

## The Relationship between Burnout and Perceived Job Performance among Private-sector Employees in Malaysia

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**Published:** 25 March 2025

**To cite this article (APA):** Aminurhan, A. A., & Abas, N. A. H. (2025). The Relationship between Burnout and Perceived Job Performance among Private-sector Employees in Malaysia. *EDUCATUM Journal of Social Sciences*, 11, 33-41. <https://doi.org/10.37134/ejoss.vol11.sp.4.2025>

**To link to this article:** <https://doi.org/10.37134/ejoss.vol11.sp.4.2025>

### Abstract

This study examined the relationship between burnout and perceived job performance among private-sector employees in Malaysia. Data was collected through an online survey, 149 respondents were (100 females, 49 males) conveniently sampled. The study utilized two instruments, the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) and the Individual Work Performance Questionnaires (IWPQ). Three objectives were aimed for this study, (1) to determine the levels of burnout among private-sector employees (2) to determine the levels of perceived job performance among private-sector employees and (3) to identify the relationship between burnout and perceived job performance among private-sector employees. Both descriptive and inferential analyses were conducted, including Pearson's correlation, to evaluate the data and explore the relationships between key variables. The results revealed that the majority of respondents exhibited low levels of burnout ( $n = 60$ ) and also a low level of perceived job performance ( $n = 96$ ). Additionally, a significant negative correlation was found between burnout and perceived job performance ( $r = -.609, p < .001$ ). The findings of this study are critical to enhancing organizational performance as minimizing burnout may improve employees productivity and performance, resulting in higher quality work, better client service, and overall corporate success. Organizations might use these data to establish targeted strategies and programs designed to alleviate burnout, such as stress management workshops and counseling services. The study also adds valuable empirical data to the existing body of research on burnout and job performance. It addresses existing gaps in the literature, especially regarding the Malaysian context, and provides a basis for future research exploring similar themes.

**Kata kunci** keletihan, prestasi kerja, pekerja sektor swasta, industri kerja

### Abstrak

Kajian ini mengkaji hubungan antara kelesuan dan persepsi prestasi kerja dalam kalangan pekerja sektor swasta di Malaysia. Data dikumpul melalui tinjauan dalam talian, 149 responden (100 perempuan, 49 lelaki) telah dijadikan sampel dengan mudah. Kajian ini menggunakan dua instrumen, Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) dan Individual Work Performance Questionnaires (IWPQ). Tiga objektif telah dikenalpasti untuk kajian ini, (1) untuk menentukan tahap kelesuan dalam kalangan pekerja sektor swasta (2) untuk menentukan tahap persepsi prestasi kerja dalam kalangan pekerja sektor swasta dan (3) untuk mengenal pasti hubungan antara kelesuan dan persepsi prestasi kerja dalam kalangan pekerja sektor swasta. Kedua-dua analisis deskriptif dan inferensi telah dijalankan, termasuk korelasi Pearson, untuk menilai data dan meneroka hubungan antara pembolehubah utama. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa majoriti responden menunjukkan tahap kelesuan yang rendah ( $n = 60$ ) dan juga tahap prestasi kerja yang rendah ( $n = 96$ ). Selain itu, korelasi negatif yang ketara didapati antara kelesuan dan prestasi kerja yang dirasakan ( $r = -.609, p < .001$ ). Penemuan kajian ini adalah penting untuk meningkatkan prestasi organisasi kerana meminimumkan kelesuan boleh meningkatkan produktiviti dan prestasi pekerja, menghasilkan kerja yang lebih berkualiti, perkhidmatan pelanggan yang lebih baik, dan kejayaan korporat secara keseluruhan. Organisasi mungkin menggunakan data ini untuk mewujudkan strategi dan program yang disasarkan yang direka bentuk untuk mengurangkan kelesuan, seperti bengkel pengurusan tekanan dan perkhidmatan kaunseling. Kajian itu juga menambah data empirikal yang berharga kepada badan penyelidikan

