work life balance.

Living alone also lost its shine soon enough and we were left longing for home. Leave was a scarce commodity and I had to fight for my right to go home after ten months separation.

Life soon appears to be a distant horizon. The organisational republic has soon degenerated into an industrial prison where freedom and space to breathe is difficult. The young engineer had joined the organisation with the imagination of the workplace as an energising civic arena for dialogue, growth and performance. Instead, she soon finds the workplace as an imprisoning jail of depression, anxiety, politics and insecurity. She feels that her sense of youth and imagination as an engineer is being wasted and the imagination of being trapped begins to grow.

4.4. Career as Survival, Peer as Rival, Future as Nightmare

The Indian engineer is made to inhabit a habitus of career that is structured around the idea of survival. While she may have survived for long periods of time, she can still never be sure about where her career is headed. She is constantly made to question the role of her peers and suspect whether they can play the game of organisational politics better than her. Seen in this way, the future always appears as a nightmare as it is consummate politicians and ruthless peers who are likely to make it to the top of organisations. Thus, there is a sense of tragedy that informs the career oriented struggles of survival in which Indian engineers are caught. Muruganandan stated,

Last time, we had to reduce the manpower for the project up to 40%. So we got all freshers on to the job. Replaced experienced employees with freshers. Because the cost spent on a project using freshers is much lesser than utilizing the expertise of senior colleagues.

Thus, cost is a driver of managing projects within organisations. Thus, there is a need to replace experienced labour with those who are fresh out of college. With cost being a primary concern, the engineer is reduced to a commodity generating a definite quantum of surplus. The imagination is not of investing more and obtaining higher returns from human resources. The imagination is instead of reducing costs and thereby increasing the surplus.

A young engineer, Vikram responded to this logic of cost,

Its good that we are getting good offers. But, we need to really slog for nearly 16 – 18 hours in a day.

During manpower shrinkage, our entire team has to work for long hours. Yesterday, the day started at 8.45 a.m. and went on till 1a.m. And again, I have to be there at my desk in the morning 8.45a.m. I can't even complain to my boss who is on constant look out for reasons to send people out.

Thus, the engineer lives under the constant fear of being thrown out of the organisation. For the engineer, there is a constant reminder that there are others waiting to replace her. Therefore, she is urged to expend her labour as much as she can for the organisation. The consequence is the reduction of the engineer into a machine who has no voice with respect to managerial decision making. The psyche is one of perpetual fear and the anxiety is one of somehow surviving and not having to leave the organisation.

Anand who had replaced his manager said,

I am working with one of the top notch IT companies. My job is still intact, when hundreds of my colleagues have been asked to leave. The last what I heard from my team was that my manager was also one amongst them who was asked to leave. Immediately, after the news, he fell sick and was hospitalised. I understand, he has a family to take care and a few loans too.

To my shock, I was asked to head my team. Do you think I can be happy with the offer I have got? Never.

Its very difficult to let go our dear colleagues... especially someone who was more of a friend, philosopher and guide to me.

I am not sure how well I am going to lead my team. Sure, not as great as my manager. Sooner or later, I may again be replaced. Its really a tough situation.

Career as survival means that the engineer is also being trained to replace her manager and take her place. There is no other means of progressing in your career apart from replacing those who are hierarchically above you. This method of progressing in one's career almost reduces the organisation into a battlefield where the engineer looks upon every peer as a rival. This sense of rivalry soon makes the layers of dialogue thinner as people take a guarded and masked approach for conversing with each other. Thick layers of dialogue require a sense of camaraderie where people recognize that rewards in the organisation are based on excellence rather than on engineered eliminations.

