

Self Esteem and Sociotropy - Autonomy as predictors of Workplace Burnout among Private Sector Employees

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Abstract

Workplace burnout is a growing concern in the private sector, where employees face intense performance pressures, leading to stress and reduced productivity. While job-related factors are well-documented contributors, the role of personality traits in burnout remains an area of interest. This study examines the impact of Self-Esteem, Sociotropy, and Autonomy on Workplace Burnout among private sector employees. A sample of 120 employees was analyzed using ANOVA, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression. The findings reveal that burnout levels significantly differ across employee groups ($F = 8.210, p < .001$), but Self-Esteem and Sociotropy did not show significant relationships with burnout ($p > .05$). However, Autonomy was negatively correlated with burnout ($r = -0.349, p = .027$) and significantly predicted lower burnout levels ($B = -0.129, p = .025$). These results suggest that job autonomy portrays a significant part in reducing burnout, while self-esteem as well as sociotropy may not be direct predictors. The study highlights the need for organizations to enhance job autonomy, implement stress management programs, and adopt flexible work policies to mitigate burnout. Future research should explore additional workplace stressors and long-term intervention strategies. These findings underscore the importance of organizational structures that prioritize employee autonomy and mental well-being. Encouraging participative decision-making, providing opportunities for self-directed work, and promoting supportive leadership can foster a healthier work environment. Moreover, regular mental health assessments and resilience training can help employees manage stress more effectively. By integrating these practices, organizations can not only reduce burnout but also enhance overall job satisfaction, engagement, and long-term productivity among private sector employees.

Keywords: Workplace burnout, self-esteem, sociotropy, autonomy, private sector employees, occupational stress

INTRODUCTION

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem reflects an individual's sense of self-worth and capability. It influences motivation, resilience, and workplace relationships. Low self-esteem correlates with emotional exhaustion and burnout, particularly in employees with high sociotropy—those reliant on social approval (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; Blatt et al., 2001) [11]. In contrast, individuals with high self-esteem manage stress more effectively.

Sociotropy and Autonomy

Beck's (1983) sociotropy-autonomy framework defines two personality traits affecting stress management [10]. Sociotropic individuals prioritize relationships and are more prone to burnout due to dependence on external validation. Autonomous

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Received Date: June 03, 2025

Accepted Date: July 23, 2025

Published Date: November 22, 2025

Citation: Palak Jaggi, Smriti Sethi. Self Esteem and Sociotropy - Autonomy as predictors of Workplace Burnout among Private Sector Employees. International Journal of Behavioral Sciences. 2025; 2(2): 81–89p.

individuals, valuing independence and achievement, exhibit resilience but may still experience burnout from workaholism.

Workplace Burnout

Burnout, caused by prolonged work stress, results in emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced performance (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998) [11]. The JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) [9] links burnout to excessive job demands and insufficient resources. It contributes to lower productivity, dissatisfaction, and turnover, affecting both employees and organizations.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, Beck's Personality Theory, and Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Theory. The JD-R Model explains that burnout results when job demands exceed resources, with autonomy serving as a key buffer. Beck's theory outlines sociotropy and autonomy as personality traits that affect how individuals handle stress. Rosenberg's theory suggests that self-esteem helps with stress management. Together, these theories may show that certain personality traits may influence people's workplace experiences.

Rationale for the Study

Burnout is a growing concern in high-pressure workplaces. While workload is a key factor, psychological traits like self-esteem and sociotropy-autonomy also impact stress levels. Low self-esteem and high sociotropy increase burnout risk due to reliance on external approval, while autonomous employees may struggle with work-life balance. This study explores how these traits influence burnout in the private sector, aiming to inform strategies that enhance resilience, job satisfaction, and organizational performance.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Alimbekov, A., et al. (2025) [1] explored the mediating role of self-esteem in the relationship among perceived organizational aid as well as burnout within college level teachers. Using a survey-based, cross-sectional design with 407 participants, the study found that organizational support reduced burnout while enhancing self-esteem. Additionally, self-esteem fully mediated this relationship, indicating that supportive work environments not only mitigated burnout but also boosted educators' confidence. These findings highlighted the importance of institutional support in enhancing faculty well-being and reducing job-related stress. By establishing self-esteem as a crucial link between organizational support and burnout, the study provided valuable insights for developing strategies that promoted a healthier and more supportive academic work environment.(Table-1)

