The Meaningful Association Between Employee Workplace Stress and the Type of Organizational Culture

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Abstract

Purpose: The present study investigates if the type of organizational culture influences the level of job-related stress. This study is significant because creating the need to explore the concept to become more informed on the best practices to promote and foster a positive culture that prioritizes workers, it could result in a healthier workforce, improved organizational performance, and success. **Research design, data and methodology:** Examining previous studies by other researchers was the primary research tool for this study. The organized approach of gathering data and assessing related work was vital in developing a fundamental basis for advancing knowledge on this concept while enhancing theory development and drawing more informed conclusion. **Results:** These four types, including the clan, adhocracy, hierarchical, and market cultures, contribute significantly in revealing four associations between the two variables, including (i) supportive culture and reduced stress, (ii) high pressure and increased stress, (iii)autonomous culture and variable stress levels, and (iv) open culture and low-stress levels. **Conclusions:** The literature affirms a multifaceted link between employee workplace stress and organizational culture type. The findings show that these cultures are crucial in influencing the level of stress among employees. All four types were hypothesized to have a significant relationship with job stress.

Keywords : Workplace Stress, Organizational Culture, Employee Management

JEL Classification Code: M14, J81, O15

1. Introduction

In the current highly dynamic, competitive, and ever-evolving business environment characterized by regular organizational restructuring and downsizing, job stress has become a critical focus and a growing concern in the corporate world. Globalization and technological innovations have altered the nature of work, making workplaces more diverse and competitive (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016). Such scenarios necessitate organizations to engage in practices that can help them keep up with the pace, including outsourcing labor and downsizing employees. Stress implies a state of worry, mental tension, pains, and aches that may emanate from difficult situations or a hectic pace of life. Most employees report high workplace stress levels in American society. Stress is linked to many health issues that undermine well-being, productivity, and performance (Sonnentag et al., 2023). Specifically, the productivity-killing effect of stress is significantly evident even in forms that focus heavily on

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worker's performance. A vital element of an organization is that it is comprised of people and the relationships between these individuals. Therefore, businesses exist when these people interact and collaborate to conduct various roles and responsibilities to achieve a common goal. However, these interactions, roles, and objectives vary from one organization to another. Although workplace cultures differ among organizations, they significantly influence the stress that the workers experience. For the past few years, experts have developed various frameworks to clarify organizational culture's role and its influence in multiple dimensions of the workplace. Again, its causes, effects, and job stress prevention have been extensively studied. Job stress is a concept that affects individuals, especially employees, within the workplace context. Hence, organizations should understand the interactions between workplace culture and job stress to adopt appropriate measures and practices that can help lower stress levels and ensure a healthier and more productive workforce.

Organizational culture involves beliefs, values, and behaviors that influence how the firm's employees and leaders interact, perform, and conduct the underlying firm operations. This phenomenon develops progressively from cumulative personal traits within a given company. Culture may manifest in diverse ways, such as how a company treats its workers, priorities, and other business operations (Mingaleva et al., 2022; Guzak & Kang, 2018). Such practices are vital in helping a firm to grow, thrive, and succeed. These aspects reflect the practices that workers use to assign meaning to various issues they encounter at work. Again, organizational culture determines employees' attitudes and perceptions towards other workers, the management, bosses, and the entire company (Cherian et al., 2021). In other words, these norms impact everything from productivity to how employees perceive their organizations. Hence, workplace culture is vital for organizational productivity and success. Leaders should prioritize and invest in building a positive culture to influence the attitudes and behaviors of the workers in a way that they stay engaged and willing to collaborate to achieve a common goal. The level and quality of interactions between the workers and the general perception of the firm determine organizational culture. Besides influencing workers' productivity, it also affects their stress levels, implying that the type of culture that a given organization has may either increase or lower the employees' stress. For example, companies with output-oriented norms tend to have high job demands, which may heighten workers' anxiety (Kim et al., 2021). Stress is a prevalent issue in contemporary work environments that is often inevitable. Toxic aspects of workplace culture lead to stressful feelings and heighten the risk of experiencing fatigue, psychological burnout, and other mental health problems, including anxiety and depressive symptoms. The

type of organizational culture influences the level of job-related stress, creating the need to explore the concept to become more informed on the best practices to promote and foster a positive culture that prioritizes workers, resulting in a healthier workforce, improved organizational performance, and success.
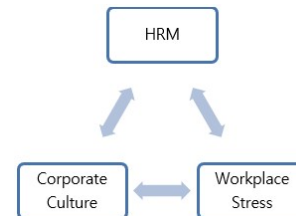

