

THE IMPACT OF WORK-RELATED STRESS: A STUDY ON WORKPLACE CULTURE AND MENTAL HEALTH

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Abstract

Work-related stress is a vital factor that can impact an employee's mental health. Anxiety disorders and a huge decrement in productivity ratio can be the consequence of excessive work pressure. The major purpose of the study is to examine the depressive state of employees' under work-related stress and explore the role of workplace culture in influencing the mental well-being of employees from both perspectives negative as well as positive. With the approach of secondary qualitative research design, it is possible to make this study more engaging. Excessive workload, long working hours, job insecurity, poor management, and toxic workplace environments are addressed in this study as key stressors that are responsible for acting psychological state of an employee by increasing anxiety, burnout, and depression. The importance of supportive workplace culture, stress management programs, and mental health initiatives in the subject of mitigating the negative effects of the workplace are defined in this study. The findings of the study suggest that it is essential for each and every organization to adopt policies for promoting work-life balance, open communication, and employee well-being.

Keywords: Work-related stress, Anxiety, Workplace culture, Mental health, Employee well-being, Occupational stress, Job life

1. Introduction

In this generation where everyone has to match the rhythm of technology, workplace stress has become a growing subject of concern. Excessive pressure of work, tight deadlines, as well as long working hours, and pressure to perform far better than others make most of the employees frustrated which in turn increases their level of stress. In the current competitive landscape, each and every organization are willing to grab the leading position for which employees are expected to be highly productive. Excessive competitiveness makes the work environment stressful for many employees. According to medical professionals and psychologists, excessive pressure of work is not only harmful to the body but it also negatively impacts the mental health of a person (Søvold et al. 2021). It has been mentioned by the World Health Organization that work-related stress is one of the most crucial reasons behind the occurrence of severe mental health issues among employees (Sun et al. 2022).

It has been scientifically proven that when employees experience constant pressure, it causes nervousness, restlessness, concentration difficulty, as well as even panic attacks. Feeling stressed for a prolonged time can increase the chances of generalized anxiety disorder (Teo et al. 2021). In this disorder, an excessive and uncontrollable worry makes daily life very challenging. As well as there are also some workplace factors like job insecurity, poor management, and lack of support which sometimes elevate stress levels which as a result make anxiety worse. The work environment of an organization matters a lot in the subject of reducing or increasing work-related stress. In a positive workplace culture employees feel valued, heard, as well as supported, which reduces stress and anxiety. Organizations that promote a healthy work environment, provide mental support, and encourage open communication are able to satisfy their employees. On the

other hand, a toxic work environment can increase stress among employees' which impacts their mental health.

2.2 Understanding Work-related Stress and Anxiety

Excessive work demands, job pressures, as well as difficult work conditions are the major reasons for work-related stress which negatively affects an employee's psychological and physiological state. As mentioned in the International Labour Organization or ILO, the actual meaning of excessive stress of work is expecting productivity which is beyond an individual's ability to cope (Subair et al. 2021). Due to excessive stress, an employee can experience emotional exhaustion, as well as mental distress. WHO addressed work-related stress as a the most crucial occupational health issue which can impact the mental health of millions of employees in the whole world (Iavicoli et al. 2022). American Psychological Association define work-related anxiety as a persistent feeling of worry, nervousness, as well as fear. In this condition, a person even is not able to focus on daily life (Levy and Ellison 2022). The transactional Model of Stress and Coping presents the psychological perspective of job-related stress in which it is clearly defined that the major reason of stress, depression and anxiety is when an employee perceives tasks beyond their coping abilities (Si et al. 2023). In the workplace stress and anxiety can increase absenteeism and turnover rates, while decreasing the overall productivity. There are multiple studies that highlight most of the time workers report anxiety symptoms just because of the high pressure of job life. Moreover, too much stress sometimes creates a lack of concentration among employees for which they lose the ability to make the right decisions. According to Kim and Jung (2022), modern organizations need to implement some proactive interventions, like workload management mechanisms, programs that guide employees psychologically and the promotion of a supportive work culture which can further address workplace stress and anxiety.

