



## Impacts of Workplace Anxiety: A Review of the Literature

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### Abstract

A common reaction to an increasing workload is anxiety about reaching deadlines or finishing activities. More and more individuals are experiencing stress as a result of their professions these days. Addressing this issue and taking steps to remedy the problems it may cause for persons and groups is of the utmost importance. The effects of stress on an organization's efficiency and productivity are demonstrated in this study, which also delves into the idea of workplace stress and several theories surrounding it. This paper set out to survey the literature on "work stress," taking stock of the numerous publications that have dealt with the subject from a range of perspectives, including different definitions, demographics, research methods, and industries.

Keywords: Workplace stress, anxiety and the efficiency and productivity of the organisation

### Introduction

#### Occupational stress: What Is It?

"Occupational stress" is the emotional response a person could have when confronted with demands and expectations at work that surpass their current abilities. When employees don't feel they have any control over their job or have social support from their bosses or co-workers, workplace stress can become much worse. But, when people mistake stress for pressure or challenge, it can justify bad management. Stress is inevitable in today's workplaces because of the way things are structured. A person's ability to perform well under duress depends on their inherent abilities as well as the specifics of the situation. When the pressure gets too much, though, that's when stress sets in. Workers' well-being and output can take a hit when they're under pressure. Occupational stress can be caused by a variety of factors, including ineffective job and system design, management, poor working conditions, lack of support from peers and bosses, and poor work design (such as an absence of control over work processes). Having little autonomy, receiving little social support, and being subjected to excessive demands that are out of line with one's skills and experience are the three most stressful job characteristics, according to studies. Having a voice in workplace decisions, social support from colleagues and superiors, agency over one's task and its execution, and an adequate challenge to one's talents and abilities all contribute to a less stressful work environment.

The many meanings of stress and its impact on the workplace: Many writers have contributed their own definitions of stress and work stress in an effort to help readers better comprehend this concept.(see Table I, below).

**Table I: Various definition of stress and work stress.**

Sl. No.	Author(s)	Stress definitions
1.	Jit, S. Chandan, (1995)	When a person's internal and external resources are inadequate to meet the demands imposed by stressful situations, they may experience a variety of negative mental and emotional states, including anxiety, tension, and despair.
2.	Levi (1996)	When there is a mismatch between our needs and our abilities, as well as between the resources we have and the demands placed on us by our environment, we experience stress.
3.	Bernik (1997)	Either the aggressive act or its aftereffects that cause distress are what are referred to be stress. It is the way our body reacts to any kind of threat, whether that threat is right or bad.



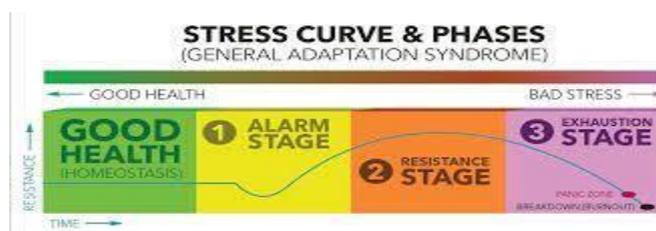
4.	Kristensen et al, (1998)	An individual's subjective condition that is defined by a mix of high arousal and unpleasantness is known as stress. People experience stress when they are subjected to excessive demands or pressures.
5.	The Health and Safety Executive (1999)	A stimulus, which can be either physical or mental in nature, and an individual's reaction to that stimulus are the three components that make up stress.
6.	Moorhead, G., & Griffin, R. W. (2001)	Stress is caused by a stimulus, that the stimulus can be either physical or psychological, and that the individual responds to the stimulus in some way
7.	Leka, et al., (2004)	When people's understanding and abilities regarding the problems in their environment, it can lead to stress.
8.	Siegrist J, Rodel A., (2006)	When the autonomic nervous system is in a chronically overactive state, the emotional, mental, and behavioural symptoms of stress become synchronised.
9.	Stephen P. Robbins etal (2007)	The ever-changing situation in which a person faces a demand, constraint, or opportunity that pertains to their desires, with a conclusion that is viewed as significant but also unclear.
10.	R. Abualrub et al., (2008)	High turnover, turnover intentions, absenteeism, and costs associated with serious health problems are all positively correlated with stress, the key component.
<b>Work stress definitions</b>		
11.	Comish R. & Swindle B. (1994)	The inability to manage work-related stresses due to a mismatch between an individual's skills and the demands of their employment is known as occupational stress. An individual's health, effectiveness, productivity, and quality of work are all impacted by this mental and physical condition.
12.	European Commission, DG, guidance on work-related stress (1999)	When people are subjected to unpleasant and harmful elements of their jobs, their workplaces, and their organisations, it can lead to a cascade of negative emotions, thoughts, and actions. When people are in this state, they often feel that they can't handle the stress and extreme levels of arousal.
13.	European Commission, Directorate- General for Employment and Social Affairs(2000)	When people experience negative and unpleasant feelings, thoughts, actions, and bodily sensations as a result of their jobs, their workplaces, and their employers, it's called job stress. Elevated levels of alertness and distress, along with frequent sensations of being unable to cope, define this state.
14.	Dollar et al., (2001)	Arousal at the workplace can be described as a state that occurs during the shift from external stresses to strain, where strain is the body's reaction to the stressors.