Figure 1: The Purpose of the Research

2. Literature Review

This study investigates the link between organizational culture and employee workplace stress. Most previous studies conducted by other researchers mainly focus on these variables in isolation. Hence, this study is meaningful as it combines these elements to examine their relationship. Thus, to understand this topic, a competing values framework is adopted that differentiates organizational culture into four categories: hierarchy, clan, market, and adhocracy (Tadesse Bogale & Debela, 2024). Hence, exploring each will enhance insights about its relationship with workplace stress. Most researchers agree that workplace stress has become a significant topic for many experts to address issues facing employees across various sectors. Chen et al. (2022) agree that work stress adversely impacts workers' performance. The authors acknowledge workers as vital assets for organizational growth and success, creating an urgent need to examine factors affecting their health and well-being or productivity levels, including stress. According to this source, work stress may precipitate burnout, which often manifests as frustration and fatigue (Chen et al., 2022). The phenomenon correlates with various adverse reactions, such as reduced job satisfaction, higher intent to quit, and low commitment. Another recent journal article by Elsafty and Shafik (2022) supports Chen et al. (2022)'s findings by exhibiting job stress as a universal element that can affect anyone and every firm irrespective of its size or nature of operations. The source also highlights some of the adverse impacts of stress, especially on job performance, suggesting that the phenomenon could lead to decreased productivity, low-quality labor, and increased turnover (Elsafty & Shafik, 2022). The authors also indicate that job stress could harm the health of the workers and may heighten the risk of various psychological issues, including depressive symptoms, anxiety, and other problems such as headaches.

Organizational culture is one of the elements that influence employees' workplace stress levels. Olynick (2020) indicates that organizational culture significantly influences workers' well-being and workplace performance despite being among the areas that have received insufficient attention over the years. The author defines the work environment as a multidimensional system rooted in various values, beliefs, and practices a given team holds (Olynick, 2020). Culture determines employee health and well-being, measured through multiple factors such as absenteeism rate, fatigue, and illness. In other words, stress increases the possibility of being absent from work or having various health issues and diseases, jeopardizing performance and productivity. The feelings of job stress are often linked to the broader organizational culture, especially one that neglects worker rights, overloads, and fails to offer them the needed support. According to Nair, Aston, & Kozlovski, positive organizational culture correlates with increased job satisfaction emanating from effective leadership practice, which helps lower job stress. The authors view organizational culture as a primary binding force in the workplace that vastly influences the firms' performance. This source suggests that various practices, such as role overload and role ambiguity, may hurt the workers and increase job stress (Nair et al., 2021; Kang, 2022). Similarly, Misoles et al. (2023) exhibit job stress as an environmental stimulus that results in mental and behavioral issues in people due to their familiarity with the workplace environments. Hence, various factors such as unfair pressure, conflicts, and low pay may increase the risk of experiencing job stress, which is detrimental to the individual workers and the entire organization.

Alsaqqa and Akyürek (2021) explores various types of organizational cultures. According to the authors, the four cultures include clan, adhocracy market, and hierarchy. The clan culture focuses on controlling the workplace environment via engagement and collaboration. Adhocracy is based on various values, including innovation and risk-taking (Alsaqqa & Akyürek, 2021). Further, the authors exhibit market culture based on the concepts of stability and control. This culture also emphasizes external issues rather than internal matters. The hierarchical culture tends to be more subjective to internal influences than external ones and favors power and stability more than discretion and flexibility. Yip et al. (2020) agree that the type of organizational culture is pivotal in influencing stress levels in the workplace. According to these authors, firms with outcome-oriented cultures tend to have increased job expectations, increasing workers' anxiety and stress (Yip et al., 2020). Again, when weak norms define the culture intensity, the workers are also prone to become stressed since weak norms and values provide less clarity on the organizational priorities and expectations. The type of

organizational culture that a firm adopts affects employees' stress levels. For example, Olynick (2020) indicates that workers operating in a clan culture are likelier to exhibit the lowest stress levels, resulting in increased productivity and job satisfaction, followed by those in adhocracy, hierarchical, and market cultures.

