# The Relationship Between Employee Consultation and Workplace Stress: Evidence from the Current Literature

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The relationship between employee consultations and job/workplace stress remains one of the most consequential owing to its impact on the well-being of the employees and their final output. The current study aims to look closely at the connection employee consultation and job stress, investigating the prior and present literature dataset to explore employee consultations' approaches, effects, and impacts in reducing job stress. **Research design, data and methodology:** The current research has conducted literature content analysis, and all collected prior studies were selected and screened thoroughly by the topic and keywords of the research. **Results:** The result of this study shows that meaningful consultations for workers are pertinent and essential in addressing the causes of workers' job stress, thus critical in reducing them as follows: Mitigation of Workers' Stressful Concerns, Booting Interpersonal Relationships at Work, Employees Personal Improvement, and Proper Communication Tendencies and Culture. **Conclusions:** All in all, this study concludes that employee consultation equally deals with positive aspects such as areas of strengths and achievements of employees. It entails discussing ways to maintain or consistently improve a worker's abilities and performance. Through the above dimensions, employee consultation reduces job stress and improves performance and outcomes.

**Keywords :** Employee Consultation, Job Stress, Psychological Destress, Human Reource Management, Qualitative Analysis

**JEL Classification Code:** O15, D91, J53, C35

## 1. Introduction

The Job stress is one of the biggest impediments to the success of individual employees and the collective achievements of an organization or a team. It refers to a person's psychological distress or toll due to work-related reasons, pressure, or issues (Chen, 2019). Job stress remains a significant cause of employee unhappiness (both at work and home), poor concentration, anxieties and generally poor inputs and outputs of employees, leading to inefficiencies,

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underperformance, and quality issues at work, etc. In contemporary times where employee centrality has been identified as one of the emerging trends and secrets to the resounding success of organizations, job stress needs to be appropriately mitigated, reduced or averted in totality (Choi et al., 2019). As such, one of the ways that many pertinent stakeholders have identified to help deal with job stress is through employee consultations.

The relationship between employee consultations and job/workplace stress remains one of the most consequential owing to its impact on the well-being of the employees and their final output. Employee consultations refer to the interactions between employees and the employers or the organization. Specifically, it occurs through the conversations between the employees and employer representatives such as the management, human resource or the Chief executive officer. The dynamic and emerging trends in organizational management, such as employee centrality and the need to have conducive workplace environments for effective delivery, are the major driving forces behind the need to have robust, positive and rewind relationships between employees' consultations and job stress (Kurniawaty et al., 2019).

Employee consultations have significant impacts and implications on job stress reduction and mitigation. Generally, they allow employees to share several issues with employers that range from workplace to personal issues. Thus, the consultations offer critical communication challenges and opportunities for employers and employees to converse on issues directly and indirectly related to work for the advantage of all parties (Kuo et al., 2020). Moreover, employee consultations also offer unique opportunities for employers to establish a good and meaningful rapport and communication culture and practices with employees.

Despite the apparent correlation between employee consultation and job stress, many stakeholders lack a proper understanding of the explicit details and implications of the relationship. Essentially some stakeholders, such as managers and some employees, lack a proper understanding of the underpinnings, the correlation between the two elements and the implications of their relationship. It implies they lack knowledge of how the two are related and how employee consultations can reduce job stress effectively. Additionally, there is generally a lack of clarity on the specifics of employee consultations, how they should be done, their application and how it ultimately can reduce job stress. It means that employee consultations remain low despite their impact in reducing job stress, necessitating the need to explain and underscore their application and importance in reducing job stress.

This research delves into the above by discussing the relationship between employee consultations and job stress. Specifically, it explores employee consultations' approaches,

effects, and impacts in reducing job stress. The research findings have numerous implications for pertinent stakeholders such as managers, owners, and employees. Specifically, the owners and managers would find better ways and implications of employee consultations to reduce job stress for employees and themselves (Heath et al., 2020). On the other hand, the findings equip the employees with the knowledge to mitigate and avert job stress by having robust employee consultation cultures, strategies, and tendencies.
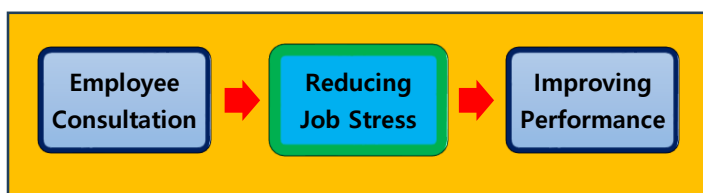


**Figure 1:** The Research Model

## 2. Literature Review

This section reviews the old and current literature pertinent to the topic. This section examines other scholars' and writers' contributions to the topic. Besides, this section would be crucial in identifying the gaps that should be addressed to foster a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the topic.

