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Study of Workplace Stressors as Contributing Factors in Shaping Turnover Intentions of Frontline Employees During Times of Uncertainty

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ABSTRACT

Purpose-Grounded on the Conservation of Resource Theory (COR), the study explored the indirect effect of customer incivility, abusive supervision, COVID-19, disruption in work-life balance, and career growth opportunities on employee turnover intent through the mediating role of job stress.

Design/methodology/approach-Target population for this study was the front-line employees working at the major international airports of Pakistan and 258 valid responses were taken for mediation analysis through Partial Least Square (PLS) method. Factor analysis, composite reliability, model fitting summary, and discriminant validity were also assessed.

Findings-Results depicted that the worker's job stress completely mediates between customer incivility and turnover intentions. The same was the case when supervisor incivility, disruption in work-life balance, and career growth were taken as independent variables. But no mediation effect of job stress was found between COVID-induced stress and employee turnover intentions.

Practical Implication-Study highlights the contributing factors of employee job stress and implies the necessity of special training programs for employees and supervisors to better manage these stressors.

Originality/Value-The study contributes to the lack of literature on front-line employees working at airports where various factors including the pandemic are evaluated in terms of their impact on turnover intentions.

Keywords: Workplace Incivility; COVID Induced Stress; Disruption in Work-Life Balance; Career Growth; Job Stress; Turnover Intentions

1. INTRODUCTION

Stress is an aspect of human life and is cited as a communal problem in today's world (Salari et al., 2020). Over the years, the literature related to job stress has gained the

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attention of management researchers because it poses severe undesirable effects on individual workers and ultimately on the overall business (S. Kim et al., 2022). Among others, one major consequence of job stress is employee turnover (Huang et al., 2018). This turnover can be enormously expensive for the organization and every so often can be considered as its highest cost (Malek et al., 2018). This is a significant cost for a business and an important metric to measure performance related to human resource management (Li et al., 2022). In this context, several recent studies in the literature attempted to evaluate employee stress in the hotel business (Aguar-Quintana et al., 2021; Baum et al., 2020; H. S. Jung et al., 2021). Few studies were also found where authors examined job stress for airline crew members (S. Kim et al., 2022). However, similar endeavors for front-line ground staff in aviation are limited. Despite the grave consequences of the turnover rate highlighted above and the importance of ground staff in providing quality services to passengers (Shah et al., 2020), research specifying the job stressors of frontline employees working at the airports and its impact on their turnover intentions is limited – an important gap which the current study intends to fill.

As cited by Jiang and Shen (2018), employee turnover is a situation in which an employee willingly and deliberately ceases to be a member of an organization. Many other scholars similarly defined the term. In a detailed qualitative study, Arokiasamy (2013) attributed this turnover to voluntary (i.e., when employees separate from an organization on their own), involuntary (i.e., when the employer decides to terminate the employment contract), avoidable (i.e., something that an organization can prevent through motivating employees) and unavoidable (i.e., employee's life decisions which are beyond employer's control. But, the emphasis of the current study is the 'turnover intention' which is voluntary and reflects the attitude of an employee towards the organization (Jiang & Shen, 2018). More importantly, these intentions are the declaration of a specific behavior of interest and an accurate indication of a subsequent behavior (K. F. E. Wong & Cheng, 2020). So the literature on human behavior in an organization setting asserts that turnover intention is one of the immediate precursors of the employee leaving the organization.

Job stress is among the major causes which lead to employees' intentions to quit the

job (Liyanage et al., 2014). The nexus between work stress and turnover intentions is positive as a greater amount of stress will increase the employee's intentions to leave the company (Applebaum et al., 2010; Arshadi & Damiri, 2013; M.-F. Chen et al., 2011). Many others also cited the higher employee turnover as a negative outcome of workplace stress (Hatzinikolakis & Crossman, 2010; E. S.-T. Wang, 2014).

This stress arises because of the mismatch between perceived job demands and the worker's ability to fulfill them (M.-F. Chen et al., 2011; Williams et al., 2010). The situation gets worst when this mismatch is a constant occurrence (Tziner et al., 2015; Urien Angulo & Osca Segovia, 2013). More specifically, as cited by A. K. F. Wong et al. (2021), job stress is the worker's cognizance or sensation of disfunction as a consequence of perceived circumstances in the job setting. On the contrary, O'Brien and Beehr (2019) categorized job stress into two types i.e., 'challenge related' which leads to the desirable outcome, and 'hindrance related' which leads to the undesirable outcome. But, the focus of this research is the type of stress that has undesirable consequences on worker turnover intent.