2.3 Workplace Factors Contributing to Stress

There are a lot of factors that negatively affect the psychological condition of an employee in the work environment. It is mentioned by Chireh et al. (2023), that one of the major and most significant reasons for work-related stress is long working hours. It has been seen in multiple workplaces that employees who are working over 48 hours per week experience an elevated level of stress in comparison to those who work within a standard hour because excessive work hours exacerbate the chances of fatigue, as well as reduce cognitive functioning, and makes an employee emotionally frustrated. A study published in the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* (2021), mentioned that employees experience much anxiety and stress on days of unrealistic deadlines and heavy workloads compared to those days with manageable workloads (Taris et al. 2021). Overburden of work sometimes demotivates employees, for which they feel helpless. Inadequate management and lack of superior leaders also increase the stress in the work environment. It is mentioned in a significant number of studies, that unsupportive or ineffective leadership is one of the ideal reasons for experiencing excessive pressure in the workplace. unrealistic expectations, inconsistent feedback and lack of prominent guidance elevates stress for employees. An unsupportive work environment led to job dissatisfaction and gradual deterioration of mental health. Job insecurity has been linked to increased workplace stress (Zheng et al. 2021). Employees who are placed in temporary or unstable jobs experience significant levels of fatigue in comparison to those who have secure job positions because uncertainty about future employment brings up chronic worry and anxiety. In addition to this, conflicts in the workplace as well as toxic environments make the situation impossible to continue the work with deep concentration which ultimately affects the overall performance and mental state of a worker. It is a very common issue

in most of organisations that employees leave their jobs because it becomes very difficult for them to further continue in a negative work culture. On the other hand, bullying, discrimination, and lack of support from colleagues also build up a toxic environment in workplaces which are equally responsible for elevating stress (Al Khoury 2022). It is very important for modern organisations to promote a healthy and productive work environment as a solution to work-related stress faced by millions of employees.

2.4 Effects of Work-related Stress on Mental Health

In the subject of psychological and physical health, work-related stress has significant implications. In this current generation employees and organizations, both are facing the crucial consequence of workplace stress. As reported by Gajera et al. (2021), the National Institute for Mental Health addresses workplace stress as the most impactful reason for exacerbating anxiety disorders. High-stress jobs cause excessive worry, panic attacks, and nervousness which negatively impact the cognitive capability of a worker. It has been mentioned in a couple of studies that workers who are battling with stress for a prolonged period have the maximum chance of experiencing clinical depression. In a study, Shi (2024), mentioned Burnout or frustration as the initial consequence of unmanaged stress. Excessive pressure on mental state is the basic reason for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of performance. Some common symptoms of unmanaged stress are deficiency of focus, cognitive fatigue, and emotional detachment from daily tasks.

Apart from mental health issues, work-related stress also affects the physical health of a person by increasing the chances of many chronic disorders. It has been found in multiple studies that employees who are unable to deal with excessive stress, most of the time become patients of different cardiovascular diseases. As per Forte et al. (2022), too much pressure on mental state increases cortisol levels in the body as well as increased blood pressure. Stress influences the initial balance of hormonal imbalances which leads to hypertension, heart disease, and a weakened immune system. In this way, individuals become more susceptible to illnesses. Sleep disturbances are another major consequence of experiencing stress for a prolonged period. Stress increases the chances of insomnia, which impacts the concentration and decision-making ability of employees (Wang et al. 2023). It is necessary for organizations to integrate stress management strategies, encourage a balanced workload, and foster a supportive work environment for making employees satisfied and increasing productivity.

Theoretical Framework

The Job Demands-Resources or JD-R Model prominently supports this study. The JD-R Model defines how workplace stress takes place at the time when job demands exceed available resources. Job demands, including excessive workload, long hours, as well as poor management, exacerbate mental strain; on the other hand, job resources such as supportive leadership and a healthy work environment aid in combating stress. The model sheds light on how an imbalance between these factors is the cause of anxiety and burnout. It makes it possible for the study to explore how workplace culture shapes the availability of resources, and, in turn, it influences employee mental health. The JD-R model ultimately allows for a structured approach that helps to understand the underlying attachment between stress, anxiety, and organizational practices.

