

## **Understanding Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED) and Job Burnout Among Indian Expatriate Workers in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries: A Quantitative Study**

Hasna C<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

Ethnic discrimination becomes a significant threat to the occupational well-being of expatriate workers in workplace settings. One of the factors for the deterioration of occupational well-being due to perceived ethnic discrimination may be job burnout. The main objectives of the study were to find the relationship between perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout and to understand the differences in perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout in different religious and age groups among Indian expatriate workers in GCC countries. Data were collected from 201 Indian expatriate workers (99 young adults, 102 late adults, 100 Muslims and 102 non-Muslims) in GCC countries using the Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire and Oldenburg Burnout Inventory. Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis was used to measure the association between perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout, which revealed a significant positive correlation between perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout. Student's t-test was also applied, which showed a significant difference in perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout between Muslim and non-Muslim expatriate Indian workers and a significant difference in job burnout between young adult and late adult workers. The study highlighted the importance of taking necessary measures to wipe out ethnic discrimination towards Indian expatriate workers in GCC countries.

*Keywords:* Perceived ethnic discrimination, job burnout, Indian expatriate workers, occupational well-being

## **Introduction**

The number of Indians migrating to other countries for employment, especially Middle Eastern countries, has increased. The 1970s “oil bloom” in the Gulf Corporation Council countries became one of the primary reasons for accelerating this process. Consequently, one of the significant financial sources of India’s and Gulf states’ economic growth and development is now from the hands of Indian expatriate workers in GCC countries.

According to Arab News reports in 2012, 31 per cent of the total population in GCC countries is constituted by foreigners; among them, Indians are always higher in numbers. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), India is one of the largest migrant providers to the Gulf countries. Around 8.5 million Indians are there and do jobs in GCC countries. It was reported that for similar educational qualifications, work experience, and job responsibilities, expatriates from Asian countries are paid lower salaries in GCC than those from Western advanced nations. Arabian Business Salary Survey for the year 2009 highlighted that British expatriates working in GCC countries are paid salaries that amount to more than two times the salaries paid to their Indian counterparts (Sambidge, 2009).

## **Theoretical Background**

Social Identity Theory (SIT) is one of the famous social theories proposed by Henri Tajfel and J.C Turner in 1979. Social Identity Theory states that individuals seek to enhance their self-esteem by identifying themselves as a member of their specific group. Based on that, there is

a tendency to view others outside their group as “out-group” and view their group as “in-group”. So, there is a strong tendency to divide the social world into “us” and “them”, and each group member seeks to view itself as different from the other groups and also better than them, which then gradually leads to the rise of prejudice and ultimately result in discriminative behaviours towards the other group. If the ‘other group’ is minor and inferior in terms of ethnicity, religious background, etc., the intensity of discriminative behaviours might be worse.

James, in 1994, conducted three studies to understand Social Identity Theory in the workplace context. It was found that having a social identity strengthened discriminative behaviours towards minority workers, and it became a significant stressor to the minority workers, which led to prejudice among majority workers towards the minority workers. Minority workers’ overall health outcomes and their perceptions of personal as well as ethnic collective esteem also went into a more negative dimension.

### **Perceived Ethnic Discrimination**

Ethnicity is a feeling of being included in a group or community that shares one common aspect: nationality, culture, language, race, geography, religion, and common descent. If someone rejects, avoids, or insults other group members as the other person is different from her or his ethnic and racial group, then this is called ethnic discrimination. Perceived Ethnic discrimination can be defined as the evaluation of an adverse event as unfair and is explained by belonging to a stigmatised social group (Major & O’Brien, 2005).

Studies reveal that age has a significant role in the perception of discrimination, and younger persons are more prone to the perception of discrimination than older ones (Ayalon, 2014). Another study shows that the coping ability and resilience of ethnic minority groups is an

excellent resource to deal with or challenge the aftereffects of perceived ethnic discrimination, and that helped the researchers to understand why some individuals are more resilient than others in dealing with perceived ethnic discrimination. Some use problem-focused coping strategies, which is helpful, and individuals who use this strategy showed lower levels of depressive symptoms when compared to those who used avoidant coping styles such as denial or disengagement style. (West et al., 2010).

