LEX LOCALIS-JOURNAL OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT
ISSN:1581-5374 E-ISSN:1855-363X
VOL. 24, NO. 1(2026)

ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE AND OCCUPATIONAL STRESS: A FIELD STUDY ON ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN TEBESSA PROVINCE, ALGERIA

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Received :15/06/2025 Accepted :03/02/2026 Published :30/03/2026

Abstract
This study aimed to explore and identify the relationship between the prevailing organizational climate in a sample of primary schools in Tebessa Province and the occupational stresses experienced by administrative staff in their work environment. Accordingly, the study relied on the dimensions of organizational climate (leadership style, incentives, work technology, and training) as urgent and critical factors that assist educational institutions in general in reducing the burdens resulting from employees' exposure to occupational stress. The study adopted the descriptive method and employed a purposive sample consisting of 40 male and 120 female administrative employees (total N=160). Two scales were applied, each comprising 15 items, after verifying their validity and reliability. The results revealed a strong correlational and integrative relationship between the elements of organizational climate and its dimensions in determining the level of occupational stress among administrative employees in the education sector in Tebessa Province.

Keywords: Organizational climate, occupational stress, administrative staff, leadership style, incentives, technology, training.

Introduction

Primary schools constitute a fundamental pillar and essential foundation in the education and upbringing of the younger generation. They represent one of the most prominent and significant institutions adopted by the state to serve the children of society and prepare them to engage successfully in life while contributing to the building of a civilized nation through the outcomes they produce. Educational institutions strive to provide a suitable organizational climate for their employees, considering them the most influential resource in their activities. This is essential for maintaining and supporting them, particularly amid the contemporary challenges facing society, in order to avoid obstacles that may impede the achievement of institutional goals. However, these institutions encounter several barriers and problems, among which is the issue of occupational stress affecting human resources, particularly administrative staff. Such stress has a significant impact on their behavior, which in turn is reflected in their performance and ultimately leads to reduced productivity. To address this, it is necessary to adopt multiple and effective strategies that fall within the dimensions of organizational climate, most notably leadership style, incentives, technology, and training. The aim is to identify the repercussions resulting from these dimensions, which may contribute to the occupational stress experienced by administrative employees in primary education institutions. Based on the

aforementioned considerations, the following main research question can be formulated: What is *the relationship between organizational climate and occupational stress among administrative employees in the national education sector?*

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- To attempt to uncover the relationships and repercussions arising from the organizational climate that contribute to causing occupational stress among administrative employees in the national education sector.
- To identify the reality of the prevailing organizational climate in primary schools.
- To reveal the positive aspects that fulfill the satisfactions and needs of administrative employees in the national education sector, thereby enhancing their psychological and physical well-being.
- To clarify the most important effective methods and approaches related to the dimensions of organizational climate—represented by leadership style, incentives, technology, and training—in alleviating and reducing the occupational stress experienced by administrative employees in the national education sector.
- To provide proposals and recommendations that assist educational institutions in addressing the occupational stress faced by administrative employees in the national education sector.

1. General Concepts of Organizational Climate

1.1. Organizational Climate

The accumulated research on the concept of organizational climate has led to the emergence of numerous definitions that outline its general frameworks, dimensions, and constituent elements. The term "organizational climate" is a metaphorical expression derived from a geographical concept related to environmental temperature (coldness and warmth), used to aesthetically convey the atmosphere within the organization.

Al-Zahrani (1992) defined it as the psychological and social framework prevailing within the organization, which either encourages individuals to exert significant effort toward achieving its goals or hinders them from utilizing their latent potential. It is the outcome of numerous factors that can influence it either positively or negatively. (Al-Hashimi & Boumengar, 2014, p. 43) This definition highlights the significant role of psychological and social factors within the organization in motivating employees' enthusiasm and capabilities and directing them toward the achievement of organizational objectives.

Al-Dhanibat (1999) defined it as the set of factors, characteristics, rules, and methods that direct and govern the behavior of individuals within the organization and distinguish it from other organizations. This definition points to the distinctive features that characterize certain institutions compared to others, whereby individuals are subject to their decisions, influenced by them, and strive to achieve their goals.

