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ORIGINAL

## Cultural Experience and Employee Indifference: Burnout as a Mediator among IT Professionals

### Experiencia cultural e indiferencia de los empleados: El burnout como mediador entre los profesionales de TI

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#### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** in the midst of the epidemic and shifting work frameworks, organisations face a significant challenge in handling employee attitudes. Employee indifference, which manifests as cynicism, reduced motivation, and vacillating dedication, has significant ramifications for both the personal welfare of individuals and the operational effectiveness of an organisation.

**Objectives:** the objective of this research is to examine the complex interplay among employee indifference, organisational culture, and burnout. Also to study the mediating role of burnout on the relationship between cultural experience and employee indifference.

**Method:** to collect the information about the experiences of employees about their workplace culture, employee indifference, and burnout, a cross-sectional study was conducted utilising automated questionnaires circulated using Google Forms. The sample consisted of 382 employees from various IT sector companies.

**Results:** the results indicate that cultural experience of employees has a significant direct influence on employee indifference. Burnout acts as a mediator in this relationship, which is an aspect that deserves considerable amount of attention.

**Conclusion:** implementing interventions aimed at addressing staff burnout and indifference can improve overall performance and satisfaction within organisational. Understanding the influence of employee experiences from organisational culture on employee attitudes is essential for creating a supportive work environment and minimising negative consequences on individuals and organisations.

**Keywords:** Employee Experience; Burnout; Indifference; Organisation Culture; IT Professionals; Mediation.

#### RESUMEN

**Introducción:** en medio de la epidemia y de marcos laborales cambiantes, las organizaciones se enfrentan a un reto importante a la hora de gestionar las actitudes de los empleados. La indiferencia de los empleados, que se manifiesta como cinismo, motivación reducida y dedicación vacilante, tiene importantes ramificaciones tanto para el bienestar personal de los individuos como para la eficacia operativa de una organización.

**Objetivos:** el objetivo de esta investigación es examinar la compleja interacción entre la indiferencia de los empleados, la cultura organizativa y el burnout. También estudiar el papel mediador del burnout en la

relación entre la experiencia cultural y la indiferencia de los empleados.

**Método:** para recopilar información sobre las experiencias de los empleados acerca de la cultura de su lugar de trabajo, la indiferencia de los empleados y el burnout, se llevó a cabo un estudio transversal utilizando cuestionarios automatizados distribuidos a través de Google Forms. La muestra estaba formada por 382 empleados de diversas empresas del sector de las TI.

**Resultados:** los resultados indican que la experiencia cultural de los empleados tiene una influencia directa significativa en la indiferencia de los empleados. El burnout actúa como mediador en esta relación, aspecto que merece considerable atención.

**Conclusiones:** la puesta en práctica de intervenciones dirigidas a abordar el agotamiento y la indiferencia del personal puede mejorar el rendimiento y la satisfacción general dentro de la organización. Comprender la influencia de las experiencias de los empleados de la cultura organizativa en las actitudes de los empleados es esencial para crear un entorno laboral propicio y minimizar las consecuencias negativas en las personas y las organizaciones.

**Palabras clave:** Experiencia de los Empleados; Burnout; Indiferencia; Cultura Organizativa; Profesionales de TI; Mediación.

## INTRODUCTION

The work environment is dynamic and ever-changing, and it has a significant impact on the lives of the people. The workplace is where people spend most of their day, regardless of occupation. Therefore, where a person is spending most of their lives will affect their mind and body. It may also affect employee's productivity, quality, and value to the company.<sup>(1)</sup> In addition, the workplace is the cornerstone of a country's economic and social development. Thus, organizations have to design and plan various elements in the workplace, with particular emphasis on the organizational culture, such that the employees find their workplace pleasant and motivating. A corporate employee encounters their workplace and its elements very often. The accumulation of these events shapes their view of their organisation and career. Work cultures have a profound effect on the behavior and commitment of employees. It shows values, beliefs, practices, and attitudes that condition social relationships and responsibility. Strong and positive corporate cultures can cultivate inclusiveness, confidence, and cooperation. This can enhance work satisfaction, employee engagement, and dedication.<sup>(2)</sup>