It was reported that males experienced higher levels of PED than females, and older workers perceived more ethnic discrimination than young workers in organisational settings. As a person grows older, her or his experiences of discrimination will increase, and her or his awareness about discrimination will be more so that all these awareness and experiences will generate more negative results in older adults than younger ones (Schmitt et al., 2014). However, at the same time, older adults are more subjected to a gradual decrease in the negative impact of discrimination than younger ones, mainly because of the adaptive coping strategies they have as they get older.

While considering religiosity, which influences PED, in one research, it was found that religion cannot decrease the association between perceived ethnic discrimination and depressive symptoms. So, the motive behind considering one's identified religion to understand its influence on the perception of ethnic discrimination and job burnout, apart from age and gender, became one of the main reasons in this study.

### **Job burnout**

One of the serious adverse outcomes of PED in workers can be considered the experience of job burnout itself. Burnout has been included in the 11<sup>th</sup> revision of the International

Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as an occupational phenomenon, not a medical condition (WHO, 2021). Job burnout was defined in ICD 11 as “a syndrome conceptualised as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed”. Three significant dimensions are feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion, increased mental distance from one’s job or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one’s job, and reduced professional efficacy.

Reports have stated that Indian expatriates are facing inequalities more than Western expatriates in those countries. Social treatment toward them is pathetic when compared to the treatment received by Western expatriates. So, it can be assumed that these discriminations may be mainly based on their Indian ethnicity. Though all these are chronic stressors, they can cause grave job burnout among Indian expatriates, which may lead to many problems in the economic, social, psychological, and physical levels of the expatriates, as well as both nations’ growth and prosperity.

This study attempted to analyze the effect of perceived ethnic discrimination on job burnout among Indian expatriate workers in Gulf Cooperation Countries. Perception of all kinds of discrimination, including perceived ethnic discrimination, may lead to many issues, especially job burnout among expatriates. There was a growing need to understand whether ethnic discrimination towards Indian expatriate workers exists in GCC countries and, if so, the effect of PED in causing job burnout among them and thus might help both Indian and Gulf Governments to implement necessary amendments in the labour protection laws and to make appropriate interventions to wipe out those kinds of ethnic discriminations because Indians who are doing working and earning GCC salary are undoubtedly a significant resource for our country, India, as well those countries, Gulf-Cooperation Council. Expatriate employees are one of the main

backbones of our economic and financial growth. They contribute a big part to the prosperity and the betterment of India and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Human resource management and development, including recruitment, employee relations, compensation, and organisational culture, must be handled carefully and efficiently. Studies on employees, especially expatriate employees, also help organisations to understand those better. Along with these, perceived ethnic discrimination can even affect legislative decisions and ultimately have a financial impact on the organisation and ultimately may affect the financial health of the organisation. In a nutshell, it is an urgent need for organisations and human resource professionals to note employees perceived ethnic discrimination in their work settings. Moreover, it may contribute to the planning for the necessary steps or plans to wipe out discrimination towards workers, especially Indian workers in Gulf countries. As part of it, it would be great if the Governments could implement programs to enhance well-being, assertiveness, and coping mechanisms to tackle and deal effectively with the psychological negative consequences they experience due to exposure to a discriminated environment because, for example, many researches show that negative consequences of discrimination can be repaired to a more significant extent by enhancing positive coping styles in victims of those discriminations. Besides these, they can also implement several programs and policies and an anti-discrimination board that focuses on developing systematic and accurate interventions to wipe out ethnic discrimination in Gulf Cooperation Countries. Also, this would activate programs that encourage multiculturalism and discourage cultural toughness among the population of the countries.

## Review Of Literature

In the context of organisational or workplace settings, there is very little research carried out on perceived ethnic discrimination. Some studies focus on the relationship between perceived ethnic discrimination and variables such as work bullying behaviour, job performance, and job satisfaction. So, many studies ignored variables that also have influences on the perception of ethnic discrimination among employees, especially those who are doing jobs outside their native place or country. Therefore, this study attempted to focus on variables missed by previous studies and address the importance of perceived ethnic discrimination in determining job burnout among Indian expatriate workers in Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

Miguel (2020) found that discrimination based on one's skin colour, ethnicity, nationality, and heritage, taking away employment opportunities, and disapproval towards foreigners in South Korea were found to be the primary sources of stress and burnout among foreign professionals.