4.5. Unsure, betrayed and broken: Post-rational Scars of Rational Layoffs

When careers are structured in the form of rivalries with peers, sooner or later there is a sense of being betrayed that gnaws on engineers. Organisations are driven by a rational calculation of their profits when they lay off engineers. To them what matters is the current sense of profit. To organisations, an imagination of a future sense of profit based on security, excellence and innovation appears elusive. Consequently, a larger social structuring of human capital investments made by Indian engineers also leads them to perceive lay-offs as an act of breaking them. Echoing these concerns, Rajeev who works as a Project Manager said,

We heard that our organization is going to sack almost 25000 – 30000 employees in the next few months. To our surprise, we have got to know that even our HR doesn't have any clue about what's happening. It is done at the BSI level. We are not sure, at which level, the lay off will be more. But, it is a practice generally, that it impacts the people who have joined recently, may be the fresh recruits!

This is a 'massacre.'

There were no prior notice was given. There were also rumours that the organization has informed neither the Labour Department nor the Government regarding its lay off plans.

There is a great sense that the game of layoffs is being played at the seniormost levels of the organisation. The top managers have a sense of the revenues that are going to come in during a quarter. When there is likely to be a shortfall in achieving profitability targets using these revenues, then layoffs are a useful tool for managing costs. Under any circumstance, layoffs provide incremental profitability as they help in replacing slightly expensive resources with younger, less expensive resources. The sense of being massacred during a layoff indicates how layoffs constitute a purge, an act of organisational cleansing with no concerns for the lives of engineers. Vivek, who works as Manager – People Function, in a Global IT, research and development, consulting firm spoke about the waves of criticism that had been levelled against his organisation,

It's just a cycle. You are caught if you are on the wrong side.

We belong to an organization which is highly competitive. We are driven only by performance. To optimize the resources based on the business demands, corporate and employee performance, we need to ask some of the employees to leave. This is a continuous process and is followed almost every year.

Thus, almost a karmic cycle of creation and destruction is invoked to justify the regularity of layoffs in the Indian IT industry. Yet the temporality of these layoffs shrinks the experience of time for employees. Every day becomes a time of anxious survival for employees. They begin to think too much about every emotional sign or gesture that their managers provide as cues. They are constantly wondering whether they have done something to rub their managers the wrong way. Dipesh who had a lot of expertise in coding and developing IT solutions was shocked when he heard about the problems regarding his confirmation,

One day, my manager called me and said that there is no revert from the U.S. regarding approval for increasing the head count and hence he will not be in a position to confirm my employment.

Approval now? They have already recruited me. I am on my probation now. Why they have to recruit me in the first place, when they do not have approval for positions and headcount.

The experience of uncertainty leads to a notion of being betrayed. When organisations cite rational reasons for not confirming employees, there is a questioning of the rationality of organisations. Engineers begin to wonder when organisations discovered that there was not enough economic space for them to be confirmed. If organisations already knew it at the very beginning, then perhaps there was no point about misleading engineers about their career possibilities at the time of joining. Under any circumstance, engineers begin to believe that the organisation is treating them with a great degree of carelessness.

Rehamn, a junior analyst with an Indian IT Services, Business Solutions and Outsourcing company said,

I was asked to move out of my department and to find a new department where I can be placed. If I can't find, I have to leave.

Thus, the engineer has to invent work for herself. This again creates the sentiment of a refugee for the engineer. She is not wanted in the organisation and has to forge the connections required to survive. It presents the organisation as a space which is not concerned about how people fit in to the organisation. It is for people to demonstrate the narrative capacities to speak to people and provide evidence of their being of any value to the organisation.

Ajay, who was asked to leave quoting personal reasons said,

Today one has ten projects, tomorrow there are only five projects does not mean that one has to reduce your work strength. There are other ways to reduce costs. And there are a lot of companies in India who are doing it. You know cutting a variable pay or some other ways in which you can reduce costs rather than firing people because there is no end to it. And till what level can you keep on cutting your bench. And then by any chance if the situation changes then you have to recruit everyone again.

It was very disheartening to know that one fine day morning, you find that your card is not working or your mail is not functional. The company has lot of reasons to quote why I should be removed. It hits hard on the individual.

