

Understanding employee burnout: The interplay between workload and non-physical work environment

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ABSTRACT

Employee burnout has become a critical issue in organizational settings, particularly in companies facing increasing job demands and dynamic work environments. This study aims to examine the effect of workload and non-physical work environment on employee burnout at PT Kalimas Kharisma Banjarmasin, both partially and simultaneously. Employing a quantitative research approach, primary data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to 82 employees selected using the Slovin formula. The data were analyzed using statistical techniques with SPSS software. The results indicate that workload has a positive and significant effect on employee burnout, suggesting that excessive or poorly managed workloads contribute substantially to physical and emotional exhaustion. In contrast, the non-physical work environment shows a negative but statistically insignificant effect on burnout, indicating that although psychosocial aspects such as interpersonal relationships and communication may help reduce burnout, their independent influence is relatively weak. Simultaneously, workload and non-physical work environment have a significant effect on employee burnout. These findings imply that effective workload management is essential to mitigate burnout, while efforts to foster a supportive, safe, and comfortable non-physical work environment can strengthen relationships between supervisors and subordinates and enhance overall employee well-being.

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1. Introduction

Human resources (HR) represent one of the most valuable assets of an organization, providing indispensable contributions to the achievement of organizational objectives. According to Darwianis et al. (2022), organizations must implement effective human resource management practices to create conditions that encourage and enable the development of employee quality. Unlike other organizational resources, human resources possess unique characteristics, as individuals bring diverse thoughts, emotions, and personal attributes into the workplace. Consequently, employees are susceptible to experiencing work-related fatigue, which may lead to discomfort, psychological pressure, and emotional strain (Bultmann et al., 2002; Lee et al., 2014). Prolonged exposure to such pressures can render employees irrational, tense, and ineffective in performing their duties, ultimately resulting in burnout.

Burnout is defined as a condition of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion arising from prolonged exposure to stress and high emotional demands (Robbins & Judge, 2022). Burnout is not merely a symptom of work pressure; rather, it is a serious condition resulting from unmanaged or excessive job stress. This condition emerges when employees perceive persistent pressure from work demands, such as overwhelming tasks, strained relationships with supervisors or colleagues, and dissatisfaction with compensation that does not meet expectations. Individuals who initially experience burnout are often those

who are highly enthusiastic, energetic, optimistic, and strongly committed to achieving excellence. Such conditions are commonly observed among employees working within organizational environments (Galanakis & Tsitouri, 2015; Nerstad et al., 2019). Therefore, this study seeks to examine employee burnout through two critical factors: workload and the non-physical work environment.

According to Erna & Johansyah (2020), workload assessment is a crucial aspect of organizational management, as workload reflects the intensity of job assignments and constitutes a major source of employee stress. Workload can be classified into physical and mental workload. Physical workload relates to physiological demands such as noise, vibration, and workplace hygiene. Poor working conditions combined with insufficient staffing levels may lead to excessive physical workload, which in turn contributes to work stress and burnout.

Workload is defined as a series of tasks or activities that must be completed by employees within a specified period. When employees are capable of completing and adapting to assigned tasks, these demands do not constitute a workload burden (Hlado & Harvankova, 2024; Kawada et al., 2024). However, when employees are unable to meet such demands, tasks transform into excessive workload. Supporting this view, Ahmadi et al. (2022) and Kinanti et al. (2025) explain that excessive workload results in physical and mental fatigue, manifesting in symptoms such as headaches, digestive disorders, and irritability. Moreover, excessive workload can lead to job dissatisfaction (Devi et al., 2025). Conversely, insufficient workload can also be problematic, leading to boredom, monotony, reduced attention, and declining performance.

Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates a strong relationship between workload and burnout among employees. Darwianis et al. (2022) found that excessive workload significantly increases employee burnout, indicating that when job demands exceed employees' physical and psychological capacities, prolonged stress and exhaustion are likely to occur. High workloads require sustained effort, reduce recovery time, and intensify pressure to meet performance targets, all of which contribute to emotional exhaustion and decreased work engagement.