Judith and colleagues (2019) found that bullying and discrimination were positively correlated with higher levels of burnout. Also, it was suggested that discrimination and bullying towards midwives and nurses must be wiped out, and through that, experiences of job burnout can be decreased. It eventually led to better healthcare services from the nurses and midwives to the patients. Gadgradji and colleagues (2021) found that mistreatment and discrimination lead to feelings of job outs among the participants. Also, female neurosurgeons were more prone to

these adverse effects. Mays and colleagues (1996) found that perceived race-based discrimination has a strong positive correlation with job stress, which will then lead to serious adverse health outcomes among black women even if they are not very ill.

Fonseca and colleagues (2018) revealed that perception of discrimination led to the deterioration of psychological variables such as self-esteem, positive evaluation of life, self-mastery, well-being and psychological adaptation among migrants. Ensher and colleagues (2001) found a negative correlation between perceived discrimination and other positive variables such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and organisational citizenship behaviour.

Carmen and colleagues (2015) found that there was a negative relationship between perceived racial discrimination and physical health, psychological health, job attitudes, organisational citizenship behaviour and a positive relationship with coping behaviour. Also, women are more prone to the experiences of perceived racial discrimination and respond more strongly to discrimination in the workplace than their men counterparts. McDonald-Agu (2016) found that perceived ethnic or racial discrimination significantly affects negative moods such as anger, tension, and depression. Ikram et al. (2015) found that perceived ethnic discrimination has a positive correlation with depression and major depressive disorder among ethnic minority groups in Europe. Bhanugopan and Fish found that job characteristics and role conflict are the main reasons for the experiences of job burnout among expatriate workers. Aydogan and colleagues (2009) found that burnout is a common problem among Turkish teachers in Turkey and abroad.



## **Methods**

Despite extensive research on how perceived ethnic discrimination influences many aspects of the development and job performances of workers, little attention has been given to the relationship and effect of perceived ethnic discrimination on job burnout of Indian expatriate workers in Gulf-Cooperation Council countries as they are the significant financial backbone of our country.

## **Objectives**

This study assessed the relationship between perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout and analysed the differences between different age and religious groups among Indian expatriate workers in GCC countries on perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout.

## **Hypotheses**

1. There would be a significant relationship between perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout among Indian expatriate workers in Gulf Cooperation Council countries.
2. There would be a significant difference between young and late adult Indian expatriate workers in Gulf Cooperation Council countries on perceived ethnic discrimination.
3. There would be a significant difference between young and late adult Indian expatriate workers in Gulf Cooperation Council countries on job burnout.

4. There would be significant differences between Muslim and non-Muslim Indian expatriate workers in Gulf Cooperation Council countries on perceived ethnic discrimination.
5. There would be significant differences between Muslim and non-Muslim Indian expatriate workers in Gulf Cooperation Council countries on job burnout.

### **Sample**

The sample comprised 201 Indian expatriate workers working in the private sector as teachers, salespersons, accountants, and similar jobs in GCC countries (99 young adults and 102 late adults, 100 Muslims and 102 non-Muslims). Most expatriate workers (95.5%, n = 195) reported living in the GCC countries without their families. Concerning the work experience, all the participants had at least one year of work experience in GCC countries. Concerning daily interaction, 98% (197) of the Indian expatriate workers reported spending more than 80% of their work time interacting with co-workers from other ethnic backgrounds.

### *Inclusion Criteria*

Indian expatriate workers in GCC countries who were either men or women and in the age range of 22 -65 years old were excluded.

### *Exclusion criteria*

Indian expatriate workers in GCC countries who were third gender, below 22 and above 65 years old and workers from upper economic status groups were excluded.

### **Tools**

1. Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire (PEDQ)- PEDQ is a 22-item instrument designed to measure ethnicity-related stress by measuring the frequency of various acts of

ethnic discrimination in all ethnicities. This seven-point summated rating scale asks respondents to indicate how often certain racist events were directed at them in the previous three months. This scale has four subscales: (a) Disvaluation Action, (b) Avoidance, (c) Verbal Rejection, and (d) Threat Aggression. Scores can range from 22 to 154, with higher scores indicating more experiences of ethnic discrimination/racism. It was developed by Contrada et al. in 2001 with an internal consistency  $\alpha > .88$ .

2. Oldenburg Burnout Inventory- It was developed by Demerouti and Nachreiner in 1998. The inventory includes 16 items, which are designed to measure the job burnout level of workers. Respondents used a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree) to indicate the level of agreement with each item. The dimensions in this inventory are Disengagement and Exhaustion. There are eight reverse score items.