According to Kim and Jung (2022), clan culture relies on values such as flexibility, which encourages workers to be flexible and collaborate to achieve the best outcomes. In other words, this culture is linked to a friendly and caring workplace environment that positively impacts sportsmanship. Hence, workers identified as working in this culture tend to exhibit the lowest levels of job-related stress. According to Assens-Serra et al. (2021), market culture prioritizes profitability, implying that everything is evaluated with this bottom line. This couture also reinforces and encourages competition. Therefore, it has characteristics that could increase workers' suffering while heightening their risk of experiencing job-related stress. Adhocracy culture has decentralized decision-making, significantly empowering employees to make autonomous decisions (Einhorn et al., 2023). This culture puts focus on the workers adapting and innovating. In other words, it stresses flexibility, innovation, and decentralized decision-making. The prior study affirms autonomy's indispensable role in reducing organizational work-related stress. According to the source, job autonomy can significantly alleviate the adverse effects of stress and burnout and help minimize the employee turnover rate (Zhou, 2020). Jain and Ahuja (2024) indicate that a hierarchical organizational culture is formal, structured, and with written down rules and procedures. Hence, it is linked to moderate levels of stress as it minimizes the need for worker participation and may make them feel unseen and unrecognized, affecting their sense of psychological safety and commitment. In other words, this culture stresses structure and order more, often making it unsupportive (Samuel, 2015). This extremely formalized structure also creates boredom among the workers.

2.1. Research Gap

In the above-discussed research, the researcher took employee workplace stress as a variable for this study. Therefore, it only presents work-related stress as a negative factor that may hurt the workers' well-being and reduce their performance and productivity. However, it is challenging to judge employee workplace stress as bad for the company because sometimes the phenomenon may affect organizational performance in a good way. In other words, nothing in the world has positives or negatives only. Hence, further studies should focus on examining the positive implications of work-related stress emanating from various

forms of organizational culture to have a more balanced view of the concept.

Table 1: Investigation to Figure Out the Research Gap

Gap in the Literature	Evidence Resources
This study investigates examining various implications regarding impacts of the job stress emanating from various forms of organizational culture.	Tadesse Bogale et al. (2024), Chen et al. (2022) Elsafty and Shafik (2022), Elsafty and Shafik (2022), Olynick (2020), Nair et al. (2021), Kang (2022), Misoles et al. (2023), Alsaqqa and Akyürek (2021), Guzak and Kang (2018), Yip et al. (2020), Kim and Jung (2022), Assens-Serra et al. (2021), Einhorn et al. (2023). (Zhou, 2020). Jain and Ahuja (2024), Samuel (2015)

3. Methodology

Generally, due to time and resource constraints, this study adopted a qualitative approach. Thus, the research relied on collecting and analyzing data from previous studies exploring this topic to gather information about the explored issue while generating new concepts and theories for the research (Snyder, 2019). The central focus of a thorough literature review was to assess various arguments and facts from the existing knowledge of authors and experts from diverse research backgrounds. Hence, this model was crucial in enhancing the understanding of the link between employee workplace stress and the type of organizational culture. Conducting a substantive and sophisticated literature review was essential in laying the basis for extensive investigation into multiple dimensions of this research topic while developing a factual and deeper analysis of the issue (Nantharath et al., 2016).

Examining previous studies by other researchers was the primary research tool for this study. The organized approach of gathering data and assessing related work was vital in developing a fundamental basis for advancing knowledge on this concept while enhancing theory development and drawing more informed conclusion. In other words, comparing studies that different experts have developed was crucial in synthesizing findings while affirming various logic and arguments on a meta-level (Fidahic et al., 2020; Kang & Hwang, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2022; Woo & Kang, 2020). In this case, many sources were secondary peer-reviewed journal articles incorporating relevant information from other researchers.

A limitation of this methodology is that examining literature may often lack thoroughness, resulting in bias. Hence, sometimes the research may be scanty, leading to biased or misrepresented findings and conclusions. In other cases, the approach may put a researcher in a position whereby they may develop their study based on faulty assumptions, leading to biased results (Johnson et al., 2014; Kim & Kang, 2022; Phommahaxay et al., 2019). Such incidences may occur, especially when the investigator is selective on the gathered evidence and relies on their assumptions to build on research, often overlooking key facts and evidence. Besides, there may be other issues regarding what makes a good contribution even when the review methodology is valid. Therefore, to enhance the findings' accuracy and reliability while reducing the chance of bias, the research relied on scholarly peer-reviewed sources, including journal articles and other reputable websites and government publications.

