

Workplace Stress, Job Satisfaction, and Turnover Intentions: A Study of Service Sector Employees

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ABSTRACT

The stress at the workplace has turned out to be a burning issue to companies, especially service companies where workers are subjected to heavy workload, contact with customers and emotional labour. The stress may adversely affect the job satisfaction, which affects turnover intentions of employees, organizational performance, and productivity. This paper will address the correlation between stress at the workplace, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions of employees operating in the service sector. Under a quantitative research strategy, the research gathered data in the form of structured survey by employees in various service organizations in Lahore district. The results also show that there are significant negative relationships between the greater the workplace stress levels and the lower the job satisfaction and turnover intentions. On the other hand, job satisfaction lessens the stress impact on turnover intentions. The research paper underscores the significance of organizational interventions that include stress management programs, employee engagement programs, and conducive work environments to increase the level of employee satisfaction and the low rate of attrition in the service sector.

Keywords: Stress at work place; Job satisfaction; Turnover intentions; Service sector; Employee engagement; Organizational behavior; Human resource management.

INTRODUCTION

In the modern service sector, it has received a pivotal role in the economic growth of all countries globally, offering job market opportunities in the banking, hospitality, healthcare, educational, retail, and other information technology sectors (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017). Nevertheless, service industry workers have to deal with specific job-related problems, such as the expectations of customers, monotony, deadlines, and emotional work, which may cause workplace stress (Kahn et al., 2019). The stress at work has been identified as a multidimensional construct that involves both psychological and physiological reactions of too much work demands, role ambiguity, and organizational pressure (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). Stress is not only detrimental to the well-being of employees but also to the performance of the organization, including the productivity, absenteeism, and turnover intentions (Sharma and Jyoti, 2020).

Job satisfaction is a very important variable that facilitates the correlation between work stress and employee performance. Being the degree to which employees are pleased and satisfied with their working positions, job satisfaction is affected by intrinsic (recognition, achievement, and skill use) and extrinsic (compensation, work conditions, and organizational support) factors (Locke, 1976; Spector, 1997). Job satisfaction has been discovered to lower the turnover intention and increase commitment, engagement, and

the organization citizenship behavior (Judge et al., 2001). On the other hand, low job satisfaction may worsen the adverse impact of stress, which results in high absenteeism, burn out and intent to quit the organization (Podsakoff et al., 2007). As a result, the dynamics that exist between stress, satisfaction, and turnover intentions needs to be understood to ensure the development of strategies that can be used to retain the talents in the competitive service industry.

Turnover intention: This is the probability or intentional thinking of an employee to quit the organization willingly (Tett and Meyer, 1993). High turnover is the common challenge in the service industry, as the work is very demanding, the interaction with the clients is high, and the job control is comparatively low (Karatepe and Sokmen, 2006). The studies show that stress at work and job satisfaction are the main factors affecting turnover intentions. As an illustration, workers who report having incessant occupational stressors are more likely to complain of dissatisfaction with their work and show readiness to seek an alternative work (Sharma and Jyoti, 2020). Conversely, turnover intentions can be cut down substantially in organizations that promote good working conditions, offer employees career growth, and stress reduction strategies (Bakker et al., 2005).

There are a number of theoretical models that are used to study stress at the workplace, job satisfaction and turnover intentions. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model assumes that job demands, including workload and emotional work, create strain and stress, and job resources, including support, autonomy, and development opportunities generate engagement and satisfaction (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017). Also, the Social Exchange Theory proposes that employees pay back loyalty, commitment and turnover intentions as a result of support and positive treatment of the organizational support through the organization (Blau, 1964). Through the combination of these frameworks, it can be seen that the intervention that aims at reducing stress and improving job satisfaction is likely to alleviate the turnover intentions in the service industry.

The hypothesized relationships are supported by empirical studies that have been conducted in different service industries. Research studies in hospitality industry have revealed that high perceived stress has adverse impact on job satisfaction and foreseeable increase in turnover intentions (Karatepe and Sokmen, 2006). In banking and IT services, researchers have been able to determine that stresses have both negative and positive impacts on turnover intentions which are moderated by organizational support and job satisfaction thus the importance of human resource practices in influencing the outcome of employees (Podsakoff et al., 2007; Bakker et al., 2005). In addition, the intensity of these relations can be also affected by cultural variables and organizational climate, which implies that strategy-specific interventions are needed to manage the stress at the workplace and improve retention (Sharma and Jyoti, 2020).

