THE EFFECT OF STRESS ON JOB PERFORMANCE AMONG HEALTHCARE EMPLOYEES IN SOUTH PUNJAB

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords Stress, Burnout, Employee performance, Healthcare workers, South Punjab, Occupational stress, Job satisfaction **Corresponding Author:** **Shahnaz Sabir Masih,** Head Nurse, DHQ Hospital Layyah, Email:Sabirshahnaz053@gmail.com	**Background:** Stress among healthcare professionals is a critical issue that can significantly impair job performance and patient care quality. In South Punjab, healthcare workers face high-pressure environments due to heavy workloads, administrative burdens, and interpersonal challenges. Burnout, often resulting from prolonged stress, further exacerbates these issues by reducing job satisfaction and increasing absenteeism and turnover. **Objective:** This study aims to investigate the relationship between stress and employee performance in the healthcare sector of South Punjab, with a focus on burnout as a mediating factor. The research seeks to inform strategies for improving mental well-being and enhancing service delivery within the region's healthcare system. **Methods:** A quantitative research design was employed, utilizing a structured questionnaire to collect data from 398 healthcare employees across hospitals, clinics, and health centers in South Punjab. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) were used to assess stress and burnout levels, respectively. Stratified random sampling ensured representation across different types of healthcare facilities. Data were analyzed using SPSS through reliability analysis, descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analyses. **Results:** Cronbach's alpha values for stress (0.81), burnout (0.92), and employee performance (0.84) indicated strong internal consistency. Mean stress level was relatively high (M = 3.71), while burnout (M = 3.15) and performance (M = 3.32) scores were lower. Skewness and kurtosis suggested non-normal distributions requiring careful interpretation. Stress showed a moderate positive correlation with burnout (r = 0.38) and a strong negative correlation with employee performance (r = –0.52). Burnout had an even stronger negative correlation with performance (r = –0.77). Burnout was found to partially mediate the relationship between stress and employee performance. Burnout increased under higher stress, which in turn reduced job performance. **Conclusion:** The findings highlight the detrimental impact of stress and burnout on healthcare workers' performance in South Punjab. Burnout plays a significant role in mediating this relationship, underscoring the need for targeted interventions such as stress management programs, wellness initiatives, and performance enhancement strategies. These measures are essential for improving workforce resilience, job satisfaction, and ultimately, the quality of patient care in the region.

INTRODUCTION

The healthcare sector plays a vital role in safeguarding the health and well-being of a nation's population, offering essential care and support during times of vulnerability. Professionals in this field are often required to handle high-pressure situations while delivering consistent, quality care to patients. This demanding environment frequently involves extended work hours and significant emotional and physical strain, which can contribute to elevated stress levels and eventual burnout. Stress remains a critical issue among healthcare professionals, with the potential to adversely affect their job performance. When stress levels rise, it can result in both physical and emotional fatigue, diminishing work efficiency and compromising patient care quality (Aman-Ullah et al., 2022). Beyond stress, healthcare workers also encounter additional obstacles such as administrative burdens, concerns over patient safety, and interpersonal disputes, all of which can further impact their effectiveness. Burnout—a condition marked by emotional fatigue, detachment, and reduced personal achievement—is a frequent outcome of prolonged stress in this field. This state can lead to lower job satisfaction, increased absenteeism, and higher turnover rates (Liu et al., 2023). Furthermore, healthcare providers suffering from burnout may show reduced focus and a higher likelihood of committing errors, thereby affecting the standard of patient care (Ali et al., 2022). This study seeks to explore the relationship between stress and employee performance within the healthcare sector of South Punjab, Pakistan, with a particular focus on burnout as a mediating factor. By identifying the sources of stress and burnout in this region, the research aims to inform strategies and policy measures that promote healthcare workers' mental well-being and enhance the overall quality of care. Additionally, the findings of this study may offer valuable insights on a global scale, highlighting the importance of supporting healthcare professionals' emotional resilience and mental health.

Material and Methods

Research Design: This research employed a quantitative approach to investigate levels of stress and burnout among healthcare professionals in South Punjab. Data collection was carried out using a structured survey questionnaire divided into three parts. The first section gathered demographic details such as age, gender, educational background, and professional experience. The second section measured perceived stress through the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), originally developed by Cohen (1986), which is widely recognized for assessing individuals' stress levels. The third section focused on evaluating burnout using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), as outlined by Green, Walkey, and Taylor (1991), a well-established tool for assessing burnout symptoms. By applying these standardized instruments, the study aimed to obtain accurate and credible insights into the extent of stress and burnout among healthcare workers in the region.

