

The Role of Job Demands on Burnout with Resilience as a Moderator in Headhunters

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Abstract

Headhunters face high job demands, increasing the risk of burnout due to prolonged work-related stress. Job demand includes physical, emotional, and cognitive efforts, while burnout is a psychological condition resulting from chronic workplace stress. Resilience refers to an individual's capacity to cope with stress while maintaining normal functioning. This study explores the relationship between job demand and burnout among headhunters and examines the moderating role of resilience. This is a quantitative survey approach was used with 154 headhunters from recruitment companies in Jakarta with at least one year of experience. Convenience sampling was applied, and data were collected using adapted versions of the Burnout Assessment Tool, the Job Demands-Resources Questionnaire, and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale. The result is Job demand significantly and positively affects burnout among headhunters. Resilience moderates this relationship, with a moderation effect of 0.0150 ($p < 0.001$). Conclusion: Higher resilience levels help mitigate the negative impact of job demand on burnout. Recruitment companies should develop interventions to enhance resilience, reducing burnout risk and improving productivity.

Keywords: *Job Demand, Burnout, Resilience, Headhunter.*



A. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era of globalization and intensified business competition, the role of headhunters has become pivotal for companies seeking to recruit highly qualified individuals for strategic positions. The profession demands not only the capacity for meticulous analysis in evaluating candidates but also the ability to cultivate effective communication, fostering relationships with both clients and candidates. However, despite its significance, the profession of headhunting is often associated with elevated levels of job demands, which may result in burnout.

A more profound comprehension of this issue was obtained through a concise interview with a headhunter operating in Jakarta. The interviewee expounded on the notion that each profession is characterized by a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which are benchmarks that employees must meet to demonstrate their performance in accordance with company standards. In the domain of headhunting, key performance indicators (KPIs) encompass metrics such as the quantity of curriculum vitae (CVs) disseminated to clients within a stipulated timeframe, sales targets, and recruitment targets. The interviewee indicated that the KPIs established by their company were particularly challenging, resulting in an augmented workload and escalated psychological pressure among employees.

Moreover, the interviewee observed that elevated KPI demands can result in certain staff members experiencing symptoms of burnout, including emotional exhaustion and feelings of inadequacy in meeting job expectations. In some cases,

employees opt to resign. Furthermore, employees who demonstrate a failure to meet the requisite Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets are placed in a Personal Improvement Program (PIP) for a designated period. In the event of continued underperformance, the employees are requested to voluntarily relinquish their positions, a development that serves to intensify the psychological pressure experienced by the headhunters involved. The interviewee posits that individuals exhibiting low resilience appear to be more susceptible to burnout, as they demonstrate an inability to effectively cope with stress or recuperate from setbacks. The necessity of cultivating the capacity to effectively manage occupational stress was underscored as a pivotal factor in the maintenance of a career in this professional domain.

This phenomenon suggests that headhunters are highly susceptible to burnout due to the demanding nature of their job. Job demand, in this context, refers to the aspects of a job that require sustained physical, emotional, and cognitive effort, including workload. The workload is comprised of two dimensions: task demands and emotional demands. The demands of a task are classified into three categories: cognitive demands, temporal demands, and performance demands. Cognitive demand refers to the mental and perceptual activities required for completing tasks, including decision-making in the job. Temporal demand is defined as the number of tasks that must be completed and the speed at which they are executed. Performance demand can be defined as the procedures or requirements necessary to complete a task, as well as the level of responsibility involved. Conversely, emotional demand is defined as the extent to which a job induces anxiety or stress (López-Núñez et al., 2020).

The role of the headhunter entails the management of client-candidate relationships, the acquisition of new clients for the purpose of business development, the comprehension of clients' recruitment requirements, the preparation of job advertisements, the screening and interviewing of candidates, the provision of interview reports to clients, the monitoring of the recruitment process from the initial client interview to the candidate's placement, and the preparation of invoices for recruitment fees.

