

STRESSORS, PERCEIVED STRESS, AND BURNOUT: A CORRELATION STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the correlations between workplace stressors, perceived stress, and burnout among employees in the IT sector. Given the dynamic and demanding nature of this field, understanding the psychological mechanisms that affect employee well-being is essential. The research aimed to test three hypotheses: (H1) that workplace stressors are positively correlated with perceived stress, (H2) that perceived stress is positively correlated with burnout, and (H3) that workplace stressors are positively associated with burnout. Data were collected from 145 IT professionals through an online questionnaire administered between March and June 2025. Spearman correlation analyses confirmed all three hypotheses: stressors were significantly associated with perceived stress ($r = 0.55, p < 0.001$), perceived stress correlated with burnout ($r = 0.50, p < 0.001$), and stressors strongly predicted burnout levels ($r = 0.87, p < 0.001$). These findings emphasize that occupational factors are key predictors of psychological strain and contribute to professional exhaustion. By clarifying these correlations, our study contributes to the literature on occupational health psychology and the development of effective preventive and adaptive interventions designed to reduce the impact of stress in fast-paced work environments. Practical implications include the development of strategies aimed at reducing stress exposure, enhancing coping mechanisms, and promoting employee well-being. Understanding these relationships is essential for organizations seeking to maintain productivity while safeguarding the mental health of their workforce.

KEYWORDS: *burnout, employees, perceived stress, stress, stressors, workplace.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In our contemporary society, characterized by a fast pace and increasingly demanding professional expectations, organizational stress has become a major topic of interest for both employees and employers. It is no longer viewed as a temporary reaction to isolated challenges, but rather as a complex phenomenon with significant effects on employee performance, motivation, and emotional balance. Neglecting this issue can lead to a rise in burnout cases and a decrease in job satisfaction.

The primary aim of this paper is to examine the relationships between workplace stressors, perceived stress, and burnout, in order to understand how these factors influence employees' psychological well-being and to identify potential directions for effective organizational intervention. This study explores organizational stress from an integrative perspective, by focusing on both its causes, such as specific stressors within the work environment, and its consequences, including perceived stress and psychological exhaustion experienced by employees.

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The relevance of this research stems from the practical need for organizations to better understand how to create healthy work environments that help employees manage pressure, thereby enhancing performance and improving staff retention. The IT sector was selected for this study due to its intense dynamics, constant demand for innovation, and high cognitive workload, all of which make it particularly vulnerable to elevated levels of occupational stress.

The causes that can trigger this state are diverse and include individual factors such as personality traits, perceived control, and lifestyle, as well as internal organizational factors like workload, role ambiguity, hierarchical conflicts, and lack of managerial support. In addition, external elements such as economic instability or social pressures can further increase employees' vulnerability.

The effects are observed both on a personal level, through decreased motivation, emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and sleep disturbances, and on an organizational level, through reduced performance, absenteeism, and the deterioration of team dynamics. Burnout is considered a severe consequence of prolonged stress exposure, manifesting as exhaustion, a negative attitude toward work, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment.

Preventing and reducing these effects requires interventions aimed at both employees and the organizational system. Recommended strategies include developing individual stress management skills, clarifying responsibilities, introducing flexible work arrangements, and fostering a supportive and appreciative work environment. Leadership plays a crucial role in shaping a healthy and balanced workplace climate.

Through our analysis conducted on a sample of IT sector employees, we identified clear connections between stressors, perceived stress, and the onset of burnout. By using previously validated scales, our research offers useful insights for designing effective workplace stress management strategies. Within this framework, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how workplace stressors influence perceived stress and burnout. By examining these variables in the context of the information technology sector, the research highlights key factors relevant to professional stress management and proposes practical solutions to promote employee well-being.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Concept and Nature of Stress

Stress experienced within organizations has consequences not only for employees but also for the institutions themselves. Stress can play a dual role in organizational settings: moderate stress may boost engagement and performance, whereas excessive stress can harm both well-being and productivity. Therefore, understanding and evaluating employees' perceptions of stress is essential for effective workplace management (Olteanu & Radu, 2025). Stress can lead to physiological, emotional, and behavioral effects, which often extend beyond working hours, impacting personal and family life. The factors that generate stress do not always act immediately; some reactions are instant, while others develop gradually over a longer period of time (Powers et al., 2018).

Stress has a significant impact on cardiovascular health and the recovery process following a stroke. It is frequently accompanied by emotional disorders such as anxiety, depression, irritability, a pessimistic outlook on life, and a general sense of dissatisfaction. These reactions can cause harmful physiological effects, including increased blood pressure, inflammation, irregular heartbeat, and reduced blood flow to the heart, all of which raise the risk of a subsequent stroke (Powers et al., 2018).