*sedia ada mengenai kelesuan dan prestasi kerja. Ia menangani jurang yang sedia ada dalam kesusasteraan, terutamanya mengenai konteks Malaysia, dan menyediakan asas untuk penyelidikan masa depan meneroka tema yang serupa.*

**Kata kunci** keletihan, prestasi kerja, pekerja sektor swasta, industri kerja

## INTRODUCTION

Job performance determines whether or not a person does a good job. In other words, job performance refers to how well or poorly an individual accomplishes his or her work-related duties (Torlak, & Kuzey, 2019). Job performance is a component of human resource management that is studied academically as part of industrial and organisational psychology. Organizational success is relying on employee's performance. The employee is a valuable asset of the company regardless of the government sector and the private company as they have the capacity to enhance or harm the company's reputation and can adversely affect profitability (Elnaga & Imran, 2013). The current global context has created a competitive environment in which companies are interested in optimising their performance in order to maximise profits, which are heavily dependent on the performance of their employees (Elrehail et al., 2020).

The development of the era of globalization today shows that organizations must be better prepared to face challenges in maintaining a competitive advantage (Baard, Rensch, & Kozlowski, 2014). Various innovations and new ideas are trying to be introduced into the organization that requires the commitment of all parties, including human resources (Xiu et al., 2017). All this is done in the hope that productivity continues to increase while reducing the overall cost of the organization. In the excitement of successful organizational strategy in the increasingly challenging business world, there are times when organizations begin to neglect the most valuable resource, namely human beings (Vardarlier, 2016). This forgetfulness has caused various problems faced by the human resources of an organization. Problems such as employee turnover and job dissatisfaction are among the common problems in organizations today (Mat Rifin and Danaee, 2022). All of these problems are related to fatigue at work and burnout are one of the factors that can contribute to these problems.

Employee's experiencing unreasonable pressure or burnout may feel detached from their general surroundings, depleted of energy, and may likewise encounter stress on an individual and expert level. Undesirable pressure and coming about burnout can negatively affect essentially all parts of their group's performance. The direct and indirect costs to the team and the wider organization can include poor job performance. It is not shocking that when individuals are over-pushed, they might have trouble zeroing in on the main job, commit more errors, or invest heavily in their work. Being burned out causes an employee's mind to wander, preventing themselves from locking in on new ideas. It basically limits the ability to come up with creative, new ideas to produce high quality work.

According to a report by human resource solutions provider, over half of Malaysian workers are experiencing workplace burnout (Ignatius, 2022). The study was conducted using a survey between February 28 and March 7, 2022, to evaluate the continued impact of the pandemic on career progression among 1,016 Malaysian employees aged 18 to 35. The findings were based on data gathered from diverse industries with 80% working full-time. The result revealed that 58% of its respondents admitted feeling burnout from their jobs in the last three months. In addition to this, it is also found that burnout is one of the top threats to employee mental health in 2022.

Employees are an important asset and the backbone of the industry, ensuring that the company runs properly. Organizations require employees that can give the best work performance to help them reach their objectives and goals. However, one of the issues that companies must deal with is the ever-present issue of employee turnover. As the turnover trend in Malaysia's private sector increases from year to year, it has become a critical issue in recent years (Abdul Latif and Saraih, 2016). Employee turnover refers to the circumstance in which employees leave a company and are replaced by other employees. This employee turnover issue puts pressure on their team members who are in charge of

filling open positions as well as current employees who are working to compensate for workforce shortages. As mentioned in Forbes (2017), a study carried out by Kronos Incorporated and Future Workplace discovered that 95% of human resource leaders admit that employee burnout is a barrier to workforce retention. According to the study, 46% of Human Resource leaders believe employee burnout is responsible for up to half (20% to 50%) of annual workforce turnover.

