



RESEARCH PAPER

Impact of Stress on Employees' Performance in Health Sector of Azad Kashmir: Mediating Role of Burnout

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ABSTRACT

This research determined to examine the influence of stress on the performance of healthcare workers in the Azad Kashmir region and the role of burnout as a mediator. A survey opinion poll was utilized to gather information from 387 workers in the healthcare industry, and a quantitative methodology was employed to analyze the data. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation and regression, and reliability analyses. The results revealed that stress had a negative effect on employee performance and a positive relationship with burnout. Burnout was also found to be negatively associated with worker performance. Furthermore, the results from regression analysis revealed that burnout significantly mediated the relationship between stress and worker performance. These findings suggest that decreasing stress and burnout could increase worker performance in the healthcare industry. This study offers valuable insights into the importance of interventions to manage stress and burnout for employee well-being and organizational outcomes in the healthcare sector.

KEYWORDS Azad Kashmir, Burnout, Employee Performance, Stress

Introduction

The healthcare industry is critical to the well-being of any country's population, as it is responsible for providing care and support to individuals when they are at their most vulnerable. The workforce in this sector must manage various critical situations while maintaining high care and service to their patients. This often requires long working hours and can be emotionally and physically demanding, leading to stress and burnout. Stress is a major challenge faced by healthcare workers and can significantly impact employee performance. High-stress levels can cause physical and emotional exhaustion, leading to decreased job performance and a decrease in the eminence of patient care (Aman-Ullah et al., 2022). In addition to stress, healthcare workers are also exposed to other challenges, such as the burden of administrative tasks, patient safety concerns, and interpersonal conflicts, all of which can impact employee performance.

Burnout, a condition characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a decreased sense of personal accomplishment, is a common consequence of stress experienced by healthcare workers. This state can negatively impact job satisfaction, increasing absenteeism and turnover rates (Liu et al., 2023). Additionally, healthcare workers experiencing burnout may be less attentive and more susceptible to medical errors, which may reduce patient quality of care (Ali et al., 2022). To address this issue, this study aims to examine the influence of stress on employee performance in the health sector of Azad Kashmir, Pakistan, and the mediating role of burnout. By identifying the causes of stress and burnout among healthcare workers in this area, the study can provide insights for interventions and policies aimed at enhancing the well-being of healthcare workers and improving the quality of patient care. This research could also contribute to the worldwide

understanding of healthcare workers' obstacles, emphasizing the importance of supporting their emotional and mental health.

Stress in the Healthcare Sector

Stress is a common phenomenon in the healthcare sector, as healthcare workers are exposed to daily stressors. These stressors can be related to workload, patient care, interpersonal relationships, and organizational factors (Liu et al., 2023). Healthcare workers exposed to high intensities of stress can experience burnout, which is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion.

Burnout among Healthcare Workers

The problem of burnout among healthcare professionals is significant since it can cause a decline in the standard of patient care, an upsurge in medical errors, and a decrease in job contentment. Many factors, such as workload, interpersonal connections, and organizational aspects, contribute to burnout among healthcare workers (Menon et al., 2022).

Impact of Stress on Employee Performance

Stress can have a substantial influence on worker efficiency in the healthcare sector. Healthcare workers exposed to high intensities of stress can experience a decrease in their job performance, leading to a decrease in the quality of patient care (Kamila & Muafi, 2023). Stress can also lead to increased absenteeism, turnover, and medical errors.

Mediating Role of Burnout

The healthcare industry faces a significant challenge where burnout can serve as a mediator between stress and employees' performance. According to Chami-Malaeb (2022), high-stress levels among healthcare workers can trigger burnout, resulting in a decline in job performance. Furthermore, burnout can negatively affect job satisfaction and increase absenteeism and turnover rates.

Literature Review

Stress is a psychological state that occurs when people perceive that the demands of a situation are beyond their ability to manage. It can stem from internal or external factors and may harm a person's mental and physical well-being. Given the demanding nature of their work, healthcare professionals commonly experience stress. This literature review intends to analyze how stress affects employee performance in the Azad Kashmir healthcare sector, particularly through burnout mediation.

