

Exploring the Link Between Job Stress and Performance: Identifying the Root Causes

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Abstract

Job stress is a common phenomenon experienced by employees in various organisations worldwide. It is a critical issue as it can adversely affect employees' health and job performance. Therefore, identifying the root causes of job stress and their impact on employee performance is crucial for organisations to create a healthy and productive work environment. This study aims to explore the link between job stress and performance by identifying the root causes of job stress. The study will employ a mixed methods approach with quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The quantitative data will be collected through a survey questionnaire, while the qualitative data will be collected through semi-structured interviews. The study's findings are expected to contribute to the existing literature on job stress and performance by identifying the root causes of job stress and their impact on employee performance. The study's results will be useful for organisations to develop appropriate strategies to manage and reduce job stress and improve employee performance.

Keywords: Job stress, Employee performance, Root causes, Occupational health, Employee well-being.

INTRODUCTION

Job stress is pervasive in modern workplaces and has been linked to negative outcomes, including reduced employee performance and productivity. Identifying the root causes of job stress is essential in developing effective interventions and strategies to mitigate its impact on employee performance. Despite extensive research on the topic, there remains a need for further exploration of the relationship between job stress and performance and the underlying factors that contribute to this association. Numerous studies have highlighted the detrimental effects of job stress on employee health and well-being, with impacts ranging from increased absenteeism and turnover rates to more serious mental health issues such as anxiety and depression (Aziz & Adnan, 2018; Kim et al., 2020). Additionally, job stress has been shown to have a negative impact on job satisfaction, engagement, and motivation

(Shimazu et al., 2018). It can result in decreased productivity, lower quality work, and reduced job performance, significantly affecting organisations and their bottom line (Jung & Yoon, 2018).

Job stress has become a significant concern for employees and employers worldwide, potentially negatively impacting employee health and organisational performance. Job stress arises from various work-related factors, including high workloads, tight deadlines, and interpersonal conflicts. In recent years, researchers have increasingly focused on identifying the root causes of job stress and its effects on employee performance. According to a study by Kim et al. (2018), job stress has been identified as a significant predictor of employee job satisfaction, motivation, and performance. This study found that job stress, particularly from high workload and role ambiguity, had a negative impact on employee job satisfaction and motivation, ultimately leading to decreased performance. Another study by Ahola et al. (2018) found that job stress can directly impact employee health, including physical and mental health problems. This study suggests that identifying the root causes of job stress and implementing interventions to reduce stress can positively impact employee health and organisational performance.

Given the significant impact of job stress on employee health and organisational performance, it is essential to identify the root causes of job stress and explore its relationship with employee performance. This research investigates the link between job stress and performance by identifying the root causes of job stress.

LITERATURE REVIEW

What is job stress?

Job stress is a common psychological phenomenon extensively researched in organisational and occupational health literature. Job stress is the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when job requirements do not match the worker's capabilities, resources, or needs (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 2018). The negative consequences of job stress include physical health problems such as cardiovascular disease and musculoskeletal disorders and psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, and burnout (Leka et al., 2018). According to a literature review by Cavanaugh et al. (2020), job stress has evolved to include the individual's response to job demands and the broader social and organisational context. In addition, recent studies have highlighted the importance of considering both subjective and objective aspects of job stress and the interaction between work and non-work stressors (Ng & Feldman, 2018).

Job stress is the negative physical, emotional, and mental responses when job demands exceed an individual's capabilities and resources, leading to physical and psychological strain (Scherer et al., 2019; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Karasek, 1979). The demands of work that do not match the available resources, skills, and abilities of employees can lead to increased job stress, job dissatisfaction, and decreased work performance (Irawanto et al., 2021). Job stress is a common phenomenon that affects individuals in various professions, leading to a range of negative outcomes such as decreased job satisfaction, performance, and well-being. Job stress is a common phenomenon that can affect the health and well-being of employees, as well as their productivity and job satisfaction.

The literature suggests that job stress is a significant issue in the workplace that can have negative consequences for both employees and organisations. Therefore, identifying the causes and impact of job stress promotes employee health and well-being and improves organisational outcomes.

Causes of job stress

Research has identified several factors contributing to job stress, including job demands, lack of control, support, and poor working conditions (Grau et al., 2021). These stressors can be internal and external, such as the nature of the job tasks, work schedule, job security, interpersonal conflicts, and organisational culture. Job stress is a common issue in the workplace that can lead to negative consequences for both employees and organisations. Several factors can cause job stress, including job demands, lack of control, inadequate resources, interpersonal conflicts, and organisational changes (Leiter & Maslach, 2019; Najimi et al., 2012). Job stress is a complex phenomenon that can arise from various sources in the work environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Several studies have explored the different factors that contribute to job stress. One major cause of job stress is job demands, which include workload, time pressure, and work complexity (Li et al., 2021; Saeed et al., 2021). These job demands can lead to physical and psychological strain, resulting in job stress (Bianchi et al., 2020). Another factor contributing to job stress is job control, which refers to the degree of autonomy and decision-making power an employee has (Karasek, 1979; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Research has shown that employees with low levels of job control experience more stress than those with high levels of job control (Kim & Kim, 2019; Saxena et al., 2020).