Stress as a reaction. The conceptualization of stress as a biological reaction originates in the medical field, emphasizing the body's response to external demands without focusing on the specific nature of the stressors. Starting in the 1930s, Hans Selye identified a nonspecific physiological response to various stress-inducing agents, which he termed the "general adaptation syndrome." This process includes three stages: alarm, resistance, and exhaustion. Selye demonstrated that stress does not depend on the type of stimulus but rather on its impact on internal balance, functioning as an

automatic defense mechanism activated in the face of challenges (Selye, 1976). This perspective highlighted the tangible effects of stress on the body, beyond psychological discomfort. Physiological responses such as increased cortisol levels, sleep disturbances, weakened immunity, and metabolic issues can, over time, lead to chronic illnesses such as hypertension or digestive disorders (Pitariu & Vîrgă, 2008).

Although often associated with negative effects, Selye (1976) also highlights the positive role of moderate stress (eustress), which can stimulate motivation and adaptability. In contrast, stress perceived as threatening or overwhelming leads to distress and exhaustion.

Stress could be perceived as a stimulus. This approach defines stress as the result of external pressures (stressors) that exceed an individual's ability to cope. Factors such as overload or unexpected events can disrupt both emotional and physiological balance (Cooper et al., 2001). The model has its roots in physics, where stress refers to a force applied to a system. Translated into psychological terms, stress arises when external demands surpass internal resources, leading to imbalances and behavioral responses. Thus, stress is conceptualized as a clear cause of specific physiological and psychological reactions.

Stress is also an interaction. The interactional approach views stress as the outcome of the relationship between external factors and internal responses of the individual. It assumes a predictable, cause-and-effect mechanism and is often used in quantitative research. However, it is criticized for oversimplifying the process and for neglecting subjective perception and social context (Pitariu & Vîrgă, 2008). This model does not consider individual differences in how stress is perceived: the same event may be experienced as an opportunity by one person and as a threat by another. While useful in experimental studies, the interactional model is limited in real-world applications, particularly in complex organizational environments.

As an alternative, the transactional model redefines stress as a dynamic process of evaluation between external demands and internal resources. Individuals are not passive recipients, but rather interpret and respond based on their perception, personal context, and coping strategies. Stress occurs only when a situation is perceived as exceeding one's available resources. The focus is placed on cognitive processes and the continuous interaction between the person and the environment. This model offers a more realistic and applicable understanding of stress, relevant both for research and practical interventions (Cooper et al., 2001).

2.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Organizational Stress

Stress is defined as the psychological and physiological response of an individual when faced with demands or pressures perceived as exceeding their capacity to adapt. In the professional environment in particular, stress has been linked to decreased performance and impaired well-being, which has led to numerous studies within the field of organizational and industrial psychology (Ursu, 2007).

Organizational stress is defined as a complex state of psychological and physical discomfort that arises when professional demands consistently exceed employees' resources, abilities, or coping mechanisms. This response is commonly encountered in demanding work environments characterized by multiple tasks, unrealistic deadlines, ambiguous responsibilities, and strained relationships with colleagues or supervisors. A negative organizational climate, marked by a lack of support, poor communication, and absence of recognition, contributes to heightened tension and exhaustion. Over time, employees may experience persistent fatigue, a loss of control over their activities, and reduced motivation, which affect both performance and mental health. If these conditions remain unmanaged, organizational stress may evolve into a systemic problem with repercussions for the entire institution. According to Ursu (2007), organizational stress has become a frequent reality in professional life, often manifesting through role conflict and role ambiguity, two factors that directly impact emotional balance and workplace efficiency.

Emotional imbalance and reduced professional performance are common effects of stress caused by role conflict, a situation in which employees receive multiple, contradictory, or unclear demands from different superiors. This constant confusion reduces clarity regarding priorities and expectations, generating frustration, emotional exhaustion, and difficulties with concentration. Over time, this type of stress undermines professional engagement, team relationships, and mental health, becoming a significant risk for both individual and organizational effectiveness (Ursu, 2007).

According to Ursu (2007), role ambiguity is another key factor in the emergence of organizational stress, manifested by the lack of clarity regarding job responsibilities and objectives. This uncertainty causes insecurity, lowers confidence in decision-making, and increases anxiety. Managers are particularly exposed to this form of stress, as they must meet the expectations of both upper management and their teams, leading to constant pressure. Additionally, employees with higher education levels are more sensitive to role ambiguity, as they are accustomed to structured tasks. The absence of clear information can affect their responsiveness and lead to psychological exhaustion.

