
METHODOLOGY OF MEASURING STRESS – EFFECTS ON MOTIVATION & PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ORGANISATIONS IN KOSOVO

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Abstract. Stress has emerged as an increasing problem in organisations and companies over the recent decades. The workplace has become a place of rapidly changing forces, such as increasing competition, quality pressure, innovation and increasing pace of doing business. As a result, employees' demands have increased dramatically and this has led to the creation of stress at work. Despite the awareness of the importance of occupational stress, the growing number of stress research and stress measurement methodologies at workplace, there are still major empirical gaps in Kosovo, where this topic is not explored enough. Therefore, the present research seeks to provide scientific contribution to the spread of stress among organisations in Kosovo and to identify factors that cause stress among public and private sector employees. To achieve this goal, as part of the Doctoral Thesis, a methodology of measuring stress has been applied in organisations, and the effects of stress on motivation and performance of employees has been studied. The study has shown that there are several stress factors in organisations, and managers need to undertake specific interventions to manage the occupational stress. Findings of this paper suggest that occupational stress is mainly caused by job insecurity, lack of information on developments in the organisation, work overload, inadequate treatment by the employer, destructive relations among colleagues, lack of general working conditions and resources. The findings also show that occupational stress negatively affects the employees, in particular by reducing employee performance, reducing work efficiency and decreasing their motivation. Furthermore, the results indicate that both public and private sector employees consider similar factors as stressful and experience relatively similar levels of stress. Based on findings from primary data collected through surveys and secondary data from international literature, it is recommended to undertake periodic stress tests, engage senior management level in re-designing jobs, increasing decision-making authority of the employees, reducing workload, reducing role conflict, and continuously providing training.

Keywords: *Occupational Stress, Measuring Occupational Stress, Stress Management at the Workplace, Stressors, Productivity, Motivation.*

INTRODUCTION

Stress has emerged as an increasing problem in organisations and companies over the years. While work and being employed contribute to the well-being and health of employees, stressful and insecure work can adversely affect their health.

Traditionally, work-related healthcare research was a concern of occupational medicine, where most often the harmful effects of physical, chemical and biological hazards were analysed from the workplace. However, with the technology advancement, including automation, service sector growth and the expansion of computer work and information processing in modern societies, professional exposures with potential impact on employees' health have changed massively (Siegrist, *et al.* 2008). While traditional dangers still exist in certain sectors, most employees now face a variety of challenges, mental and emotional conflicts. The workplace has become a place of rapidly changing forces, such as increasing competition, quality pressure, innovation and increasing pace of doing business. As a result, employees' demands have increased dramatically and this has led to the creation of stress at work. Moreover, it has been identified that these trends pose a threat to the mental health of employees, as higher demands at work challenge the mental functions of employees and cause high levels of psychological worries.

Stress has become an important part of the human being development and today it is difficult to imagine an employee who has not experienced stress at work. In general, stress is a reaction caused from the pressure and the unknown. Coping with unknown factors, or stressors, can cause a stressful event in humans, as the result is usually perceived as ambiguous but vital (Bashir and Ramay, 2010). Stress is an unwanted or unpleasant reaction people give in response to claims that are basically worried they cannot reach. The state of stress can also pass on health problems when the job demands are high and beyond the individual's capacities. This can also happen when the requirements do not match the skills, resources or needs of the employee at work.

Even though the awareness of this topic has increased, there are still major empirical gaps, especially in Kosovo, where this topic is not explored enough. Therefore, considering the need for a proper review of this topic, this research tries to provide a scientific contribution to the spread of stress in organisations in Kosovo and to identify factors that are perceived as stressful among public and private sector employees. To achieve this goal, a methodology will be applied to measure the stress experienced at organisations and the effects of stress on the motivation and performance of the employees will also be studied. In order to perform stress measurement, this paper will focus mainly on determining stress factors because without the identification of causes, stress symptoms cannot be addressed properly.

