

The Effect of Role Stress on Burnout in IT Support

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ABSTRACT: The widespread digitalization in society has resulted in technological advances in various fields growing rapidly so the number of workers in the field of Information and Communication Technology is increasing. However, it cannot be denied that the burden and demands of work in the IT field are very heavy and might cause burnout. The research aims to find out whether there is an influence of the multidimensional construct of role stress on burnout in IT Support workers. This research uses a quantitative correlational approach using simple linear regression analysis and multiple linear regression. 140 IT support workers aged 21 – 35 years who had experience in the IT field for at least 1 year participated in this study. The result of this study revealed that there is a positive and significant influence on the role of stress on burnout. The role ambiguity and role overflow dimensions have a positive effect on burnout, but the role conflict dimension does not affect burnout.

KEYWORDS: Burnout; IT Support Worker; Role Ambiguity; Role Conflict; Role Overload; Role Stress.

I. INTRODUCTION

Workers in the Information Technology (IT) field currently play a crucial role in achieving success and fulfilling company business strategy goals. Information technology itself is the technology used to process, retrieve, compile, store, manipulate data, and formulate various strategies to produce quality, relevant, accurate, and timely information, crucial for meeting personal, business, and government needs (Lestari & Diana, 2023). Kemnaker (2022) indicates that in 2021, the workforce in Indonesia's IT sector was approximately 1 million people, with an expected increase to 1.97 million people by 2025. The trend demonstrated a continuous rise in employment within the IT sector. It is undeniable that this field imposes a relatively high workload and difficulty.

As noted by Syabani & Huda (2019), companies in the information technology services sector face substantial workloads due to continuously evolving technological advancements, necessitating workers in this field to constantly adapt, be creative, and innovative. Besides keeping up with technological developments, work in the information technology field demands precision and thoroughness in decision-making. It is not uncommon for IT workers to be perceived as versatile, often taking on tasks beyond their designated responsibilities. Due to the demanding workload and expectations, many workers in the IT sector experience prolonged stress and, in some cases, burnout.

According to the survey conducted by Mansoor (2021) involving 504 web developers, where 71% were from the United States (US) and 29% from other countries, the result indicated that 82% of respondents experienced burnout. 34% of respondents experienced a low level of burnout, 30% at a moderate level, and 18% at a high level. 73% of respondents felt that burnout negatively impacted their productivity and personal lives, and 22% planned to change their jobs due to burnout. Similar findings were observed in a study by Lestari & Diana (2023) at PT "X" a manufacturing company in the cement industry, where the turnover rate in the IT division exceeded 5% over the past 5 years. The average turnover contributors were IT professionals at levels III and IV, with considerable work experience and in their productive years. However, exit interviews revealed that their reasons for leaving were burnout and low job satisfaction. The research also explained that 69% of employees in system analyst/programmer positions experienced burnout.

Burnout poses a significant problem for workers, impacting job satisfaction (Lestari & Diana, 2023; Liu & Lo, 2018), and work motivation (Wirati, Wati & Saraswati, 2023). It not only affects individuals but also becomes a serious issue for companies or organizations, leading to turnover intentions (Lestari & Diana, 2023) and work productivity (Saptarani, Saptaningsih & Hutapea, 2022). Consequently, this can be detrimental to organizations or companies as employees may find it challenging to achieve the organization's goals and mission.

One of the high-demand jobs in the field of Information Technology (IT) is IT Support. In an article by Cermati (2023), it is explained that IT Support is divided into several categories, including computer network, which involves software installation,

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configuration, and maintenance of computers within a company. Other categories include desktop support, contract hardware maintenance, vertical software application, and managed hosting providers, all aimed at ensuring the active and smooth functioning of clients' websites or applications. However, in reality, many IT Support workers find themselves taking on multiple roles that do not align with their designated field or are far from the realm of IT work itself.

In preliminary research conducted in an IT group on Facebook, the researcher found that out of 35 respondents, 15 of them expressed that working in IT Support made them feel emotionally exhausted, cynical, and negatively evaluated themselves. Almost all respondents explained that they had received tasks beyond their job descriptions. For example, *"I as an IT Support, not only handle computer hardware, software and network issues but also design ID cards, banners, stickers. Additionally, I deal with CCTV, phones, IT asset management, procurement, and inventory"* *"... I even worked on documentation for company outings..."*. Some subjects were asked to fill in tasks from other divisions. Some even went beyond their job descriptions to help in unrelated areas, such as supporting the public relations team and participating in sales as a cashier. They also mentioned fixing electrical issues, from installing lights to setting up electrical lines for outlets. The sentiment expressed was that IT Support roles often required a broad range of skills and tasks beyond the traditional IT domain.