## **Procedure**

In the study, the measures (PED and Oldenburg Burnout Inventory) were converted into a Google form and then administered online, taking approximately 20–25 minutes to complete. The forms were circulated among the potential participants through convenient sampling via electronic media, along with a note explaining the research, informing participants about their rights, and giving instructions regarding the questionnaires. The ethics of confidentiality was maintained, and the data collected were used strictly for research.

## **Statistical analyses**

The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Carl Pearson's Product-moment correlation, and students' t-tests. The correlation was applied to examine the relationship between perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout among Indian expatriate workers in GCC

countries. Student’s t-test analysis was applied to assess the difference between Muslim and non-Muslim Indian expatriate workers and also young adult and late adult Indian expatriate workers on their perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout levels.

**Results**

**Table 1**

*The correlation coefficient between perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout of Indian expatriate workers in Gulf Cooperation Council countries*

		Job Burnout	PED
Job Burnout	Pearson Correlation	1	.404**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	201	201
PED	Pearson Correlation	.404**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	201	201

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

The result showed that there was a significant positive correlation with  $r = .404$  between perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout among Indian expatriate workers in GCC.

Hence, a further part of the statistical analysis, the student t-test, was carried out to understand

any differences in perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout among religious and age groups.

**Table 2**

*The values of Mean, Standard deviation and 't' on perceived ethnic discrimination (PED) and job burnout among young and late adult Indian expatriate workers in GCC countries.*

Variable	Age group	N	Mean	Standard-deviation	t-value	Significant t-value	Significant level	95% confidence interval of the difference	
								lower	Higher
PED	Young adults	99	38.63	5.060	1.033	.917	.05	-.676	2.164
	Late adults	102	37.88	5.146					
	Total	201							
Burnout	Young Adults	99	39.47	5.627	t=3.157	0.002	.05	0.867	3.750
	Late adults	102	37.17	4.710					
	Total	201							

The student’s t-test showed no significant difference between young (M= 38.63, S. D=5.060) and late adult Indian expatriate workers (M=37.88, S. D= 5.146) in GCC countries on their perceived ethnic discrimination Whereas, there was a significant difference between young (M= 39.47, S. D=5.627) and late adult Indian expatriate workers (M=37.17, S. D=4.710) in GCC countries on job burnout.

**Table 3**

*The values of Mean, Standard deviation and ‘t’ on Perceived ethnic discrimination (PED) and job burnout between Muslim and non-Muslim Indian expatriate workers in GCC countries*

Variable	Religion	N	Mean	Standard-deviation	t-value	Significant t-value	Significant level	95% confidence interval of the difference	
								lower	Higher
PED	Muslim	100	36.93	4.932	-3.762	.897	.05	-4.000	-1.249
	Non-Muslim	101	39.55						
	Total	201	4.957						
Burnout	Muslim	100	36.63	5.122	-4.685	.514	.05	-4.732	-1.929
	Non-Muslim	101	39.96	4.956					
	Total	201							

The student's t-test indicated that there was a significant difference between Muslim (M= 36.93, S. D=4.932) and non-Muslim Indian expatriate workers (M=39.55, S. D= 4.957) in GCC countries on perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout.

### **Discussion**

The study examined the effect of Perceived Ethnic Discrimination (PED) on job burnout among Indian expatriate workers in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. The study also examined if there were any differences in the experiences of PED and job burnout among Muslim and non-Muslim and young adult and late-adult Indian expatriate workers in GCC countries. The study's findings are presented in light of relevant research in this terrain and the following session.

The study aimed to look at the relationship between perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout among Indian expatriate workers in GCC countries. As shown in Table 1, there was a significant correlation between perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout among Indian expatriate workers in GCC countries. This result indicates that perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout among Indian expatriate workers in GCC countries are closely related to each other. A study by Lakshmi in 2019 investigated the relationship between perception of discrimination and job satisfaction and how essential psychological need satisfaction can play a role in that relationship of a sample of teachers and staff with three years of working experience. The results revealed that perceived discrimination negatively affects autonomy, relatedness, and job satisfaction. Another study was conducted on 'Perceived ethnic discrimination at work and

well-being of immigrants in Finland: The moderating role of employment status and work-specific group-level control beliefs. It was found through this study that perceived ethnic discrimination hurts the psychological well-being and self-rated general health among immigrant workers.