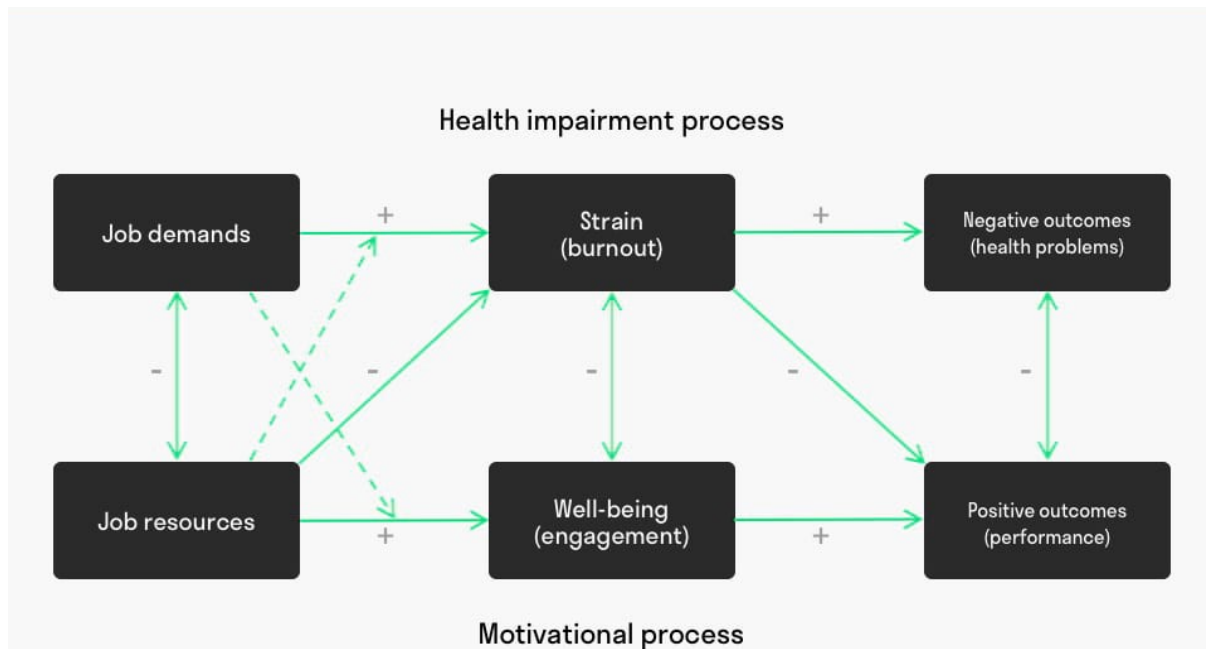


Figure 1: JD-R Model
(Source: Janse 2025)

3. Research Methodology

Aims and Objectives

The main purpose of the study is to assess how excessive pressure of work is responsible for fueling the anxiety and depression level of an employee and also to explore how workplace culture shapes the mental of workers. In this study, the definition of workplace culture is shared values, behaviors, norms, as well as practices. All of them play a very important role in order to shaping employee experience within an organization. The research particularly focuses on whether workplace cultures, including gender-inclusive practices, open communication, management support, fairness, flexibility, and psychological safety, promote or hinder mental well-being. In this context, an inclusive culture refers to one that is free from discrimination on the basis of gender, caste, disability, or social class. An inclusive culture in the workplace not only encourages work-life balance and mental health but also enhances employee autonomy. On the opposite side, toxic cultures is refers to hierarchy abuse, poor communication, excessive pressure, as well as neglect of employee well-being.

Research Objectives

- To examine factors associated with work-related stress in different workplace environments.
- To understand the link between work pressure and the development of anxiety disorders.
- To examine how various types of workplace culture influence the mental health and stress levels of employees.
- To study how job pressure, workload, and organizational policies have an impact on the well-being of employees.