Bai, A., & Vahedian, M. (2023) [2] conducted a longitudinal study tracking 250 employees in IT firms over 12 months to assess the association of workplace stress, self-esteem, plus burnout within digital work environments. The study discovered that employees with lower self-esteem had greater susceptibility towards burnout, particularly when organizational commitment was weak. However, the presence of an ethical work environment helped mitigate these negative effects.

Gómez-Salgado, J., et al. (2023) [6] conducted a systematic review of 60 studies examining remote work burnout, job stress, and employee performance. The findings revealed that employees with low self-esteem were more susceptible to burnout due to the absence of face-to-face validation and increased job stress. The review highlighted how remote work conditions can amplify stressors, leading to diminished job performance, particularly for individuals who rely on external affirmation. These results underscore the importance of organizational strategies that promote employee well-being, such as virtual support systems and self-esteem-boosting initiatives, to mitigate burnout in remote work settings. (Table-2)

Zhalifunnas, M.S., et al. (2023) [8] performed quantitative research examining the association between job autonomy and workplace well-being within 322 employees in Makassar, Indonesia. Using regression analysis, the study found a significant positive impact of job autonomy on employee welfare.

Higher levels of autonomy were linked to greater workplace well-being, reducing detrimental behaviors. Results suggested organizations can enhance employee well-being by granting more autonomy in job roles, ultimately supporting company sustainability and employee satisfaction.

Gillet, N., et al. (2020) [5] conducted a three-year longitudinal study to examine how psychological demands, self-esteem, and social support impact burnout among 350 private-sector employees. Findings revealed that individuals with higher self-esteem and greater social support experienced lower burnout over time, even in high-stress work environments. The study underscores the significance of fostering strong workplace support systems and enhancing self-esteem as protective factors against burnout. Additionally, the research contributes to the broader discussion on psychological well-being in the workplace, highlighting the success of organizational interventions in building worker resilience as well as decreasing the bad result of prolonged work-related stress. (Table-3)

Johnson, A.R., et al. (2020) [7] studied the likelihood of low self-esteem, high stress, and burnout of healthcare professionals in a private health center. The study included a diverse sample of 306 healthcare professionals, using validated scales to measure self-esteem, stress, and burnout. The analysis indicated that low self-esteem nearly tripled the likelihood of high stress, which in turn greatly increased the risk of burnout. Additionally, self-esteem had both a direct and indirect impact on burnout through stress. The study emphasized the importance of routine screening and counseling programs to address these psychological risks among healthcare workers.

Blom, V., et al. (2018) [3] investigated the relationship among job insecurity, burnout, and depressive symptoms, with a focus on how performance-based self-esteem (PBSE) moderates these effects. Using a large sample of 4,145 twins, the study found that job insecurity was strongly linked to both burnout and depression. Moreover, individuals with high PBSE—whose self-worth is tied to their work performance—experienced even stronger negative effects from job insecurity compared to those with lower PBSE. By incorporating a personality trait into the analysis, the study provided deeper insights into how job insecurity contributes to mental health issues, emphasizing its significant impact on burnout and depression. (Table-4)

Galanakis, M., et al. (2016) [4] performed a meta-analysis of 50 to explore the link of workplace stress, burnout, and self-esteem. The review found that low self-esteem consistently predicted higher burnout, while a positive self-perception helped buffer against workplace stress. The study highlighted that stress and self-esteem influence each other across personal, psychological, and professional domains. These findings emphasize the importance of stress management techniques not only in reducing stress but also in enhancing self-esteem. Ultimately, the research underscores the need to integrate stress-reducing strategies to improve self-esteem, prevent psychological disorders, and enhance overall well-being.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

This research aims to examine the predictive role of self-esteem and sociotropy-autonomy personality dimensions in workplace burnout among private sector employees.

