



A Triad Relationship among Stress, Turnover Intention, and Performance: A Mediation Perspective

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Abstract:

Background: The Indian education sector is experiencing rapid growth, with the emergence of private universities alongside public institutions. Within this context, organizational behavior factors like stress, turnover intention, and performance play critical roles in shaping the efficiency of academic faculty.

Purpose: This study aims to investigate the interplay among stress, turnover intention, and performance in the context of academic faculty in private universities in Punjab, India. Identifying gaps in existing literature, the study formulates hypotheses to explore the mediating effect of turnover intention on the relationship between stress and performance.

Methodology: A sample of 364 assistant professors from a private university in Punjab, India, was selected using a two-stage process involving simple random and convenience sampling methods. The study employed three standardized scales to measure stress, turnover intention, and performance among the participants.

Results: The study reveals that when academic faculty experiences stress, it often leads to them considering leaving their positions. Surprisingly, this intention to leave influences their performance. This shows how intricate the interactions among stress, intentions to leave, and performance can be within educational organizations. Implications of these findings are discussed in terms of their significance for organizational management in private universities. Moreover, the study offers suggestions for addressing issues related to stress and turnover intention to enhance faculty performance.

Conclusion: This research contributes to the literature by empirically examining the mediation effect of turnover intention on the relationship between stress and performance within a specific context of academic faculty in private universities in Punjab, India. By filling gaps in existing research, the study offers valuable insights into understanding and managing organizational behavior dynamics in the education sector.

Keywords: Stress, Turnover intention, Performance, Education sector, Mediation, Private universities.

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Cite as: Kaur J, Maggo M, Phoolka S, Singh S. A Triad Relationship among Stress, Turnover Intention, and Performance: A Mediation Perspective. *Open Psychol J*, 2024; 17: e18743501290750.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2174/0118743501290750240516053331>



Received: January 01, 2024
Revised: March 28, 2024
Accepted: April 26, 2024
Published: June 06, 2024



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1. INTRODUCTION

The educational landscape in India is experiencing unprecedented growth, with private universities playing a

pivotal role alongside government institutions in shaping the higher education system. However, recent years have witnessed a notable surge in employee turnover rates

within private universities [1]. Particularly in Punjab, where sixteen private universities are currently operational, certain institutions have witnessed a significant escalation in turnover rates [2]. Concurrently, there is a growing recognition of elevated stress levels among faculty members within private universities [3], highlighting the pervasive nature of workplace stress in contemporary society. This surge in stress-related research is propelled by an increasing understanding of the detrimental impact of psychosocial stressors on both individual health and financial stability [4, 5], prompting human resource managers to grapple with the challenges of addressing job-related stressors [6]. Gautam and Gautam [7] delineate various factors contributing to workplace stress, encompassing heavy workloads, stringent deadlines, interpersonal conflicts, and job insecurity, which can profoundly affect individuals' mental and physical well-being, culminating in burnout, anxiety, and disillusionment. Moreover, stress has been identified as a significant determinant of diminished work fulfillment and engagement, rendering individuals more predisposed to contemplate leaving their current positions, a phenomenon commonly referred to as turnover intention. Various factors, including job dissatisfaction, limited career advancement prospects, precarious job security, and personal reasons, can influence turnover intention.

Performance remains a cornerstone of organizational success [8], encapsulating diverse facets, such as job proficiency, communication skills, and adaptability. However, stress exerts a detrimental impact on employee performance, compromising reasoning abilities and resulting in diminished output, increased errors, and even resignation [9, 10]. Elevated stress levels may exacerbate the desire to seek alternative employment, driven by a perceived need for stress relief and the belief that departing represents the most viable recourse. Moreover, heightened stress levels can impair concentration and problem-solving abilities and increase inactivity, all of which adversely affect overall performance.

