

Burnout among IT professionals: A Myth

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Abstract

The IT industry is known for its tension rate due to high quality standards of writing various programs, testing them and proving it within a given amount of time. As the procedure is customized to the needs of the consumer, it is very important to define the criteria and satisfy the demands. These aspects include multi-party interaction between the tech worker, the senior and the target organization. So the decision to delay the operation or to take a sudden break for urgency would not be a simple choice. In addition, workers need to use their brain to a very high degree of maturity constantly to find a response, individuals begin to melt down due to stress levels which in essence, contribute to early life burnout. While burnout surveys are very readily available for hospital personnel and teaching practitioners, Sara L. Schwarz Cook has only one true report on burnout in the IT industry. Role confusion, job assurance, brain drain etc. are some of the key reasons that are common in most of the literature. These factors are categorized into organizational factors, job factors and individual factors. Researchers such as David and Smeeding (1985) and Wright and Cropanzano (2004) claim that psychological well-being in terms of satisfaction relates to the maximization of corporate efficiency in terms of both personal wellbeing and work efficiency. A special form of stress condition is burnout. Burnout signs are common. They are neither very elusive nor very odd. A person with burnout symptoms loses interest in work, and the burnout victim physically becomes unable to do work in most cases.

It is really important to recognize the importance of burnout since this will assist administrators and HR heads to predict situations of this type and avoid the result itself at an early point. That would also help decrease the turnover of workers.

Keywords: *Burnout, exhaustion, work load, work culture, well-being, IT professionals, Job factors.*

Introduction

Majority of us have stressful days at work. But for some workers, when Monday rolls around, it's not just once in a while; instead, tension is their everyday life. This will lead to full-on burnout for employees over time.

In the fast-paced, demanding world of the tech industry, burnout is particularly frequent. But what are the implications, how widespread is it, why do we worry and what should employers do to de-stress their employees?

How common is Employee Burnout?

This is the issue that Blind — a work place app for tech employees — seeks to answer via a consumer survey.

The software is used by 40,000 Microsoft workers, 25,000 from Amazon, 10,000 from Google, 7,000 from Uber, 6,000 from Facebook, and thousands of other tech firms, so the findings of their survey are broadly represented.

The one-question survey had a straightforward yes / no answer: "Are you actually suffering from work burnouts?"

And over half of respondents (57.16%, to be exact) answered yes.

In both the micro and macro stages, burnout has significant implications. Workplace tension costs \$125 to \$190 billion annually for health insurance alone. It leads to about 120,000 deaths a year.

Stress is also responsible for higher rates of firing or career transition among employees: 95 per cent of HR leaders decided in the Kronos survey that burnout is sabotaging labour retention.

James Campbell Quick, Ph.D., has developed a lot of job tension and burnout studies, analyzing it from both employee and corporate levels. He stresses that for organizations that neglect their workforce's mental wellbeing, there are also financial implications.

"There are enormous, if often difficult to quantify, financial costs associated with inadequate mental health at work," says Quick.

Why is it necessary for corporations to look after the mental health of employees?

That's like growing a vegetable garden and then wondering why supplying water and sufficient sunshine is necessary. An organization has the mission of a prosperous, successful and sustainable enterprise, and that is vital to the mental health of workers.

Literature Review

Gloryson R B Chalil and L Prasad (2014), Most software jobs are very challenging in terms of heavy workload, forcing workers to work long hours, uncertainty of responsibilities due to the inherent need to work in close contact with people in their respective fields, lack of sufficient and timely knowledge and almost impossible deadlines. *Kumari, Dr. Gaurav Joshi, Dr. K.M. Pandey, G. (2014)* Work environment, management, workloads, social injustice corporate culture, fear of job cuts and working style have been the key cause of workplace stress. Stress in the mind causes depression, frustration, irritability, mood swings, loss of self-confidence, etc., which leads to a fragile effect on the individual. Also *Advani, Y., J., Garg, Kumar, A., Kumar, & Rohtas. (2006)* Organizational policy and coordination expertise influence the burnout level of software developers. Although organizational strategy has a greater impact on emotional fatigue and related aspects of depersonalization, teamwork experience has a greater impact on the burnout dimension of personal achievement.