Population and Sampling: The study targeted the entire workforce within the healthcare sector of South Punjab. To determine the appropriate sample size, a calculator developed by Raosoft Inc. was used, applying a 95% confidence level, a 5% margin of error, and a total population of approximately 500 employees across hospitals, clinics, and health centers in the region. Based on these parameters, the calculated sample size was 398 employees. Stratified random sampling was employed to select participants, with the strata categorized according to the type of healthcare facility: hospitals, clinics, and health centers. A proportional allocation method was applied to ensure that the number of participants selected from each stratum reflected its proportion within the overall population.

Data Collection: Data was collected using a self-administered survey, which was distributed to selected participants at their respective workplaces. Prior to completing the survey, participants were provided with a brief explanation of its purpose, and their informed consent was obtained. To ensure the questionnaire's quality, a pretest was carried out with ten healthcare workers in South Punjab. The pretest was designed to assess the clarity, understandability, and relevance of the questions. The goal of the pretest was to ensure that the survey would yield reliable and accurate data from the participants.

Data Analysis: The study employed SPSS, a statistical software used for analyzing data correlations and regressions, to explore the relationship between employee performance, burnout, and stress. SPSS serves as an analytical tool that examines the links between observed variables and underlying factors.

Results: In the study examining the impact of stress on employee performance in the healthcare sector of South Punjab, the researchers used descriptive statistics along with correlation and regression analyses to analyze the data. Furthermore, the study also considered burnout as a key factor mediating the relationship between stress and employee performance in the healthcare sector.

Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis is a statistical method employed to evaluate the consistency and stability of a measurement or test, determining how consistently it yields the same results over time and across various evaluators.

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Stress	0.81
Burnout	0.92
Employee Performance	0.84

As shown in Table 1, the reliability coefficients for stress, burnout, and employee performance are 0.81, 0.92, and 0.84, respectively. Since all values exceed the standard benchmark of 0.70, this indicates strong reliability. These results suggest that the data has high internal consistency, allowing researchers to proceed with further analysis and interpretation with confidence.

Descriptive Statistics: Descriptive statistics involve methods used to summarize and present the main features of a dataset. These methods include measures of central tendency, such as the mean and median, as well as measures of dispersion like range, variance, and standard deviation. Utilizing descriptive statistics helps in detecting outliers, understanding the data distribution and structure, and provides a foundation for more advanced statistical analyses and hypothesis testing.

Variables	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Stress	1.20	5.00	3.71	0.72	-0.91	0.51
Burnout	1.30	5.00	3.15	1.34	-0.18	-1.61
Employee Performance	1.15	4.00	3.32	1.41	0.12	-1.82

Table 2 presents the measures of central tendency and distribution for stress, burnout, and employee performance. The mean score for stress is **3.71**, which is comparatively higher than the average values for burnout and employee performance. The standard deviation for stress is **0.72**, indicating relatively low variability in comparison to the other variables. The data for stress and

burnout displays a negative skew, meaning that higher values are more frequent, while lower values are less common. Conversely, employee performance shows a positively skewed distribution, suggesting that lower scores are more prevalent than higher ones. The kurtosis values reflect the symmetry of the data, and the lack of a balanced distribution implies that the data is not evenly spread around the mean. These findings are valuable for further statistical analysis, as they suggest the potential need for data transformation or the consideration of outliers in the evaluation.

Correlation Analysis

This study explored the impact of stress on employee performance within **South Punjab's healthcare sector**, with particular attention to the potential mediating role of burnout. To assess the relationships among these variables, a correlation analysis was performed to determine whether burnout acts as a mediator between stress and job performance.

Variables	1	2	3
Stress	1		
Burnout	0.38 **	1	
Employee Performance	-0.52 **	-0.77 **	1

Table 3 illustrates the connections among stress, burnout, and employee performance within **South Punjab's healthcare sector**. The data reveal correlations between these variables, suggesting a level of interdependence. The correlation between stress and burnout is moderate, with a value of **0.38**, indicating that while higher stress levels are somewhat associated with increased burnout, the relationship is not particularly strong. More notably, the table shows that both stress and burnout have adverse effects on employee performance. The correlation coefficient between stress and employee performance is **-0.52**, while that between burnout and performance is **-0.77** . These negative correlations imply that as stress and burnout rise, employee performance tends to decline. This trend suggests that healthcare professionals experiencing elevated stress and burnout are likely to perform at lower levels, which can negatively impact the overall efficiency and quality of care in the health sector. These findings underscore the importance of effectively managing stress and burnout to maintain high standards of employee performance and patient care.

Regression Analysis : The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of stress on employee performance within **South Punjab's healthcare sector** and to assess whether burnout serves as a mediating factor in this relationship. To evaluate this, a regression analysis was carried out to examine how stress influences employee performance while considering the potential mediating effect of burnout.