Employee stress and their intent to leave the company relate closely (Fong & Mahfar, 2013) and may be impacted by several external and internal factors including job demands (Van der Heijden et al., 2018), influence of supervisor (Kuehnl et al., 2019) and work-life equilibrium (Irawanto et al., 2021). In current research, abusive passenger behavior is studied as one of the external stressors that ultimately affects the intent of an employee to switch the job (Bamfo et al., 2018). Now, as COVID has caused a substantial effect on the stress of front-line employees impacting their intentions to leave a particular occupation (Northington et al., 2021), so this outside factor is also considered in current research. On the other hand, the study also incorporated supervisor incivility (Tews & Stafford, 2020; Xu et al., 2018), disruption in work-life disbalance due to the unfavorable nature of the job (Sirgy & Lee, 2018), and career growth opportunities provided by the organization (Huo, 2021) the absence of which may add up to the stress, as internal stressors that influence the turnover intentions of front-line employees working at major airports of Pakistan who are responsible for check-in and boarding of airline passengers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theory

Conservation of Resource (COR) provides a theoretical foundation for this study as it is often utilized in organizational psychology literature to explain employee behavior in a variety of stressful circumstances (Hobfoll et al., 2018). This theory posits that individuals' behavior for actively seeking ways to retain the resources that they value and finding ways to create new resources (Hobfoll, 1989). As cited by Chua et al. (2022), these resources can be objects, conditions, personal characteristics, and symbolic values. Stress is triggered when individuals perceive or face the loss of such resources which ultimately leads to their preventive behavior towards such loss (Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993).

2.2. Customer Incivility

Interchangeably used as abusive customer behavior, dysfunctional customer conduct (J. Kim et al., 2018), or deviant customer behavior (J. H. Jung & Yoo, 2019), customer incivility is a deliberate act on behalf of customers that violates the commonly accepted norms of mutual respect and courtesy in a working environment (H. Kim & Qu, 2019). Some other common terms found in the literature for this type of behavior of customers are aberrant customer behavior (Hwang et al., 2021) and jay-customer behavior (G. Kim et al., 2014).

Wide-ranging research was found in existing literature where authors evaluated the various impacts of customer incivility on front-line employees through several different mediators. In a qualitative study, Bamfo et al. (2018) evaluated the impact of abusive customer behavior on bank tellers' intentions to leave the company through the mediating role of employee satisfaction. On similar grounds, G. Kim et al. (2014) found an increased level of job stress due to customer incivility which in turn led to lower job satisfaction working in the hospitality industry. Moreover, recent research in Korea reported a positive effect of customer abusive behavior and job stress on employees' intent to quit (H. Chung et al., 2021). A similar Korean study was conducted on restaurant employees and found a significant impact of three types of jay-customers behavior on employee stress leading to decreased job satisfaction (Bi et al., 2021). On the

other hand, Huang et al. (2018) used three stress coping strategies in their research model hypothesizing their diminishing impact on occupational stress and assuming the positive relation between stress and quitting intents of hotel industry personnel in China.

Related to the aviation industry, E. K. Chung et al. (2017) studied the arbitrating role of satisfaction between stress and turnover of airport security screening staff working at two Korean airports. In a cross-sectional research conducted on airline employees, Cho et al. (2014) identified a rapport between role stressors and employee turnover but their research included all levels of passenger-contact employees working at airports and in head offices hence lacking focus. Recent research in Pakistan studied the impact of unmannerly customer behavior on bank managers' intent to quit by using three mediators including job stress (Kashif et al., 2017). They recommended including other stressors as well to study employee turnover. Moreover, no research was found where the impact of uncivil behavior of airline passengers on quitting intentions of passenger-contact staff working at the airports of Pakistan or in any other country was evaluated, especially considering the intervening role of job stress. So, the following hypotheses were formulated to fill this gap:

H₁: *Taking job stress as a mediator, the incivility of airline passengers significantly contributes to the turnover intentions of front-line staff.*

H_{1a}: *Incivility of airline passengers significantly contributes to turnover intentions of front-line staff.*

H_{1b}: *Incivility of airline passengers significantly contributes to the stress of front-line staff.*