Everyone may have experienced stress at their workplace at certain times. Identifying the most common causes of stress at work can help prevent it and reduce the risk for health problems and well-being. According to Dessler (2000), there are two main sources of occupational stress: stress caused by the environment (external factors) and personal stress. The author stated that a variety of external environmental factors could lead to occupational stress. These included work schedules, place of work and job security. Dessler (2000) noted that individuals reacted differently even if they were at the same job, because personal factors also influenced stress.

There are six areas that can cause a lot of stress if they are not properly managed which are: work load, control, support, relationships with others, role at work, and frequent changes. Many researchers have identified several sources of occupational

stress. As the first step to reducing the impact of stress and develop more appropriate work practices, it is necessary to identify the cause. Different occupational health psychologists have listed causes of stress at workplace. According to them, some of the most common causes of stress at the workplace are: high job demands with deadlines which make employees feel pressured and overloaded; inadequate workloads, making workers feel that their skills are being exploited; lack of control over work activities; lack of support or poor work relationships that cause a sense of isolation; people are required to do a job for which they have insufficient experience or lack adequate training; the difficulty of a job promotion, both in terms of meeting the demands of new roles and adapting to possible changes in peer relationships; worries about job security, lack of career opportunities, or salary levels.

Most of the studies performed on this topic showed that stress might be largely responsible for organisational outcomes, such as decline in performance, dissatisfaction, lack of motivation and commitment, and an increase in absenteeism and turnover. Since stressful factors at the workplace may be different, it is understood that the effects of stress on individuals also vary. Generally, these stress reactions can be categorised as psychological, including anxiety, excessive fatigue and depression, as well as behavioural or physiological reactions. When there are high levels of stress at the workplace, employees face challenges in their mental capacity, exposing acute behavioural reactions such as withdrawal, aggression, loss of motivation, or a narrow time of attention, concentration difficulty and capacity reduced memory. Stress-induced emotional reactions may include humorous fluctuations but also longer-term stress reactions such as emotional fatigue, cynicism, reduced pleasure, and eventually “burnout” that can be understood as a physical or mental collapse from overload or stress. In turn, physiological reactions include increased activation of the cardiac system, i.e., high blood pressure, increased heart rhythm, cholesterol elevation or heart rate.

1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study aims at measuring stress and its effects on employee productivity. By using a descriptive questionnaire, factors that explain or influence stress on employees are analysed. The number of responses received by a considerable number of respondents was considered as a top priority.

The core data were collected through a survey, involving 110 managers and 230 employees, mostly medium and large enterprise workers, as well as leaders of various sectors in public institutions. The survey with public sector employees was conducted in Prishtina, while respondents of private organisations that participated in the survey were from the entire territory of Kosovo. The survey was conducted through direct interviews.

The sample size of 340 declared workers from all over Kosovo was selected randomly, stratified based on the database of Kosovo Agency of Statistics. This sample size is considered large enough to provide statistically significant results at 95 percent confidence level and 5.3 percent error of margin for this study. The

sample size was stratified according to position of employees, education and the institutions that are exposed to stress.

2. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Employees, both managers and employees, experience stress at their workplace, whether rarely or often, with low or high intensity. Identifying stressors at work can help improve or even prevent such stressful situations in the future, which does not only lead to improving employee performance but also to improving their well-being and health. Different individuals react differently to the causes of stress due to personal factors. Therefore, identifying key stressors and measuring their intensity is crucial. For this reason, the respondents were asked about work-related factors that caused stress the most, given the current job position.