Rutner, P., Hardgrave, B., & McKnight, D. (2008), Emotional dissonance is being studied as a factor in the exhaustion of work by IT professionals, job satisfaction and the intention of turnover. The results indicate that emotional dissonance predicts exhaustion of work better than perceived workload, role conflict, or ambiguity of role, constructions long associated with exhaustion of work. Job satisfaction is directly influenced by ambiguity of role and exhaustivity of work. In turn, job satisfaction influences employee turnover intention

Higher scores of mental fatigue and depersonalization, and lower scores of personal accomplishment represent higher burnout rates. Interpersonal interactions are a key construct in the burnout process, so it is reasonable to predict that any group for whom interpersonal interactions on the job cause a strain will become vulnerable to burnout. Employment and organizational perceptions are what contribute to burnout *Cordes, C. L., Dougherty, T. W., & Blum, M. (1997)*.

Sethi, V., Barrier, T., & King, R. C. (1999, July 1). Two role stressors are examined in this study - role ambiguity and role conflict. These variables are theorized to be antecedents of burnout. In addition, two dimensions of organizational commitment - affective and continuance commitment - are examined as possible consequences of burnout. Both role stressors were found to correlate positively with burnout. In addition, affective commitment was found to be negatively correlated and continuance commitment positively correlated with burnout.

Bischoff, S., Detienne, K., & Quick, B. (1999). The authors compare the effect of ethical stress to the effect on burnout and fatigue of employees of other stress factors (coworker support, supervisor support, family conflict, dead-end work, task conflict, customers and company expectations). Results of regression suggest that stress on ethics both causes burnout and exhaustion. Additionally, support for employee flexibility, dead-end work, and boss predicts burnout and family conflict and task conflict is correlated with exhaustion.

The study expands previous studies by showing the significance of the achievement goals of leaders in predicting employee burnout above and above the achievement goals of the workers themselves. The cross-level effects between the motivational efforts of leaders and the burnout of employees provide an interesting area for improving our understanding of when the achievement goals of leaders are beneficial or harmful to employee well-being. *Sijbom, R., Lang, J., & Anseel, F. (2018, September 04).*

*Randa., Omar. R, Aya.M, Omar.H,(2017)*It will not have an impact, regardless of the time spent on the developmental activities, unless the employee is actually invested in the programs provided. As such, it is critical with this takeaway to provide a constant stream of employee input on any improvement programs implemented by the organization; as it is the approval of the programs that will ultimately deliver results and reduce employee burnout.

Intrinsic and extrinsic bonuses are required to satisfy the employees. Extrinsic recompenses are claimed to be satisfying. Some extrinsic incentives include, salary, supervisory efficiency and the environment. This help to increase work satisfaction that lowers employee turnover intention *Azeez.,(2017)*

Research Problem

Employee burn-out causes significant challenges for both workers and companies as a whole. Low efficiency, low workforce performance and high employee attrition costs are the major impact of employee burnout. But this would have a detrimental impact not only on workers, company and business, but also on society as each and every employee is part of society.

Employees that become victims of burnout are highly detrimental to organizations because those individuals produce a ripple effect, transmitting burnout to their subordinates. Unfortunately, for an employee's friends and family who have reached this point, the pessimistic and uncaring attitudes that form towards co-workers, superiors, or subordinates may have a negative influence on all the social experiences of the person.

Despite the high percentage of managers associated with the issue, analysis has not adequately shown the correlations of burnout in this demographic within IT workers in their organizations. It is fair to believe that they would be able to take steps to mitigate it if IT management were able to foresee burnout.

In addition, the new research initiative addresses the shortcomings of existing burnout literature. Specifically, while Seth et al . (1999) studied the burn-out associations of IT workers, relatively few variables were considered.

Other study on the burnout of IT staff is comparatively sparse.

Current IT Industry

The current IT climate is marked by accelerated transition and improved productivity.

