

# The Influence of Workplace Environment on Employee Burnout and Coping Mechanisms

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## ABSTRACT:

**Background:** Employee burnout has also emerged as a major issue in all types of industries, especially the high-stress industries, which include healthcare, education, and finance. Workload, managerial support, and role clarity are some of the environmental factors in the workplace that contribute to burnout and the coping strategies of individuals. This paper examines how these environmental factors within the workplace affect employee burnout and establishes the coping mechanisms adopted by the workers to deal with stress in the Indian organisations. These relations are significant to understand and identify effective interventions to decrease burnout and enhance employee well-being.

**Methods:** A convergent parallel mixed methods approach was used to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were gathered through the application of three standardised measures, including the Revised Work Environment Scale (WES-R), the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS), and the Brief Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced (COPE) inventory. The use of semi-structured interviews was aimed at getting qualitative data on what participants believed about their workplace, stressors, and coping strategies. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, thematic analysis, hierarchical regression analysis, and Pearson correlation.

**Results:** Workload was found to be the most significant predictor of burnout ( $b = 0.31$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with role clarity ( $b = -0.29$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and managerial support ( $b = -0.27$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) being significant in reducing levels of burnout. Adaptive coping strategies like active coping ( $M = 4.3$ ) and planning ( $M = 4.1$ ) were commonly used and resulted in reduced burnout. Sector-specific differences in levels of burnout were found, with healthcare workers reporting the highest levels of burnout ( $M = 3.9$ ), followed by education ( $M = 3.8$ ) and finance ( $M = 3.7$ ).

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**Conclusion:** This study emphasizes the importance of factors in the workplace environment and coping strategies in the mitigation of burnout. Interventions that focus on workload management and supporting managers may help to reduce burnout and improve employee well-being.

**Keywords:** Workplace environment, burnout, coping strategies, role clarity, workload, managerial support, employee well-being

**INTRODUCTION**

The essence of employment has changed dramatically in recent decades, with complex organisational structures and increased performance demands. Although these changes in dynamics have led to productivity and innovation, it has also resulted in heightened psychological stress in workers (Zhenjing et al., 2022). Burnout is one of the most significant psychological outcomes, a long-lasting response to work-related stress, which presents itself in the form of emotional exhaustion, detachment, or the inability to perform personal competence (Edu-Valsania et al., 2022). The healthcare and social service industries are no longer dealing with burnout. It has turned into an issue in the education sector, information technology, finance, and manufacturing sectors (De Hert, 2020). This makes it a grave challenge to the well-being of employees and organisational sustainability.

When it comes to the workplace setting, the settings and contexts of managerial support, workload allocation, role delimiting and autonomy, peer relationships, and perceived fairness are the settings in which the employees experience the workplace and their health outcomes (Al-Ghwary et al., 2024). There have been several studies proving that an unhealthy work environment leads to the development of symptoms of burnout (Virtanen et al., 2011). For example, emotional exhaustion is directly related to poor managerial support and high workloads, and role ambiguity and lack of autonomy are directly related to a sense of helplessness and depersonalization (Charoensukmongkol, 2022). In areas where performance is valued more than the safety of employees, these occupational hazards are

exacerbated because of a systematic ignoring of psychological safety.

The structural elements of the work environment are important, but the individual's response to stressors and coping strategies in particular are equally important in diminishing burnout. Coping strategies can be broadly categorised into two groups: emotion-focused coping strategies and problem-focused coping strategies. The former is flexible and purposeful (Cavanagh and Obasi, 2021). Employees with a higher chance of resilience and less burnout symptoms employ active coping, planning, and positive reframing. The more holistic perspective on the dynamics of burnout is to understand how individuals cope with an unfavourable working climate (Kunzler et al., 2020).

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model gives a strong theoretical framework for the study of the interaction between work environment factors, including demands and resources, and burnout. The argument behind this model is that stress responses are triggered by job demands, e.g., workload and time pressure, whereas engagement is triggered by job resources, e.g., supervisory support, role clarity, and autonomy, and protection against stress is triggered by job demands (Schaufeli, 2017). In occupational settings, the usefulness of this model has been largely defined and continues to be an effective tool with which to systematically analyse burnout and coping. Importantly, the JD-R model provides the opportunity to include variables at the individual level.