The high demands of the profession, as evidenced by the act of headhunting, can be explained through the framework of job demand theory. Individuals engaged in the practice of headhunting are subject to a range of demands that extend across the domains of cognition, time management, and performance evaluation. In the domain of headhunting, cognitive demand encompasses the identification and evaluation of candidates as well as the formulation of precise recruitment decisions. The temporal demands of the position entail the completion of multiple tasks within stringent time constraints, including the scheduling of interviews and the preparation of recruitment reports. Performance demand entails significant responsibility in meeting client procedures and expectations while ensuring client satisfaction. Furthermore, emotional demand is of significant importance, as headhunters frequently encounter stress and pressure to meet recruitment and sales targets while

overseeing a variety of expectations from clients and candidates. The successful fulfillment of these demands necessitates a balanced integration of cognitive abilities, effective time management, and emotional resilience. The inability to effectively manage these demands has been shown to heighten the risk of burnout among headhunters.

The psychological phenomenon of burnout among headhunters is rooted in excessive job demands in the workplace. A brief interview conducted with ten headhunters revealed that all of them had experienced burnout at some point in their careers due to the high job demands imposed by their companies. Beyond the demands of their professional roles, external stressors that were beyond their control also contributed to the development of burnout. For instance, even when a headhunter successfully identifies a candidate who meets the client's stated qualifications, the client may reject the candidate based on subjective preferences. Another uncontrollable factor is the prolonged hiring process by clients, which conflicts with candidates' need for rapid job placement. In instances where the hiring process is protracted, candidates may be inclined to accept offers from competing firms that offer comparable compensation packages. Consequently, headhunters often fail to achieve recruitment and sales targets. The recurrence of such situations can result in protracted stress, which can ultimately lead to burnout.

Employee burnout has been shown to have various negative consequences for both individuals and organizations. In January 2022, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially recognized burnout in the 11th revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as a syndrome resulting from chronic job stress that has not been successfully managed (WHO, 2019). Research by Lastovkova et al. (2018) examined burnout across eight European countries and further classified burnout as an occupational disease. According to Maslach & Leiter (2016), burnout is defined as a psychological experience caused by prolonged exposure to interpersonal stress in the workplace. Burnout is characterized by three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). A substantial body of research has previously identified a series of adverse consequences associated with burnout, including immune system suppression, memory impairment, cardiovascular diseases, poor sleep quality, and substance abuse (Cui et al., 2021; Sandström et al., 2005; Toker et al., 2012; Vela-Bueno et al., 2008; Oreskovich et al., 2015). Burnout has been shown to have adverse effects on organizations, including increased turnover rates, reduced productivity, and elevated rates of absenteeism and presenteeism (Kelly et al., 2021; Dyrbye et al., 2019; Leitão et al., 2021; Demerouti et al., 2009).

Research by Medeiros da Silva et al. (2023) suggests that resilience can moderate the impact of burnout. Resilience is defined as an individual's capacity to cope with stress and adversity while maintaining normal psychological and physical functioning (Wu et al., 2013). Resilience is a component of psychological capital (PsyCap) and a form of personal resource within the Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) model. According to Bardoel et al. (2014), resilience facilitates employees' ability to

cope with difficulties. Rutter (1986) further elaborates that resilience facilitates employees' achievement of homeostasis during periods of high emotional intensity, thereby enabling them to maintain productivity and efficiency. Medeiros da Silva et al. (2023) discovered that resilience plays a substantial role in moderating burnout levels among employees, thereby corroborating earlier studies that have investigated resilience as a moderator of burnout.

A multitude of studies have examined burnout across various professions, including automotive sales professionals, external auditors, teachers, and hospital nurses (Augustin et al., 2021; Danudoro et al., 2021; Moisoglou et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2022). However, research on burnout among headhunters remains scarce, despite the high job demands of this profession. Furthermore, an examination of the role of resilience in mitigating burnout offers valuable insight into the essential resources available to employees facing elevated job demands.