Several researchers focused on the effects of burnout among healthcare workers. There have been limited studies concerned on how burnout could also influence employees from various industries. Hassim et al. (2022) emphasized that even if the level of burnout among employees in government and private sectors in Malaysia is average, ignoring the phenomenon that can contribute to work burnout and taking no action will have a negative impact on employees in ways that can be seen in their emotional, physical, social, and professional lives. Therefore, this research intends to study the relationship between burnout and perceived job performance particularly for private-sector employees. The objectives of this research are to measure the level of burnout and perceived job performance as well as identify the relationship between burnout and perceived job performance among private-sector employees in Malaysia.

The significance of this study on workplace burnout has become a big issue that is increasing globally every year. Work is not just a source of income for people, but it can also be a cause of stress and have an impact on their mental health if not handled appropriately. Burnout in the workplace should not be taken lightly by either the individual or the organisation because it has an impact on organisational productivity. Burnout at work is not a new phenomenon, and it has been linked to employees for decades. Hence, a more precise identification of the burnout phenomenon among workers, from early signs to clinical symptoms, is vital for the overall welfare of society. This study could help employees in raising their awareness of symptoms associated with workplace burnout in order to avoid poor job performance. Employees also will benefit greatly from this study because they will be more aware of their own emotions as well as their stress level.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research design**

This study adopted a cross sectional-correlational quantitative research approach, because the study is aimed at establishing the association between burnout and perceived job performance and the quantitative technique is quick, focused, scientific, and approachable. This method is useful for rapidly analyzing data, especially when gathering data from a big sample size. Surveys are the instrument of choice for gathering and analyzing quantitative data. The link to the online survey was shared on numerous social media platforms, including WhatsApp, Facebook, and Telegram which helped data collected from different individuals at the same time.

The population targeted by the study consisted of private-sector employees in Malaysia who were over the age of 21, had a minimum of three years of work experience, and had no medical conditions affecting job performance. This specific inclusion criterion aimed to ensure that the participants had a relevant work background and were in a position to provide insightful data on burnout and perceived job performance. Respondents are excluded if they are not private-sector employees, under 21 years old, have less than three years of work experience, or have medical problems that could interfere with job performance.

The researcher used convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling technique in which data is collected from a readily available and easily accessible pool of respondents. This is because the sampling method has no other requirements other than that people be available and willing to participate. The sampling technique was chosen as it is incredibly prompt, uncomplicated, and economical. The sample size for this study was determined using G\*Power 3.1.9.4, a well-established tool for statistical power analysis. Using an estimated effect size of 0.3, an alpha level of 0.05, and a

power of 0.95, the analysis indicated that a minimum of 138 participants was required. The goal of defining sample size is to show that a set of participants are chosen from the general population.

## **Instruments**

### Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI)

Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) was used to measure the level of burnout among private-sector employees. The OLBI, developed by Demerouti and Bakker in 2001, has been validated for use by employees in various occupational fields, including health workers, all around the world. Oldenburg Burnout Inventory consists of 16 items, covered two dimensions which are exhaustion and disengagement. Since the questionnaires in the study were intended to administer in both Malay and English, the Malay version of the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory translated by Mahadi and colleagues (2018) was used.

The results of the forward-backward translation performed by the experts show a high level of face validity (76.5%), indicating that it effectively measured what it intended to. The OLBI-M constructs' composite reliability values ranged between 0.71 and 0.73, indicating a high level of convergent validity. As for reliability, analysis confirmed that the final 9-item model demonstrated a high level of internal consistency with overall Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.7 (range 0.70 and 0.74). The findings indicate that the Malay version of the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory is a reliable and valid tool for assessing burnout in Malaysia. As for OLBI, the internal consistency was considered acceptable, with Cronbach's alpha scores ranging from 0.74 to 0.87 (Halbesleben and Demerouti, 2005). All scores exceeded the threshold of 0.70, indicating strong reliability across the measure.

### Individual Work Performance Questionnaires (IWPQ)

In addition to the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory, the study also employed the Individual Work Performance Questionnaires (IWPQ). Developed by Koopmans and colleagues in the Netherlands in 2015, the IWPQ is designed to assess job performance across three dimensions: task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior. This instrument comprises a total of 18 items, in which 5 items for task performance, 8 items for contextual performance, and 5 items for counterproductive work behavior. Different from Oldenburg Burnout Inventory, Individual Work Performance Questionnaires are not readily available in Malay. Therefore, a back translation was performed by a Malay and English expert.