Al-Ma'shar (2001) defined it as the set of social characteristics and principal attributes that shape the human and work environment, which are perceived by employees and influence their behavior. (Al-Momani, 2011, pp. 25-26) .This definition emphasizes the social interactions and human relations that occur in the work environment and contribute to building the organizational climate within the institution.

Organizational climate is also defined as "individuals' perceptions of certain organizational variables in the work environment (leadership style, organizational policies, values, and attitudes, etc.) and the extent of their compatibility with the individual's organizational and social formation." (Ashouri, 2013) . This definition refers to the principles upon which the organization is based, about which individuals possess prior knowledge and upon which they rely in adapting to its requirements.

Al-Maghribi defines organizational climate as "the set of characteristics that distinguish the internal environment of the organization in which the individual works, influencing his values, attitudes, and perceptions, due to its relatively high degree of stability and constancy." (Aksas, 2013).This definition underscores the relative stability and steadiness of the organization, which contributes to the individual employee's susceptibility to influence by its internal environment.

From the preceding definitions, it can be concluded that organizational climate expresses the characteristics and features available in the work environment within the educational institution. It influences the behaviors of teachers and staff, while the institution is in turn affected by their performance. The effectiveness and positivity of the climate can be determined through the perceptions of the staff, taking into consideration their scientific and cultural level, experience, and the surrounding context.

1.2. Dimensions of Organizational Climate

Numerous researchers have addressed the topic of organizational climate and proceeded to identify its dimensions and analyze its content. Through careful examination of these studies, the most frequently cited dimensions were selected as follows:

1.2.1. Leadership Style

Al-Omian (2005) defines leadership as the art of influencing subordinates to accomplish assigned tasks with enthusiasm and sincerity. Leadership styles include the autocratic style, characterized by centralization, authoritarianism, punishment, downward communication, and one-way direction, which limits the exchange of opinions, ideas, participation, and creativity. In contrast, the democratic style is based on decentralization, delegation of authority, two-way communication, and reward, which encourages interaction, the presentation of creative ideas, and innovation. (Adwan, 2012)

This definition focuses on the most common leadership styles—autocratic and democratic—and highlights the importance of fostering humane and interactive relationships among organizational members through participation in decision-making, delegation of authority, and two-way communication. Such practices contribute to creating a suitable and supportive organizational climate that facilitates the achievement of organizational goals.

1.2.2. Incentives

Incentives refer to the set of tools and mean that the organization seeks to provide, whether in material or moral form, individually or collectively, positive or negative, in order to achieve the satisfaction of its members and attain the desired effectiveness, while taking into account the surrounding environmental conditions. (Adwan, 2012)

This definition indicates that the organization places significant emphasis on incentives within its policies to achieve various forms of satisfaction for its members, both inside and outside the organization—whether psychological or material—in order to accomplish its objectives.

1.2.3. Technology

Technology is defined as the body of knowledge, expertise, information, and material and organizational means available and utilized across various fields with the aim of satisfying growing human needs. Alternatively, it is the systematic application of scientific knowledge in production processes and the delivery of new products. Thus, technology encompasses ideas related to the methods of producing goods more than the goods themselves. (Al-Aifawi & Al-Aifa, 2016, p. 44) This definition illustrates individuals' need for the availability of technology within the organization they work for, in order to enhance their well-being and develop their performance in service of organizational goals amid the prevailing competitiveness in their environment.

1.2.4. Training

Salah Abdel Baqi defines training as "a planned activity aimed at equipping individuals with a set of information and skills that lead to increased rates of individual performance at work." (Al-Taher & Ahmed, 2020) This definition highlights the practical value provided by training through the acquisition of skills, effective handling of problems and situations encountered during task completion, and the improvement and development of performance levels.