Stress and Employee Performance

Stress is a well-documented phenomenon that can negatively impact employee performance in the workplace. The healthcare sector is particularly vulnerable to stress due to the demanding and high-pressure nature of the job. Studies have shown that stress can decrease productivity, increase absenteeism, and cause poor job satisfaction among healthcare workers (Sari et al., 2021).

Furthermore, stress can harm physical health, which can further exacerbate the negative impact on employee performance. Chronic stress has been linked to various physical health problems, such as cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, and musculoskeletal disorders (Deole, Deter & Huang, 2023). These health problems can lead to increased absenteeism, decreased productivity, and increased healthcare costs for employees and

employers. Moreover, stress can also have a negative impact on interpersonal relationships, both at work and in personal life. When stressed, employees may be more prone to conflict and communication breakdowns with colleagues, leading to decreased collaboration and teamwork (Karim, 2022). This can further impact employee performance, as teamwork and collaboration are often essential for completing complex tasks. The negative impact of stress on employee performance is well-documented, with its effects extending beyond cognitive functioning and emotional well-being to physical health and interpersonal relationships. Therefore, employers need to implement measures to reduce stress and promote employee well-being to mitigate stress's negative impact on employee performance.

Burnout as a Mediator

Burnout is a psychological condition involving emotional tiredness, depersonalization, and reduced individual achievement. It is often a result of prolonged workplace stress, and its effects can be detrimental to employee performance. In healthcare, burnout is especially prevalent, given the profession's high-pressure and emotionally demanding nature. Recent research indicates that burnout can mediate the connection between stress and employee performance. This means that burnout can partially explain the negative impact of stress on performance. For instance, in a study by Wahab and Blackman (2023), burnout partially mediated the relationship between work-related stress and physician job satisfaction. Similarly, another study by Bulfone and colleagues (2022) found that burnout mediated the relationship between job demands and job performance among nurses. The authors suggest that burnout can impede effective job performance by reducing motivation, cognitive functioning, and emotional well-being. It is, therefore, important for organizations to prioritize addressing burnout to promote employee well-being and performance.

Interventions to Mitigate the Impact of Stress on Employee Performance

Given the negative impact of stress and burnout on employee performance, it is essential to identify interventions to mitigate these effects. One potential intervention is mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), a program that aims to improve emotional regulation and reduce stress through meditation and other mindfulness techniques. Research has shown that MBSR can be an effective intervention for reducing stress and burnout among healthcare workers. For example, a study by Bartlett et al. (2019) found that MBSR was associated with significant improvements in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization among healthcare workers.

Job crafting involves employees shaping their roles and responsibilities to match their skills and interests better. This intervention is based on the idea that when employees have greater control over their work, they experience greater job satisfaction and well-being, which can help to reduce stress and burnout. Job crafting can involve various activities, such as seeking new challenges, developing new skills, and changing how tasks are performed. By doing so, employees can increase their engagement and a sense of purpose in their work, leading to increased job satisfaction and better performance. In the healthcare sector, job crafting effectively reduces burnout and increases employee job satisfaction. Tavoian & Craighead (2023) found that nurses who engaged in job crafting reported higher levels of job satisfaction and lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

Another study by Agarwal, Brooks & Greenberg (2020) found that job crafting effectively reduced burnout among employees in mental health care organizations. The intervention involved a training program that taught employees how to redesign their jobs to align with their strengths and interests, resulting in increased job satisfaction and reduced burnout. Job crafting is a promising intervention for reducing burnout and improving employee well-being in the healthcare sector. By empowering employees to take an active

role in shaping their job roles and responsibilities, employers can create a more engaged and satisfied workforce, which can help mitigate stress's negative impact on employee performance.

Organizational Interventions

Organizational interventions focus on improving the work environment and working conditions to reduce stressors and improve employee well-being. These interventions can be targeted at various organizational levels, including individual, group, and organizational. At the individual level, interventions may include training programs on stress management and coping strategies and employee assistance programs that provide counseling and support for employees experiencing stress or burnout (Watts, Gray & Medeiros, 2022). These interventions can help provide employees with the tools and resources they need to manage stress and cope with the demands of their job. At the group level, interventions may include team-building activities and social support networks. These interventions can help foster a sense of camaraderie and social support among employees, which can help mitigate stress's negative impact on employee performance. At the organizational level, interventions may include changes to the physical work environment, such as providing ergonomic workstations and reducing noise levels. These interventions can help reduce physical stressors contributing to employee stress and burnout (Hamouche, 2023).