Since the implications of workplace stress, job satisfaction and turn over intentions are critical, as regards to the well being of the employees and organizational performance, this research aims at examining the relationships between these variables in the case of employees in service sector. Recognizing the factors that worsen the stress, diminish the satisfaction, and augment the turnover intentions, the organizations can introduce evidence-based interventions, including stress management training, flexible working hours, recognition schemes, and supportive leadership behaviors. Not only are such measures good in terms of the mental and physical wellbeing of employees but they also increase the effectiveness of the organization, lower the recruiting expenses and increase customer service results.

To sum, workplace stress is one of the burning issues of the service industry, and its impact on job satisfaction and turnover intentions cannot be overrated. The study of these relationships on a theoretical and empirical basis is critical to coming up with good human resource strategies that are effective in

ensuring employee retention and organizational success. The proposed study will address the research gaps in the literature by analyzing how stress, satisfaction, and turnover intentions are related and how these variables interact in service sector personnel to present a practical implication to practitioners and policymakers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stress in the workplace has always been considered as one of the factors that is critical to the performance of employees, their well-being, and retention within any organizational environment. Employees working in service industries are more prone to stress than those working in other industries because of the high degree of interactions with customers, strict deadlines, and feeling of emotional labor (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017). In this case stress is usually multidimensional and it includes workload pressure, role ambiguity, interpersonal conflict and emotional exhaustion (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Research indicates that the long-term effects of work-related stress have psychological and physiological effects, such as anxiety, depression, burnout, and cardiovascular disorders (Kahn et al., 2019). Such negative impacts are not only detrimental to the health of the employees but also have a negative impact on the organizational performance in terms of productivity, service quality, absenteeism, and turnover intentions (Sharma and Jyoti, 2020). The sources and implications of stress in the workplace are a crucial aspect of the literature, as it is imperative to gain insight into the reasons behind workplace stress and implement effective management strategies to enhance employee satisfaction.

The concept of job satisfaction is one of the core concepts in organizational behavior studies, which refers to the level of satisfaction that individuals experience about the positions they undertake (Locke, 1976; Spector, 1997). Most of the researches show that job satisfaction mediates the connection between stress at workplace and turnover intentions and acts as a buffer to negative impact. Highly stressed working environments still promote higher levels of job satisfaction among staff members who feel that they are recognized sufficiently, they have a supportive leader and that they have the chances of developing their career (Judge et al., 2001). In contrast, low work satisfaction enhances the negative consequences of work stress, which causes emotional burnout, low involvement, and increased desire to leave the company (Podsakoff et al., 2007). The studies also indicate that while intrinsic variables, including meaningful work and personal development can cause overall job satisfaction in the service sector, extrinsic variables, including pay, benefits and working conditions can also lead to job satisfaction (Bakker et al., 2005).

Job stress and job satisfaction have been linked, to a great extent, with turnover intentions that are characterized as the conscious intentions of employees to leave their organization. Tett and Meyer (1993), operationalise the concept of turnover intention as a predisposition of actual turnover as it is important in human resource management. Empirical research in service professions suggests that stress and job dissatisfaction levels are significantly high and that led to an increased tendency of employees to show intentions to quit their employment (Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006). As an example, it has been revealed that employees with emotional exhaustion as a result of being in constant contact with customers and having heavy workloads turn over with greater intentions (Karatepe and Sokmen, 2006). Indeed, in the banking and IT industries, the workers who report high role conflict and job pressure have lower job satisfaction, which is associated with high turnover intentions (Sharma and Jyoti, 2020). These results highlight the importance of the synergy between stress, satisfaction and retention results in service based organisations.

A number of theory frameworks are used to offer insight into the correlation between stress at the workplace and job satisfaction and turnover intentions. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model assumes that job demands such as workload, time pressure, and emotional labor strain and cause stress but job resources

such as social support, autonomy, and feedback facilitate engagement and satisfaction (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017). This model suggests that the lack of balance between demands and resources causes burnout and decreased satisfaction and turnover intent. The Social Exchange Theory goes on to add that the perceptions of the employees on the organizational support can also determine their commitment and retention behaviours (Blau, 1964). Employees tend to return the favor when organizations invest in the well-being of employees and offer sufficient resources to deal with stress and high performance and lower intention to leave (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). All these frameworks emphasize the role played by organizational structures as well as relational dynamics in influencing employee performance in the service industry.

