

COPING REPERTOIRES AS PREDICTORS OF BURNOUT TRAJECTORIES IN IT- WORKERS: A PSYCHOSOCIAL

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ABSTRACT

Background: Burnout is a work-related psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced efficacy, prevalent in high-stress professions such as Information Technology. **Objectives:** This study aimed to assess the levels of burnout and coping strategies among IT professionals in Nungambakkam, Chennai, and to explore their correlation along with associations to demographic variables. **Materials & Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional design was adopted, involving 100 IT professionals aged 25–45 years selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected between Sep19 - Oct 10, 2024, using the validated Copenhagen Burnout Inventory and the Brief COPE Questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, Karl Pearson’s correlation, and Chi-square tests were applied to analyze the data. **Results:** The study revealed a high prevalence of burnout, with over half of IT professionals reporting significant fatigue and client-related stress. The mean burnout score was 52.69 ± 20.53 , with self-distraction being the most common coping strategy and substance use minimal. An inverse correlation was observed between burnout and coping ($r = -0.229$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that effective coping reduces burnout symptoms. Burnout was significantly associated with demographic and work-related factors, while coping strategies were influenced by gender and family structure. **Discussion:** These results reflect existing research indicating that early-career professionals and those working long hours are at greater risk, and that adaptive coping strategies are essential for maintaining psychological resilience. **Conclusion and Recommendations:** Tackling burnout among IT professionals calls for a nursing-led, multidisciplinary approach with organizational support, adaptive coping, flexible policies, and mental health initiatives to enhance resilience, well-being, and productivity.

Introduction

An individual’s vocation represents a pivotal aspect of their identity, consuming a considerable share of their time and psychological commitment across the lifespan. The pursuit and attainment of personal ambitions, needs, and ideals

through professional engagement frequently foster a deep sense of fulfillment and self-actualization. A substantial body of empirical research has consistently underscored the strong association between occupational roles and the holistic health

outcomes of employees. In response, numerous developed nations have implemented or are in the process of developing robust legislative policies and structural frameworks intended to regulate the work environment and ensure the preservation and enhancement of workforce well-being.^[1]

Burnout represents a complex and multidimensional psychological syndrome, characteristically marked by persistent emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a significant deterioration in one's sense of personal accomplishment. ^[2] It primarily manifests in individuals subjected to chronic exposure to emotionally demanding and interpersonally taxing occupational environments. This condition emerges as the cumulative consequence of sustained and overwhelming professional stressors, culminating in a debilitating state of emotional, physical, and cognitive depletion. It compromises professional functionality and fosters pervasive feelings of ineffectiveness, disillusionment, and psychological detachment from one's vocational identity.^[1] Burnout is conventionally delineated by three core dimensions: chronic fatigue, emotional withdrawal or cynicism toward work-related obligations, and a diminished

perception of professional efficacy or growth.^[3] The timely identification and systematic management of burnout are vital in reinforcing organizational commitment and ensuring long-term occupational resilience.^[4] Accordingly, routine assessment and strategic intervention are essential to safeguard institutional integrity and optimize workforce potential.^[5] A coping inventory was to systematically assess the cognitive and behavioral strategies individuals employ in response to stress. This tool enhances the validity of coping research by capturing diverse approaches such as problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance strategies.^[6]

Furthermore, heightened levels of occupational engagement have been robustly associated with increased subjective well-being and inversely correlated with manifestations of depressive symptomatology and professional burnout.^[7] Burnout, as a multidimensional construct, is substantially influenced by factors such as the magnitude of workload, psychosocial characteristics of the work environment, and the cumulative duration of professional experience.^[8] Empirical evidence suggests that diminished tenure in the workforce

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predisposes individuals to elevated vulnerability to burnout-related syndromes. Interestingly, empirical findings from a Sri Lankan study challenge conventional paradigms by indicating an absence of statistically significant associations between employee performance and organizational determinants such as workload, environmental conditions, and structural or cultural frameworks^[9]. A Talker Research survey found that 68% of Gen Z and 61% of millennials are affected by workplace burnout key drivers include lack of appreciation, rising expectations, and toxic work environments^[10]. Complementing these findings, the UKG Workforce Institute documented that nearly 78% of Indian employees experience varying intensities of job-related burnout, frequently culminating in both somatic exhaustion and affective dysregulation.^[7] Recent study of emergency, intensive care, nephrology, and oncology nurses revealed that approximately 82% of nurses surveyed exhibited moderate to high levels of Burnout^[11].

