

Understanding and Managing Job Stress in the Service Sector: A Literature Review

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Abstract

Job stress is an integral aspect of human resource development dynamics within organizations. This literature review investigates job stress, highlighting its prevalence as a critical issue for employees in various service sectors, such as healthcare, hospitality, banking, consumer, and courier services. The study sets out to accomplish two primary goals: firstly, to delineate the factors that contribute to job stress, and secondly, to evaluate the repercussions of job stress on employees. By examining insights from ten prior studies, we identify a comprehensive array of internal and external factors that intensify job stress. We further explore the influence of these stressors on vital outcomes, including turnover intentions, employee performance, and burnout. Our findings reveal that job stress significantly impacts employees' intentions to leave. Nonetheless, effectively managing job stress can foster positive outcomes for organizations. These insights underscore the critical need for management in the service sector to grasp the complex origins of job stress fully. Armed with this understanding, they can devise and implement strategies to reduce turnover intentions, bolstering overall organizational performance.

Keywords: Job Stress, Turnover Intention, Job Stress Management, Service Sector.

JEL CODES: M10, M21, M55

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1. Introduction

Job stress manifests as a reaction to perceived threats in the workplace, symbolizing a detrimental interaction between the individual and their professional environment. Two primary models dominate the academic discourse surrounding job stress: the transactional and the interactionist approaches. The transactional model accentuates the genesis of stress through the interaction between an individual and their work environment, whereas the interactionist perspective portrays stress as the dynamic outcome of this interaction (Mansour & Tremblay,

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2018). This study aims to articulate the diverse factors inducing job stress, their subsequent impacts, and the imperative for organizations to address this significant concern.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (2008) disclosed that, annually, in the UK, 350 fatalities occur at the workplace, along with over 36 million days lost due to work-related accidents and ill-health (Armstrong, 2009). Stress at work emerges as a key factor affecting employee health. A rising trend in job stress has been observed, escalating worries over its influence on mental health (Virtanen, 2007).

The World Health Organization has labeled stress the "Health Epidemic of the 21st Century." Stress is costing American businesses up to \$300 billion a year. Over 50% of Americans encounter stress, negatively impacting their work productivity. Stress levels have increased by 10-30% among all demographic groups in the United States from 1983 to 2009 (Fink, 2006).

Furthermore, a study by Mercer Marsh Benefit (MMB) revealed that nearly 37% of employees in Indonesia, approximately two out of five individuals, experienced work-related stress during the pandemic. While this rate is lower than 51% in Asia and the global rate of 50%, it remains significant (Halidi, 2021).

Creating a safe and healthy work environment and reducing hazards that may jeopardize health and safety to the fullest extent possible is a collective responsibility shared by everyone in an organization (Armstrong, 2009). Nonetheless, various factors can precipitate stress (Akca & Küçükoğlu, 2020), such as time pressure relating to qualitative workload and multi-tasking, both of which have detrimental effects on human life (Schmoldt et al., 1994). Stress generally influences human behavior (Schlegel, 1993) and can lead to burnout (Kim et al., 2007).

Considering this context, this study aims to uncover the factors triggering stress and its impacts on employees in the service sector, a sector chosen due to its higher pressures and greater job stress than others (Cheng & Kao, 2022). Through a literature review of ten articles from prior research, this study identifies areas for further exploration, providing a valuable foundation for academics interested in studying job stress.

The key objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the factors contributing to job stress.
2. To understand the impacts resulting from job stress.

Given the aforementioned background, this study endeavors to address the following research questions:

1. What primary factors precipitate job stress in the service sector?
2. What are the consequential impacts of job stress on employees within this sector?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Stress

Stress, an intensely personal phenomenon, manifests differently across individuals, contingent upon their respective levels of vulnerability, resilience, and the diversity of tasks they undertake (Fink, 2006). The complexity and individuality of stress render it elusive to define, with its significance fluctuating under different circumstances. Stressful work situations are often characterized by heightened arousal and anxiety in response to uncontrollable, aversive

challenges, typically inducing sensations of fear and anxiety (Fink, 2006). Recent research, aimed at exploring work stress across various professions, has particularly delved into the factors influencing work stress within the hospitality industry. In this sector, researchers found that daily, weekly, and annual work events consistently precipitate transition moments triggering job stress in any division. Given the service-oriented nature of the hospitality industry, which prioritizes customer satisfaction, this research provides an insider perspective on how stress impacts this specific workforce (Yusriani et al., 2023).