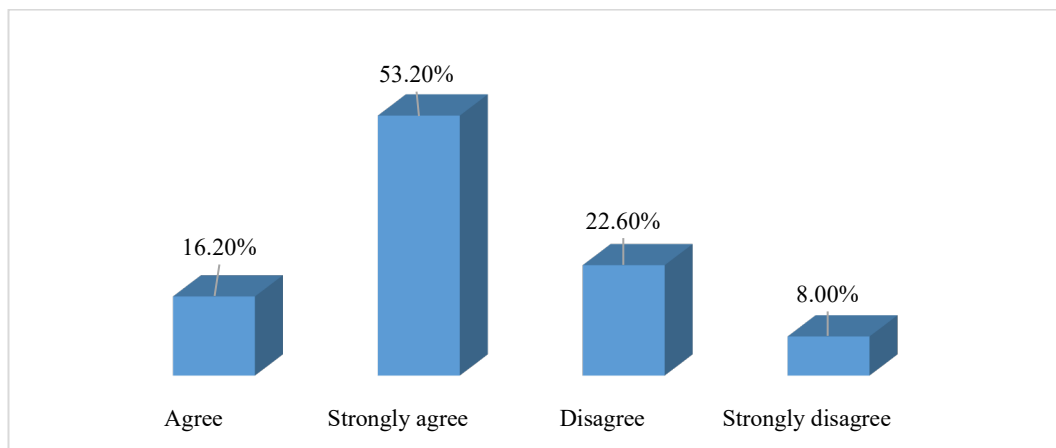


Fig. 1. Stress negatively affects performance at work. Source: The authors' calculations.

Findings first indicate that more than 2 out of 3 respondents (69 percent) consider that they face stressful factors at their workplace, which negatively affect their performance. Such a high assessment from the respondents shows the seriousness of the fact that different factors related to the workplace can cause high levels of stress on the employee.

With regard to the factors that can cause stress at the workplace, the results reveal that the most stressful factors of all categories are: workplace insecurity (81 percent); offensive vocabulary of colleagues (78 percent); low levels of cleanliness (87 percent); no right to rest (80 percent); poor air ventilation (84 percent); inadequate treatment by the employer (83 percent); and insufficient compensation (83 percent).

Table 1. The Most Stressful Factors

Stress factors	Very stressful	Stressful	Not stressful	Not at all stressful
Offensive vocabulary of colleagues	34.30 %	43.90 %	19.20 %	2.60 %
Workplace insecurity	31.10 %	49.70 %	17.30 %	1.90 %
Low levels of cleanliness	29.20 %	58.20 %	9.10 %	3.50 %
Peer interventions in my duties	28.30 %	38.30 %	22.80 %	10.60 %
Poor air ventilation	27.80 %	56.50 %	12.40 %	3.30 %
No right to rest	27.70 %	52.70 %	14.10 %	5.50 %
Unethical communication of supervisors	26.00 %	39.50 %	23.60 %	10.80 %
Inadequate treatment by the employer	25.70 %	57.60 %	15.60 %	1.00 %
Insufficient compensation	25.10 %	57.70 %	13.70 %	3.40 %
Facing conflicting situations	24.30 %	45.30 %	27.50 %	2.90 %

Source: The authors' calculations.

While general data have shown that close to 33 percent of respondents hold managerial positions, in about 52 percent of cases they perform professional work and in 15 percent of cases perform technical / administrative work. These results after crossing with sectors have shown some differences. It appears that the position of the manager is held by about 29 percent of respondents working in the public sector (i.e., 4-percentage points below the average), and about 37 percent of respondents working in the private sector (i.e., 4 percentage points above average). Professional jobs make 60 percent of those working in the public sector, while 40 percent of those working in the private sector. Lastly, 11 percent of public sector employees have technical or administrative jobs, whereas 14 percent of private sector workers hold technical or administrative positions.

Furthermore, respondents were also asked about the advancement opportunities at their workplace. While 34 percent of the public sector workers were offered good or very good promotion opportunities, 54 percent of those working in the private sector agreed that were promoted or offered promotion opportunities. However, about 34 percent of public sector employees stated that they had good opportunities at their workplace, and 29 percent of those in the private sector said that as well. On the other hand, while 34 percent of public employees stated that the job vacancies did not offer any opportunities for advancement, only 17 percent of those in the private sector claimed it. Thus, the results show that the private sector generally offers more opportunities for promotion to its employees than the public sector.