4. Findings

The literature affirms a multifaceted link between employee workplace stress and organizational culture type. These four types, including the clan, adhocracy, hierarchical, and market cultures, contribute significantly in revealing four associations between the two variables, including (i) supportive culture and reduced stress, (ii) high pressure and increased stress, (iii) autonomous culture and variable stress levels, and (iv) open culture and low-stress levels.

4.1. Supportive Organizational Culture and Reduced Stress

A supportive culture correlates to many benefits, including increased job satisfaction and productivity. The supportive traits influence workers' motivation levels, foster effective communication and meaningful collaboration, provide growth opportunities, and empower team members (Asiedu, 2015). Clan culture is one of the organizational cultures that offer support to the employees by emphasizing cooperation, teamwork, and a sense of communal relationship among the team members (Guzak & Kang, 2018). Hence, the culture encourages open communication and unity in attaining a common goal that benefits workers' health and well-being and is an ideal strategy that can help them mitigate stress. Employees are more likely to handle stressful situations they encounter in the workplace when they feel supported and valued by the management and their colleagues (Agarwal et al., 2019). The clan culture emphasizes flexibility rather than control and stability. The flexible workplace model can minimize stress levels and promote an environment based on meaningful teamwork, collaboration, and increased performance and productivity (Mache et al., 2020). Hence, the clan culture correlates to reduced stress levels since it accommodates the workers by allocating them resources and encouraging collaboration while allowing them to balance their commitments and the

assigned roles and duties in the workplace, which helps achieve a better work-life balance and reduces job-related stress. Besides, a supportive workplace culture prioritizes employee well-being and encourages teamwork while making everyone feel valued and encouraged to do their best (Kang, 2021). Hence, it is an ideal strategy to reduce stress and support workers' psychological health.

4.2. High Pressure and Increased Stress

Indeed, stress is linked to high-pressure work environments. For example, employees who perform physically demanding jobs and work on a tight schedule are more prone to experience burnout and mental exhaustion (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022). These challenging tasks may affect their overall health and work performance. Organizational cultures such as market and hierarchy are linked to increased stress levels. Market culture is a style that fosters and encourages competition, which allows the workers to compete with themselves for various benefits, such as promotions and accolades (Guzak & Kang, 2018). Hence, this style makes some employees work harder for lengthy periods, heightening the risk of experiencing burnout as they strive to beat their competitors. Again, the need for constant competition with colleagues often results in an unsupportive work environment whereby each worker focuses on themselves rather than collaborating with others to achieve a common goal (Bhat & Patni, 2023). Hierarchy culture also reduces the need for worker participation and heightens the possibility of some employees feeling unheard and unrecognized. Workplace environments with hierarchical culture also tend to be unsupportive, with staff working under intense pressure to adhere to the stipulated rules and procedures (Lee & Ding, 2023). Unfortunately, being too complex for a high-performance culture does not always translate into better organizational outcomes (Sheng & Fan, 2022). Hence, cultures such as the market culture that mainly prioritizes high performance and focus on output may harm the workers' productivity over time. Rather than motivating them to perform their best, these practices may create a high-pressure workplace atmosphere, resulting in increased employee stress and burnout.

4.3. Autonomous Culture and Variable Stress Levels

Autonomy implies that employees control their tasks, schedules, and environments. Thus, the phenomenon contributes significantly to making workers feel confident about deciding how to execute daily tasks, including the time and location where they will conduct the assigned roles. Workplace autonomy enables workers to make decisions independently and feel valued and creative (Nie et al., 2023).