The present study aims to assess the burnout syndrome and coping strategies among IT professionals. This evaluation seeks to elucidate the relationship between the coping mechanisms adopted and the

degree of burnout experienced by individuals within the profession. Notably, this study offers a novel contribution by focusing specifically on the Indian IT sector, a workforce exposed to prolonged working hours, high productivity expectations, and rapid technological shifts factors that have intensified in the post-pandemic work culture. Unlike previous studies that examine burnout and coping in isolation, this research uniquely integrates both constructs to capture their interdependence in a digitally driven, high-stress occupational context. Furthermore, by identifying effective coping strategies that correlate with reduced burnout symptoms, the study provides actionable insights for the formulation of targeted mental health interventions and organizational policies tailored to the evolving demands of the Indian tech industry.

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Objectives

To assess the burnout syndrome and coping strategies among IT Professionals, To determine the correlation between burnout syndrome and coping strategies among IT Professionals, To assess the significant association of burnout among IT professionals with the selected demographic variable, To assess the significant association of coping strategies among IT professionals with the selected demographic variables

Hypotheses

H₁: There will be a significant correlation between the level of burnout syndrome and coping strategies among IT Professionals, @ P<0.05

H₂: There will be a significant association between burnout syndrome and demographic Variables among IT Professionals @ P<0.05

H₃: There will be a significant association between Coping strategies and demographic Variables among IT Professionals, @ P<0.05

Methodology

The present investigation set out to employ a descriptive cross-sectional design to explore the prevalence of burnout and the coping strategies employed by Information Technology (IT) professionals stationed in Nungambakkam, Chennai. Over the course of ten days from Sep 19th to Oct 10th 2024 the data collection process was meticulously carried out. The study population consisted of 120 IT professionals from a purposively selected company, encompassing individuals working across diverse roles such as software development, project management, IT support, cybersecurity, and data analytics. Given the inherently high-stress nature of the IT sector marked by relentless deadlines, extended work hours, and the rapid pace of technological change this group was ideally suited for an in-depth examination of burnout manifestations and coping mechanisms.

Out of the initial 120 professionals, a purposive sample of 100 IT Professionals who met the inclusion criteria was selected for participation. The inclusion criteria stipulated professionals aged between 25 and 45 years, currently employed at the designated company, and capable of providing informed consent. Meanwhile, those with a diagnosed psychiatric

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condition, those on medical or disability leave, or those unwilling or unable to consent were excluded from participation.

A non-probability purposive sampling method was employed in keeping with the study's specific focus. Data collection was executed using a carefully structured and validated questionnaire, developed in light of an extensive review of the existing body of literature and refined through expert consultation. The tool comprised three major components: socio-demographic details, burnout evaluation via the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI), and assessment of coping strategies through the Brief COPE Questionnaire. Each instrument was adapted and validated for contextual appropriateness and was administered in English. Prior to data collection, ethical clearance was duly obtained from the Institutional Ethical Committee of A.C.S Medical College and Hospital, Dr. M.G.R Educational and Research Institute. **(Ref. No 1258/2024/IEC/ACSMCH Dt. 05.07.2024)** The IT company where data were gathered was situated approximately 15 kilometers from the parent institution, necessitating daily commutes by the principal investigator to the corporate premises. Formal authorization to conduct

the study was secured well in advance from the Human Resources Department of the participating organization. To uphold strict confidentiality, all response sheets were anonymized beyond recognition. Participants were issued structured questionnaires aimed at assessing both their levels of burnout and their coping strategies. Following data collection, the principal investigator presented the key findings to the company's Vice President. By way of follow-up, informational pamphlets were disseminated. Additionally, with the full support of management, individualized educational interventions were provided to those identified as experiencing moderate to high levels of burnout.