2.3. Supervisor Incivility

Supervisor incivility or 'abusive supervision' is subjective and can be defined as the perception of the sub-ordinate about the extent of aggressive verbal and non-verbal behavior from their supervisors (Ali et al., 2022). In an empirical research conducted on Taiwanese bank employees, M.-F. Chen et al. (2011) evaluated a nexus among seven core job characteristics including supervisor support with employees turnover intentions through job stress but 70% of respondents were specified as clerks and the authors did not specify the rest. Likewise, Liyanage et al. (2014) hypothesized the interceding role of

occupational stress between supervisor backing and quitting intentions of sewing machine operators in Sri Lanka. In recent research that was focused on the nursing staff operating in government hospitals, Faheem et al. (2022) found that observable and unobservable workplace incivility strongly influences turnover intentions. Moreover, a study conducted in UAE found that abusive supervision has an adverse effect on the capacity of front-end restaurant workers to achieve customer satisfaction through the mediating role of employees' silent behavior (Al-Hawari et al., 2020). In a similar industry, Tews and Stafford, (2020) also reported the impact of supervisor's incivility on the turnover intentions of 'front-of-house' restaurant employees. Moreover, Bai et al. (2022) studied the impact of abusive supervision on employees' performance which is of slight relevance to the current study as the authors selected Chinese airline service employees. Another research was done on South Korean flight attendants where the authors found a mediating effect of job insecurity between supervisors' abuse and service performance (Y. Shin et al., 2022). But no research was found where the authors studied the mediating role of job stress between supervisors' incivility and turnover intents of front-line employees responsible for check-in and boarding of airline passengers at the airports. So, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H₂: *Taking job stress as a mediator, the supervisor's incivility significantly contributes to turnover intentions of front-line staff.*

H_{2a}: *Supervisor's incivility significantly contributes to turnover intentions of front-line staff.*

H_{2b}: *Supervisor's incivility significantly contributes to the stress of front-line staff.*

2.4. COVID Induced Stress

In recent times, COVID-19 has drastically changed the work environment resulting in disruption to the service industry (Northington et al., 2021). This paradigm shift added a layer of stress on front-line employees (Voorhees et al., 2020). In the retail sector, Mayer et al. (2022) found a relationship between workers' perception of unsafe workplaces due to COVID-19 on higher rates of stress. In the context of the airline industry, D.-J. Shin et al. (2021) found that COVID-induced stress increased the turnover intentions of employees working in two airlines i.e., Korea Air and Asiana, and their

research involved employees who were working in the reservation, ticketing, sales services, airport services, and in-flight services hence lacking the focus. But they suggested validating this effect in other contexts. In this area, no research was found in existing literature where COVID induced stress was evaluated in terms of its impact on airport employees' job stress and ultimately to their quitting intentions. Hence, following hypotheses were proposed to fill this gap:

H₃: *Taking job stress as a mediator, COVID-induced stress significantly contributes to turnover intentions of front-line staff.*

H_{3a}: *COVID-induced stress significantly contributes to turnover intentions of front-line staff.*

H_{3b}: *COVID-induced stress significantly contributes to the overall job stress of front-line staff.*

2.5. Disruption in Work-Life Balance

The disruption between work and life balance is created when long working hours and high work demands become the norm and a balance between work and life decreases the turnover intentions and psychological strain (Adriano & Callaghan, 2020). Studies found a relationship between work-life balance, employee satisfaction, and well-being (Haar et al., 2014). Another research found a significant effect of work-life balance and stress on employees' turnover intentions (Giauque et al., 2019). In relevance to the model proposed in the current study, Boamah and Laschinger (2016) found a significant mediating effect of job burnout between work-life balance and turnover intentions of nurses. Similarly, Liyanage et al. (2014) found that job stress mediates the impact of work-life balance and turnover intentions of machine operators. In the context of aviation industry and in close similarity to the current study, C.-F. Chen and Kao (2011) investigated the impact of work-life balance on turnover intentions of flight attendants of Taiwanese airlines through the role of job stress. Moreover, they recommended establishing the predictive validity of their model across other contexts and industries. Also, the existing literature lacks research related to frontline employees working at airports. So, the current study filled this gap in literature by proposing the following hypotheses:

H₄: *Taking job stress as a mediator, disruption in work-life balance significantly contributes to turnover intentions of front-line staff.*

H_{4a}: *Disruption in work-life balance significantly contributes to turnover intentions of front-line staff.*

H_{4b}: *Disruption in work-life balance significantly contributes to the stress of front-line staff.*

2.6. Career Growth

Career growth has conversed in the literature as the perception of an employee about the chances of advancement and development that this employee has within the organization (Q. Wang et al., 2022). A lack of career growth in an organization for an employee who desired it leads to stress (Cooper & Cartwright, 2018). For this lack of growth, the term ‘Career Plateauing’ (Yang et al., 2019) is used in literature and found researchers found its impact on employees' intentions to quit (Yang et al., 2018). On the other hand, the provision of career growth opportunities (e.g., promotion) is negatively associated with employee turnover intentions (Dodanwala & Santoso, 2022).