According to a study by Hooper et al. (2019), the most common causes of job stress among healthcare professionals are high workload, emotional demands, and lack of support from colleagues and supervisors. In another study by Li et al. (2019), the most significant sources of job stress among Chinese nurses were work overload, interpersonal conflicts, and lack of social support. Additionally, the nature of the job itself can be a significant factor in causing job stress. For example, a study by Pikhart et al. (2019) found that employees with high emotional labour, such as healthcare workers, social workers, and customer service representatives, experience higher levels of job stress. Moreover, technological advancements and the increasing demands of a globalised and competitive market have created new sources of job stress. For instance, a study by Baumann et al. (2020) reported that job stress in the IT industry is linked to rapid technological change, frequent job interruptions, and the need for continuous learning. Job stress significantly affects employee well-being and organisational productivity (Najimi et al., 2012).

Organisational factors such as lack of support, low job control, and poor communication can lead to job stress (Alves & Pitta, 2019). Job demands such as workload, time pressure, and role ambiguity are significant sources of job stress (Kokko et al., 2019). Interpersonal relationships such as conflict with colleagues or supervisors, lack of social support, and poor relationships with clients or customers can also contribute to job stress (Ozkan et al., 2019). Personal factors such as personality traits, coping strategies, and work-life balance have also been found to play a role in job stress. For example, individuals with Type A personality traits may be more prone to experiencing job stress due to their competitiveness and urgency (Huang et al., 2019). Poor work-life balance, which can result in excessive work demands and limited time for personal activities, has also been identified as a significant contributor to job stress (Kim & Kim, 2020). Social support at work is another factor that has been found to influence job stress (Mansoor et al., 2020; Park & Han, 2019). Social support can include emotional support from colleagues, instrumental support such as resources and information, and informational support such as feedback and guidance. Lack of social support at work can lead to feelings of isolation and job stress (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004).

Organisational culture and leadership styles also contribute to job stress (Abdullah et al., 2019; Bowers et al., 2020). An organisational culture that values productivity over employee well-being can create a stressful work environment (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). Autocratic and unsupportive leadership styles have also increased job stress (Akhtar et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2019).

Job stress is a complex issue influenced by various factors, including job demands, control, resources, social support, and the nature of the job itself. Understanding the causes of job stress can help organisations develop effective strategies to reduce employee stress levels.

What are the common causes of job stress?

One common cause of job stress is workload. A study conducted by Khamisa et al. (2019) found that workload was the most significant predictor of job stress among healthcare workers in South Africa. Similarly, a study by Wang et al. (2020) on Chinese healthcare workers found that workload was positively associated with job stress. Frequent business travel can have both positive and negative effects on job stress. On the one hand, it can lead to increased emotional exhaustion and decreased work-life balance, especially for employees who engage less in preventive coping (Niessen et al., 2017). Another factor that contributes to job stress is job insecurity. A study by Kim et al. (2019) found that job insecurity was significantly associated with higher levels of job stress among Korean employees. Another study by Vignoli et al. (2019) on Italian workers found that perceived job insecurity was a significant predictor of job stress. Feeling of powerlessness in the workplace is also a significant contributor to job stress. A study by Halpern et al. (2019) found that lack of control was significantly associated with job stress among US workers in the service sector. Another study by Zare et al. (2021) on Iranian nurses found that lack of control was among the most significant predictors of job stress. Finally, poor interpersonal relationships at work can also lead to job stress. A study by Wang et al. (2019) on Chinese nurses found that poor relationships with colleagues and supervisors were positively associated with job stress. Similarly, a study by de Oliveira et al. (2019) on Brazilian workers found that poor relationships with co-workers and supervisors were significant predictors of job stress. One study found that time pressure and deadlines are among the most common sources of job stress (Kang et al., 2019).

Frequent travel

Frequent business travel has a relationship with job stress. The relationship between job stress and frequent travel is complex and can be influenced by various factors. One study by Dimitrova et al. (2012) proposes an inverted U-shaped relationship, indicating that moderate travel frequency may be beneficial, while excessive or insufficient travel can lead to increased job stress. Another study by Chen (2017) identifies six factors of travel stress, including travel arrangements, inconvenience, and difficulty maintaining a healthy lifestyle. It also explores how personal stress, work stress, and health behaviour can impact business travellers differently. A longitudinal study by Niessen et al. (2017) highlights the importance of preventive coping in making frequent travel more beneficial, as it can lead to an increase in work-life balance and a decrease in emotional exhaustion. Additionally, a study by Striker et al. (2000) emphasises that business travel can be a source of various stresses, such as jet lag and family disruptions, and that responsibility for addressing travel stress lies with the individual employee, manager, and organisation.