2. General Concepts of Occupational Stress

2.1. Occupational Stress

The issue of occupational stress, also known as work stress, has occupied the minds of many scholars in the field of organizational behavior due to its direct or indirect impact on individuals and organizations of all kinds. This impact may be positive, such as motivating the individual toward innovation and self-development, or negative, such as exposing the individual to personal or organizational problems and harm.

Cox (1986) defined occupational stress as "an experience of pressure resulting from an imbalance between demands (internal and external) and the ability to cope with these demands when resistance is significant." Meanwhile, Behr and Newman, as cited by Lotfi Rashid (1992), defined it as "a state arising from the interaction between people and their work, characterized by producing changes within them and driving them to deviate from their normal performance." (Sahraoui, 2013)

Cooper defined it as the feeling experienced by workers while performing their duties, which negatively affects their performance. This feeling results from a set of environmental factors, the most prominent of which are: role ambiguity, role conflict, environmental working conditions, workload, and interpersonal relationships at work. These factors cause physiological and psychological strain. (Bakai, 2020, p. 134)

From the above, a specific and comprehensive concept of occupational stress can be derived: it is a feeling that befalls the individual within and outside the work environment, expressing his or her inability to adapt to the surrounding circumstances. It leads to behaviors resulting from stimuli—whether negative or positive—depending on the individual's ability to cope with these stressors.

2.2. Elements of Occupational Stress

- **Stimulus:** This includes all forces that cause work stress and lead to the feeling of psychological pressure.
- **Response:** This encompasses psychological, physical, or behavioral reactions toward the stress. Frustration and anxiety are among the most prominent responses.
- **Interaction:** This refers to the interaction between the stress-inducing factors and the responses to them. (Meknassi, 2007)

Occupational stress arises from several sources, some related to the nature of the work and the organizational environment, others related to the personalities and traits of individuals, and still others related to the profession itself.

3. The Field Framework of the Study

3.1. Methodological Procedures of the Study

3.1.1. Scope of the Study

- ***Spatial (Geographical) Scope:*** This study covers Administrative District No. 08 in the Cheria Circle, Tebessa Province.
- ***Temporal Scope:*** The study was conducted in April 2025 during the 2024/2025 academic year.
- ***Human Scope:*** The human scope of the study includes administrative staff working in primary schools in Tebessa Province, Algeria.

3.1.2. Research Method Used

The researcher adopted the descriptive method in this study, as it is the most appropriate approach for the nature of the phenomenon under investigation.

3.1.3. Study Sample

A purposive sample was selected using non-probability sampling, based on the nature of the topic and the objectives of the research. The sample consisted of all administrative employees working in the management and administration of educational institutions in Tebessa Province, Algeria. The researcher identified the total number of administrative staff as 160 employees of both genders.

3.1.4. Data Collection Tools - Questionnaire:

Data concerning the studied topic were collected using a questionnaire form containing 16 questions. This is one of the most commonly used techniques in social research. In addition, some unstructured interviews were conducted with the respondents to verify the accuracy of the data provided in the questionnaire and to gather additional information that could be utilized later in the study. The questionnaire was chosen as the primary tool for this research because it is the most suitable instrument for studies that allow both quantitative and qualitative handling.

- **Observation:** The observation tool was used purposefully and simultaneously in various places and times (structured observation). This allowed the researcher to form a clear perception of the realities and circumstances surrounding the human resources in the institution, to observe their behavior and reactions, and to assess their responsiveness to and understanding of the statements included in the questionnaire axes.
- **Interview:** The current study employed unstructured interviews to address gaps in the information collected through the questionnaire and observation. This was achieved by conducting a series of free interviews with selected members of the study population, representing different categorical affiliations and organizational levels.
- **Documents and Records:** The current study relied on a set of documents and records, which are among the most important techniques and tools for data collection in human and social research. These were used to uncover and verify certain facts, information, and data related to the field of the study.

3.1.5. Statistical Processing

The researcher used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 28) to analyze the data collected through the various data collection tools. The study relied on the following statistical methods: frequencies, percentages, Pearson's correlation coefficient, and the Chi-square test (χ^2).