Ayudytha & Putri (2019) and Indiawati, Syaa, Rachmawati & Suhardiningsih (2022) identified factors that can influence burnout, including age, gender, education level, marital status, tenure, workload, leadership style, locus of control, and commitment. Additionally, role-related issues (role stress) such as role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, and work-family conflict, can impact burnout (Singh, Suar & Leiter, 2012; Dewi & Riana, 2019).

Role stress is a multidimensional construct that encompasses role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload. Role conflict is defined as the incongruence between expectations for a role. Role ambiguity involves uncertainty about the actions needed to meet expectations, while role overload is seen as the extent to which time and resources prove insufficient to fulfil expectations, commitments, or obligations within a role (Örtqvist & Wincent, 2006). When workers experience conflicting expectations, receive ambiguous directives, or are assigned excessive workloads, they would face role stress.

The research conducted by Tang & Li (2021) on 1,683 first-year social workers in China found that workers with higher levels of role stress, such as receiving incompatible or conflicting requirements (role conflict) or a lack of information about job execution (role ambiguity), showed higher emotional exhaustion, higher depersonalization, and lower personal achievement in the workplace. This indicates a significant correlation between role stress and burnout dimensions. Similar findings were obtained in a study by Pretorius, Padmanabhanunni, Issac & Jackson (2022) on teachers in South Africa demonstrated that role stress (role conflict and role ambiguity) correlates with burnout. Hardiani, Rahardja & Yuniawan (2018) found in their study of 150 workers at PT PLN (Persero) Centra Construction Management in Semarang that role stress in the dimensions of role conflict and role overload has a positive influence on burnout. Thus, it can be concluded that the higher the role stress experienced by workers, the higher the perceived burnout.

Weken, Mongan & Kekenusa (2020) and Hardiani et al (2018) explained that when a job is done differently from usual, while it has not been trained or provided training, and when a worker receives conflicting expectations that go against their values (role conflict), lacks clear information about the role they should play (role ambiguity), and frequently receives tasks that do not match their abilities (role overload), it can lead to work-related stress and burnout. Researchers assume that this can happen to IT workers, especially IT Support employees, as explained earlier IT Support workers often receive tasks beyond their job descriptions, which researchers assume can lead to role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload, impacting excessive stress and burnout.

Based on the background information above, the research problem in this study is "whether there is an influence of role stress, and the dimensions of role stress, namely role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload on burnout IT Support workers?" The objective of this research is to determine the influence of role stress and the dimensions of role stress on burnout, specifically in IT Support workers. This research is expected to provide benefits, especially in the field of references on role stress, its dimensions, and burnout. Additionally, it is hoped that this research can contribute to organizations in the technology sector or those with IT Support workers by paying more attention to their employees, creating a comfortable work environment, and achieving organizational goals.

II. THE IMPACT OF ROLE STRESS ON BURNOUT

Role stress is the stress stemming from stressors related to job roles, comprising role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload (Eatough, Chang, Miloslavic & Johnson, 2011). Prolonged and unaddressed work stress can result in employees experiencing emotional exhaustion, a core aspect of burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Burnout is a response to chronic work stress that proves unsuccessful (Edú-valsania, Lagúa, & Moriano, 2022). Initially, work stress triggers a series of coping strategies, but when these strategies fail, it leads to personal dissatisfaction and emotional exhaustion.

As previously explained, the dimensions of role stress are interconnected. A study by Yongkang et al (2014) found that role conflict has a positive relationship with role ambiguity. When employees experience role conflict, having to perform two or more roles simultaneously, their behaviour in one role complicates their behaviour in another due to conflicting expectations.

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Consequently, employees become confused about which role to fulfil, leading to ambiguity in defining their tasks and questioning clear responsibilities for assigned duties. Role conflict, besides causing conflicting expectations and a lack of clear information about tasks and responsibilities, can lead to another potential issue: excessive workload. Faced with conflicting roles and an inability to prioritize tasks to meet demands, employees tend to lack the time and resources needed to complete assigned tasks (Parayitam et al, 2020). Workers required to complete tasks with inadequate resources, time, and abilities can experience role overload (Jones et al, 2007).