In today's fast-paced, competitive workplace, employees face challenges like excessive workloads, unreasonable deadlines, job insecurity, and work-life problems, especially after COVID-19. Companies worldwide are concerned about employee disengagement and indifferent attitude of employees. Because disinterested workers don't care about their jobs, don't invest in them, and don't work harder. Uninvested workers have lower productivity and job satisfaction. Poor workplace culture can cause burnout, which causes emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and low self-efficacy.<sup>(3)</sup> Burnout affects organisations and people through low productivity, absenteeism, and commitment.<sup>(4)</sup> To design effective interventions and measures to increase employee well-being and organisational success, it is vital to understand the psychological mechanisms via which burnout mediates the interaction between organisational culture and employee indifference.

Over the past few decades, multitude of studies have examined how organisational culture affects employee engagement, dedication, and performance. Specific cultural characteristics may cause employee indifference or disengagement, although they have received less attention. To bridge this information gap, this study examines how organisational culture affects employee burnout and indifference. Also, organisations worry about burnout because it hurts people and the bottom line. Previous researches have indicated that burnout can cause employee disengagement, cynicism, and indifference, but there is limited understanding of the mechanisms that connect these two phenomena. This study will examine whether burnout mediates the relationship between cultural experience of employees and employee indifference, providing new insights into employee behaviour and motivation.

## Related literatures

There are a variety of factors that combine to give staff a holistic experience at the workplace. According to Jacob Morgan<sup>(5)</sup> these employee experience factors include Physical space, cultural factors and technological factors. According to Schein<sup>(6)</sup>, organisational culture is a complex and ubiquitous notion that plays a significant part in determining the behaviour, values, and performance of employees inside an organisation. The concept of organisational culture, as defined by different researchers, is complex and comprised of distinct facets.

Organisational culture is the outcome of a process of acquiring knowledge and skills. It is the outcome of experiences transmitted to individuals during the socialisation process. It ensures consistency, minimises employee uncertainty, impacts job satisfaction and emotional well-being, serves as a motivation, and can

be a competitive edge.<sup>(7)</sup> According to Zheng, Yang, & McLean<sup>(8)</sup> and Cameron and Quinn<sup>(2)</sup>, researchers have acknowledged the significance of organisational culture in terms of its ability to influence numerous elements of organisational life. These aspects include employee behaviour, innovation, employee engagement, and overall effectiveness. The culture of a workplace can be characterised as the amalgamation of employee experiences which directly and indirectly influences employee behaviour.<sup>(9,10,11)</sup> Jacob Morgan<sup>(5)</sup> defines cultural experience as the experience of employees from diverse cultural elements that has the potential to contribute to a positive employee experience. A well-known company culture is made up of ten important traits that have a big effect on how an organisation works and how people see it. Notably, culture exists even in the absence of intentional efforts to define or influence it, which shows how important is its deliberate planning.<sup>(12)</sup>

Organizational culture can influence employee behavior and outcomes; the outcome can either be positive or negative. A solid corporate culture breeds identity and belonging, which helps employees make meaning of and act out their experiences. According to research, a strong and positive culture enhances efficacy, enhances the performance of employees, and innovation in organizations. However, on the other hand, a toxic corporate culture, fostering distrust, psychological instability, and stress, is undoubtedly detrimental to the employee's well-being. Long-term exposure to such conditions may result in fatigue, work disinterest, and a high rate of employee turnover.<sup>(13,14)</sup> Poor corporate culture is always associated with low engagement and productivity. Employees under such corporate culture have low performance expectancy and less willingness to engage in extra-role behaviors, which affects organizational success.<sup>(2,15)</sup> Burnout results from the work-first culture. Increase in work-life balance promotes decreased burnout and well-being among employees.<sup>(16)</sup>