These theoretical frameworks are applicable as evidenced by empirical studies. In their work, Bakker et al. (2005) have shown that supervisor support and training opportunities are job resources that help to reduce the impact of job demands on stress and burnout and, in this way, increase job satisfaction. In the same line, Karatepe and Sokmen (2006) reported that the mediating variable of workload and turnover intentions in hotel employees is emotional exhaustion as the stress management intervention is essential. In the area of banking and IT, as well, research indicates that job satisfaction is increased by stress-reduction training, employee rewards, and career development, which in turn decline turnover intentions (Sharma and Jyoti, 2020; Podsakoff et al., 2007). In addition, cross-cultural research demonstrates that the extent of these relationships depends on organizational culture, leadership style, and the perceived fairness, and this implies that the context-based approach is the key to effective human resource management (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017).

The new studies have emphasized the increasing importance of psychological and emotional aspects in determining staff satisfaction and retention in the service industry. Another major cause of stress has come out as emotional labor, which is controlled emotional expression to satisfy the demands of an organization when dealing with clients (Hulsheger and Schewe, 2011). Overworking emotional labor is one of the factors that lead to burnout, less job satisfaction, and increased turnover intentions. Emotional support interventions, resilience, and self-care interventions have been discovered to reduce the adverse effects of emotional labor (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002). These results support the relevance of comprehensive approaches to work addressing the tasks and emotional components of a job among services employees.

Besides this, the literature also highlights the economic and organizational consequences of turnover. High turnover does not only result in recruitment and training expenses but also breaks the team cohesion and quality of service delivery (Hancock et al., 2013). As a result, managing stress, improving job satisfaction and favorable organizational policies is a strategic necessity of service organizations in order to reduce turnover intentions. It is proposed by the studies that job redesign, workload management, supportive supervision, and employee engagement initiatives are most efficient, when applied in a combined form to enhance retention (Sharma and Jyoti, 2020; Bakker et al., 2005). Such strategies go hand in hand with those of the organization at large, to enhance productivity, customer satisfaction and sustainability in the long term.

To sum, the literature continues to provide a solid correlation between stress at the workplace, job satisfaction and intentions to turnover in service industry. Stress has undesirable effects on satisfaction and predisposes employees to the possibility of quitting their respective organizations. These effects are mediated by job satisfaction which can also serve as buffer against the negative effects of stress. Theoretical and empirical findings underscore the significance of organizational interventions, such as stress management program, employee engagement interventions, and work support environments as important strategies to improve satisfaction and prevent turnover. These dynamics are critical in the creation of good

human resource practices that enhance the wellbeing, retention, and performance of employee in the service oriented industries.

METHODOLOGY

In this research, quantitative research design was used to analyze the correlations between stress at work, job satisfaction and turnover intention of employees working in the service industry in Lahore. Considering the purpose of the study the investigation of statistical relationships and possible predictive relationships between these variables, a survey-based method was chosen as the most relevant one. This gave the opportunity to use systematic data gathering of a representative sample and conduct descriptive and inferential statistical analysis to test the hypothesis based on theoretical bases, including Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and Social Exchange theory (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017; Blau, 1964).

Population and Sample

The population of interest was comprised of the workers of different service oriented organizations in the service sector, such as the banking industry, hospitality, information technology, and retail services. In order to keep things viable and to control data quality, non-probability convenience sampling method was used. A sample of 200 employees was selected to take part where the analysis was done through the application of correlation, regression and structural equation modeling tests without violating the normal statistical standards (Cohen, 1992). Respondents volunteered to engage with the research and all respondents signed the informed consent to ascertain ethical barriers.

Data Collection Instrument

The structured, self-administered questionnaire that was used in the collection of the data consisted of the standardized scales that have been extensively tested in the study of organizations. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), which is a measure of perceived stress of employees in the last month, was used to measure stress factors at the workplace (Cohen et al., 1983). The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) short-form was used in the study to measure job satisfaction and it measures both intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions of satisfaction (Weiss et al., 1967). The scale of turnover intentions was assessed using a three-item scale derived out of Tett and Meyer (1993), on whether respondents are likely to quit the organization soon. The answers to each scale were presented in a 5 point Likert-type scale, with 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Data Collection Procedure

The survey was made available through the use of email and online survey tools to offer wide accessibility and limit the interference with the working schedule of the participants. Data was collected within a period of four weeks whereby follow up messages were sent to enhance the number of responses. Anonymity was ensured through all the responses to preserve confidentiality and minimize the chances of social desirability bias. The total number of responses that were received was 180, after the incomplete or inconsistent responses were crossed-off, which resulted in a response rate of 90%.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data was done by using IBM SPSS statistics (version 26) and AMOS to do structural modeling. Prelude analysis was done on data cleaning, missing values and normality, reliability and validity

of the measurement scales. The missing data that constituted less than 2 percent of the responses were imputed by means to maintain the integrity of the data. The assessment of reliability was carried out based on the alpha coefficients of Cronbach with the values greater than 0.70 being regarded as a good level of reliability in any scale (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). To determine the construct validity, which showed that items were able to measure their respective latent variables, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was done.

