

The Impact of Workplace Stress on Employee Motivation and Well – Being among Young Adults

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Abstract

The present research explored how workplace stress influences employee motivation and well-being among young adults. In recent years, stress in professional environments has become a major concern due to its impact on employees' psychological health and workplace functioning. The study aimed to examine the relationships among workplace stress, employee motivation, and well-being in young working adults. A sample of 60 participants aged 18 to 40 was selected through judgmental sampling. Data were collected using three standardised measurements: the workplace stressors assessment questionnaire (WSAQ), the WHO-5 well-being index, and the work extrinsic and intrinsic motivation scale (WEIMS). Spearman's correlation analysis was applied to examine the relationships among the variables. The results demonstrated the significant inverse relationship between workplace stress and employee well-being, indicating that greater stress is associated with lower well-being. However, no significant relationship was found between workplace stress and employee motivation. The study highlights the need for organisations to adopt stress reduction measures, encourage supportive work environments and promote work- life balance to enhance employee well-being and workplace functioning.

Keywords: Workplace stress, Employee motivation, Employee well-being

Introduction

The nature of work has changed considerably due to increasing organisational expectations, technological advancement, and competitive professional environments. Employees are often expected to manage multiple responsibilities, meet deadlines, and adapt

to changing workplace demands, which may contribute to workplace stress. Young adults entering or establishing themselves in their careers may be particularly vulnerable to such stress because of professional expectations and adjustment challenges.

Workplace stress refers to the mental, emotional or physical pressure experienced when job demands become difficult to manage or exceed an individual's coping capacity. Common workplace stressors include excessive workload, limited control over tasks, time pressure, job uncertainty, interpersonal conflicts, and role-related challenges. Although a manageable level of stress may encourage productivity and performance, persistent or excessive stress can negatively affect employees' mental health and professional effectiveness.

Employee well-being is an important component of organisational success and refers to an individual's overall emotional, psychological and physical state within the workplace. Employees with better well-being are generally more satisfied with their jobs, maintain healthier workplace relationships, and are able to function more effectively. However, exposure to ongoing workplace stress may reduce well-being by increasing emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and dissatisfaction.

Similarly, employee motivation plays a crucial role in influencing workplace performance and engagement. Motivation reflects the willingness of employees to remain committed to work responsibilities and pursue professional goals. High stress levels may lower enthusiasm, reduce commitment, and negatively affect work engagement. Understanding how workplace stress relates to motivation and well-being is important because these factors collectively influence employee productivity and organisational effectiveness. Therefore, examining this relationship among young adults may provide meaningful insight into employee functioning within modern workplaces.

Need and Significance of the Study

The increasing prevalence of workplace stress among young employees highlights the importance of examining its effects on well-being and motivation. Young adults frequently face professional pressure as they adapt to workplace expectations, making them more vulnerable to psychological strain. Investigating the relationship between workplace stress, motivation, and well-being can help organisations recognise factors influencing employee mental health and workplace performance.

The importance of the study lies in its potential contribution to improving organisational practices. Reduced motivation and poor well-being may lead to lower productivity, increased absenteeism, burnout, and employee turnover. Findings from the present research may assist organisations in developing workplace interventions aimed at stress reduction and employee support. Additionally, the study contributes to organisational psychology by providing a better understanding of how workplace stress affects young employees' workplace motivation and psychological well-being.

Definition of key terms

Workplace stress may be described as the psychological and physical strain experienced when employees perceive those job-related demands exceed their skills, availability of resources, or coping abilities. Stress can emerge when workplace expectations become difficult to manage and are not aligned with an employee's capabilities (International Labour Organisation, 2016).

Employee motivation refers to the internal drive and external influences that determine the level of effort, direction, and persistence employees show in accomplishing workplace goals (Robbins & Judge, 2017).

Employee well-being refers to the overall emotional and psychological quality of an individual's work experience, including aspects such as job satisfaction, mental health, and positive emotional functioning (Warr, 1987).

Review of Literature

Basumatary and Som (2021), in their study titled Occupational Stress, Employee Motivation and Psychological Well-Being among Individuals Working in Sales Jobs, found a significant difference in occupational stress between field employees and desk-job employees. The study also reported a positive correlation among occupational stress, employee motivation, and psychological well-being. However, no significant difference was observed in psychological well-being and employee motivation between the two groups.

Sardouk and Ali (2021), through their study Job Stress Impact on Job Motivation and Performance, examined the effects of stress experienced at work on employee motivation and performance, with psychological capital acting as a moderating factor. The findings revealed

that job stress negatively affected both job motivation and job performance. However, psychological capital moderated the association between workplace stress and motivation, while job motivation showed a positive association with job performance.