Burnout was once considered a personal issue, and people were expected to prevent and manage it.<sup>(17)</sup> In 2019, the WHO recognised burnout as an occupational occurrence rather than a medical condition. Thus, the onus of its administration has shifted to organisations.<sup>(18)</sup> Maslach<sup>(19)</sup> describes job burnout as a psychological syndrome caused by extended exposure to a variety of stress-inducing professional factors. Burnout models have been proposed by many scholars. Burnout Assessment Tool by Schaufeli, Desart, and Witte<sup>(20)</sup>, Oldenburg Burnout Inventory by Demerouti and Nachreiner<sup>(21)</sup>, Copenhagen Burnout Inventory by Kristensen<sup>(22)</sup>, and Maslach Burnout Inventory by Maslach and Leiter<sup>(3)</sup> are examples. The most common burnout framework is Maslach's three-dimensional paradigm, which includes emotional exhaustion, professional inefficacy, and cynicism. Burnout begins with emotional tiredness, according to various studies.<sup>(23)</sup> Thus, employees feel frustrated since they can't participate or perform as well as before. Exhausted employees become cynical and indifferent to their work, clients, coworkers, and the company. Depersonalisation, also known as a lack of self-efficacy, is marked by pessimism and uncertainty about one's abilities and skills.<sup>(24)</sup>

Burnout is a major issue in organisational psychology since it impacts workers' health and productivity. A culture of overwork, in which workers are expected to always push themselves without support, worsens emotional exhaustion, a critical component of burnout.<sup>(25)</sup> An organisational culture with minimal independence and decision-making authority might also make staff feel underperforming.<sup>(26)</sup> Burnout harms people's health and businesses by making workers less motivated. Research shows that burned-out professionals are less engaged, dedicated, and motivated.<sup>(27)</sup> Employees that are emotionally exhausted and cynical may lose interest in their occupations and exhibit indifference by working less, missing work, and being bad organisational citizens.<sup>(28)</sup> Burnout can also make people distrust their employer and coworkers by making them feel alienated and impersonal.<sup>(25)</sup> Maslach and Leiter<sup>(29)</sup> argue this type of criticism causes indifference and disconnect, which harms work relationships and teamwork. Melamed et al.<sup>(30)</sup> found that burnout can impair productivity, lifespan, and death. Organisations that neglect employee well-being and pleasure will incur higher operating expenses, lower productivity, and higher employee turnover.<sup>(31)</sup>

Employee indifference refers to a state in which an employee displays a lack of interest or concern towards the goals and accomplishments of the organisation. People who engage in repetitive and dull tasks are prone to burnout and consequently exhibit indifference.<sup>(32,33)</sup> Job burnout and indifference can arise due to a dearth of enthusiasm for one's employment.<sup>(34)</sup> Upon entering a company, an individual may undergo a decrease in their initial enthusiasm and develop an attitude of indifference towards their job. This period is extremely exasperating, causing the individual to despair in achieving their goals. As a result, individuals try to avoid this feeling of irritation by adopting an attitude of indifference.<sup>(33)</sup> Fard, Salarieh, & Noruzi<sup>(32)</sup> established a framework consisting of five dimensions to assess organisational indifference among employees: indifference towards supervisors, the workplace, customers, coworkers, and job. Ghasemi et al.<sup>(33)</sup> assert that An indifferent employee exhibits indifference towards attaining organisational objectives and fails to exert additional effort in their job, resulting in subpar organisational performance and productivity. These individuals may exhibit a lack of commitment or interest towards their job, colleagues, or company. In addition, they may experience less motivation. An imperative HR difficulty in contemporary times is the prevalent indifferent attitude exhibited by employees.

Many research have examined the association between burnout and job characteristics.<sup>(35,36)</sup> Studies like Zaid<sup>(37)</sup> examined how burnout affects workers' attitudes, performance, and job satisfaction. Burnout can

cause absenteeism and workplace dissatisfaction.<sup>(38)</sup> Research has examined workplace difficulties, employee disinterest, and burnout. Many studies have focused on IT workers. Trehan, Thomas, & Subbaiyan<sup>(39)</sup> found that emotionally exhausted and depersonalised workers are more likely to quit. Organisational culture and other internal factors also affect indifference management.<sup>(40)</sup> Burnout and workplace indifference have been studied little, and most studies have overlooked burnout or just examined its immediate impacts. However, workplace burnout and indifference have been extensively studied. This study examines employee experience, corporate culture, and indifference using burnout as a mediator. This notion comes from previous exchanges. The investigation proposes the following hypothesis, shown in figure 1, based on its aims.