Blake et al. (2020) defines employee consultation as the interaction between the employees and other organizational stakeholders, such as the owners, management, and supervisors, in research on employees' wellness and productivity improvement. Per the writers, the consultations are done in formal and informal sessions and channels. Formal channels refer to formally identified and documented interaction modes such as discussion forums, seminars, and physical sessions in the offices. On the other hand, the contrary amount to the informal communication channels such as lunch breaks out -of -office conversations and outside work communications (Kotteeswari & Sharief, 2014). The writers assert that consultations are essential in sorting out several issues affecting employees, such as workloads, disturbance at work and various workplace impediments.

Larson et al. (2020) concur with the above writers on most of the details but discuss the use of employee consultation from a different perspective. They explain that employee consultation is not exclusively for negative issues but also for positive aspects pertinent to employees, employers, and the organization. Per the writers, employee

consultations also allow employees to share with employers the areas of strength and how much can be sustained. Collectively the above writers pontificate that employee consultations are used for multidimensional aspects of an organization that are positive or negative to an organization.

Arifin and Manan (2019) researched the relationship between employee consultation and job stress and revealed critical insights. Specifically, they emphasized the procedure of doing the consultations and their implications on reducing job stress for organizations. First, they recommend a thorough evaluation of the need for consultation. The second is identifying the right person to consult and which approach to use (Ramli, 2018). Third, the writers urge employees to consult the soonest they realize the need without hesitation.

Fourth, they recommend that employers or management give employees the correct feedback or assistance for change and give them time to think about such. Then the employer or management needs to obtain the employee's feedback and incorporate it in the final decision-making for both parties, which can help reduce employees' stress vis-à-vis their challenges. Lenihan et al. (2019) reiterate the above and underscore the need for clarity and effectiveness in the consultation process to properly deal with, reduce, or avert job stress. They urge cordial consultations that are not too formal and strict and not ridden with many hindrances and mistrust between the two parties.

Dyrbye et al. (2019) researched the importance of employee consultations vis-à-vis reducing problems employees face and impediments to organizational success. Among the significant benefits the researchers found was that employee consultations allow the employers and the management to communicate the various changes critical for reducing inconveniences and job stress of work in the workplace (Iskamto, 2021). For example, the changes in policy requirements on duties and responsibilities can help increase employees' sense of control of employees thus reducing their job stress. It is a view shared by the prior study (Sull et al., 2022), who opine that employee consultations are driven by the realization that involving the employees in decision-making is paramount for their internal satisfaction, enhancing their sense of belonging and thus reducing their anxieties and stress. It is, therefore, prudent to fully involve the employees through employee consultations to make them free and more productive at work.

Attridge (2019), in similar research as above, echoes the need for and importance of consultations in addressing workplace issues. They explain that employee consultations must be reasonably practicable and aim to address the issues that affect the employees, i.e., which cause their agitation. For example, the consultations should address the employees' health, safety, and job security. The above is

some of the biggest worries and causes of stress in employees. Thus, per the writer, the employees have the right to participate in employee consultations that are appropriately arranged, involve the right parties, and address the issues that stress the employees. In other words, the consultations should not be cosmetic but substantive (Puspitawati & Atmaja, 2021). Through the above, the consultations can yield a positive outcome that would realistically mitigate, reduce, or avert the employees' job stress.

Hay et al. (2021) discussed the situation where consultations are required and their impact in reducing workplace changes and stumbling blocks to effectiveness, efficiency, and speed to work and success in organizations. First, they encourage employee consultations in case of risks and how to deal with them (Jalagat, 2017). For example, employees should consult if they face safety or performance output risks regardless of source. Through the above, it is possible to address such using the best possible approaches that cannot stress or inconvenience employees as the employer or management facilitates. Second, the writers encourage consultations when coordinating employees and communicating the necessary organizational changes. It implies that employees need to be involved in critical decision making when coordinated and even during basic communication to make them feel included in the organization entirely. It helps to alleviate a feeling of exclusion, autocracy by the leadership and poor leadership that could stress employees. In turn, it reduces the workplace tension and stress of employees.