The burgeoning phenomenon of stress and turnover intention within private universities underscores the imperative for organizations to address these challenges proactively. Recognizing the intricate interplay among stress, turnover intention, and performance is crucial for fostering a work environment conducive to employee well-being and organizational success. Such insights underscore the importance of implementing targeted interventions aimed at mitigating stressors and enhancing resilience among employees, thereby fostering a culture of engagement, retention, and performance excellence. Turnover intention can significantly impact organizational performance by influencing employee engagement, job commitment, and task performance. Employees contemplating leaving their jobs are likely to exhibit reduced effort, decreased job satisfaction, and lower organizational citizenship behaviors. Employees with a high rate of departure intention may be less devoted to their jobs, resulting in poor performance; rather than concentrating on their present position, they may

disconnect or actively seek alternative options [11]. In contemporary organizational psychology and management studies, the interplay among stress, turnover intention, and performance has garnered significant attention. This review aims to delve into the literature surrounding this triad relationship, with a particular focus on understanding the mediation perspective that illuminates the mechanisms through which these variables interact. The mediation perspective offers valuable insights into the underlying mechanisms that explain the interrelation between stress, turnover intention, and performance. Several theoretical frameworks, such as the Job Demands-Resources model, propose mediation pathways through which stress influences turnover intention and subsequently affects performance outcomes. The Conservation of Resources theory, as proposed by Hobfoll (1989), delineates mediation pathways, elucidating how stress impacts turnover intention and subsequently influences performance outcomes. These theoretical frameworks posit that stressors diminish employees' psychological and social resources, thereby elevating turnover intention and diminishing performance levels.

2. RESEARCH GAPS

The objective of the study was to examine the mediation role of turnover intention in the relationship between stress and performance. Literature evidently confirmed that this variable is a very important aspect of behaviour. Especially in the academic private sector, high performance is expected. This can be a reason for stress among the employees. It may affect their turnover intention. To the best of our knowledge, no such study has been conducted in private universities of Punjab. Furthermore, it is believed that stress, performance, and turnover intention were studied as outcome variables. A combined study on such types of variables is a developing area. The present study was an attempt to fill such research gaps.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS

For many years, turnover intention has been a crucial management concern [12], and it is currently a significant issue for businesses. Turnover intentions are defined [13] as the deliberate willingness to perform poorly and the purpose of quitting [14]. Numerous studies have discovered that employees' intentions to leave will increase with stress levels [12, 14]. Noor and Maad [15] discovered a positive correlation among work-life conflict, stress, and turnover intentions. The research model of this study was developed based on the work characteristics theory of Hackman and Oldham [16]. The job characteristics hypothesis plays a crucial role in the investigation of work stress, turnover intention, and employee performance since it outlines the task settings that people should thrive in at work [17], which, in turn, influences their intentions to leave as well as their performance at work.

Furthermore, the Job-Demand Resource model (JDR-M) of Schaufeli and colleagues [18] is the most widely used theory in studying the relationship among work stress,

turnover intention, and job performance. Hence, the concept of this theory was also utilized in this study. In the stress-performance model, also known as the Yerkes-Dodson law, Yerkes and Dodson [19] further suggest that stress or arousal can have both positive and negative effects on performance, depending on the level of stress. This research aimed to find a relationship among stress, turnover intention, and performance by bridging the important but earlier unexplored relationships [20].

4. STRESS AND PERFORMANCE

The connection between performance and stress is intricate and multifaceted. In some circumstances, moderate stress can improve performance by increasing attention and motivation. Excessive or persistent stress can have a negative impact on performance. Performance on the job is described as the entire anticipated benefit to the organization of discrete behaviours carried out by an employee over a regular period [21]. Stress can cause worry, decreased focus, and psychological signs, such as muscle tightness, all of which can impair one's ability to function efficiently. Finding the appropriate balance is critical because inadequate tension is prone to dissatisfaction, and an excessive amount of strain can contribute to burnout. Those who considered job stress as necessary for the organization and its personnel perceived a negative association between work stress and employee performance [22]. As a result, individuals and organizations have to be aware of stress management in order to maximize performance while also acknowledging that the appropriate degree of stress varies from one individual to another and from one activity or situation to the next.

5. STRESS AND TURNOVER INTENTION

The emotional, physical, and mental fatigue or strain faced by individuals as an outcome of their job-related tasks, plus the atmosphere in which they operate, is referred to as workplace stress. As stress may have a substantial influence between a person and the organization, it is an issue that must be addressed. Workplace stress is becoming an increasingly typical part of modern life because of the growing influence of psychological strain in the workplace on wellness as well as financial losses [22]. Employees who are under a lot of stress at work are more likely to be ill, unmotivated, less productive, and unsafe. Their businesses are also less likely to flourish in an environment of competition. Workplace stress can originate from a range of causes and influence people in a variety of ways. Many studies have revealed that the higher the level of stress, the higher the intention of employees to leave [12, 14].

