

Under Pressure: Work Stress and its Impact on Operators' Job Performance in the Manufacturing Industry

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effect of work stress and job performance among operators at a manufacturing company in a southern Malaysian state. The issue of work stress has increasingly become significant in Malaysia's industry sector which leads to low job performance. Therefore, understanding work stress is important to increase employees' job performance. In this research, a quantitative approach was utilized using a structured self-administered questionnaire to collect data from 103 operators through simple random sampling. The questionnaire was adapted from Shukla and Srivastava (2016) which was used to assess work stress that consists of two dimensions which are time stress and anxiety. For job performance, the questionnaire was adapted from Platania et al. (2023). The job performance was measured in three dimensions such as task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior. The findings revealed a moderate level of work stress and a high level of job performance among operators. The result showed a strong negative effect of work stress on job performance. It highlights the importance of managing work stress effectively to maintain high job performance. Despite these valuable findings, the study acknowledges several limitations included its cross-sectional design and the reliance on self-reported data which may be subject to bias, lack of inclusion of external factors, etc. This study concludes by recommending that organizations implement comprehensive stress management programs and supportive workplace policies to sustain high levels of job performance and employee satisfaction in the long term.

Keywords: Work Stress, Job Performance, Operators

INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades, work stress has become a prominent concern both in theoretical and practical organizational management. Since the late 20th century, particularly during the 1960s and 1990s, work stress has been a serious social problem that was extensively studied in occupational health sciences and industrial-organizational psychology (Kirby, 2022). Global health authorities now regard work stress as a major public health issue of the twenty-first century, with burnout formally included in the International Classification of Diseases, 11th Revision (Almeida et al., 2020). In modern organizational environments, work stress remains a persistent force because organizations still strive for high performance while ensuring employees' well-being especially in excessively stressed sectors such as healthcare, finance, and technology (Dou et al., 2022). All of these showed that the evolving and dynamic nature of work stress comes to terms with organizational and societal changes. Because of this, it is crucial to learn how work stress impacts job performance particularly at the level of understanding its patterns and impacts in contemporary scenarios.

Job performance is a central construct in organizational psychology, encompassing the actions and outcomes that are accountable for organizational objectives (Campbell & Wiernik, 2015). While the history of performance research begins in the early 20th century through the scientific management methods of Frederick W. Taylor, wherein task specialization, time measurement, and standardization took precedence to maximize productivity, that original viewpoint was solely focused on efficiency and output (Pulakos et al., 2019). As organizational development has continued, so has job performance as a construct. From the earlier multidimensional models, contemporary scholarship continues to argue that performance is not a unidimensional trait but rather an interaction of various factors like task proficiency, effort, discipline, and interpersonal behavior (Campbell & Wiernik, 2015). This trend reflects the growing need for organizations to evaluate not only measurable outcomes but behavioral, psychological, and social facets of work, especially with the threat of globalization, technology advancement, and demands for flexibility, innovation, and collaboration in diverse work settings (Griffin et al., 2017).

The relationship between work stress and job performance has been the focus of increased attention in the last few years because of the growing burden on employees and extended work hours (Almeida et al., 2020). Empirical research has established that work stress negatively impacts job performance with mental health as an intervening variable (Chen et al., 2022). Working under chronic stress might negatively affect individual and organizational performance and require strategic management interventions (Jaiswal & Bihari, 2020). In Malaysia, recent studies have found that work stress significantly affects individual performance in corporate environments and for university interns, emphasizing its importance in regional organizational environments (Johari, 2020). In an Insightful report, 80 percent of workers confessed that work stress affected their job performance or quality of work negatively. Further, 38 percent were too stressed to perform their work to the best of their ability (Insightful, 2024). Adding to that, an article by Dutta, M. (2024) posted on LinkedIn stated that 85 percent of world workers were disengaged or unengaged in work due to work stress, and this indicates there was an extensive feeling of not being motivated and committed to perform their job. Therefore, by studying these two variables together, researchers can acquire valuable information about how work stress affects job performance in today's evolving work environment.

