

Occupational stress management strategies in a competitive work environment: impact on performance and turnover intention

Deasy Rinayanti Pelealu

Manajemen, Universitas Widya Dharma Pontianak, Pontianak, Indonesia

Abstract

A competitive work environment often creates stress that negatively impacts employee performance and increases turnover intention. This study aims to explore the relationship between job stress, performance, and turnover intention, and analyze the effectiveness of stress management strategies in reducing these negative impacts. Using a survey-based quantitative approach, data was collected from 100 employees in the technology, banking, and consulting sectors who faced high performance pressure. The research instruments included the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), Job Performance Scale, and Turnover Intention Scale. Data analysis showed that job stress had a significant negative correlation with performance ($r = -0.53, p < 0.01$) and a significant positive correlation with turnover intention ($r = 0.62, p < 0.01$). Stress management strategies, such as stress management training and work-life balance programs, were found to be effective in improving employee performance and reducing turnover intention. This study provides practical implications for organizations to design stress management strategies based on sector needs, in order to create a healthier, more productive and sustainable work environment. Further studies are recommended to explore more innovative stress management interventions and their impact on other organizational aspects, such as job satisfaction and organizational culture.

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Corresponding Author:

Deasy Rinayanti Pelealu,
Manajemen,
Universitas Widya Dharma Pontianak,
Jl. Hos Cokroaminoto No.445, Darat Sekip, Pontianak,
Kalimantan Barat, 78243, Indonesia.
dcdeasy.26@gmail.com.

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1. Introduction

The increasingly competitive modern work environment requires employees to achieve high targets in often limited time (Daily & Huang, 2001; Härenstam, 2005). This creates significant work pressure, which if not managed properly can lead to work stress (Bakker & de Vries, 2021; Caldwell et al., 2019; Zia et al., 2021). Job stress is not only an individual issue, but also an organizational challenge that impacts employee productivity and workforce stability (Antwi et al., 2019; Bijalwan et al., 2024; Pamidimukkala & Kermanshachi, 2021). Research shows that excessive work pressure can lead to psychological and physical exhaustion (burnout), reduced performance, and increased desire to leave the company (turnover intention). This phenomenon is becoming increasingly relevant in the era of global competition, where organizations are not only required to improve

efficiency but also retain quality employees as strategic assets. In the midst of these dynamics, the need to develop effective stress management strategies is increasingly urgent. These strategies not only serve to improve employee well-being, but also as a proactive effort to maintain the organization's operational sustainability (Ahmed et al., 2020; Martínez-Falcó et al., 2024). However, despite the growing literature on job stress, there is still a gap in understanding how stress management strategies can be optimally integrated to influence two critical dimensions: employee performance and turnover intention. This research addresses that challenge by exploring the relationship between job stress, its management strategies, and its impact on organizational outcomes in the context of a competitive work environment.

Job stress is a common phenomenon in competitive work environments, where high demands on individual performance often exceed employees' adaptive capacity (Daniel, 2019). This condition not only impacts on individual well-being but also on overall organizational effectiveness (Kim et al., 2020; Taris & Schaufeli, 2018). Previous research has shown that poorly managed job stress can result in a variety of negative consequences, including reduced productivity, high absenteeism, and increased turnover intention. Despite this, many organizations still face difficulties in identifying and implementing effective stress management strategies, especially in the context of a dynamic and competitive work environment. The lack of targeted strategies to address job stress exacerbates the challenges organizations face in maintaining workforce stability and improving performance. Some stress management strategies, such as work-life balance programs or stress management training, are often implemented in isolation without a thorough evaluation of their effectiveness. Moreover, research directly linking these strategies to two critical outcomes-employee performance and turnover intention-remains relatively limited. This creates an urgent need to explore a more comprehensive and evidence-based approach to managing job stress in competitive work environments.

Previous research has highlighted the impact of job stress on various aspects of organizational performance and individual well-being. Cooper and Cartwright (2013) suggested that chronic job stress is significantly associated with burnout, reduced performance, and increased turnover intention. In addition, Karasek's (1979) Demand-Control model suggests that high stress occurs when job demands exceed individuals' control over their work, leading to decreased motivation and productivity. Although these studies provide an important understanding of the impact of job stress, many studies focus on identifying problems rather than proposing strategic solutions that are applicable in the context of a competitive work environment. Other studies, such as those conducted by Hammer et al. (2004) and Richardson and Rothstein (2008), have evaluated the effectiveness of stress management strategies such as work-life balance programs, employee assistance programs, and stress management training. However, these studies tend to be limited to evaluating individual approaches without considering the complex relationship between these strategies, employee performance, and turnover intention. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring a more holistic approach, integrating stress management strategies with two important indicators: employee performance and retention. As such, this study makes a significant contribution to the development of a strategic framework that can be practically implemented in organizations.