Madhavi and Srinivas Rao, in the study *Work Stress and Its Impact on Employee Performance and Job Satisfaction*, found that workplace stress negatively influences employee performance and job satisfaction. The major causes of stress identified in the study included excessive workload, lack of control, poor work–life balance, and toxic organisational culture. The study emphasised that supportive work environments, workload management, employee assistance programs (EAPs), and stress-management training can reduce stress and improve employee well-being and performance.

Bokenbayeva, in the study *Employee Motivation and Workplace Stress Management*, reported that workplace stress adversely affects employees' physical and mental health, reduces labour productivity, and creates high financial costs for organisations. The study highlighted modern approaches to employee motivation and stress management and emphasised the importance of coordinated organisational strategies to improve productivity and labour quality. It also identified effective stress-management practices adopted by European companies.

Shah (2023), in the study *Work Stress and Employee Performance: Analysis of Work Stress and Its Implication on Employee Performance*, found that workplace stress significantly decreases employee performance and increases counterproductive work behaviour. The findings emphasised the harmful effects of stress on employee well-being and organisational outcomes and highlighted the importance of effective stress-management strategies within organisations.

Ansari et al. (2023), in the study *Challenges and Effect of Workplace Stress on Employee Health and Productivity*, reported that workplace stress has an adverse impact on employee health and productivity, leading to burnout, absenteeism, and employee turnover. The study identified major sources of stress such as high workloads, lack of control, and toxic workplace cultures. The authors suggested that organisational interventions, management strategies, and employee wellness programs can help reduce workplace stress and create a healthier and more productive workforce.

Millet, Das, and Dave (2023), in the study Employee Motivation and Workplace Stress Management, found that employees who receive effective stress-management support demonstrate higher engagement, lower burnout levels, and improved organisational outcomes. The study emphasised the importance of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory in understanding employee motivation and stress. It also highlighted strategies such as time management and supportive leadership as effective methods for reducing stress and improving productivity.

Problem of the Study

To examine how workplace stress is associated with employee motivation and well-being among young adults.

Research Question

Whether there a relationship between workplace stress, employee motivation, and well-being among young adults?

Objectives

To investigate the relationship between workplace stress, employee motivation, and well-being among young adults.

Hypothesis

There will be a significant relationship between workplace stress and employee motivation among young adults.

There will be a significant relationship between workplace stress and employee well-being among young adults.

There will be a significant relationship between employee motivation and well-being among young adults

Methodology

Research Design

The research design is a quantitative correlation. To investigate the relationship between workplace stress, employee motivation & well-being among young adults. A correlational approach was considered appropriate because it enabled the researchers to

identify the direction and strength of relationships among the study variables without manipulating any conditions. This design was useful in understanding how variations in workplace stress are linked to changes in motivation and well-being within real-life workplace settings.

Sample & Sampling

The study's sample comprised 60 young adult participants aged 18-40 years recruited through judgmental sampling. Judgmental or purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which participants are selected based on the researcher's judgment and the specific purpose of the study. This method was used because the study involved a non-parametric test and required participants who specifically met the defined age range and characteristics relevant to the objectives of the study.

Inclusion Criteria: The study included employees working in different organisations, young employed adults aged between 18 and 40 years, and literate individuals.

Exclusion Criteria: The study excluded adults below the age of 18 years and above 40 years, illiterate individuals, and unemployed persons.

Variables of the Study

In the present study, Workplace stress was the independent variable, while employee motivation & wellbeing were the dependent variables. Workplace stress refers to the emotional, physical or psychological strain experienced by employees due to work-related factors. Employee motivation encompasses the drive and enthusiasm to perform job tasks, while well-being encompasses psychological, physical & emotional health. The study examined how variations in workplace stress relate to changes in employee motivation & well-being among young adults.

Assessment Tools

Three standardised psychological instruments were used to measure the variables included in the study. Workplace stress was assessed using the Workplace Stress Scale™ (copyrighted by the Marlin Company, North Haven, CT, and the American Institute of Stress, Yonkers, NY), employee well-being was measured using the WHO-5 Well-Being Scale, and employee motivation was assessed through the Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (WEIMS).

Procedure

Data collection was carried out through both online and offline methods. For online data collection, a questionnaire was prepared using Google Forms, and participants were requested to provide informed consent before answering the questions to ensure voluntary participation. The survey link was then shared with eligible participants. In addition to the online process, printed copies of the same questionnaire were distributed directly to selected participants through offline data collection. The collected data were organised and analysed according to the objective of the study.