Therefore, this study aims to examine (i) the level of operators' work stress (ii) the level of operators' job performance and (iii) the effect of work stress on job performance among studied operators.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Unpacking Work Stress: Conceptualization and Dimensions

According to Burman and Goswami (2018), work stress is the strain, depression and anxiety that a person feels in their workplace when they are loaded with excessive demands and expectations that they have to complete within a limited time. Similarly, Ganster & Rosen (2013) define work stress as the mechanism or process through which work psychological demands and experiences (stressors) produce short-term (strains) and long-term physical and mental health changes. Building on this, Jeon et al. (2022) defined work stress as the sum of all the negative psychological reactions employees have to job performance. In line with these perspectives, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2024) explained that work stress can be described as the harmful physical and emotional reactions that happen when the demands of the work do not align with the abilities, resources, or needs of the worker. For the purpose of this study, work stress is the negative psychological reactions in the form of time stress and anxiety that take place when job demands exceed employees' abilities and resources (Parker & DeCotiis, 1983).

When the need for work increases in response to globalization, digitalization, and competition, the employees experience greater work stress particularly with regard to time pressure and emotional overload (Cooper et al., 2001). In response to the emerging problem, Parker and DeCotiis (1983) developed the Job Stress Model in order to capture the multidimensionality of stress in today's workplace. The model targets time stress and anxiety specifically, two concepts that always carry with them ill consequences in the area of burnout, job satisfaction, and reduced job performance (Koutsimani et al., 2019). Kayati et al. (2025) also utilized the scale in their study of Malaysian seafarers to assess the psychometric properties of work stress within high-stress maritime environments. Their results verified that time pressure and anxiety were significant factors in work

stress and had adverse effects on well-being. A study by Malhotra et al. (2024) used the model to explore work stress in resident physicians where time stress and anxiety were found to be primary stressors affecting job satisfaction and mental health. In conclusion, the Job Stress Model (Parker & DeCotiis, 1983) offers an inclusive and contextually appropriate model for measuring workplace stress especially in high-stress work environments. Its emphasis on critical dimensions such as time stress and anxiety aligns with contemporary organizational realities in which employees are subjected to extreme pressure and uncertainty.

Work stress is a world and mounting issue in every industry that affects the psychological, emotional, and physical well-being of employees worldwide. It is also defined as the negative physical and emotional responses due to incompatible work demands with the capacity, facilities, or requirements of an employee (Leka et al., 2003). The contemporary working environment has been competitive and quicker and thus leading to burnout, low productivity, and job dissatisfaction problems that are caused by stress (World Health Organization, 2020). This research focuses on two main work stress dimensions, which are time stress and anxiety (Shukla & Srivastava, 2016). Time stress is a sense that one experiences under constant stress (Shukla and Srivastava, 2016). Time stress is an unpleasant feeling of being overwhelmed or rushed by an actual shortage of time. It is a psychological state in which people think they don't have enough time to finish work or meet obligations (Pritchard, 2015; Sussman & Sekuler, 2022). Anxiety in this context relates to job-related emotions that can be described as an anxiety disorder in which a person is frequently frightened, worried, or uncomfortable due to the constraints and duties they face at work (Shukla and Srivastava, 2016). Anxiety problems at work are a severe issue in the workplace, as they are associated with sick leave and reduced job performance (Vignoli et al, 2017). In summary, time stress and anxiety refer to the level to which psychological and affective dimensions of work are highly embedded in the workplace and can affect job performance.

Job Performance in Perspective: A Review of Definitions and Dimensions.

Job performance is the quantitative and qualitative description of what employees can do or provide for the purposes of the whole attitude and behavior they exhibit at work or for the purposes related to that job (Şahin & Kanbur, 2022). In this regard, Latham and Wexley (2020) emphasized that job performance refers to the extent to which an employee's performance contributes to the achievement of an organization's goals. Similarly, Rothwell and Lindholm (2016) stated that job performance is an employee's competency and productivity in performing job-related tasks. Adding to this, Kang and Shen (2016) highlighted that job performance refers to the quality, quantity, and timeliness of one's work as an employee. Not only that, Landy and Conte (2016) further described it as the capacity of an employee to effectively carry out their responsibilities. Finally, Aguinis (2013) clarified that job performance is not only about results but also about effort and how one performs their work. In this study, job performance is defined as employees' task-related behaviors, including quality, quantity, and effort, based on the Individual Work Performance model (Koopmans et al., 2014).

