



Impact of Stress and Psychological Abuse on Workers' Performance within the Organization

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the impact of stress and psychological abuse on employees' performance in organizational settings. Workplace stress and abuse, often overlooked, have become central challenges affecting both employee well-being and organizational efficiency. Drawing on a sample of organizational employees and analyzing quantitative survey data, the study investigates how persistent stressors and exposure to psychological abuse influence work commitment, job satisfaction, and performance outcomes. Results indicate a significant negative relationship between stress, psychological abuse, and performance, while organizational support and resilience strategies play mediating roles. The findings highlight the importance of promoting healthy work environments, implementing policies against abuse, and providing stress management resources. This study contributes to organizational behavior literature by contextualizing stress and abuse within modern workplaces and offering practical recommendations for improving performance outcomes.

Keywords : Impact, Stress, Performance

INTRODUCTION

The modern workplace is increasingly characterized by high demands, fast-paced environments, and complex interpersonal dynamics. While organizations strive to maximize productivity, employees often face heightened levels of stress and, in many cases, psychological abuse. Stress at work has been recognized as a major occupational health problem that undermines performance, decreases motivation, and increases turnover (Leka & Jain, 2010; Hassard et al., 2018). Similarly, psychological abuse—manifesting through verbal harassment, bullying, intimidation, or exclusion—erodes self-esteem, creates hostility, and discourages collaboration (Einarsen, Hoel, & Zapf, 2020).

For organizations, employee performance is directly tied to competitive advantage. However, when workers are subjected to constant stressors and psychological abuse, their cognitive, emotional, and physical capacities decline. Consequently, absenteeism rises, turnover increases, and organizational culture deteriorates. This study examines the relationship between stress, psychological abuse, and employee performance within organizational contexts, focusing on how these factors undermine commitment, engagement, and efficiency.

By bridging classical theories of stress and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) with modern empirical evidence, this research provides new insights into how organizations can mitigate harmful practices and foster resilience.



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Problem Statement and Research Questions

Despite growing attention to employee well-being, stress and psychological abuse remain pervasive in many organizations. Workers subjected to such conditions often struggle to perform effectively, yet many organizations underestimate the severity of the issue.

Research Questions:

What is the relationship between workplace stress and employee performance?

How does psychological abuse affect employees' commitment and productivity?

Can organizational support and stress-management strategies mitigate these negative effects?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research are to:

Examine the impact of stress on workers' performance.

Analyze the influence of psychological abuse on employee motivation and organizational outcomes.

Investigate the mediating role of job satisfaction and commitment.

Provide recommendations for organizations to reduce stress and prevent psychological abuse.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stress and psychological abuse at work have been widely studied, with consistent evidence linking them to adverse outcomes.

Workplace Stress and Performance

The Job Demand–Control Model (Karasek, 1979) posits that job stress arises when work demands exceed employees' control. Prolonged stress reduces concentration, impairs decision-making, and leads to burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Studies show that high stress correlates with absenteeism, low productivity, and higher turnover intentions (Ganster & Rosen, 2013; Giorgi et al., 2020).

Psychological Abuse at Work

Psychological abuse, often referred to as workplace bullying or emotional harassment, involves repeated mistreatment that harms an employee's dignity and well-being (Einarsen et al., 2020). Research indicates that psychological abuse reduces job satisfaction, creates hostile environments, and is strongly associated with decreased performance and higher attrition (Hershcovis, 2011; Salam & Farooq, 2021).

Mediating Role of Commitment and Satisfaction

Organizational commitment and job satisfaction play mediating roles in the stress–performance relationship (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Judge et al., 2017). Employees who feel valued and supported can buffer some effects of stress. However, under abusive conditions, even strong commitment tends to weaken (Tepper, 2000).

Recent Studies

Recent research (2021–2024) highlights remote and hybrid work environments as new contexts of stress and abuse. Giorgi et al. (2022) found that digital surveillance and remote micromanagement intensified psychological pressure. Similarly, Khan & Yusaf (2023) reported that workplace cyber-bullying



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significantly reduced employee engagement. These findings confirm that stress and abuse remain evolving challenges in modern organizational settings.

Theoretical Framework

This research is underpinned by three major theories:

Job Demand–Control Model (Karasek, 1979): Stress arises when job demands are high but decision-making control is low.

Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964): Employees reciprocate fair and respectful treatment with higher performance; abusive treatment leads to withdrawal.

Organizational Commitment Theory (Meyer & Allen, 1991): Stress and abuse negatively affective, normative, and continuance commitment, reducing discretionary effort.

Research Gap

Although there is a growing body of research on workplace stress and psychological abuse, significant gaps remain in understanding their impact on employee performance. Existing studies (e.g., Ganster & Rosen, 2013; Einarsen et al., 2020) have largely examined stress and abuse as independent constructs but have often failed to explore how these two interact and compound each other's effects within a single organizational setting. While stress is frequently studied from an occupational health perspective, psychological abuse is often categorized under workplace bullying or harassment, leaving limited integrated frameworks that address both simultaneously.