It is necessary to consider the role of job stress in the life of employees. For many years, management has been concerned about turnover intentions [6]. Tett and Meyer [13] defined turnover purposes as the conscious willingness to perform poorly and the intention to leave the work. The link between stress at work and staff turnover has been widely documented [23]. According to a 2007 American Psychological Association research, 52% of

employees left their jobs or looked for new ones because of workplace stress [6]. Stress at work and intentions to leave have also been reported to be related in service contexts [23]. As a result, there is a direct association between tension and the intention to turn.

5.1. Performance and Turnover Intention

Research has long sought to discover the variables that foster employee work effectiveness [24]. Some researchers believe that employee intention to leave is an important indicator of individual job success [25]. A more recent finding is that social context, such as how much employees feel supported and valued at work, can influence their intentions and attitudes [26]. The work experience of employees heavily influences cognitions, such as turnover intention. Researchers have recognized that the present job market and options outside the organization may impact turnover and job habits [26]. It has been discovered that perceived organizational backing [15] is a crucial antecedent for outcomes, such as extra-role work performance. Moreover, employees with heightened turnover intention often demonstrate decreased engagement with their work tasks, diminished enthusiasm for their roles, and a reluctance to engage in discretionary behaviors that contribute to the overall welfare of the organization, such as helping colleagues or volunteering for additional responsibilities. Turnover intention exerts a profound influence on organizational performance by shaping various critical facets of employee behavior and productivity. Specifically, it affects the level of employee engagement, as individuals with higher turnover intentions may exhibit decreased enthusiasm and commitment to their work tasks and organizational goals. This erosion of commitment and involvement not only affects individual job performance but can also have cascading effects on team dynamics and organizational culture. Turnover intention can significantly impact organizational performance by influencing employee engagement, job commitment, and task performance (Holtom *et al.*, 2008).

5.2. Transmittal Mediation

The mediation perspective provides a nuanced understanding of how stress serves as a catalyst for turnover intention, ultimately influencing performance outcomes within organizations. Models like the Job Demands-Resources framework shed light on the intricate pathways through which stressors deplete employees' resources, triggering intentions to leave their roles. This departure intention, in turn, disrupts the delicate balance between employee engagement and commitment, ultimately impacting individual and organizational performance metrics. Such insights are invaluable for crafting targeted interventions that address the root causes of turnover and mitigate its adverse effects on productivity and employee well-being. The Conservation of Resources theory posits mediation pathways, whereby stress impacts turnover intention, subsequently influencing performance outcomes. These frameworks indicate that stressors exhaust the psychological and

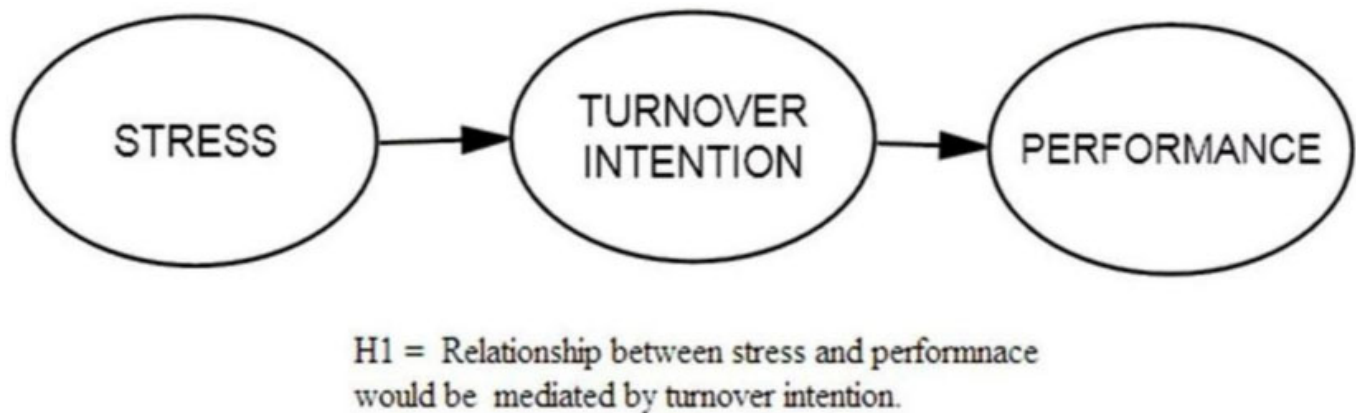


Fig. (1). Tentative model.

social capital of the employees, resulting in heightened turnover intentions and diminished performance levels. In the present study, a transmittal mediation approach was used. It is used when the focus of the study is an indirect effect. Previous literature evidently explained that stress was related to performance and turnover intention. The relationship between turnover intention and performance was also evident. So, this conclusion leads us to formulate the following hypothesis, as presented in Fig. (1):

H1: The relationship between stress and performance would be mediated by turnover intention.

6. METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in the private universities of Punjab, India. The sample incorporated 364 university faculty members. The sample incorporated 59 percent female and 41 percent male. By profile, all respondents were assistant professors. The appropriation of sample size was confirmed by G* Power analysis. At present, there are 16 universities in the Punjab. Out of these 16 universities, five were selected by applying a simple random sampling technique. In the next stage, a sample of 430 teachers was collected by applying convenience sampling. However, the collected data was subjected to cleaning and validation. As per the guidelines of Hair *et al.* [27], the data was cleaned and validated. In the collected data, 50 responses carried 15% missing values. Such responses were removed. The remaining missing values were replaced with mean. In the next step, 16 unengaged responses were found and removed. Finally, the distribution of data was examined, which meant the data was not significantly varied from a normal distribution. In such a situation, covariance-based SEM was an excellent choice to test the hypothesis. AMOS 18.0 version (software) was used to analyze data. Three standardized scales were used. A four-item scale by Cohen and Mermelstein [28] collected the stress information, and respondents' perception of turnover intention was measured by applying the five-item scale of Jung and Yoon [29]. The data about the perception of performance was collected using a nine-item scale of Goodman and

Svyantek [30].

6.1. Measurement Model

Before testing the hypothesis of the study, the validity and reliability of the model were checked [31]. In the measurement model, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability of the measurement were examined. Convergent validity examines the extent to which multiple indicators of the same construct converge or are highly correlated. Discriminant validity, on the other hand, assesses the distinctiveness of different constructs by ensuring that they are not excessively correlated. Finally, reliability measures the internal consistency and stability of constructs, reflecting the extent to which items within a construct consistently measure the intended latent variable [32]. The convergent validity of the present study was assessed by using AVE, and their results were 0.59, 0.62, and 0.50 for the constructs of S, TI and P, respectively. These values indicate that, on average, underlying constructs explain at least 50% of the variance in observed variables and indicate that there is no convergent validity issue. The Fornell-Larcker [33] suggested that the minimum criteria for AVE is 0.5. Regarding the internal consistency of the item, Cronbach's alpha was used, and the result was 0.81, 0.82, and 0.74 for the constructs S, TI, and P, respectively. Furthermore, composite reliability (CR) was also applied to check the internal consistency of the items. All the values of composite reliability in every construct exceeded 0.70. Table 1 demonstrates that the outcomes align with these standards [34]. Thus, the composite reliability (CR) values for the constructs S, TI, and P were 0.81, 0.82, and 0.80, respectively, which surpassed the threshold recommended by Hair *et al.* [28] (they suggested that Cronbach's alpha and CR value of greater than 0.7 is acceptable). The loading of all items was greater than 0.6, with a better value. The above table depicts that the minimum loading in this model was 0.626, which is above the threshold suggested by Hair *et al.* [27], which is 0.5. This also further indicates that the constructs have convergent validity [35]. Here, it is worth mentioning that all constructs in the study were reflective in nature, so removing any indicator from the construct did not affect the

real meaning of the construct. Various items of these constructs were removed due to non-significant loadings (Table 2).

The discriminant validity of the study was also examined by using the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Table 3). The Fornell-Larcker criterion [33] is used to determine whether

the variance shared between two constructs is less than the variance unique to each construct [36]. Table 2 presents that the current study has no issue with discriminant validity because the value of the square root of AVE is greater than the inter-construct correlation coefficients [37].

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents.

-	-	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	186	51.1
	Male	178	48.9
	Total	364	100.0
Age	25-30	121	33.2
	30-35	200	54.9
	35 >	43	11.8
	Total	364	100.0
Income	25K - 30K	132	36.3
	30K -35K	103	28.3
	35K >	129	35.4
	Total	364	100.0
Resident	Urban	335	92.0
	Rural	29	8.0
	Total	364	100.0

Table 2. Measurement model results.