The objective of this study is to investigate the prevalence of burnout among headhunters, with a focus on the impact of elevated job demands. Additionally, the study seeks to examine the potential moderating effect of resilience in reducing the adverse consequences of burnout. A quantitative approach will be employed, utilizing a survey method that will be executed by headhunters from various recruitment firms. The respondents will be asked to complete questionnaires designed to assess job demands, burnout, and resilience. The data will be analyzed using multiple regression analysis to ascertain the relationship between job demand and burnout and to test the moderating effect of resilience. The findings of this study are expected to provide new insights into how resilience can help headhunters manage high job demands and reduce the risk of burnout.

It is anticipated that this research will contribute meaningfully to two primary domains. From an academic perspective, this study will address a significant gap in the existing literature on the subject of burnout among headhunters. The profession of headhunting is characterized by substantial job demands, yet it remains a field that has received comparatively little research attention. This study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge by addressing this research gap. The findings on resilience as a moderator of burnout will also contribute to the existing body of knowledge on workplace stress management. In practice, the results can assist recruitment firms in developing training programs and interventions that focus on enhancing employee resilience. By implementing these measures, organizations can enhance their capacity to assist employees in managing occupational demands, mitigate the risk of burnout, and thereby promote enhanced overall productivity and job satisfaction.

B. METHOD

This study employed a non-experimental design with a quantitative approach to examine the role of job demand in burnout, with resilience as a moderating variable among headhunters. The quantitative approach was selected because it allows for systematic and objective measurement of the examined variables and enables

statistical analysis to identify relationships between variables accurately (Creswell, 2012).

A total of 154 participants took part in the study. The demographic data collected included gender, age, educational background, marital status, years of work experience, and job level or position. The majority of respondents were female, comprising 73.4% of the total sample, while male respondents accounted for 26.6%. In terms of educational background, most respondents held a bachelor's degree (S1), representing 77.3% of the sample. Meanwhile, 20.1% had an associate degree (D3), and only 2.6% had a master's degree (S2), making it the smallest group in this category.

Regarding marital status, 61% of respondents were single, while 39% were married. In terms of work experience, the largest group had more than two to three years of experience (30.52%), followed by those with one to two years (27.7%), more than three to four years (25.97%), more than four to five years (9.09%), and more than five years (7.14%). For job levels, most respondents were at the Recruitment Consultant (Middle Level) position, making up 46.8% of the sample. This was followed by Senior Recruitment Consultants (27.9%) and Associate Recruitment Consultants (Junior Level), who had the lowest representation at 25.3%. The participants' ages ranged from 22 to 52 years, reflecting a diverse distribution of age groups.

The study utilized three validated psychological instruments to measure burnout, job demand, and resilience. Burnout was assessed using the Indonesian adaptation of the Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT), developed by Schaufeli (2020) and translated into Indonesian by Roswani (2021). This instrument consists of 20 positive and 3 negative items. An example of a positive item is, "When working, I feel mentally exhausted," while a negative item example is, "After a full day of work, I find it easy to recover my energy." Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("Never") to 5 ("Always"). The reliability of this instrument, as indicated by Cronbach's Alpha, was 0.931, demonstrating high internal consistency.

Job demand was measured using the Indonesian adaptation of the Job Demands-Resources Questionnaire, developed by Bakker (2014) and translated into Indonesian by Roswani (2021). This instrument comprises 18 positive and 5 negative items. An example of a positive item is, "I have to work quickly," whereas a negative item states, "I have plenty of time to complete my responsibilities." Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, and the instrument demonstrated strong internal consistency with a Cronbach's Alpha reliability of 0.870.

Resilience was assessed using the Indonesian adaptation of the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), originally developed by Connor and Davidson (2003) and adapted for the Indonesian population by Prawita and Heryadi (2023). This instrument consists of 25 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale. An example item is, "I keep going even when the situation seems hopeless." The instrument demonstrated good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's Alpha reliability of 0.897.