- H1: Cultural experience of employees have a negative influence on employee indifference.
- H2: Burnout serves as a mediator for the relationship between cultural experience and employee indifference.

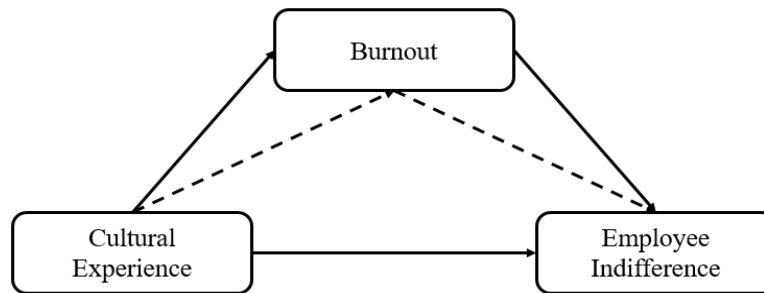


Figure 1. The Hypnotized Model

**METHOD**

**Participants and Procedure**

IT professionals in the Indian state of Kerala participated in this cross-sectional study. 382 IT professionals from different IT companies were chosen using a multistage sampling technique. IT professionals from northerners, central and southern regions of the state were included in the sample to ensure diversity. The sample selection was conducted by focusing on the state’s four main IT parks. Inorder to carry out the survey in an efficient and effective manner, questionnaires were administered online via Google forms.

**Instrument**

The data collection instrument employed in this research consists of the following four sections: The preliminary segment to collect demographic data from the participants. The subsequent sections were to understand cultural experiences, employee indifference, and burnout. The section pertaining to cultural experience comprised 10 statements derived from the employee experience equation research of Jacob Morgan<sup>(5)</sup>, whereas that of employee indifference comprised 39 statements, from the scale developed by Fard et al.<sup>(32)</sup> The scale comprises five distinct dimensions: indifference towards supervisors, the workplace, clients, fellow employees, and the job itself. Respondents indicated their degree of agreement with each statement on a five-point Likert scale. Responses ranged from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” The levels of burnout were evaluated utilising the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). Emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and self-efficacy are the three dimensions into which the MBI’s twenty-two items are classified.<sup>(34)</sup>

**Reliability**

Reliability is defined as the degree to which a measurement method consistently and dependably evaluates a specific construct. A reliability coefficient shows how well the measuring device reliably replicates the target idea or occurrence.<sup>(41)</sup> This study evaluated the reliability of the questionnaire’s scales using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. The survey instrument demonstrated a high level of reliability and consistency in its ability to assess cultural experience, employee indifference, and burnout, as all three variables produced coefficients exceeding 0,8.<sup>(42)</sup> (refer table 1)

Table 1. Reliability Analysis		
Variable	Cronbach’s Alpha	N of Items
Cultural Experience	0,857	10
Emotional Exhaustion	0,891	9
Personal Accomplishments	0,904	8
Depersonalization	0,853	5

Indifference to Workplace	0,883	8
Indifference to Job	0,825	9
Indifference to Colleagues	0,803	6
Indifference to Managers	0,883	10
Indifference to Clients	0.860	6

### Data analysis

An exploratory methodology was utilised for the research. The data analysis was carried out with the help of SPSS 23.0 for Windows. Demographic profile of the sample and the variables under investigation was accomplished through descriptive statistical methods. To determine the connection between the independent variable (cultural experience) and the dependent variable (employee indifference), correlation and regression analyses were carried out. In addition, the research utilised confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate the mediation impact, that burnout has on the association between cultural experience and employee indifference. For the purpose of establishing statistical significance in the analyses, a significance level equivalent to 0,05 was set.