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Inclusion</i>	<i>Exclusion</i>
Type of Workplace	Formal sector workplaces in both private and public sectors (e.g., corporate offices, IT firms, hospitals, educational institutions)	Informal sector (e.g., gig economy, domestic work, street vendors)
Data Sources	Peer-reviewed journal articles, books, government reports, organizational publications (published 2015–2024)	Unverified online sources, outdated or anecdotal data
Workplace Characteristics	Structured hierarchies, defined roles, regulated work hours, formal HR policies	Workplaces without defined structures, policies, or reporting systems
Mental Health Issues	Anxiety, stress-induced burnout, depression, and insomnia	Disorders unrelated to workplace stress (e.g., substance abuse, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia)

3.1 Research Design

The study is based on review of literature. Existing literature on the specific subject is analysed to establish a well-rounded understanding of the impact of work-related stress on anxiety as well as the role of workplace culture in mental health. The review of different scholarly sources is an ideal approach for this study as it helps to spot prime stress factors of a workplace, their psychological effects, and possible interventions. The collection of secondary information is prominent for this study because it gives a broad understanding of existing knowledge and at the same time, makes it easy to shed light on gaps for future studies.

The study adhered to a thematic literature review approach. For the sourcing of relevant literature, some keywords such as “work-related stress,” “anxiety at workplace,” “workplace culture,” and “mental health and employment” are used along with the utilisation of some exclusive databases such as Google Scholar and PubMed. Inclusion focused on such studies that employ qualitative methods, such as ethnographic and observational research. Sources from 2020–2025 were chosen on the basis of relevance, credibility, and contribution to workplace mental health discussions.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

For this study, initial information was collected from different secondary sources, like peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, industry white papers, and recent empirical studies. These sources are excellent for strutting the foundation of the study by providing evidence-based data on work-related stress, its impact on anxiety, as well as workplace mental health strategies. There are some excellent academic databases like Google Scholar, PubMed, and Scopus which were used in this study to get the reach of relevant literature. The selection criteria are studies published within the last five years because it helps to ensure the inclusion of up-to-date research.

3.3 Sampling Strategy

This specific research based on secondary data collection have used existing studies and reports to sample the data (Islam and Aldaihani 2022). Data was selected from various types of trusted sources including government reports as well as academic research. The proper focus of the data sampling was on studies related to workplace stress, anxiety, and culture of workplaces. Data for

this study was chosen from various industries, job roles, as well as groups of ages to make sure a broader understanding is maintained.

3.4 Data Analysis Technique

This specific research has used the technique of qualitative analysis (Koontalay et al. 2021). This is to effectively analyze the stress and anxiety associated with workplaces throughout industries. Various types of statistical data were used. These include rates of stress prevalence. This was done to effectively review the trends and patterns. On the other hand, various types of qualitative studies were also analyzed to gain a proper understanding of the critical impacts of workplace cultures on the mental health of employees.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

This research has used secondary data (Konstantiset al. 2024). This is why it is very crucial to make sure that all the sources are credible as well as publicly available. The aspects of proper citations and references are included in the study to make sure original authors are acknowledged and plagiarism is prevented. On the other hand, there are no personal or confidential data that was used. It was done to maintain proper compliance with the GDPR. This is how the study makes sure that only ethically approved research is considered to maintain integrity as well as transparency.

4. Results

4.1 Key Findings

Extent and Severity of Work-Related Stress Among Employees

The pressure associated with work-life is one of the major issues that is affecting employees throughout the world. Approximately 43% of employees in the United States have stated that they feel stressed during their workday (AIS 2025). On the other hand, 61% of UK employees feel very less psychologically safe at their workplaces (Andrew 2024). It is noted that employees who are younger at age feel higher levels of stress than employees who are older. 48% of employees aged between 18 to 25 and 51% of the employees who are aged between 26 to 43 have reported that they face stress in associated with their workplaces (Jager 2024). On the other hand, there are only 17% of the workers in between the age of 65 and above who feel stress for their work.

