Review of literature

- Job stress has been recognized as a significant occupational hazard that can impair physical health, psychological well-being, and work performance (Kahn & Byosiere, 1992; Sauter & Murphy, 1995).

- The worker’s internal experience of strain is assumed to play a mediating role between the impacts of external job demands (stressors) and work-related outcomes (such as absenteeism or illness). This basic mediation model characterizes the job stress phenomenon known as burnout as well as its positive opposite of engagement with work (Leiter & Maslach, 2005).

- Burnout is an unpleasant and dysfunctional condition that both individuals and organizations would like to change; indeed, much of the major interest in burnout has been not simply to understand what it is but to figure out what to do about it (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998).

- The cynicism (or depersonalization) component represents the interpersonal context dimension of burnout and refers to a negative, callous, or excessively detached response to various aspects of the job. The significance of this three-dimensional model is that it clearly places the individual strain experience within the social context of the workplace and involves the person’s conception of both self and others (Maslach, 1993).

- Research on burnout uses the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) to assess these three dimensions (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996).
More recently, other researchers have used the same term of “engagement” but have departed from the original Leiter and Maslach (1998) formulation. Although retaining the idea that engagement is a positive “opposite” of burnout, this alternative approach has developed a separate measure, with three different dimensions, rather than utilizing the opposite scores on the MBI (Gonzalez-Roma’, Schaufeli, Bakker, & Lloret, 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

New research has suggested that this alternative approach contributes very little additional explained variance over the MBI (Leiter & Laschinger, 2006).

The practical significance of this burnout–engagement continuum is that engagement represents a desired goal for any burnout interventions. (Leiter & Maslach, 1998).

Exhaustion is not something that is simply experienced—rather, it prompts actions to distance one emotionally and cognitively from one’s work, presumably as a way to cope with work overload. (Maslach & Leiter, 2005).

The initial research on burnout, which began in the mid-1970s and 1980s, was concentrated in the United States and Canada, but with the translations of articles and research measures, it began to be studied in many other countries. Currently, research is being conducted internationally, with the bulk of the work occurring in Post-industrialized nations (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

Europeans show lower average scores than do North Americans (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998) and other researchers have found cultural differences in multi-
national data sets (Golembiewski, Boudreau, Munzenrider, & Luo, 1996; Savicki, 2002).

- Research has established that burnout is a stress phenomenon that shows the expected pattern of health correlates, such as headaches, gastrointestinal disorders, muscle tension, hypertension, cold/flu episodes, and sleep disturbances (Leiter & Maslach, 2000).

- Work performance resulting from negative attitudes and behaviors (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993). These symptoms are largely represented in the diagnosis for job-related neurasthenia (World Health Organization, 1992), so recent research has been utilizing this diagnosis as the psychiatric equivalent of burnout.

- A recent study has found that burnout scores on the MBI can distinguish psychiatric outpatients diagnosed with job-related neurasthenia from outpatients diagnosed with other mental disorders as well as that the former group shows a less pathological profile than the latter (Schaufeli, Bakker, Hoogduin, Schaap, & Kladler, 2001).

- Other research has shown that burnout is distinct from (but possibly predictive of) more severe types of mental illness. Between burnout and depression, (Bakker, Schaufeli, Demerouti, et al., 2000; Glass & McKnight, 1996; Leiter & Durup, 1994

- While other research has found that burnout is predictive of depression and other emotional symptoms (Greenglass & Burke, 1990; Schonfeld, 1989).

- Research on work–family issues has found that burnout has a negative “spillover” effect; workers experiencing burnout were rated by their spouses in more negative ways (Jackson & Maslach, 1982; Zedeck, Maslach, Mosier, & Skitka, 1988)
• The workers reported that their job had a negative impact on their family and that their marriage was unsatisfactory (Burke & Greenglass, 1989, 2001).

• Several demographic variables have been studied in relation to burnout, but the studies are relatively few and the findings are not that consistent (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998, for a review).

• As with demographic variables, there have been some suggestive trends, but the only consistent findings have come from research on the Big Five personality dimensions, which have found a link between burnout and the dimension of Neuroticism (Deary et al., 1996; Hills & Norvell, 1991; Zellars, Perrewe, & Hochwartuer, 2000).

• In contrast to the relative dearth of significant individual variables, many organizational risk factors have been identified in research across many occupations (Maslach & Leiter, 2005; Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

• Researchers do not universally agree about the accuracy of the conceptualization of burnout as this three-part construct. Lee and Ashforth (1996) contested that exhaustion and depersonalization develop in parallel and together lead to diminished professional efficacy.

• Other researchers have argued that depersonalization and diminished professional efficacy are actually consequences of emotional exhaustion, not part of the burnout construct itself (Moore, 1997).

• Several studies have confirmed the order of the phases of burnout (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Koeske & Koeske, 1989; Leiter, 1991). That is, in order to cope with emotional exhaustion, individuals withdraw and depersonalize others, causing a
loss of personal commitment to their work relationships, eventually resulting in feelings of declining competence and diminished personal accomplishment (Leiter & Maslach, 1988).

- The work of Golembiewski (1996) toward the development of a phase model of burnout also supports the isolation the emotional exhaustion component.

- The exhaustion that can result from prolonged stressful situations may cause deteriorated health and well-being (De Dreu, Van Dierendonck, & Dijkstra, 2004).

- Burnout has been associated with mental health issues such as depression, insomnia, and anxiety (Quick, Quick, Nelson, & Hurrel, 1997).

- Looking at the components of the burnout construct, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization specifically have been associated with physiological and psychological strain and helplessness (Lee & Ashforth, 1990).

- A commonly discussed source of burnout is overload: job demands exceeding human limits. Increased workload has a consistent relationship with burnout, especially with the exhaustion dimension (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

- Structural models of burnout have shown that exhaustion then mediates the relationship of workload with the other two dimensions of burnout (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Leiter & Harvie, 1998). Both qualitative and quantitative work overload contribute to exhaustion by depleting the capacity of people to meet the demands of the job.
Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) observed that individuals suffering from burnout become hypercritical of the organization and distrust peers and colleagues. Perhaps the most important attitudinal consequence of burnout, though, is job dissatisfaction.

The association between job burnout and job satisfaction has been shown to be so strong that some researchers speculated that the two concepts were manifestations of the same underlying construct, rather than distinguishable distinct phenomena (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993; Tsigilis, Koustelios, & Togia, 2004).

Any organizational activity that can change the approach or alter the context can infuse energy into the work climate and thus, stave off burnout (Anonymous, 2011; Langer, 1989).

Research suggests that organizations that promote work environment in which staff can deal with and eliminate stress to develop more even-keeled, low-stress climates are showing high productivity and low absenteeism and presenteeism rates (Lack, 2011).