Lee (2021) explores the implication of employee consultations in reducing workplace stress. They explain that employee consultations improve the interpersonal relationships between the employees and the management or employer. Specifically, it eliminates workplace mistrust, hatred and uneasiness that cause job stress. Thus, consultations improve relationships which, when poor, cause unnecessary implications such as anxieties, distractions and envy that elevate workplace stress. Addressing such reduces workplace stress and increases employee productivity.

Additionally, the writers explain that employee consultations help clarify work, issues and even the future, reducing stress. They argue that uncertainty and working hindrances are some of the most significant causes of job stress (Basit & Hassan, 2017). Thus, addressing them through consultations reduces uncertainty and lack of clarity on what employees are doing. Hence it enhances the employees' confidence, motivation, and success at work.

From the above review, it is evident that there is a research gap on the exact effects of employee consultations and how they can reduce job stress. Instead, many researchers focus on other related aspects, such as employee

consultation approaches and their importance in addressing the general challenges that reduce work efficiency, coordination, planning, communication, employee satisfaction and increased agitation of employees leading to ultimately poor results and performance of organizations. Thus, most writers lack a specific focus on the relationships between employee consultations and workers' job stress.

# 3. Evidence from the Current Literature

Employee consultation is a significant undertaking that reduces workers' job stress. It entails the conversations between the employees and other pertinent stakeholders at work, such as the employer, management, and fellow employees, in a meaningful manner relevant to reducing the workers' job stress. Such consultations are pertinent and essential in addressing the causes of workers' job stress, thus critical in reducing them as follows.

## 3.1. Mitigation of Workers' Stressful Concerns

Employees' consultations are crucial in addressing the workers' concerns that cause jo stress among workers. There are several issues that workers are often concerned about, and which result in job stress. They include their safety, health, compensation, and approach to work. Many workers often mind the impact of their work on their health (Ratnawat & Jha, 2014). For example, workers in a metal factory that emits hazardous gases could be concerned about the impact of harmful lead gas when inhaled into their bodies. Such concerns often emanate and are exacerbated by the lack of an alternative because the workers need to strike a tricky balance between safeguarding their health and taking risks to earn a living. It implies that a worker ought to work under stressful conditions that deny them peace of mind, even if they are working.

Equally, safety is often another concern for many employees. Various regulations require employers to provide employees with safety gear. However, some workplaces endanger employees in fatal accidents and risk getting sicknesses. For instance, the recent pandemic posed a significant threat to elderly workers who lacked the required protective equipment (Sutrisno, 2022). In such environments, employees are often stressed, anxious, and unsettled due to the prevailing circumstances. Elsewhere other concerns, such as being uncomfortable when using complicated technology that employees are uncomfortable with, lead to workplace stress (Ornelas & Kleiner, 2003). In all the above, employee consultation is crucial in dealing with such concerns. It allows the employees to voice their concerns, relieving them (Quick et al., 2017). Further, it suffices to note that such consultations should be followed by substantive

actions or solutions by the employer to reduce employees' job stress effectively. Thus, it makes the employees less anxious, stressed, and ready to work with utmost happiness and dedication (Holland et al., 2019).

## 3.2. Booting Interpersonal Relationships at Work

Employee consultations are critical in enhancing interpersonal relationships in organizations. They refer to the relationship between the employees and themselves or the management. Uneased relationships between the various internal stakeholders often harm any organization (Kelloway et al., 2008). It promotes unwanted vices such as mistrust, jealousy, and hatred within an organization. Besides, it erodes the cordial interaction between various stakeholders leading to broken systems such as communication, the chain of command and basic interaction. All the above harmful vices often lead to a toxic workplace environment that exacerbates the workers' stress and unease at work.

Employee consultation first breaks the imaginary and real barriers between the employees and the employer or management. Essentially it removes the traditional autocratic tendencies of the seniors and instead promotes a cordial and fruitful engagement between the employee and the employer that is underpinned by modern trends of organizational behaviors such as employee centrality (Arshadi & Damiri, 2013). The above, thus, promote respect, kindness, love and other noble virtues within an organization. The above is critical in enhancing interpersonal relationships, which promotes coordination, and results in an organization. Employees will likely feel more at ease, open, trusting and accommodating to all internal stakeholders and could readily embrace diversity (Matteson & Ivancevich, 2021). It reduces the job stress that emanates from all the above, leading to the improved output of individual employees and collaborative teams in an organization.