Outsourcing and downsizing are two concepts that are commonly used in debates regarding the IT sector. The migration of IT workers to offshore sites has continued uninterrupted since the late 1980s (Ho, Ang, & Straub, 2003). In one poll, when asked to recognise major factors in their job climate, more than half of IT employees reported budget cuts and elevated workloads, and more than one-third identified permanent layoffs and wage and hiring freezes (King, 2004) For example, layoffs can be referred to as the "role levels of scepticism against top management" (King, 2004), and cynicism is one of migrations;

The effect is a reported rise in burnout components. In the Book of *The Truth about Burnout: How companies trigger personal stress and what to do about it*, Maslach and Leiter (1997) provide a strong connection between globalisation and job burnout. The writers argue that even the prospect of a company transferring jobs out of the country (off-shoring) places pressure on the workers who stay and is harmful to the society at work.

Consequences of Burnout

The burnout consequences are assorted. For eg, psychosomatic objections, migraines, muscle pain, stomach side effects, respiratory problems, cardiac signals, instability, blacking out, among others, suggest that the body is struggling to manage ecological demands.

Often, the fatigue that can come about because of delayed upsetting circumstances may cause disintegrated wellbeing and prosperity (De Dreu, Van Dierendonck, & Dijkstra, 2004).

Burnout has been attributed to problems of emotional well-being, such as misery, a sleeping illness, and fatigue. (Quick, Nelson, & Hurrell, 1997)

They often withdraw from their companions and decrease standardisation (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993), just like individuals encountering burnout withdraw candidly from their work. Wore-out workers' tendency to disconnect from others is likely to spoil effective conflict mediation techniques; tensions can then intensify (De Dreu et al., 2004).

Organizational factors

Job over-load, called either objective or contextual, is the after-effect of having an excess of items to do in a given amount of time (Bacharach, Bamberger, & Conley, 1991). Authoritative legislative problems are a basic form of interpersonal dispute within an organization, a concept used to identify actions that are misleading and self-serving (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992). Analysis has shown that if members see an irregular state of IT Burnout 22 authoritative government problems, employees are more likely to be psychologically removed from the association and tyre out (Yashwant Advani et al., 2005).

Job factors

However the most imperative attitudinal consequence of burnout is workplace disappointment. An alternative possible attitudinal consequence of burnout is decreased hierarchical accountability, which can be defined as the power of a worker's relation to, and appreciation of, an organisation and its goals and qualities (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). Burnout has currently found to be one of the best markers of turnover (Barak et al., 2000). Van Dam (2005) has shown that members who believe they have been positively paid for their contributions have recorded a more influential work success and a more noteworthy emotional obligation and along those lines, feel less likely to abandon the organisation.

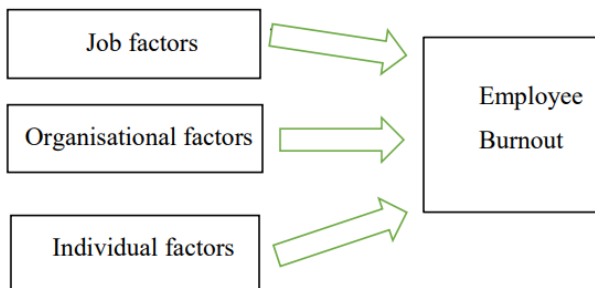
Individual factors

Kalbers and Fogerty (2005) state that the locus of control, a mechanism established by Rotter (1966) to differentiate between individuals who feel they are responsible for the course of their lives (said to have an internal control locus) and individuals who acknowledge their predetermination, is controlled by situations and occasions beyond their control (said to have an external control locus), a single person with an outward locus of influence has a propensity to feel sadder and powerless to resolve depression (Luzzo & Ward, 1995) and is more defenceless against fear in this way (Clarke, 1995). In order to intercede with the destructive consequences of job anxiety, emotional and enthusiastic encouragement from relatives and companions outside the working atmosphere was suggested (Abelson, 1987).

Theoretical Framework

Dependent Variable: Employee Burnout

Independent Variable: Job factors, Organizational Factors, Individual Factors.