In recent decades, stress in organizations has become a major topic of interest, analyzed from various perspectives, including those of management, employees, and human resources professionals. Pitariu (2004) highlights that stress is reflected in difficulties adapting to job demands and decreased professional performance, signaling psychological discomfort. These effects occur both at the individual level, by impacting mental health and motivation, and at the collective level, where they negatively affect the work climate and organizational efficiency.

Organizational stress is described as an employee's response to work demands perceived as disproportionate to their own abilities and resources. This tension arises when workplace pressures exceed the individual's ability to adapt, leading to psychological discomfort and, in some cases, health problems. Organizations in which employees feel unable to meet expectations risk developing an unhealthy work climate, marked by frustration and poor performance.

According to Nerstad et al. (2023), organizational stress results from a major imbalance between the demands of the professional environment and the individual's personal resources. This type of stress arises when employees feel unable to adequately respond to continuous pressures due to a lack of time, support, or autonomy. In other words, it is a form of psychological tension specific to the professional context, which affects both the emotional state of the employee and their efficiency in daily tasks.

2.3 The Concept and Dynamics of Occupational Stress

Occupational stress can be defined as a negative psychological response that occurs when the demands imposed by work tasks exceed the employee's actual or perceived ability to manage them effectively, creating an imbalance between professional requirements and available individual resources (Folkman et al., 1987).

Occupational stress is also described as any psychological discomfort caused by intense, frequent, and difficult-to-manage work-related tasks or events. This condition arises when employees perceive that professional demands surpass their ability to cope using typical coping strategies. In this context, workplace stress becomes a threat to mental health and optimal functioning, especially when there is a lack of institutional support or clear protective mechanisms (Kaur & Haque, 2024).

Professional fatigue results from prolonged exposure to work-related demands and pressures, manifesting through emotional and intellectual exhaustion, decreased motivation, and difficulty concentrating. It is often associated with burnout and may be accompanied by anxiety, depression, and a sense of helplessness. Appels (2000) and Kant et al. (2003) point out that chronic fatigue can lead to harmful behaviors, such as the abusive use of substances, as a dysfunctional coping mechanism. Therefore, occupational fatigue signals a serious psychological imbalance that requires both individual and organizational intervention.

2.4 Main Causes of Organizational Stress

2.4.1 Individual factors

Individual factors that may intensify occupational stress are closely linked to personal characteristics and the way these align with the demands and dynamics of the organizational environment. Among these factors are personality traits, such as Type A temperament, which is associated with a heightened tendency toward competitiveness, urgency in actions, and increased reactivity to pressure. Demographic variables such as gender and age also influence how stress is perceived and processed, as sensitivity and coping styles differ across groups (Kendall et al., 2000). Another essential factor is the individual's perception of their own competencies and level of control over situations. A negative self-evaluation and low self-confidence can amplify the perception of stress and reduce the effectiveness of coping responses. Moreover, coping capacity plays a fundamental role, as the strategies chosen to manage stress—whether adaptive or maladaptive—significantly influence the degree of psychological impact experienced under constant pressure (Kendall et al., 2000).

Work-life balance is also a critical factor in maintaining mental health. When individuals perceive an imbalance between their professional and personal spheres, or feel that workplace demands exceed available resources, they may experience ongoing pressure that contributes to emotional exhaustion and lower job satisfaction. These dimensions indicate that, beyond the organizational context, individual characteristics play a key role in determining vulnerability to stress.

The study conducted by Radu et al. (2020) examines the relationship between professional engagement, perceived performance, job satisfaction, and the burnout syndrome. The findings indicate that employee involvement in work, assessed through the direction, intensity, and consistency of effort, has an influence on job satisfaction, with perceived performance acting as a mediating variable. This means that employees who evaluate their performance positively tend to experience higher levels of job satisfaction, even when the workload is significant. However, a high level of burnout reduces this positive effect by weakening the connection between performance and satisfaction. The study also highlights that managers and entrepreneurs report lower levels of psychological exhaustion, due to greater decision-making autonomy and a stronger ability to adapt to demands. In conclusion, sustained effort can contribute to both performance and satisfaction, but only if it is accompanied by effective management of emotional resources.

2.4.2 Organizational factors

Work overload is frequently recognized as one of the main factors contributing to the emergence of stress in organizational settings (Buchanan & Huczynski, 2004; Topper, 2007).

When the workload within an organization increases without considering the actual capacity of employees to cope with these demands, the risk of organizational stress becomes significantly higher. In this context, aligning tasks with the available human resources becomes essential. Among the key contributors to stress in organizations are poor physical working conditions, inefficient job design, inadequate management style, strained interpersonal relationships, uncertainty about the future, and loyalty conflicts (Buchanan & Huczynski, 2004).