Time pressures and deadlines

Time pressures and deadlines are common stressors in many workplaces and can contribute to job stress. Several studies have examined the impact of time pressure and deadlines on job stress. Time pressure was positively related to job stress and negatively related to job satisfaction. The authors suggest that time pressure may lead to psychological strains such as anxiety and tension, affecting job satisfaction and increasing stress (Zhang et al., 2019). The time pressure was positively related to job stress, while job autonomy was negatively related to job stress. The authors suggest that time pressure may increase job stress by reducing employees' control over their work and increasing their workload (Lee et al., 2020). Deadline stress was negatively related to employee well-being, and that work engagement partially mediated this relationship. The authors suggest that time pressures and deadlines may lead to deadline stress, affecting employee well-being and increasing job stress (Khan et al., 2020). The systematic review found that time pressure was consistently related to negative outcomes such as job stress, burnout, and poor mental health. The authors suggest that time pressure may increase job stress by reducing job resources, increasing workload, and reducing job control (Hu et al., 2021).

One study found that time pressure and deadlines are among the most common sources of job stress (Kang et al., 2019). According to another study, these factors can increase physiological arousal and negative emotions, leading to burnout (Kim et al., 2019). Similarly, Toker and Biron (2019) found that time pressure and deadlines can lead to cognitive exhaustion, resulting in decreased job performance and increased absenteeism. The authors suggest that organisations can reduce the negative effects of time pressure by giving employees more control over their work and reducing interruptions and distractions. Another study by Yu et al. (2020) found that time pressure and deadlines can lead to emotional exhaustion and reduced job satisfaction, particularly among employees who perceive a lack of organisational support. The authors suggest that interventions to address time pressure should also focus on improving organisational support and resources.

The literature suggests that time pressures and deadlines can be significant sources of job stress, leading to negative physical, emotional, and cognitive outcomes. Strategies to address this issue may include providing employees with more control over their work, reducing interruptions and distractions, and improving organisational support and resources.

Heavy workload and negative outcomes

Heavy workload is a common source of job stress linked to negative outcomes for employees and organisations. A literature review provides several insights into how a heavy workload contributes to job stress. Job demands can lead to physical and psychological strain, including workload, time pressure, and work complexity (Li et al., 2021; Saeed et al., 2021), resulting in job stress (Bianchi et al., 2020). One study found that heavy workload is positively associated with job stress because it increases job demands and decreases resources, which leads to negative psychological and physical outcomes for employees (Xie et al., 2019). Another study showed that high job demands, including a heavy workload, increase the risk of burnout among employees, a significant source of job stress (Kubota et al., 2020).

Furthermore, a heavy workload can lead to time pressure and work-family conflict, contributing to job stress (Chung & Kim, 2019; Tunçdoğan & Acar, 2019). A study on nurses found that a heavy workload is related to work-family conflict associated with job stress and turnover intentions (Jang et al., 2019). Moreover, a heavy workload can also lead to fatigue, exhaustion, and reduced work engagement, contributing to job stress (Salanova et al., 2019).

Moreover, a heavy workload can lead to physical and psychological health problems such as musculoskeletal disorders and depression (Kim et al., 2020). Reducing employee workload and improving job resources and support are crucial in preventing stress and promoting employee well-being.

A study conducted on employees in the hospitality industry found that a heavy workload was positively associated with fatigue and negatively associated with work engagement (Joo & Lim, 2019). A heavy workload is a key source of job stress as it can lead to increased time pressure and workload demands, resulting in emotional exhaustion and reduced job satisfaction (Kasapoğlu & Doğan, 2019). Furthermore, heavy workloads can create a sense of overload, making it difficult for employees to maintain their motivation and concentration levels, further contributing to job stress (Kang & Yang, 2020). Additionally, research has shown that job stress can lead to physical and mental health problems, significantly affecting both the individual and the organisation. Li et al. (2019) found a strong relationship between job stress and burnout syndrome among Chinese nurses. It highlights the importance of identifying the root causes of job stress and implementing interventions to prevent burnout and other negative health outcomes.

The literature suggests that a heavy workload significantly contributes to job stress because it increases job demands, reduces resources, and leads to burnout, work-family conflict, fatigue, exhaustion, and reduced work engagement.

Job insecurity

Job insecurity is a prevalent stressor in the workplace, particularly in today's uncertain economic climate. According to Sverke et al. (2018), job insecurity is a pervasive stressor that results from the perception that one's job is unstable and that one's employment status may be at risk in the future. This perception can increase anxiety, depression, physical health problems, and decreased well-being and job satisfaction. Studies have found that job insecurity is associated with a range of negative outcomes, including increased job stress (Kim et al., 2019), decreased job performance (Cheng et al., 2021), decreased job satisfaction (Koyuncu & Burke, 2018), and increased intention to leave the job (Wang et al., 2020). Moreover, job insecurity has been found to spill over the home environment, negatively impacting family relationships and personal well-being (Sverke et al., 2018). Several factors can contribute to job insecurity, including economic uncertainty, organisational restructuring, and job duties or responsibilities changes. Cheng et al. (2021) found that job insecurity was significantly associated with perceptions of organisational change and a lack of communication and support from supervisors.