Respondents were also asked about direct motivation that they got from their managers or supervisors. When cross-cutting this question with sectors about 34 percent of private sector workers said that their managers motivated their staff, whereas 28 percent of employees working in the public sector said the same for their managers (i.e., a 6-percentage point difference). Similarly, about 24 percent of private sector employees were of the opinion that their managers created good

working conditions, whereas only 21 percent of public employees thought that. On the other hand, while 34 percent of public employees strongly agreed that their managers created a sense of teamwork, with which 28 percent of private employees strongly agreed (i.e., a 6-percentage point difference). Similarly, 17 percent of public employees thought that their leaders promoted initiative, whereas 14 percent of private employees thought so for their leaders.

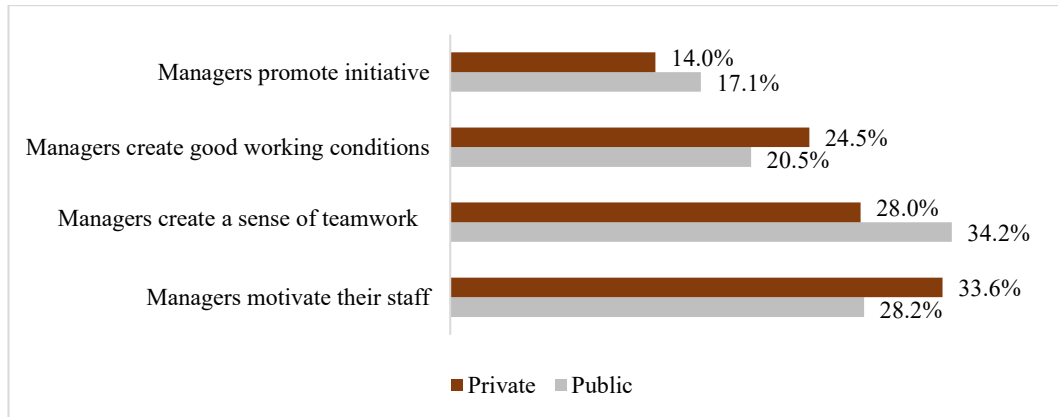


Fig. 2. Motivation from managers. Source: The authors' calculations.

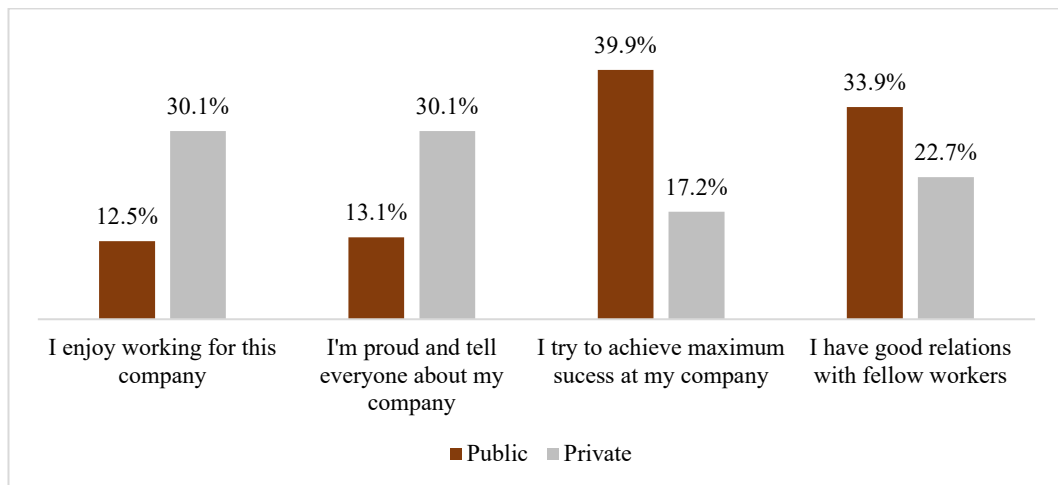


Fig. 3. Job satisfaction. Source: The authors' calculations.