(i.e., personal resilience, coping strategies) making it possible to conduct an integrated analysis of workplace stress and employee well-being (Miranda, 2024). There is a huge body of work on burnout and

occupational stress, but there are many important gaps. Many studies have focused primarily on either the structural or psychological variables and have overlooked the complex interaction between environmental factors and individual coping behaviour (Mao et al., 2023). India, being an emerging economy with a high rate of industrialization, job insecurity, and a rigid organisational hierarchy, provides a unique stress environment, and very little research has been conducted in this area (Sen et al., 2024). Socio-cultural context where collectivism, power distance, and poor mental health literacy are taken into account greatly influence how employees perceive stress and how they choose to cope with it (Oruh & Dibia, 2020). Regional inquiry is necessary to capture the nuances of the socio-organization of burnout.

As the post-pandemic return to physical and hybrid workspaces occurs, there are new stressors that have emerged, such as fear of infection, reduced social interaction, and blurring work-life boundaries. These changes have altered what is possible in the 'supportive' workplace environment, leading scholars and organisations to revisit traditional models of burnout (Chan et al., 2022). With the rise of remote work and flexible scheduling, the coping mechanisms of individuals and their relationship to the organisational cultures of the virtual world need to be reexamined.

While coping strategies are typically treated as dispositional traits, they are also highly influenced by environmental cues. A problem-focused coping style may be promoted by a supportive managerial style and may be reinforced accidentally by a punitive or neglectful environment (Fathima, 2024). Employees' coping repertoire is dependent upon their access to organisational resources (mental health programmes, peer support systems, etc.) as well as on clear channels of communication. According to Halbesleben (2006), studies have shown that employees who perceive their organisations to be interested in their welfare experience proactive coping and report lower levels of burnout. Such is the two-way support between the environment and individual resilience.

Age, gender, length of employment, and occupation are mediating demographic factors for the burnout experience and the choice of coping strategy. Given they have less work experience, younger employees might use emotion-focused coping more, and experienced professionals might use more planning and problem solving (Stanislowski, 2019). Similarly, stress appraisal and preference for coping are often affected by gender-based socialisation processes wherein women tend to seek social support, whereas men often tend to use distraction for coping (Cholankeril et al., 2023). Identifying these differences is important in order to develop targeted interventions for the workforce.

In addition to individual health, the consequences of unaddressed burnout are high organisational costs, including increased absenteeism, high turnover, diminished productivity, and decreased innovation (Kelly et al., 2021). The relationship between burnout and physical health problems like cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, and immune dysfunction is also found (Salvagioni et al., 2017).

The available literature validates the multidimensional nature of employee burnout and the significance of both workplace conditions and coping styles (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). These variables have been investigated empirically; most investigations have not considered these variables together in a unified analytical framework, especially in culturally diverse and high-pressure organisational settings, as are present in India. Therefore, an integrative approach, which considers organizational structure, interpersonal dynamics, and individual psychology, is essential (McCluskey, 2022).

The study aims to examine the effect of workplace environment on employee burnout and study the coping strategies used by employees of different sectors of India. The study uses a mixed-methods approach from the JDR framework to determine critical environmental stressors, to find out how common burnout is, and to examine adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

### Study Design

To provide a comprehensive understanding of how workplace environmental factors affect employee burnout and coping strategies used, the design employed was a convergent parallel mixed methods approach. Simultaneously collecting both qualitative and quantitative data provided an opportunity to conduct the analysis independently, and the synthesis of the findings led to the creation of subtle meanings. The quantitative one was used to quantify the associations and predictive relationship, and the qualitative one to give the findings more context.