## **Procedures**

This study received ethical approval from the UPSI Human Research Ethics Board under Reference Number 2022-0719-02. Participants were thoroughly informed about the study's purpose, potential risks, and their participation was entirely voluntary. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study. The confidentiality and anonymity of participants were strictly protected, with personal data securely stored and only accessible to authorized researchers. The researcher's contact information was also provided, enabling participants to reach out with any inquiries regarding the study.

Data analysis was done using SPSS Statistics version 26. Descriptive statistics was used for the analysis of demographic information such as gender, age, type of job industry, and marital status. Aside from that, inferential analysis involving Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

## **Participants**

A total of 152 participants have answered the survey. However, three from the 152 data were not fulfilled the study requirements as they were retired, government employees and internship students.

As a result of these exclusions, the total number of participants in this study was only 149. Table 1 summarized participants' demographic details.

**Table 1** Profile of the participants

| Demographic          | Category               | Frequency ( <i>f</i> ) | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Gender               | Male                   | 49                     | 32.9           |
|                      | Female                 | 100                    | 67.1           |
| Age                  | 21 to 25 years old     | 45                     | 30.2           |
|                      | 26 to 30 years old     | 48                     | 32.2           |
|                      | 31 to 35 years old     | 35                     | 23.5           |
|                      | 36 to 40 years old     | 10                     | 6.7            |
|                      | 41 years old and above | 11                     | 7.4            |
| Type of job industry | Healthcare             | 22                     | 14.8           |
|                      | Construction           | 15                     | 10.1           |
|                      | Retail                 | 21                     | 14.1           |
|                      | Finance                | 13                     | 8.7            |
|                      | Hospitality            | 12                     | 8.1            |
|                      | Manufacturing          | 42                     | 28.2           |
|                      | Education              | 9                      | 6.0            |
|                      | Fashion                | 2                      | 1.3            |
|                      | Food and beverages     | 9                      | 6.0            |
|                      | Advertising            | 1                      | 0.7            |
|                      | Engineering            | 1                      | 0.7            |
|                      | Optical                | 2                      | 1.3            |
| Marital status       | Single                 | 72                     | 48.3           |
|                      | Married                | 77                     | 51.7           |

As stated in Table 1, 100 females (67.1%) and 49 males (32.9%) completed this study. There were 48 (32.2%) participants between the ages of 26 and 30, followed by 45 (30.2%) between the ages of 21 and 25, 35 (23.5%) between the ages of 31 and 35, 11 (7.4%) ages 41 years old and above, and only 10 (6.7%) between the ages of 36 and 40. Next, in the demographic information section, the researcher only included seven types of industrial jobs and provided blank spaces for respondents to fill out if their type of job industry was not stated. Participants in the manufacturing industry account for 28.2% of the total. Along with participants from the manufacturing sector, there are also numerous participants from health care and retail which make up 14.8% and 14.1% respectively. Meanwhile, only one participant (0.7%) from two industries, advertising, and engineering, took part in this study. In terms of marital status, there is a slight difference in the number of participants, with 77 (51.7%) having a partner or being married and 72 (48.3%) being single.

## RESULTS

The first objective of the study is to determine the level of burnout among private-sector employees in Malaysia. The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) was used to measure burnout. It has 16 items and was divided into two subscales: (1) exhaustion and (2) disengagement, each with 8 items. A descriptive analysis was run using SPSS. Table 2 summarized the level of burnout experienced by private-sector employees in the current study.

**Table 2** Level of burnout among private-sector employees in Malaysia

| Level of burnout | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Low              | 60            | 40.3           |
| Moderate         | 45            | 30.2           |
| High             | 44            | 29.5           |

Table 2 shows that 40.3% of the current study's participants experienced a low level of burnout. Followed by 30.2% experienced a moderate level of burnout, and 29.5% experienced a high level of burnout.