15.	Malta, (2004)	When a person's coping mechanisms and resources are overwhelmed by instances, events, or situations that are too frequent and intense, they experience occupational stress. This discomfort is felt and perceived on a personal level.
16.	Holmlund-Rytkönen, M., & Strandvik, T. (2005)	It's like a person's view of their environment is out of whack, making it impossible for them to handle the demands of their profession. When people's mental and physical health negatively impact their ability to do their jobs, we say that this is the case.
17.	P. Anna Raja and Nima M Joseph., (2007)	Stress at work refers to "the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of a job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker".
18.	Chen, J. C., & Silverthorne, C. (2008)	The Job stress is defined as the mental and emotional strain that comes from not being able to effectively respond to and manage challenging situations on the job.
19.	Salami O. S. (2010)	When one's job causes them to feel negative emotions like tension, worry, irritation, rage, or sadness, this is known as occupational stress.
20.	Yan, H., & Xie, S. (2016)	Stress in the workplace is defined as the cumulative impact of several stressors on an individual's physiological, psychological, and behavioural reactions.

**Model for Stress**

The idea of stress was initially proposed by Dr. Hans Selye, sometimes called the "Father of Stress," in 1936. He proposed the following three steps of the stress response using a physiological and psychological model of stress called the Generalised Adaptation Syndrome (GAS).



**Fig. 1: Model for Stress**

**Core Concepts**

Many terms have been used to characterise the mental and emotional toll that working as an employee can take. These include workplace stress, occupational stress, and employee stress. Furthermore, its importance increased with time. It was once assumed that it was because of the pressures of working in a specific environment. But in the end, it was found out that he truly had an employee inside of him. The relationship between employees' reactions to their work environment and those environments has just been defined. Employees go through stress when they feel they can't live up to the standards established by their employers or society at large. Either mental or physical exertion may be necessary to meet this standard. It's a bad reaction to excessive pressure or an irrational demand. When employees have a positive work environment and receive encouragement from management, they are better equipped to handle stress on the job. A stressful work environment can negatively impact both the mental and physical well-being of employees, as mentioned before. According to Anderson (2002), issues



at home and at the business make workers' strain worse. Anxiety can set in when a worker finds that a situation's expectations are above their capabilities, especially if such demands last for a long time. That is according to Selye (2006). The fact that different people react differently to the same stressors is one of the hallmarks of stress. It will be manageable for some, but not for others. But when other people encounter the same difficulties, they won't have the same luck. In order to make the most of an exciting chance, people often find themselves in difficult situations, as pointed out by Naturale (2007). Steve (2011) argues that when workers face demands, pressures, and professional aspects at work that are outside of their skill set, it can lead to increased stress levels. This is because it poses a threat to their abilities and makes it difficult for them to stay employed. A "healthy" employment is one that allows the employee enough control over their work and is a suitable match for their interests, abilities, and resources. Consequently, it can win over the people who matter most to them.

The physiological response to external stimuli is known as stress (Selye, 2006). Assigning more work to an employee than they can reasonably do can lead to stress. There appears to be a wide range of stress levels among the employees. Prolonged exposure to stress may cause physiological, psychological, and behavioural problems. Stress may contribute to the onset of nicotine and alcohol dependence, according to research conducted in Sri Lanka (Opatha, 2011). While there are instances when employees benefit from stress, the inverse is true when they overextend themselves.