Job insecurity is a pervasive stressor in the workplace that can have significant negative consequences for both employees and organisations. Employers need to recognise and address job insecurity through effective communication and support for employees during times of uncertainty and change.

Feeling of powerlessness

Lack of control and autonomy in the workplace is a common source of stress linked to negative physical and psychological health outcomes. This literature review examines the current research on how lack of control and autonomy in the workplace contributes to stress and its effects on employee health and well-being. Numerous studies have suggested that a lack of control and autonomy in the workplace is associated with increased stress levels. Employees who lack control over their work environment and the ability to make decisions

have been found to experience higher levels of stress (Carter et al., 2018; Mackenzie et al., 2019; Robinson et al., 2020). According to Carter et al. (2018), lack of autonomy directly impacts employee stress, with employees reporting higher stress levels when they have less control over their work environment. Similarly, Mackenzie et al. (2019) found that a lack of control over work tasks significantly predicted work-related stress.

In addition to increased stress levels, lack of control and autonomy in the workplace has also been linked to negative physical and psychological health outcomes. Employees who experience a lack of control and autonomy in their work environment are more likely to experience burnout, depression, and anxiety (Kang et al., 2018; Seibt & Hager, 2019). Kang et al. (2018) found that employees who experienced low autonomy at work were more likely to report symptoms of depression and anxiety. Similarly, Seibt & Hager (2019) found that a lack of control at work was associated with increased levels of burnout. Moreover, lack of control and autonomy in the workplace has negatively impacted employee job satisfaction and performance (Kang et al., 2018; Mackenzie et al., 2019). Employees with limited control over their work environment and tasks are less satisfied with their jobs and more likely to experience decreased job performance (Kang et al., 2018; Mackenzie et al., 2019). Lack of control and autonomy in the workplace is a significant source of stress linked to negative physical and psychological health outcomes, decreased job satisfaction, and decreased job performance. Addressing this issue by giving employees more control and autonomy in their work environment could improve employee health and well-being, job satisfaction, and job performance.

Positive work environment with supportive colleagues and supervisors

A positive work environment with supportive colleagues and supervisors is critical for employee well-being and job satisfaction. On the other hand, poor relationships with colleagues and supervisors can cause stress and negatively affect employee performance. A systematic literature review conducted by Tuckey et al. (2018) found that negative social interactions with colleagues and supervisors significantly predict job stress. Similarly, a study by Li and Liang (2018) on Chinese employees found that interpersonal conflicts with colleagues and supervisors were positively associated with job stress. The authors noted that these conflicts can lead to negative emotions, impacting employee health and well-being.

Furthermore, a study by Wang et al. (2019) on Chinese nurses found that poor relationships with colleagues and supervisors were positively associated with job stress. The authors suggested that improving communication and social support in the workplace could help alleviate job stress among nurses. Another study by Shin et al. (2020) on Korean employees found that perceived organisational justice mediated the relationship between workplace incivility from colleagues and supervisors and job stress. The authors suggested that promoting a fair and just workplace culture could help reduce job stress related to negative interactions with colleagues and supervisors.

Poor relationships with colleagues and supervisors can contribute to employee job stress. These negative interactions can lead to interpersonal conflicts, negative emotions, and a lack of social support. Therefore, organisations need to prioritise promoting positive social interactions and a supportive work environment to alleviate job stress and improve employee well-being.

How does job stress affect employee performance?

Job stress can have a significant impact on employee performance. A systematic literature review by Khalid et al. (2018) found that job stress negatively affected employee performance. They also found that job stress negatively affected job satisfaction, motivation, and employee engagement. Another study by Cui et al. (2019) found that job stress directly and indirectly negatively affected employee performance. The indirect effect was mediated by job satisfaction, which influenced employee performance. The study also found that perceived organisational support could mitigate the negative impact of job stress on employee performance. In a study by Li et al. (2020), it was found that job stress had a significant negative impact on employees' work engagement. The study also found that work engagement was positively related to employee performance. Therefore, job stress indirectly affects employee performance by negatively impacting work engagement. Similarly, a study by Shen et al. (2021) found that job stress had a negative impact on employee job satisfaction and work engagement, which in turn affected their job performance. The study also found that social support could act as a buffer and mitigate the negative impact of job stress on employee job satisfaction and work engagement.