## RESULTS

### Data presentation

The research sample consisted of 382 IT professionals employed in various IT companies located in Kerala, India. 72 %(275) were married, while 47 %(179) were male and 203(53 %) were female, with an average age of 31,7 years. The mean and standard deviation of the variables are displayed in Table 2. It is worth mentioning that the average value for cultural experience was  $2,83 \pm 0,48$ , with a mean percentage score (MPS) of 57,80 %. This indicates that the perception of cultural elements in the workplace, is on a medium level<sup>(43)</sup> (Loyd & Abidin, 1985) (p Value = 0,006, Independent sample test). On the other hand, the average burnout score was comparatively modest at  $1,81 \pm 0,73$ , indicating a low to average prevalence of burnout (mean percentage score: 36,2 %, p-value<0,01). Conversely, the average value for employee indifference was  $2,47 \pm 0,49$ , with a mean percent score of 48,8 %, corresponded to a moderate degree of indifference (p-value<0,01). The prevailing attitudes and perceptions of employees regarding their workplace culture, burnout levels, and degree of engagement or indifference are illuminated by these results. (refer table 2)

Table 2. Mean score value for the variables

Variable	Mean	S.D	MPS	Test Value	z	p value	Result	Level
Cultural Experience	2,83	0,48	57,8	50	312	0,006	Reject H0	Good/Medium
Burnout	1,81	0,73	36,2	35	31,58	<0,01	Reject H0	Average
Employee Indifference	2,47	0,49	48,8	50	-48	<0.01	Reject H0	Average

The results of the correlation analysis demonstrate a statistically significant inverse relationship ( $r=-0,729$ ) between cultural experience and employee indifference. The regression coefficient for the total effect of cultural experience on employee indifference is also significant with  $B=-2,474$ , p value<0,01. This suggests that improvements in the organisational culture are linked to a decline in employee indifference. Additional findings from table 3 indicate that the regression estimate for the direct impact of cultural experience on employee indifference is statistically significant ( $B=-1,656$ , p-value<0,01). This suggests that as employees' cultural experience becomes more positive, there is a tendency for employee indifference to decrease. In the same vein, the regression estimate pertaining to the impact of burnout on employee indifference is likewise statistically significant ( $B=2,943$ , p-value<0,01). This indicates that as burnout levels rise, so does employee indifference in a significant way.

Furthermore, the regression analysis reveals a significant negative relationship between workplace cultural experience and burnout ( $B=-0,425$ , p-value<0,01), as indicated by the significant regression estimate for the influence of burnout on employee indifference. Furthermore, the estimate for the mediating variable burnout's indirect effect is substantial ( $B=-1,251$ , p<0,01), indicating that burnout serves as a mediator in the relation between employee indifference and cultural experience (Refer table 3 & figure 2). This suggests that enhancements in the workplace culture not only have a direct impact on decreasing employee indifference but also serve to mitigate levels of burnout, thereby exerting an indirect influence on employee indifference via this mediating pathway.

Path	Estimate	Std. Error	t	p-value
Cultural experience - Employee indifference	-2,474	0,119	-20,789	<0,001
Cultural experience - Employee indifference	-1,656	0,112	-14,808	<0,001
Cultural experience - Burnout	-0,425	0,037	-11,617	<0,001
Burnout - Employee indifference	2,943	0,145	20,285	<0,001
Cultural experience - Burnout - Employee indifference	-1.251	0.125	-9.997	<0.001

