
WORKPLACE STRESS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH JOB PERFORMANCE AMONG EMPLOYEES WORKING IN THE LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT OF IDUKKI DISTRICT, KERALA

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	ABSTRACT
Key Words: Workplace Stress, Job Performance , Local Self- Government Employees, Public Sector, Gender Difference	This research examines how occupational stress affects job performance among local self-Government employees. Stress levels arise from many sources, including heavy workloads, complex systems, demands related to public accountability, and other pressures relatead to their roles, which may affect their job performance. The research aims to: (1) find out stress levels at work; (2) measure job performance; (3) explore the link between stress and performance; (4) compare stress levels between male and female employees. The study includes 120 local self-government employees (60 men and 60 women) selected to ensure equal group representation. Data were collected using the Workplace Stress Scale and the Job Performance Scale. Stress and performance levels were analysed using basic statistics. The study used correlation, t-tests, and regression analysis. Results showed that work stress significantly lowers job performance ($r = -.62$, $p < .01$), but stress levels were similar for men and women. This means job stress directly impacts performance, underscoring the need for government agencies to adopt effective stress

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management practices.

1. Introduction

Stress in the workplace has become a significant issue in contemporary businesses, particularly in public sector establishments. Among these, employees working in Local Self-Government (LSG) Departments---such as Panchayats and Municipalities, ---play a vital role in grassroots administration, policy implementation, and public service delivery. These employees are directly involved in executing government schemes, handling administrative procedures, and interacting with the public, which often exposes them to significant occupational stress.

The current investigation is aimed at employees of the Local Self-Government (LSG) Department in Idukki District within Kerala State. Idukki is geographically diverse with steep terrain, scattered settlements and a variety of administrative challenges. Many employees in the Idukki district are subject to additional stressors related to geography (i.e., difficult access to facilities), infrastructure (i.e., poor transportation and communication systems), and an increasing dependency of the public on government services.

Stress is commonly described as a physical and emotional response to high demands placed upon the individual by the environment. Hans Selye defined stress as an undirected, cumulative response that occurs when demands on a physiological or psychological system exceed the coping ability (Selye, 1956). Moderate, short-term stresses can sometimes provide motivation, while excessive, long-term stresses will often result in losses in productivity, job satisfaction, and overall organizational effectiveness. Common sources of stress in the LSG sector include work-life balance, heavy workload, ambiguous role definition, political pressure, time constraints, and rising public demands.

Recent research has shown the increasing importance of this area of study. Singh & Jain (2021) indicate that bureaucratic complexity and administrative burden (i.e., "the number of things employees have to

complete") are significant stressors for employees working within government bodies. Furthermore, Khan et al. (2019) found that high work-related stress decreases productivity and increases the time employees take off work in the public sector. Moreover, Verma et al. (2022) found that the implementation of e-governance has created "technostress" for employees working in local government departments. George & Zakkariya (2023) have also expressed that stress from employees of decentralized government departments has a direct impact on how well a department provides services and how satisfied the public is with them.

Employee performance is an assessment of how well an employee performs their job duties as well as how well they contribute to the overall success of an organization. Each employee in a Local Self-Government Department plays a pivotal role in providing quality public services at the local level, thus exploring the effect of workplace stress on Local Self-Government Employees' job performance is necessary for understanding the relationship between stress and performance among the Local Self-Government Employees within Idukki District. The aim of the study is to examine the relationship between job performance and workplace stress of Local Self-Government Employees in Idukki District with regard to the differing experience of stress and performance based on gender.

2. Literature Review and Research Gap

Workplace stress is an increasingly researched area due to the negative impacts it has on those who are impacted (individuals/employees), as well as the overall success of organizations. One of the earliest studies of workplace stress was conducted by Hans Selye (1956), who identified that workplace stress is the body's response to any type of demand. Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman's (1984) early research also indicated that individual cognitive adaptation impacts what an individual sees or interprets as stress and their responses to it. Beehr and Newman (1978) stated that job stress was a primary contributor to employee health and productivity in the workplace. Jamal (2007) also identified a negative relationship between job stress and employee job performance across all

employee subgroups.