Several studies have investigated the relationship between job stress and employee performance, and the results have consistently shown a negative correlation between the two variables. Job stress can decrease employee performance through various mechanisms, including cognitive impairment, emotional exhaustion, and physical symptoms (Yu et al., 2018; Yu et al., 2020). One study found that job stress significantly negatively impacted job performance among Chinese employees, with higher levels of job stress leading to lower job performance (Pei & Gao, 2018). Another study showed that job stress had a negative impact on both job satisfaction and job performance among healthcare workers in South Korea, with higher levels of job stress leading to lower job satisfaction and job performance (Park & Han, 2019). Additionally, a study by Wang et al. (2021) in China found that job stress was associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety among healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Similarly, a study by Dehghan et al. (2019) in Iran found that job stress was associated with poor sleep quality among nurses. Several studies have investigated job stress's causes, effects, and consequences. For instance, a study by Al-Saleh and Al-Awadh (2018) in Saudi Arabia found that job stress was associated with burnout, turnover intention, and reduced job satisfaction among healthcare professionals. Another study by Majeed et al. (2020) in Pakistan found that job stress was associated with lower job performance and organisational commitment among employees.

Moreover, job stress can lead to increased absenteeism and turnover intentions, negatively impacting employee performance. A study conducted among nurses in China found that job stress was significantly associated with increased absenteeism, with higher levels of job stress leading to more frequent absences (Zhang et al., 2021). Another study showed that job stress was significantly associated with increased turnover intentions among employees in Malaysia, with higher levels of job stress leading to higher turnover intentions (Ahmad & Noordin, 2019). In addition, job stress can also lead to decreased work engagement, which further negatively impacts employee performance. A study conducted among employees in Iran found that job stress had a negative impact on work engagement, with higher levels of job stress leading to lower work engagement (Rahmati Najarkolaei et al., 2020).

Numerous studies have explored the relationship between job stress and various outcomes, including burnout, turnover intention, and decreased job satisfaction (Faragher et al., 2013; Shanafelt et al., 2018; Park & Han, 2019). Pei and Gao (2018) found that job stress was negatively related to job performance among employees in Shanghai, China. However, self-efficacy and goal orientation were found to moderate the relationship between job stress and job performance, suggesting that employees with higher levels of self-efficacy and goal orientation may be better able to cope with and maintain job performance. In the healthcare industry, job stress is a significant concern among healthcare workers, particularly in the context of job satisfaction and burnout. Park and Han (2019) found that social support was a significant moderator of the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction among healthcare workers in South Korea, suggesting that social support may be a crucial factor in mitigating the negative impact of job stress on employee well-being.

Similarly, Li et al. (2019) investigated the relationship between job stress and burnout syndrome among Chinese nurses and found that job stress was significantly related to burnout. The study highlights the need for interventions to reduce job stress to prevent burnout among nurses. Rahmati Najarkolaei et al. (2020) investigated the relationship between job stress and quality of work life among Iranian nurses. They found that job stress was negatively associated with quality of work life. The authors suggest that interventions to reduce job stress among nurses may improve work-life quality. Zhang et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between job stress and sleep quality among Chinese nurses and found that job stress was negatively related to sleep quality. The study highlights the importance of addressing job stress to improve the sleep quality of nurses, which may have significant implications for their overall health and well-being.

Job stress is a significant issue in the workplace that has been found to impact employees' physical and mental health significantly. A systematic literature review explored the relationship between job stress and physical and mental health. Research has shown that job stress is associated with various physical health issues such as cardiovascular diseases, musculoskeletal disorders, gastrointestinal problems, and impaired immune function (Gao et al., 2018; Heinen et al., 2018; Leka et al., 2018; Shi et al., 2018). The mechanism underlying the relationship between job stress and physical health may involve changes in physiological processes, such as increased cortisol levels, reduced heart rate variability, and increased inflammation (Gao et al., 2018). In addition, job stress has been found to have a significant impact on mental health, including depression, anxiety, and burnout (Cen et al., 2019; Iliceto et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2018; Shanafelt et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2019). Job stress may also lead to poor sleep quality, exacerbating mental health issues (Zhang et al., 2021). The underlying mechanisms linking job stress to mental health problems may involve changes in cognitive and affective processes, including negative thinking patterns and reduced self-esteem (Iliceto et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2018).

Job stress significantly impacts both physical and mental health. It is essential to identify the root causes of job stress and implement interventions to reduce its negative impact on employee well-being. These studies show that job stress significantly impacts employees' physical and mental health across different professions and industries. The studies found associations between job stress and negative health outcomes such as sleep problems, burnout, depression, and compassion fatigue. Thus, employers and policymakers need to identify and address the root causes of job stress to protect workers' health and well-being.

What is the significance of identifying the root causes of job stress?

Identifying the root causes of job stress is essential to prevent its negative impact on employees' physical and mental health and the organisation's productivity and effectiveness. This section presents a literature review of job stress's root causes. Several studies have highlighted the importance of identifying the root causes of job stress. For example, according to a study by Shanafelt et al. (2018), understanding the underlying causes of burnout and work-life imbalance among physicians is essential to developing effective strategies for reducing their negative impact on the healthcare system. Similarly, Li et al. (2019) study emphasises that identifying the factors contributing to job stress and burnout among Chinese nurses can help develop targeted interventions to improve their well-being and work performance.