Each employee brings different expectations into their work, and in some cases, these expectations are very high, whether regarding job characteristics (interesting, challenging, enjoyable) or success expectations (achievements and promotions). High expectations can make individuals work excessively hard, leading to emotional exhaustion and cynicism when their high efforts do not align with expected results. Additionally, employees with minimal participation in decision-making may experience higher burnout (Maslach et al, 2001). When employees are required to do many things in a short time with limited resources, they are prone to burnout, especially in terms of emotional exhaustion (Maslach et al, 2001).

From the above explanation, the dimensions of role stress that is role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload can be linked to burnout in IT Support workers.

A. *Role conflict*

Employees experiencing conflict between role expectations, such as juggling two or more roles simultaneously, receiving different requests from different people at the same time, or performing tasks beyond their role, may experience emotional exhaustion as they strive to meet received expectations. Emotional exhaustion is a core aspect of burnout, for instance, when an IT Support worker is tasked with fixing the office's air condition or other electronic devices, which is not part of their responsibilities.

B. *Role ambiguity*

Employees receiving unclear information about what they should do, a lack of information about the purpose of their work, and uncertainty about which behaviours are acceptable to complete their tasks may feel the need to make extra efforts to seek information. This can lead to reduced participation in decision-making and contribute to burnout. For example, when an IT Support worker is assigned the task of fixing CCTV, which they have never done before, the lack of information on how to perform the task can be overwhelming.

C. *Role overload*

Employees receiving workloads beyond their capabilities, inadequate time and resources, or additional tasks while pending duties are incomplete may experience burnout. For example, when an IT Support worker receives tasks beyond their job description while having to meet the demands and tasks that are part of their job.

III. METHODOLOGY

The approach employed in this research is a quantitative approach, wherein the quantitative approach is a method of analysis utilizing statistics or numerical data (Muhson, 2006). The method utilized in this study is the quantitative correlational method, which is a statistical analysis approach used to explore the relationship or influence between two or more variables (Muhson, 2006). In this research, the researcher aims to examine the multidimensional constructs of role stress on the variable of burnout.

The subjects of this research are 140 workers in the field of IT, specifically in the IT Support department. The sampling method employed in this study is non-probability sampling using the purposive sampling technique. According to Sugiyono (2018), non-probability sampling is a method that does not provide equal opportunities for the selected population to become samples. Purposive sampling is a technique for selecting samples from a data source based on specific considerations (Sugiyono, 2018). The sample criteria in this study are individuals aged 21 to 25 years, working as IT Support, and having a minimum of 1 year of experience in the field of IT.

Burnout in this study was assessed using The Maslach–Trisni Burnout Inventory (TM-BTI), formulated by Widhianingtanti & Luitjelaar (2022), an adaptation of the Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey (MBI-GS) by Maslach, Jackson & Leiter (1996). The scale includes three indicator aspects: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The instrument consists of 22 items, comprising 14 favourable and 8 unfavourable items.

Meanwhile, the role stress variable in this study is measured using an instrument developed by Peterson et al (1995) and adapted to the Indonesian language and culture by Febriana, Fajrianthi & Suhariadi (2022), with a total of 13 favourable items.

A. *Procedure*

In its execution, the researcher followed several procedures, including:

Preparation stage: The researcher observed the prevalent phenomenon in the current area, which was chosen as the research topic. Subsequently, the researcher searched for relevant and reliable sources regarding the phenomenon, including variables, theories, and research instruments.

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Data collection stage: The researcher distributed two scales, namely the Maslach-Trisni Burnout Inventory (TM-BTI) and the role stress scale in the form of a questionnaire.

Data analysis stage: The researcher analyzed the data using JASP (Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program). The analysis techniques involved simple linear regression and multiple linear regression. Before employing the multiple linear regression analysis technique, the researcher conducted classic assumption tests, including tests for normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroskedasticity.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

140 respondents had joined this study, of which 123 men represent 87.8% and 17 women represent 12.1%. Depending on the age range, the majority were between 21 and 25 years old with 81 respondents or 57.8%. According to the highest educational level, the majority had a bachelor's degree, up to 76 respondents or 54.2%, while the fewest had a master's degree, up to 3 respondents. Regarding work experience in the field of IT, 99 respondents (70.7%) had 1 to 3 years of experience, 31 respondents (22.1%) had 4 to 6 years of experience, and lastly, 10 respondents (7.1%) had 7 to 10 years of work experience.