Job factors:

1. Occupation Disappointment (monotonous job).

2. Lack of job clarity
3. Diminished Hierarchical Responsibility
4. Compensation
5. Lack of coaching conversations (Feedback System)

Organizational Factors:

1. Lack of decision making power
2. Lack of resources
3. Environment
4. Organization opportunities

Individual Factors:

1. Outer locus of control
2. Error between abilities and occupational desires
3. Demographics (age, income, gender, qualification)
4. Adaptability

Measurement scale

The questions pertaining to the dependent variable (Burnout) are considered on the basis of the Maslach Burnout Inventory scale. The questions for the independent variables (organizational factors, job factors, independent factors) are taken after reviewing various qualitative research papers.

Questionnaire

Burnout:

1. I feel emotionally drained from my work
2. I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day at work.
3. Working all day is really a strain for me.

Organizational factors:

1. I get few opportunities, if any, to participate in management decisions.
2. I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to do my job.

Job factors:

1. I feel frustrated because of my job
2. Clear, planned goals and objectives do not exist for my job.

Individual factors:

1. I do not feel I have complete control over the outcome of my work.
2. I feel gap between my current work and my desired work.
3. I am treated different from the rest due to my race.
4. I find it difficult to adapt to the work culture.

Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant effect of organizational factors on employee burnout

H1: There is significant effect of organizational factors on employee burnout

H0: There is no significant effect of job factors on employee burnout

H1: There is significant effect of job factors on employee burnout

H0: There is no significant effect of individual factors on employee burnout

H1: There is significant effect of individual factors on employee burnout

Research Methodology

This research takes in to account of only leading multinational IT organizations. The main purpose of this study is to examine and assess the main reasons for stress and depression of employees in IT sector.

Data presented in this study is secondary data via online surveys across tier 1 IT companies in India. **172 responses** were collected for the study via online **Google form survey**. The data analysis was performed via SPSS, IBM SPSS Statistics 20 (or commonly referred to as Statistical Package for Social Sciences).

This research is also a **cross-sectional study**, in which a survey was performed between May 2020 and November 2020.

The data analysis was used to evaluate the respondent demographic profile and mean of variables, factor analysis to assess the data quality, reliability analysis to measure the repeatability of the measuring instrument and regression analysis to assess the impact of

independent on dependent variable (Burnout). The study focused on understanding the strong influence of factors that led to burnout among the IT sector employees.

The selected population approach is focused on availability and cost efficiency. In addition, the suggested sampling approach used was non-probability sampling, and convenience sampling is the preferred technique. In this analysis, convenience sampling was carried out and can also be distinguished as availability sampling that involves randomly selecting cases because of the most convenience and easily accessible in terms of sample selection. In addition, snowball sampling is also included, as respondents could introduce others to participate in this study's survey.

For independent and dependent variables, the analysis adopted a **five-point Likert-type measurement scale**, ranging from **1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)**

Analysis

The Statistical Kit for Social Science (IBM-SPSS) is used in this research as a statistical method for the interpretation of outcomes.

The descriptive statistics on demographic information were carried out using SPSS software tool and the common measures used to characterize a data set. In particular, the demographic data gives an overview of the profile of respondents under study. Such details, such as gender, age, current job role, marital status, current company experience, The collected data was then subjected to a series of checks for reliability and validity. IBMSPSS provides new metrics for reliability testing that take into account the various external loadings of composite reliability on the indicated variables

According to Hair Jr, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt (2013), Cronbach's alpha suggests that if composite reliability value is greater than 0.7, it is considered appropriate. Next the theories were all subjected to different measures. The Social Science Statistical Package Version 20 (IBM-SPSS) method was chosen in this analysis to test both independent and dependent hypotheses.

Testing of the hypothesis was carried out using IBM-SPSS tools. This research would provide a different view or clearer interpretation of the type of construct by running a multiple regression model, which will have a greater effect on the dependent variable(Burnout).