3.2. Presentation and Interpretation of the Study Data

Table No. (01) Responses of the Respondents Regarding the Relationship Between Leadership Style and the Increase in Occupational Stress According to the Age Variable Axis No. (01)

Age	Yes	No	Total
Less than 25 years	45 (28%)	10 (6%)	55 (34.5%)
25 to 35 years	35 (22%)	10 (6%)	45 (28%)
35 to 44 years	31 (19%)	4 (2.5%)	35 (22%)
45 years and above	20 (12.5%)	5 (3%)	25 (15.5%)
Total	**131 (81.5%)**	**29 (17.5%)**	**160 (100%)**

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the outputs of SPSS v-26.

From the statistical Table No. (01), which illustrates the relationship between leadership style and occupational stress according to the age variable, it is evident that the first trend is expressed by the category of respondents who have not exceeded 25 years of age. They confirmed that they suffer from occupational stress due to the prevailing leadership style in

their institutions, at a rate of 28%, which is the highest percentage according to the table data. This indicates that this category is the most affected, possibly due to their lack of experience and life skills in dealing with organizational and administrative problems.

The table further shows that the age group between 25 and 35 years expressed "Yes," indicating that they suffer from occupational stress at a rate of 22%. This group ranked second and is close to the first in percentage, which can be explained by their insufficient adaptation to the work environment and its requirements. The age group between 35 and 44 years came in third place with 19%, which may be interpreted as resulting from their higher level of control and empowerment at work. The data also reveal that 12.5% of respondents in the category of 45 years and above expressed "Yes," indicating a gradual decrease in stress as the age of the administrative employee increases. This may be attributed to their possession of sufficient experience and awareness to deal with various situations encountered in the work environment.

As for the second trend, it represents respondents who are under 25 years and those between 25 and 35 years who confirmed that leadership style does not contribute to increasing occupational stress, at the same rate of 6%. This confirms their good relationship with their direct supervisors and their effective communication with them. Meanwhile, the 35–44 years category expressed this at only 2.5%, the lowest percentage in the table, indicating that this age group is the most balanced, comfortable, and rational at work, relatively free from occupational stress compared to the others, despite the proximity of percentages. The category of 45 years and above also expressed this at 3%, which demonstrates the interaction and harmony of this group with their supervisors and their cooperative efforts to accomplish tasks participatively, share work problems, and avoid occupational stress.

Through the statistical results obtained in Table No. (01), it is clear that the value of the Chi-square test (χ^2) reached 1.63 at 3 degrees of freedom, with a significance level of approximately 0.65. This value is greater than the adopted significance level of 0.05, indicating the absence of a statistically significant relationship between leadership style and the increase in occupational stress according to the age variable. Consequently, differences in age groups do not statistically affect the relationship between leadership style and occupational stress among the sample members. Additionally, the value of Pearson's correlation coefficient was 0.08, which is a very weak value, indicating a weak correlational relationship between the two variables. This result is also consistent with the Chi-square test, which did not show statistical significance for this relationship.

Table No. (02): Respondents' Answers Regarding the Relationship Between Incentives and Occupational Stress According to the Gender Variable Axis No. (02)

Type of Incentives	Male	Female	Total
Material incentives	6 (3.75%)	10 (6.25%)	16 (10%)
Moral incentives	4 (2.5%)	2 (1.25%)	6 (3.75%)
Material and moral incentives combined	122 (76.25%)	16 (10%)	138 (86.25%)
Total	**132 (82.5%)**	**28 (17.5%)**	**160 (100%)**

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the outputs of SPSS v-26.

The statistical Table No. (02), which illustrates the relationship between incentives and occupational stress according to the gender variable, shows that the first trend represents respondents who suffer from occupational stress due to the lack of material incentives, at a rate of 10%, with a slight variation between males and females, slightly higher for females. This indicates that this category is not satisfied with material incentives alone and seeks additional moral motivation to avoid occupational stress. The table further reveals that the second category expressed suffering from occupational stress at a rate of 3.75% due to the absence of material incentives and reliance solely on moral incentives to alleviate work problems. This may not align with their ambitions and social conditions, with a slight increase in favor of males.