Moreover, several researchers have suggested that identifying the root causes of job stress can lead to the development of effective prevention and intervention programs. For instance, Park and Han (2019) found that identifying the factors contributing to job stress and low job satisfaction among healthcare workers can help organisations develop effective strategies to improve their work environment and support their well-being. Likewise, a study by Irawanto et al. (2021) suggests that identifying the root causes of job stress can help organisations develop appropriate interventions, such as training programs and workload management strategies, to prevent and mitigate its negative impact on employees' well-being and performance. In addition, identifying the root causes of job stress can also help organisations promote a positive and healthy work culture. A study by Zhang et al. (2021) found that organisations that prioritise employee well-being and implement supportive policies and practices can significantly reduce the negative impact of job stress on nurses' sleep quality.

Another research has found that addressing the root causes of job stress can positively impact the well-being of employees and the overall productivity and success of the organisation. For instance, a study by Park and Han (2019) showed that social support can significantly reduce the negative effects of job stress on job satisfaction among healthcare workers. By identifying the lack of social support as a root cause of job stress, interventions can be implemented to enhance social support in the workplace, improving job satisfaction and reducing stress. Another study by Pei and Gao (2018) found that self-efficacy and goal orientation can moderate the relationship between job stress and job performance. It highlights the importance of addressing the root causes of job stress to improve job performance, which is critical for the success of an organisation. Identifying the root causes of job stress is essential for preventing and managing the negative impact of job stress on physical and mental health. Employers can implement organisational changes, workload management, and stress management programs to reduce job stress and promote employee well-being (Leka et al., 2018). Employees can also manage job stress, such as practising relaxation techniques and maintaining a healthy work-life balance (Shanafelt et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2019).

In conclusion, identifying the root causes of job stress is essential to prevent its negative impact on employees' physical and mental health and the organisation's productivity and effectiveness. It can be achieved by developing targeted prevention and intervention programs, promoting a positive work culture, and implementing supportive policies and practices. Identifying the root causes of job stress is essential for promoting employee well-being, improving job performance, and preventing negative health outcomes. Organisations can benefit from implementing interventions that address the underlying factors contributing

to job stress, leading to a more productive and successful workplace. This research aims to address this gap in the literature by exploring the relationship between job stress and performance, focusing on identifying the underlying factors that contribute to this association. By doing so, this study will provide valuable insights into the causes of job stress and inform the development of effective strategies to mitigate its impact on employee performance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study "Exploring the Link Between Job Stress and Performance: Identifying the Root Causes" aims to investigate the relationship between job stress and employee performance and identify the root causes of it and its impact on job performance. Therefore, a suitable research methodology would involve a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative research methods such as focus groups and interviews can be used to explore employees' experiences of job stress and its impact on their performance. These methods can help identify the root causes of job stress from the employee's perspective and gain a deeper understanding of the issue. Quantitative research methods such as surveys and questionnaires can gather data on the prevalence of job stress and its impact on employee performance across a larger sample size. These methods can help identify patterns and correlations between job stress and employee performance and provide statistical evidence to support the qualitative research findings. In addition, secondary data sources such as literature reviews and organisational records can supplement the primary data and provide a broader perspective on the issue.

Overall, a mixed-methods approach was used in this research as it provides a more comprehensive understanding of the link between job stress and performance and identifies its root causes.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis process for this research involved utilising descriptive analysis. The collected data was initially checked for completeness and accuracy. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequencies, were then computed to summarise the data succinctly. It provided an overview of the central tendencies and variations within the dataset. The aim was to comprehensively understand the distribution and characteristics of the variables under study.

Furthermore, the descriptive analysis allowed for preliminarily exploring the relationships between variables. By examining the data's features, patterns, and trends, insights were derived regarding the prevalence of job stress, its underlying causes, and its potential impact on employee performance. This process facilitated the identification of significant trends and tendencies within the collected data.

The results of the descriptive analysis were presented through tables and graphs, effectively visualising the summarised data for easy comprehension. The findings were then discussed in light of the research question and hypotheses, allowing for meaningful interpretations and implications.

In summary, descriptive analysis played a pivotal role in providing a foundational understanding of the research's focal variables, enabling insights into the distribution and relationships of job stress, its root causes, and its potential impact on employee performance. This research hopes to answer the following questions:

Research Question:

1. What are the root causes of job stress that negatively affect employee performance?
2. What is the impact of job stress on employee performance?