Table A. Level of Role Stress Based on the Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Category	N	Low	N	High
		Percentage		Percentage
Gender				
Female	8	47%	9	53%
Male	54	43.9%	69	56.1%
Age				
21 – 25	36	40%	45	60%
26 – 30	18	46.1%	21	53.9%
31 – 35	8	40%	12	60%
Education				
High School	19	55.9%	15	44.1%
Associate Degree	6	22.2%	21	77.8%
Bachelor Degree	35	46%	41	54%
Master Degree	2	66.7%	1	33.3%
Work Experience				
1 – 3	45	45.5%	54	54.5%
4 – 6	11	35.5%	20	64.5%
7 – 10	6	60%	4	40%

Based on Table A above, the role stress level based on response characteristics in this study reveals that the role stress score is dominated by the characteristics of male workers aged between 21 and 25 years, with education level of bachelor's degree and occupation. Work experience ranges from 1 to 3 years, each of which falls into the high job stress category.

Table B. Burnout Level Based on Respondents' Characteristics

Category	N	Low	N	High
		Percentage		Percentage
Gender				
Female	6	35%	11	65%
Male	52	42.3%	71	57.7%
Age				
21 – 25	33	40.7%	48	59.3%
26 – 30	15	38.5%	24	61.5%
31 – 35	10	50%	10	50%
Education				

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High School	16	47%	18	53%
Associate Degree	9	33.3%	18	66.7%
Bachelor Degree	32	42.1%	44	57.9%
Master Degree	1	33.3%	2	66.7%
Work Experience				
1 – 3	37	37.4%	62	62.6%
4 – 6	14	45.1%	17	54.9%
7 – 10	7	70%	3	30%

Based on Table B above, the burnout level based on the characteristics of respondents in this study shows that the burnout score is dominated by the characteristics of workers who are male, aged between 21 and 25 years, with a bachelor's degree education, and work experience ranging from 1 to 3 years, and work experience ranging from 1 to 3 years, each of which is in the high-level burnout category.

The results of the simple linear regression analysis carried out which is explained in Table C, to test the prediction of the influence of the role stress variable on the burnout variable, shows that the role stress regression model significantly predicts burnout, with $F(1,138) = 91.353$, $p < 0.01$. The variance in burnout explained by role stress was 39.8% ($R^2 = 0.398$). Therefore, it can be concluded that the role stress variable has a significant influence on the burnout variable.

Table C. Simultaneous Test Result ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
H ₁	Regression	14180.469	1	14180.469	91.353	< .001
	Residual	21421.324	138	155.227		
	Total	35601.793	139			

Dependent variable: Burnout

Table D. Partial Test Results Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H ₁	(Intercept)	30.553	4.301		7.104	< .001
	Role_Stress	0.984	0.103	0.631	9.558	< .001

Note. $R^2 = 0.398$

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p
H ₁	(Intercept)	42.300	5.045		8.385	< .001
	Role_Conflict	-0.526	0.413	-0.084	-1.275	0.204
	Role_Ambiguity	1.299	0.244	0.431	5.316	< .001
	Role_Overload	1.064	0.267	0.336	3.982	< .001

Based on the results of the multiple linear regression analysis which is explained in Table D, it is found that the t-value for conflict is $-1.275 < t\text{-table } 0.676$, with a p-value of 0.204 ($p > 0.05$). This indicates that there is no significant influence of the role conflict dimension on the burnout variable. Meanwhile, for role ambiguity the t-value is $5.316 > t\text{-table } 0.676$, with a p-value < 0.001 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a significant influence of the role ambiguity dimension on the burnout variable. Furthermore, for role overload the t-value is $3.982 > t\text{-table } 0.676$, with a p-value < 0.001 ($p < 0.05$), signifying a significant influence of the role overload dimension on the burnout variable.

The formula for a simple linear regression equation is $Y = a + b(x)$. Based on the coefficient table above, it is known that the intercept (a) has a value of 30.553, and the regression coefficient (b) is 0.984. The regression equation is determined as burnout =

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30.553 + 0.984 (x). Therefore, the intercept value of 30.553 signifies the burnout score when there is no role stress. Meanwhile, the regression coefficient value of 0.984 indicates that every 1% change in the role stress variable (x) will be influenced by 0.984 or 9.84%. The positive t -value indicates that the role stress variable has a positive correlation with burnout.