Similar to the current study, Biswakarma (2016) put promotion and remuneration into one latent variable career growth, and found its direct negative relation with turnover intentions. In Pakistan, Umar et al. (2016) demonstrated that career growth opportunities play a major role in overcoming turnover intentions of management professionals working in the pharmaceutical industry. In a similar setting, Ohunakin et al. (2018) hypothesized a negative relation between career growth opportunities and turnover intentions of faculty members but with the mediating effect of organizational commitment. So, in this context, the existing literature lacks research on the airport employees' turnover intentions impacted by the career growth opportunities mediated by job stress. To fill this gap, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H₅: *Taking job stress as a mediator, the provision of career growth opportunities significantly counteracts the turnover intentions of front-line staff.*

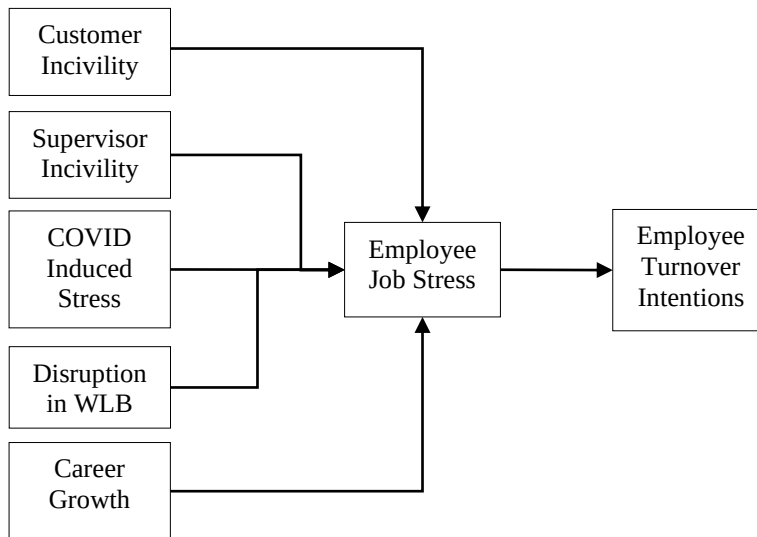
H_{5a}: *Provision of career growth opportunities significantly counteracts the turnover intentions of front-line staff.*

H_{5b}: *Provision of career growth opportunities significantly counteracts the stress of front-line staff.*

Based on these hypotheses, the current study proposed a model (See Figure 1) in which job stress is acting as a mediating factor between five selected independent variables and turnover intentions of front-line staff handling check-in and boarding of airline passengers at the airports.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model



3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sampling and Data Gathering

By taking a convenient sample, data was collected from 324 respondents through a self-administered questionnaire. After initial screening, 258 valid responses were used for further analysis which is under an acceptable limit (Hair et al., 2014). Data analysis was conducted through Smart PLS 3.0. Moreover, to avoid selection bias of non-probability sampling (Buelens et al., 2018), responses were collected at six major international airports i.e., 39 (15%) from Allama Iqbal International Airport, 92 (35%) from Islamabad International Airport, 30 (12%) from Jinnah International Airport, 47 (18%) from Multan International Airport, 30 (12%) from Faisalabad International Airport and 20 (8%) from

Sialkot International Airport. The respondents of this study were the front-line employees of airlines and ground handling companies working in the capacity of passenger handling (i.e., check-in and boarding) at these six designated airports. After handling the missing data, the final analysis included the responses of 173 males (67%) and 85 females (33%). Most of the participants i.e., 208 (81%) were of age between 25-44 and 185 (72%) of the total respondents have a graduate degree.

3.2. Survey Instrument

For this research, the appropriate scales were adopted from the existing literature to warrant high validity and reliability. In accordance with the number of constructs used in the current study, the questionnaire was separated into seven segments. Customer incivility (CI) comprised ten items and supervisor incivility (SI) which contained five items was borrowed from the study of Y. Shin et al. (2021). For COVID-induced stress (CIS), a five-item scale was borrowed from Northington et al., (2021). Moreover, out of ten question items used by Dex and Bond (2005), seven were adopted in the current study to measure disruption in work-life balance (DWLB). Three items were skipped due to their lack of relevance. Career growth (CG) which included promotion speed and remuneration growth was measured through six items (Weng et al., 2010). Furthermore, nine items were espoused by Jamal and Baba (1992) to measure employee job stress (EJS). Lastly, employee turnover intentions (ETI) were measured through four question items (H. S. Jung et al., 2021). Questions to measure CI were anchored to ‘within the past one month, how often how passengers...’ and a sample item was ‘... used an inappropriate manner of addressing you (e.g., Hey you)’? Moreover, a sample question statement to measure SI was ‘my immediate supervisor ridicules me’. For CIS, anchored statement was ‘how concerned are you about...’ and an exemplar indicator for this variable is ‘...bringing COVID-19 home to someone in family from work’. One sample question to measure DWLB was ‘my family is missing out on my input, either because I don’t see enough of them, or I am too tired’. Additionally, ‘my promotion speed in the present organization is fast’, ‘my job gets to me more than it should’ and ‘I sometimes feel compelled to quit my job in my current workplace’ were the sample question items for CG, EJS, and ETI respectively.