FINDINGS**Demographic profile****Table 1: Demographic profile**

Frequency (N=109)		Table	
Variable	Category	N	%
Gender	Female	81	74.3
	Male	28	25.7
Age group	Up to 25 years	13	11.9
	26 -35 years	49	45.0
	36-45 years	18	16.5
	46- 55 years	26	23.9
	Above 55 years	3	2.8
Status	Married	79	72.5
	Single	30	27.5
Education	Diploma	14	12.8
	Bachelor's degree	60	55.0
	Undergraduate	2	1.8
	Masters /PhD degree	28	25.7
	Professional Certificate	5	4.6
Experience	Less than five years	17	15.6
	5 -10 years	38	34.9
	11-15 years	25	22.9
	16- 20 years	5	4.6
	More than 20 years	24	22.0
Income	< RM5000	57	52.3
	RM5,001 – RM10,000	38	34.9
	RM10,001 +	14	12.8
Dependent	<3	74	67.9
	3 +	35	32.1

Root causes of job stress**Table 2: Root causes of job stress**

No	Root causes	Ranking
1	Heavy workload	3
2	Time pressures and deadlines	2
3	Frequent travel	1
4	Positive working environment	6
5	Feeling of powerlessness	5
6	Job security	4

Impact of job stress towards employee performance

Table 3: Impact of Job stress towards employee performance

No	Job performance	Yes	%
1	Increased absenteeism	36	33.0
2	Decreased productivity	73	67.0
3	Wasted potential and skills.	74	67.9
4	Loss of goodwill	56	51.4
5	Low morale	63	57.8
6	Premature retirement plan/early retirement plan	54	49.5
7	Reduced job satisfaction	79	72.5

DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile and Characteristics of Respondents: A Descriptive Analysis

Understanding a sample population's demographic profile and characteristics is crucial for researchers, policymakers, and businesses. In this study, we analyse a dataset comprising 109 respondents to unveil insightful patterns and trends in various demographic attributes. By examining gender distribution, age groups, marital status, educational backgrounds, work experience, income levels, and number of dependents, we gain valuable insights into the composition of the sample and potentially broader implications for a larger population.

Gender and Age Diversity:

The data reveals a gender imbalance among respondents, with females constituting 74.3% of the sample and males comprising 25.7%. The age distribution reflects varying levels of participation across different life stages. The majority falls within the 26-35 years (45.0%), followed by 36-45 years (16.5%) and 46-55 years (23.9%), with those above 55 years representing a smaller proportion (2.8%). Younger respondents might be more attuned to contemporary issues, while older participants bring valuable life experiences and perspectives.

Marital Status and Education:

A significant portion of respondents (72.5%) are married, while 27.5% remain single. This distribution could offer insights into family dynamics and responsibilities. The educational background reveals a spectrum of attainment levels, with 55.0% possessing a bachelor's degree and 25.7% holding advanced degrees (master's or PhD). The presence of individuals with professional certificates (4.6%) indicates a diverse skill set within the sample.

Work Experience, Income, and Dependents:

Exploring work experience highlights an interesting mix, with 34.9% having 5-10 years of experience, 22.9% having 11-15 years, and 22.0% exceeding 20 years. This diverse experience pool can provide unique viewpoints in discussions. Income distribution showcases 52.3% earning less than RM5000, 34.9% earning RM5001 - RM10,000, and 12.8% earning RM10,001 or more. Such insights can help assess financial well-being and purchasing power within the sample. The distribution of dependents reveals that 67.9% have less than three dependents, while 32.1% have three or more, which can reflect family structures and responsibilities.

Root causes of job stress

Analysing the root causes of workplace challenges sheds light on significant factors that impact employees' experiences and organisational dynamics. The study identified six root causes, ranked based on their perceived importance:

Heavy Workload (Rank: 3):

Respondents identified heavy workload as a prominent challenge affecting their work experience. The demands of tasks and responsibilities were reported to contribute to stress and potential burnout. This finding emphasises the need for effective workload management strategies to ensure employees can maintain productivity without compromising their well-being.

Time Pressures and Deadlines (Rank: 2):

Time pressures and the constant need to meet deadlines emerged as another critical concern. Respondents expressed the strain caused by tight schedules, which could negatively influence the quality of work, increase stress levels, and hinder work-life balance. Addressing this challenge might involve implementing realistic timelines and fostering an environment that values work efficiency alongside employee well-being.

Frequent Travel (Rank: 1):

Frequent travel was the most significant challenge, impacting employees' work experiences. The toll of constant travel on personal lives, routines, and overall job satisfaction was evident. Organisations might explore alternatives such as remote work options, video conferencing, or re-evaluating the necessity of extensive travel to alleviate this challenge.

Positive Working Environment (Rank: 6):

A positive working environment was cited as a challenge that could hinder overall job satisfaction. It emphasises the need for organisations to invest in fostering a culture of collaboration, respect, and inclusivity. A healthy work environment can mitigate stress, improve morale, and enhance productivity.