Yes, there is a termination package, which is approximately 2-3 months of a person's salary. Is it good enough to get a decent job?

The sense of carelessness means that there is an atmosphere of rudeness with which engineers are asked to leave. There are no early warning signs, there is no rational escalation of organisational messages before asking somebody to leave. When the email or the access card of an engineer suddenly stops functioning, it indicates that asking an engineer to leave is not part of conversations. It is merely a command asking the engineer to not worry about being a part of the organisation any longer. Since no justifications are given, this indicates that the individual is like a sacrificial lamb being offered at the altar of organisational profits. Afroz, an employee, who had been asked to leave recently, said,

Our team is not that strong to raise the issue or fight against what's happening to us. Look at Nokia, Chennai Plant. They are all fighting against the management. God knows, what will happen. But atleast, people are together.

When layoffs become too frequent, engineers begin to feel the need to collectivise. The consciousness of the trade union becomes a possibility of expressing solidarity towards each other. Frequent layoffs make employees suspicious of each other, and there is an experience of fragmentation. Fragmentation leads to a collapse of ordinary conversational spaces in the organisation. A hope is expressed that the space of the trade union will help in overcoming this sense of fragmentation and lead to a greater amount of solidarity among engineers.

Malati, while sharing her experiences of being out of a job, discussed the difficulty of getting a new job after being laid off,

Its been two years since that I have left my job. I have not left my job. My manager asked me to resign. He was kind enough to say that it would be nice if I leave the organization mentioning personal reasons than they sending me out quoting poor performance. May be I'll be employable if I leave voluntarily. How does it matter? I have given nearly twenty five interviews, but no job. Till today, I am looking out for an appropriate answer to the question that all my interviewers asked 'Why did you leave the previous job?' And another difficult question to answer – Why do you want to move from Electrical Engineering to IT? I am surprised, why this question was not posed in my first job interview? I remember, the interview was for 3 minutes. And mine was longer than some of my other friends.

The frustration of being unable to find out an alternative job soon leads to the engineer questioning her worth in society. While society requires a lot of creative solutions in a variety of arenas such as climate change, education, health and public administration, it comes as a surprise to the engineer that she still is unable to find a job. The inability for placing engineers within organisational contexts also indicates the lack of adequate economic responses to the problems confronting our society. Rather than creating organisational spaces where engineers can collaborate to find technological solutions to problems facing us, we have create organisations where the engineer is treated as a cost for the organisation. Organisations have also been unable to create embedded tacit knowledge, which makes the engineer an easily replaceable resource. Krishna also describes her inability to find a new job,

I have been giving interviews one after the other. Since the time, I have left my job, I have put on approximately 20 more kgs. And its very funny. My parents are on look out for a groom now for marriage! I do not know, what should I do? I never wanted to be a house wife.

During my probation, I do not have enough time to have my lunch even during stipulated lunch breaks. To cut down my lunch break and to show more accuracy and finish the target, I skip my lunch. And morning... no breakfast. I used to live on Coke and Samosas.

There is a personal toll on the lives of engineers who are rejected by organisations. They are unable to recover from the disaster of having lost a job. The imagination of losing a job for an engineer is not different from a street vendor being raided by the police and having to give up the material means of her livelihood. Under any circumstance, the losing of a job appears as a shock. Recovery from the shock requires resilient social networks, which engineers lack on account of the deep fragmentation that informs their organisational existence.

5. Discussion

It is evident that chances of burnout during early career is higher (Dyrbye et al, 2014) and it needs attention through proper measures and at the right stage. The difficulties that the young knowledge worker experiences in one's early career have a profound impact on career success in later life (Yoo, 2011). Burnout is more prevalent among younger and single professionals (Alacacioglu et al, 2009). Burnout is noticed to be dynamic and more exhausting for the new recruits (Dunford, 2012) and attrition is higher in the first five years of employment (Schutz and Zembylas, 2009). The analysis of the interview narratives reveal that the employees during their initial career burn out because of the following reasons: poor integration with the job and the organization at large, underemployment, stressful job and exhausting work environment, fear and insecurity of replacement of talent and downsizing. It is important to deal with all these factors to prevent burn out among the young knowledge workers for individual and organizational wellbeing.