Objectives

1. To study the difference in level of Self Esteem, Sociotropy, Autonomy and Workplace Burnout among Private Sector Employees.
2. To study the relationship between Self Esteem and Workplace Burnout.
3. To study the relationship between Sociotropy and Workplace Burnout.
4. To study the relationship between Autonomy and Workplace Burnout.
5. To study Self Esteem as a predictor of Workplace Burnout.
6. To study Sociotropy as a predictor of Workplace Burnout.
7. To study Autonomy as a predictor of Workplace Burnout.

HYPOTHESIS

- H_1 : There is a significant difference in the level of Self-Esteem, Sociotropy, Autonomy, and Workplace Burnout among Private Sector Employees.
- H_2 : There is a significant negative relationship between Self-Esteem and Workplace Burnout.
- H_3 : There is a significant positive relationship between Sociotropy and Workplace Burnout.
- H_4 : There is a significant negative relationship between Autonomy and Workplace Burnout.
- H_5 : Self-Esteem significantly predict Workplace Burnout.
- H_6 : Sociotropy significantly predict Workplace Burnout.
- H_7 : Autonomy significantly predict Workplace Burnout.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a structured plan or a series of steps that guide the research process while ensuring maximum control over variables that may affect the validity of the findings. It encompasses the researcher's overall strategy for gathering answers to the key research questions driving the study. Types of research design which are commonly used are exploratory, descriptive, correlational, experimental, and causal. The present study followed an explanatory design for deciding the hypotheses. Once the hypotheses were finalized, descriptive and correlational research designs were adopted. (Table- 5 & 6)

Extensive literature survey was done under exploratory research design to come up with the gaps in the current literature and identify hypotheses to be tested.

VARIABLES

Independent Variable

- Self Esteem
- Autonomy
- Sociotropy

Dependant Variable

- Workplace Burnout

Sample and its Selection

20 research papers and literature reviews surrounding self esteem, sociotropy, autonomy and workplace burnout over the last decade were studied and the 8 most relevant ones were listed out. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) by Morris Rosenberg (1965), Sociotropy-Autonomy Scale (SAS) by Aaron T. Beck (1983) and Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) by Eva Demerouti and colleagues (2001) was generated into a google form and had been filled by 120 private sector employees within the age ranges of 20 to 49 years.

Inclusion Criteria

The study includes private sector employees aged between 20 to 49 who are actively employed and provide informed consent. Participants must be proficient in the survey language and complete it in full to ensure data accuracy and reliability.

Exclusion Criteria

The study excludes public sector employees, freelancers, those on extended leave, individuals with incomplete responses, and those who do not provide consent.

Description of the Tool Employed

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) is a 10-item tool measuring global self-esteem on a 4-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating greater self-worth. It has high reliability and is widely used in psychological and workplace studies.

The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) assesses burnout through 16 items measuring exhaustion and disengagement on a 4-point scale, with strong reliability. Unlike the Maslach Burnout Inventory, it captures burnout as a two-dimensional construct.

The Sociotropy-Autonomy Scale (SAS) by Beck evaluates personality traits influencing stress responses, with 60 items divided into sociotropy and autonomy. Rated on a 5-point Likert scale, it has high reliability and is widely used in clinical and occupational research.

PROCEDURE

Prior to data collection, ethics approval was obtained, and informed consent secured from participants, ensuring they were aware of their rights, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation. The survey was administered online through social media, email, and collaborations with various organizations. It remained open for 4-6 weeks, with reminders sent to encourage participation from those who had not yet completed it. A small pilot test was conducted with 10-15 participants to assess the clarity of the survey and the usability of the platform. Necessary refinements were made based on the feedback. After distributing the survey, responses were monitored and data was collected. Once the survey closed, the dataset was cleaned to remove incomplete responses and ensure accuracy. For data analysis, Pearson correlation was calculated for the variables to determine whether there is a statistically significant impact of one on the other. The findings were compiled into a research report, presenting the analysis and insights. Based on the results, recommendations were offered, along with suggested directions for future research. (Table-7)

RESULT

Table 1. ANOVA for Workplace Burnout Across Three Employee Groups of Varied Ages.