These findings are reinforced by Sitinjak & Nastiti (2022), who similarly reported a positive and significant effect of workload on burnout. Their study highlights that employees facing continuous task overload and tight deadlines are more vulnerable to experiencing physical fatigue, mental strain, and emotional depletion. Workload is a critical predictor of burnout, as excessive job demands consistently place prolonged physical and psychological pressure on employees, leading to emotional exhaustion and reduced work effectiveness. Therefore, effective workload management is essential to prevent long-term psychological distress, declining job performance, and broader occupational health problems that may negatively impact both employees and organizational sustainability. In addition, balanced workload allocation enables employees to maintain resilience, job satisfaction, and sustained productivity over time (Alzoubi et al., 2024; Diehl et al., 2021; Meliani et al., 2024).

Overall, empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that excessive workload is a significant predictor of employee burnout. When employees face high job demands without adequate resources or recovery, the imbalance leads to sustained psychological and emotional strain, ultimately resulting in burnout. This relationship has been observed across different occupational contexts, including healthcare, banking, and general organizational settings. For example, research found that workload positively and significantly influences burnout among healthcare workers, indicating that excessive demands contribute directly to emotional exhaustion and burnout syndrome (Alfiansyah & Adi, 2024). Similarly, a quantitative study of banking employees in the commercial sector reported that higher workload is associated with increased levels of burnout, highlighting the role of job demands in shaping employee well-being (Rhamadhan et al., 2025). In the industrial context, research by found a clear relationship between workload and burnout among employees, suggesting that increased organizational performance expectations and associated task demands can elevate burnout risk (Mumtaz & Purwanto, 2024). Together, these studies reinforce the conclusion that excessive workload—when demands exceed an employee's capacity to cope—leads to burnout across diverse work settings and populations.

In addition to workload, the non-physical work environment is another important determinant of burnout (Akbar et al., 2022; Guan, 2021; Molnar et al., 2024). The non-physical work environment is widely understood to include the patterns of communication and interpersonal relationships between supervisors and subordinates, which shape how work is coordinated, understood, and experienced in organizations. In healthy work environments, supportive leadership helps clarify expectations, encourages employee voice and participation, and strengthens trust, all of which contribute to better psychological well-being and work

outcomes for employees. Research in organizational communication and leadership consistently finds that supportive supervisor behaviour enhances information flow, employee engagement, and role clarity, thereby improving both individual and organizational performance. For example, studies show that when supervisors provide supportive leadership and clear communication, employees are more likely to participate in organizational discourse and feel empowered to contribute ideas (e.g., supportive leadership predicts employee voice behaviour). Additionally, effective communication competence by supervisors has been identified as a key predictor of positive employee outcomes such as engagement, empowerment, and accomplishment, highlighting the importance of interpersonal exchange in shaping a constructive non-physical work environment (Kaur & Randhawa, 2021; Lin et al., 2025; Nizam, 2022).

Burnout-related issues have also been identified at PT Kalimas Kharisma Banjarmasin. Based on interviews with several employees, burnout is prevalent due to high job demands, particularly the pressure to meet aggressive sales targets and complete tasks within strict deadlines. These demands result in high workloads that contribute to both physical and mental exhaustion. PT Kalimas Kharisma operates as a distributor and marketer of Wings Group products, serving modern and traditional markets across Banjarmasin and extending distribution to Kuala Kapuas, Central Kalimantan. Further interviews revealed that employee workload at PT Kalimas Kharisma Banjarmasin remains excessively high. Employees reported insufficient working hours relative to demanding performance targets and high work volumes, often requiring overtime beyond scheduled working hours. The lack of adequate rest time exacerbates fatigue and contributes to burnout.

In addition to workload pressures, the non-physical work environment also contributes to burnout at PT Kalimas Kharisma Banjarmasin. High task demands reduce opportunities for social interaction among employees, particularly as many staff members spend substantial time working outside the office for product delivery and customer acquisition. This situation leads to limited interpersonal familiarity, feelings of awkwardness, and boredom among employees.