A seven-point Likert scale (where 1 equal ‘strongly disagree’ and 7 equals ‘strongly agree’) was used for SI, CG, EJS, and ETI while a five-point Likert scale was used to assess CI where 1 equal ‘never’ and 5 equals ‘very often’. Similarly, CIS was measured on five points but here, 1 equal ‘causes me no concern’ and 5 equals ‘causes me great concern’. Lastly, DWLB was measured with a three-point Likert scale where 1 equal ‘disagree’ and 3 equals ‘agree’.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

To test the internal consistency for all seven scales, values of Cronbach’s Alpha were considered. For all the constructs used in this study, these values were greater than 0.8 (See Table 1) which showed high internal consistency (Bonett & Wright, 2015; Taber, 2018). Further to this, Composite Reliability (CR) was tested grounded on the interrelation among the observed variables. These values vary from zero to one and all the values greater than 0.7 aligned with the acceptable standards (Hair, 2014). Moreover, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all the study variables was above 0.5 which showed that the variance explained by a variable is more than the variance due to error (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In continuation to this, using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, discriminant validity was tested by taking the square root of AVE and comparing them with the co-relation of the latent constructs (Ab Hamid et al., 2017). According to Hair (2014), the square root of AVE for each construct should have a greater value than the correlations with other latent constructs which was the case in the current study. These results can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1

Validity and Reliability

	CIS	CG	CI	DWLB	EJS	ETI	SI	Cronbach	CR	AVE
CIS	(0.779)							0.899	0.884	0.607
CG	0.108	(0.847)						0.922	0.939	0.718
CI	-0.071	-0.223	(0.812)					0.942	0.951	0.659
DWLB	0.286	0.149	0.179	(0.814)				0.915	0.932	0.663
EJS	-0.054	-0.225	0.574	0.343	(0.803)			0.921	0.936	0.645
ETI	-0.152	-0.161	0.238	0.1	0.495	(0.833)		0.855	0.900	0.694
SI	-0.194	-0.21	0.671	0.081	0.612	0.332	(0.857)	0.910	0.932	0.734

Note: CI: Customer Incivility, EJS: Employee Job Stress, ETI: Employee Turnover Intentions, SI: Supervisor Incivility, CIS: COVID-Induced Work Stress, DWLB: Disruption in Work-life Balance, CG: Career Growth

Moreover, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was also done which depicted a strong factor loading (Hair et al., 2014) as all items were loaded above 0.7 (See Table 2). Along with the standard loadings, values of mean and standard deviation are also mentioned in the same table.

Table 2*Measurement Model*

Customer Incivility	SL	Mean	SD
CI1	0.820	3.419	1.295
CI2	0.809	3.457	1.279
CI3	0.839	3.353	1.339
CI4	0.825	3.264	1.465
CI5	0.806	3.453	1.439
CI6	0.798	3.078	1.434
CI7	0.768	3.252	1.495
CI8	0.807	3.097	1.365
CI9	0.845	3.221	1.395
CI10	0.794	3.043	1.376
Supervisor's Incivility			
SI1	0.887	3.012	2.014
SI2	0.920	2.837	1.912
SI3	0.769	2.465	1.58
SI4	0.771	2.519	1.602
SI5	0.922	2.837	1.906
COVID Induced Stress			
CIS1	0.758	3.562	1.504
CIS2	0.771	3.612	1.478
CIS3	0.965	3.078	1.583
CIS4	0.694	3.322	1.415
CIS5	0.674	3.333	1.419
Disruption in Work-life Balance			
DWLB1	0.713	2.190	0.848
DWLB2	0.840	1.946	0.852
DWLB3	0.812	2.085	0.845
DWLB4	0.822	2.085	0.889
DWLB5	0.844	2.213	0.857
DWLB6	0.804	2.109	0.865
DWLB7	0.855	2.074	0.866
Career Growth			
CG1	0.877	3.488	1.531