In contrast, respondents in the third category expressed, at a rate of 86.25%, the necessity of providing both material and moral incentives together to avoid occupational stress. This can be explained by their strong need for such incentives in their educational institutions, which would enhance their productivity and performance. It is also evident that the majority of respondents who prefer material incentives alongside moral ones are males, at 76.25%, compared to females at only 10%. This reflects the social role of males through the responsibilities they assume in meeting family needs, in addition to their desire to strengthen their social and professional status, highlight their efforts and capabilities, and receive recognition from their superiors in front of their colleagues.

From the results obtained in Table No. (02), the Chi-square test (χ^2) value reached 24.28 at 2 degrees of freedom, with a significance level of less than 0.05. This indicates the existence of a statistically significant relationship between the gender variable and the type of incentives associated with the work pattern. Pearson's correlation coefficient was 0.22, indicating a weak negative correlational relationship between the two variables. This means that the preference for the type of incentives differs according to gender among the sample members.

Table No. (03): Respondents' Answers Regarding the Relationship Between Work Technology and Occupational Stress According to the Marital Status Variable

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	39	24.40%
Married	112	70%
Divorced	5	3.10%
Widowed	4	2.5%
Total	**160**	**100%**

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the outputs of SPSS v-26.

Through Table No. (03), which presents data on the relationship between work technology and occupational stress according to the marital status variable, it is clear that among respondents who suffer from occupational stress due to the lack of work technology, married individuals represent the highest percentage at 70%. This may be attributed to their substantial material and social family commitments and lack of time, whether male or female, placing them in a relatively unstable professional and social position due to the unavailability of technology that facilitates task completion. Single respondents constituted 24.40% of the sample. This may be due to their lack of major family obligations, availability of sufficient time, and satisfaction with their jobs relative to the efforts exerted, especially given the recency of their employment. Divorced individuals represented 3.10%, a small percentage compared to employees in other public sector institutions. This confirms the relative psychological and social stability of administrative staff in the study field, which may positively reflect on their behavior and motivation to perform assigned activities without occupational stress. Widowed respondents accounted for 2.5%, which can be explained by their desire to assert their presence, gain social status, and occupy themselves with administrative tasks—even in the absence of work technologies—as compensation for the psychological and social hardships they may experience, thereby distancing themselves from occupational stress.

The results of the Chi-square test (χ^2) showed a statistically significant relationship between marital status and occupational stress related to work technology, with a significance value (sig) of 0.005. Pearson's correlation coefficient indicated a weak to moderate positive relationship of 0.32, suggesting that marital status is one of the factors actually influencing the level of occupational stress.

Table No. (04): Respondents' Answers Regarding the Relationship Between Training and Occupational Stress According to the Educational Level Variable

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary	62	38.75%
University	98	61.25%
Total	**160**	**100%**

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the outputs of SPSS v-26.

Table No. (04) shows that 38.75% of the study sample members have a secondary education level. During unstructured interviews, some respondents with secondary education stated that they continued their studies in specialized national institutes after failing to obtain the baccalaureate certificate. This enabled them to secure an administrative position in the education sector in Tebessa Province. They considered that the training they received contributed to reducing the occupational stress they might encounter while performing their tasks. Meanwhile, 61.25% of the sample belonged to the university-educated category, most of whom are executives and senior executives occupying administrative and management positions such as school directors, supervisors, school and vocational guidance counselors, department heads, and office heads. They expressed that the training they received at university, in addition to the training acquired within the sector (national education sector), enabled them to control work processes, deal appropriately with various occupational stresses they face, and adapt well to all changes.

What can be appreciated from these data regarding the educational level of administrative staff in the national education sector is that the majority possess a level of education that can be described as good. This allowed effective interaction with them within the framework of scientific research related to the study procedures, through proper understanding and response to the content of the questionnaire items, as well as positive engagement during the unstructured interviews.