Although many studies have examined workload and the non-physical work environment in relation to employee burnout, several gaps still exist. Most previous research focuses on sectors such as healthcare, banking, and manufacturing, while sales and distribution companies, especially in regional Indonesia, receive little attention. In addition, earlier studies often analyze workload and the work environment separately, even though employees experience both at the same time. Few studies also consider real workplace conditions such as long working hours, limited social interaction, and communication problems. Therefore, this study is important because it examines the combined effects of workload and the non-physical work environment on employee burnout at PT Kalimas Kharisma Banjarmasin in a specific organizational context.

Based on the foregoing background, this study aims to examine the extent to which workload and the non-physical work environment influence employee burnout at PT Kalimas Kharisma Banjarmasin. The findings of this research are expected to provide valuable insights for management in formulating effective strategies to mitigate burnout and improve employee well-being. Moreover, this study is expected to provide sector-specific empirical evidence from the consumer goods distribution and marketing industry, a context that has received far less attention than healthcare, education, or manufacturing. Additionally, the study extends burnout theory by demonstrating how the relative importance of job demands versus psychosocial factors varies by industry, offering more context-sensitive insights for managing employee well-being in consumer goods distribution firms.

2. Research Method

This study adopts a quantitative approach with an associative research design to examine the causal relationship between workload, non-physical work environment, and employee burnout at PT Kalimas Kharisma Banjarmasin. Workload and non-physical work environment are treated as independent variables, while burnout serves as the dependent variable. The research aims to identify both partial and simultaneous effects of the independent variables on burnout using statistical analysis.

The population of this study consists of 282 employees of PT Kalimas Kharisma Banjarmasin. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula, resulting in 82 respondents. A probability sampling technique was employed to ensure that each employee had an equal chance of being selected. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed directly to respondents, with responses measured on a Likert scale to capture perceptions regarding workload, non-physical work environment, and burnout.

Workload was measured using indicators of working conditions, utilization of working time, and work targets to be achieved, while the non-physical work environment was measured through relationships among co-workers, relationships between supervisors and employees, and employee cooperation. Burnout was assessed using indicators of physical exhaustion, emotional exhaustion, mental exhaustion, and low personal accomplishment. The burnout instrument is built on established burnout theory, The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (1981), which defines burnout as consisting of exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment, and these dimensions are reflected in the indicators of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion as well as low personal accomplishment used in this study. By aligning each questionnaire item with these theoretically grounded dimensions, the instrument ensures that burnout is captured as a comprehensive psychological syndrome rather than a single symptom. In addition, this alignment strengthens construct validity, allowing the measured scores to accurately represent employees' overall burnout experiences.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS, incorporating validity and reliability tests, classical assumption tests, and multiple linear regression analysis, followed by t-tests and F-tests at a 5% significance level to test the proposed hypotheses. Before distributing the questionnaires, validity and reliability tests were carried out to confirm that the research instrument was both accurate and consistent. After the data were collected, multiple regression analysis was employed to evaluate the effects of compensation, work commitment, and work communication on employee loyalty. Furthermore, classical assumption tests, including tests for normality, heteroscedasticity, and multicollinearity, were conducted to ensure that the data met the requirements for regression analysis, thereby strengthening the credibility and robustness of the study's statistical findings.

3. Result and Discussion

Prior to questionnaire distribution, validity and reliability testing were performed to ensure the adequacy of the research instrument. The results of the validity test indicate that the calculated correlation coefficients (r-count) for all questionnaire items exceed the r-table value of 0.444, confirming that all items are valid. Moreover, the reliability test shows that the Cronbach's Alpha values are 0.806 for workload, 0.821 for the non-physical work environment, and 0.678 for burnout. Since all values surpass the minimum reliability threshold of 0.60, the instrument can be considered reliable.