Variables	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Between Groups	479.317	2	239.658	8.210	<.001
Within Groups	3415.350	117	29.191		
Total	3894.667	119			

Table 2. Pearson Correlation for Self Esteem, Sociotropy, Autonomy and Workplace Burnout for Age Group 1 (20–29 Years).

Variable	Mean	SD	SE	S	A	WB
SE1	32.15	5.62	1	.041 (p = .802)	.041 (p = .803)	.044 (p = .789)
S1	28.76	4.98	.041 (p = .802)	1	.371 (p = .018)*	-.037 (p = .821)
A1	30.45	6.12	.041 (p = .803)	.371 (p = .018)*	1	-.349 (p = .027)*
WB1	45.32	5.78	.044 (p = .789)	-.037 (p = .821)	-.349 (p = .027)*	1

Table 3. Regression Analysis Predicting Workplace Burnout for Age Group 1 (20–29 Years).

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.367	.135	.062	5.528

Table 4. Pearson Correlation for Self Esteem, Sociotropy, Autonomy and Workplace Burnout for Age Group 2 (30–39 Years).

Variable	Mean	SD	SE	S	A	WB
SE2	30.89	5.23	1	-.271 (p = .091)	.348 (p = .028)*	-.187 (p = .247)
S2	27.34	5.12	-.271 (p = .091)	1	.275 (p = .086)	-.028 (p = .864)
A2	29.87	6.45	.348 (p = .028)*	.275 (p = .086)	1	-.135 (p = .406)
WB2	44.76	6.08	-.187 (p = .247)	-.028 (p = .864)	-.135 (p = .406)	1

Table 5. Regression Analysis Predicting Workplace Burnout for Age Group 2 (30–39 Years).

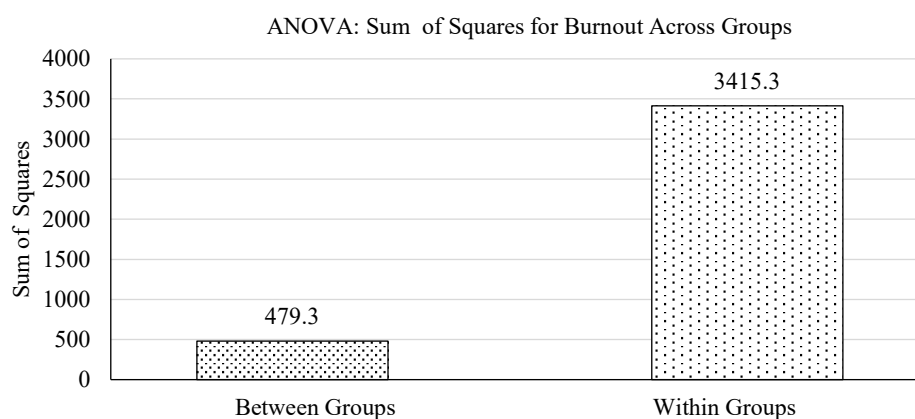
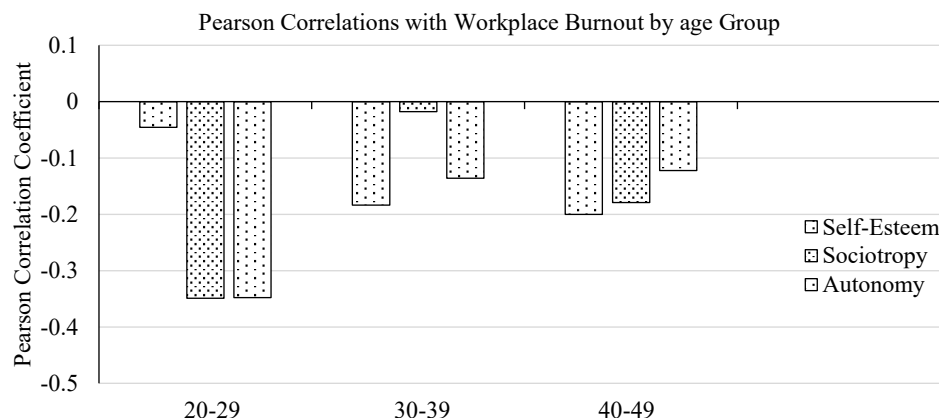
Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.209	.044	-.036	4.151