### Study Setting and Population

The research sites comprised medium to large organisations in urban centres, both in the north and south of India, in the fields of health care, information technology, finance, manufacturing, and education. The target population consisted of full-time employees between the ages of 21 and 60 years who had at least one year of continuous service in the organisation he or she was working in. This qualification was necessary to make sure that the participants were well oriented towards the workplace environments, to shed some light on burnout and coping strategies.

### Sampling Strategy

#### Quantitative Measures

Three standardised tools were used in collecting quantitative data. It was used on the Revised Work Environment Scale (WES-R) to measure the workplace factors such as management support, workload, role clarity, autonomy, interpersonal relations, and organisational justice, which had high internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.88$ ). Professional efficacy, cynicism, and emotional exhaustion were also determined to be measured by Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS), and this was highly reliable ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ). The Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced (COPE) inventory was utilised to measure adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies with a reasonable degree of reliability ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ).

### Qualitative Tool

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the participants were used as the major method of data collection, and the interview guide was developed relying on the questions of the place of work environment perception, stressors, and coping strategies of the participants. An expert review of the interview guide has also been done to establish the soundness of the contents and appropriateness. The pilot test was conducted on a sample of employees, which allowed for certain changes to the readability and structure of the instructions. Interviews provided qualitative data, which served to interpret the quantitative data obtained and provided the researchers with a closer view of the study topic, as the participants saw it.

### Data Collection Procedure

Quantitative data were collected by providing an encrypted web-based survey platform via organisational intranets. The survey had to be completed by the participants anonymously during specified working hours, upon receiving managerial permission. Interviews were conducted either over secured Zoom or in a private office space, both depending on participant preference, during the qualitative phase. The interviews lasted around 30 to 45 minutes, and were audio-recorded with informed consent. The whole process of data collection was completed in the period from January to March 2025 for 10 weeks.

### Ethical Considerations

The study protocol was approved by the Institutional Human Research Ethics Committee of [Insert University Name] before data collection. All participants gave informed consent either in writing or electronically. People were informed that participation was completely voluntary and that they could leave at any time without incurring any fees. Confidentiality of responses was ensured strictly, and all data were secured, saved, and treated completely in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) principles.

### Data Analysis

Quantitative data were screened initially to check for missing values, outliers, and normality.

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participant demographics and workplace variables. The analysis of Pearson's correlation was applied to examine relationships among workplace environment factors, burnout dimensions, and coping strategies. Hierarchical multiple regression was used to identify significant predictors of burnout while holding demographic variables constant. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) established the structural soundness of the Revised Work Environment Scale (WES-R) in the Indian organizational setting. All statistical testing was conducted through SPSS Version 27 and AMOS Version 24 with  $p < 0.05$  as the significance level.

The six-phase thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke was used to code the qualitative data. Transcripts from interviews were cross-checked manually with NVivo 14 for analytical rigour and consistency. A Cohen's Kappa of 0.86 verified inter-rater reliability for high agreement between coders. Patterns in themes were coded and triangulated against quantitative results to explore further the relationship between burnout, coping behaviours, and workplace dynamics.

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Statistics of Workplace Environment

The descriptive statistics showed that there was significant variation in workplace environment factors. The highest mean ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 0.49$ ) was in Role clarity, suggesting that employees generally understood what they needed to do at work. The Interpersonal Relations also scored high

( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ), indicating strong peer support. Workload saw the lowest mean ( $M = 2.89$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ), which represented significant strain mentioned in Table 1. Organizational Justice had a moderate mean value, and managerial support also had a moderate mean value, both of which suggest areas in which managers should focus.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Workplace Environment Dimensions

| Workplace Dimension     | Mean | Standard Deviation (SD) |
|-------------------------|------|-------------------------|
| Managerial Support      | 3.75 | 0.56                    |
| Workload                | 2.89 | 0.73                    |
| Role Clarity            | 4.12 | 0.49                    |
| Autonomy                | 3.43 | 0.61                    |
| Interpersonal Relations | 4.05 | 0.52                    |
| Organizational Justice  | 3.67 | 0.60                    |