The results of the Chi-square test showed statistically significant differences in the distribution of sample members according to educational level, with a value of 8.10. University-educated individuals represented the largest proportion. Pearson's correlation results indicated a weak relationship between educational level and occupational stress related to training, suggesting that educational level influences the level of stress.

4. Presentation and Analysis of the Study Results

Based on the results obtained from the previous tables and revealed through statistical processing, the following can be observed:

- There is no statistically significant relationship between leadership style and occupational stress attributed to the age variable among sample members. Age does not constitute a substantial dividing factor in managing stress resulting from leadership from a statistical perspective. However, field experience associated with advancing age acts as a mitigator of the intensity of these stresses in practical reality. This is confirmed by the study of Bouhafes (Algeria), which attributes the impact of working conditions and the applied leadership style to all individuals as a result of the organizational environment, without linking it to age.
- There is a statistically significant relationship between the variables, confirming a relationship between gender and the type of incentives associated with the work pattern, with a weak negative correlational relationship. This means that the preference for the type of incentives differs according to gender among sample members. Consequently, incentives—both material and moral—play a fundamental role in confronting occupational stress. There is a particularity for males in their tendency toward material incentives due to social and family motives. This was confirmed by statistical tests

showing significant differences between genders in this preference. This is supported by the study of Al-Otaibi (Saudi Arabia), which considers material incentives as the primary driver that achieves psychological stability.

- There is a statistically significant relationship between marital status and occupational stress related to work technology, with a weak to moderate positive relationship. This confirms that marital status is one of the factors that actually influence the level of occupational stress among employees. Work technology is not merely a technical tool but a decisive factor in alleviating occupational stress, especially among married individuals who face a conflict between work demands and family commitments. The absence of technology increases the intensity of stress for them, while its availability serves as a means to achieve balance and psychological stability. This is confirmed by the study of Boukfa (Algeria), which concluded that technology contributes to reducing the physical effort exerted, thereby decreasing occupational stress.
- There are statistically significant differences in the distribution of sample members according to educational level, along with a weak correlational relationship between educational level and occupational stress related to training. This means that educational level helps mitigate stress, although other factors may intervene in influencing the magnitude of such stress. The study found that a high educational level and continuous training reduce the employee's feeling of occupational stress. The higher the employee's educational and training level, the greater their ability to deal with problems, and consequently, the lower the likelihood of exposure to occupational stress in educational institutions. This is confirmed by Obeidat (Jordan), who stated that higher education refines and develops skills, equips the employee with the ability to adapt, and increases self-confidence, thereby protecting him or her from exposure to stress.

The results of this study indicate the existence of a strong correlational and integrative relationship between the elements of organizational climate—represented by its dimensions of leadership style, incentive system, work technology, and training—as a decisive factor in determining the level of occupational stress among administrative employees in the education sector in Tebessa Province.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that the organizational climate plays a significant and effective role in influencing the level of occupational stress among administrative employees in the education sector in Tebessa Province. An organizational climate based on participatory decision-making, open communication, and encouragement contributes to reducing the intensity of occupational stress, increasing productivity and performance, and improving the quality of job performance. Conversely, the absence of effective communication, continuous support, and clarity of organizational roles hinders the proper functioning of these institutions and increases levels of tension and occupational stress among employees.

In this context, it becomes essential to create an atmosphere of positive interaction among all categories and ranks of employees, provide material resources, and improve physical working conditions in order to achieve shared objectives. Consequently, attention to the quality of the organizational climate not only positively reflects on employees' well-being and protects them from occupational stress but also contributes to enhancing educational and pedagogical performance and achieving the general educational goals and plans.

Finally, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the organizational climate and reduce occupational stress:

- Reducing working hours and alleviating professional burdens by fairly distributing roles and tasks.
- Encouraging participatory work and supporting the idea of collective decision-making.

- Seeking the assistance of ergonomics specialists to improve the physical working conditions.
- Opening multiple communication channels among employees to ensure the flow of data and information related to sources of occupational stress.
- Organizing training courses to enhance control over work requirements and support the psychological and social aspects of employees.

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