The second objective of this study is to determine the level of perceived job performance among private-sector employees in Malaysia. The level of job performance is measured using the Individual Work Performance Questionnaires consists of three dimensions which are task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior. This instrument contains 18 items in total, with 5 items for task performance and counterproductive work behavior, and 8 items for contextual performance. The analysis used is a descriptive analysis using the SPSS Software. The results of the level of perceived job performance among private sector employees in Malaysia are provided in Table 3 below.

**Table 3** Level of perceived job performance among private-sector employees in Malaysia

| Level of burnout | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Low              | 96            | 64.4           |
| Moderate         | 4             | 2.7            |
| High             | 49            | 32.9           |

According to the data shown in Table 3, over sixty percent of respondents, 96 (64.4%), reported a low level of perceived job performance, while 49 (32.9%) reported a high level of perceived job performance. Only four (2.7%) of the 149 respondents rated their job performance as moderate.

### **Inferential analysis**

In this section, the analysis of inferential statistics will be discussed. The analysis was conducted by running a Pearson's Correlation to identify the relationship between burnout and perceived job performance among private-sector employees in Malaysia. Previous research showed that there is a significant relationship burnout and perceived job performance among employees. Thus, Pearson's Correlation has been run in the current study to identify the relationship between these two variables. The hypotheses for this objective are:

H1: There is a significant relationship between burnout and perceived job performance among private-sector employees.

Correlation result shows that there is a significant moderate negative correlation between burnout and perceived job performance among private-sector employees at the .01 level with two-tailed ( $r = -.609$ ,  $n = 149$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Negative direction indicates that as burnout increases, job performance tends to decrease. Thus, the H1 was supported.

## **DISCUSSION**

In terms of gender, regardless of the fact that women made up the majority of the respondents, the result turns out that 40.3% reporting low levels of burnout, and only 29.5% reporting high levels of burnout. This result was unexpected given that women have consistently reported higher levels of burnout than men, and this gap has more than doubled since 2019, according to a Gallup (2021) report. There are a

number of explanations for this finding, including the possibility that women were more prone to burnout than men because they were less likely to be promoted than men and thus more likely to hold positions of less authority, which can result in higher levels of stress.

Prior research by Bertolino, Truxillo, and Fraccaroli (2013) has shown that older and younger workers are perceived differently regarding the Big Five personality traits and key dimensions of job performance. Specifically, older workers are often viewed more positively in terms of contextual performance, aligning with Ng and Feldman's (2008) meta-analysis on age-related differences in job performance. Given that 48 participants are between 26 and 30 years old, compared to just 10 participants aged 36 to 40, this age distribution may contribute to the observed lower levels of perceived job performance. Older employees, benefiting from greater experience, may feel more confident in their roles, while younger employees, still adjusting to workplace demands, might experience lower self-assessed performance.

One interesting finding is that marital status may influence the level of perceived job performance among private-sector employees in Malaysia. According to the result obtained, 77 of the 149 participants are married or have a partner. Padmanabhan and Magesh (2016) reported a significant relationship between marital status and employee performance, with a significant value of  $p < 0.01$ . The researcher discovered that those employees who are single or unmarried show no low level of performance with (0.00%). Unmarried employees may outperform married employees because their commitment to their family and other circumstances are significantly less when compared with married employees. To summarize, the fact that the majority of participants are married may contribute to the low level of perceived job performance.