### Correlation Between Workplace Factors, Burnout, and Coping

Bivariate correlation analysis showed that Burnout had a negative relationship with Managerial Support ( $r = -0.45$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), Role Clarity ( $r = -0.48$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and Autonomy ( $r = -0.41$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and a positive relationship with Workload ( $r = 0.52$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). According to Table 2, coping strategies had a negative correlation with burnout ( $r = -0.33$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and a positive correlation with supportive workplace dimensions.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix of Key Variables

| Variable           | Burnout | Managerial Support | Workload | Role Clarity | Autonomy | Coping Strategies |
|--------------------|---------|--------------------|----------|--------------|----------|-------------------|
| Burnout            | 1.00    | -0.45              | 0.52     | -0.48        | -0.41    | -0.33             |
| Managerial Support | -0.45   | 1.00               | -0.36    | 0.59         | 0.51     | 0.44              |
| Workload           | 0.52    | -0.36              | 1.00     | -0.40        | -0.32    | -0.28             |
| Role Clarity       | -0.48   | 0.59               | -0.40    | 1.00         | 0.48     | 0.36              |
| Autonomy           | -0.41   | 0.51               | -0.32    | 0.48         | 1.00     | 0.29              |
| Coping Strategies  | -0.33   | 0.44               | -0.28    | 0.36         | 0.29     | 1.00              |

**Predictors of Employee Burnout: Regression Analysis**

Results of the multiple linear regression analysis showed that Workload ( $\beta = 0.31, p < 0.001$ ) was the strongest positive predictor of burnout, while Role Clarity ( $\beta = -0.29, p < 0.001$ ), Managerial Support ( $\beta = -0.27, p < 0.001$ ), and Organizational Justice ( $\beta = -$

$0.24, p = 0.001$ ) significantly reduced the burnout scores. The overall model was statistically significant ( $F(5, 414) = 79.62, p < 0.001$ ) and accounted for 63.2% of the variance in burnout (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.632$ ), indicating strong reliability and predictive power of the model mentioned in Table 3.

Table 3: Regression Analysis of Burnout Predictors

| Predictor              | B     | Standard Error (SE) | Beta ( $\beta$ ) | p-value |
|------------------------|-------|---------------------|------------------|---------|
| Managerial Support     | -0.28 | 0.06                | -0.27            | 0.000   |
| Workload               | 0.34  | 0.07                | 0.31             | 0.000   |
| Role Clarity           | -0.30 | 0.05                | -0.29            | 0.000   |
| Autonomy               | -0.22 | 0.06                | -0.22            | 0.002   |
| Organizational Justice | -0.25 | 0.06                | -0.24            | 0.001   |

**Burnout Levels Across Occupational Sectors**

Sector-wise breakdown of burnout scores showed that Healthcare staff had the highest burnout ( $M = 3.9$ ), followed by Education ( $M = 3.8$ ) and Finance ( $M = 3.7$ ). The lowest levels were found in the manufacturing sector ( $M = 3.5$ ), illustrated in Figure

1. These patterns reflect a widespread occupational stress in service-based industries and highlight the need for burnout prevention programs tailored to specific industries and resource allocation.

