

## Relationship between Job Stress and Work Engagement: A Review of Empirical Studies

Anjali Nath<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Rekha Dhingra<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak, Haryana, India

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak, Haryana, India

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### Abstract

The study aimed to review the empirical studies on the relationship between job stress and work engagement thoroughly and synthesize the results for improved comprehension of this construct. The majority of empirical research investigations showed that work engagement and workplace stress were negatively correlated. Therefore, it is essential to deepen our understanding of this relationship. The integrative review revealed that most of the studies depicted that job stress and work engagement are negatively associated. The study mainly focused on reviewing correlational and causal relationships along with the measurement instruments used to assess the said relationship. To carry out the review, Scopus and Google Scholar database was used. Encouragement to take on challenges may safeguard employees' health by reducing the effects of psychological and physical stress and resulting in higher levels of both personal and professional fulfillment.

**Keywords:** Stress, stressors, job stress, work engagement

### Introduction

Stress levels are rising as a result of the intense rivalry, ongoing efforts to stay up with industry innovation, and the risk of failing to live up to one's own as well as other people's expectations (Singh & Dhawan, 2013). Work establishes a crucial link between social and economic development, with advantages that could substantially advantageous for individuals (Padula et al., 2012). Despite this, poor job conditions, and rising job demands, despite this, may have negative effects on human health (Salovey et al., 2000). Workplace stress results from the person's insertion into the environment as it not only fosters individual autonomy, growth, and acknowledgment, but also leads to issues with discontentment, disinterest, and irritability (Moos et al., 1993). Work stress is attributed to several issues, such as an unfavorable workplace culture, an unsatisfactory professional growth, uncomfortable work conditions, lack of companionship at work, and the interaction between work and home (Leka et al., 2003). There is a chance that stress levels will rise as organizations get more complicated. Socioeconomic intricacy leads to stress, which can also act as an inducer to a certain degree. Consequently, individuals should limit dysfunctional stress and develop ways for utilizing stress effectively (Ahmady et al., 2007). A positive opposite of burnout is work engagement, which is characterized by energy, focus, and enthusiasm (Fiabane et al., 2013). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) discovered that job resources significantly predict work engagement when examining the interaction between sources of job stress and engagement. Job resources, by Baumeister and Leary (1995), satiate fundamental human needs for psychological autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which improve well-being and boost motivation internally (Ryan & Frederick, 1997). According to Coetzer and Rothmann (2007), job resources are favorably correlated with work engagement, but workplace demands like work overload are negatively correlated with it. (Seada, 2017) explained that in health profession, workplace stressors negatively impact physical and mental health as

well as lowered their engagement level. Decline in work engagement may have an impact on contentment, and this condition may lead to stressful circumstances (Schaufeli et al., 2006). Work engagement is crucial to advancing the objectives of the organization and supporting and fostering a positive workplace culture. Therefore, the present study aimed to review the studies addressing the relationship between job stress and work engagement.

### Research Objectives

- To study the correlational and causal relationship between job stress and work engagement.
- To study the measurement instruments of job stress and work engagement frequently used in empirical literature.

### Research Methods

The literature was subjected to an integrative evaluation. This review approach is regarded as the most inclusive since it enables the integration and compilation of research using a variety of methodologies to help people comprehend research subjects as well as to find research gaps. The study employed the Scopus database to extract the concerned articles. According to Kim, Park, Song, and Yoon (2012), the word "work engagement" might refer to employee engagement or job engagement. Therefore, the keyword combination was "Work Engagement", "Job Engagement" and "Employee Engagement". Similarly, the keyword combination used for Job stress was "Job Stress", "Occupational Stress" and "Work Stress". No particular time frame was chosen. It should be emphasized, nonetheless, that the first time work engagement appeared in scholarly works was in 1990 (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). The initial stage of the search in Scopus turned up 416 documents in all. Thereafter, the articles were filtered for articles that were open access and in the English language, which resulted in 207 documents. Then, the title and abstracts of the retrieved articles were screened to find relevant articles. The article was carefully scrutinized to determine whether it fits the criteria for inclusion if the

abstract did not explicitly state the empirical link. 38 studies were chosen for further examination using this tiered review. Also, a search for the reference list was accomplished. The step-by-step selection process of articles is shown in the figure below:

### Inclusion Criteria

- The article should be empirical.
- The relationship between job stress and work engagement should be examined.
- The language of the article should be English.