You can be sure that your line of work will have its share of stressful moments. The capacity to cope with stress over time is brought up in the Maltese literature [3]. Thanks to workplace pressure, employees will continue to be motivated and educated. The capacity of the worker to adapt, however, will differ according to his or her character and the tools available to them.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that individuals are more prone to stressful situations when they are overworked at work. When an employee's abilities aren't up to par, he or she is likely to experience stress on the job. There are instances when an employee has no choice but to do their job, regardless of their feelings about it. Under these circumstances, workplace stress is likely to emerge. Another kind of occupational stress is when a person finds themselves stuck in a job that doesn't mesh well with their personality. In the course of this inquiry, "work stress," "occupational stress," and "organisational stress" will all mean the same thing.

**Table II: Workplace Classification**

Year	Authors	Author's Profile	Country	Methodology	Type of industry/ Research unit
2012	Ipsen, C., et al.	Academic	Denmark	Conceptual	Consulting companies
2012	Smith, A. P., et al.	Academic	UK	Cross Sectional	Cardiff University
2012	Huss, E.	Academic	Israel	Conceptual	Social workers
2012	Wells, C. R., et al.	Academic	USA	Cross Sectional	Clerical Profession
2013	Julià, M., et al.	Academic	Spain	Empirical	Mutual Insurance Company
2013	Kath, L. M., et al.	Academic	USA; Germany	Cross Sectional	Nurse & managers
2013	Mackenzie, S. H., et al.	Professional	USA; Canada	Longitudinal	Tourism guide's
2013	Steinisch, M., et al.	Academic	Germany; Bangladesh	Cross Sectional	Ready-Made garment
2013	Lucas, T., et al.	Academic	USA	Empirical	Police officers



2013	Jain, A. K., et al.	Academic	Denmark; Uk	Empirical	Call centres
2014	Huss, E., et al.	Academic	Israel	Empirical	Health professionals
2014	Sznajder, K. K., et al.	Academic	USA; China	Cross Sectional	Chinese working women
2014	Steinisch, M., et al.	Academic	Germany, Bangladesh	Cross Sectional	Readymade garments
2014	Liu, S., et al.	Both	China; USA	Conceptual	Teachers
2014	Johnson, S. J., et al.	Academic	UK	Cross Sectional	Pharmacists
2014	Honda, A., et al.	Academic	Japan	Cross Sectional	Japanese workers
2014	Kraan, K. O., et al.	Academic	Netherlands	Cross Sectional	EWCS
2014	Avdija, A. S.	Academic	USA	Empirical	Law enforcement officers
2014	Lian, S. Y., et al.	Academic	Malaysia	Conceptual	Working females
2015	Fiori, M., et al.	Academic	Switzerland	Longitudinal	SFSO
2015	Van Laethem, M., et al.	Academic	Netherland, Sweden	Longitudinal	Dutch employees
2015	d'Ettorre, G., et al.	Academic	Italy	Empirical	Doctors and nurses
2015	González-Quintanilla, et al	Both	Spain	Cross Sectional	Migrane patients
2015	Wang, S. M., et al.	Professional	Taiwan, USA	Cross Sectional	Psychiatric nurses
2015	Smyth, E., et al.	Professional	UK, Ireland	Empirical	Disability support staff
2015	Ronchetti, M., et al.	Academic	Italy	Conceptual	-
2015	Sailaxmi, G., et al.	Both	India	Empirical	Nurses
2015	Yang, S., et al.	Professional	Australia; Singapore	Cross Sectional	Healthcare professionals
2015	Ma, C. C., et al.	Professional	USA	Cross Sectional	Police officers
2015	Ninaus, K., et al.	Both	Austria; Hong Kong	Exploratory	Journalism industry
2015	Li, J., et al.	Both	Germany; China	Descriptive	-
2016	Huet, V., et al.	Academic	UK	Exploratory	Staffs in health care

### Evidence from Scientific Studies Correlating Occupational Anxiety and Productivity

When employees are under stress, they are more prone to quit their occupations (Mead, 2009). Turnover rates vary across companies. Employees leave the private sector at a higher rate than those in the public sector. The turnover rate varies substantially among regions as well. The



greatest rates are often found in areas where both the unemployment rate and the number of available jobs are low. In some cases, the departure of an employee can actually be beneficial to the organisation. Such a situation might arise when a more active and youthful employee takes the place of an older, less productive one, or when a retiree is recruited to fill an open post.

Employee turnover costs money because of the time and effort needed to replace open jobs, train new recruits, and make up for lost productivity when they aren't on the clock (Dessler, 2000).