Descriptive statistical tools namely frequency and percentage distributions were used to describe the prevalence of burnout and the spectrum of coping strategies employed. To delve deeper into the relationship between burnout and coping styles, inferential statistics were applied using Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient. Moreover, the Chi-square test was employed to ascertain statistically significant associations between burnout and selected demographic variables, as well as between coping mechanisms and socio-

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demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Result

The socio-demographic characteristics of the study population offer fundamental insights into the participants. The vast majority were in the 25–29 age group (99%), with a small proportion aged 30–34 years (1%). In terms of gender distribution, a significantly higher percentage were female (67%) compared to male (33%). Regarding educational qualifications, 59% had completed undergraduate studies, while 41% held a postgraduate degree. In relation to family structure, 39% came from nuclear families, 38% from joint families, and 23% from single-parent households. With respect to marital status, the majority of participants were single (83%), and 17% were married. A notable 11% had children, and a substantial 94% reported working more than eight hours per day. Concerning years of professional experience, 66% had been employed for 1–2 years, while 7% had more than five years of service. In terms of the primary caregiver for children, 79% marked this as not applicable, while 4% identified their husbands, 6% their wives, and 11% selected others.

To evaluate burnout among IT professionals, the study focused on three core dimensions: overall physical and psychological fatigue, physical and psychological fatigue, and client-related fatigue. Regarding overall physical and psychological fatigue, 7% of participants reported low levels, 42% experienced moderate levels, and 51% reported high levels. For physical and psychological fatigue alone, 12% had low levels, 43% moderate, and 42% high levels. In relation to client-related fatigue, 14% of participants experienced low levels, 27% moderate, and a majority of 59% faced high levels of burnout. These results indicate considerable burnout, especially in terms of reduced personal accomplishment and occupational exhaustion. (**Table: 1**)

The mean score for overall physical and psychological fatigue was 52.29 ± 21.17 , with a median of 54.17. For physical and psychological fatigue, the mean score was 51.18 ± 20.27 , with a median of 50.0. Client-related fatigue had a mean score of 54.62 ± 25.0 , with a median of 58.33. The overall mean burnout score was 52.69 ± 20.53 , with a median of 54.96.

Coping mechanisms among IT professionals showed that self-distraction had the highest mean score (5.33 ± 1.39),

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while substance use had the lowest (2.6 ± 1.22). The overall mean coping score was 64.47 ± 11.15 , with a median of 66.0. **(Table: 2)**

The correlation between burnout and coping strategies among IT professionals revealed a statistically significant inverse relationship. The mean burnout score was 52.69 ± 20.53 , and the mean coping score was 64.47 ± 11.15 . Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient was $r = -0.229$, indicating a weak negative correlation that was statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. Suggests that lower coping abilities are associated with higher levels of burnout. **(Table: 3)**

Analysis of burnout levels in relation to socio-demographic variables indicated significant associations. Burnout, as measured by the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory scale, was significantly associated with gender ($p = 0.0001$), socio-economic status ($p = 0.0001$), educational qualification ($p = 0.0001$), daily working hours ($p = 0.0001$), years of experience ($p = 0.0001$), marital status ($p = 0.004$), and the identity of the primary caregiver for children ($p = 0.003$). Other demographic variables did not demonstrate statistically significant associations with burnout at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Similarly, the association between coping scores and selected demographic variables showed significant results for gender ($p = 0.004$) and family structure ($p = 0.042$). Other socio-demographic variables did not show statistically significant relationships with coping scores among the IT professionals at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Discussion

The demographic delineation of the cohort demonstrated a pronounced predominance of participants within the 25–29-year age. (99%), with a greater representation of females (67%). Socioeconomic stratification revealed that nearly two-thirds (62%) were situated within the lower middle class. Educationally, 59% had attained undergraduate qualifications, whereas 41% possessed postgraduate degrees. Analysis of familial typologies indicated that 39% resided in nuclear households, 38% in joint family systems, and 23% within single-parent households.

With regard to marital and reproductive status, a vast majority were unmarried (83%) and childless (94%). Occupational characteristics highlighted that 94% were engaged in employment

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exceeding eight hours daily. In terms of professional tenure, 66% reported one to two years of experience, 27% reported two to four years, and 7% had accrued five years or more. Pertaining to childcare responsibilities, 79% reported the variable as non-applicable, whereas the remainder identified husbands (4%), wives (6%), or alternative caregivers (11%) as the primary providers.