According to Tehrani (2002), organizational stress often originates from a culture lacking empathy, characterized by ineffective communication between leadership and employees, exclusion of staff from decision-making processes, abusive behavior, frequent and unexpected changes, insufficient resources, conflicting objectives, and a lack of professional challenges. To prevent such sources of stress, it is essential for organizations to ensure open access to communication channels for all employees and to provide opportunities for active participation in decision-making. Failing to involve employees in these processes often results in heightened stress levels among staff.

Organizational stressors can also be found in work relationships, excessive workloads, low levels of control, poor communication, lack of resources, job insecurity, and conflicts between work and personal life (Faragher et al., 2004; Johnson et al., 2006; Cooper & Cartwright, 1994.) These factors

have negative effects both on individual health and on the overall functioning of the organization (Vanhove et al., 2015).

2.4.3 External factors

Moreover, the specialized literature supports the idea that organizational stress is not determined solely by factors within the professional environment but is often amplified by a range of personal and contextual influences. Aspects such as family life, external responsibilities, socio-economic status, and financial stability can significantly contribute to the overall perception of stress. In addition, employees' physical and psychological health is a critical factor in how they respond to organizational demands. Individuals dealing with chronic illnesses, anxiety disorders, or persistent mental fatigue are considerably more vulnerable to occupational stress. Furthermore, the perception of one's own ability to meet demands, family support, and the broader social support network can act either as protective factors or as risk factors. Therefore, understanding organizational stress requires a holistic approach that considers the interaction between personal, social, and professional variables (Manshor et al., 2003).

Technology and digitalization are significant external factors contributing to organizational stress, directly impacting how employees carry out their work. In the IT sector, constant changes—such as the introduction of new technologies, transitions to remote work, or team restructuring—demand high levels of adaptability from employees. These ongoing adjustments can increase perceived stress, impacting both psychological well-being and work performance (Radu & Stan, 2025). The rapid integration of new IT systems and digital platforms imposes a continuous process of learning and adaptation, which can generate psychological discomfort, particularly among employees with limited technological competencies. These individuals may experience anxiety related to professional inadequacy, fear of failure, or the risk of being replaced by automation (Sonnetag & Frese, 2003).

Digitalization also extends the workday beyond traditional limits through constant online communication, which blurs the boundaries between professional and personal life. This context contributes to overexertion and mental exhaustion. Sonnetag and Frese (2003) define technostress as an imbalance between technological demands and the employee's capacity to adapt, especially in the absence of adequate organizational support.

Economic instability, through factors such as financial crises, inflation, or unemployment, increases organizational stress by amplifying uncertainty related to job security and professional future. These pressures affect employees even in cases where performance remains high (Leka et al., 2003).

The rapid adoption of new technologies can trigger professional insecurity, particularly among employees with low digital proficiency. The lack of training and organizational support leads to frequent changes being perceived as stressful and difficult to manage. This continuous pressure to adapt generates anxiety, frustration, and a decrease in job satisfaction. Additionally, fear of replacement by automation further intensifies stress and negatively impacts employee engagement and the overall organizational climate (Sonnetag & Frese, 2003).

2.5 Effects of Organizational Stress

Organizational stress has significant negative consequences for both employees and employers, regardless of the type of organization. These effects include decreased efficiency, reduced ability to achieve performance, diminished personal initiative, lack of interest in professional activities, a pronounced tendency toward rigid thinking, indifference toward colleagues and the organization, as well as a loss of sense of responsibility (Greenberg & Baron, 2000; Ivancevich et al, 1990).

Although the IT sector does not typically involve intense human interaction, it has become one of the fastest-growing industries in recent decades, playing a crucial role in supporting the global economy. However, this rapid expansion has been accompanied by an alarming rise in professional burnout among employees. A study conducted by Kronos Incorporated in collaboration with Future

Workplace (Nobles, 2022) shows that nearly half of HR professionals (46%) identify burnout as the main reason for the high rate of voluntary departures from companies, estimating that between 20% and 50% of turnover is caused by this factor. Additionally, research conducted by Harvard Business School highlights the major impact of occupational stress on the healthcare system, contributing significantly to national medical costs (Sheridan, 2020).

The issue of organizational burnout has increasingly attracted the interest of specialized publications in the field of cybersecurity, as well as online platforms, social networks, and industry blogs. Prestigious academic institutions in the United Kingdom, along with companies developing IT security solutions, have frequently reported that burnout is widespread among professionals in this field, significantly affecting the quality and efficiency of their work (Platsis, 2019).

