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Stress May Be Part of Work, But It Should Not Become the Culture of Work: A Study on Occupational Stress and Workplace Well-Being Among Employees

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Abstract
This dissertation explores the relationship between occupational stress and workplace well-being among employees across various organizations (N = 95). The study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional research design using structured survey instruments assessing occupational stress, workplace well-being, work-life balance, and perceived organizational support. Data were collected from a sample of 95 working professionals and analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient.

The results revealed a statistically significant negative correlation between occupational stress and workplace well-being ($r = -.465$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher occupational stress was associated with lower workplace well-being. Perceived workload was positively correlated with occupational stress ($r = .582$, $p < .001$), whereas perceived organizational support was negatively correlated with occupational stress ($r = -.438$, $p < .001$). Work–life balance ($r = .521$, $p < .001$) and perceived organizational support ($r = .496$, $p < .001$) were positively correlated with workplace well-being.

The study concludes that while temporary work-related pressure may occur in professional roles, chronic occupational stress must not become an accepted or normalized feature of organizational culture. Practical recommendations highlight the need for equitable workload distribution, supportive leadership, clear role boundaries, flexible work arrangements, and organizational policies that protect employees' psychological health.

Keywords: occupational stress, workplace well-being, perceived workload, work–life balance, perceived organizational support, organizational culture.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Work is an essential part of human life, providing financial security, personal identity, social interaction, and opportunities for professional growth. It enables individuals to develop their abilities, achieve personal goals, and contribute to society. A healthy working environment can promote motivation, satisfaction, and psychological well-being. However, the increasing demands of modern workplaces—driven by technological development, globalization, intense competition, and evolving organizational expectations—have made occupational stress a significant concern across professions.

In today's competitive work environment, employees are often expected to manage multiple responsibilities, meet strict deadlines, achieve performance targets, and maintain high levels of productivity. Long working hours, excessive workloads, job insecurity, interpersonal conflicts, lack of recognition, and unrealistic expectations contribute significantly to work-related stress. Although a manageable degree of pressure may encourage focus and efficiency, prolonged and excessive stress negatively affects physical health, emotional stability, interpersonal relationships, and overall quality of life.

Occupational stress refers to the psychological and physical strain that occurs when the demands of a job exceed an individual's perceived ability or available resources to cope with them. Employees experiencing persistent occupational stress frequently report anxiety, irritability, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, sleep disturbances, reduced motivation, emotional exhaustion, absenteeism, and dissatisfaction with their work.

The central premise of this dissertation—'Stress may be part of work, but it should not become the culture of work'—emphasizes the critical distinction between temporary, task-specific work pressure and an organizational culture in which chronic stress is normalized. Every profession involves inherent responsibilities and challenges. However, constant pressure, unreasonable deadlines, expectations of continuous availability outside scheduled hours, and the inability to disconnect from work should never be treated as unavoidable indicators of professional dedication or success.

Concept of Stress

Stress is a psychological and physiological response that arises when an individual appraises a situation as demanding or exceeding the personal, social, or material resources available to manage it. Stress is a natural aspect of human life and is not inherently harmful; short-term, acute stress can stimulate alertness, preparation, and problem-solving. For instance, a reasonable deadline may motivate an employee to organize tasks efficiently. However, when demands become intense, unpredictable, or continuous without adequate opportunities for recovery, stress impairs cognitive and emotional functioning.

Nature and Characteristics of Occupational Stress

1. Individual Differences: Employees differ in their vulnerability and resilience to workplace stressors due to variations in coping skills, emotional regulation, career stage, and social support networks.

2. Continuous and Accumulating Nature: Occupational stress accumulates when demanding conditions—such as regular overtime, competing deadlines, or unresolved conflicts—persist without sufficient recovery periods.

3. Multidimensional Responses: Occupational stress manifests across emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physiological domains.

4. Interaction with the Work Environment: Working conditions directly shape whether occupational challenges remain manageable or escalate into chronic strain.

5. Impact on Work Performance: While moderate pressure can sharpen short-term focus, chronic stress erodes decision-making quality, creativity, teamwork, and sustained productivity.

Major Sources of Occupational Stress

Major sources include excessive workload, time pressure and unrealistic deadlines, role ambiguity, role conflict, lack of autonomy, job insecurity, interpersonal conflicts, lack of recognition, and poor physical working conditions.

Workplace Culture and the Normalization of Stress

Workplace culture encompasses the shared values, beliefs, norms, and everyday practices that govern behavior within an organization. The normalization of stress occurs when chronic exhaustion, anxiety, and overwork are treated as ordinary, inevitable features of employment, discouraging employees from voicing concerns.

Workplace Well-Being and Work-Life Balance

Workplace well-being encompasses psychological, emotional, social, and physical thriving at work. Closely linked is work-life balance—the ability to effectively manage professional responsibilities alongside family, social, and personal commitments without chronic spillover strain.