Koopmans et al.'s (2011) Individual Work Performance (IWP) model is one of the most complete and empirically supported models of workplace employee performance. Refer to Figure 1, the model proposed three significant dimensions of individual work performance: task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior. Several previous studies have utilized Koopmans et al.'s (2011) Individual Work Performance (IWP) model to measure the performance of workers in different industries and workplaces. For instance, Setiawati and Ariani (2020) applied the IWP model to investigate the influence of fairness in performance appraisal and job satisfaction on the job performance of hospital workers in Indonesia. Mehmood and Nazir (2021) applied the Individual Work Performance (IWP) model to the banking sector in Pakistan, where it was discovered that psychological empowerment and leadership support were positively related to enhanced contextual performance and reduced counterproductive work behavior. Similarly, Gašić et al. (2024) employed the model in exploring the effect of work-from-home policies during the COVID-19 pandemic in various industries. Their results confirmed the model's sensitivity to workers' inner psychological state and outer work settings. Hence, it provides a theoretical basis for the examination of the influence of variables like work stress on employees' job performance.

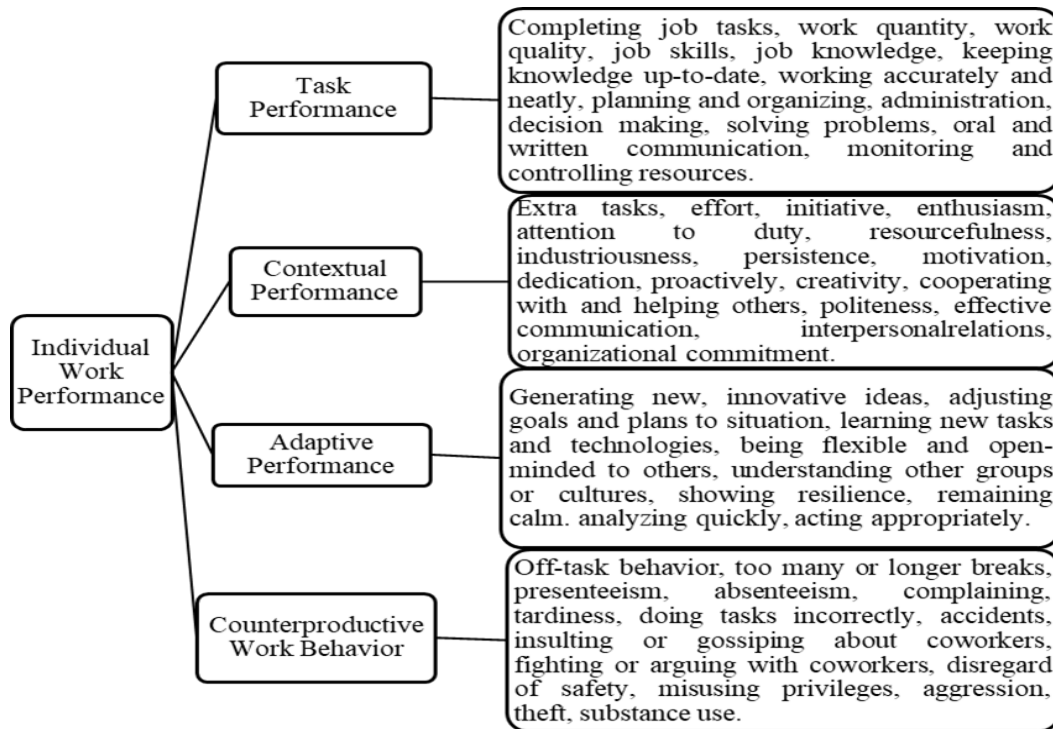


Figure 1: Heuristic Framework of Individual Work Performance (Source: Koopmans et al., 2011:863)