There is evidence that employees within public sector organizations experience higher rates of workplace stress; there are numerous reasons for this, including added administrative complexity and added responsibilities for employees regarding their productivity. Kazmi et al. (2008) found that workload and/or time pressures are among the primary sources of stress for employees and typically diminish productivity. Additionally, Malik (2011) found evidence that short-term workplace stress may improve an employee's productivity; however, long-term workplace stress (due to excessive workloads and/or time pressures on employee productivity) may lead to employee burnout and reduced productivity.

Recent empirical studies provide further insight into how stress affects government employees' work performance. For instance, Khuong and Yen (2018) found that job-related stress negatively affects job satisfaction and job performance. Khan et al. (2019) further identified three key factors associated with decreases in employee performance: workload, role conflict, and organization-induced pressure. Additionally, Altaf and Awan (2020) found evidence of a strong inverse relationship between occupational stress and employee productivity among public-sector employees. Singh and Jain (2021) noted three ways that create increased levels of stress for government employees: bureaucratic processes, a lack of organizational support, and administrative burdens. "Technostress," a result of new digital governance initiatives, is essentially eroding employees' ability to complete their jobs in a timely manner, according to Verma et al. (2022). As a result, George and Zakkariya (2023) found that stress levels among employees of decentralized governments will cause an overall reduction in service delivery, leading to decreased customer satisfaction with services provided to the public.

Many recent studies have explored and analysed different types of workplace stress. For example, a study by Rana and Sood (2024) demonstrated that emotional exhaustion and workload negatively

impacted job performance. Gender-based differences in workplace stress were found in another study by Sharma et al. (2025), which explicitly demonstrated that female employees are more likely than male employees to feel additional workplace stress from juggling work and home obligations.

While many studies have examined the relationship between stress and job performance at a general level, very few have examined employees in Local Self-Government departments, especially those in hard-to-access areas such as Idukki district. Some factors related to working conditions in these areas include rough terrain, limited support, and high public contact; therefore, it will be interesting to determine how these factors may increase stress levels and, in turn, affect job performance. This research aims to close the existing gap by examining how Job Performance affects Workplace Stress among employees in the Local Self Government Departments of the Idukki District, and whether there are differences between males and females with respect to those two variables.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of workplace stress among government employees.
2. To evaluate the level of job performance.
3. To investigate the relationship between job performance and workplace stress.
4. To evaluate how stressed out male and female workers are.

4. Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between workplace stress and job performance.

H₁₁: There is a significant negative relationship between workplace stress and job performance.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in workplace stress between male and female employees.

H₁₂: There is a significant difference in workplace stress between male and

female employees.

5. Limitations of the Study

1. The sample comprised 120 respondents from local self-government employees working in the Idukki district, Kerala.
2. Data were based on self-reported measures, which may be subject to social desirability bias.
3. The study was cross-sectional; causal inferences cannot be made.
4. The research was conducted only within a specific geographic region or government sector.

6. Methodology

6.1 Research Design

To investigate the relationship between variables, the study used a descriptive and correlational research approach.

6.2 Sample

A sample of 120 local self-government employees, with 60 males and 60 females, was selected for the study. The subjects were aged between 21 and 56.

6.3 Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure equal distribution of male and female employees across the department.

6.4 Tools Used

Workplace Stress Scale: A 20-item Likert-type scale measuring perceived stress at work ($\alpha = 0.85$).

Job Performance Rating Scale: A 15-item supervisor-rated scale measuring task completion, quality of work, and efficiency ($\alpha = 0.88$).

6.5 Statistical Techniques

- Descriptive statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation)
- Pearson's product-moment correlation

- Independent samples t-test
- Linear regression analysis
- The data was analysed using SPSS version 26.