In the information technology industry, Shih et al. (2011) emphasize that stress has a profound impact both on individuals and on the overall functioning of organizations.

The work environment is often characterized by tight deadlines, complex technical requirements, and constant pressure to deliver innovative solutions in a short period of time. All these elements contribute to chronic overload, which affects employees' mental health and their ability to work effectively. IT specialists frequently experience mental fatigue, decreased concentration, and lack of motivation, which can lead to coding errors, project delays, and team conflicts.

Organizations that do not provide concrete support through counseling sessions, realistic task management, or work-life balance policies often face high employee turnover. This instability negatively impacts organizational culture, long-term productivity, and the quality of services provided. Furthermore, losing valuable employees due to stress becomes a strategic threat, especially in a highly competitive sector like IT. Without preventive and intervention measures, occupational stress not only reduces individual performance but also contributes to a negative employer image in the job market. Therefore, managing stress in the technology sector should not be seen as merely an individual responsibility, but rather as an organizational priority essential for talent retention, process efficiency, and long-term stability (Shih et al., 2011).

2.6 Intervention Measures

2.6.1 Individual strategies for stress management and emotional resilience

To effectively combat stress, it is essential for affected individuals to identify their personal sources of stress and adopt healthy coping strategies. Regular physical activity, such as walking outdoors, practicing yoga, or meditation, helps reduce nervous tension and alleviate anxiety. Social relationships also play a crucial role, as spending time with loved ones or talking with close individuals can provide important emotional support. Another key factor in stress reduction is maintaining a proper sleep schedule, ideally between 7 and 9 hours per night, which supports both mental and physical health. Adopting a positive outlook and focusing on the good things in life can help counter negative thoughts and foster greater emotional resilience. Additionally, techniques such as deep breathing, listening to music, or guided meditation can induce a sense of calm and reduce accumulated stress. Engaging in recreational activities that bring personal joy also helps distract from daily worries and provides an effective way to recharge emotionally. Maintaining a balance between responsibilities, respecting one's own limits, and cultivating a harmonious attitude are essential for a healthy and balanced life, especially in contexts marked by constant stress (Powers et al., 2018).

2.6.2 Organizational strategies for managing the workplace stress

In the absence of effective management, organizational stress can lead to increased absenteeism, intensified workplace conflicts, and decreased employee morale (Botha & Pienaar, 2006).

Stress management workshops may include training sessions on time management, clear goal setting, delegation of responsibilities, counseling subordinates, self-awareness development, relaxation techniques, conflict resolution, and early identification of stress-inducing situations and associated symptoms.

In today's professional environment, marked by rapid changes and constant pressure, more and more organizations acknowledge that occupational stress is not merely a personal issue but a risk factor with a direct impact on internal operations and overall performance. Thus, increasing emphasis is placed on adopting coherent organizational strategies aimed at preventing and effectively managing employee stress. Among the most effective approaches are the direct involvement of employees in identifying stressors and developing appropriate solutions, such as adjusting workloads, offering flexible schedules, or reorganizing project teams. When properly implemented, these measures can reduce professional burnout and enhance employee engagement (Bes et al., 2023). Furthermore, cultivating a positive organizational climate based on support, collaboration, and empathetic leadership plays a key role in maintaining psychological balance and strengthening collective resilience (Roos, 2025).

Alongside these structural and relational strategies, organizations are increasingly exploring modern technological solutions that can actively assist in monitoring and regulating stress levels. Smart wearable devices and artificial intelligence systems are being experimentally used to detect physiological stress indicators and generate automatic recommendations, such as taking regular breaks or adjusting work pace (Traunmuller et al., 2024). This type of personalized intervention allows for immediate and tailored responses to employees' real needs, supporting the effective prevention of overload. In conclusion, organizations that integrate such measures into their internal culture and support them through engaged management can build a healthier, more stable, and higher-performing work environment.

2.7 Hypotheses Formulation

Drawing from the literature on occupational stress and burnout, we formulated three hypotheses to guide our study, reflecting the relationships between stressors, perceived stress, and burnout. In the following lines we present each hypothesis and the theoretical rationale behind it.