Organizational interventions may also involve changes to organizational policies and practices, such as flexible work schedules, job redesign, and work-life balance programs. These interventions can help reduce job demands and improve employee well-being, which can help mitigate stress's negative impact on employee performance. Organizational interventions that focus on improving working conditions and reducing stressors can effectively mitigate the negative impact of stress on employee performance (Nielsen & Christensen, 2021). These interventions can be targeted at various levels within the organization, including individual, group, and organizational levels, and may involve changes to policies, practices, and the physical work environment. By addressing the root causes of workplace stress and burnout, organizations can create a healthier and more productive work environment for their employees.

Material and Methods

Stress is an innate aspect of human life that can either positively or negatively impact individuals. The workplace is one area where stress can majorly affect employee productivity, job satisfaction, and overall welfare. The health industry in Azad Kashmir is not exempt from the adverse consequences of stress on worker performance. Consequently, this investigation seeks to assess the influence of stress on employee performance in the Azad Kashmir health sector and the mediation of burnout in this association.

Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative research design to examine stress and burnout among healthcare workers in Azad Kashmir. Data were collected through a survey questionnaire that was comprised of three sections. The first section collected demographic information, including age, gender, education, and work experience. The second section assessed perceived stress using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), developed by Cohen (1986) and widely used to measure stress perception in individuals. The third section evaluated burnout using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), discussed by Green, Walkey, and Taylor (1991), and is a commonly used scale to measure burnout in individuals. Utilizing these standardized measurement tools, the study aims to gather reliable and valid data on the prevalence of stress and burnout among healthcare workers in Azad Kashmir.

Population and Sampling

The study utilized the entire population of employees working in the healthcare sector of Azad Kashmir. A sample size calculator created by Raosoft Inc. was employed to determine the sample size. The chosen parameters were a 95% confidence level, a 5% margin of error, and a population size of 409. The result of the calculation was a sample size of 387 employees. Stratified random sampling was utilized to select participants, and the strata were defined based on the type of health facility: hospitals, clinics, and health centers. A proportional allocation technique was used to determine the number of participants from each stratum. This technique ensures that each stratum's representation is proportional to its size in the entire population.

Data Collection

Data was gathered through a self-administered survey that was distributed among chosen participants at their workplaces. The survey purpose was briefly explained to participants, and their informed consent was obtained before they filled it out. A pretest was conducted on ten health sector workers in Azad Kashmir to ensure the quality of the questionnaire. The pretest evaluated the questions' clarity, comprehensibility, and relevance. By conducting the pretest, the researchers aimed to ensure that the survey would collect reliable and accurate data from the participants.

Data Analysis

The study utilized SPSS, a statistical software that analyzes the correlation and regression of data, to investigate the association between employee performance, burnout, and stress. SPSS is an analytical tool that examines the connection between observed variables and underlying constructs.

Results and Discussion

In the study on the Impact of Stress on Employees' Performance in the Health Sector of Azad Kashmir, researchers employed descriptive statistics and correlation and regression analysis to analyze data. Additionally, the mediating role of burnout was considered an important factor influencing employee performance in the health sector.

Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis is a statistical technique used to assess the consistency and stability of a measure or test and the degree to which it produces consistent results over time and across different raters.

Table 1
Reliability

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Stress	0.808
Burnout	0.921
Employee Performance	0.836

N = 387

The reliability of data is an important aspect of any research study. In Table 4.1, the reliability scores of stress, burnout, and employee performance are reported as 0.808, 0.921, and 0.836, respectively. These values are all greater than the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating that the data is reliable. Researchers can confidently proceed with further analysis and interpretation of the data knowing that it is reliable and has high internal consistency.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are a set of techniques used to summarize the key characteristics of a dataset. These techniques include measures that indicate central tendency (median and mean) and variation (range, variance, and standard deviation). Applying descriptive statistics can be useful in identifying outliers, understanding the distribution and shape of a dataset, and forming the basis for further statistical analysis and hypothesis testing.