Further, previous studies have elucidated the multifaceted nature of stress, highlighting the role of psychological resilience, workplace environment, and organizational support in mediating stress outcomes. For example, Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) stress appraisal model emphasizes the significance of personal appraisal in stress perception, suggesting that individuals' assessment of a potential stressor as threatening or manageable can significantly influence their stress response. Moreover, workplace wellness programs have gained traction, with evidence suggesting that such interventions can mitigate stress levels and enhance overall employee well-being (Richardson & Rothstein, 2008).

Technological advances and the increasing prevalence of remote work have introduced new dimensions to work-related stress. Research by Srivastava, et al. (2020) underscores the dual-edged nature of remote work, which, while offering flexibility and autonomy, can also blur the boundaries between work and personal life, potentially exacerbating stress.

Understanding stress within the hospitality industry, and more broadly across professions, requires a holistic approach that considers individual differences, organizational culture, and the evolving nature of work environments. As the body of literature on stress continues to grow, it becomes increasingly clear that addressing work-related stress requires multifaceted strategies encompassing individual resilience-building, organizational support mechanisms, and adaptive work practices.

2.2. Job Stress

Job stress epitomizes an adverse interaction between the individual and their work environment. It may arise when any component of the work environment is perceived as a threat (Beehr & Newman, 1978). Two fundamental approaches to understanding job stress are the transactional and interactionist models. The transactional model accentuates the interplay between an individual and their work environment in the emergence of stress. Conversely, the interactionist model posits that stress is the outcome of a dynamic relationship between the individual and their environment (Mansour & Tremblay, 2018). Job stress can be characterized as an employee's subjective emotional response to their environment, wherein failing to achieve significant goals or outcomes may induce physical and psychological stress. Furthermore, job stress can potentially deteriorate employees' physical and mental health (Cheng & Kao, 2022).

2.3. Service Sector

As a vital component of modern economies, the tertiary or service sector significantly bolsters GDP and employment across numerous countries (OECD, 2021). This multifaceted sector encompasses various industries including but not limited to healthcare, hospitality, banking, education, and retail (Armstrong, 2009).

The service sector is uniquely characterized by the immediate provision of services to consumers, involving heightened interaction with customers. This can often translate into

significant stress triggers for employees (Cheng & Kao, 2022). The demands of maintaining high service quality, negotiating with demanding customers, and meeting rigorous performance objectives can be stress-inducing and emotionally taxing for service employees (Huang et al., 2019).

Certain service sectors, such as healthcare and hospitality, are particularly marked by prolonged working hours, unpredictable scheduling, and intensive emotional labor. These factors contribute to a greater vulnerability to job stress among employees in these fields (Kim et al., 2007). As such, the service sector stands apart in presenting specific challenges and stressors that differentiate it from other industrial sectors (Schmoldt et al., 1994).

The COVID-19 pandemic has further intensified the complexities of job stress in the service sector. In Indonesia, for example, around 37 percent of service sector employees reported experiencing work-related stress during the pandemic, a figure that is only slightly lower than the global and Asian averages (Halidi, 2021). Reflecting on this, Yusriani (2023) emphasized that the widespread experience of job stress during the pandemic has yielded invaluable lessons and insights.

These findings highlight the pressing need for a deeper understanding and strategic intervention to mitigate job stress within the service sector, given its potential to negatively impact both employee welfare and organizational effectiveness.

3. Research Method

The methodology employs a qualitative approach, analyzing previous studies. Researchers selected recent articles with diverse citation counts and service sector variants, guided by discussions in the completion of academic assignments (Tracy et al., 2019). These articles serve as empirical evidence and align with the goal of fostering innovative thinking in research related to Human Resource Development.

