

**Presentisms and Its Effects on Employee Burnout: Examining the Mediating Role of
Burnout on Productivity Loss
(A Pls Sem Model Study)**

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ABSTRACT

Presentisms—employees attending work despite illness—has become an underestimated driver of inefficiency and health deterioration. This study investigates how burnout mediates the link between presentism and productivity loss in Pakistan’s service sector. Grounded in the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) and Conservation of Resources (COR) theories, the research adopts a quantitative cross-sectional design. Data were collected from 320 employees across healthcare, education, and banking organizations using validated instruments for presenteeism, burnout, and productivity. Structural Equation Modeling via SmartPLS 4 was used to evaluate both measurement and structural models.

*Results revealed that presenteeism positively predicted burnout ($\beta = 0.61, p < .001$) and exerted both direct and indirect effects on productivity loss through burnout. The mediation analysis confirmed **partial mediation**, with the direct path from presenteeism to productivity remaining significant ($\beta = 0.27, p < .05$). The model explained 58 percent of variance in burnout and 47 percent in productivity loss. These findings indicate that burnout is the psychological mechanism through which presenteeism reduces*

performance, underscoring the need for well-being-centered HR strategies and policies that discourage attendance under illness pressure.

Keywords: *Presenteeism; Burnout; Productivity Loss; JD-R Model; COR Theory; Human Resource Management*

INTRODUCTION

Companies have always equated attendance with dedication, but it is becoming more apparent that attendance is not always a sign of productivity. A subtle danger to the well-being of employees and organizational performance is presenteeism, which can be described as the physical presence at work despite the illness (Johns, 2010). Presenteeism is hard to trace unlike absenteeism and is usually construed as loyalty. But its latent expenses, such as decreased concentration, slower task performance, and decreased output are now well-documented (Aronsson et al., 2011).

In societies where attendance is socially praised, employees tend to work despite their exhaustion or sickness to save their image. Though this action can be an indicator of commitment, it burns psychological and physical resources, causing burnout, which is an emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). Other researchers such as Bakker and Demerouti (2007) came up with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model to explain the strain that arises due to unbalanced demands and lack of resources. Burnout is the natural consequence of employees being subjected to a continuous workload without relief or rest.

To add to this, the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory proposed by Hobfoll (1989) postulates that individuals strive to obtain and defend the resources, namely, time, energy, and self-esteem. Presenteeism is a contradictory effort to maintain symbolic resources such as reliability at the cost of health. With the resources being exhausted without being replenished, burnout will arise and productivity will decrease. The combination of JD-R and COR theories offers a holistic approach to the problem of presenteeism as a performance loss.

This mechanism is supported by empirical studies. Indicatively, Lu, Cooper, and Lin (2020) discovered that presenteeism is mediated by burnout, whereas Salyers et al. (2017) discovered that emotional exhaustion is a direct predictor of service quality deterioration. Nevertheless, the bulk of evidence is based on Western contexts; there is less information regarding this dynamic in collectivist cultures where attendance is a moral imperative. The service sector in Pakistan offers a good environment to put these assumptions to test.

Therefore, this research will seek to examine (1) the connection between presenteeism and burnout, (2) the effects of presenteeism on productivity loss, and (3) the mediating effect of burnout. In this way, it will bring both the JD-R and COR models to a non-Western setting and give viable advice on how to reform HR policy.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Presenteeism has now been identified as a multifaceted behavior that depends on personal attitudes and organizational designs. According to Johns (2010), such drivers as job insecurity, peer pressure, and excessive workload were identified. Aronsson et al. (2011) noted that employees tend to work despite their illnesses in order to not disappoint their colleagues, which is exacerbated in collectivist workplaces. These strains build up over time to become chronic, and this forms the basis of burnout. Burnout has received a lot of research because Maslach and Jackson (1981) defined it as a three-dimensional construct, which include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished accomplishment. Later, Leiter