- *H1. There is a significant positive correlation between stressors and perceived stress.* Individuals frequently exposed to stressors in the professional environment, such as unclear responsibilities, increased workload, and pressure related to meeting deadlines, tend to experience higher levels of perceived stress. These factors do not operate independently but often reinforce each other, contributing to a persistent state of psychological tension. Occupational stressors serve as direct predictors of perceived stress, negatively influencing quality of life and emotional balance (Arslan, Zahra, & Irshad, 2023). As exposure to these stressors continues, the individual's capacity for adaptation decreases, with effects becoming evident not only in professional activity but also in personal life. Sleep disturbances, decreased motivation, and a general decline in well-being may occur. In this context, early identification and management of stressors are essential for preventing psychological imbalance and for sustaining a healthy organizational climate.
- *H2. There is a significant positive correlation between perceived stress and burnout.* The relationship between perceived stress and burnout is well-documented in the specialized literature. High levels of perceived stress tend to facilitate the emergence of professional exhaustion symptoms, and this connection is evident across all dimensions of the burnout syndrome. Individuals who perceive stress as constant or overwhelming are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion, affective withdrawal, and a diminished sense of personal

accomplishment in their professional activities (Devebakan, 2019). In fact, perceived stress acts as a triggering factor that gradually weakens the individual's internal coping resources. The more unmanageable the stress is perceived to be, the higher the risk of developing emotional exhaustion, which is the core and most frequently reported component of burnout. Thus, stress not only accompanies burnout but also plays an active role in its development.

- *H3. There is a significant positive correlation between stressors and burnout.* Organizational stressors such as frequent conflicts, excessive demands, and the lack of necessary resources for carrying out work tasks have a direct impact on the onset of burnout. These factors function as objective stressors that continuously pressure the employee, gradually depleting their physical and emotional resources. The study conducted by Bhat et al. (2023) shows that this influence is significant and does not depend directly on the employee's perception of stress, meaning that negative effects can occur even in the absence of clear awareness of the pressure (Bhat et al., 2023). Therefore, work environments characterized by lack of support, poor organization, or excessive demands expose employees to an increased risk of professional exhaustion, regardless of their subjective awareness of stress. This highlights the importance of structural rather than solely individual interventions in the prevention and reduction of burnout.

3. RESEARCH METODOLOGY

3.1 Instruments

Three distinct measurement scales were used for each of the variables analyzed. The descriptive details corresponding to each scale are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Scale Descriptions

Nr. crt.	Variables	Scale Used	Number of Items
1	Perceived Stress	Perceived Stress Scale (Chen et al., 2012)	14
2	Stressors	Workplace Stress Questionnaire (HealthyLife, 2019)	55
3	Burnout	Maslach Burnout Inventory – Short Version (Schaufeli et al., 1996)	9

Source: Authors' compilation

3.2 Participants

Our research focused on organizational stress, by examining its causes, the effects experienced by employees, and possible intervention strategies. The study was conducted in the information technology sector, selected for its fast-paced evolution and its essential role in the modern economy. Employees in this field frequently face high demands, including the need for continuous learning, frequent updates to processes and systems, and organizational restructuring. These elements represent potential sources of stress.

The study analyzed a total of 145 valid responses collected through an online questionnaire. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 52 years. In terms of gender distribution, 73.8% of the respondents were women and 26.2% were men. Regarding professional roles, 35.2% held leadership positions, while 64.8% were in non-managerial roles. Only complete responses were included in the final analysis.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

This research was conducted using a quantitative, cross-sectional design aimed at analyzing the relationships between perceived stress, workplace stressors, burnout levels, and organizational support among employees in the Information Technology sector. The necessary data were collected through an online questionnaire created using the Google Forms platform and distributed to employees working in the field of information technology. The target group included both individuals in leadership positions and employees without managerial responsibilities. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary and anonymous. Before beginning the questionnaire, participants were informed about the purpose of the research and provided their informed consent.

Data collection took place between March and June 2025. A total of 145 correctly completed questionnaires were included in the final analysis. The data processing involved the use of quantitative methods, beginning with descriptive analysis to verify data distribution and determine the appropriate statistical tests for hypothesis testing. All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS software, known for its computational accuracy and clarity in interpreting results.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

In order to obtain a detailed perspective on the distribution of the key research variables — perceived stress, workplace stressors, and burnout — descriptive statistical analyses were conducted.

To assess the central tendencies and variability of the variables included in the analysis, the mean, standard deviation, and 95% confidence intervals for the mean were calculated (Table 2). Additionally, the distribution of each variable was examined using Skewness and Kurtosis coefficients to evaluate deviations from normality.

The stressors recorded a mean of 1.82 (SD = 0.66), and the 95% confidence interval for the mean ranged between 1.71 and 1.93. The distribution shows moderate positive skewness (Skewness = 0.87, SE = 0.20) and slight leptokurtosis (Kurtosis = 0.25, SE = 0.40), indicating a deviation from the normal distribution. However, these indicators do not exceed the conventionally accepted critical thresholds for significant deviation from normality. Specifically, according to the literature (George & Mallery, 2010), skewness values between -2 and +2 and kurtosis values between -7 and +7 are considered acceptable for parametric analysis. Moreover, the sample size (N = 145) is sufficiently large for the central limit theorem to apply. According to this theorem, for samples with $N \geq 30$, the sampling distribution of the mean tends to approximate normality regardless of the shape of the population distribution (Field, 2018). Therefore, even in the presence of moderate deviations from normality, parametric tests remain robust and provide valid results. Based on these arguments, the use of parametric tests in the analysis of the stressor variable is methodologically and statistically justified.