Job performance is a multidimensional construct that reflects various employee behaviors essential for organizational success, and in this study, it is examined through three key dimensions: task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior. Task performance is a series of behaviors that contribute to the development of products or services. It represents the competence or capability to accomplish the job's major or main duties (Koopmans et al., 2011). Contextual performance refers to employee behaviors accountable for the effective operation of the organization in addition to task performance, and is portrayed as favorable employee behaviors not in job descriptions but encouraged by the organization (Guo & Ling, 2020; Elsnor et al., 2021). In contrast, counterproductive work behavior includes significant consequences for organizations, which reduce productivity, increase human resource expenditures due to high turnover, poorer employee morale, and harm to organizational reputation (Baharom et al., 2017; Carpenter & Berry, 2017). Understanding these three dimensions provides a comprehensive view of employee conduct, allowing organizations to strengthen appraisal systems, foster positive work environments, and reduce harmful behaviors for long-term sustainability and employee well-being.

Linking Work Stress to Job Performance: A Review of Past Literature

The effect between work stress and job performance across various industries due to its central importance in organizational productivity and employees' health. Psychological anxiety and time stress under work stress can deteriorate cognitive functions and emotional control, thus lowering job performance (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Conceição & Palma-Moreira, 2025). One of the views from Purnomo et al. (2021) is that work stress negatively influences job performance in the sense that employees had to spend time and energy managing work stress, thus contributing to increasing their load and reducing their work efficiency. This reflects that intractable work stress not only lowers productivity but also leads to dysfunctional behavior and turnover, which calls for the necessity of organizations to take proactive interventions that reduce time stress and optimize employee job performance. In past studies, it had been shown that work stress had a significant negative impact on the job performance of employees. Basit and Hassan (2018) found that role ambiguity and time pressure negatively impacted job performance, confirming the importance of well-specifiable roles and achievable deadlines. Similarly, Murali et al. (2017) emphasized that unrealistic deadlines and poor managerial support increased work stress and lowered job performance. Thus, there is a distinct effect of work stress on job performance, which in turn contributes to the formation of the following hypothesis:

H1: There is an effect of work stress on job performance among operators in a manufacturing company in Southern Peninsular Malaysia.

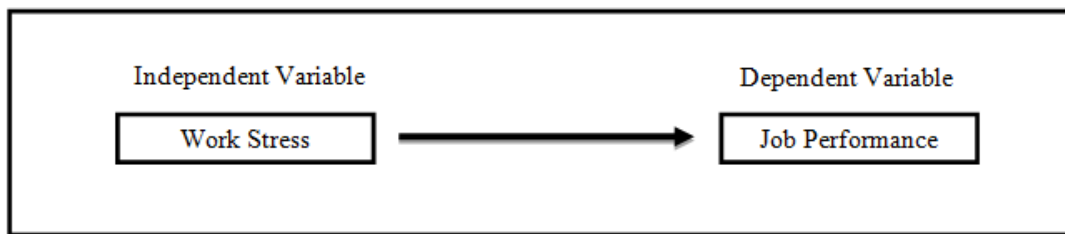


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the effect of work stress on job performance among operators at a manufacturing company in Southern Peninsular Malaysia. A cross-sectional survey method was adopted for the collection of data at a single point in time. The population consists of 140 operators, using a simple random sampling method to ensure equal chance of being selected (Bhardwaj, 2019). The sample size for this study was calculated as 103 employees (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The work stress was measured by the New Job Stress Scale (NJSS) from Shukla and Srivastava (2016). There are 9 items of two dimensions which are time stress and anxiety, measured using the 5-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha value for work stress variable is 0.975 indicating very strong reliability. While the job performance was

measured by the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) from Platania et al. (2023). There are 17 items of three dimensions which are task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior. It also measured using the 5-point Likert scale. Generally, items measuring counterproductive work behavior are reverse-scored or negatively worded. For analysis purposes, the scores were recoded, resulting in findings that reflect positive behavior levels. The Cronbach's alpha value for job performance variable is 0.846 showing strong reliability. The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics such as mean scores and standard deviations were computed to summarize the data while structural equation modelling analysis was conducted to examine the strength and direction of relationships between work stress and job performance.