For this test, the decision rule is to

Accept the H1: If the P- value is less than 0.05 at a confidence interval of 95 percent

Rejects the H1: If the P-value is greater than 0.05 at the 95% confidence interval,

In addition to the IVDV correlation testing, was also tested in this analysis in order to analyse the relative influence of those three independent variables (Job factors, Organizational factors, Individual factors) on the dependent variable (Burnout)

Findings

Cronbach's Alpha's Reliability Test

It could be the data collected for this study was convincingly concluded to have very good internal consistency, as the measured Alpha value of Cronbach for all 3 constructs is > 0.7

Table1: Reliability

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.833	11

The value obtained is 83.3%, which determines that, questions considered for the study are good to proceed with.

Descriptive Statistics

Table A displays the findings of the descriptive study for both independent and dependent variables in the overall sample of 172 questionnaires.

Ratings ranging from a minimum of 1.0 (least favourable) to a maximum of 5.0 (most favourable) were registered in all 3 research variables. Among the Independent variables – Organizational factors have the highest mean with 2.9012 with a standard deviation of 0.93446, Job factors with a mean of 2.4913 and SD of 1.04080, Individual factors with a mean of 2.3808 and SD of 0.76827

The dependent variable, Burnout has a mean of 2.6512 and SD of 1.09034

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Burnout	172	1.00	5.00	2.6512	1.09034
OF	172	1.00	5.00	2.9012	.93446
JF	172	1.00	5.00	2.4913	1.04080
IF	172	1.00	4.25	2.3808	.76827
Valid N (listwise)	172				

Table A

Correlation

Correlation is a mathematical method that can explain when pairs of variables are related and how strongly. A measure of how well they are connected is the correlation between sets of data.

The Pearson Correlation is the most common indicator of correlation in stats. Any statistical association, whether causal or not, between two random variables or bivariate data is a correlation or dependency. Any statistical correlation is correlated in the broadest sense, although it typically refers to the degree to which a pair of variables are connected linearly

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

Correlations		Burnout	OF	JF	IF
Burnout	Pearson Correlation	1	.263**	.640**	.556**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.000	.000
	N	172	172	172	172
OF	Pearson Correlation	.263**	1	.277**	.327**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.000	.000
	N	172	172	172	172
JF	Pearson Correlation	.640**	.277**	1	.632**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	172	172	172	172
IF	Pearson Correlation	.556**	.327**	.632**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	172	172	172	172

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

H0: There is no significant relationship between Organizational factors and Burnout

H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between Organizational factors and Burnout

Result: $p < 0.05$, reject H0. Accept H1

H0: There is no significant relationship between job factors and burnout

H1: There is significant relationship between job factors and burnout

Result: $p < 0.05$, reject H0. Accept H1

H0: There is no significant relationship between individual factors and burnout

H1: There is significant relationship between individual factors and burnout

Result: $p < 0.05$, reject H0. Accept H1

Regression Analysis

By carrying out IBM SPSS Statistics Version 20.0.0, the hypothesis was tested.

Table 4: Regression

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.772 ^a	.596	.579	.70762

a. Predictors: (Constant), I get few opportunities, if any, to participate in management decisions, I do not feel I have complete control over the outcome of my work., I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to do my job, I find a gap between my current work and my desired work., I find it difficult to adapt to the work culture, I feel frustrated because of work overload, Clear, planned goals and objectives do not exist for my job

The R value predicted in Model summary is 0.772 which indicates a good level of prediction The R Square value 0.596 (59.6% of variance in dependent variable can be explained by independent variables)

Job factors showed a substantial and positive impact on Burnout with the t-value of 6.390, while Individual factors showed a positive and significant effect on Burnout with the t-value of 3.162. Organizational factors however did not have much of an impact on the Burnout of employees.

Table 5: Regression Study

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.428	.247		1.734	.085
OF	.062	.071	.053	.874	.384
JF	.497	.078	.474	6.390	.000
IF	.339	.107	.239	3.162	.002

a. Dependent Variable: Burnout

A further analysis was also done to see which among the Job and Individual factors are significantly leading to Burnout.