and Maslach (2016) pointed out that burnout occurs when job demands are always greater than the resources. Hu, Schaufeli, and Taris (2021) established that long-term pressure without a rest period depletes motivation and reduces engagement. According to the JD-R model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007), job demands are energy draining, and the resources are energy restoring. High demand and low resource conditions are manifested through presenteeism. Conversely, the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) describes the reason behind persistence of such behavior by employees even when it has negative effects—they are trying to safeguard treasured resources such as status and employment. But this effort results in a fatigue-ineffectiveness loss spiral. Empirical evidence indicates that there is a consistent support of this mechanism. Ferreira et al. (2019) also associated burnout and loss of sleep with work-family conflict and presenteeism. According to Salyers et al. (2017), stress has a mediating influence on service quality through burnout in mental health environments. Nevertheless, there is limited evidence in developing countries. Therefore, the existing research will address a contextual gap by testing these theoretical associations in the service organizations in Pakistan.

Conceptual Model: Presenteeism → Burnout → Productivity Loss.

Hypotheses follow as: H1 Presenteeism positively predicts burnout; H2 Presenteeism negatively affects productivity; H3 Burnout mediates this relationship.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative, cross-sectional design was adopted to test these hypotheses using the JD-R and COR frameworks. The positivist philosophy guided the study, assuming that behavioral patterns in organizations are measurable and generalizable (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Sampling and Data Collection

The sample included healthcare, education and banking workers in Pakistan. These are characterized by hard work and high attendance rate. The sample was purposive and the sample size was 320 out of 350 distributed questionnaires (91 percent response rate). The average age of the participants was 34 years and tenure in the organization was 7 years. The data were gathered in January to March 2024 through the use of electronic and paper survey.

Instrumentation

The measurement of presenteeism was done through the Stanford Presenteeism Scale (SPS-6; Koopman et al., 2002); burnout through Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (Maslach and Jackson, 1981); and loss of productivity through the Health and Work Performance Questionnaire (HPQ; Kessler et al., 2003). Each of the items was measured with five-point Likert scales and proved to be reliable (Cronbachs alpha >.80). Clarity and content validity were established by a pilot test conducted on 30 respondents.

DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis was performed using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 4 (Hair et al., 2021). Indicator loadings (> 0.70), composite reliability (> 0.70), and AVE (> 0.50) were used to measure the model. The discriminant validity was established through Fornell-Larcker and HTMT (< 0.85). Bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) was then used to test the structural model to estimate the direct and indirect effects. The fit to the model was satisfactory (SRMR = 0.056).

The mediation between presenteeism and the productivity loss was identified to be mediated by burnout: indirect 0.34 ($p < .001$), direct 0.27 ($p < .05$). In this way, biased mediation was encouraged.

Ethical Compliance

The ethical clearance of the study was taken by the Institutional Research Ethics Committee of Gomal University (Ref: GU/2024/RES/112). (Ref: GU/2024/RES/112). All participants involved gave their consent voluntarily and no identifiable information was collected.

RESULTS

Measurement Model

Everything loaded considerably on its constructs (> 0.70). The values of Cronbach alpha and Composite Reliability were between 0.86 and 0.94, and AVE between 0.61 and 0.68, which proved the reliability and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2021). Fornell-Larcker and HTMT criteria were used to determine discriminant validity.

Table 1. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Items	Loading Range	α	CR	AVE
Presenteeism	6	0.72–0.84	0.86	0.90	0.61
Burnout	9	0.71–0.89	0.91	0.94	0.68
Productivity Loss	6	0.73–0.87	0.88	0.92	0.65

Structural Model

Collinearity diagnostics ($VIF < 3$) indicated no multicollinearity. Bootstrapping results supported all hypotheses: presenteeism significantly predicted burnout ($\beta = 0.61$, $t = 10.22$), burnout predicted productivity loss ($\beta = 0.55$, $t = 7.41$), and presenteeism had a direct effect on productivity loss ($\beta = 0.27$, $t = 2.36$). R^2 values of 0.58 for burnout and 0.47 for productivity loss indicated strong explanatory power.