-	Estimate	AVE	CR	Alpha
S2	0.757	0.59	0.81	0.81
S3	0.838			
S4	0.717			
TI1	0.65	0.62	0.82	0.8
TI2	0.854			
TI3	0.844			
TI4	0.709			
P2	0.713	0.5	0.8	0.74
P1	0.794			
P6	0.626			

Table 3. Discriminant validity.

-	S	TI	P
S	0.76	-	-
TI	0.72	0.78	-
P	-0.63	-0.68	0.7

Table 4. Model fitness.

CMIN/DF	3.7
GFI	0.94
CFI	0.942
TLI	0.92
RMSEA	0.08
SRMR	0.07

The adequacy of the model fit for the present study was also evaluated, and the result is summarized in Table 4. The assessment revealed the following fit indices:

CMIN/DF = 3.7, GFI = 0.94, CFI = 0.942, TLI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.08, and SRMR = 0.07, collectively indicating a good fit of the model to the data as suggested by Byrne [38].

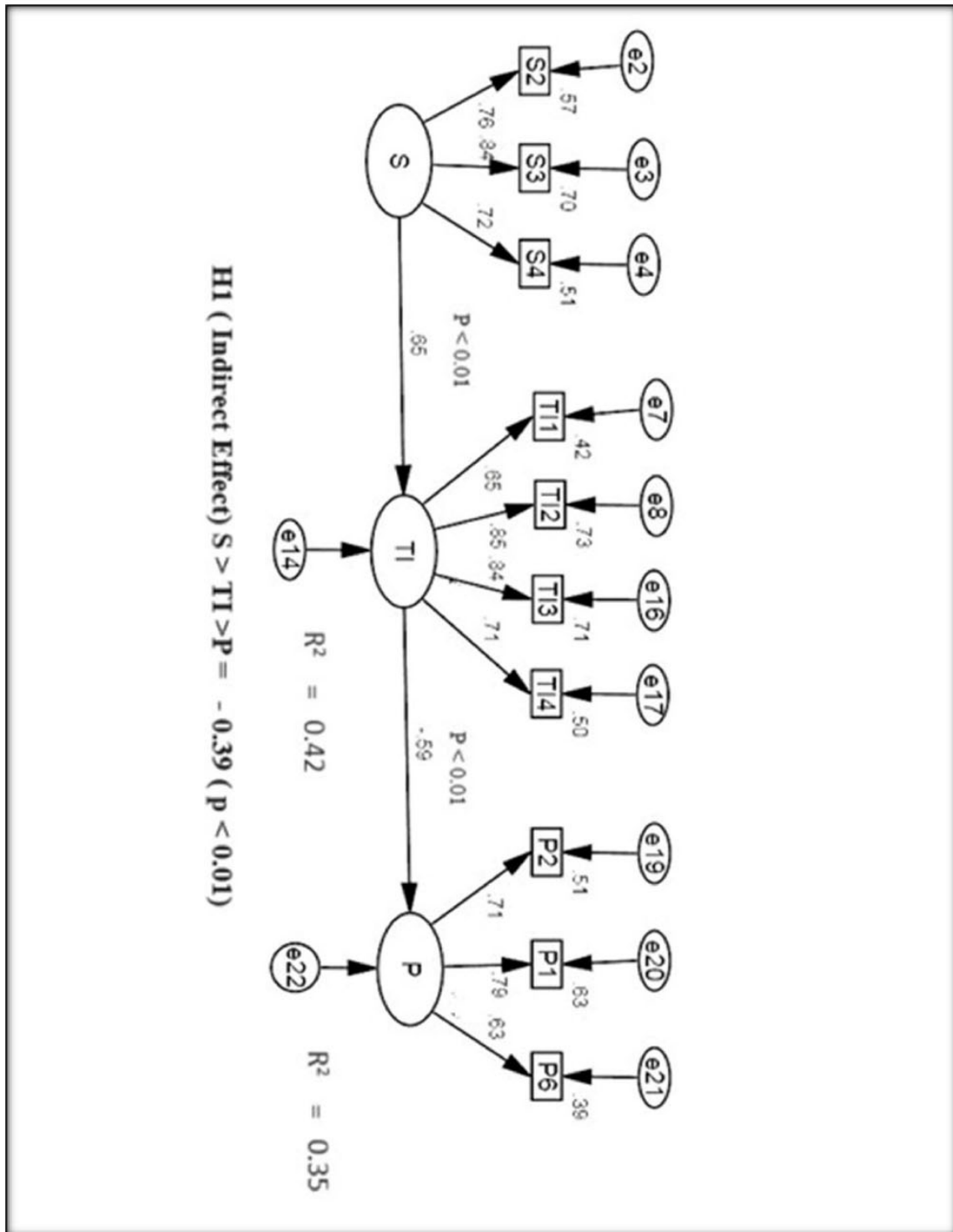


Fig. (2). Tested model.