ANALYSES AND FINDINGS

Demographic Analysis

Demographic analysis is done to gain a glimpse of the background of the respondents such as age, gender, race, job tenure, and education level are addressed in this analysis in a manufacturing company. Age distribution showed the most prominent age group to be 21–30 years ($f=45$, $\%=43.7$), followed by 31–40 years ($f=31$, $\%=30.1$). Few respondents are 20 years and below ($f=12$, $\%=11.7$), and another 11.7% ($f=12$) are 41–50 years old. There are only 2.9% ($f=3$) who are 51 and older. The majority of respondents are female ($f=53$, $\%=51.5$) and male ($f=50$, $\%=48.5$). Besides that, racial composition shows that the largest number are Malay operators ($f=66$, $\%=64.0$), followed by Chinese ($f=20$, $\%=19.4$), Indian ($f=14$, $\%=13.6$), and others ($f=3$, $\%=2.9$). Job tenure analysis showed that most of the respondents ($f=58$, $\%=56.3$) have worked between one and five years, 21.4% ($f=22$) with 6–10 years of experience. Just 9.7% ($f=10$) have more than 10 years of tenure, while a smaller fraction is quite young, having less than one year of tenure ($f=13$, $\%=12.6$). SPM holders make up the largest percentage of respondents ($f=62$, $\%=60.2$) at the educational level, followed by certificate holders ($f=17$, $\%=16.5$) and diploma holders ($f=12$, $\%=11.7$). Smaller percentages have completed PMR/PT3 ($f=9$, $\%=8.7$), and only 2.9% ($f=3$) possess a degree.

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1: Findings on Descriptive Analysis for Work Stress and Job Performance

Variables	Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Work Stress	Time Stress (TS)	2.59	1.132	Moderate

Job Performance	Anxiety (A)	2.86	1.06	Moderate
	Overall	2.73	1.096	Moderate
	Task Performance (TP)	3.76	1.13	High
	Contextual Performance (CP)	3.87	1.074	High
	Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) (reversed score)	3.72	0.881	High
	Overall	3.78	1.028	High

Table 1 presents the analysis of work stress and job performance among operators at the manufacturing company in a southern Malaysian state. Firstly, work stress plays a significant role in influencing employees' job performance, particularly in the manufacturing sector, where workloads are often demanding. Evaluating the level of work stress provides insight into the employees' job performance in the workplace. The overall mean score of 2.73 (SD=1.096) indicates a moderate level of work stress among employees. This indicates that many times, the employees felt their jobs were a big burden; however, they continued to manage their workload even though they feared there was very little time to do. There are two dimensions of work stress, which are Time Stress and Anxiety. Both dimensions fall in the moderate level category. Time Stress with a mean score of 2.59 (SD=1.132) showed that employees at the office are fatigued caused by the company's demand however they still remain committed to completing the tasks despite a heavy workload with insufficient time. Anxiety with a mean score of 2.86 (SD=1.060) implied that the job had become a big burden to them however the employees won't experience a tight feeling in their chest when thinking about it. Overall, the findings reveal that work stress is present among operators but it still remains at a manageable level. However, continuous monitoring and the implementation of effective stress management programs should take place to reduce work stress and strengthen job performance.