The formula for a multiple linear regression equation is $Y = a + b^1x^1 + b^2x^2 + \dots + b^nx^n$. Based on the coefficient table above, it is known that intercept (a) has a value of 42.300. Additionally, b^1 represents the regression coefficient for role ambiguity with a value of 1.299, and b^2 represents the regression coefficient for role overload with a value of 1.064. Thus, the regression equation can be determined as $\text{burnout} = 42.300 + (1.299 x^1) + (1.064 x^2)$. Therefore, the intercept value of 42.300 signifies the burnout score when there is no role ambiguity and role overload. The regression coefficient value of 1.299 for role ambiguity indicates that every 1% change in the variable (x) for role ambiguity will increase the burnout score by 12.9%, and the regression coefficient value of 1.064 for role overload will increase the burnout score by 10.64%. The positive t -values indicate that the dimensions of role ambiguity and role overload have a positive correlation with burnout, meaning that higher values of role ambiguity and role overload correspond to higher burnout scores.

Based on the findings of the conducted research, it was discovered that there is a significant influence of the role stress variable on burnout among IT Support workers. The research elucidates that the role stress variable is capable of predicting the burnout variable in the field IT Support workers by 39.8% while the remaining 60.2% is influenced by other factors not explained in this study, such as age, gender, educational level, marital status, work experience, workload, leadership style, locus of control, and commitment (Ayudytha & Putri, 2019; Indiwati et al, 2022).

Furthermore, according to the results of the partial tests conducted to reveal the influence of each dimension on burnout, it was found that role conflict did not significantly affect burnout among IT Support workers. This finding contradicts the research conducted by Hardiani et al (2018) which suggested that the role conflict dimension has a positive effect on the burnout variable, meaning that the higher the value of role conflict, the higher the level of burnout. This discrepancy may occur because some IT support workers in this study do not perform two or more roles simultaneously, making it less challenging to meet expectations and consequently, experience burnout (Lina & Kusuma, 2018). Another possibility is that some subjects in this study did not experience situations such as receiving tasks accepted by one party but not accepted by another, performing tasks in different ways, bypassing rules to complete tasks quickly (Hardiani et al, 2018), and receiving requirements that are not suitable or conflicting (Tang & Li, 2021).

The role ambiguity dimension in this study yielded results indicating a positive and significant influence on burnout among IT Support workers. This implies that the higher the value of role ambiguity, the higher the level of burnout. Therefore, the minor hypothesis stating that there is an influence of role ambiguity on burnout is accepted. This finding supports the research conducted by Lina & Kusuma (2018), which indicated a positive influence on burnout. Lack of information received to complete their tasks can impact higher emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lower personal accomplishment (Tang & Li, 2021).

Subsequently, the dimension of role overload resulted in findings indicating a positive and significant influence on burnout among IT Support workers. This result also supports the research conducted by Hardiani et al (2018) and Lina & Kusuma (2018), indicating a positive influence of role overload on burnout. Workers who frequently receive other tasks before completing their current ones, accept jobs beyond their capacity, which can lead to emotional exhaustion. If the emotional exhaustion continues persistently, it can lead to burnout (Hardiani et al, 2018).

This conducted study undoubtedly has some limitations in its process. The first limitation is that the researcher only targeted respondents specifically for IT Support workers. Additionally, the age range of the respondents was focused on 21 – 35 years old, and the field or type of company in this research population was not specified. Therefore, it is expected that future researchers will be able to address these limitations by conducting studies on other IT workers such as programmers, web developers, or workers in the IT field in general, with a broader age range. Moreover, the focus can be on specific business sectors or types, such as state-owned enterprises or start-ups.

V. CONCLUSION

This study focuses on examining the impact of the multidimensional role stress construct on burnout among IT Support workers. The results indicate a significant and positive relationship between role stress and burnout in IT Support workers, suggesting that higher levels of role stress correspond to increased burnout. However, when the data is analyzed individually, the role conflict dimension does not have a significant influence on burnout in IT Support workers. This might be attributed to respondents in this study not experiencing multiple roles simultaneously or not facing conflicting or contradictory requirements. On the other hand, when examined separately, both the role ambiguity and role overload dimensions show a significant impact on burnout among IT Support workers.

The implications of this study suggest that companies in the IT sector, as well as those with employees in IT-related roles, particularly IT Support, should pay closer attention to aspects such as expectations, information clarity, and workload distribution. This is essential to prevent conflicting demands, provide clear information, and assign tasks according to the employee's capacity. Clearly defining job descriptions and responsibilities is crucial to avoid role conflicts that may lead to role stress for workers.

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Additionally, IT Support workers are encouraged to be more assertive in decision-making and better manage their time and resources is expected to serve as a reference for future studies on role stress, its dimensions (role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload), and burnout.

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