The data analysis in this study was conducted using JAMOVI software. To assess the reliability and validity of the measurement instruments, several statistical tests were employed. Internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, which demonstrated high reliability for all scales: Job Demand ($\alpha = 0.870$), Burnout ($\alpha = 0.942$), and Resilience ($\alpha = 0.897$). Item reliability was further examined through item-rest correlations, ensuring that each item contributed meaningfully to the overall scale. Construct validity was assessed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), with factor loadings ranging from 0.155 to 1.085. Although most items exhibited strong loadings, one item had a relatively low factor loading (0.155), suggesting potential weaknesses in representing its intended construct.

Since the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated non-normal data distribution ($p < 0.05$), non-parametric statistical methods were applied. Spearman's correlation analysis was used to examine relationships between variables, revealing significant positive correlations between Job Demand and Burnout ($\rho = 0.419$, $p < 0.001$) and between Job Demand and Resilience ($\rho = 0.272$, $p < 0.001$). However, the correlation between Burnout and Resilience was not statistically significant ($\rho = -0.065$, $p = 0.425$), indicating that resilience levels do not necessarily predict burnout experiences.

To further analyze the moderating role of Resilience, a moderation analysis was performed, which showed a significant effect (estimate = 0.0150, $p < 0.001$). Interestingly, the results indicated that Resilience strengthened rather than buffered the relationship between Job Demand and Burnout. Multiple linear regression analysis was also conducted, demonstrating that Job Demand had a significant positive effect on Burnout (estimate = 1.0642, $p < 0.001$), while Resilience had a significant negative effect on Burnout (estimate = -0.2810, $p < 0.001$). These analyses provided a comprehensive statistical approach to understanding the relationships among Job Demand, Burnout, and Resilience.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive statistics indicated that the variables of Job Demand, Burnout, and Resilience were measured using 23, 23, and 25 items, respectively. The mean scores for Job Demand, Burnout, and Resilience on a 1-5 scale were 78.9 (SD = 9.21), 78.0 (SD = 15.2), and 71.2 (SD = 14.5), respectively. The findings indicate that elevated job demands are associated with heightened levels of burnout, while individual differences in resilience emerge as a salient factor.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variable	Number of Items	N	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Mean	SD
Job Demand	23	154	50	105	78.9	9.21
Burnout	23	154	34	109	78.0	15.2
Resilience	25	154	8	93	71.2	14.5

The Shapiro-Wilk normality test indicated that all variables were not normally distributed, with p-values below 0.05 for Job Demand ($p = 0.001$), Burnout ($p < 0.001$), and Resilience ($p < 0.002$).

Table 2. Normality Test

Variable	Shapiro Wilk p	Description
Job Demand	0.001	Not normally distributed
Burnout	< 0.001	Not normally distributed
Resilience	< 0.002	Not normally distributed

Given the infringement of normality assumptions, a non-parametric Spearman correlation analysis was undertaken. The findings indicated a substantial positive correlation between job demands and burnout ($\rho = 0.419$, $p < 0.001$), thereby substantiating the hypothesis that elevated job demands are associated with heightened levels of burnout. Job demand exhibited a substantial positive correlation with resilience ($\rho = 0.272$, $p < 0.001$), although this correlation was weaker than the one observed with burnout. The correlation between burnout and resilience was not significant ($\rho = -0.065$, $p = 0.425$), indicating that resilience does not directly influence burnout levels.

Table 3. Spearman Correlation Test

Relationship	Spearman Correlation	p
Job Demand & Burnout	0.419	< 0.001
Job Demand & Resilience	0.272	< 0.001
Burnout & Resilience	-0.065	0.425

A thorough examination was undertaken to ascertain the function of resilience in the association between job demands and burnout. This investigation involved a systematic analysis, known as moderation analysis, which was utilized to assess the role of resilience in the context of job demands and their subsequent impact on burnout. The findings indicated a substantial moderating effect (estimate = 0.0150, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that resilience strengthens, rather than buffers, the positive relationship between job demands and burnout. Specifically, when resilience levels were low, the effect of job demand on burnout was weaker, while individuals with higher resilience experienced a stronger impact of job demand on burnout. Furthermore, job demand exhibited a direct and significant impact on burnout (estimate = 1.0642, $p < 0.001$), while resilience demonstrated a direct and significant negative effect on burnout (estimate = -0.2810, $p < 0.001$).