6.2. Structural Model

SEM is a sophisticated statistical analysis method that combines elements of factor analysis and multiple regression. Fig. (2) shows that stress has a significant effect on turnover intention ($\beta = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$), and turnover over intention has a negative effect on performance ($\beta = -0.59$, $p < 0.01$). The turnover intention was expected to have a mediating influence on the relationship between stress and performance. The mediation analysis revealed that the variable turnover intention mediates the relationship between stress and performance. Stress influences performance through turnover intention as the indirect effect is -0.394 , which is effectively channeled through TI. The significance of the indirect effect is an indication that mediation exists in the model [27, 39]. This indicates that turnover intention plays a crucial role in explaining the relationship between stress and performance. This result implies that turnover intention mediates the relationship between stress and performance. Finally, the hypothesis of the mediating effect of turnover intention in the relationship between stress and performance was supported empirically. Table 4 depicts the indirect effect of stress (S) on performance (P). Apart from path coefficients, the R^2 value of TI was 0.42, which indicated that TI had explained a 42 percent variance in stress. The calculated value of R^2 for performance was 0.35, indicating that a 35 percent variance in performance was explained by TI.

7. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The current study proposes that stress has a negative impact on performance. The findings are in line with various previous research studies, where stress has been indicated to have a major impact on emotional performance. The association between prolonged occupational stress and emotional tiredness was also demonstrated previously [40]. When stress levels get too high, performance begins to suffer. This theory is congruent with the Yerkes-Dodson law, as reported by Yerkes and Dodson [19]. Several studies have found a direct detrimental association between stress and performance. Excessive stress can affect cognitive, emotional, and physical functioning [41, 42]. However, several studies have provided opposing viewpoints. Moderate stress can boost focus, motivation, and productivity in terms of cognitive performance. In a study, it has been proved that acute stress can improve cognitive function, particularly in tasks that require prolonged attention [43]. The present study also found a positive relationship between stress and turnover intention. These results are similar to the previous research [44], in which how job stress is related to turnover intention was investigated, implying that higher job stress is associated with a greater possibility of employees wishing to quit the business. A positive relationship exists between perceived stress and intention to quit among executives, indicating that high levels of stress are associated with a greater desire to leave the job [45]. It was also found in the current study that turnover intention negatively influences

performance, which is in line with the studies conducted in the previous literature [10, 46, 47]. When individuals have a strong desire to leave their positions, it can have a detrimental impact on their performance. It has been found in the study based on meta-analysis that turnover intentions are inversely connected to job performance [10]. When employees show a strong desire to leave their jobs, their performance tends to suffer. Several factors influence the stress-performance relationship. Individual characteristics, such as personality traits and coping techniques, are extremely important. The significance of individual variability in the stress-performance equation has also been highlighted in the previous literature [48]. The potential role of turnover intention in governing the stress-performance relationship is an intriguing idea. It implies that turnover intention functions as an intermediary variable in explaining how stress impacts an individual's performance [49-52].

CONCLUSION

The current study found that stress has a direct effect on turnover intention. The effect of turnover intention on performance was also significant. Turnover intention exerts a profound influence on organizational performance by shaping various critical facets of employee behavior and productivity. Specifically, it affects the level of employee engagement, as individuals with higher turnover intentions may exhibit decreased enthusiasm and commitment to their work tasks and organizational goals. Furthermore, turnover intention can undermine job commitment, leading to reduced loyalty and dedication among employees. Ultimately, this ripple effect extends to task performance, as employees with heightened turnover intentions may demonstrate lower levels of efficiency, effectiveness, and quality in their job responsibilities. Therefore, addressing turnover intention is essential for fostering a positive work environment conducive to enhanced employee engagement, commitment, and performance, ultimately contributing to organizational success [52]. Based on the literature, it was assumed that the relationship between stress and performance would be mediated by turnover intention. The results met the expected directions. Overall, the study concludes that mediation exists in the relationship between stress and performance and seems realistic.