CG2	0.804	3.729	1.740
CG3	0.847	3.516	1.629
CG4	0.861	3.45	1.659
CG5	0.861	3.601	1.770
CG6	0.832	3.403	1.638
Employee Job Stress			
EJS1	0.769	3.795	1.961
EJS2	0.829	3.841	1.903
EJS3	0.833	3.919	1.879
EJS4	0.824	3.527	1.933
EJS6	0.845	3.829	1.933
EJS7	0.802	4.124	2.010
EJS8	0.745	3.907	1.963
EJS9	0.774	3.496	1.945
Employee Turnover Intentions			
ETI1	0.844	3.019	1.920
ETI2	0.891	2.822	1.888
ETI3	0.853	3.504	2.262
ETI4	0.736	4.314	2.285

4.1. Structural Model

In a research framework, the structural model reflects the hypothesized paths and is assessed based on the significance of these paths and through the values of R^2 and Q^2 . The goodness of fit for the model is determined by the R^2 values of the dependent variables (Briones Peñalver et al., 2018) which should be greater than 0.1 (Falk & Miller, 1992). The R^2 values for both dependent variables in the model are greater than 0.1 (See Table 3) hence establishing the predictive power of the model. Moreover, to state the predictive relevance of endogenous variables, the value of Q^2 should be above 0 (Gim et al., 2015) and the results shown in Table 3 satisfy this condition. In addition, the model was also tested by using the Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR) which is below the required value of 0.10 (Aresi et al., 2018) indicating the acceptable model fit.

To further assess the goodness of fit, all hypothesized paths were tested to determine the significance of their relationships. H_{1a} assesses whether CI significantly contributes to ETI. The results showed that this impact is not significant and not positive ($\beta = -0.115$, $t = 1.524$, $p = 0.064$) hence H_{1a} is not supported. Similarly, H_{2a} evaluates the impact of SI on ETI, and the result revealed that this impact is insignificant ($\beta = 0.064$, $t = 0.665$, $p =$

0.253) so H_{2a} is also not supported. H_{3a} states that CIS significantly contributes to ETI, but the result did not support this hypothesis as well ($\beta = -0.105$, $t = 0.973$, $p = 0.165$). H_{4a} postulates a positive impact of DWLB on ETI but the results showed otherwise ($\beta = -0.026$, $t = 0.339$, $p = 0.367$). H_{5a} assesses that CG significantly counteracts ETI. The result showed that although the impact is negative, yet it is insignificant ($\beta = -0.048$, $t = 0.741$, $p = 0.229$). H_{1b} evaluates whether CI significantly contributes to EJS, and the result supported this hypothesis ($\beta = 0.212$, $t = 3.419$, $p < 0.05$). On similar grounds, H_{2b} states that SI significantly contributes to EJS, and the result supported the same ($\beta = 0.411$, $t = 6.873$, $p < 0.05$). Additionally, H_{3b} assesses whether there is a significant effect of CIS on EJS, and the result showed otherwise ($\beta = -0.032$, $t = 0.553$, $p = 0.290$). Also, H_{4b} states that there is a significant positive impact of DWLB on EJS and the results supported this hypothesis ($\beta = 0.301$, $t = 5.342$, $p < 0.05$). Moreover, H_{5b} proposes that there is a significant negative impact of CG on EJS, and the results in Table 3 showed the same ($\beta = -0.132$, $t = 2.961$, $p < 0.05$). Finally, H_6 evaluates whether there is a significant positive impact of EJS on ETI. The results showed the same ($\beta = 0.515$, $t = 6.158$, $p < 0.05$) hence H_6 is supported.

In addition to this, Table 3 is also indicating lower and upper-level (bias-corrected) confidence intervals at 10,000 bootstrapping. A confidence interval different from zero shows a significant relation (Hayes, 2022). These outcomes are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Path Coefficients and Model Fit

Paths	β	SD	t-Value	p-Values (at 95% confidence)	Confidence Intervals Bias Corrected	
					5.0%	95.0%
CI $\rightarrow$ ETI	-0.115	0.075	1.524	0.064	-0.236	0.013
SI $\rightarrow$ ETI	0.064	0.096	0.665	0.253	-0.098	0.219
CIS $\rightarrow$ ETI	-0.105	0.108	0.973	0.165	-0.222	0.083
DWLB $\rightarrow$ ETI	-0.026	0.077	0.339	0.367	-0.140	0.108
CG $\rightarrow$ ETI	-0.048	0.065	0.741	0.229	-0.150	0.062
CI $\rightarrow$ EJS	0.212	0.062	3.419	0.000	0.108	0.313
SI $\rightarrow$ EJS	0.411	0.060	6.873	0.000	0.311	0.508
CIS $\rightarrow$ EJS	-0.032	0.059	0.553	0.290	-0.118	0.079