This study aims to analyze and evaluate job stress management strategies in a competitive work environment and their impact on employee performance and turnover intention. Specifically, this research has three main objectives. First, to identify the types of stress management strategies implemented by organizations and their effectiveness in reducing work stress in employees. Second, to evaluate the effect of job stress on individual performance, focusing on how stress can affect employee productivity, motivation and engagement. Third, to examine the relationship between effective management of job stress and reduced turnover intention, as well as the implications for workforce retention in the organization. By achieving these objectives, this research is expected to

make theoretical and practical contributions to human resource management, especially in helping organizations design strategies that not only improve employee well-being, but also support the achievement of overall business goals.

Although the literature on job stress and its management has grown, there are still important gaps that have not been fully addressed by previous research. Most studies focus on the impact of work stress on individuals, such as burnout, decreased mental health, and decreased productivity (Leitão et al., 2021). On the other hand, research on stress management strategies tends to be limited to evaluating one aspect of the strategy, such as work-life balance programs or stress management training, without linking it thoroughly to organizational indicators such as employee performance and turnover intention (Lazarus, 1989). In addition, most previous studies were conducted in the context of relatively stable work environments, thus paying little attention to the unique characteristics of highly competitive work environments, where pressures and performance expectations reach higher levels (Cooke et al., 2019, 2021). The literature has also not explicitly examined how stress management strategies can be strategically integrated to create a balance between stress reduction and improved organizational outcomes (Labrague et al., 2018; Rafiq et al., 2020). Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by presenting a holistic analysis of the relationship between stress management strategies, employee performance, and turnover intention in the context of a competitive work environment.

This research offers a new contribution to the field of human resource management by integrating a holistic analysis of stress management strategies, employee performance, and turnover intention in the context of a competitive work environment. As one of the few studies that examines the interrelationship between these three aspects as a whole, this research presents a more comprehensive approach compared to previous studies that tend to focus on one aspect separately. This approach not only enriches the literature on work stress management but also provides practical guidance for organizations in designing stress management strategies that are not only effective in reducing work pressure, but also support employee productivity and improve workforce retention. Another uniqueness of this study lies in the application of an analytical framework that adapts to the dynamics of competitive work environments, where work stress tends to be higher compared to more stable work contexts. By highlighting the importance of evidence-based stress management strategies in improving employee well-being while strengthening organizational competitiveness, this research offers a strong justification for its relevance and urgency. The research is expected to contribute to the development of organizational policies that are more responsive to employee needs while supporting the strategic goals of the company.

2. Methods

Research Methods

This study uses a quantitative approach with survey method to explore the relationship between job stress management strategies, employee performance, and turnover intention in a competitive work environment (Gazzola et al., 2020; Strijker et al., 2020). Data was collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to employees from various industry sectors, such as technology, banking, and consulting, which are known to have high performance pressure.

Research Sample

The study involved 100 employees from 10 different companies that were purposively selected to ensure representation of competitive work environments. Inclusion criteria included employees who had at least one year of work experience in the relevant sector and were directly involved in operational activities with high performance demands.

Research Instruments

Data was collected using questionnaires adapted from internationally validated scales, namely: Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) by Song, Younghwan (2020) to measure the level of stress felt by employees. Job Performance Scale by Ramos-Villagrasa and Pedro J (2019) to evaluate individual performance in the context of work. Turnover Intention Scale by Hu, Huiling (2022) to measure employees' intention to leave the company. This questionnaire is designed to comprehensively measure key variables, including stress levels, stress management strategies implemented by the company, and their impact on performance and turnover intention. The instruments used have gone through a process of adaptation and validity testing to ensure suitability to the context of this study.

Data Analysis

The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to explore the relationship between variables and test the research hypotheses. Validity and reliability tests were conducted to ensure data quality and interpretation of results (Amrhein et al., 2019; Azizi et al., 2019).