Table 6. Pearson Correlation for Self Esteem, Sociotropy, Autonomy and Workplace Burnout for Age Group 3 (40–49 Years).

Variable	Mean	SD	SE	S	A	WB
SE3	31.25	5.78	1	-.031 (p = .847)	.280 (p = .081)	-.200 (p = .217)
S3	28.12	4.67	-.031 (p = .847)	1	-.222 (p = .169)	-.086 (p = .597)
A3	29.92	6.34	.280 (p = .081)	-.222 (p = .169)	1	-.120 (p = .462)
WB3	45.21	6.45	-.200 (p = .217)	-.086 (p = .597)	-.120 (p = .462)	1

Table 7. Regression Analysis Predicting Workplace Burnout for Age Group 3 (40–49 Years).

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.237	.056	-.022	6.261

**Figure 1.** Graphical representation of table 1.**Figure 2.** Graphical representation of tables 2, 4 and 6.

The results indicate that Workplace Burnout (WB) significantly differs across employee groups ($F = 8.210$, $p < .001$), with autonomy being the only psychological factor significantly correlated with burnout in one dataset ($r = -0.349$, $p = .027$), suggesting that higher autonomy reduces burnout. However, self-esteem and sociotropy showed no significant relationships with burnout across all datasets ($p > .05$). Regression analyses further revealed that autonomy was the only significant predictor of burnout in one dataset ($B = -0.129$, $p = .025$), while self-esteem and sociotropy did not predict burnout in any dataset. Overall, the models explained limited variance in burnout, indicating that other workplace factors play a more significant role in influencing employee well-being as shown in figure 1–3.

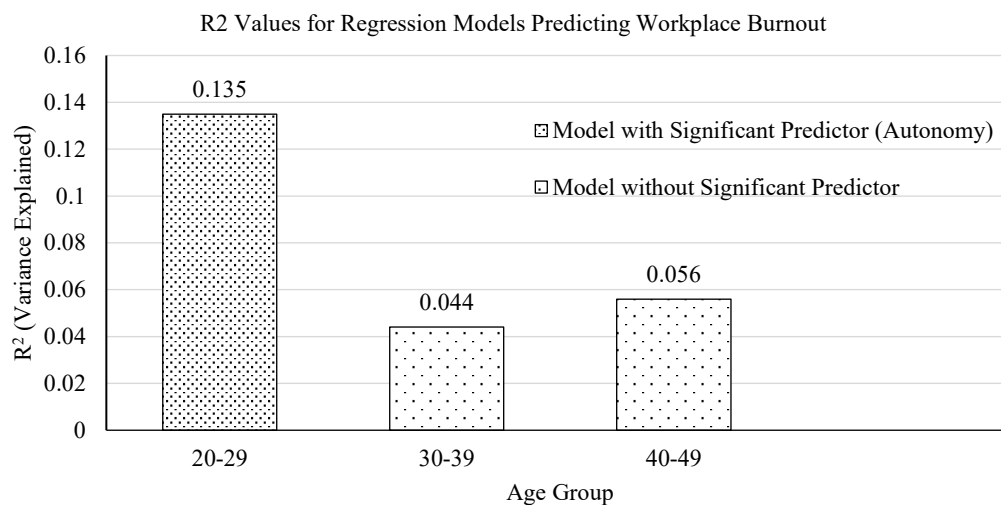


Figure 3. Graphical representation of tables 3, 5 and 7.