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.690	.226		3.051	.003
1 I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to do my job	.076	.050	.085	1.517	.131
I feel frustrated because of work overload	.572	.056	.619	10.182	.000
Clear, planned goals and objectives do not exist for my job	-.046	.053	-.053	-.873	.384
I do not feel I have complete control over the outcome of my work.	.004	.054	.004	.073	.942
I find a gap between my current work and my desired work.	.033	.045	.041	.718	.474
I find it difficult to adapt to the work culture	.239	.062	.227	3.855	.000
I get few opportunities, if any, to participate in management decisions	-.022	.047	-.024	-.470	.639

a. Dependent Variable: Burnout

Table 6: Summary of Hypothesis and Result

Hypothesis	Std beta value	t-value	Result
There is a significant effect of the job factors on employee Burnout	0.474	6.390	Supported
There is a significant effect of individual factors on employee	0.239	3.162	Supported

burnout			
There is no significant effect of organizational factors on employee burnout	0.053	0.874	Supported

Discussion

This paper was aimed finding out the different causes for burnout among employees in the IT sector in India.

A sample of 172 respondents from top 5 IT companies namely, Infosys, IBM, Cognizant, TCS, Accenture were considered.

The questionnaire included 16 questions excluding the demographics. After performing **reliability test**, 11 questions were taken into consideration that had significant impact on the model.

Cronbach alpha’s value of 83.3% implied the questions were internally reliable and the study was good to proceed with.

The correlation test was done to find out if there was a significant relationship between the variables considered for study. The results showed that the variables were statistically significant.

The regression test displayed how strongly the independent variables (organizational factors, job factors and individual factors) affect the dependent variable (Burnout).

The model summary showed an R-value of 0.772 which implies strong positive correlation. The R square value confirmed that 59.6% of the dependent variable is affected by the independent variables.

The regression equation can be written as:

$$\text{Burnout} = 0.428 + 0.062(\text{OF}) + 0.497(\text{JF}) + 0.339(\text{IF})$$

The results of the regression study showed that individual factors and job factors had a significant effect on the burnout experienced by the employees of IT sectors.

To focus on which of the individual and job factors had effect, a further regression test taking the variables of job and individual factors was examined.

It was shown that “work overload” and “difficulty to adapt to work culture” were the two primary reasons for burnout among the employees.

Recommendations

Employee burnout has serious consequences for both Employee and Employer. Below mentioned steps taken by an organization may help to prevent burnout of its employees

1. To build a friendly and cooperative environment in the organization and make job more interesting to the employees
2. Proper Employee recognition programs
3. Proper guidance and support while dealing with critical projects
4. Employees should play roles to influence and improve their working conditions
5. Organization should have a proper grievance mechanism
6. Employee/project ratio should be should be ideal
7. Flexible work times for the employees and work from home in time of need
8. Crèche facility for children’s when employees are at work
9. Counseling of Employees for work life balance
10. Regular and compulsory health checkups and medication programs
11. Provision of free refreshments drinks and snacks in the workplace
12. Awards and gifts from the organization in appreciation of efforts
13. Job Security assurance and motivational programs
14. Organizing extracurricular actives like annual day, cultural day and birthday celebrations for the employees
15. Employees should have liberty of sharing their views without any fear
16. Employee provision to take a sabbatical leaves and encouragement to pursue higher education
17. Holiday facilities with family so that employees can spend more time with your family
18. Special time provisions for working mothers
19. Organization should introduce provisions to do Yoga/meditation at work place.

Conclusion

The overall analysis of the research leads to a significant issue that both companies and individuals face as a result of burnout.

In companies, work overload is the most prominent reason cited as the primary cause of burnout. It is common in the IT industry to have workers overwhelmed with jobs when a business gets some contract and often employees sit on benches without any work for weeks waiting for the next job to arrive. This is also a peculiar phenomenon that is not normal in other sectors and as workers see zig zag job allocation, it has a serious effect on them.

Another important aspect was the difficulty in adapting to the work culture. Accepting changes in the workplace community is the hardest thing for an individual to do. Not all workers are happy to respond to systemic changes. Management must also allow workers time to freeze a new culture for them. Don't press someone to make improvements all of a sudden.

Overall, there seems to be a great potential from the data gathered from the study to deep dive into different aspects of burnout in the IT industries and brainstorm for solutions that can help reduce or eliminate burnout among the employees for a happier workforce.

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