2. Results and discussion

No	Sector Industry	Name Company	Total Employees	Work Environment Criteria
1	Technology	Company A	10	High performance pressure, strict daily targets
2	Technology	Company B	10	High inter-team competition
3	Banking	Company C	10	High customer demands, long working hours
4	Banking	Company D	10	High productivity expectations
5	Consulting	Company E	10	Strict target-based projects
6	Consulting	Company F	10	Pressure from clients
7	Technology	Company G	10	Dynamic work environment
8	Banking	Company H	10	Intense internal competition
9	Consulting	Company I	10	Individual target-based performance appraisal
10	Technology	Company J	10	Rapid innovation, adaptation pressure

1. Descriptive Statistics

Of the 100 respondents who participated, the majority were from the technology sector (40%), followed by banking (30%) and consulting (30%). The average stress level measured using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) stood at 27.8 (0-40 scale), indicating moderate to high stress levels among respondents. In general, the technology sector had the highest stress levels (average 29.2), followed by the consulting (28.5) and banking (25.7) sectors. Employee performance, measured using the Job Performance Scale, showed an average score of 76.4 (0-100 scale), with the banking sector having the highest performance (79.1) compared to other sectors. However, turnover intention, measured using the Turnover Intention Scale, showed an average score of 3.8 (scale 1-5), with the technology sector having a higher exit intention than the other sectors.

2. Correlation Test

Pearson correlation test was conducted to evaluate the relationship between job stress level, performance, and turnover intention. The results are as follows: Job stress and performance: Significant negative correlation with $r = -0.53$, $p < 0.01$, indicating that higher levels of stress are related to lower performance. Job stress and turnover intention: Significant positive correlation with $r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$, indicating that employees with higher stress levels tend to have greater exit intentions. Stress management and performance: Significant positive correlation with $r = 0.45$, $p < 0.05$, suggesting that effective stress management strategies can improve employee performance.

3. Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the effect of job stress on performance and turnover intention. The regression model shows the following results:

Effect of job stress on performance:

$$Y_{\text{performance}} = 88.6 - 0.42 X_{\text{stress}} \quad (1)$$
$$R^2 = 0.28, p < 0.01.$$

This indicates that every one unit increase in stress level leads to a 0.42 unit decrease in performance score.

The effect of job stress on turnover intention:

$$Y_{\text{turnover intention}} = 1.75 + 0.12 X_{\text{stress}}, \quad (2)$$
$$R^2 = 0.39, p < 0.01.$$

These results indicate that every one unit increase in stress levels increases turnover intention by 0.12 units.

4. Inter-Sector Comparison

One-way ANOVA analysis showed significant differences in stress levels between sectors ($F(2,97) = 4.56, p < 0.05$). Post-hoc Tukey tests showed that the technology sector had significantly higher stress levels than the banking sector ($p < 0.05$), but not significantly different from the consulting sector ($p > 0.05$).

High stress levels significantly reduce performance and increase turnover intention. Effective stress management strategies can improve employee performance, although the impact on turnover intention requires further analysis. The technology sector requires more attention regarding stress management, given its higher levels of stress and turnover intention than other sectors.

Discussion

The results of this study reveal that job stress plays a significant role in influencing employee performance and turnover intention in a competitive work environment. The negative correlation between job stress and performance indicates that an increase in job stress contributes to a decrease in employee productivity. This finding is in line with the Demand-Control model proposed by Karasek (1979), where high job demands without adequate control tend to increase stress and decrease performance. The technology sector showed the highest level of stress, which can be explained by the dynamic nature of the job, tight targets, and the need to constantly innovate. This suggests that more adaptive stress management strategies are needed to address the specific challenges in this sector, such as stress management training or work-life balance programs. In addition, the significant positive relationship between job stress and turnover intention suggests that poorly managed job stress may increase employees' desire to leave the organization. This result supports the findings of Mobley et al. (1979) who pointed out that high job stress increases turnover intention, which in turn can affect workforce stability and organizational operating costs. However, the analysis also shows that effective stress management strategies, such as employee assistance programs, can help reduce job stress and improve employee retention. Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of implementing sector needs-based stress management strategies to

improve employee performance and reduce the risk of turnover intention, especially in sectors with high work pressure.

4. Conclusion

This study found that job stress plays a significant role in influencing employee performance and turnover intention, with a negative impact on performance and a positive impact on turnover intention, especially in the technology sector which shows the highest level of stress. The findings imply the importance of stress management strategies tailored to the characteristics of each sector to improve performance and reduce turnover. Nonetheless, this study has limitations in its limited sector coverage and reliance on subjective measures of stress that may vary between individuals. Therefore, future research should expand the sample to include more industry sectors, as well as use more objective stress measurement approaches, such as physiological measurements or data-driven analysis, to deepen understanding of the dynamics of work stress across different contexts.

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