The result obtained from Table 4 earlier shows the same as the previous research which shows there is a correlation between burnout and perceived job performance. The finding could be supported by the prior research, as most research agreed that there was correlation between the two variables. It should come as no surprise that burnout has been associated with a wide range of undesirable outcomes, including those that are personal, societal, and organizational. A research conducted by Dyrbye et al., (2019) discovered a link between burnout among nurse's absenteeism, and work performance. Overall, 35.3% of respondents reported burnout symptoms, 30.7% reported depression symptoms, 8.3% missed one or more days due to personal health issues in the previous month, and 43.8% reported poor work performance. Burnout nurses were more likely to have missed one or more days of work in the previous month and to perform poorly at work. According to these findings, burnout is common among nurses and has a negative impact on work performance.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this current study has several implications. Firstly, this study managed to present the latest literature study regarding the relationship between burnout and perceived job performance among private-sector employees. In today's literature, there have been only a few reports on the impacts of burnout to private sector employees as most of the research is only focusing on the healthcare sector. This study presents the idea of how burnout plays a role in the employee's job performance. Through this study, it shows a significant relationship between burnout and perceived job performance among private-sector employees. Since it is a negative correlation, it means that the more employee's experience burnout, the less employees perceive their job performance.

By analyzing the relationship between burnout levels and perceived job performance, companies can implement targeted interventions to reduce stressors and improve employee well-being. This may include adjusting workloads, and providing more flexible work arrangements. Addressing these issues can lead to increased job satisfaction, reduced absenteeism, and improved overall productivity. Besides, recognizing the interplay between burnout and job performance allows organizations to fine-tune their performance management systems. With insights into how burnout affects employees' self-perceived performance, companies can develop strategies to support employees in managing their stress while maintaining high performance standards. This might involve redesigning

performance metrics, offering additional training and resources, and fostering a more supportive work environment to help employees meet their performance goals despite burnout challenges.

Employees will benefit from this study because it is expected they would be aware of their own current emotions as well as their stress level while answering the survey. This self-reflection helps them become more conscious of how their job impacts their mental and physical health. Greater awareness of their own stress and emotional state can lead employees to seek out resources or support, improve their well-being, and make informed changes to manage their workload and work environment more effectively.

### **Limitation of study**

This study has several limitations. As this was a cross-sectional study, one of the limitations was not knowing the long-term relationship between burnout and perceived job performance. This is due to the fact that the cross-sectional study used a single-time analysis during the current exposure. This design does not account for how these variables may change over time, meaning it cannot reveal trends or long-term effects. As a result, the study is unable to establish causation or examine the enduring impact of burnout on perceived job performance, limiting the depth of our conclusions regarding its long-term consequences.

Another limitation of the study is that a total of 34 items in the survey may be considered excessive by some respondents. A large number of items might increase the cognitive load on respondents, requiring them to process and recall extensive information. Cognitive load refers to the effort required to process information while completing a task (Sweller, 1988). This can be challenging, especially if the questions are complex or require detailed introspection, leading to decreased accuracy and attentiveness. A lengthy survey also can lead to respondent fatigue, where participants become tired or bored, potentially impacting the quality of their responses. When faced with numerous questions, respondents may rush through the survey, provide less thoughtful answers, which can affect the reliability of the data. Furthermore, a survey with 34 items requires a significant time investment. For respondents with busy schedules, the time needed to complete the survey might be seen as too demanding. This can discourage participation or lead to incomplete responses if participants feel the survey is too time-consuming.

### **Recommendation for future study**

For future research on the relationship between burnout and perceived job performance, it is recommended to explore how marital status may influence these variables. Since the current study did not examine marital status, incorporating this variable could provide a deeper understanding of how personal life factors intersect with workplace experiences. Marital status might affect burnout levels and job performance in different ways. Married individuals might experience varying levels of support or stress compared to single individuals, which could influence their job performance and overall well-being. To address this in future studies, researchers should ensure a balanced sample of participants across different marital statuses to avoid bias.

Next, a further study with more focus on burnout between two different samples, private and government employees is suggested. Because there were some notable differences between government and private sector jobs, it may have contributed to different levels of burnout. For example, job security. Government jobs often offer greater job stability compared to the private sector, where job security can be less predictable due to potential company closures, mergers, or role changes. These differences might contribute to varying levels of burnout among employees in these sectors. To effectively explore this, future studies should ensure they include a representative sample of both private and government sector employees.

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