Burnout had a mean of 1.36 (SD = 1.49), with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 1.11 to 1.60. The distribution of this variable is characterized by pronounced positive skewness (Skewness = 1.71, SE = 0.20) and high kurtosis (Kurtosis = 2.90, SE = 0.40), indicating a significant deviation from normality, with a high concentration of low scores and a few extreme values.

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis

Nr. Crt.	Variable	M	SD	CI 95%	Skewness	Kurtosis
					(SE)	(SE)
1	Perceived Stress	1.66	0.54	[1.57 ; 1.75]	-0.12 (0.20)	-0.16 (0.40)
2	Stressors	1.82	0.66	[1.71 ; 1.93]	0.87 (0.20)	0.25 (0.40)
3	Burnout	1.36	1.49	[1.11 ; 1.60]	1.71 (0.20)	2.90 (0.40)

Note: M = Mean;
 SD = Standard Deviation;
 CI = Confidence Interval;
 SE = Standard Error.

Source: Authors' compilation

4.2 Hypotheses Testing

Table 3 presents the Spearman correlation coefficients calculated to analyze the relationships between organizational support, perceived stress, stressors, and burnout. The analysis indicates the existence of significant associations among all the variables examined.

Table 3. Spearman Correlation Coefficients

Nr. Crt.	Variable	Perceived Stress	Stressors	Burnout
1	Perceived	-		
2	Stressors	0.55**	-	
3	Burnout	0.50**	0.87**	-

Note: **p < 0.01

Source: Authors' compilation

H1. There is a significant positive correlation between stressors and perceived stress.

The results confirmed the first hypothesis, indicating a significant positive correlation between stressors and perceived stress ($r = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that as employees perceive more stress-inducing factors in the workplace, their level of perceived stress also increases.

H2. There is a significant positive correlation between perceived stress and burnout.

The second hypothesis was supported by the data, which showed a significant positive correlation between perceived stress and burnout ($r = 0.499$, $p < 0.001$). In other words, employees who experience higher levels of perceived stress are more likely to develop symptoms of professional burnout.

H3. There is a significant positive correlation between stressors and burnout.

The third hypothesis was strongly confirmed by the analysis results, which revealed a very high correlation between stressors and burnout ($r = 0.871$, $p < 0.001$). This relationship indicates that individuals who are frequently exposed to stressors are significantly more likely to experience burnout.

5. DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

This research aimed to explore the relationships among four key variables relevant to employees' psychological well-being in the organizational context: professional stressors, perceived stress, and burnout levels. The conclusions drawn from the correlation analyses and descriptive indicators offer a clear perspective on how these variables interact and influence overall employee well-being. As discussed in the literature review, stress arises from the dynamic interplay between external demands and internal coping resources (Cooper, Dewe, & O'Driscoll, 2001).

Organizational stress is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon with significant implications both for the individual and for the effective functioning of the organization. Beyond simple discomfort responses, occupational stress affects psychological health, emotional balance, and employees' ability to perform under constant pressure. The theoretical models reviewed – from classical frameworks based on direct causal links to transactional and systemic models – emphasize the essential role of subjective perception in the emergence of stress (Ursu, 2007; Pitariu & Virgă, 2008). Therefore, not only external demands influence stress reactions, but also internal resources, organizational context, and coping capacity.

Common causes of stress include role conflict, task ambiguity, time pressure, difficult relationships with supervisors or colleagues, and rigid or unsupportive organizational climates. The effects of these factors are visible both at the individual level, through chronic fatigue, burnout, emotional disorders, and unhealthy behaviors, and at the collective level, through reduced productivity, absenteeism, high turnover, and a deteriorated organizational culture. Modern approaches emphasize the early identification of such risks and the implementation of integrated interventions that address not only the symptoms but also the underlying causes of stress.

One of the most important findings was the confirmation of hypothesis H1, which proposed a positive correlation between stressors and perceived stress. As expected, the data supported this relationship, indicating that as employees perceive more sources of pressure or challenges in the workplace, their level of subjective stress increases. This result aligns with previous research showing that organizational stressors – such as workload, task ambiguity, or lack of autonomy – trigger emotional and physiological stress responses (Arslan, Zahra, & Irshad, 2023).