PERCENTAGE OF U.S. WORKERS REPORTING WORKPLACE STRESS (BY AGE)

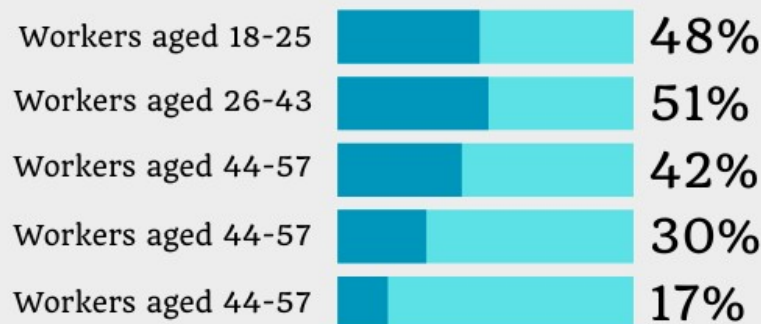


Figure 1: Workplace Stress Percentage by Age
(Source: Jager 2024)

Research has found that approximately six out of ten employees in various crucial economies have reported that they have faced some kind of increased stress in workplaces (Spill 2024). This fact

clearly highlights the fact that this specific issue is already widespread throughout the globe. On the other hand, the stress associated with workplaces may also create serious financial consequences. These consequences related to workplace stress have cost the U.S. economy \$300 billion annually (Steve Nguyen 2024). This happened especially due to the ineffective levels of productivity and absenteeism. The approach of unmanaged issues of workplaces may lead to various types of long-term mental as well as physical health problems. These factors may affect both the employees as well as the businesses.

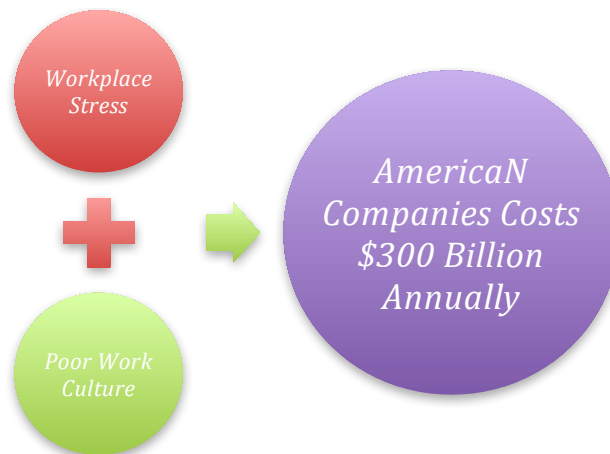


Figure 2: Costs for Workplace Stress
(Source: Self-developed)

Correlation Between Workplace Stress and the Development of Anxiety Symptoms

Workplace stress is one of the most common bearers of the issue of mental health. There are various studies that have clearly demonstrated the fact that approximately 79% of people consider the stress of work to be one of the main causes of stress (Spill 2024). This fact sometimes leads to chronic conditions including anxiety and depression. These specific mental conditions may significantly disrupt the quality of sleep and reduce the level of concentration at work. On the other hand, anxiety and depression also may cause persistent feelings of worry or fear.