Generally, job satisfaction is measured by some indicators and crossing the sectors reveals some differences. Thus, while only 13 percent of public sector employees were satisfied with their work, 30 percent of the private sector workers were satisfied with their work (more than double). Similarly, 13 percent of public workers were proud of their institution, while 30 percent of private workers felt so (again, more than double). While 41 percent of public employees stated that they tried to reach their maximum impact, as for the private employees, only 17 percent of them answered the same (i.e., less than half declared this). Also, while 33 percent of public employees claimed to have good relations with their fellow workers, 23 percent of private employees agreed with that (i.e., 10 percentage points less).

Employees were also asked to evaluate their working conditions and again significant differences were identified between these two sectors. Thus, while about 50 percent of public employees considered working conditions as good or very good, about 71 percent of private employees agreed that they had good or very good working conditions.

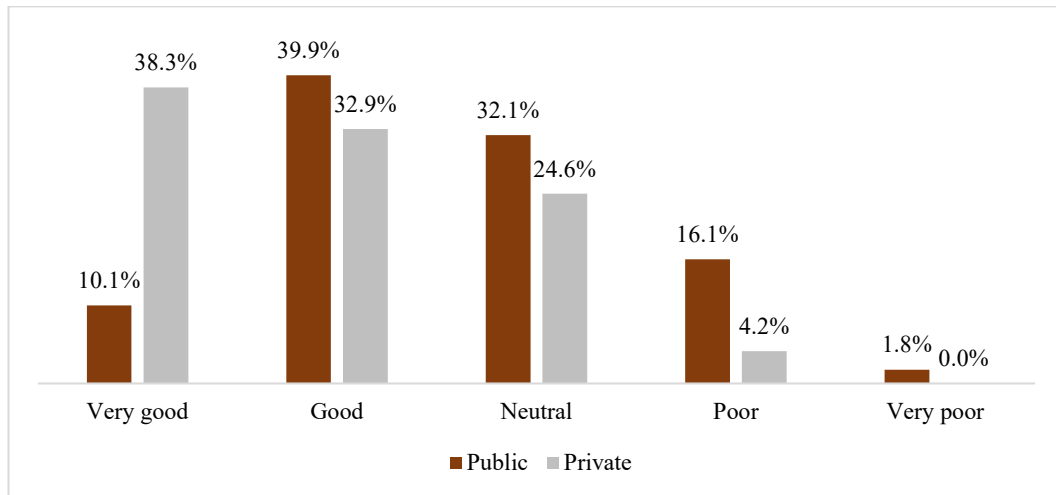


Fig. 4. Working conditions. Source: The authors' calculations.

3. ANALYSIS OF HYPOTHESES

To test the hypotheses listed below, several independent variables were used to identify the impact on the dependent variable.

H1: The high level of stress negatively affects the performance of employees;

H2: Private sector employees show higher levels of stress than public sector employees;

H3: The high level of stress affects the motivation of employees.

H1: H_0 – The high level of stress negatively affects the performance of employees; H_1 – The high level of stress does not affect negatively the performance of employees.

The bivariate correlation method was used to see if there was a correlation between performance at work as a dependent variable and four independent variables. Based on the results of the correlation analysis, it appears that inadequate treatment from the employer ($r = 0.382$, P -value $0.000 < 0.01$) has a significant positive correlation with the dependent variables followed by insufficient compensation ($r = 0.339$).

This implies that the more explicit the inadequate treatment and compensation by the employer, the greater the negative effects on the performance at work. Also, the better the treatment and compensation by the employer, the better the performance of the employees. Thus, zero hypothesis – ‘the high level of stress negatively affects the performance of workers’ – is accepted, as the results have

proven the hypothesis that work performance and factors identified as independent variables affect the employees’ stress levels.