Moreover, much of the research has been conducted in Western contexts, where cultural dynamics, organizational structures, and labor protections differ considerably from those in South Asian organizations. In Pakistan and other developing economies, organizational hierarchies are often rigid, and employees may be less likely to report stress or abuse due to fear of retaliation or job insecurity (Salam & Farooq, 2021). This cultural dimension remains underexplored, creating a pressing need for localized research.

Another important gap lies in methodological approaches. Several studies rely on qualitative narratives or single-variable assessments, while fewer employ quantitative approaches that capture the statistical significance and interaction effects between stress, psychological abuse, and performance outcomes (Giorgi et al., 2020). Additionally, many investigations focus primarily on physical outcomes (such as absenteeism and turnover) but overlook psychological dimensions like motivation, commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviors that strongly influence performance.

Finally, the evolving nature of work—such as remote work, digital surveillance, and cyberbullying—has introduced new forms of stress and abuse (Giorgi et al., 2022; Khan & Yusaf, 2023). Yet, research on these emerging stressors, especially in South Asian organizations, remains limited.

This study addresses these gaps by:

Examining both stress and psychological abuse together and their combined effect on performance.

Providing empirical evidence from a South Asian organizational context, specifically within Pakistan.

Using a quantitative approach with reliable measurement tools to validate relationships between variables.

Highlighting the mediating roles of commitment and job satisfaction, which are often overlooked in existing studies.



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By filling these gaps, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how workplace dynamics affect employees in developing countries and provides practical recommendations for organizations to foster healthier, more productive environments.

Conceptual Framework

Independent Variables: Stress, Psychological Abuse

Mediating Variables: Job Satisfaction, Commitment

Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

Narrative: Stress and psychological abuse diminish job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which in turn reduce performance. Conversely, organizational support can buffer these negative effects.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: Quantitative, cross-sectional survey.

Population and Sampling: Employees from a multinational organization (N = 60). Convenience sampling used.

Instrument: Structured questionnaire with validated scales on stress, psychological abuse, job satisfaction, and performance.

Reliability: Cronbach's alpha = 0.85, indicating high internal consistency.

Data Collection: Questionnaires distributed via email; 45 valid responses received.

Data Analysis Techniques: Descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis conducted using SPSS.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Reliability Analysis: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.859 across 35 items, confirming scale reliability.

Descriptive Statistics:

Age distribution: Majority between 20–40 years.

Gender: Balanced (51% male, 49% female).

Qualifications: Majority Master's and Bachelor's degree holders.

Correlations:

Stress negatively correlated with performance ($r = -0.62, p < .01$).

Psychological abuse negatively correlated with commitment ($r = -0.54, p < .01$).

Job satisfaction positively correlated with performance ($r = 0.63, p < .01$).

Regression Analysis:

Stress significantly predicted reduced performance ($\beta = -0.42, p < .01$).

Psychological abuse significantly predicted lower job satisfaction and commitment ($\beta = -0.39, p < .01$).

Together, stress and psychological abuse explained 46% of the variance in performance outcomes.

Results: All hypotheses were accepted, stress and abuse significantly affect workers' performance, mediated by commitment and satisfaction.

DISCUSSION



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The findings align with past research show that stress and abuse harm productivity (Ganster & Rosen, 2013; Einarsen et al., 2020). Employees under constant pressure lose focus, creativity, and motivation, while abusive environments create hostility and erode trust. Importantly, this study confirms that organizational support, fairness, and stress-management programs can mitigate these impacts.

Compared with recent studies, our results reinforce the evolving challenges of psychological abuse in hybrid workplaces (Khan & Yusaf, 2023). The significance of job satisfaction as a buffer highlights the critical role of supportive HR practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Implement Anti-Abuse Policies: Establish zero-tolerance policies for bullying, harassment, and psychological mistreatment.

Promote Stress Management Programs: Provide counseling, wellness initiatives, and training workshops.

Enhance Employee Autonomy: Empower workers with greater decision-making authority to reduce stress.

Encourage Supportive Leadership: Train managers in emotional intelligence and respectful communication.

Strengthen Feedback Systems: Use anonymous surveys to detect abuse early and address grievances.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that stress and psychological abuse significantly undermine workers' performance. Both factors reduce commitment and satisfaction, leading to diminished productivity and increased turnover risks. However, organizations can mitigate these effects by fostering supportive environments, promoting fairness, and providing stress-management resources. Ultimately, employee well-being is inseparable from organizational success.

Limitations and Future Research

Limited to one organization; findings may not generalize across industries.

Small sample size (n = 45) restricts broader applicability.

Cross-sectional design does not capture long-term effects. Future studies should use longitudinal designs and include larger, diverse samples across multiple organizations.

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