This investigation was executed through a systematic review of ten scholarly articles, published between 2017 and 2023. Scholars aim to acquire more knowledge and gain new insights to inform future research directions. This literature-based research aimed to identify variables contributing to stress and clarify the effects of stress within the service industry. Specifically, this study explored sectors including health, hospitality, banking, consumer, and courier services. The comprehensive review of these diverse areas sheds light on the multifaceted nature of stress in different service environments and paves the way for developing targeted interventions and strategies to mitigate stress and enhance employee well-being across various service sectors.

4. Findings and Discussions

Organizations have four primary motivations for addressing job stress. First, they bear a societal obligation to ensure a high-quality work environment. Second, unchecked stress can precipitate various health conditions. Third, stress can result in an inability to meet work demands, subsequently amplifying employee stress levels. Finally, elevated stress can diminish both employee and organizational effectiveness (Armstrong, 2009).

A comprehensive understanding of stress triggers and their repercussions can help identify the root causes of stress. This, in turn, empowers both individuals and organizations to undertake preventative measures to mitigate the adverse impact of stress on employees. An examination of ten pertinent studies revealed a significant research interest in the domain of job stress.

Tables below summarize the findings from ten previous studies, detailing the potential variables contributing to job stress and their implications.

Table 1: Summary of Previous Research.

No	Author, Year	Research methods	Variables	Result
1	Mulyani & Gunawan (2017)	The quantitative study with a sample of 164 customer service courier services	- Leadership style - Job satisfaction - Job stress - turnover intention	- There is a negative and significant influence of leadership style and job satisfaction on turnover intention through job stress. - Job stress is very dominant mediator of the effect of leadership style and job satisfaction on turnover intention
2	Ramli (2018)	This study conducted in a private hospital in Jakarta.	- Job stress - organizational commitment - employee performance	- Job stress gives a negative impact on organizational commitment and employee performance
3	Mansour & Tremblay (2018)	The quantitative study on a sample of 258 staff in the hospitality industry in Quebec	- Work–family conflict (WFC) - Family–work conflict (FWC) - Job stress - Burnout - Intention to leave	- Perceived need for childcare moderates the relationship between FWC, job stress, and burnout
4	Kurniawaty et al. (2019)	A quantitative study with a sample of 100 Bank Mandiri employees	- Work environment - Stress - Job satisfaction - Employees' turnover intention	- The work environment has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction. - Stress has a significant negative impact on job satisfaction. - The work environment negatively impact on turnover intention significantly - Stress causes turnover intention positively and significantly - Job satisfaction causes turnover intention significantly

Table 2: Summary of Previous Research (continued).

No	Author, Year	Research methods	Variables	Result
5	Vui- Yee & Yen-Hwa (2020)	The quantitative study of 44 employees from the consumer service sector in Malaysia	- Ostracism - Job stress - job autonomy - turnover intention -	- Employees' perceived workplace ostracism leads to job stress, which in turn results in negative behaviors such as turnover intention. - Job autonomy moderates the mediated relationship, where the relationship is stronger with lower levels of job autonomy.
6	Ravari et al. (2020)	The experimental study of 80 nurses working in affiliated emergency departments with the faculty of medicine at universities in Iran	- Job stress - Time management training intervention	- There was no statistically significant difference in job stress scores after the time management training intervention
7	Siddiqui et al. (2021)	The study involved 220 healthy staff members from a Beijing hospital.	- Job stress - leader position - Self-control - Resistance to temptation	- Poor physical and mental health conditions are significantly associated with poor self-control and higher job stress. - Job stress has a negative correlation with self-control
8	Kim (2022)	Survey of 135 adult women who work in banks	- Job stress - coping strategies, - Meaning of life - Resilience - quality of working life	- Psychological well-being is positively correlated with social support-seeking mechanisms, problem-solving-focused coping mechanisms, meaning in life, and resilience. - Psychological well-being shows a negative correlation with job stress and avoidance-focused coping mechanisms. - Factors that affect psychological well-being are coping mechanisms that focus on problem-solving, job role stress,

meaning in life, coping mechanisms that focus on avoidance, and resilience.

Table 3: Summary of Previous Research (continued).