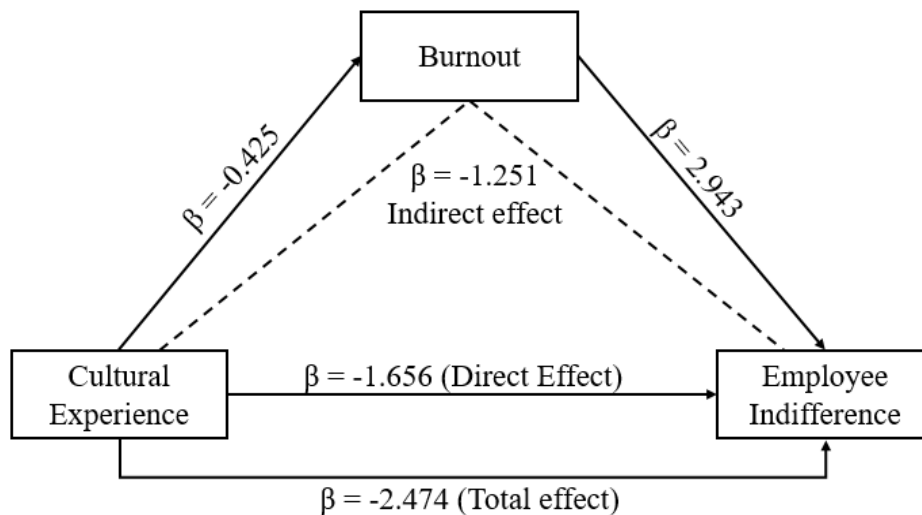


Figure 2. The Final Model

## DISCUSSIONS

This study explores the complex relationship between experiences from workplace culture, employee indifference, and burnout. The study illuminates key elements affecting IT professionals well-being and productivity. It also investigates the mediating function of burnout in the relationship between employee indifference and cultural experience. The results indicate two critical outcomes that make a substantial contribution to the comprehension of employee well-being and organisational behaviour. Initially, the analysis suggests a strong negative correlation between employee indifference and cultural experience. Exposure to different cultural perspectives and practices improves employees' work life by fostering engagement and inclusiveness.<sup>(44)</sup> Diversity of cultural experiences may broaden individuals' perspectives, improve their adaptability, and strengthen their connections to coworkers and work. Prior research<sup>(45)</sup> shows that inclusive and culturally diverse teams are more motivated and cohesive.

Burnout mediates cultural experience and employee indifference. Culturally diverse employees are less likely to burnout and become indifferent to their work. This emphasises the need of a supportive workplace culture prioritising employee well-being, work-life balance, and open communication to decrease burnout and boost employee engagement.<sup>(46)</sup> The research has major ramifications for employees and organisations. Cultural dimensions reveal how culture affects workplace behaviour.<sup>(47)</sup> A Positive workplace culture prevents burnout.<sup>(48)</sup> Barsade & O'Neill<sup>(49)</sup> explain how emotional culture influences employee happiness, burnout, and teamwork, revealing role of culture on employee well-being. Organisations must prioritise good and inclusive workplace culture to thrive. Stress management, workload distribution, and emotional support are also needed to reduce employee burnout. Employee development programmes that improve cultural competence are essential in companies. By proactively addressing the issues, organisations may foster employee engagement, well-being, and organisational success.

## Future research scope

An integrated approach using many intervention tactics is needed to improve workplace culture and reduce employee indifference. Longitudinal studies reveal how organisational culture affects burnout and employee engagement over time, enabling focused treatments. Comparing cultural experiences at various types of companies and in different sectors and industries can reveal subtle differences. Comparative analyses across industries and organisational settings can identify industry-specific best practices by revealing how cultural experience affects burnout and indifference differently. To create a pleasant workplace, leadership styles must be examined and their effects on employee well-being. Investigating workplace technology integration's

effects on cultural experience, burnout, and staff indifference informs technology-driven solutions to improve organisational culture and employee engagement. These intervention tactics can create a supportive and successful workplace culture for employee well-being and organisational performance.

## CONCLUSION

An organization's most precious asset is its dynamic and crucial human resources. HR issues, notably employee indifference and burnout, can greatly impact workplace morale and productivity, therefore studying them is crucial. According to the study, burnout mediates the relationship between cultural experience and indifference and cultural experience negatively associates with employee indifference, suggesting that employees with positive cultural experiences are less likely to be indifferent at work. Exposure to supportive cultural situations may increase employees' understanding, and involvement, creating a more flexible and responsive workforce. By examining the intricate relationship between workplace culture and employee indifference, the study can help IT organisations enhance employee well-being. According to the report, businesses must address the root causes of burnout to create a healthy work environment. Organisations can reduce employee fatigue and indifference by addressing working conditions that cause it. This will boost employee engagement and productivity.

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