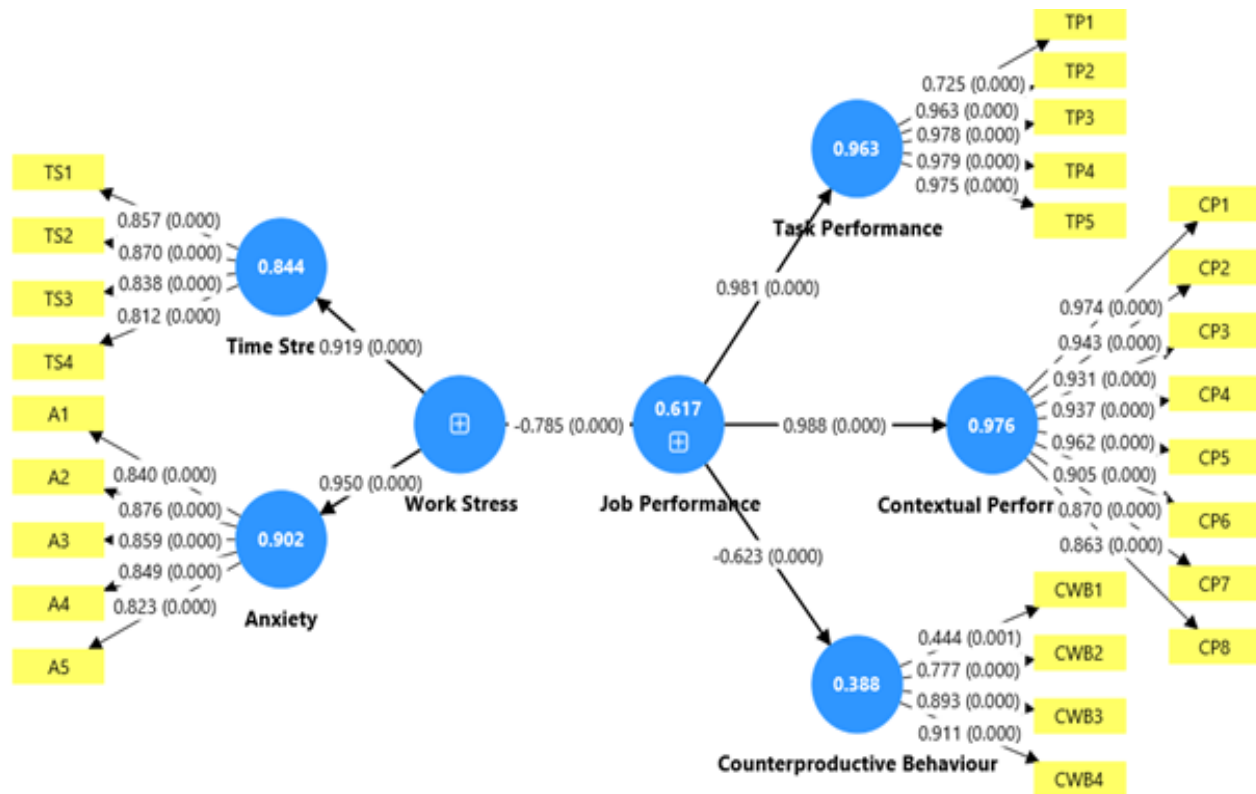
Secondly, job performance is a crucial indicator of how effectively employees carry out their assigned duties and tasks which can contribute to achieving organizational goals. The overall mean score for job performance was 3.78 (SD=1.028), which falls in the high-level category. This indicates that employees were able to carry out their work efficiently, took on challenging tasks, and did not cause problems at work. There are three dimensions of job performance which are Task Performance, Contextual Performance and Counterproductive Work Behavior. All of these dimensions showed a high level. Task Performance with a mean score of 3.76 (SD=1.130) showed that most employees are able to set clear priorities and carry out their work efficiently. Contextual Performance with a mean score of 3.87 (SD=1.074) indicated that the employees take on challenging tasks when available and continuously work to keep their work skills up to date. Meanwhile, all items listed in Counterproductive Work Behavior are negatively phrased and with the mean score of 3.72 (SD=0.881). It showed that the employees overall did not create problems at work and seemed to focus more on the positive in the scenario than the negative. Overall, the results indicate that the operators exhibit high levels of job performance, with task and contextual performance being of particular strength. To sustain such a high level of job performance, management needs to put constant effort into keeping employees motivated, providing opportunities for skill development, and promoting a positive organizational environment that minimizes counterproductive work behaviors

Partial Least Square - Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM)