DISCUSSION

The study explored how Self-Esteem, Sociotropy, and Autonomy influence Workplace Burnout among private sector employees. While previous literature strongly suggested that personality traits play a significant role in burnout, the findings from this study presented a more nuanced and realistic perspective. The data revealed a significant difference in burnout levels across employee groups ($F = 8.210$, $p < .001$), indicating that burnout is not experienced uniformly and may be shaped more by external or demographic factors than by personality traits alone. However, there were no significant differences in Self-Esteem, Sociotropy, or Autonomy across these groups, suggesting that these traits remain relatively stable regardless of workplace stress levels or age.

Surprisingly, Self-Esteem did not show a significant relationship with burnout in any age group or dataset. This contrasts with much of the prior research that has emphasized low self-esteem as a risk factor for burnout. The results imply that, in practical workplace settings, internal confidence and self-worth may not be sufficient protective factors against the overwhelming demands and systemic pressures of high-stress jobs. Similarly, Sociotropy—the reliance on social approval and interpersonal relationships—was also not significantly associated with burnout. This suggests that in the context of private sector roles, where interpersonal dependence may not be as central, sociotropic tendencies may not necessarily translate into greater vulnerability to burnout.

Among the variables studied, Autonomy was the only factor that showed a significant negative correlation with burnout in one subset of data ($r = -0.349$, $p = .027$), and it also significantly predicted lower burnout levels ($B = -0.129$, $p = .025$). This indicates that employees who experience higher levels of control and independence in their roles are less likely to experience burnout, affirming the importance of autonomy as a protective job resource. However, this relationship was not consistent across all age groups, highlighting the potential influence of job roles, organizational structures, or how autonomy is perceived and utilized by different individuals. While autonomy showed some promise, the regression models overall explained only a small portion of variance in burnout (R^2 between .044 and .135), pointing to the likelihood that many other factors—such as workload, job demands, leadership quality, and organizational culture—play more substantial roles in employee burnout than individual personality traits alone.

The findings collectively emphasize that workplace burnout is more deeply rooted in environmental and systemic conditions than in internal psychological traits. While autonomy appears to offer some buffer against burnout, boosting self-esteem or addressing sociotropy alone is unlikely to provide meaningful relief. As such, organizations aiming to combat burnout should focus on creating supportive

environments, enhancing employees' control over their work, and minimizing systemic stressors rather than relying solely on personality-based interventions. These results underscore the complexity of burnout and the need for multifaceted solutions that integrate organizational change with employee well-being strategies.

CONCLUSION

The study provides valuable insights into the psychological and workplace factors contributing to employee burnout. While Self-Esteem and Sociotropy were not found to be significant predictors of burnout, Autonomy emerged as an essential factor in mitigating stress, particularly in one dataset. These findings suggest that burnout prevention strategies should prioritize job autonomy and workplace conditions rather than focusing solely on individual personality traits.

Limitation

1. *Limited Generalizability:* Findings are based on private sector employees, limiting applicability to other sectors.
2. *Cross-Sectional Design:* Data was collected at one point in time, preventing causal conclusions.
3. *Narrow Psychological Scope:* Only Self-Esteem, Sociotropy, and Autonomy were studied, excluding other key burnout factors.
4. *Self-Reported Data:* Potential biases like social desirability may affect responses.
5. *Variability in Autonomy's Impact:* The relationship between Autonomy and Burnout differed across datasets, suggesting industry or role-specific influences.

Recommendations

1. *Expand Sample:* Include employees from public, private, and nonprofit sectors for broader insights.
2. *Use Longitudinal Design:* Track employees over time to examine causal relationships.
3. *Explore Additional Factors:* Study job satisfaction, leadership style, and work-life balance in relation to burnout.
4. *Consider Demographic Influences:* Analyze how gender, age, and culture affect burnout relationships.
5. *Compare Job Roles:* Investigate burnout levels across different organizational positions to identify at-risk groups.

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