Employees leave for many different reasons. Workers may be less committed to their present companies if more attractive employment opportunities arise. Factors such as domestic responsibilities or dissatisfaction with one's current job can also put people under pressure to quit their positions. People often quit their employment because they are unhappy with the way they are treated by management. Very few people would quit a job they've grown really attached to, even if offered a higher salary elsewhere.

The absence of opportunity for professional development and promotion is another major factor that causes employees to voluntarily leave their jobs. Employees place a great importance on a stable workplace. Several preventative activities should be considered by management in order to decrease turnover. Examples of such actions include making the workplace comfortable and safe for workers, training new managers, and helping current managers become better supervisors. Current managers may be given the opportunity to undergo retraining if they have a track record of dissatisfying their staff. When managers' own teams have significant turnover rates, they should face consequences. Providing as much job security as possible, holding frequent performance evaluations, and honouring employees' preferences for work hours are just a few of the many ways to reduce employee turnover. The aforementioned can increase employees' stress levels, which could lead to their eventual resignation from the organisation. A high rate of employee turnover is bad for business.

Morale takes a nosedive when employees are constantly under stress on the job. Factors that can greatly affect morale in the workplace include large-scale layoffs, the removal of overtime, reduced or eliminated benefits, and the lack of union representation. Several more things can affect morale on the job, such as sick building syndrome, low wages, and poor treatment from superiors. Workplace morale can be influenced by factors such as the following: The following factors can impact an employee's perspective on their work experience: job security, management style, the staff's belief that their contribution is valued by the employer, the company's overall social or economic value, the team's composition, the company's culture, and the likelihood of merit-based promotions. If the aforementioned traits reduce stress, employee morale will be low; if the reverse is true, morale will be high.

In 1992, Bruckner and colleagues investigated how economic uncertainty and job insecurity affected employee attitudes in order to evaluate the effects of downsizing. When Brockner wanted to know how his employees felt about their occupations, he looked at their effort levels. Those who were very job insecure yet had a strong desire to keep working responded to losing their jobs by working harder than before, the results showed. People didn't change their output when they were highly uncertain about their jobs and had little incentive to labour. When faced with extreme employment uncertainty, as could be anticipated during a downsizing, employees with a higher need to work put in more effort than those with a lower need to work. A round of layoffs is sure to increase the stress level in any organisation.

Everyone knows that stress lowers productivity in the workplace, but until recently, researchers have looked at the issue from an individual rather than a corporate vantage point. The effects of stress on productivity have never been examined in a study that included more than one individual. According to Newstrom (2007), the most investigated pattern regarding the relationship between stress and performance is an inverted U-shaped correlation. Put simply, little stress encourages the body to perform better. This provides more evidence that stress, in

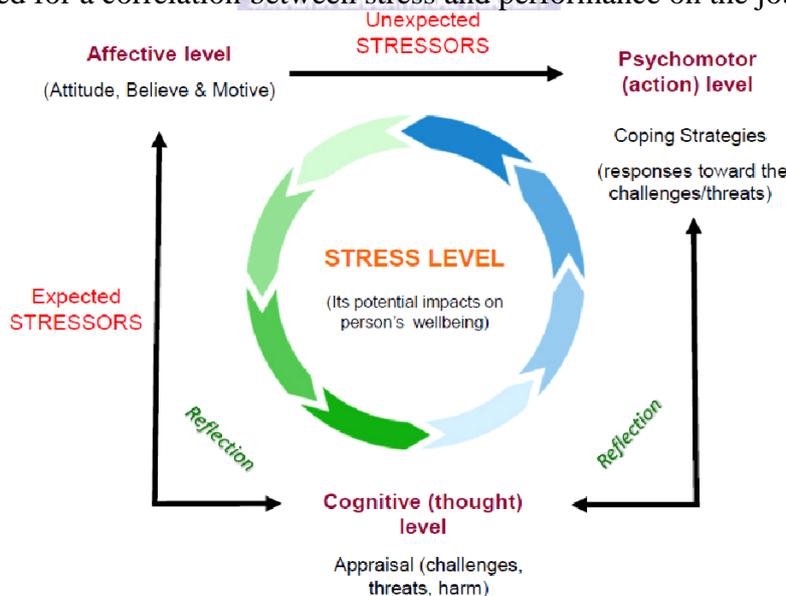


any form, reduces productivity. It is possible that the response to stress over time and to changes in stress intensity can be described by the inverted U pattern, as suggested by Robbins (2003). Stress is harmful to individuals and can affect an organization's productivity in a domino effect, according to multiple authors[9,10]. An sick body does not aid in job performance; an overworked stress response causes broad wear and tear on the body, according to Everly& Benson (1989). But according to Welford [11], employees are motivated to do their best when they are under just the correct level of stress at work. The "sweet spot" of stress occurs when workers are presented with an optimal level of hard tasks. Under certain circumstances, a portion of an organization's staff will exert stress in a manner that benefits the business and boosts its income, according to Welford [11] and Jing [6].