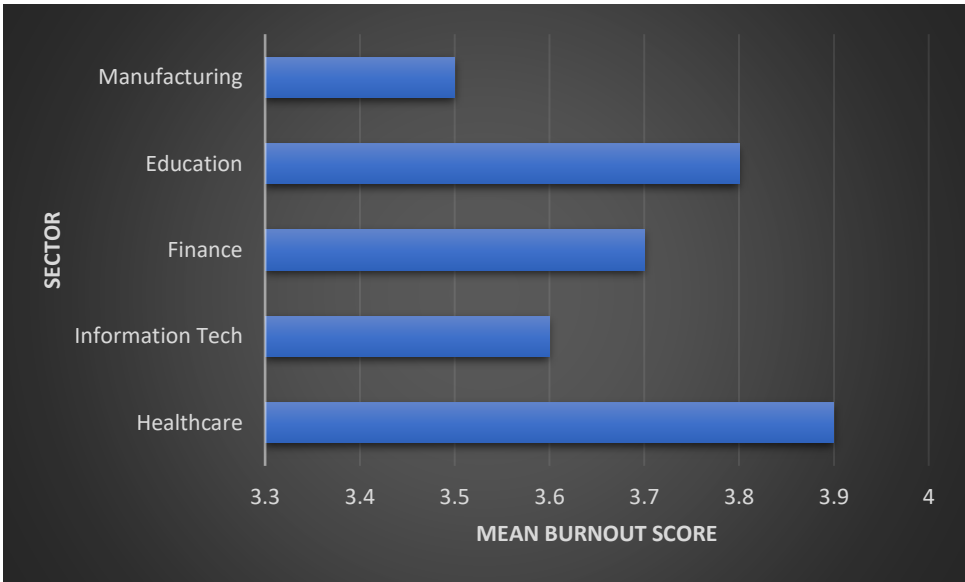


Figure 1: Mean Burnout Scores by Sector

### Frequency of Coping Strategy Utilization

The results of the analysis of coping strategies indicated that the employees mainly applied Active Coping ( $M = 4.3$ ) and Planning ( $M = 4.1$ ), which are problem-focused strategies. In contrast, Substance Use ( $M = 1.9$ ) and Denial ( $M = 2.1$ ) were the least

used. Adaptive strategies were favoured, and this implied that moderate levels of emotional intelligence and stress management ability were moderated by environmental support variables presented in Figure 2.

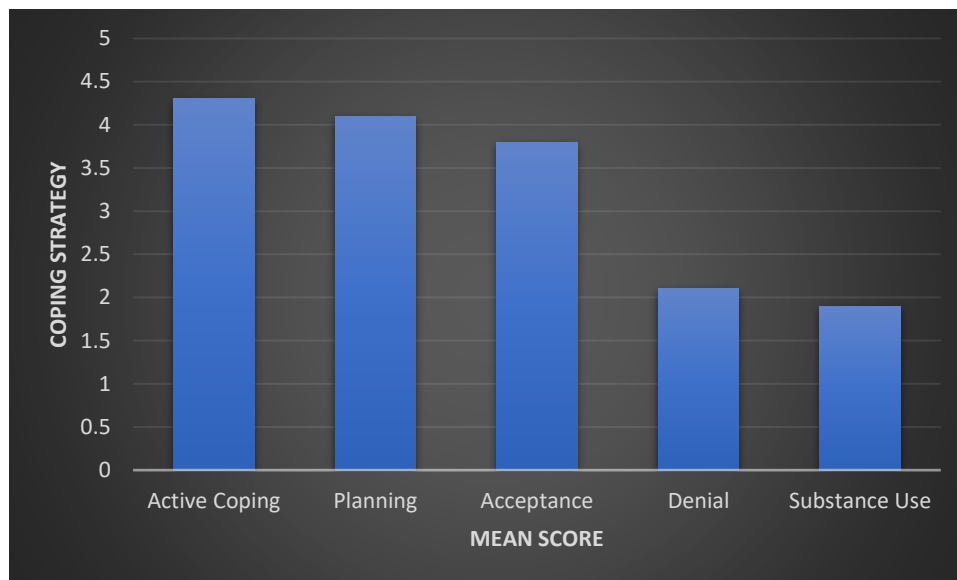


Figure 2: Coping Strategy Usage Frequency

### Association Between Workload and Burnout

Perceived workload is positively related to burnout scores, and this is a linear relationship. Regression plot indicated that the Workload scores were significantly positively related to the Burnout scores

as the Workload scores rose ( $r = 0.52$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The appearance of this trend was reinforced by the statistical result that workload is a major predictor of psychological strain in the workplace and that workload should be addressed through policy and role restructuring, as shown in Figure 3.