Employers and management should proactively utilize employee consultation to enhance interpersonal relationships and build the employees. They should be able to read emotions and determine the correct approach to dealing with employees" issues. They can then initiate coaching initiatives to improve employees' and interpersonal relationships (Pandey, 2020).

## 3.3. Employees Personal Improvement

Employees consultations should aim to improve the employees at personal and collective levels. The essence of improving the employee is to enhance their happiness, satisfaction, motivation, and ultimate output (Karimi & Alipour, 2011). Employees often consult whenever they face various challenges in the workplace and beyond. Working can be draining and daunting for employees, for example,

when dealing with dynamic situations and problems. For example, new diseases could be tricky if the employees are unaware of such emerging outbreaks. Such situations often provide a good opportunity for the employees to consult on the correct course of action (Laal, 2013). Specifically, they seek assistance from their fellow employees or seniors on the correct action.

Such consultations provide an opportunity for the capabilities and performance of the employees to be improved. The people being consulted must be professional and helpful in the most excellent way possible. They should figure out the solutions to the issues the workers are consulting about (Chen et al., 2006). If not, one needs to refer the worker to where they can be helped best. The above makes the consultations to be meaningful and practical. Besides, the consulted people should capitalize on the above to provide lasting solutions and relationships with workers. For example, they can initiate coaching relationships that address the weaknesses of employees.
Additionally, they can improve the employees' strengths and drills (Kurniawan et al., 2018). The above helps improve the employees' weaknesses and strengths and make them more confident and capable. It, in turn, reduces their real and imaginary barriers that are often stressful or that cause job-related stress, for instance, the workers' inherent weaknesses and inefficiencies (Joy, 2020). Consequently, it ultimately leads to improved output and success at individual and collective levels.

### 3.4. Proper Communication Tendencies and Culture

Employee consultation is not only crucial in addressing issues of an employee but also in establishing a culture and defined processes that are critical in mitigating workplace stress. Communication is among the most vital requirement for success in an organization. Communication should be substantive, precise, and meaningful (Mansaray, 2019). Besides, emerging trends require constant communication, which is critical for an organization's success. For example, organizational communication needs to be anchored on a culture of rigorous and cordial interactions between all people (Waddell et al., 2019). The sense of the above is to promote complementary working relationships and employee cooperation. Employees should adopt the consulting culture, accepting their weaknesses and complementing others with their strengths (Swaminathan & Rajkumar, 2010).

The above ultimately creates naturally a culture that fosters reduced stress and improved working strategies that lead to robust success. Therefore, organizations need to reiterate regular, meaningful, and substantive communications to create environments that naturally reduce employees' stress, anxieties and worries and promote ease of

complementing each other, leading to top-notch results from individual employees and collectively as a team.

However, Donaghey et al., (2014) cautions that employee consultations need the correct boundaries. They should not be reduced to consulting about the obvious, which reduces the quality and essence of such consultations. Instead, they should be regular and professional. For example, they urge for a reduction in consultations that are about non-work-related issues to ensure that the quality and outcomes of such consultations remain high.

**Table 1:** The Resource of the Findings

| Main Statement | Supporting Prior Studies |
|---|---|
| Employee consultation is a significant undertaking that reduces workers' job stress. | Ratnawat and Jha (2014), Sutrisno (2022), Ornelas and Kleiner (2003), Holland et al. (2019), Kelloway et al. (2008), Arshadi and Damiri (2013), Matteson and Ivancevich (2021), Pandey (2020), Karimi and Alipour (2011), Laal (2013), Chen et al. (2006), Sularso and Titisari (2018), Joy (2020), Mansaray (2019), Waddell et al. (2019), Swaminathan and Rajkumar (2010), Donaghey et al. (2014) |

## 4. Implications

The above effects of employee consultation have various practical implications. First, they help to address the issues and problems of the employees. It suffices to note that employees are human beings who face challenges. Thus, they need a listening ear and solutions to their problems. Addressing work-related issues increases the employees' happiness and satisfaction or motivation at work. Besides, addressing their non-work issues, such as home/family challenges, also gives them the perception that their employees are caring and humane, which speaks volumes about how they value them. Equally, it motivates them, reduces their stress and makes them more meaningful and productive at work and beyond.