Company inefficiencies, high staff turnover, absenteeism, low quality and quantity of output, and increased health care expenditures for personnel are all attributed to stress, according to Lambert, Lambert, & Ito [3]. In 2007, Ngeno [10] investigated elementary school teachers' experiences with burnout in Kenya. His research indicates that when teachers are exhausted, it shows in the classroom. In addition, Munali (2005) discovered that when hotel personnel are stressed, their productivity decreases. Munali discovered that stress-related illness was the primary reason for employee absences after surveying 300 hotel staff members for her study. Organisational outcomes can take many forms, but they all have certain traits, as stated by Ivancevich et al. [12]. Stress among workers cost companies money. Ongori&Agolla[5] state that workers are less productive when they are under a lot of pressure. They claim that this will eventually reduce the company's output. Elovainio et al. (2002) found that stress in the workplace increases absenteeism and impairs efficiency, which is a major concern for organisations. He continued by saying that businesses should take action to reduce workplace stress because it negatively impacts employees' productivity.

**A conceptual framework of stress management intervention for students**

Workplace stress and its various internal and external causes have been the subject of a great deal of literature. "The moderating effects of locus of control social support and perceived organisational support in the relationship between job stress and psychological strain" (Figure 2) is what Shrestha claims to have studied. In an attempt to ascertain whether or not stress levels are associated with job satisfaction, numerous models have been considered. In 2014, Ali et al. searched for a correlation between stress and performance on the job.



**Fig 2: A conceptual framework of stress management intervention for students**

**Table III: Summary of the research studies particularly applicable for the present study.**



Author & Year	Method & Methodology	Findings	Short comes
Siegrist (1996)	1,100 factory workers	Workers' stress, hypertension, and cholesterol levels rise in response to an increase in workload.	Applicable for the developed countries
Goswami (2015)	100 executives from the banks in the Pakistan	Negative impacts on mental and psychological health, including feelings of dread, rage, and anxiety, are subjective outcomes of professional stress.	Only applicable to the Rajasthan province of Pakistan
Kotteeswari and Sharief (2014)	100 employees who are working in number of different BPOs in Chennai city	There has been a significant rate of employee turnover in the business process outsourcing (BPO) sector due to "ungodly hours, monotonous job, low perceived value, dispirited efficiency."	While this study does account for occupational stress as a factor influencing performance on the job, it does not account for any of the other factors that are associated with performance on the job.
Bashir and Ramay (2010)	A total of 144 participants were selected from among the graduate-level staff, managers, and customer service representatives of a reputable and rapidly expanding Pakistani bank.	"The results demonstrate that there is a negative correlation between work stress and performance on the job, and that this stress considerably lowers an individual's performance. "Because of constraints in both time and money, a convenient sampling strategy was employed.	The method of convenient sampling was employed because of financial and time constraints
Ruyter (2001)	A big insurance company in the Netherlands has 1,200 people working in its call centres.	A lower stress level is associated with the autonomy feature of empowerment. Also, both directly and indirectly through organisational commitment, job satisfaction lowers plans to leave".	Relevant to industrialised nations

## Implications

This study aimed to fill a gap in our knowledge of job stress by reviewing the literature on the topic and providing an overview of the concept. Study after study on workplace stress over the last 25 years has been carried out in a wide range of nations and sectors, and this page provides a thorough overview of all of them. Although many workplace stressors and their solutions have been identified, the study revealed that only a small percentage of companies are making efforts to eradicate stress entirely. To find out how to make a workplace that is good for everyone's health and development while also keeping stress levels low, more research may be necessary. Employees can benefit from regular stress management seminars that include topics such as the origins of stress, its detrimental impacts on health, and practical methods for coping with the issue, according to the literature. Workplace and non-workplace stress reduction strategies should be part of the package.

## Conclusion

Workplace stress is a major obstacle for contemporary managers in their interactions with staff. Many studies have shown that when workers are stressed out at work, their productivity drops significantly.



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