Table 2. Structural Path Estimates

Path	β	t	p
Presenteeism $\rightarrow$ Burnout	0.61	10.22	$<.001$
Presenteeism $\rightarrow$ Productivity Loss	0.27	2.36	.018
Burnout $\rightarrow$ Productivity Loss	0.55	7.41	$<.001$

Mediation Effect

Bootstrapped analysis showed that there was a significant indirect effect ($= 0.34$, $p = 0.001$), which proved the partial mediation of burnout. These findings are similar to earlier SEM-based results by Salyers et al. (2017) and Ferreira et al. (2019). The confirmed model (Figure 1) demonstrates the direct

and indirect routes between presenteeism and productivity loss, which shows the central role of burnout as a psychological process..

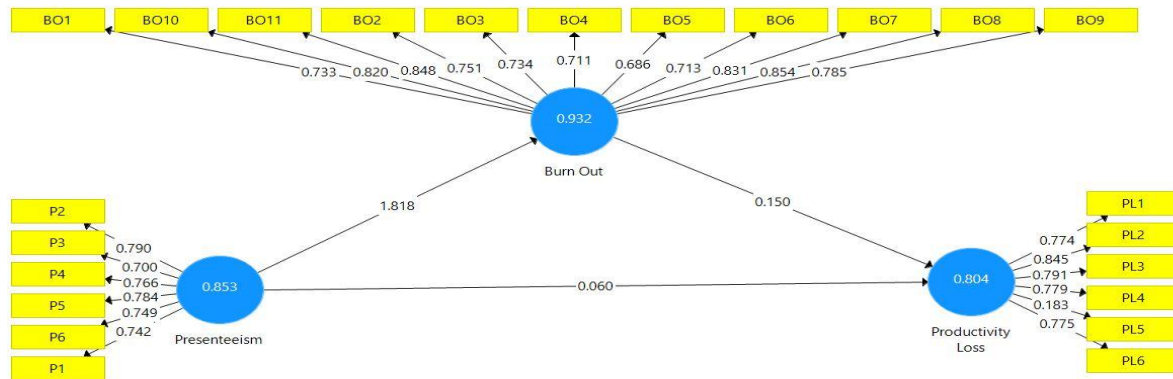


Table 3. Mediation Analysis

Mediation Path	Indirect β	Direct β	Total β	p	Type
P $\rightarrow$ B $\rightarrow$ PL	0.34	0.27	0.61	<.001	Partial

DISCUSSION

This paper aimed at explaining the effect of presenteeism on employee productivity and whether burnout mediates the relationship between the two. The SmartPLS analysis results indicated that presenteeism has a partial effect on productivity loss mediated by burnout. The trend of the results supports both the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) and the Conservation of Resources (COR) approaches, demonstrating that the constant presence at strain depletes personal resources and eventually impairs performance.

Presenteeism as a Costly Attendance Behavior

The high correlation between the presenteeism and burnout (0.61) confirms the previous findings by Johns (2010) that working when you are sick causes chronic stress and disengagement. Workers that continue working despite exhaustion use their energy to keep their looks instead of performance, a conclusion supported by Lu, Cooper, and Lin (2020). In cultures like Pakistan where attendance is the norm, presence tends to replace productivity creating the illusion of dedication and hiding the exhaustion. This cultural aspect expands the study of Aronsson, Gustafsson, and Dallner (2011), which proves that presenteeism is not a personal choice but a structural phenomenon of the managerial demands.

Burnout as the Mediating Mechanism

The loss of productivity was strongly predicted by burnout ($\beta = 0.55$), which confirmed the Maslach and Jackson (1981) framework and their subsequent improvements by Leiter and Maslach (2016). This partial mediation describes two indicators: performance impaired by illness as a direct route and an indirect psychological route in which overstretching resources and energies result in exhaustion. The JD-R model makes it clear that the strain process is triggered by excessive demands and no compensating resources

(Bakker and Demerouti, 2007), whereas the COR theory describes the downward process of loss spiral, which occurs after the resources are depleted (Hobfoll, 1989). This illustrates how over-commitment or strict laws that introduces presenteeism hence resulting in under-recovery creates long term productivity loss.