Result

Table 1: Relationship Between Workplace Stress and Employee Well-being

Workplace stress			
Spearman's rho	Employee Well-being	Correlation	-.475
		Coefficient	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	60

The results of Spearman's rank correlation analysis demonstrated a statistically significant negative relationship between workplace stress and employee well-being (WHO-5), with a correlation coefficient of $r_s = -0.475$, $p < .01$. These findings suggest that employee who experience higher levels of workplace stress are more likely to report lower level of psychological well-being. Therefore, increased workplace stress appears to negatively influence the overall well-being of young adult employees.

Table 2: Relationship Between Workplace Stress and Employee Motivation

Workplace stress			
Spearman's rho	Employee Motivation	Correlation	-.027
		Coefficient	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.839
		N	60

The findings revealed a very weak negative correlation between workplace stress and employee motivation, with a correlation coefficient of $r_s = -0.027$. However, the obtained relationship was not statistically significant ($p = .839$). This indicates that workplace stress did not meaningfully affect motivation levels among participants in the present study. In other words, changes in workplace stress were not associated with noticeable differences in employee motivation.

Table 3: Relationship Between Employee Well-being and Employee Motivation

Employee Motivation			
Spearman's rho	Employee Well-being	Correlation	-.063
		Coefficient	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.630
		N	60

The analysis showed a weak positive relationship between employee well-being and employee motivation, with a correlation coefficient of $r_s = 0.063$. Nevertheless, the relationship was not statistically significant ($p = .630$). This result indicates that well-being and motivation were not meaningfully related among the participants included in the study. Higher well-being levels did not necessarily correspond to increased employee motivation in the current sample.

Discussion

The present study examined the relationship between workplace stress, employee motivation, and employee well-being among young adults. The findings revealed different patterns of association among the variables. The first hypothesis proposed a significant relationship between workplace stress and employee motivation among young adults. However, the findings did not support this assumption, as no statistically significant relationship was identified between workplace stress and motivation ($r_s = -.027$, $p > .05$). Although stress is generally believed to influence motivation, the present study suggests that workplace stress may not necessarily reduce motivation among young employees. One possible explanation is that young adults may remain motivated due to personal ambitions, financial responsibilities, career growth opportunities, or the desire to establish professional stability.

The present findings differ from the study conducted by Basumatary and Som (2021), which reported an association between occupational stress and employee motivation. Similarly, Sardouk and Ali (2021) found that job stress negatively affected motivation and work performance. Despite these contrasting findings, the current results indicate that motivation among young employees may be influenced by several external and personal factors beyond workplace stress alone.

The second hypothesis predicted a significant relationship between workplace stress and employee wellbeing among young adults. The results supported this assumption and demonstrated a statistically significant negative relationship between workplace stress and well-being ($r_s = -.475, p < .01$). This finding indicates that higher workplace stress is associated with lower employee well-being. Employees experiencing greater stress may face emotional exhaustion, psychological strain, and reduced overall life satisfaction.

The present result is consistent with previous studies. Shah (2023) reported that workplace stress negatively affects employee performance and psychological functioning; likewise, Ansari et al. (2023) highlighted that factors such as excessive workload, unhealthy workplace environment, and limited control contribute to burnout, absenteeism, and poor employee health. Similarly, Madhavi and Srinivas Rao (2024) observed that workplace stress reduces job satisfaction and negatively affects employees' psychological state. These findings support the present conclusion that workplace stress plays an important role in shaping employee well-being.

The third hypothesis examined the relationship between employee motivation and employee well-being among young adults. The findings revealed no statistically significant association between these variables ($r_s = .063, p > .05$), leading to the rejection of the hypothesis. This suggests that employee motivation and well-being may function independently in the present sample.

Although the current findings align with the observations of Basumatary and Som (2021), who reported no major differences in motivation and psychological well-being among different employee groups, some previous research presents differing evidence. Millet, Das and Dave (2023) suggested that motivated employees often demonstrate higher engagement

and lower burnout levels, indirectly contributing to better well-being. The difference in findings may be explained by age-related career priorities, workplace expectations, and external rewards, which could influence motivation independently of psychological wellbeing among adults.

Conclusion

The present study investigated the relationship between workplace stress, employee motivation, and employee well-being among young adults. The findings demonstrated a significant negative relationship between workplace stress and employee well-being ($p = .000$), supporting the first hypothesis. However, no statistically significant relationship was found between workplace stress and employee motivation ($p = .839$) or between motivation and employee well-being ($p = .630$), resulting in the rejection of the second and third hypotheses. Overall, the study highlights the importance of addressing workplace stress to maintain employee psychological health and improve organisational functioning. Future research may consider using larger, more diverse samples and exploring additional factors such as job satisfaction and organisational support. Organisations are encouraged to implement stress management and employee wellbeing programmes to foster a healthier work environment.

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