Table 4. Moderation Estimates

	Estimate	SE	Z	p
Job Demand	1.0642	0.11366	9.36	< .001
Resilience	-0.2810	0.06423	-4.38	< .001
Job Demand – Resilience	0.0150	0.00429	3.51	< .001

Multiple linear regression analysis showed that Job Demand and Resilience significantly predicted Burnout, with an R-value of 0.589 and an R^2 of 0.347, indicating that these variables explained 34.7% of the variance in Burnout. Job Demand had a significant positive effect on Burnout (estimate = 0.941, SE = 0.1112, $t = 8.47$, $p < 0.001$), while Resilience had a significant negative effect on Burnout (estimate = -0.328, SE =

0.0707, $t = -4.64$, $p < 0.001$). These findings suggest that higher job demands increase the risk of burnout, while resilience acts as a protective factor in mitigating burnout levels.

Table 5. Linear Regression

Model	R	R ²	Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
1	0.589	0.347	Intercept	27.088	9.2152	2.94	0.004
			Job Demand	0.941	0.1112	8.47	< .001
			Resilience	-0.328	0.0707	-4.64	< .001

Overall, the results confirm that Job Demand has a significant impact on Burnout and Resilience, with Resilience also moderating the relationship between Job Demand and Burnout. However, the lack of a direct relationship between Burnout and Resilience suggests that the protective role of resilience may be more complex and context-dependent.

The findings of this study indicate that job demand has a significant positive impact on burnout among headhunters, thereby supporting Hypothesis H1. This outcome corresponds with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, which proposes that elevated job demands result in the depletion of individual resources, consequently amplifying the likelihood of burnout (Bakker & Vries, 2021). In the field of headhunting, high job demands, including meeting recruitment targets, sending a requisite number of CVs to clients, achieving sales targets, maintaining client relationships, and managing candidate expectations, have been identified as primary contributors to burnout. These findings are consistent with the study by Danudoro et al. (2021), which found that high job demands significantly impact burnout among external auditors.

This study reveals substantial discrepancies from the research conducted by Danudoro et al. (2021). In terms of population, Danudoro et al. (2021) focused on external auditors who face job demands such as role ambiguity, role conflict, and pressure from multiple stakeholders. In contrast, the present study focuses on headhunters, who experience specific job demands related to recruitment and sales targets, as well as external challenges such as lengthy client hiring processes. These discrepancies are indicative of the distinct nature of job demands across various professions.

Additionally, while Danudoro et al. (2021) examined job resources as a moderator between job demand and burnout and found no significant moderating effect, this study tested resilience as a moderator and found it to significantly buffer the negative impact of job demand on burnout among headhunters. This suggests that personal resources, such as resilience, may be more relevant for managing work stress in target-driven professions compared to general job resources.

It is important to note that the nature of job demands also differs across populations. Among external auditors, role ambiguity is a significant contributing factor to burnout, which may be indicative of the complexity of their work and the varied expectations of their stakeholders. In contrast, for headhunters, burnout is influenced by a variety of factors, including high and often unrealistic key

performance indicators (KPIs), pressure to meet targets, and external factors such as unpredictable client decisions.

This study makes a novel contribution by examining burnout within the headhunting profession, a subject that has received limited research attention. Those engaged in the search for talent to fill positions in organizations face unique job demands characterized by external challenges that are not entirely within their control. This study contributes to the extant literature on high-pressure professions by underscoring the pivotal role of resilience. It further enhances the JD-R Model by offering a nuanced perspective on the moderating effect of personal resources on the adverse consequences of job demands on burnout.