From the result shown in Table 2, it is understood that age does not play a role in the perception of ethnic discrimination. However, it plays a role in the experience of job burnout as it was found that there was a significant difference between young and late adult Indian expatriate workers on job burnout in GCC countries. It indicates that both young adult and late adult Indian expatriate workers have different experiences of job burnout in Gulf Cooperation Council countries. A study by Marchand et al. (2018) revealed that burnout symptoms changed significantly according to various age groups. Burnout decreased as age increased, especially in men workers. Individuals aged 20-35 were particularly more prone to job burnout symptoms, and they also found that age followed a non-linear relationship with emotional exhaustion and total burnout. At the same time, it was linearly related to cynicism and reduced professional efficacy. Another study by Sawang and Cameron (2018) found that young workers aged 17-29 perceived work as stressful and viewed work demands as challenging tasks. They became job crafters to find more satisfaction in routine tasks.

From the results given in Table 3, It is indicated that one's religion plays a role in the experience of both ethnic discrimination and job burnout among Indian expatriate workers in GCC countries, as there was a significant difference between Muslim and non-Muslim Indian expatriate workers in their experience of perceived ethnic discrimination in Gulf Cooperation Council Countries. A study by Heliot and colleagues addressed how religious and occupational identities relate to each other in the workplace. The result of the study was that religious identity



has a positive influence and can help reduce workplace tension and conflict. Another study conducted by Amali (2020) found that there was discrimination toward ethnic identity, primarily based on the conflation of race and religion among Malaysian Malays and Chinese.

Ethnic and religious discrimination can be explained through Allport's (1954) inter-group contact theory and Tajfel's (1971) Social Identity Theory. Being the majority group in any society, creating pride and self-esteem can lead to the emergence and development of superiority and prejudicial attitudes towards the minority group. This leads to negative sentiments and reduced understanding and empathy between groups. This may lead to the negative consequences of perceived ethnic discrimination, including Job burnout symptoms among the participants in this study.

Thus, hypothesis 1, stating that *there would be a significant relationship between perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout among Indian expatriate workers in Gulf Cooperation Council countries*, was accepted. Hypothesis 3, stating *there would be a significant difference between young and late adult Indian expatriate workers in Gulf Cooperation Council countries on job burnout*, was accepted. The hypothesis 4, stating *there would be a significant difference between Muslim and non-Muslim Indian expatriate workers in Gulf-Cooperation Council countries on their Perceived ethnic discrimination*, was accepted. Also, hypothesis 5, stating that *there would be a significant difference between Muslim and non-Muslim in Gulf-Cooperation Council countries on their job burnout*, was accepted.

### Summary

The study aimed to examine the relationship between perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout among Indian expatriate workers in GCC countries. The study also examined the differences in these variables in different religious and age groups within those Indian expatriate workers in GCC countries. The study sample comprised 201 Indian expatriate workers aged 22 to 65 in GCC countries. Among them were 100 Muslims and 101 non-Muslims; 99 samples were young adults, and the remaining 102 were adults. The sample was drawn using the convenience sampling method online. The tools used in this study were the Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire by Contrada et al. and the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory developed by Demerouti and Nachreiner. These tools were converted into a Google form and then administered online. It was found that there is a significant positive correlation between perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout, and there is no significant difference between the two age groups, viz. young adults and late adults Indian expatriate workers, on their experiences of job burnout in GCC countries. However, there is a significant difference between the two age groups, viz. young adults and late adult Indian expatriate workers, on their experiences of job burnout in GCC countries and Muslim and non-Muslim Indian expatriate workers are different in their experiences of Perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout in Gulf-Cooperation Council Countries.

### **Limitations of the study**

Although all possible efforts were made to control extraneous factors in research design, certain limitations still existed, which were unavoidable in the chosen research context. The present study has limitations because of the time and resource constraints. The study was restricted in terms of the location of the sample collected, that is, only in GCC and restricted in applicability as it studies only Indian expatriate workers.

Only two variables, perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout, are considered; it would be great if further research could include more variables and a mixed approach for collecting and analysing data is appreciated as this study was purely quantitative.

Despite these limitations, the study has shown that there is a significant correlation between perceived ethnic discrimination and job burnout among Indian expatriate workers in GCC countries, and there are significant differences between Muslims and non-Muslims in their perception of ethnic discrimination and job burnout in their work settings. Also, young and late adults significantly differ in their job burnout.

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