Second, the above approaches/undertakings enhance the processes and relationships in the workplace. Courtesy of the interactions, the relationships between various internal stakeholders are enhanced. Such relationships are crucial for realizing noble aspects such as teamwork, mutual respect and value for each other due to reduced stress, anxiety and mistrust. Besides, they have a connotation of improving the organization's image since it can work as a team. Therefore, it extends such relationships even with the external players, such as the environment of existence. Thus,

the approaches are critical for creating and sustaining essential relationships for top-notch organizational performance.

Third, the findings imply that consultations are crucial for establishing systems and cultures that outlive an individual's working period. Such cultures naturally reduce the effect and burden of job stress instead of continuously using resources to address such issues. Thus, the effects are critical in saving resources for an organization other than improving the individual employees, capability and performance and doing away with their weaknesses, fears and impediments to success at the workplace.

From the above, it is evident that many stakeholders will benefit from the findings of this paper. As discussed above, they include the employees, managers, employers and the owners of organizations and workplaces. There are other stakeholders, such as scholars, professional business advisors and interested stakeholders. The researchers can enrich themselves with their knowledge and offer professional and qualified advice on the above. Besides this, scholars can write critical learning resources that can be used for a long time to improve business and organizational performance courtesy of reduced workers' job stress due to enhanced or best possible employee consultations.

The students and teachers in schools are another important category of the beneficiaries of the paper's findings. The students can continuously build their knowledge and learn from the above. For example, they can familiarize themselves with emerging trends, such as employee centrality, that underpin employee consultations and reiterate them. Besides, the teachers can also get insightful and invaluable insights that they can use to improve the student's knowledge, understanding, and capability in the topic and related aspects. It is incumbent upon all stakeholders to rigorously use the findings in complementary with other sources to ensure that there is significant importance and use of the findings to improve the workplaces, reduce job stresses and enhance outcomes and processes at workplaces. Elsewhere, the policy reviewers and government stakeholders can also use the findings meaningfully. For example, they can form and review policies and put mandatory policies on employee consultation to enhance its use and importance in organizations.

## 5. Conclusions

The Employee consultation is an essential activity that reduces writers' job stress. It involves interactions often in communication, talking or discussion between the employees and other internal stakeholders such as the employer and the management. Employee consultation addresses the issues and concerns that directly and indirectly affect employees and the organization. They include safety concerns, health issues, job safety, working strategies and other impediments to an employee's comfortable stay and work. Addressing the above in a meaningful manner leads to a feeling of calmness, confidence, satisfaction, and motivation in employees, which reduces stress and anxieties leading to top-notch workers' performance, individually or collectively.

Employee consultation equally deals with positive aspects such as areas of strengths and achievements of employees. It entails discussing ways to maintain or consistently improve a worker's abilities and performance. Through the above dimensions, employee consultation reduces job stress and improves performance and outcomes. Additionally, employee consultations allow the internal stakeholders to improve their interpersonal relationships and communication in a way that fosters positive outcomes. It reduces anxieties, hatred, jealousy etc., which are harmful vices that exacerbate employees' job stress, thus leading to improved outcomes at workplaces.

It is incumbent upon all pertinent stakeholders, such as employers, managers, and employees, to embrace employee consultations to improve workplaces, workplace environment and employee stay and performance. However, it is crucial for such stakeholders to thoroughly evaluate their unique situations to figure out the best possible approaches to employee consultation to use, their objectives and outcomes. It is informed by the unique dynamics and situations that different workplaces and organizations could have. Hence applying a blanket approach to employee consultations for all organizations may not yield the intended results. Thus, involved stakeholders thus need to be wise and calculative in ensuring that they use the best possible strategy of employee consultations to reduce job stress at workplaces.

Elsewhere organizations need to conform to emerging trends in organizational behaviors and processes. One such is the employee centrality underpinned by noble actions such as regular and meaningful employee consultations. Embracing such trends and their requirements would make organizations and workplaces less stressful workers and more motivated and productive employees/ workers, thus making such organizations highly competitive in an ever increasingly competitive world and markets.

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