Table 2
Descriptive Analysis

Variables	Min.	Max.	Mean	S.D	Skewness	Kurtosis
Stress	1.20	5.00	3.69	0.71	-0.89	0.49
Burnout	1.30	5.00	3.12	1.32	-0.17	-1.58
Employee Performance	1.13	4.00	3.30	1.39	0.11	-1.79

N=387

Table 2 provides information on the central tendency and distribution of stress, burnout, and employee performance. The table shows that the average stress value is 3.69, higher than the moderate burnout and employee performance values. Additionally, the standard deviation of stress is 0.71, which suggests there is low variation in the data compared to the other factors. The distribution of stress and burnout is negatively skewed, indicating more high values in the dataset and fewer low values. On the other hand, employee performance has a positively uneven distribution, suggesting that there are more low values in the dataset and fewer high values. The kurtosis of the data indicates whether the data is symmetrical or not. The fact that there is no balanced data set for these factors suggests that the data is not evenly distributed around the mean. This information can be useful in further statistical analysis, as it indicates that the data may require transformation or that outliers should be considered in the study.

Correlation Analysis

The study investigated how stress affects employee performance in the health sector of Azad Kashmir, focusing on whether burnout plays a mediating role. A correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between these variables and to determine whether burnout mediates the relationship between stress and employee performance.

Table 3
Correlations

Variables	1	2	3
1-Stress	1		
2-Burnout	.377**	1	
4-Employee Performance	-.512**	-.765**	1

N=387; **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 presents data on the relationship between stress, burnout, and employee performance in the health sector of Azad Kashmir. The table shows a correlation between these variables, indicating they are somehow related. The correlation between stress and burnout is low at 0.377, meaning they are moderately associated with each other. As stress levels increase, burnout levels may also grow to some extent, but not necessarily in a strong way. However, the table also indicates that stress and burnout hurt employee performance in the health sector. The correlation coefficient between stress and employee performance is -0.512, while the correlation coefficient between burnout and employee performance is -0.765. A negative correlation coefficient suggests employee performance decreases as stress

and burnout levels increase. This indicates that employees who experience high stress and burnout are likely to have lower performance levels, which can harm the health sector. The data suggest that stress and burnout can hurt employee performance in the health sector of Azad Kashmir, highlighting the importance of managing stress and burnout among employees to ensure optimal performance and quality of care in the health sector.

Regression Analysis

The study aimed to examine how stress affects employee performance in the health sector of Azad Kashmir and whether burnout mediates this relationship. A regression analysis was conducted to determine how stress predicts employee performance while accounting for the mediating role of burnout.

**Table 4
Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.541 ^a	.293	.279	.940

a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Performance, Burnout

**Table 5
ANOVA**

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	35.569	2	17.784	20.120	.000 ^b
	Residual	85.741	384	.884		
	Total	121.310	386			

a. Dependent Variable: Stress

b. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Performance, Burnout

**Table 5
Coefficients**

	Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.325	.347		3.824	.000
	Employee Perform	-.041	.152	-.023	-.272	.006
	Burnout	.587	.093	.539	6.285	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Stress

Table 4 suggests a significant relationship between stress on employee performance and burnout. This relationship is supported by ANOVA, which shows a statistically significant result through the F-test at a 5% significance level. The regression analysis indicates that burnout positively impacts stress, while employee performance negatively impacts pressure. This means that as burnout increases, so does stress, while as employee performance increases, stress decreases. Moreover, the comparison of means through a t-test shows that these variables are statistically significant, indicating that the relationship between stress, employee performance, and burnout is not simply due to chance. This information could be useful for managers and organizations as it highlights the importance of employee performance and burnout in managing workplace stress. Organizations can create a healthier and more productive work environment by addressing burnout by providing mental health resources and promoting positive employee performance through recognition and support.