Knowledge-intensive organizations adopt recruitment strategies to attract talent. It competes with its other players in recruiting the best from the educational institutions and the employment market. Young employees, the fresh recruits are welcomed and treated as the 'indispensable and a scarce resource' through their induction program, usually an extended training program. But, they fail to initiate and sustain strategies to integrate the newly joined employees with their jobs and organizations at large. This develops anxiety, frustration and disappointment among the fresh recruits. Integrating the new employees with the roles and organizations is important. Strategies to integrate the new recruit will deal with burnout

which is characterised by a sense of helplessness (Krug 1999) and low engagement due to varied reasons (Schaufeli et al 2009).

Organizations' inefficiency in human resource planning and managing resources after placement cost the young employees heavily. When the young resources are not provided with projects or the right projects, results in disengagement, low morale and burn out. The demands of the industry expects the employees to be technologically sound, business savvy, team player and customer relations specialist. Careful analysis of these expectations reveal the need for technical, functional and behavioural competencies. It is humanly impossible to excel in all these different set of competencies. When organizations fail to provide customized and continuous learning programs to their employees, it gradually steps down from being a learning organization. Organizational capital become subservient to the individual human capital. But, even with this surplus human capital, the individual becomes vulnerable, as he is dependent on institutions for meaningful work. Lack of meaningful work leads in a situation of low self-efficacy, role insufficiency and underemployment. As stated by Jung (2013) job stressors like role insufficiency as a result of felt inadequacy and lack of clarity on role boundary lead to burnout among IT professionals.

Employees complain of two things: either more work or no work. The industry attributes these grievances of employees to uncertainty in the economic conditions and business demands. Employees report excessive work load and suffer from extended working hours to meet the strict deadlines and demands of their clients. As reported by Cranley et al (2016), long hours of work during one's early career leads to difficulty in physically and emotionally detaching from work leading to exhaustion, and extended working hours and night shifts leading to burnout and job dissatisfaction (Kim and Back, 2012).

The metaphorical explanation of burnout given by Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, (2009) refers to the smothering of a fire or the extinguishing of a candle. It implies that once a fire was burning but the fire cannot continue burning brightly unless there are sufficient resources that keep being replenished (Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009). When there is lack of resources and there is more pressure at work, it has an impact on one's family life. And unfriendly and rigid HR practices make employees even more vulnerable. This vulnerability results in psychosomatic illnesses and even cases of death among the young career-driven

knowledge workers.

The study reports that budgetary constraints and cost cutting measures result in increase in work load horizontally and vertically among junior resources. Young employees during their initial career phase are subject to this as they are more vulnerable in retaining their jobs or being employable outside the boundaries of their organizations. This results in willingly accepting the difficulties in the work situation and continue to strive for high performance. Employees' voices are silenced due to fear and discomfort with reporting boss who are conditioned by the organizational constraints to look out for even minor deviations in the larger compliant system to punish the young and vulnerable knowledge workers. Pines (2003) reported that burnout is adversely correlated to relationship with superiors.

While, we discuss the vulnerability of the young workforce, it is also important to discuss the insecurity among the managers. Insecurity among managers of being replaced by their junior colleagues who report to them. Insecurity among managers leads to unhealthy manager-subordinate relationships. Young employees are guilt-ridden in situations where they are required to replace their managers and experience discomfort of becoming managers when they are not prepared. This scenario of replacement of talent and lay off results in survival of employees and managers with guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration and fear during difficult times. Financial responsibilities and family obligations of these young workforce make them to become more vulnerable. According to Cotter and Fouad, (2012), burnout was seen to have positive correlation with excessive job demands among layoff survivors studied across several companies where downsizing was implemented. Suicide ideation was reported due to burnout (Downs et al 2014) and as a consequence of job stressors (Frindner et al, 2008). Ensuring that the professionals have sufficient time goes a long way to prevent burnout and ensuring well-being and productivity (Cedfeldt et al, 2010).