To effectively combat the negative impact of occupational stress, organizations must adopt a proactive and systemic approach. Effective strategies include fostering a healthy work environment, clarifying roles, providing psychological support, training leaders in stress management, and integrating technology to support well-being monitoring. Moreover, involving employees in decision-making and aligning job demands with their actual capabilities help strengthen both individual and collective resilience.

In line with previous literature (Devebakan, 2019), hypothesis H2, which suggested that perceived stress is positively associated with burnout, was also supported. The relationship between these two variables is logical and theoretically grounded – chronic stress, in the absence of effective coping mechanisms or organizational support, can lead to emotional exhaustion, cynicism towards work, and reduced professional efficacy. It is worth noting that this type of relationship has also been documented in other occupational contexts, which reinforces the applicability of these findings.

The strongest relationship identified in the study was between perceived stressors and burnout, confirming hypothesis H3. This result confirms theoretical claims that structural stressors can independently contribute to burnout, emphasizing the need for organizational interventions (Bhat et al., 2023), and highlights the significant influence that ongoing workplace pressures have on employees' psychological health. In practice, when job demands and challenges become overwhelming, the risk of developing burnout increases substantially. These conclusions justify the need for proactive organizational interventions aimed at reducing stressors.

We believe our findings may contribute to understanding how occupational stress develops and manifests in organizational settings. It is clear that both stressors and the lack of perceived support

can significantly impact employees' psychological state. The analyzed variables interact in a predictable yet complex manner, underscoring the fact that effective interventions must be multidimensional – focused both on reducing pressure and enhancing available resources.

These conclusions should draw the attention of organizational leaders to the importance of building a balanced and supportive work environment. Monitoring workload, clarifying roles, and promoting a culture of collaboration are just a few measures that can mitigate the negative impact of stress and prevent burnout. Managing organizational stress can no longer be treated as a secondary responsibility. It is a strategic priority requiring well-grounded interventions, collaboration across all hierarchical levels, and the commitment to a workplace culture centered on well-being, balance, and sustainability.

Finally, this research emphasizes the importance of perceived support as a critical resource in managing occupational stress and maintaining well-being at work. The relationships identified among the variables provide a strong starting point for future organizational interventions and the development of HR policies focused on prevention and support.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Our study investigates the relationships between four essential dimensions of organizational stress: workplace stressors, perceived stress, and burnout. Starting from a theoretical framework, the research sought to provide a deeper understanding of how these factors interact and influence the psychological health of employees in the IT sector.

The data analysis confirmed all our three hypotheses, revealing significant correlations between all the variables included. It was demonstrated that professional stressors are directly associated with a higher level of perceived stress and a greater risk of burnout. Furthermore, perceived stress has a direct influence on professional exhaustion, reinforcing the idea that constant pressure at work profoundly affects employees' emotional state and cognitive functioning.

Organizational stress is not merely an individual reaction to external pressures, but an expression of the relational dynamics between the employee and the structure of the system in which they operate. The study results demonstrate that imbalances between professional demands and perceived resources lead to significant psychological consequences, among which burnout is the most visible and destructive form.

Burnout appears as a cumulative effect, fueled both by perceived stress and by repeated exposure to specific workplace stressors. This conclusion supports the idea that burnout is not an isolated event but the result of a gradual deterioration of psychological well-being.

Differences in perception between employees in managerial positions and those in non-managerial roles may influence how occupational stress is experienced. This is a direction worth exploring in future studies, as it involves cultural, responsibility-related, and autonomy-related factors.

The importance of regularly evaluating the psychological state of employees becomes evident following this research, as early identification of perceived stress levels or risk factors can prevent performance deterioration and the onset of burnout. Stress in the IT sector has specific characteristics, associated with the rapid pace of change, the need for continuous learning, and innovation pressure. This highlights the need for personalized intervention measures for this field.

The study emphasizes that effective organizational interventions must go beyond reactive paradigms and adopt a proactive approach centered on prevention, balance, and psychological sustainability. Stress management strategies should be structurally integrated into organizational culture rather than treated as isolated solutions.

The results obtained not only support established theoretical models, such as the Conservation of Resources Theory and the Job Demands-Resources Model, but also provide a solid empirical basis for formulating practical interventions within organizations. They indicate the need for internal

policies aimed at reducing chronic stressors and strengthening perceived employee support through support programs, training, effective communication, and empathetic leadership.

In conclusion, this study highlights that the prevention of organizational stress cannot be achieved solely through individual changes, but requires systemic interventions that target both the external sources of stress and the reinforcement of employees' internal and external resources. Therefore, organizations seeking sustainable performance must integrate the psychological well-being of their staff into their development strategy.

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