7. Results

7.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1

The mean and standard deviation for workplace stress and job performance

Variable	Mean	SD
Workplace Stress	68.45	8.32
Job Performance	72.10	7.15

Note: Possible score ranges: Stress (20–100), Performance (15–75). The results indicate moderate to high stress levels (68.45/100) and average job performance (72.10/75, i.e., ~96% of maximum).

7.2 Correlation Analysis (Hypothesis 1)

A Pearson correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between workplace stress and job performance.

Table 2

Pearson's Correlation Between Workplace Stress and Job Performance

Variable	1	2
Workplace Stress	1	-0.62
Job Performance	-0.62	1

$p < .01$ (two-tailed)

The correlation between workplace stress and Job performance is strong and significant ($r = -0.62$, $p < .01$); therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected, and H_{11} is supported.

7.3 Gender Difference in Workplace Stress (Hypothesis 2)

An independent-samples t-test was performed to assess workplace stress levels between male and female employees.

Table 3

The Gender Difference in Workplace Stress

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Male	60	67.90	8.50	-1.26	118	0.21
Female	60	69.00	8.15			

The t-test revealed no significant difference in stress levels between male and female employees ($p = 0.21 > 0.05$). Therefore, H_{02} is retained. Stress affects men and women similarly in this government sample.

7.3 Regression Analysis

The level to which job performance is predicted by workplace stress was discovered using linear regression.

Table 4

Regression Summary for Workplace Stress Predicting Job Performance

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
(Constant)	112.45	4.21		26.71	<.001
Workplace Stress	-0.59	0.07	-0.62	-8.43	<.001

$R^2 = 0.38$ (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.37$) $F(1, 118) = 71.05$, $p < .001$

Workplace stress is a significant predictor of performance, accounting for

38% of the variation in job performance.

8. Discussion

According to the study, work-related stress has a significant overall impact on public sector employees' job performance. The research indicates a substantial negative correlation between the two variables ($r = -0.62$), consistent with past studies (e.g., Jamal, 2007; Beehr & Newman, 1978) that document that as employee stress increases, employee productivity and/or efficiency decrease. It also confirms, through regression analysis, that for each 1.0-unit change in stress, employee performance decreases by about 0.59 units.

The result of this study is that at the 0.21 level, there is no statistically significant difference in stress levels between male and female employees in the public sector, indicating that stress levels are relatively comparable for male and female employees in this workplace. Prior research has demonstrated that female public-sector employees are more stressed than male employees. The lack of statistically significant differences in stress between groups may be due to similarities in job functions, workload, and bureaucratic pressures experienced by male and female employees surveyed. This finding may also demonstrate the changing demographic distinctiveness of public sector employees. The evidence presented indicates that moderate stress may have a motivational impact; however, the ongoing trend shows declining motivation at moderate levels of workplace-related stress (see Malik, 2011). Therefore, there remains a demonstrated need for employers to intervene with employees experiencing workplace stress.

9. Conclusion

According to the study, increased workplace stress negatively impacts the performance of Government employees. Stress is a contributing factor to reduced job performance (compared to all employees), regardless of gender, with higher levels of stress correlating with lower productivity. Therefore, in order to enhance both public service delivery and employee

well-being, an effective means of stress management should be utilized.

10. Recommendations

The following recommendations for government organisations are based on the findings:

1. Workload Management - To prevent multiple people from being overburdened, workloads need to be more evenly distributed among departmental staff.
2. Stress Management Programs- The LSG should implement regular stress management workshops for its employees.
3. Training and Technological stress Reduction - Since the e-governance systems can be stressful, employees should be given structured training on digital platforms.
4. Enhance Workplace Conditions - Office infrastructure in rural and hilly locations of the Idukki district should be improved.
5. Defining Job Responsibilities and Providing Administrative Support- To reduce job ambiguity, specific job descriptions and roles should be established.
6. Provision of Psychological Support - A Local Self-Government Employee Counselling or Support Centre is to be created.
7. Lessening Political and Other Outside Pressures - Administrative tasks are to be kept free from unsought political interferences.
8. Performance Recognition System - Introduce a performance-based appreciation and reward system to motivate employees.

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