Introduction

Work stress is the most prevalent health problems of these days. Burnout is often used to state a reaction to prolonged work stress, specially feeling of emotional exhaustion, which are believed to be the core cause of burnout. Employees experiencing burnout often feel like as if they have lost control and an employee that is sick of the workplace may experience exhaustion and even illness. Burnout can be described as “the extinction of motivation or incentive, especially where one’s devotion to cause a relationship fails to produce the desired results,” and is a stress related state. When an employee is continuously working for a long time on some assignment or we can say project which he or she does not find interesting, he may start losing interest on the job and after some time a situation may arise where he totally gets exhausted from work and feels depressed. In the final stages of depression, the employee totally looses his interest in work. This is the situation of employee burnout. This generally affects the professionals who had to deal with multitasking. Information Technology is a high-trio industry with high demand, high stress and high risk. Most of these organizations are multinationals, so in weekends also employees need to work for back end support. Not only this on weekdays due to pressure of work and pressure of project deadlines they had to work for stretched timings. These long hours of work with lots of stress and mental pressure gives rise to different health problems like headache, backbone trouble, diabetics, blood pressure, migrant etc. Hence, it is important for IT organization to take care of their employees.

Research studies suggest that stress and burnout are different aspects of same scenario. Most of the people become stressed periodically. Burnout is much more than being stressed. Burnout, unlike disengagement, is a condition that affects motivated people with
high ideals. There is a human need to get meaning from work. The employees, regardless of the field, should have the satisfaction that their life and work is significant and purposeful. There is an ancient desire to be fulfilled at work that goes back to a time when skilled crafts were looked upon with pride. Not surprisingly, there is a connection between idealistic dedication to a job and a heightened tendency to burnout (Stanley, 2001).

Burnout results in reduced productivity, higher turnover, and generally poor performance, which is exactly what organizations cannot afford as budgets keep getting tighter and demands from the business side keep getting louder (21 Hayes, 2003). In fact, a recent study found that employee morale is becoming an issue among workers. Seventy-one percent of managers admit that burnout is a serious problem in their organizations (McGee, 2003).

Burnout has a wide range of possible symptoms as well as causes. Symptoms include, but are not limited to, powerlessness, hopelessness, detachment, irritability, despair, apathy, frustration, feeling trapped, isolated, detached, emotional exhaustion and cynicism.

Some countries keep statistics on burnout. In Germany, where burnout is covered by some insurance policies, 5% of the population between 25 and 45 years of age are being treated for burnout. In the Netherlands, roughly 10% of the workforce is burned out at any given time, with teachers and primary care health professionals most burned out. Statistics are not complete in the USA for various reasons data privacy.

Burnout was first recognised in the helping professions (nurses, social workers, public service), then it hit those in services such as IT and IT enable services, sales and jobs that
deal with customers’ demands or complaints in high-pressured environments, and finally management and other professions not normally perceived as being under extreme pressure, e.g. lawyers. Middle management struggled with right-sizing and centralization, resulting in decision makers not only having responsibilities for team leadership, mentoring and attending meetings, but also taking on, rather than delegating, operational responsibilities and ‘special projects’.

In addition to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, a third and final aspect of burnout is a feeling of low personal accomplishment. Many systemic reasons may contribute to the gap that exists between a new employee’s goals and the veteran’s accomplishments, including (1) unrealistically high expectations because of a lack of exposure to the job during training, (2) constraints placed on the worker by organizational Policies and procedures, (3) inadequate resources to perform one’s job, (4) co-workers who are frequently uncooperative and occasionally rebellious, and (5) a lack of feedback about one’s successes.

**Prior Research of Burnout in IT Workers**

A few studies have directly addressed the burnout phenomenon among IT workers.
Summaries of the research conducted since 1990 are presented here in chronological order.

In 1990, Polok examined the influence of self-esteem and a variety of situational factors on burnout in a technology firm. The study discovered a significant negative correlation between burnout scores and worker involvement, supervisor support, peer cohesion, autonomy, work pressure, clarity, control, and innovation. A hypothesis investigating a possible correlation between demographic variables and burnout scores was not supported.

In 1994, Sonnentag et al. studied software developers to test the relationships between work stress and control at work and burnout, and to examine the potential moderating effects of social interaction on these relationships. The researcher found significant correlations between burnout and work stress and control at work. However, the data did not support the hypothesis pertaining to the moderating effects of social interaction.

Later, Sethietal. (1999) tested two potential correlates of burnout in IT workers and found a strong positive correlation of role ambiguity and role conflict with burnout. In 2002, Salanova, Peiro, and Schaufeli explored a possible moderating effect of self-efficacy specificity on burnout. Through an investigation of the effects on job demands and job control, the researchers determined that computer self-efficacy moderated the relationship between job demands and control and levels of the burnout dimensions exhaustion and cynicism (Salanova et al., 2002).
Current IT Environment

While the previous discussion of the antecedents of burnout applies to workers from all professions, certainly some of the factors discussed are likely to be more influential in the specific population of IT professionals. Unfortunately, industry experts indicate that most organizations do not have a solid understanding of what is involved in IT work or in advancing an IT career (McGee, 2006). Consideration of the current IT environment might reveal those factors that are most relevant to IT professionals.

The current IT environment is characterized by rapid change and increased globalization. Outsourcing and downsizing are two terms used frequently in discussions about the IT industry. The movement of IT jobs to offshore sites has continued unabated since the late 1980s (Ho, Ang, & Straub, 2003). Some market researchers predict that the percentage of U.S. IT services done offshore in 2007 will be twice that of 2003 (Farrell, 2005). In one survey, when asked to identify significant factors in their workplace environment, more than half of IT workers identified budget cuts and increased workload and more than a third identified permanent layoffs and salary and hiring freezes (King, 2004). Workers also reported resentment toward cheerful euphemisms being applied by upper management. For example, layoffs may be referred to as “position migrations”, and outsourcing may be called “global sourcing.” The result is a reported growing rate of cynicism toward top management (King, 2004), and cynicism is one of the components of burnout. In their book *The Truth about Burnout: How Organizations Cause Personal Stress and What to Do About It*, Maslach and Leiter (1997) directly link between globalization and worker burnout. The authors posit that even the possibility of
an organization moving jobs out of the country (off-shoring) puts pressure on the workers that remain and is damaging to the community of the workplace.

Preventing employee burnout

Organizations can do many things to prevent employee burnout. On the basis of our employee burnout, organizations can change any one or all of the organizational conditions causing burnout. For example, supervisors could be trained to provide more contingent (based on performance) rewards to employees, thus eliminating the comment, “If you don’t hear anything, you must be doing okay.” Organizations could redesign jobs to enable employees to have more control over their work. Compensation could be more closely related to the level of employee performance. Although such programs could be successfully implemented by human resources managers, the cost and time required by them may be greater than that for the three programs described below - that is, anticipatory socialization programs, participative management programs, and/or feedback programs.