5.1. Implications

The grounded realities of burn out among young knowledge workers demand the attention of the younger workforce, practitioners, line managers, human resource managers, consultants and organizations today. Organizations and practitioners should strategise and implement proper induction and integration programs. According to Fernández-Aráoz, Groysberg and Nohria (2009) integrating the new comer by using veteran top performers as mentors and making sure the newcomer checks in regularly with boss, mentor, and HR, even when there

are no problems aid in integrating and supporting the young knowledge workers. If the industry aims in producing knowledge workers, it should focus on catering to the specific demands of the role, business and individual capabilities. Generic training program could never be the solution. Organizations should create and sustain employee friendly HR practices.

It is important to deal with stressors such as underemployment, stressful job and exhausting work environment, fear and insecurity of replacement of talent and downsizing to prevent burn out among the young knowledge workers for individual and organizational wellbeing. To deal with this, employees are required to be resilient. It may be essential for employees to initiate and formalize trade unions which were not felt important in services sector earlier as that of its presence in manufacturing sector. As stated by Day and Gu (2014), resilience to burnout need to be nourished by intellectual, social and organizational measures.

Support from superiors and co-workers result in work engagement. Superior's role is most important in creating positive work engagement in IT sector (Lehner and Jung 2013). Resource is to be allocated to effective supervision as it is shown to increase long term sustainable job performance (Chiller and Crisp, 2012). Cross-domain compensation was found to reduce burnout along all the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism and self-efficacy (Dishon-Berkovits, 2013). It is important that the organization need to care for employees' career and overall wellbeing. This calls for taking care of employee wellbeing and work engagement (Schaufeli et al 2002). To prevent burnout in early stage of career, it is mandatory to develop a work environment culture and education that helps in identification of early stages of stress and rejuvenation (Cranley et al 2016). Even in cases of involuntary separations, organizations should handle the employees with dignity and provide them with outplacement services wherever it is possible.

Creating the positive energy is going to be the major challenge for leaders and human resource management professionals over the next twenty years (Clawson and Newburg, 2005). And, organizations that are positive and appreciative (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005) will be able to deal with burn out better than the other organizations. Teaching mindfulness is found to be helpful in dealing with stress related burnout (Dobkin and Hutchinson, 2013; Di Benedetto and Swadling 2014) and spirituality was found useful in coping with the job related stressful experiences in an effective manner (Charles et al, 2014). Self-care is

essential to overcome the emotional demands (Bradley et al, 2013). Enabling psychological resource development among students in their first year of higher education would prevent future burnout (Kotze and Kleynhans, 2013).

5.2. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The qualitative findings of the study is applicable to organizations like IT Services industry and thus the research outcome cannot be generalized to the other sectors. It is recommended to pursue qualitative research in professions such as medicine, teaching, counselling and psychiatry, human services, customer support and sales. Critical grounded theory approach may be adopted to study burnout among women workforce and employees who belong to underprivileged sections of the society.

While grounded experiences of knowledge workers in their early career stage has been accessed, there is still potential to carry out an immersed ethnographic study in the future. Especially, if the ethnography is carried out over an extended period of time by deploying techniques of participant observation, it may be possible to access deeper details of organizational program, symbols and culture. This can then recraft the basis of socialization of knowledge workers in important ways by resorting to an action research framework. Such a framework can provide important insights about behavioural issues associated with micro-politics and the lack of adequate integration into the workplace. Another limitation of the study is that it does not take into account experiences of knowledge workers who may come from vulnerable background, especially those from low income rural families for whom the compulsions and experiences of work may be profoundly more difficult.