Theoretical Perspectives on Occupational Stress

The study is guided by three key theoretical frameworks: the Job Demand–Control (JDC) Model (Karasek, 1979), the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model (Demerouti et al., 2001), and the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Statement of the Research Problem

Modern workplaces increasingly subject employees to heavy workloads, tight deadlines, role ambiguity, and expectations of constant availability. Investigating how occupational stress, perceived workload, work-life balance, and perceived organizational support interact is essential for establishing healthier, psychologically sustainable workplace cultures.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Research in organizational and occupational psychology consistently demonstrates that workplace conditions strongly influence employees' psychological health, engagement, and performance. This chapter reviews foundational theoretical frameworks and empirical studies examining job demands, job resources, burnout, work-life balance, organizational support, and contemporary stressors.

Key foundational studies reviewed include Karasek (1979) on job demands and decision latitude; Demerouti et al. (2001) on the JD-R model of burnout; Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) on multi-sample burnout and engagement; Lesener et al. (2019) on longitudinal JD-R meta-analysis; World Health Organization (2024) guidance on mental health at work; Prasad et al. (2025) on work-life balance and psychological well-being among IT professionals; and contemporary systematic reviews on technostress (2026).

Research Gap: While extensive literature links job demands to burnout and job satisfaction, fewer studies examine occupational stress, perceived workload, work-life balance, and perceived organizational support simultaneously within a unified framework focused on workplace culture.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Topic and Objectives

Stress May Be Part of Work, but It Should Not Become the Culture of Work: A Study on Occupational Stress and Workplace Well-Being Among Employees. The aim is to examine the relationship between occupational stress and workplace well-being among employees, and to investigate the roles of perceived workload, work-life balance, and perceived organizational support.

Hypotheses

H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between occupational stress and workplace well-being among employees.
H2: There is a statistically significant relationship between perceived workload and occupational stress among employees.
H3: There is a statistically significant relationship between work-life balance and workplace well-being among employees.
H4: There is a statistically significant relationship between perceived organizational support and occupational stress among employees.
H5: There is a statistically significant relationship between perceived organizational support and workplace well-being among employees.

Operational Definitions

Defined variables include Occupational Stress, Workplace Well-Being, Perceived Workload, Work-Life Balance, and Perceived Organizational Support.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion: Working adults aged 18+, employed in public/private sectors, minimum 6 months tenure in current organization, English literacy, and informed consent. Exclusion: Unemployed individuals, students, self-employed business owners, and incomplete questionnaire submissions.

Research Design, Population, and Sampling

A quantitative, descriptive, correlational, and cross-sectional survey design was adopted. A final valid sample of 95 employees was obtained through convenience and snowball sampling.

Ethical Considerations

The study was designed and conducted in strict adherence to APA ethical guidelines and institutional standards. Informed consent was obtained digitally from all participants prior to survey completion. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained by omitting personal identifiers and storing encrypted data securely. Participation was entirely voluntary with full freedom to withdraw at any time.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hypothesis Testing

Pearson's product–moment correlation analysis was conducted to test the hypotheses among working professionals (N = 95).

Variables	N	Pearson's r	p-value
Occupational Stress & Workplace Well-Being	95	−.465	< .001

Interpretation for H1: A statistically significant moderate negative correlation was found between occupational stress and workplace well-being, r(93) = -.465, p < .001, supporting Hypothesis 1.

Variables	N	Pearson's r	p-value
Perceived Workload & Occupational Stress	95	.582	< .001

Interpretation for H2: A statistically significant positive correlation was established between perceived workload and occupational stress, r(93) = .582, p < .001, supporting Hypothesis 2.

Variables	N	Pearson's r	p-value
Work-Life Balance & Workplace Well-Being	95	.521	< .001

Interpretation for H3: A statistically significant positive correlation was found between work-life balance and workplace well-being, r(93) = .521, p < .001, supporting Hypothesis 3.

Variables	N	Pearson's r	p-value
Perceived Organizational Support & Occupational Stress	95	−.438	< .001

Interpretation for H4: A statistically significant negative correlation was found between perceived organizational support and occupational stress, r(93) = -.438, p < .001, supporting Hypothesis 4.

Variables	N	Pearson's r	p-value
Perceived Organizational Support & Workplace Well-Being	95	.496	< .001

Interpretation for H5: A statistically significant positive correlation was found between perceived organizational support and workplace well-being, r(93) = .496, p < .001, supporting Hypothesis 5.

Discussion, Limitations, and Implications

The findings indicate significant associations among workplace demands, organizational resources, and employee well-being. Higher perceived workload was associated with higher occupational stress, while occupational stress was associated with lower workplace well-being. In contrast, work–life balance and perceived organizational support were positively associated with workplace well-being; perceived organizational support was also negatively associated with occupational stress. The study's limitations include its sample size (N = 95), cross-sectional design, and reliance on self-reported data. The findings suggest that organizations should consider reviewing workload distribution, strengthening supportive leadership, and introducing policies that protect employees' work–life boundaries and psychological well-being.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The present dissertation investigated the relationship between occupational stress and workplace well-being among working adults (N = 95). Pearson's correlation analysis identified statistically significant relationships for all five hypotheses. Work-related challenges and temporary pressure are part of professional life; however, chronic, unmanaged stress should not become an accepted feature of

workplace culture. Fair workload distribution, respect for work–life boundaries, and supportive leadership may help organizations create psychologically healthier working environments.

Future research could use larger samples drawn from multiple sectors, longitudinal designs, and mixed-methods approaches. It could also examine potential mediating variables, such as psychological safety and resilience.

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