Mean, standard deviation, and frequency distributions were calculated as descriptive statistics, which summarized demographic variables and key variables. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to test the bivariate correlation between workplace stress, job satisfaction and turnover intentions. The multiple regression analysis was used to evaluate the predictive impacts of stress and satisfaction on the turnover intentions, as well as predicting them with keeping other demographic factors, including age, gender, tenure, and job role. The mediation effect of job satisfaction was hypothesized as it was used in structural equation modeling (SEM) to establish the relationship between workplace stress and turnover intentions, which revealed the indirect and direct effects at the same time.

Ethical Considerations

The research followed the ethical protocols in research involving human subjects. All the respondents gave informed consent and were free to participate. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured through coding the responses and data was kept in password-protected files that were only accessed by the research team. The research also adhered to the institutional review board (IRB) standards by ensuring that no harm, coercion, or any undue influence was subjected on the respondents.

Overall, the given methodology offers the rigorous approach to studying the interaction between stress at work and job satisfaction on one hand and turnover intentions in employees of the service sector on the other hand. The research will be reliable, valid, and generalizable since validated scales, systematic methods of data collection, and the use of modern statistical methods are used. The methodology is used to address both the direct and indirect relationships hence facilitating a holistic explanation of the factors that affect employee retention and the performance of an organization.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The study data under analysis was aimed at investigating the correlation of workplace stress, job satisfaction and turnover intentions among the employees working in the service industry. There were 180 valid responses that were cleaned and preprocessed. The sample included the employees of banking (28%), hospitality (25%), IT services (22%), and retail (25%) industries. The demographic picture was quite balanced (52 and 48 percent males and females respectively) and the age distribution was quite varied, with 45 percent of the participants aged 25-34, 35 percent aged 35-44, and 20 percent older than 45. Most of the employees (40 percent and 35 percent respectively) were aged between 1-5 years and 6-10 years respectively, which represents a combination of early-career and mid-career professionals.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 demonstrated the using statistics of the key variables of the study. The stress scores in the workplace were 1.8-4.7 ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.64$) which indicated that the respondents had moderate levels of stress. The perceived job satisfaction scores were between 2.0 and 4.8 ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.71$) indicating rather positive

attitudes towards their job. The turnover intentions scores varied between 1.0 and 4.5 ($M=2.84$, $SD=0.79$), which indicated that there was variability in the propensity of the employees in leaving their vessels.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
Workplace Stress	180	1.8	4.7	3.21	0.64	0.82
Job Satisfaction	180	2.0	4.8	3.45	0.71	0.88
Turnover Intentions	180	1.0	4.5	2.84	0.79	0.85

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to test the bivariate relationships of workplace stress, job satisfaction and turnover intentions. As presented in Table 2, job satisfaction was also negatively correlated with workplace stress ($r = -0.52$, $p < .01$), whereas turnover intentions were positively correlated ($r = 0.46$, $p < .01$). Job satisfaction was also found to have a negative relationship with turnover intentions ($r = -0.58$, $p < .01$), which means that the more employees are satisfied, the less it increases their chances of quitting their organization. The findings concur with the hypothesized relationships and reflect the previous studies on the relationship between stress and job satisfaction and turnover (Judge et al., 2001; Sharma and Jyoti, 2020).

Table 2: Pearson Correlations among Key Variables

Variable	1	2	3
1. Workplace Stress	1		
2. Job Satisfaction	-0.52**	1	
3. Turnover Intentions	0.46**	-0.58**	1

Note: $p < .01$

Regression Analysis

The analysis made through multiple regression was aimed to measure the predictive power of stress level at workplace and job satisfaction on turnover intentions where the demographic factors (age, gender, tenure, and job position) were taken into account. Table 3 results show that workplace stress was a positive predictor of turnover intentions ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < .001$) whereas job satisfaction was a negative predictor of turnover intentions ($\beta = -0.42$, $p < .001$). These predictors jointly accounted 47% of the turnover intentions variation ($R^2 = 0.47$, $F(6, 173) = 25.61$, $p < .001$), indicating that both stress and satisfaction are substantial factors influencing employees with regard to their intention to quit.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Predicting Turnover Intentions

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Workplace Stress	0.42	0.09	0.31	4.67	<.001
Job Satisfaction	-0.53	0.10	-0.42	-5.30	<.001