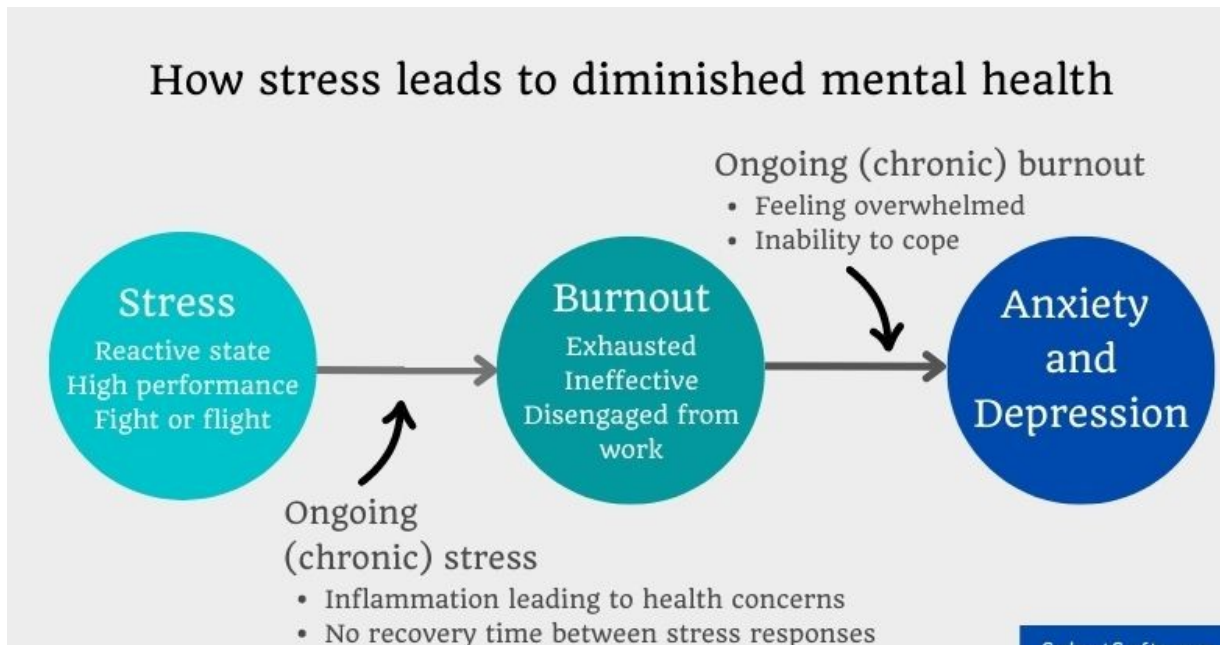


Figure 3: Relation Between Workplace Stress and Anxiety
(Source: Jager 2024)

The aspects of stress in the workplace also create various negative effects on personal lives. This is evident in the fact approximately 71% of employees noted to believe that the stress associated with their work has contributed to hampering their personal relationships (AIS 2025). On the other hand, 76% of U.S. workers have reported that workplace stress poses negative effects on their quality of sleep (Jager 2024). This fact simultaneously contributes to worsening mental health. These specific statistics clearly show the fact that there is a clear link that remains consistent between work environments of higher stress and the development of disorders like anxiety and depression.

4.2 Role of Workplace Culture

Impact of Supportive Versus Toxic Workplace Cultures on Employee Mental Well-being

The culture at workplace creates significant effects on the stress levels of employees (Kim and Jung 2022). A workplace culture that is supportive helps in the matter of promoting open communication. On the other hand, it also recognizes the efforts of employees and encourages a balance in work-life. This specific fact may contribute to maintaining a balance in work-life as well as enhancing the levels of job satisfaction and better mental well-being for employees throughout the world. On the other hand, toxic workplace cultures are noted to significantly contribute to various types of serious mental issues (Monteiro and Joseph 2023). Research has found that there are approximately 15% of workers who have described their workplace as toxic (APA 2023). Toxic environments may also hamper the rates of engagement from employees. This will consequently contribute to high turnover as well as reduced productivity. These types of toxic work cultures make employees feel undervalued, overworked as well as unsupported. These facts negatively impact the mental health of employees.

Influence of Leadership Styles and HR Policies on Managing Workplace Stress

There is a crucial role of leadership and HR policies in the matter of managing the stress at workplaces. Leaders who are supportive as well as encourage the aspects of communication, flexibility as well as recognition among employees are noted to help in the matter of reducing stress (Oruh et al. 2021). On the other hand, HR policies that provide flexible hours, mental health support as well as clear measures for anti-harassment eventually contribute to creating a healthier environment at the workplace (BELLA 2023).