Table 2. Correlation between Performance at Work

		Performance at work	Workplace insecurity	Lack of support from the supervisor	Inadequate treatment by the employer	Insufficient compensation
Pearson Correlation	Performance at work	1	0.276	0.302	0.382	0.339
	Workplace insecurity	0.276	1	0.504	0.449	0.351
	Lack of support from the supervisor	0.302	0.504	1	0.471	0.472
	Inadequate treatment by the employer	0.382	0.449	0.471	1	0.469
	Insufficient compensation	0.339	0.351	0.472	0.469	1

Source: The authors’ calculations.

H2: H₀ – Private sector workers show higher levels of stress than public sector workers; H₁ – Employees in the private sector do not show higher levels of stress than public sector employees.

Table 3. Independent Variable Test for Performance at Work by Sector

		Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Performance at work	Equal variances assumed	5.191	0.023	0.865	295	0.388
	Equal variances not assumed			0.863	289.223	0.389

Source: The authors’ calculations.

Levene’s test for variance suggests that variants for respondents differ significantly (*Sig.* 0.023 < 0.05) from each other. Since the assumption of “equal variance” is made, the *t*-test detects that *p* is greater than the significance level 0.05 (0.388 > 0.05), zero hypothesis (H₀) is confirmed and it can be concluded that there is sufficient evidence to say that at the level of significance of 5 percent, that private sector employees show higher levels of stress than public sector employees.

H3: H₀ – The high level of stress affects the motivation of employees; H₁ – The high level of stress does not affect the motivation of employees.

Table 4. Test of Motivation as an Independent Variable

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Motivation from managers	Equal variances assumed	0.018	0.895	0.579	258	0.563
	Equal variances not assumed			0.58	247.98	0.563

Source: The authors' calculations.

Levene's test for variance shows that variance for respondents does not differ significantly (*Sig.* 0.895 > 0.05) from each other. Since the assumption of "equal variance" is made, the t-test detects that the p value is greater than the significance level 0.05 (0.563 > 0.05). Zero hypothesis (H_0) is confirmed and it can be concluded that there is sufficient evidence to say that at the level of significance of 5 percent, the high level of stress affects the motivation of the employees.

4. LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Linear regression analysis is a statistical process that evaluates the relationship among variables. The regression analysis involves many techniques for analysing some variables when the focus is on the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables, also known as predictors. Dependent variables mean the main factor that we try to understand or predict between the application of regression analysis, in our case – performance at work. In their turn, independent variables represent factors that are suspected to have an impact on the dependent variables.

Statistical methods include those of descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) for predictors of independent stress variables and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation and multiple regression) for dependent variables of stress. Correlation excellently determines the relationship between independent and dependent variables within a given statistical group, which enables the overall results to be aggregated.

Table 5. Occupational Stress

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Workplace insecurity	3.13	0.764	340
Lack of support from the supervisor	2.92	0.724	340
Inadequate treatment by the employer	3.08	0.682	340
Insufficient compensation	3.03	0.756	340

Source: The authors' calculations.

The main factors that have anticipated occupational stress are job insecurity, lack of supervisor support, inadequate treatment by the employer, and inadequate compensation. Thus, from a scale of 1 to 4, the respondents said that on average of

3.13 (workplace insecurity), 2.92 (lack of support from supervisor), 3.08 (inadequate treatment by the employer) and 3.03 (inadequate compensation) negatively affected their performance.

Moreover, these results show the average response to independent and dependent variables and their deviation or distribution from the declared averages of the total sample. From these, it can be concluded that the average response rate to workplace insecurity and insufficient compensation deviate more from other variables.

The next table represents correlations among variables, respectively a matrix of correlations among all variables. This table represents the Pearson correlation coefficient, which measures linear correlation between variables X and Y. The most important thing this table shows is the correlation of independent variables with the dependent variables, i.e., performance at work. Thus, the table shows that the inadequate treatment by the employer ($r = 0.382$, P -value $0.000 < 0.01$) has a significant positive correlation with the dependent variables followed by insufficient compensation ($r = 0.339$).