Maslach et al. (2016) found that younger employees (25–34) and women reported higher emotional exhaustion, and those with <5 years of experience showed greater burnout. These trends were most evident in high-demand sectors like IT. The present study aligns with these findings, as most participants were young, female, and early in their careers factors strongly linked to elevated burnout. This underscores the urgent need for workplace interventions to reduce stress and enhance well-being among IT professionals.^[12]

The principal objective of the present investigation was the systematic appraisal of burnout severity and concomitant coping repertoires among IT professionals. The empirical analysis disclosed an alarmingly high magnitude of burnout, with 58% of the cohort evidencing

severe burnout, 51% manifesting profound physical and psychological exhaustion, and 59% registering heightened client-related fatigue. In contradistinction, Schaufeli et al. (2008) operationalized burnout through mean indices across its canonical dimensions Exhaustion ($M = 1.28$, $SD = 0.92$), Cynicism ($M = 1.08$, $SD = 1.02$), and Reduced Professional Efficacy ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.82$) while delineating salient predictors such as excessive job demands ($p < 0.01$), diminished autonomy in task execution ($p < 0.01$), and attenuated supervisory ($p < 0.01$) as well as collegial support ($p < 0.01$). A synoptic inference emergent from both studies is that burnout constitutes a profound occupational hazard, exerting pernicious consequences on employee psychosocial well-being and organizational sustainability.^[13]

Concomitantly, the present inquiry interrogated coping mechanisms through the COPE inventory. Among the strategic modalities, planning attained the highest mean score ($M = 5.52$), followed in close succession by positive reframing ($M = 5.19$) and acceptance ($M = 5.08$), thereby underscoring their salience as dominant adaptive mechanisms. In contradistinction, substance use was relegated to the nadir of endorsement ($M = 2.60$), reflecting its

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marginal utility as a maladaptive strategy. The aggregate coping index was computed at $M = 64.47$ ($SD = 11.15$). In a parallel vein, Azeez et al. (2024), examining emergency department personnel in Jazan, discerned religious coping as the most prevalently mobilized modality (46%), succeeded by self-distraction and denial. Furthermore, participants experiencing accentuated emotional exhaustion demonstrated a predilection for instrumental support ($p < 0.001$), religious coping, and active problem-solving. Juxtaposition of these findings illuminates a convergent epistemic trajectory, wherein adaptive coping modalities such as planning, positive reframing, and religious coping are preferentially deployed under conditions of occupational stress, whereas maladaptive modalities, particularly substance use, remain residually peripheral.^[14]

The second objective of the present investigation was to delineate the nexus between burnout and coping strategies among IT professionals. Statistical analysis disclosed a significant inverse correlation ($r = -0.229$) between burnout ($M = 52.69 \pm 20.53$) and coping ($M = 64.47 \pm 11.15$), thereby indicating that augmentation of coping capacities is intrinsically associated

with a diminution in burnout severity. This observation converges with the findings of Martínez et al. (2020), who demonstrated that adaptive coping modalities particularly problem-solving and positive reappraisal serve as salutogenic mechanisms, inversely associated with burnout and concomitant depressive symptomatology, whereas maladaptive strategies exhibited a pathogenic orientation, intensifying both burnout manifestations and psychological morbidity. Taken in aggregate, these evidentiary convergences advance the contention that efficacious coping repertoires constitute a critical protective determinant, functioning as a psychological bulwark against the pernicious sequelae of occupational burnout.^[15]

The third objective of the present study was to interrogate the association between burnout and selected demographic determinants among IT professionals. The analysis revealed significantly elevated burnout levels among females, individuals from lower-middle-class strata, undergraduates, and employees exceeding eight working hours per day, with all associations reaching a high level of statistical significance ($p = 0.0001$). Marital status ($p = 0.004$) and primary caregiving responsibility ($p = 0.003$) likewise emerged

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as salient predictors at the $p < 0.01$ threshold. These findings parallel those of Lin et al. (2013), who demonstrated role-contingent variability in caregiver burnout (WBS $p = 0.003$), with maximal personal burnout scores reported by psychological counselors (58.3), social workers (49.4), and special educators (47.0). Furthermore, lifestyle and health indices were shown to exert a pronounced influence, as regular physical exercise exhibited a protective inverse association (PBS $p = 0.001$; WBS $p = 0.002$), while poor self-rated health strongly predicted heightened burnout ($p < 0.001$). Viewed collectively, these convergent results delineate burnout as a multifactorial construct not reducible to occupational demands alone but profoundly conditioned by sociodemographic and lifestyle variables. This underscores the imperative for holistic, multilevel interventions that integrate organizational, personal, and health-behavioral domains to attenuate the pernicious trajectory of burnout.^[16]