DWLB → EJS	0.301	0.056	5.342	0.000	0.198	0.384
CG → EJS	-0.132	0.045	2.961	0.002	-0.203	-0.054
EJS → ETI	0.515	0.084	6.158	0.000	0.373	0.650
SRMR = 0.081						
R² = 0.508 for EJS, R² = 0.270 for ETI						
Q² = 0.318 for EJS, Q² = 0.171 for ETI						

4.2. Mediation Analysis

Mediation analysis was performed by using Smart PLS 3 to evaluate the positive and significant impact of Customer Incivility (CI) on Employee Turnover Intentions (ETI) through the mediating role of Employee Overall Job Stress (EJS). The results showed a significant indirect effect of CI on ETI (H_1 : $\beta = 0.109$, $t = 3.209$, $p < 0.05$). Whereas the total effect of CI on ETI ($\beta = -0.005$, $t = 1.504$, $p = 0.474$), and with the inclusion of mediator (EJS), the direct effect of CI on ETI ($\beta = -0.115$, $t = 1.504$, $p = 0.066$) were both insignificant. This supports H_1 and establishes a full mediation effect (See Table 4).

Table 4.

Hypothesis Testing

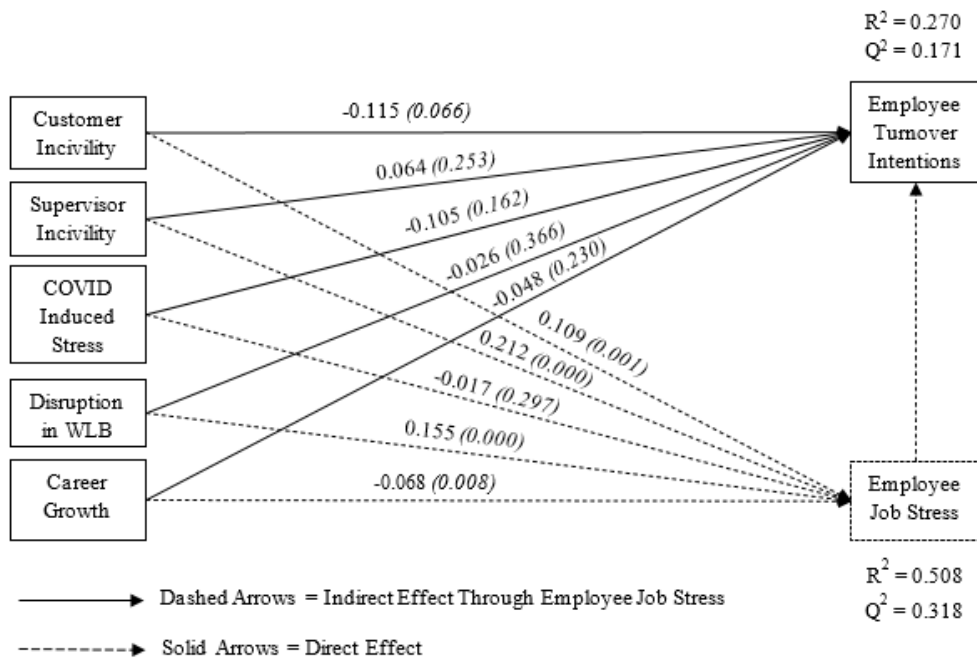
Total Effect			Direct Effect			Indirect Effect						Decision
Coeff.	t-value	Sig.	Coeff.	t-value	Sig.	Coeff.	SE	t-value	Sig.	Percentile Bootstrap 95% Confidence Interval		
										LCL	LCL	
H ₁ : CI→EJS→ETI											Full Mediation	
-0.005	0.064	0.474	-0.115	1.504	0.066	0.109	0.034	3.209	0.001	0.059		0.171
H ₂ : SI→EJS→ETI											Full Mediation	
0.276	3.329	0.000	0.064	0.666	0.253	0.212	0.053	3.968	0.000	0.131		0.306
H ₃ : CIS→EJS→ETI											No Mediation	
-0.122	1.075	0.141	-0.105	0.985	0.162	-0.017	0.031	0.534	0.297	-0.063		0.041
H ₄ : DWLB→EJS→ETI											Full Mediation	
0.129	1.739	0.041	-0.026	0.342	0.366	0.155	0.041	3.824	0.000	0.092		0.223
H ₅ : CG→EJS→ETI											Full Mediation	
-0.116	1.826	0.034	-0.048	0.740	0.230	-0.068	0.028	2.432	0.008	-0.117		-0.025