Table 6. Pearson Correlation – Performance at Work

		Performance at work	Workplace insecurity	Lack of support from the supervisor	Inadequate treatment by the employer	Insufficient compensation
Pearson Correlation	Performance at work	1	0.276	0.302	0.382	0.339
	Workplace insecurity	0.276	1	0.504	0.449	0.351
	Lack of support from the supervisor	0.302	0.504	1	0.471	0.472
	Inadequate treatment by the employer	0.382	0.449	0.471	1	0.469
	Insufficient compensation	0.339	0.351	0.472	0.469	1
Sig. (1-tailed)	Performance at work	–	0	0	0	0
	Workplace insecurity	0	–	0	0	0
	Lack of support from the supervisor	0	0	–	0	0
	Inadequate treatment by the employer	0	0	0	–	0
	Insufficient compensation	0	0	0	0	–
N		239	239	239	239	239

Source: The authors' calculations.

Therefore, the more explicit the inadequate treatment and compensation by the employer, the greater the negative effects on job performance, and the better the treatment and compensation by the employer, the better the performance of the employee. The table also shows that there is a positive inter-correlation among independent variables.

The summary table gives the *R* coefficient in square and the coefficient *R* adjusted in square. *R*-squared is a statistical meter that shows how close data with the regression line are. This coefficient is known as the coefficient of determination, or multiplication coefficient for multiple regression. From Table 7, it emerges that 19 percent of variability of the dependent variable can be predicted by four independent variables. The adjusted *R*-squared is slightly lower (18 percent), because it considers the size of the sample. This pattern of regression analysis is performed to determine the degree and importance of the four independent variables playing in the dependent variables, i.e., performance at work. The model finds that the adjusted *R*-squared is 0.176, which indicates that about 18 percent of the work performance variation is explained by independent variables: inadequate treatment by employer, insufficient compensation, lack of supervisor support, and workplace insecurity.

Table 7. The Summary Table

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> Square	Adjusted <i>R</i> Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.435	0.19	0.176	0.765

Source: The authors' calculations.

The variance analysis known as ANOVA, in the simplest sense, makes a statistical test to analyse whether the population averages of some groups are equal and therefore generalises the *t*-test in more than two groups. ANOVA is useful for comparing (testing) three or more group averages for statistical significance. The significance test for *F* values is 13.687. Usually, when performing a multiple regression analysis and involving more and more independent variables, the *F*-value decreases. This implies that any additional involvement of independent variables does not contribute much to the regression analysis, so only small amounts of variance are added to the equation. From the table, it emerges that the *P*-value = 0.000 is less than 0.005, which indicates that the regression model is statistically significant.

Table 8. Variance Analysis – ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	<i>Df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	
1	Regression	32.021	4	8.005	13.687	0.000
	Residual	136.858	234	0.585		
	Total	168.879	238			

Source: The authors' calculations.

Table 9 shows the beta weights, by which we can interpret the unique contribution of each independent variable as the dependent variable predictor.

Table 9. Probability Distribution

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.798	0.275		2.905	0.004
	Workplace insecurity	0.082	0.078	0.074	1.041	0.299
	Lack of support from the supervisor	0.087	0.087	0.074	0.994	0.321
	Inadequate treatment by the employer	0.29	0.09	0.235	3.235	0.001
	Insufficient compensation	0.187	0.079	0.168	2.382	0.018

Source: The authors' calculations.

Hence, higher beta weights mean that certain forecasters contribute more to the regression equation than those with lower beta weights. Assuming all variables are kept constant, labour stress coefficients in the regression model show 0.082, 0.087, 0.29, 0.187 increase in work performance per unit; with every unit increase of workplace insecurity, lack of supervisor support, inadequate treatment by employer, insufficient compensation, respectively. Thus, it is understood that inadequate treatment by the employer and inadequate compensation have the highest beta weights in the regression analysis (0.29 and 0.187), so these two variables are the largest contributors to the dependent variable, work performance. This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that the significance values of these two variables (0.001 and 0.018) are statistically significant because they are smaller than 0.05.