Age	-0.05	0.04	-0.06	-1.25	0.21
Gender	0.03	0.08	0.04	0.38	0.71
Tenure	-0.04	0.05	-0.05	-0.80	0.42
Job Role	0.07	0.06	0.07	1.17	0.24

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

SEM was performed in AMOS 26 in order to test the hypothesized mediation effect of job satisfaction between the workplace stress and turnover intentions. The model fit statistics presented a good fit: $\chi^2/df = 2.11$, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.06. The standardized path coefficients showed stress at work negatively influenced job satisfaction ($b = -0.52$, $p < .001$) which influenced turnover intentions negatively ($b = -0.41$, $p < .001$). Indirect mediation was found to be significant as the indirect effect of workplace stress on turnover intentions through job satisfaction was significant ($b = 0.21$, $p < .01$). These results indicate that stress has a direct negative effect on turnover intentions, although job satisfaction alleviates some of them, underlining its importance in employee retention practices.

Additional Findings

Pertaining to the analysis by sector, the differences in the levels of stress and turnover intentions were observed. The stress and turnover intentions reported to be the highest in employees working in the hospitality industry ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 0.61$ and $M = 3.05$, $SD = 0.77$, respectively) and lowest in the employees who work in the IT sector ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 0.59$ and $M = 2.68$, $SD = 0.71$, respectively). The difference in gender was low, and the female employees ranked higher in terms of average levels of stress. The tenure analysis revealed that employees who had a tenure of 1-5 years had greater turnover intentions than employees with a tenure of over 10 years, which is in line with prior research on the early-career employee attrition (Sharma and Jyoti, 2020).

Summary of Findings

The results also show a consistent negative effect of stress on the job satisfaction and positive correlation with turnover intentions at the workplace. Job satisfaction plays out as a partial mediator with its buffering role being noted against negative impact of stress. These findings are consistent with theoretical predictions of the JD-R model and Social Exchange Theory, which address the relationship between job demands and resources and employee retention behaviors (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017; Blau, 1964). The various sector-specific differences also emphasize the necessity of specific organizational interventions that will respond to particular work environments and demographic makeup of employees.

Altogether, the analysis gives solid empirical results that organizations should be preemptive in their response to workplace stress and job satisfaction in order to mitigate turnover intentions, retain a stable workforce and better service quality and organizational performance.

CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the correlations between stress at the workplace, job satisfaction and turnover intentions among workers in the service sector. The results confirm that workplace stress has a significant role on job satisfaction of employees and contributes to their intention of leaving the organization. As opposed to that, increased job satisfaction helps not only to counteract the negative impact of stress, but also to decrease turnover intentions. The findings are consistent with the theoretical frameworks like the

Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, which focuses on the ratio of job requirements and job resources, and Social Exchange Theory, which identifies the perceived organizational support in the definition of the actions of employees (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017; Blau, 1964). The sector-wise analysis showed that the hospitality employees were the most stressed and had the greatest turnover intentions, implying that specific interventions are necessary. These lessons have highlighted the need to adopt proactive organizational measures that can be used to deal with stress, improve employee satisfaction and maintain talent within service industries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the results of the research, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Provide Stress Management Programs

Workplace stress can be minimized by offering structured programs in organizations like mindfulness training, counseling services, and time management workshops that will help employees to be more resilient.

2. Increase Job Satisfaction by Recognition and Development

Job satisfaction can be enhanced through employee recognition, career growth and skill development programs, which will result in lower turnover intentions.

3. Encourage Effective Leadership and Interaction

To assist employees in staying relaxed and be more satisfied, supervisors are expected to incorporate supportive styles of leadership, offer positive feedback, and ensure the presence of open communication lines.

4. Sector-specific Interventions

The hospitality industry, being a high-stress industry, needs special measures like the redistribution of workloads, flexible work schedules, and increased employee engagement to overcome the peculiarities of work.

5. Foster Work-Life Balance

To reduce burnout and promote retention, organizations are advised to provide flexible work schedules, telecommuting, and the wellness of employees.

6. Measure and Assess employee welfare

Stress level, satisfaction, and turnover intentions should be assessed continuously using surveys and feedback systems to detect emerging problems and increase the effectiveness of interventions.

7. Bring together Organizational Policies

Employee well-being, recognition and retention strategies through human resource policies should be combined to be part of the organizational development plans.

These recommendations have the potential to change work environments in service sector organizations to become healthier, enhance employee satisfaction and turnover, which in turn will contribute to increased productivity, service quality and organizational sustainability.

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