### Exclusion Criteria

- Non-empirical studies
- Articles that don't clarify the relationship between job stress and work engagement

### Quality Assessment

The caliber of reviews can't be assessed since there is no industry-accepted standard for the same. Whittemore and Knafl (2005) noted that quality assessment should not be a consideration for the selection of an article to be a part of the integrative review or not. According to them, every article that is up to the mark for the inclusion criteria must be a part of an integrative review irrespective of the quality of the methodology.

### Results and Discussion

#### Correlation between Job stress and Work Engagement

In their study, Coetzee & M. de Villiers (2010) found a strong correlation between employees' perceptions of the origins of their work stress and their levels of involvement at work. This implies that advantageous organizational settings that reduce employees' causes of job stress by providing the necessary job resources may incite greater degrees of work engagement. Further, there was a significant adverse relation between job and role ambiguity, and absence of job autonomy with the three variables of work engagement.

Similarly, Padula et al., (2012) studied this relationship among employees of the metallurgical industry and demonstrated a positive association between these two variables. In addition, they found that both males and females responded similarly to the evaluation of job stress and work engagement. Further, in 2017, international research among nurses in a hospital revealed that there was no statistically significant relationship between overall organizational role stress (ORS) and overall work engagement (Seada, 2017). Further, (Cordioli et al., 2019) carried out a study among primary healthcare workers that demonstrated that engagement at work and stress is adversely correlated. Workplace stress had a slight link with absorption, vigour, and moderate dedication. Thereafter (Nasrul & Masdupi, 2020) showed that work stress has a considerable negative impact on work engagement. In the same year, (Fontes et al., 2019) in their survey among health professionals demonstrated that employees who are more involved typically have higher energy levels, feel more connected with their work and are better able to withstand the negative impacts of stress at work. Therefore, it was considered critical to comprehend which stress domains can forecast work engagement through commitment,

engrossment, and vigour. In this line, a hierarchical regression analysis was carried out to examine the independent impact of stress dimensions on engagement. The findings demonstrated that stress was a strong predictor of dedication, with professionals expressing greater dedication while under less stress (Fontes et al., 2019).

Steinheider et al., (2020) presented that there is a negative relationship between perceived stress and work engagement. Similarly, in 2021 survey among military officers revealed that stress is negatively correlated with engagement because rising levels of occupational stress cause a decline in job engagement (Santos et al., 2021).

In a study conducted by (Wang et al., 2021) among Chinese dental nurses, negative associations were found between work engagement and job stress. Similarly to this, the results of a survey among accountants showed a negative relationship between job stress and work engagement (Güzide, 2021). In the next year 2022, (Lourenção et al., 2022) reported a negative association between occupational stress and work engagement. (Jeong et al., 2022) their research among public workers assessed the relationship between work stress and engagement by applying the Spearman correlation test and demonstrated significant relation between work-related stress and engagement. Further, linear regression analysis on the same sample revealed that public employees' high levels of job engagement were predicted by their low levels of stress at work. It implies that there exists a causal relationship between work stress and job engagement. (Sarfaraz et al., 2022) found poor correlation among work stress and job engagement. In contrast to this, (Rothmann, 2008) found that there is a lack of a statistically meaningful link between work engagement and occupational stress.

**Table 1:** Summary of the Reviewed Studies

| Author and year              | N   | Sample                             | Country      | Instrument                                                     | Research Design                             |
|------------------------------|-----|------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Rothmann (2008)              | 677 | Police force members               | South Africa | 1) PSI<br>2) UWES-11 (after exceptioning Absorption dimension) | Cross-sectional                             |
| Coetzee & De Villiers (2010) | 90  | Employees of financial institution | South Africa | 1) Sources of Job Stress Scale<br>2) UWES-17                   | Cross-sectional                             |
| Padula et al. (2012)         | 457 | Metallurgical Industry             | UD           | 1) Job Stress Scale<br>2) UWES                                 | Transversal Epidemiologic Design            |
| Seada (2017)                 | 192 | Teaching Hospital                  | Cairo        | 1) ORS Scale<br>2) UWES-17                                     | Correlational comparative                   |
| Fontes et al. (2019)         | 221 | Health Professionals               | Portugal     | 1) SHPQ<br>2) UWES-17                                          | Cross-sectional, Correlational              |
| Cordioli et al. (2019)       | 85  | Healthcare Workers                 | UD           | 1) Work Stress Scale<br>2) UWES-17                             | Descriptive, Correlational, and Transversal |