IMPLICATIONS

The investigation of the link among stress, turnover intention, and performance has significant practical consequences for companies and individuals. Understanding and resolving this complicated dynamic can lead to improved management practices, well-being, and organizational performance. Organizations can use stress management programs to assist employees in coping with and reducing workplace stress. These programs may include stress awareness training, relaxation techniques, and options for obtaining assistance if necessary. Organizations can limit the detrimental impact of stress on both turnover intention and performance by lowering it. Employees may be less likely

to leave if they have work arrangements that meet their needs, so offering flexible work arrangements can reduce stress levels and lower turnover intention. Organizations may consider developing performance enhancement plans for employees who are stressed out and performing poorly. These plans can lay out how employees and management can collaborate to address stress-related performance concerns and set realistic targets for development. Recognizing and rewarding employee efforts and successes can enhance morale and motivation while decreasing the likelihood of turnover. Incentive systems that recognize and reward exceptional performance can help improve overall workplace performance. Implementing well-being efforts that emphasize physical, mental, and emotional health can benefit all three variables. Employees who are physically healthy and motivated are less likely to have high levels of stress, intention to leave, or performance issues.

Theoretical implications of this study on the link among stress, turnover intention, and performance help us understand the underlying mechanisms and dynamics of these interconnected elements. Stress, turnover intention, and performance research can be related to resource-based theories, which emphasize the relevance of people's resources and competencies in accomplishing organizational goals. Understanding how stress depletes a person's psychological resources, resulting in turnover intention and poor performance, adds to resource-based theory. The psychological contract between employees and organizations is highlighted in research on stress and turnover intention. Employees' commitment and participation may be reassessed when pressures undermine this contract. Theoretical consequences include a better understanding of how psychological contracts originate, persist, and are broken. According to strain theory in sociology, stressors can cause unpleasant feelings and deviant behaviour. Exploring how stressors influence turnover intention and, as a result, performance is consistent with this notion. Theoretical insights into how workplace stress manifests itself in certain outcomes are valuable. Social exchange theory can be applied to the interaction between employees and organizations. The study of stress, turnover intention, and performance serves to understand how individuals assess the costs and rewards of remaining in an organization, providing theoretical insights into social exchange processes. Expectancy theory examines how an individual's ideas about the relationship among effort, performance, and outcomes influence their motivation. This study can contribute to this hypothesis by investigating how stress and turnover intention impair the expectancy-performance link.

FUTURE SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The present study was conducted among the private universities. The scope of the study can be extended in the future as such studies can be conducted in private or public institutions. In the present study, mediation among stress, turnover intention, and performance was established. In the future, various studies on mediation and moderation can be conducted. In the present study, the data was collected on a 5-point Likert scale; however, using a 7-point Likert scale could be a good option. The sample of the study did not present any specific segment of faculty members; this can be a limitation of the study. Overall, the study adds great knowledge on the topic.

ABBREVIATIONS

- CR = Composite Reliability
- JDR-M = Job-Demand Resource Model

ETHICS APPROVAL AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Not applicable.

HUMAN AND ANIMAL RIGHTS

No animals were used in this research. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of institutional and/or research committee and with the 1975 Declaration of Helsinki, as revised in 2013.

CONSENT FOR PUBLICATION

Not applicable.

STANDARDS OF REPORTING

- STROBE guidelines were followed.
- SAGER guidelines were followed.

AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIALS

The data and supportive information are available within the article.

FUNDING

None.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest, financial or otherwise.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Declared none.

APPENDIX

Stress
• S1 In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?
• S2 In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?
• S3 In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?
• S4 In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?
Turnover intention

Stress
• T11: I am currently seriously considering leaving my current job to work at another company.
• T12: I sometimes feel compelled to quit my job in my current workplace.
• T13: I will probably look for a new job in the next year.
• T14: Within the next six months, I would rate the likelihood of leaving my present job as high. •
• T15: I will quit this company if the given condition gets even a little worse than now
Performance
• P1. I achieve the objectives of the job
• P2. I meet the criteria for performance
• P3. I demonstrate expertise in all job-related tasks
• P4. I fulfill all the requirements of the job
• P5. I manage more responsibility than typically assigned
• P6. I appear suitable for a higher-level role
• P7. I am competent in all areas of the job and handle tasks with proficiency
• P8. I perform well in the overall job by carrying out tasks as expected
• P9. I plan and organize to achieve the objectives of the job and meet the deadline

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