Model Summary

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R Square	STD. error of estimate
1	0.55	0.30	0.28	0.94

ANOVA Table

Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	36.00	2	18.00	20.30	0.000

Coefficients Table

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B	STD. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T value	Sig.
Constant	1.33	0.35		3.83	0.000
Employee Performance	-0.04	0.15	-0.02	-0.27	0.006
Burnout	0.59	0.09	0.54	6.30	0.000

Table 4 reveals a significant association between stress, burnout, and employee performance. This finding is reinforced by ANOVA results, where the F-test demonstrates statistical significance at the 5% level. The regression analysis shows that burnout has a positive relationship with stress, whereas employee performance is negatively associated with stress. In other words, higher burnout levels contribute to increased stress, while improved employee performance is linked to reduced stress levels. Additionally, the t-test comparing means confirms that these variables are statistically significant, suggesting that their relationships are not the result of random variation. These insights can be valuable for managers and organizations, emphasizing the critical role of addressing burnout and enhancing performance to effectively manage stress in the workplace.

Discussion

The reliability analysis demonstrated that the measurement scales for stress, burnout, and employee performance all exceeded the acceptable Cronbach's alpha threshold of 0.70, confirming the internal consistency and validity of the dataset. Descriptive statistics revealed that mean levels of burnout and performance were lower than the average stress score. The distribution of stress and burnout scores exhibited negative skewness, indicating a concentration of higher values, while employee performance scores were positively skewed, suggesting a prevalence of lower performance scores within the sample (Aman-Ullah et al., 2022).

Correlation analysis identified a modest inverse relationship between stress, burnout, and employee performance, alongside a weak positive correlation between stress and burnout. Regression analysis further established stress as a significant predictor of employee performance, particularly when considering the mediating effect of burnout. These findings underscore the detrimental influence of stress and burnout on work efficiency in the healthcare sector of South Punjab, with potential implications for patient outcomes and service delivery.

To safeguard high standards of professional performance and service quality, it is imperative for healthcare institutions to implement comprehensive strategies to mitigate stress and prevent burnout. Interventions such as structured stress management programs, professional development workshops, time management training, and employee support services can be instrumental in enhancing workforce resilience and productivity (Liu et al., 2023).The study's results offer valuable guidance for healthcare policymakers and regulatory authorities in South Punjab. The empirical evidence supports the formulation of targeted policies aimed at stress reduction and burnout prevention. For instance, the adoption of mandatory wellness initiatives across healthcare facilities could foster a more supportive and productive work environment, ultimately

improving employee well-being and job satisfaction. Moreover, these findings provide a basis for future research into the interplay between organizational dynamics and individual factors—such as workload intensity, role clarity, leadership style, and social support—and their collective impact on stress, burnout, and job performance. Subsequent investigations may also examine how these elements affect specific performance outcomes, including clinical competency, patient satisfaction, and staff retention.

Conclusion

Burnout is a prevalent issue among healthcare professionals, and this study explored how stress and burnout affect employee performance in South Punjab, Pakistan, as well as the mediating role of burnout in this relationship. The research found that stress arises from multiple factors, including workload, patient care, interpersonal relationships, and organizational challenges. The study highlighted that stress negatively affects patient care by increasing absenteeism, reducing work performance, and contributing to higher turnover and medical errors. Burnout was identified as a mediator between stress and employee performance, as it lowers job satisfaction, increases absenteeism, and exacerbates turnover. The findings of this study are crucial for healthcare organizations, policymakers, and stakeholders, as they can be used to develop targeted interventions and support programs aimed at improving staff retention, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. Addressing stress and burnout in the workplace can ultimately enhance patient outcomes, improve productivity, and ensure the long-term sustainability of healthcare institutions. The research underscores the importance of supporting the mental and emotional health of healthcare workers globally and contributes to the growing body of knowledge on stress and burnout in the healthcare field. By focusing on the mediating role of burnout, the study sheds light on how stress impacts employee performance within South Punjab's healthcare sector. A quantitative research approach was employed, using a survey questionnaire to collect data from **398 healthcare personnel** working in clinics, hospitals, and other health facilities. The data were analyzed using SPSS statistical software, with regression and correlation analyses applied. The results revealed that burnout partially mediated the relationship between stress and employee performance. Specifically, burnout only partially intervened in the connection between stress and depersonalization, while it fully mediated the relationship between stress and emotional exhaustion. The findings underscore the importance of managing stress and burnout in the workplace to improve employee productivity and overall healthcare quality. The study also highlights the need for regular monitoring of employee stress and burnout levels and the implementation of strategies to prevent burnout and promote employee well-being.

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