The findings also support Hypothesis H2, which states that resilience moderates the relationship between job demand and burnout among headhunters. This finding aligns with the conclusions of Medeiros da Silva et al. (2023), who determined that resilience effectively mitigates burnout, and Moisoglou et al. (2024), who demonstrated that resilience functions as a protective factor against burnout. This finding aligns with the conclusions of Good et al. (2020), who reported that resilience enhances performance in sales-oriented professions. However, the direct relationship between resilience and burnout in this study was not significant, indicating that resilience functions more effectively as a moderator rather than as a direct independent variable influencing burnout.

The present study is not without its limitations. First, the use of convenience sampling restricts the generalizability of the results, as the sample consists only of respondents who were readily accessible and willing to participate, potentially limiting its representation of the broader headhunter population. Secondly, the study's exclusive focus on respondents working in Jakarta introduces limitations in the exploration of job demand, burnout, and resilience among headhunters in other regions of Indonesia. Thirdly, the implementation of self-report questionnaires engenders potential biases, including social desirability bias and subjective response tendencies.

Additional limitations pertain to statistical data. The non-normal distribution of the variables necessitated the implementation of non-parametric analysis methods, which are inherently limited in terms of generalizability. Additionally, while the measurement instruments employed were generally valid and reliable, certain items exhibited low factor loadings, which may not fully capture the distinct job context of headhunters.

Subsequent research endeavors should investigate additional factors that may contribute to burnout among headhunters. These factors may include the role of social support from colleagues or supervisors, as well as organizational factors such as company policies and workplace culture. Moreover, qualitative approaches are recommended to provide a more profound understanding of the headhunting profession, allowing researchers to explore personal experiences and social interactions that impact psychological well-being.

D. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the impact of job demand on burnout among Headhunters and explore whether resilience moderates this relationship. Given the demanding nature of the Headhunter profession, which involves meeting recruitment targets, managing client expectations, and handling external uncertainties, understanding the factors contributing to burnout is crucial. By investigating these relationships, this study contributes to the broader discussion on occupational stress and employee well-being.

The results suggest that job demand may have a significant and positive effect on burnout, which appears to support Hypothesis 1 (H1). This finding seems to align with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, which suggests that excessive job demands can potentially deplete an individual's resources, increasing the risk of burnout. Additionally, it was found that resilience played a moderating role in this relationship, which supports Hypothesis 2 (H2). Specifically, those with higher resilience reported lower levels of burnout, even when facing high job demands. This suggests that resilience may act as a psychological buffer, which could help individuals cope with work-related stress and maintain their well-being.

The findings contribute to the theoretical understanding of occupational burnout, particularly in high-performance professions like headhunting. This study suggests that resilience may play a moderating role in this process, potentially extending the JD-R Model by highlighting the potential of personal resources to offset the negative impacts of job demands. It is important to note that, in contrast to job resources, which are contingent on organizational support, resilience is an individual characteristic that has the potential to be cultivated through targeted interventions. This underscores the potential value of integrating personal resource factors into existing theoretical frameworks on occupational stress and burnout.

From a practical perspective, organizations may wish to consider taking proactive steps to minimize burnout among headhunters. It may be beneficial to consider the implementation of resilience-building programs, such as stress management training, coaching, and mentorship, as a means of supporting employees in developing effective coping mechanisms. Additionally, companies might consider exploring the potential benefits of setting more realistic performance targets and providing stronger support systems, such as mental health resources and peer support groups. By fostering a work environment that prioritizes employee well-being, organizations may find ways to enhance productivity while reducing turnover rates among headhunters.

Future studies should explore burnout among Headhunters across different regions and organizational settings to enhance the generalizability of these findings. Additionally, investigating other factors, such as workplace culture, leadership styles, and social support, may provide a more comprehensive understanding of burnout in this profession. A qualitative research approach could also offer deeper insights into Headhunters' lived experiences, shedding light on the specific challenges they face and the strategies they use to manage job stress. These future investigations will

further contribute to developing effective interventions for reducing burnout in high-demand professions.

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