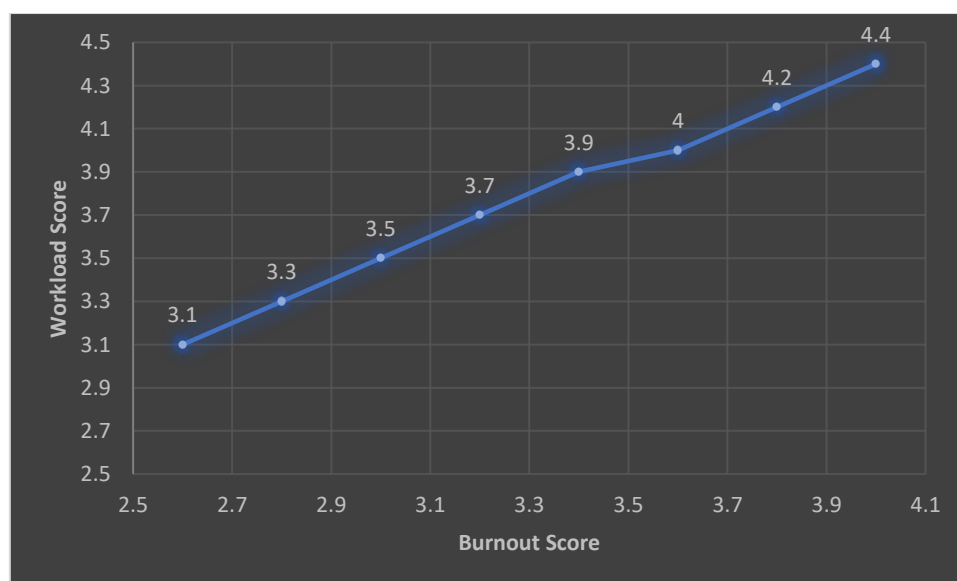


Figure 3: Relationship Between Workload and Burnout

## DISCUSSION

The primary objective of the research was to determine how environmental factors in the workplace affect employee burnout and how employees cope with the situation. We discovered that workload, managerial support, and role clarity are significant workplace factors that determine the level of burnout and coping mechanisms. Also, the findings indicated that sector-specific stressors appear to play a significant role in burnout, and the employees in the healthcare and education sectors were the most emotionally depleted. These results are consistent with the available literature that indicates that work-related stress is connected to the environment and coping strategies of a person.

The most predictive factor of burnout was workload, and the same was also reported in the previous literature (Maslach and Leiter, 2016). For instance, high job demand, as reported by Schaufeli et al. (2009), was also associated with emotional exhaustion. The study findings also conformed to the JD-R model, according to which high job demands (e.g., workload) result in burnout unless buffered by job resources (e.g., managerial support, role clarity) (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). The results of this study show that clearer roles and managerial support, as workplace tools, can lessen the effect of work-related stressors on burnout.

There was also the relationship between burnout and coping mechanisms, in which employees used more adaptive coping mechanisms (active coping and planning) and fewer maladaptive ones (denial and substance use). According to Carver (1997), these findings are consistent with the idea that adaptive coping can reduce the negative effects of stress. The use of problem-focused coping strategies by employees resulted in lower burnout scores, consistent with the idea that adaptive coping can buffer the negative effects of high job demands. Yet, the lack of maladaptive strategies in this study may be a reporting bias or a function of cultural preference for adaptive coping (Spector et al., 2007).

Moreover, the differences in the burnout scores by sector that are presented in the study are also pronounced. The healthcare sector experienced the greatest level of burnout, followed by education and

finance. This follows studies conducted by Maslach and Leiter (2016), who indicate that healthcare professionals are more prone to burnout since they are placed under the emotional pressure of their work. The education and social service fields have also been identified to have high levels of emotional labour requirements of their employees that result in burnout (Kovner et al., 2007). On the other hand, manufacturing workers had the fewest burnout cases, possibly related to the fact that their jobs are not as emotionally demanding as in other sectors, such as healthcare or education. This brings out the necessity of certain interventions to react to the particular stressors that the sector has, which the employees are subjected to.