In the future, it may be interesting to understand burnout as part of a larger network of issues such as job insecurity in different phases of an employee's career. For instance, a knowledge worker might shift from one organization to another even during the middle of one's career. However, even during such shifts, a knowledge worker might find socialisation into a new job difficult. These difficulties of early socialization into a new job might again contribute to a sense of burnout and alienation. This may be particularly true for women employees who may be returning to their careers after a period of separation from work on account of reasons related to maternity. Studies may be pursued to understand the lived experiences of working women and especially dual career women.

The study can be further studied by using positivistic paradigm to measure and establish the nature of relationship between burnout and the factors identified in the present study such as poor induction and integration with the job, underemployment, stressful job and exhausting work environment, fear and insecurity of replacement of talent and downsizing.

5.3. Conclusion

The present study investigates the reasons and consequences of burnout among young knowledge workers during their early career using grounded theory research design. The study reveals lived experiences of young knowledge workers such as poor induction and subsequent integration with the job and the organization at large, experience of being underutilized, stressful job and exhausting work environment, fear and insecurity of replacement of talent and downsizing as the major reasons for being burnt out. These experiences impact the individual and organization at large. Strategies are discussed for young knowledge workers, line managers, HR professionals and organizations to deal with burnout situations among the young workforce for individual and organizational wellbeing.

Table – I: Codes and Categories emerged from analysis of interview narratives

Concepts emerged during Open Coding	Categories emerged during Axial Coding
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inspiring Initial Learning Program 2. Generic Training Program 3. Vocational training: Just skill-based and not knowledge-driven 4. Financial Independence 5. Experiencing Sense of Freedom 6. Challenges in placing employees subsequent to their training program 7. Non-alignment of Training Needs Identification and job demands 8. Lack of Role Clarity 9. Lack of mentoring and managerial support 	Initial Learning/Training Program: Results in Good induction but Poor integration
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Non-availability of appropriate projects to the new recruits 2. Offer of jobs requiring low expertise 3. Allocation of Roles which are neither relevant to their education nor to the initial training program offered 	Underemployment
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Poor allocation of tasks 2. Mundane work 3. Excessive Work Load 4. Underpaid 5. Choosing to suffer over work compared to being unemployed 6. Long working hours 7. Health issues – Psychosomatic illness 8. Unfriendly and rigid HR Practices 9. Onsite opportunities: superficial motivator and demands employees to work more 10. Experiencing difficulty in maintaining Work Life Balance 11. Evidences of psychological disorders and reported cases of suicides 	Stressful Job and Exhausting Work Environment
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Budgetary Constraints and Cost Cutting Measures 2. Increase in work load horizontally and vertically among junior resources 	

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Extended working hours to adhere to strict deadlines 4. Expected to expend more efforts to raise upto managerial calibre 5. Employees' voices are silenced due to fear and discomfort with reporting boss 6. Employees are guilt- ridden in situations where they are required to replace their managers 7. Discomfort of becoming managers when they are not prepared 8. Managerial inadequacy 9. Insecurity among managers of being replaced by their junior colleagues who report to them 10. Insecurity among managers leads to unhealthy manager-subordinate relationships 11. Survivors' Syndrome: Employees and managers who are retained survive with guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration and fear during difficult times 	<p>Replacement of Talent: Senior Minds with Junior Resources</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communication of layoff decision and its immediate impact 2. Performance as rationale for layoff 3. Errors in Human Resource Demand Forecasting 4. Inefficient Resource Management Group 5. Disengaged workforce while on bench 6. Employees rising awareness of the need to fight for their basic rights 7. Becoming conscious of the need to form unions 8. Issues in handling layoff and employee separations 9. Need for outplacement services 10. Organizational care for employees' career and overall wellbeing 11. Financial Responsibilities and family obligations 	<p>Downsizing</p>

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