The fourth objective of this investigation was to delineate the association between coping strategies and selected demographic variables. The present analysis revealed a statistically significant association between gender and

coping repertoires, with females demonstrating superior coping scores relative to their male counterparts ($p = 0.004$). This aligns with the findings of Sharma and Sharma (2020), who, in a cohort of 300 IT professionals, observed that women reported significantly higher mean scores in adaptive coping modalities, particularly problem-solving ($M = 3.7$, $SD = 0.7$) and seeking social support ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 0.8$), in contrast to men (problem-solving: $M = 3.1$, $SD = 0.8$; social support: $M = 2.8$, $SD = 0.9$), with differences achieving high statistical significance ($t = -6.25$ and -7.12 , respectively, $p < 0.001$). Conversely, male professionals exhibited a greater proclivity for avoidance-based coping, reflected in a mean score of 3.5 ($SD = 0.6$), significantly surpassing that of females ($M = 3.2$, $SD = 0.7$; $t = 3.45$, $p = 0.001$). Taken together, these findings advance compelling evidence that gender functions as a salient determinant of coping style, with women more frequently mobilizing adaptive, problem-focused strategies, whereas men demonstrate a relatively higher reliance on avoidant modalities. Such gender-differentiated coping trajectories underscore the necessity of tailoring organizational interventions and resilience-building programs to

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account for sociocultural and gendered variations in stress appraisal and coping processes.^[17]

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study presents a nuanced evaluation of burnout and coping mechanisms among IT professionals in Chennai, elucidating a disconcerting prevalence of moderate to severe burnout within this workforce segment. The data reveal a predominant inclination toward problem-focused coping strategies, which are widely acknowledged for their superior efficacy in mitigating occupational stress. However, a considerable cohort also engages in emotion-focused coping, albeit with less frequency. Importantly, a constellation of sociodemographic and occupational variables including gender, educational attainment, socioeconomic standing, family configuration, marital status, daily working hours, and tenure demonstrated statistically significant associations with both the severity of burnout and the typology of coping strategies employed. These findings underscore the multifactorial determinants of stress adaptation within high-demand professional environments., conducted specifically in the Nungambakkam region

of Chennai, the study delineated elevated burnout manifestations in the realms of physical depletion, psychological weariness, and client-induced fatigue. The burden of burnout was particularly acute among early-career professionals and those routinely exceeding eight hours of daily work. Although coping mechanisms exhibited variability across the sample, self-distraction emerged as the most prevalent strategy, whereas reliance on maladaptive behaviors such as substance use was minimal.

A statistically significant but modest inverse correlation between burnout intensity and the effectiveness of coping strategies suggests that the deployment of more adaptive coping approaches correlates with diminished burnout symptoms. Furthermore, key demographic indicators including gender, socioeconomic background, educational level, marital status, occupational tenure, caregiving obligations, and daily working hours were intricately linked to burnout severity. Additionally, gender and familial typology were found to significantly influence the nature of coping responses.

These empirical insights accentuate the imperative for strategic organizational interventions tailored to ameliorate

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occupational stress and cultivate psychological resilience among IT professionals. Institutional reforms should prioritize the systematic monitoring of employee mental health, the establishment of psychologically safe and supportive work environments, the adoption of flexible and humane work schedules, and the integration of accessible, evidence-based mental health services. Collectively, these measures are poised to not only attenuate burnout but also to elevate employee morale, professional engagement, and overall organizational efficacy within the dynamic IT sector.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research work.

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Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of the level of burnout among the IT Professionals N=100

Level of Burnout	Low (≤25)		Intermediate (26 – 50)		High (>50)	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Overall physical and psychological fatigue	7	7.0	42	42.0	51	51.0
Physical and psychological fatigue	12	12.0	43	43.0	45	45.0
Client-related fatigue	14	14.0	27	27.0	59	59.0
Overall Burnout	6	6.0	36	36.0	58	58.0

Table 2: Assessment of mean and standard deviation of coping scores among the IT Professionals.