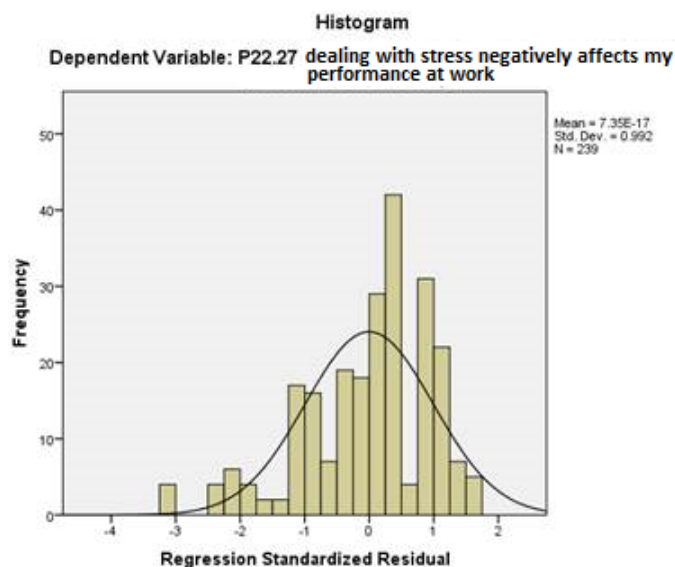


Fig. 5. Histogram. Source: The authors' calculations.

Figure 5 represents the histogram, which evaluates the probability distribution of a constant or quantitative variable. This figure shows the surpluses remaining after forecast from independent variables.

CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated that stressors do exist in organisations, and managers of various organisations must come up with various interventions to manage occupational stress. The traditional approach of employee counselling is not enough to manage stress. Therefore, there is a need to change the approach to managing work stress in order to minimise its impact on performance as well as employee wellbeing.

The findings of this paper suggest that work stress is mainly caused by workplace insecurity, lack of information on developments of the organisation, increase of workload, inadequate treatment by the employer, destructive relations among colleagues, lack of elementary working conditions and insufficient resources. The findings also reveal that occupational stress adversely affects the organisation, particularly in reducing employee performance, reducing work efficiency and decreasing their motivation. Furthermore, the results show that public and private sector employees consider the same factors as stressful and experience relatively similar levels of stress.

In general, the research suggests that the impact of occupational stress cannot be ignored and the failure to manage stress at work can harm the performance of the entire organisation. Thus, with the application of stress measurement methodology, managers can benefit from the identification of stressors in employees at their initial stage. This will help reduce stress before its impact creates serious problems, especially health problems for employees. Secondary research has shown that factors of occupational stress, including job insecurity, workload, long hours of work, and imbalance of effort and reward play an important role in causing a variety of physical illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and chronic fatigue syndrome, as well as psychological disorders such as anxiety, collapse and depression.

The interventions, which are commonly used in foreign organisations, are categorised into primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary interventions are the best in managing occupational stress and if these interventions are taken seriously, stress can be significantly reduced in organisations.

However, the usual stress management practices, which only involve traditional interventions, need to change drastically. Organisations will need to embrace a new approach to managing occupational stress, including organisational changes to prevent triggers and increase stressors. In addition, managers need to manage stress in a holistic way in order to minimise its effects especially on the well-being and health of employees. Therefore, both public and private organisations should regularly monitor their practices and policies to ensure a proper working environment. Moreover, these organisations need to install and practice periodic

stress measurement in order to identify troubled workers and provide them with an adequate level of support.

Although this paper has contributed to the existing body of knowledge, yet it might carry various limitations that need to be addressed in future by other scholars. Thus, from the applied methodology, it was difficult to identify the specific health effects, both physical and psychological, caused by stress. Also, this research has applied the quantitative method of extracting data, which always has its own limitations. However, this paper will motivate managers of various organisations to develop appropriate coping mechanisms to manage stress.

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