|                            |     |                                       |                  |                                          |                 |
|----------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Nasrul & Masdupi (2020)    | 186 | Bukittinggi City Government Employees | Bukittinggi City | Self-Structured                          | Cross-sectional |
| Steinheider et al. (2020)  | 41  | Social Service Agency                 | Midwest          | 1) PSS<br>2) UWES-9                      | Cross-sectional |
| Santos et al. (2021)       | 268 | Military Police Officers              | Paraná           | 1) Work Stress Scale (EET)<br>2) UWES-17 | Cross-sectional |
| Wang et al. (2021)         | 215 | Dental Nurses                         | China            | 1) CNSS<br>2) UWES-9                     | Cross-sectional |
| Lourenção et al. (2022)    | 32  | Healthcare Physicians                 | Brazil           | 1) WSS<br>2) UWES-17                     | Cross-sectional |
| Jeong et al. (2022)        | 300 | Public Workers                        | South Korea      | 1) KOSS-SF<br>2) UWES-9                  | Cross-sectional |
| Sarfaraz et al. (2022)     | 305 | The employees of a Medical university | Pakistan         | WHWEJSSQ                                 | Cross-sectional |
| Chidambaram et al., (2024) | 285 | IT employees                          | India            | Self-Structured                          | Cross-sectional |
| Jain et al., (2025)        | 350 | IT employees                          | India            | Self-administered                        | Cross-sectional |

Note(s): UD- Unavailable Data; SHPQ- Stress in Health Professionals Questionnaire; UWES- Utrecht Work Engagement Scale; CNSS- Chinese Nursing Stress Scale; KOSS-SF: Korean Occupational Stress Scale–Short Form; WHWEJSSQ - Workaholism, Work Engagement, Job Stress and Satisfaction Questionnaire; PSI- Police Stress Inventory Table 1 depicts the summary of the studies reviewed. Most of the studies were based on cross-sectional design. Regarding measurement, UWES (Utrecht Work Engagement Scale) by was the most influential and reliable measurement instrument to measure the work engagement, while job stress was measured with the different instruments as per the context of the study.

### Measurement Instruments

Coetzee & De Villiers, (2010) adopted Sources of Job Stress Scale (SOJ) (De Villiers 2009) to measure job stress while The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2002) to examine work engagement constitute of three dimensions namely; vigor, dedication, and absorption. (Padula et al., 2012) employed “Job Stress Scale” (Alves et al., 2004) consisting of three dimensions namely; work demand, control, and social support. Whereas, (Gloria et al., 2013) employed the “Perceived Stress Scale” (Cohen et al., 1983) to assess the stress nurses experienced. (Seada, 2017) employed “Organizational Role Stress Scale” (Pareek, 1983) in his research on nurses to assess the relationship between Organizational Role Stress and Work Engagement. Similarly, in 2019 Cordioli et al. employed the Work Stress Scale (WSS), validated by Tamayo and Paschoal (Paschoal & Tamayo, 2004). While UWES (Schaufeli et al., 2002) was used to assess work engagement. (Fontes et al., 2019) employed Stress in Health Professionals Questionnaire (SHPQ) to assess the stress

levels and sources among health professionals while the Portuguese version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Most of the literature studies (Cordioli et al., 2019; Fontes et al., 2019; Lourenção et al., 2022; Seada, 2017).

(Cordioli et al., 2019; Fontes et al., 2019; Seada, 2017) employed UWES (Schaufeli et al., 2002) to assess work engagement. (Steinheider et al., 2020) carried out their survey with the help of the Perceived stress scale developed by Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein (1983). In 2021, (Santos et al., 2021) used the Work Stress Scale validated by Paschoal & Tamayo, 2004 and the Brazilian version of the UWES, validated by Vazquez et al., 2015. In 2021, (Wang et al., 2021) employed the Chinese Nursing Stress Scale (CNSS) (Li, 2000) to measure job stress among dental nurses.

### Conclusion

This review aimed to discuss the relationship between job stress and work engagement. In addition, the measurement instruments used in the literature were examined. The majority of the research showed a negative correlation between work engagement and workplace stress. Evidence suggests that a rise in work-related stress led to a decrease in employee engagement. Also, causal relation between stress and work engagement was found (Fontes et al., 2019). The study was confined to reviewing quantitative studies only that exhibited the relationship between job stress and work engagement. Future studies may include qualitative studies also in their review.

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