No	Author, Year	Research methods	Variables	Result
9	Cheng & Kao (2022)	The online survey on hotel's employee in Taiwan in 2021	- Job stress activation - Employees' job satisfaction - Hotels' business performances	- Job stress has a mediating effect on the relationship between employee job satisfaction and hotel business performance. - Organizational resilience has a moderating effect
10	Ergun et al. (2023)	Quantitative study on hotels in Türkiye	- Job insecurity perception - Job stress - Psychological capital - turnover intention	- Perceived job insecurity positively affect job stress and turnover intention - Job stress causes switching intentions.

Source: previous research results, processed (2023)

Upon examining the referenced studies, various insights pertaining to job stress were unveiled. These findings, categorized under two major sections, are described as follows:

4.1. Factors Inducing Job Stress

Table 1 encapsulates several potential triggers for job stress experienced by employees. These stressors can broadly be divided into internal and external sources:

a. Internal Factors

Employees' perceptions of certain internal factors can influence their job stress levels. These factors include perceived job satisfaction (Mulyani & Gunawan, 2017), job insecurity (Ergun et al., 2023), psychological well-being (Kim, 2022), physical and mental health conditions, self-control (Siddiqui et al., 2021), workplace ostracization (Vui-Yee & Yen-Hwa, 2020), and family-work conflict (FWC) (Mansour & Tremblay, 2018). The empirical evidence suggests these aspects can significantly reduce employee job stress.

b. External Factors

Various work-related external factors can also lead to job stress, such as leadership style (Mulyani & Gunawan, 2017) and job demands (Ravari et al., 2020). Interestingly, management interventions aiming at enhancing time management skills did not appear to alleviate stress (Ravari et al., 2020), indicating the existence of other work-related factors instigating stress. For instance, Ravari et al., (2020) noted that, despite the implementation of time management training, the stress levels among nurses remained high, suggesting that other variables, such as work experience and overtime hours, could be influencing stress levels. As Cheng & Kao,

(2022) stated, excessive work pressure in a highly competitive environment can inflict adverse physical and mental effects, impeding organizational performance.

4.2. Impact of Job Stress

Job stress exerts detrimental effects on individual employees, most notably, sparking turnover intentions (Mulyani & Gunawan, 2017; Kurniawaty et al., 2019; Mansour & Tremblay, 2018; Vui-Yee & Yen-Hwa, 2020; Ergun et al., 2023), diminishing organizational commitment, degrading employee performance (Ramli, 2018), and leading to burnout (Mansour & Tremblay, 2018). Most of the referenced studies indicated that job stress often prompts employees to seek employment elsewhere, correlating with decreased commitment and performance. However, research has also unveiled instances where job stress positively influenced job satisfaction, thereby improving organizational performance, provided organizational resilience was sufficiently robust (Cheng & Kao, 2022). Hence, job stress, when managed effectively, can yield positive outcomes (Kim, 2022; Lazarus et al., 1984; Yusriani S. et al., 2023; Akca et al., 2020).

Managerial Implications, Limitations, and Future Research

The findings of this study hold implications for service industry management. They emphasize the need to comprehend and manage factors inducing job stress, thereby preventing detrimental impacts on organizational stability. Consequently, implementing effective job stress management in the work environment cannot be overstated.

This study's limitations lie in its reliance on only ten prior studies without conducting verification tests, potentially leading to conclusions that might lack comprehensive validity. Future research should focus on verification tests examining how job satisfaction, job insecurity, psychological well-being, physical and mental health conditions, self-control, feelings of being ostracized at work, and family-work conflict influence job stress. Further, the impact of job stress on turnover intention should be examined, with job stress management as a potential moderating variable. This could shed light on how effective job stress management strategies can enhance or dampen the effect of job stress on turnover intention.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to illuminate the multifaceted factors contributing to job stress and its consequential effects on employees within the service sector. Identifying both internal and external triggers, the research highlights how job stress can precipitate turnover intentions, diminish organizational commitment, impair employee performance, and provoke burnout. However, the findings also underscore the transformative potential of effective job stress management strategies. By comprehensively understanding and addressing the roots of job stress, organizations can not only alleviate these negative outcomes but also foster a more resilient, engaged, and productive workforce. Ultimately, this investigation serves as a clarion call for service sector management to prioritize the development and implementation of robust stress management interventions, thereby enhancing both employee well-being and organizational success.

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