	Median	Mean	S.D
Self-distraction	5.5	5.33	1.39
Active coping	5.0	4.9	1.80
Denial	4.0	4.15	1.75
Substance use	2.0	2.6	1.22
Use of emotional support	4.0	4.51	1.49
Use of instrumental support	5.0	4.78	1.19

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Behavioural disengagement	4.0	4.71	1.79
Venting	4.0	4.2	1.21
Positive reframing	5.0	5.19	1.82
Planning	5.0	5.52	1.30
Humor	4.0	4.84	1.63
Acceptance	5.0	5.08	1.60
Religion	4.0	4.2	2.03
Self-blame	4.0	4.46	1.50
Overall Coping	66.0	64.47	11.15

Table 3: Correlation between burnout and coping among IT professionals

Variables	Mean	S. D	Karl Pearson's Correlation "r" & p-value
Burnout	52.69	20.53	r= -0.229 p=0.02, S*
Coping	64.47	11.15	

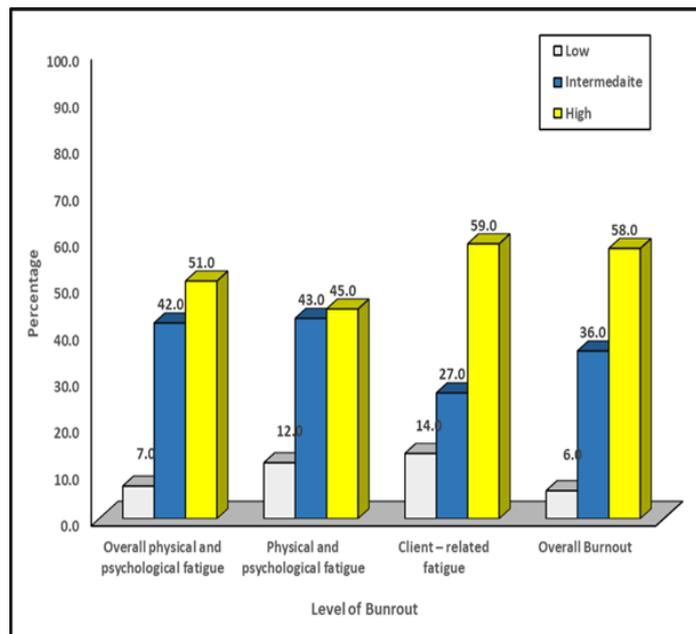


Fig: 1 Percentage distribution of the level of burnout among the IT Professionals

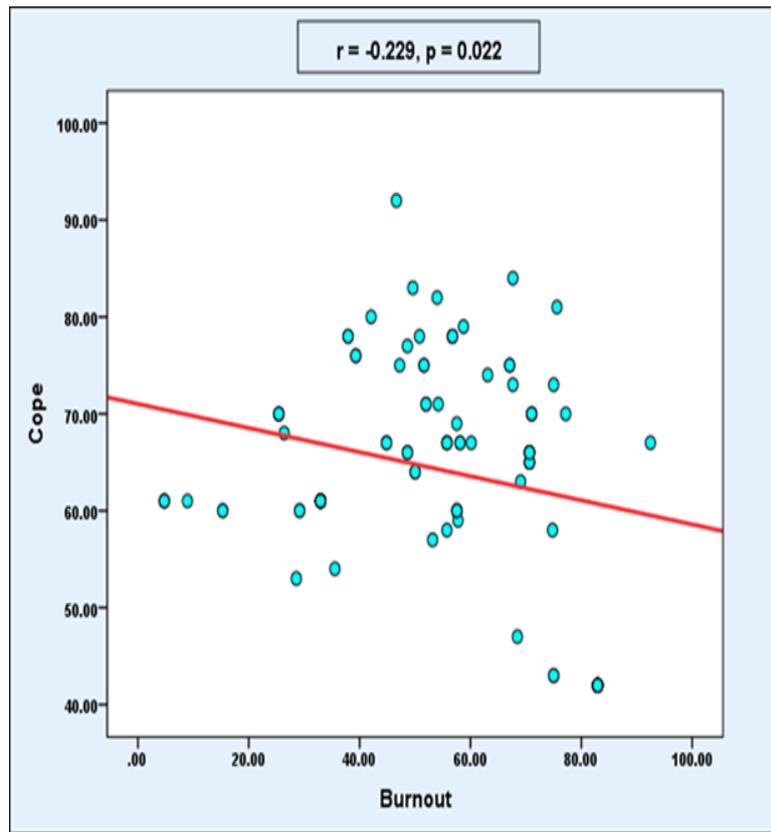


Fig: 2 Scatter diagram showing the relationship between burnout and coping among IT professional