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS (v. 23.0) and SmartPLS (v. 4.0.9.5). Specifically, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was executed via SmartPLS due to its efficacy in simultaneously evaluating all model constructs (Thaker et al., 2020). As noted by Haenlein and Kaplan (2004), PLS-SEM is a second-generation multivariate analytical approach widely utilized in the social sciences to examine complex causal networks. The structural model evaluating the effect of work stress on job performance is detailed in Table 2 and Figure 3. Following the evaluative criteria of Ramayah et al. (2018), the model yielded a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.617, demonstrating that work stress accounts for 61.7% of the variance in job performance. Furthermore, a statistically significant negative relationship was established ($\beta = -0.785$, $t = 17.712$, $p = <0.05$). It can be concluded that work stress is inversely related to job performance, indicating that lower work stress level yields better job performance among the studied population and therefore accepts Hypothesis 1.

Table 2: Summary Of Analysis Findings on the Effect of Work Stress on Job Performance

Hypothesis	Effect	Path Coefficient	Standard Error	t-value	Decision	R ²
H ¹	Work Stress → Job Performance	-0.785	0.044	17.712	Accept	0.617



Note : TS = Time Stress, A = Anxiety, CP = Contextual Performance, TP = Task Performance, CWB = Counterproductive Work Behaviors

Figure 3: Analysis of the Model to Measure the Effect of Work Stress on Job Performance

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Discussion of Findings

Level of Work Stress Among Operators at a Manufacturing Company in Southern Peninsular Malaysia

The primary objective of the research was to identify the level of work stress felt by the operators in Southern Peninsular Malaysia manufacturing sector. This was gauged via a standardized questionnaire that examined two important dimensions: time stress and anxiety. Generally, the findings revealed that work stress was moderate level which the employees could feel anxious or uneasy under their work circumstances. The time stress had a moderate level. This showed that employees at the office are fatigued caused by the company's demand however they still remain committed to completing the tasks despite a heavy workload with insufficient time. This finding is in agreement with Prem et al. (2017), who emphasized that the unnecessary imposition of time pressure can decrease the concentration, accuracy, and problem- solving ability of employees. The anxiety also existed at a moderate level, which means that the employees found the job had become a big burden to them however the employees will not experience a tight feeling in their chest when thinking about it. This validates the arguments of Narayan and Nair (2021), who argued that anxiety is bound to occur when employees are exposed to ongoing uncertainty, daunting demands, or a lack of control over their work. Although not horrendous, such concern is significant since it is able to get employees down

psychologically and encourage them if unabated. However, if these sources of stress are not handled well, they will lead to reduced productivity, absenteeism, or counterproductive work behaviors.

Level of Job Performance Among Operators at a Manufacturing Company in Southern Peninsular Malaysia

The second objective of this study was to identify the level of job performance of the operators in the manufacturing industry in Southern Peninsular Malaysia. The job performance was measured through the task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior (CWB) dimensions. The result was that the level of job performance by the operators was high in that they were able to perform at the organizational level, perform well, and make constructive contributions in the workplace. The task performance component had a high level. This means that most employees are able to set clear priorities and carry out their work efficiently. Sonnentag et al. (2023) supported that strong task-level performance directly supports organizational performance, especially in high-demanding industries such as manufacturing. Besides that, the contextual performance showed a high level. This indicates that the employees take on challenging tasks when available and continuously work to keep their work skills up to date. Accordingly, this discovery is consistent with Asgari et al. (2020), who determined that employees' willingness to learn and initiate is a predictor of high levels of contextual performance and increases the team's efficiency. Counterproductive work behavior (CWB) dimension also indicated a high level in this finding which is due to the reversed nature of the items. It indicates the employees overall did not create problems at work and seemed to focus more on the positive in the scenario than the negative. Devaraj & Jiang (2018), also supported that organizations with supportive working environments and fair supervisory practices have fewer employee counterproductive behaviors.