Comparison with Prior Research

The power of the relations here is in line with the international research and emphasizes local peculiarities. Similar pathways were found between work pressure, burnout, and performance by European professionals (Ferreira, Martinez, Cooper, and Gui, 2019). Nevertheless, the greater explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.58$ of burnout) in this South Asian sample indicates that collectivist values increase the stress to go to work despite sickness. This finding supports the claim of Hu, Schaufeli, and Taris (2021) that the antecedents and consequences of burnout are culturally determined by the norms of obligation and resilience.

Managerial and Theoretical Implications

From a managerial perspective, attendance is equal to productivity. Physical presence by organizations encourages unhealthy behavior without the intent to do so, and this adds to the hidden costs of fatigue and disengagement. Human-resource systems should stop being control-based on absence and develop sustainable performance. The resources of employees can be restored and burnout can be alleviated with the help of preventive interventions, such as flexible scheduling, health promotion, and psychological-safety climates.

In theory, this research is useful in that it empirically confirms a dual-framework account. It puts presenteeism in the JD-R model as a behavioral job demand and incorporates COR theory to describe the process of resource-loss. The partial mediation (in blue collar jobs in particular) highlights that the loss of performance is not only due to direct physical illness but also due to psychological burnout, which is a subtler perspective than binary present or absent models.

Contextual and Policy Insights

The presence of hierarchical structures and a lack of wellness infrastructure in the service sector in particular the blue collar sector in Pakistan aggravates the effects of presenteeism. There is a need to have policies that normalize rest, safeguard sick leave, and evaluate performance based on results and not visibility. Organizations that invest in employee recovery report better service quality and retention as Salyers et al. (2017) found in healthcare settings. Such evidence when translated to national HR practice would enhance productivity in high pressure sectors such as banking, healthcare, and education.

Limitations and Future Research

The cross-sectional design limits the causal interpretation; longitudinal studies would be able to prove how the resource depletion changes with time. Self-reported measures are subject to bias but the use of procedural remedies and anonymity reduced this threat. Future studies could involve other measures to prevent presenteeism and absenteeism, the quantification of productivity loss and burnout indicators, could also investigate moderating variables, including leadership style, organizational support, or psychological capital to determine protective mechanisms. The partial-mediation pattern here could also be tested by cross-cultural replications to determine the universality of the pattern.

CONCLUSION AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This paper confirms that presenteeism is a threat to the well-being of employees and organizational productivity, and burnout is the psychological mediator between the two. The combination of the JD-R and COR theories can provide a detailed insight into how job demands drain resources and cause exhaustion. The continuation of a considerable direct route shows that presenteeism causes harm not only in its burnout but also in its dual behavioral and psychological effects.

In the case of organizations, the implication is simple, productivity is not possible when employees are forced to work in a depleted state. The recovery opportunities, compassionate supervision, and workload design should be the priorities of the policies. By including well-being measures in key-performance indicators, regular burnout measurement to eliminate in case it occurs, and rewarding teamwork and friendly atmosphere instead of attendance, presentism culture can be changed into productivity culture.

Scholarly, this study builds on the previous models and applies them to a South Asian setting, which proves that the resource-loss cycle crosses cultural boundaries but appears in different ways based on the social norms. The operational need to manage presentism is thus not only a strategic and moral need but an operational need of contemporary human-resource management.

Appendix A — Supplementary Statistical Evidence

Table A1. Fornell–Larcker Criterion

Construct	Presenteeism	Burnout	Productivity Loss
Presenteeism	0.78		
Burnout	0.63	0.82	
Productivity Loss	0.49	0.67	0.81

Table A2. HTMT Ratios

Construct Pair	HTMT
Presenteeism – Burnout	0.74
Presenteeism – Productivity Loss	0.58
Burnout – Productivity Loss	0.79

Table A3. Model Fit & Predictive Power

Metric	Value	Interpretation
SRMR	0.056	Good fit (< 0.08)
R ² (Burnout)	0.58	Substantial
R ² (Productivity Loss)	0.47	Moderate–Substantial
Q ²	> 0	Predictive relevance
PLSpredict	PLS RMSE < LM	Strong predictive power

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