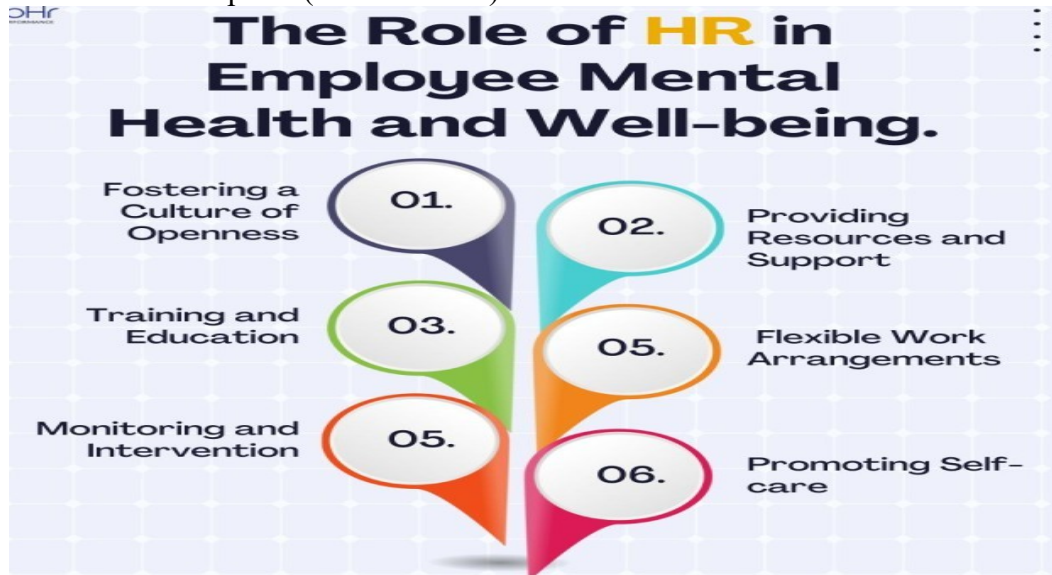


Figure 4: Role of HR on Workplace Stress Management
(Source: FabHR 2023)

Toxic leadership on the other hand, highly contributes to increasing the aspects of stress through fear, unrealistic demands as well as poor communication (Saban 2024). Weak HR policies similarly lead to various types of negative factors including higher absenteeism, lower productivity as well as increased dissatisfaction (Dhlewayo et al. 2021). A positive culture at the workplace enhances the chances of employee well-being as well as the performance of the business.

5. Discussion

5.1 Interpretation of Findings

The findings that are gathered throughout this study clearly highlight the fact that stress at workplaces is a major issue that affects the mental health of employees. There is a notable number of employees who have noted that they have faced higher levels of stress at their workplaces (Adams and Salomons 2021). This specific fact has a direct connection with some critical mental conditions including anxiety and depression. Research has found that especially employees who are younger face higher levels of stress in comparison to older employees.

There is a crucial role of workplace culture in mental well-being. The research noted that supportive workplace cultures that promote work-life balance that help employees in effectively managing their levels of stress (Wu et al. 2021). On the other hand, toxic work environments lead to increased levels of anxiety, reduced engagement as well as increased turnover. The research data also confirms the fact that the role of leadership styles and HR policies are very crucial in creating a strong influence on stress levels. An unexpected finding is that a strong connection between the levels of stress and personal relationships (Guan et al. 2022). There are many such employees who often feel that work-related stress has negatively affected their personal lives. This fact clearly

highlights that it is crucial to maintain a better workplace culture throughout sectors. ace support systems.

5.2 Practical Implications

Organizations must need to promote a healthy work culture to balance workplace-related stress (Batool et al. 2023). This may be done with the help of effectively encouraging open communication, flexible working hours as well as mental health support (Potter et al. 2022). On the other hand, it is also crucial to maintain leadership training to make sure that managers are supporting the well-being of employees rather than increasing stress. The effective implementation of these specific strategies these strategies may help businesses in enhancing the quality of employee well-being and productivity.

6. Conclusion and Future Directions

This specific study clearly highlights a strong connection between the stress of the workplace and anxiety. The study mentions that higher levels of stress create negative effects on the productivity and the well-being of employees. A supportive culture in the workplace also helps in reducing the levels of stress for the employees. On the other hand, a work environment that is toxic contributes to increasing the issue of mental health.

These specific findings that are gathered within this study suggest organizations that they must need to promote mental well-being for employees with the help of flexible work policies, mental health support as well as positive leadership. On the other hand, resources for managing stress as well as the healthier environment of work may provide benefits for employees. This may help them maintain good mental health as well as a balance between work and personal life.

The study also deals with some critical limitations. These limitations commonly occur due to the use of secondary data. This is because secondary may not always be able to effectively capture real-time changes within the workplace. On the other hand, the aspects of differences in the industry, location as well as job roles may also create significant influences on the levels of stress. This is very crucial for future research to effectively focus on the real-time experiences of employees. Researchers may also study the impacts of specific workplace interventions. The study suggests that more research is needed on the long-term mental health effects as well as the process technology that may support the well-being of employees.

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