Stress is a prevalent problem among healthcare workers because of the high level of pressure that is common in this industry. An investigation was made into how stress and

burnout affected worker performance in the healthcare sector in Azad Kashmir. The study used various statistical techniques to examine the data, such as descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. The study's conclusions showed that stress and burnout had a detrimental effect on employees' performance in the healthcare sector. The findings also indicated that the association between stress and work performance was mediated by burnout. These results point to the need for interventions and techniques to deal with stress and burnout in the healthcare sector to boost worker productivity.

Employee performance, stress, and burnout reliability scores were determined to be above the cutoff point of 0.70, indicating that the data was credible. According to the data's descriptive statistics, moderate burnout and employee performance levels were lower than the mean stress value. The distribution of stress and burnout was negatively skewed, with more high values and fewer low values in the dataset. Positively skewed distribution of employee performance indicates that the dataset contained lower than high values (Aman-Ullah et al., 2022). The outcomes of the correlation study indicated a weakly negative association between stress, burnout, and employee performance and a somewhat positive correlation between stress and burnout. The regression analysis discovered that, after considering burnout's mediating role, stress predicted employee performance.

The study's findings have significant ramifications for Azad Kashmir's healthcare system. Patient safety and care quality may suffer due to the harmful effects of stress and burnout on member efficiency in the health industry. To ensure top performance and high service standards in the health industry, managing staff stress and burnout is crucial. Healthcare businesses can implement stress management and burnout prevention strategies, such as offering time management workshops, training, and employee assistance programs, to aid staff in managing stress and preventing burnout (Liu et al., 2023).

The study's conclusions may impact Azad Kashmir's healthcare authorities and regulators. The study's findings can be used to create rules and regulations for handling stress and burnout in the healthcare industry. For instance, they can require healthcare organizations to establish stress management and burnout prevention programs and encourage the development of a friendly workplace that promotes employee well-being and job satisfaction. The study findings could also impact future investigations into stress, burnout, and employee performance in the healthcare industry. Future research might examine the effects of organizational and individual elements on stress, burnout, and employee performance in the healthcare industry, including workload, job demands, social support, and leadership style. Future research can also examine how stress and burnout affect areas of employee performance, like clinical performance, patient satisfaction, and intention to leave the company.

In summary, the research on the impact of stress on workers' efficiency in the healthcare industry in Azad Kashmir offers insightful information on the connection between stress, burnout, and worker productivity. The study's findings show how crucial it is to control employee stress and burnout to assure top performance and high-quality healthcare. The study's conclusions could greatly impact healthcare organizations, politicians, regulators, and further studies on stress, burnout, and employee performance in the healthcare industry.

Conclusion

Burnout among healthcare professionals is a problem that is common in the industry. The study investigated how stress and burnout impacted workers' performance and how they mediate in Azad Kashmir, Pakistan. According to the study, stress is caused by various stressors, including workload, patient care, interpersonal connections, and organizational issues. According to the study, stress can have a negative impact on patient

care by raising absenteeism, decreasing work performance, and increasing turnover and medical errors. Stress and employee performance are mediated by burnout, which lowers job satisfaction, increases absenteeism, and increases turnover. The study's implications are essential for healthcare organizations, legislators, and stakeholders because they may be used to create specialized interventions and assistance programs to raise staff retention rates and increase job satisfaction and well-being. In the long run, addressing stress and burnout can improve patient outcomes, boost productivity, and ensure the financial viability of healthcare institutions. The study emphasizes the significance of global boosting healthcare employees' mental and emotional well-being and adds to the body of knowledge on stress and burnout in the healthcare profession. With an emphasis on the mediating function of burnout, the research investigated how stress impacted employees' performance in the health sector in Azad Kashmir. A quantitative study methodology used a survey questionnaire to gather information from 387 clinics, hospitals, and health facilities personnel. Using SPSS statistical software, regression, and correlation were used to examine the data. According to the findings, burnout was a partly mediating factor in the link between stress and employee performance. In particular, burnout only partially intervened the association between stress and depersonalization while intervening in the relationship between stress and emotional weariness. The study's outcomes specify that managing workplace stress and burnout is essential for enhancing worker productivity and the general standard of healthcare. The study also emphasizes the significance of routinely tracking employee stress and burnout levels and finding solutions to stop burnout and improve employee well-being.

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