When employees have autonomy, they can choose when, where, and how to work best, resulting in increased flexibility and improved work-life balance (Mache et al., 2020). High levels of work autonomy also enhance work quality and lower stress levels by facilitating a better life balance whereby a worker can juggle personal life and work due to the flexibility of choosing when and where to work (Lu et al., 2023). Individuals in an adhocracy culture often encounter high levels of autonomy and empowerment, which results in a positive organizational culture, increased motivation, and higher job satisfaction (Hung et al., 2022). Decentralized decision-making encourages workers to make autonomous decisions. In other words, this culture allows workers to have the autonomy to make decisions without complete supervision. Despite being vital in enhancing the health and performance of the workers, excessive job autonomy may have a ripple effect (Rizwan et al., 2014). It may increase workers' burnout and result in unethical behaviors. In other words, autonomous culture correlates with variable stress levels since it may yield positive outcomes and can have a negative effect, including increasing job stress and emotional strain.

4.4. Open Organizational Culture and Low-Stress Levels

In an open work environment, the leaders prioritize diversity and inclusivity and adopt relevant measures that can help boost the communication flow across various departments. This culture is pivotal in enhancing employee engagement and collaboration as it ensures everyone can express their views and concerns (Alkhodary, 2023). In other words, this type of organizational culture welcomes diverse perspectives and fosters a workplace environment whereby ideas are heard and thoughtfully considered (Turi et al., 2022). Organizations that have adopted an open culture exhibit various behaviors, including collaborating across departments, teamwork, sharing ideas, and giving and receiving constructive feedback from colleagues. The leaders encourage their subordinates to take risks, and workers become bold and do not fear making mistakes. Open culture fosters unity and team building and creates a platform whereby the workers can work through ideals and overcome challenges (Jovanoska et al., 2020). An open organizational culture correlates to reduced stress levels. It creates a positive workplace environment whereby all the employees feel heard, empowered, and supported, significantly improving their psychological health and job satisfaction (Tsai, 2011). This culture also encourages open communication by creating an environment where the workers feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, ideas, and concerns (Malik et al., 2021). Creating a culture that values and prioritizes open communication fosters trust and

meaningful collaboration, enhancing performance and productivity.

Table 2: Results of the Current Study

Type of Organizational Culture	Association with Job Stress
Supportive Organizational Culture	The supportive traits influence workers' motivation levels, foster effective communication and meaningful collaboration, provide growth opportunities, and empower team members
Hierarchical Culture	Hierarchy culture also reduces the need for worker participation and heightens the possibility of some employees feeling unheard and unrecognized.
Autonomous Culture	High levels of work autonomy enhance work quality and lower stress levels by facilitating a better life balance whereby a worker can juggle personal life and work due to the flexibility of choosing when and where to work
Open Organizational Culture	An open organizational culture correlates to reduced stress levels. It creates a positive workplace environment whereby all the employees feel heard, empowered, and supported, significantly improving their psychological health and job satisfaction

5. Conclusions

The study explored the link between employee workplace stress and the type of organizational culture. Thus, to investigate the phenomenon, organizational cultures are grouped into four types: clan, hierarchy, adhocracy, and market. The findings show that these cultures are crucial in influencing the level of stress among employees. All four types were hypothesized to have a significant relationship with job stress. In other words, supportive cultures such as clan and adhocracy are linked to reduced stress, while unsupportive ones, including market and hierarchical, expose the workers to an increased risk of experiencing job-related stress. Clan culture correlates with improved teamwork, open communication, collaboration, and high engagement, which negatively affects workplace stress. This supportive culture makes every worker feel valued and appreciated, lowering the risk of experiencing stress. The clan culture exhibits the highest engagement and lowest stress levels among the four cultures.

Adhocracy relates to increased creativity and encourages workers to take risks. Hence, this approach shows an insignificant correlation between job stress and high employee engagement levels. Hierarchical culture is associated with formal procedures, and routine work exhibits a moderate relationship between job stress and employee engagement. Market culture is results-oriented and fosters and encourages competitiveness, often discouraging teamwork and collaboration. Hence, this culture significantly correlates with job-related stress. Job stress has various adverse consequences, especially on the employees' mental health and overall well-being. Besides, the phenomenon results in reduced productivity, low job satisfaction, increased turnover rates, and other harmful practices that may hurt organizational performance and success. Thus, organizations should prioritize their workplace culture to adopt the best model to foster unity and collaboration among the workers while ensuring that all the team members remain committed to attaining the stipulated goals. Future studies should explore the positive implications of job stress and how the type of organizational culture influences the practice to have a more balanced view of the phenomenon by understanding the link between the two variables and the positive and negative implications of these interactions.

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