To assess the mediating role of EJS between Supervisor Incivility (SI) and turnover intentions of staff (ETI), H_2 was tested. The result shown in Table 4 illustrates a significant indirect effect of SI on ETI (H_2 : $\beta = 0.212$, $t = 3.968$, $p < 0.05$). The total effect of SI on ETI was also significant ($\beta = 0.276$, $t = 3.329$, $p < 0.05$) and with the inclusion of mediator (EJS), the direct effect of SI on ETI became insignificant ($\beta = 0.064$, $t = 0.666$, $p = 0.253$). This shows that employee job stress fully mediates between supervisor incivility and employee turnover intentions.

H_3 was tested to evaluate the impact of COVID-induced stress at work (CIS) on ETI through the mediating role of EJS. The result showed an insignificant indirect effect of CIS on EJS (H_3 : $\beta = -0.017$, $t = 0.534$, $p = 0.297$). Hence, employee job stress does not mediate between CIS and ETI (See Table 4)

Testing of H_4 revealed that there was a significant indirect effect (H_4 : $\beta = 0.155$, $t = .824$, $p < 0.05$) of Disruption in Work-life Balance (DWLB) on Employee Turnover Intentions (ETI) through EJS. Whereas the total effect of DWLB on ETI ($\beta = 0.129$, $t = 1.739$, $p < 0.05$) was significant as well. But with the inclusion of EJS in the path, the direct effect ($\beta = -0.026$, $t = 0.342$, $p = 0.366$) became insignificant. This evidence supports H_4 and concludes that there is a full mediation effect of EJS between DWLB and ETI.

Lastly, H_5 was tested to ascertain the significant negative impact of Career Growth (CG) of employees in the company on their Turnover Intentions (ETI) through the mediating role of EJS. The results showed a small significant indirect effect of CI on EJS (H_5 : $\beta = -0.068$, $t = 2.432$, $p < 0.05$) through EJS. The total effect of CG on ETI was also significant ($\beta = -0.116$, $t = 1.826$, $p < 0.05$). But, with the inclusion of a mediator (EJS), the direct effect became insignificant ($\beta = -0.048$, $t = 0.740$, $p = 0.230$) hence proving a full mediation in this path. The results are also summarized in Table 4. Moreover, the direct and indirect effects of independent variables on employee turnover intentions along with their p-values (in parenthesis) are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2*Path Summary*

5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Adding to the existing literature, the study evaluated the direct and indirect (through the mediation of job stress) effects of five different work-related factors on the turnover intentions of front-line employees working at the airport. For managers of ground-handling companies, this research highlights various job stressors and their impact size on employee turnover. While assessing the direct effects between the constructs used in the research model, supervisor incivility was found to have a leading impact on employee job stress (i.e., 41%) followed by disruption in work-life balance (30%) and customer incivility (20%). The study provides empirical evidence that the abusive behavior of supervisors adds up the most to employee job stress hence underlining the specific areas of the workplace environment that needs improvement. In line with the findings of H. Chung et al. (2021), the results of the current study also highlight the psychological role of supervisors in lowering the stress of their employees. The study also implies the need

of developing a training mechanism (Havlovic & Keenan, 2020) for employees to acknowledge and manage the five job-related stressors highlighted in this study.

It was also found that all the independent variables did not have a significant direct impact on employee turnover intention, but these effects became significant when job stress was added as a mediator except in the case of COVID-induced stress. Surprisingly, COVID-induced stress at work was found to be negatively associated (though insignificant) with job stress which is contradictory to what is cited in the existing literature (Mayer et al., 2022; Voorhees et al., 2020). One probable reason can be the fact that the data was collected in the first half of the year 2022 and the mass vaccination may have reduced the fear of COVID (Sun et al., 2022). On the other hand, the reduced passenger flights during peak times of the pandemic (Shrestha et al., 2020) may have caused this effect in the minds of front-line employees handling passenger check-in and boarding. Future research may further explore this negative relation.

Another area for future researchers may be to add combined family income (Minnotte & Yucel, 2018) as a moderator to see if low income changes the strength of the relationship between job stress and turnover intentions. Moreover, the role of co-workers' abusive behavior (Geldart et al., 2018) along with the two types of incivilities discussed in this research may also be an intersecting area for future research. On the other hand, Team-Member-Exchange (Meng et al., 2019) can also be incorporated into the proposed model to see its moderating effect between stress and turnover intentions in time uncertainty like this. Lastly, future researchers may also extend the literature by validating the model used in this study in other geographical areas and in other service industries where front-line employees face job stress.

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