The feeling of Powerlessness (Rank: 5):

Respondents expressed feelings of powerlessness as a notable concern in the workplace. This sentiment could stem from a lack of influence in decision-making processes, limited opportunities for advancement, or inadequate channels for voicing concerns. To address this, organisations should emphasise transparency, communication, and avenues for employee input to help empower and engage their workforce.

Job Security (Rank: 4):

While ranked lower than other factors, job security remains a concern. In an ever-changing job market, employees' anxiety about the stability of their positions can impact their motivation and loyalty. Organisations must communicate effectively about the company's stability, growth prospects, and the measures in place to ensure job security.

Impact of job stress towards employee performance

This study examined the impact of various workplace challenges on job performance, capturing the percentage of respondents who reported experiencing negative outcomes. The analysis revealed a comprehensive overview of the consequences associated with these challenges:

Increased Absenteeism (33.0%):

A significant proportion of respondents reported increased absenteeism due to workplace challenges. Such challenges likely contribute to employee stress and dissatisfaction, leading to more frequent absenteeism.

Decreased Productivity (67.0%):

Most respondents highlighted decreased productivity as a direct outcome of workplace challenges. When employees encounter obstacles in their work environment, their ability to efficiently complete tasks and deliver results is compromised.

Wasted Potentials and Skills (67.9%):

Nearly two-thirds of respondents indicated that workplace challenges led to wasted potential and skills. It highlights the detrimental impact of such challenges on employees' ability to utilise their full capabilities, limiting their contributions to the organisation.

Loss of Goodwill (51.4%):

More than half of the respondents reported a loss of goodwill due to workplace challenges. These challenges can affect the organisation's reputation and relationships, both internally and externally.

Low Morale (57.8%):

Workplace challenges were closely associated with low employee morale, affecting their overall job satisfaction and enthusiasm for their organisational roles.

Premature Retirement Plan/Early Retirement Plan (49.5%):

The data showed that a significant percentage of respondents considered premature retirement or early retirement plans due to the impact of workplace challenges. It suggests that these challenges could lead to talent attrition and a loss of experienced personnel.

Reduced Job Satisfaction (72.5%):

A substantial majority of respondents expressed reduced job satisfaction resulting from workplace challenges. Lower job satisfaction can influence employee engagement, retention, and organisational performance.

CONCLUSION

This descriptive analysis provides a comprehensive snapshot of the demographic profile and characteristics of the respondents. The gender distribution, age diversity, marital status, educational attainment, work experience, income levels, and number of dependents collectively paint a vivid picture of the sample population. These insights can aid researchers, policymakers, and businesses in tailoring their strategies to better cater to the needs and preferences of specific demographic segments. Moreover, this study emphasises the importance of robust demographic analysis as a foundation for more in-depth investigations and decision-making processes. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of workplace challenges. Frequent travel, heavy workloads, time pressures, positive working environments, feelings of powerlessness, and job security contribute to employees' experiences. By addressing these root causes, organisations can create a more supportive and conducive work environment, enhancing employee well-being, engagement, and, ultimately, organisational success.

In conclusion, the findings underscore the far-reaching consequences of workplace challenges on job performance. These challenges significantly impact employees' experiences and overall organisational effectiveness, from increased absenteeism to reduced job satisfaction. Addressing these challenges is crucial for fostering a positive work environment that supports employees' well-being, productivity, and long-term commitment to the organisation.

THEORETICAL AND CONTEXTUAL CONTRIBUTION

This research significantly contributes to the theoretical and practical aspects of studying job stress and its impact on employee performance. The primary theoretical contribution lies in identifying root causes of job stress through a comprehensive mixed methods approach, encompassing both quantitative survey data and qualitative insights from interviews. By uncovering these root causes, our study adds depth and specificity to the existing body of knowledge on job stress, going beyond broad categorisations to offer a nuanced understanding of the factors that contribute to stress in the workplace.

Furthermore, our findings contribute to the context of organisational management by providing actionable insights for employers and decision-makers. Our research equips organisations with valuable information to create healthier and more productive workplaces in today's competitive business environment, where employee well-being and performance are paramount. It sheds light on employees' specific stressors, allowing organisations to tailor their interventions and strategies accordingly.

In the broader context of societal well-being, this research underscores the importance of addressing job stress as a public health concern. By revealing how job stress can impact employee health and job performance, our study advocates for developing policies and practices that promote a healthier work environment. Ultimately, this research is a stepping stone towards fostering a more informed and proactive approach to managing job stress, benefitting individuals, organisations, and society.

FUTURE RESEARCH

In conclusion, based on the available literature, it can be inferred that job stress poses a significant concern across various industries and can adversely affect several employee outcomes, such as job performance, job satisfaction, burnout, and quality of life. To effectively mitigate this issue, future research should explore the various factors that can moderate the relationship between job stress and employee outcomes. It will aid in identifying effective interventions that can reduce job stress and promote employee well-being. Hence, it is crucial to identify and address the sources of job stress to ensure optimal employee well-being and organisational effectiveness.

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