Level Relationship Between Work Stress and Job Performance Among Operators at a Manufacturing Company in Southern Peninsular Malaysia

The third objective of this study was to examine the effect of work stress on operators' job performance at a manufacturing industry in Southern Peninsular Malaysia. As observed from the structural equation modelling analysis, there was a high negative correlation (whereby job performance decreases as work stress increases). This finding demonstrates the adverse impact of work stress on job performance and supports the perspective that if not checked, work stress can be a major hindering force to the attainment of organizational objectives. Previous research has continually shown that work stress reduces the ability of employees to concentrate, make logical decisions, and maintain productivity in different workplace settings. For example, Prem et al. (2017) provided evidence that excessive time stress leads to cognitive fatigue and task performance reduction. Ganster and Rosen (2019) revealed that exposure to work stress over time results in emotional exhaustion, disengagement, and ultimately poor performance at work. This is consistent with evidence that chronic work stress erodes motivation and concentration over the long term (Udin, 2023). Therefore, it is important for organizations to maintain a balance using stress management programs, providing adequate rest and counseling services, and establishing a supportive supervisory climate will ensure that work stress is maintained at an optimal level that preserves employees' job performance.

RECOMMENDATION AND LIMITATION

The organization can implement a number of recommendations based on the research findings to improve overall job performance and minimize work stress. The results showed that unclear expectations, performance pressure, and a tense work environment are the main causes of anxiety and work stress among many employees. The organization should regularly implement stress management and mindfulness programs to address this and foster a more encouraging and positive work environment. Furthermore, putting in place an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can provide private counselling services to support workers' mental health, which will ultimately lessen anxiety and increase job performance. In addition, employees reported feeling overburdened by their workload, which may be a sign of imbalances in task distribution and job design. Overwork can result in exhaustion, a lack of motivation, and poor performance at work. In order to address this, the company should fairly review and assign tasks, perform frequent work evaluations, and implement job rotation or cross-training to change up routine and add variation. The study also showed that some employees

experience guilt when they take time off, which leads to burnout. Employee morale, output, and general job performance can all be enhanced by fostering a healthy work-life balance through flexible scheduling and allowing employees to take appropriate breaks without feeling guilty.

This study has acknowledged a number of limitations. The study's primary limitation is that it was limited to operators of a single manufacturing company. As a result, the outcomes are not applicable to other industries with different work environments and stressors. The second limitation of the cross-sectional design is that it only records data at one particular moment, making it more difficult to identify connections between variables or track changes in work stress and job performance over time. Additionally, the study only looked at three aspects of job performance and two aspects of work stress, leaving out other crucial elements like social support, motivation, and leadership. Furthermore, depending too much on self-reported questionnaires (IWPQ and NJSS) could result in bias because answers might be swayed by social desirability or perception rather than performance. Last but not least, although they may have an impact on work stress and job performance, external factors like organizational changes, family obligations, and economic conditions were not taken into account. To gain a more thorough understanding, future research should employ longitudinal designs, incorporate more organizations, and account for more variables.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effect of work stress on job performance among operators in the manufacturing industry in Southern Peninsular Malaysia. The findings indicated that the operators had a moderate degree of work stress caused by time stress anxiety, but they were still able to perform the job at a high level on all three dimensions: task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behavior. The structural equation modelling analysis showed a high negative correlation between work stress and job performance, indicating that when employees experience more work stress, their job performance is lower, and vice versa. The findings therefore emphasize the utmost importance of adopting preventive stress management interventions in the workplace, such as equitable distribution of workload, open communication, counseling, adequate rest breaks, and supportive supervision. These tactics not only help employees to deal with work demands but also sustain and increase job performance in the long run. Apart from this, organizations must develop a culture that encourages employees to voice out and take necessary breaks without any feelings of guilt, for this will make them a healthier and more resilient workforce. Overall, this study presents rich insight into the dynamics of work stress and job performance in Malaysia's manufacturing sector, indicating that stress management is not merely a welfare initiative but a strategic necessity for maintaining performance and organizational success. Future research needs to expand the scope of this work to several industries, larger groups, and longitudinal data to study in greater detail the evolving relationship between performance and stress in many varied work environments and periods.

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