In addition, classical assumption tests were conducted to evaluate the appropriateness of the data for regression analysis. The normality test using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov method produced a significance value of 0.061, which is greater than 0.05, indicating that the data are normally distributed. The multicollinearity test revealed tolerance values above 0.10 and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values below 10.00, demonstrating that multicollinearity is not present in the regression model. Furthermore, the heteroscedasticity test results indicate no heteroscedasticity symptoms, suggesting that the regression model satisfies the required assumptions and is suitable for reliable estimation. Furthermore, the results of regression tests are displayed in the tables below:

Table 1. Result of partial test

		Coefficients ^a				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	17.265	6.920		2.495	.015
	Workload	.618	.192	.343	3.226	.002
	Non-Physical Work Environment	-.236	.206	-.122	-1.143	.257

a. Dependent Variable: Burnout

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 1 presents the results of the partial (t-test) analysis examining the influence of workload and the non-physical work environment on employee burnout. The dependent variable in this model is burnout, while workload and the non-physical work environment function as independent variables. The unstandardized coefficients (B) indicate the direction and magnitude of the effect of each independent variable on burnout, whereas the standardized coefficients (Beta) reflect the relative strength of each predictor. The t-values and significance (Sig.) levels are used to test the proposed hypotheses.

The results show that workload has a positive and significant effect on burnout ($B = 0.618$; $t = 3.226$; $\text{Sig.} = 0.002$). Since the significance value is below the 0.05 threshold, the hypothesis stating that workload significantly influences burnout is accepted. The positive coefficient indicates that an increase in workload leads to a corresponding increase in employee burnout. The standardized coefficient ($Beta = 0.343$) further suggests that workload is the stronger predictor in the model compared to the non-physical work environment. Substantively, this finding implies that excessive task demands, limited time allocation, and high performance targets place psychological and physical strain on employees, increasing exhaustion and reducing their sense of personal accomplishment.

This finding implies that organizations must carefully manage task demands, work intensity, and time pressure to reduce the risk of emotional exhaustion and psychological strain among employees. Consistent with previous studies, such as Diehl et al. (2021), Rotenstein et al. (2023), Xiong et al. (2024) and Alzoubi et al. (2024), excessive workload has been shown to be a key driver of burnout across various occupational sectors. Therefore, from a managerial perspective, implementing effective workload distribution, realistic performance targets, and adequate resource support is crucial to mitigating burnout and promoting employee well-being, job satisfaction, and long-term organizational performance.

In contrast, the non-physical work environment does not have a significant effect on burnout ($B = -0.236$; $t = -1.143$; $\text{Sig.} = 0.257$). Because the significance value exceeds 0.05, the hypothesis proposing a significant influence of the non-physical work environment on burnout is rejected. Although the negative coefficient indicates a tendency for better interpersonal relationships, communication, and cooperation to reduce burnout, this effect is statistically insignificant. This result suggests that, in the studied context, social interactions and relational aspects of the workplace are not sufficient on their own to mitigate burnout when employees face high workload pressure.

Previous studies have shown mixed findings, where the non-physical work environment plays a complementary rather than central role in explaining burnout. For example, Raziq & Maulabakhsh (2015) found that a positive non-physical work environment contributes to employee well-being and reduces work-related stress, while other studies suggest that its impact on burnout becomes more significant when combined with high job demands. Therefore, organizations should continue to foster a supportive social and relational work climate, while prioritizing workload management as a more critical strategy for preventing employee burnout.

Overall, the findings indicate that workload is the primary determinant of burnout, while the non-physical work environment does not independently influence burnout at a significant level. This implies that managerial efforts to reduce burnout should prioritize workload management—such as task allocation, realistic target setting, and adequate rest periods—while improvements in the non-physical work environment may serve as a complementary but not decisive factor in alleviating employee burnout. Additionally, the findings suggest that psychosocial conditions do not independently override workload effects, but they interact with and contextualize how job demands are experienced. In practical terms, high workload creates the primary pressure, while the psychosocial environment can either intensify or buffer its impact, highlighting the need for integrated interventions that manage both task demands and workplace relationships.