The second method through which burnout moderation was attained was through coping strategies. Consequently, the research demonstrated that the workers who reported that they received more managerial support and more different roles were more likely to use adaptive coping styles. This follows the study by Halbesleben (2006) that indicated that organisational justice and managerial support at the workplace are resources that enhance active coping and reduce burnout. This research shows a positive correlation between workplace support and adaptive coping, implying that organisations that value the well-being of employees and clearly define role expectations can help employees to be resilient and reduce the chances of burnout.

Regarding the findings, much stress is put on the role played by the clarity and organisational justice interventions in reducing burnout. This follows a previous study by Karatepe and Uludag (2008) that established that employees who perceived their jobs as clear and in a work environment that was fair had less burnout. Findings of this research point to the fact that workers who had a clearer view of their job requirements and believed that the resources were shared equally experienced less emotional fatigue and were more involved in the workplace. It therefore means that organisations must develop roles that are more specific and that employees perceive the policies of the organisation as fair and just to curb burnout.

Moreover, the research also found that workload was the most accurate predictor of burnout, as other studies have found workload to be a significant cause of burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2009). Workload scores ( $M = 2.89$ ) in this research are high, and therefore, the authors recommend workload management to be a major strategy in alleviating burnout among organisations. Relaxing work demands could be done by redistributing work, flexi-time, or rest, all of which may be applicable. Such interventions would relieve some pressure on the psyche of the employees, prevent the risk of burnout, and work better.

Moreover, it discussed how coping can be used to reduce the effects of burnout. The findings indicated that the adaptive coping strategies were the most common, and the correlation between burnout and coping was not direct. Employees using maladaptive coping (denial) had reduced chances of reporting burnout: they might have simply underreported their symptoms of burnout, or they avoided it psychologically. This demonstrates that coping and burnout are complex phenomena, and the maladaptive patterns of coping in others can obscure the true extent of burnout.

There is an implication of the research on organisational practice. This was to a large extent to reduce the workload and maximise role clarity and managerial support to reduce burnout. Moreover, employees may be allowed to attend training programmes that may enable them to manage stress through enhancing adaptive coping skills, including problem-solving and time management. Employee assistance programmes and peer mentoring can also be utilised to help the employee in a bid to reduce burnout by providing workers with the tools they need to manage their stress healthily.

Lastly, this study validates the fact that workplace environmental factors such as workload, role clarity, and managerial support are significant predictors of burnout. The research also demonstrates that coping is very significant in alleviating burnout effects, and the adaptive coping strategies are the

most useful. The most important areas that organisations can utilise to deal with burnout are the reduction of workloads, role clarification, and adaptive coping. Further studies in the future can be done on further sector-specific interventions and those cultural aspects that are contributing to the coping and burnout in emerging economies such as India.

## CONCLUSION

The research findings established that the environmental factors at the workplace influence employee burnout and the coping strategies used by employees. The findings indicated that workplace factors, including workload, managerial support, and role clarity, played a pivotal role in the determination of burnout levels. Workload was the most predictive and positively correlated ( $r = 0.52$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and therefore organisations need to work on workload management as one of the strategies for reducing burnout. In addition, adaptive coping strategies like active coping ( $M = 4.3$ ) and planning ( $M = 4.1$ ) were noted to be more employed by employees who had a greater level of workplace support, meaning that such employees are more likely to cope with their stress. The levels of burnout differences in the sector also bring out the requirement for sector-specific intervention. The highest levels of burnout were reported by those who worked in healthcare ( $M = 3.9$ ), those in education ( $M = 3.8$ ), and finance ( $M = 3.7$ ). It was also found that managerial support ( $M = 3.75$ ) and encouraging role clarity ( $M = 4.12$ ) are some of the strategies that would be used in curbing burnout. The results also highlighted the importance of coping strategies in reducing the negative effects of burnout. Maladaptive coping strategies, including using substances, were not common ( $M = 1.9$ ), and adaptive coping strategies were correlated with burnout negatively ( $r = -0.33$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Finally, the results of the study give a broad understanding of the interactions between workplace environment, burnout, and coping; actionable insights for organisations to promote well-being and productivity at work.

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