Table 2. Result of simultaneous test

		ANOVA ^a				
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	172.088	2	86.044	5.455	.006 ^b
	Residual	1246.022	79	15.772		
	Total	1418.110	81			

a. Dependent Variable: BURNOUT

b. Predictors: (Constant), WORKLOAD, NON-PHYSICAL WORK ENVIRONMENT

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table ANOVA presents the results of the simultaneous significance test (F-test) used to examine whether workload and the non-physical work environment jointly influence employee burnout. In this model, burnout is treated as the dependent variable, while workload and the non-physical work environment serve as the independent variables.

The ANOVA results show that the regression sum of squares is 172.088, while the residual sum of squares is 1,246.022, with a total sum of squares of 1,418.110. These values indicate that a portion of the variation in employee burnout can be explained by the independent variables included in the model. The model yields an F-statistic of 5.455 with a significance value (Sig.) of 0.006, which is well below the 0.05 threshold.

Based on this result, the hypothesis stating that workload and the non-physical work environment simultaneously have a significant effect on employee burnout is accepted. Statistically, this means that the regression model is fit and that, when considered together, the two independent variables significantly explain variations in burnout levels among employees.

Furthermore, the consistency of the workload–burnout relationship across work contexts is supported by both the findings of this study and prior empirical evidence from diverse occupational sectors. In this study, workload was found to have a positive and statistically significant effect on burnout ($B = 0.618$; $p = 0.002$), indicating that employees at PT Kalimas Kharisma Banjarmasin experience higher burnout as their workload increases. This result aligns with previous research conducted in different industries, including healthcare, service, and industrial sectors. For example, as Diehl et al. (2021) and Rotenstein et al. (2023) documented that heavy workloads significantly increase burnout among healthcare workers, while Xiong et al. (2024) found similar effects in general organizational settings. Likewise, and Alzoubi et al. (2024) showed that excessive workload elevates burnout by reducing recovery time and increasing job strain in industrial and occupational environments. The convergence of these findings across multiple sectors demonstrates that workload is a robust and universal predictor of burnout, reinforcing the claim that the workload–burnout relationship is consistent across different work contexts.

Substantively, this finding implies that burnout cannot be viewed as the result of a single factor in isolation. Instead, it emerges from the combined influence of job demands and the psychosocial work environment. Although the partial test shows that workload is the dominant and significant predictor, the simultaneous test confirms that the overall work context—encompassing both task-related pressures and interpersonal or relational conditions—plays an important role in shaping employees' burnout experiences. Therefore, organizational interventions aimed at reducing burnout should adopt a comprehensive approach, prioritizing workload regulation while also maintaining a supportive non-physical work environment to enhance the overall effectiveness of burnout prevention strategies.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that workload has a positive and significant effect on employee burnout at PT Kalimas Kharisma Banjarmasin, indicating that excessive job demands and time pressure contribute directly to physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion among employees, while the non-physical work environment shows a negative but statistically insignificant effect on burnout. Simultaneously, workload and the non-physical work environment significantly influence burnout, confirming that job demands and psychosocial conditions together play an important role in shaping employee well-being. These findings imply that organizational efforts to manage burnout should prioritize workload control through realistic target setting, balanced task allocation, and adequate staffing, while continuously maintaining a supportive non-physical work environment characterized by effective communication, cooperation, and healthy superior–subordinate relationships. Additionally, the company should set realistic work targets, limit excessive overtime, and regularly review employee workloads. A formal rest and recovery policy should be applied, including minimum rest hours and task rotation for employees with heavy assignments. Although the non-physical work environment is not a strong direct predictor, supportive communication between supervisors and employees should be strengthened to help detect and manage stress early. Therefore, management is advised to regularly evaluate job assignments, ensure sufficient rest periods, and strengthen interpersonal relations through team-building activities and leadership development programs.

For future research agenda, it is suggested to examine how workload and psychosocial factors interact over time rather than studying them separately. Future studies should use longitudinal and multilevel approaches to analyze how factors such as leadership support, teamwork, job control, and organizational climate can weaken or strengthen the impact of heavy workload on burnout. By combining objective indicators of work demands with employees' perceptions of their social and psychological work environment, researchers can better explain why employees facing similar workloads experience different

levels of burnout. This approach will provide a more accurate and practical understanding of how work demands and workplace relationships jointly shape employee well-being.

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