

Work-Related Stressors and Work Performance: A Comparative Study Between Chinese and British IT Companies

Guanglei Lu ^{1*}, Chaiyanant Panyasiri ²

¹ Graduate School, Siam University

² Associate Professor, Graduate School, Siam University

*Corresponding author: guanglei.lu@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to: 1) investigate how various stressors, including personal characteristics of workers and the workplace environment, influence job performance by identifying their specific directions and magnitudes of effect. 2) examine whether workers' inherent experience and capability amplify or diminish these stressor effects, and whether they alter their direction. 3) compare how characteristics related to work stress differ in articulating Eastern and Western values. Based on these objectives, the study conducts a comprehensive literature review, proposes eight hypotheses, and empirically tests and explains each one. The findings underscore that workers with broad experience and capabilities are generally more adaptable, efficient, innovative, and adept at teamwork and leadership. These attributes directly enhance job performance by improving efficiency, problem-solving, decision-making, adaptability, and innovation, benefiting both individual workers and organizational success. Furthermore, it reveals that competence, problem-solving skills, effective time management, adaptability, enhanced decision-making, resilience, social support networks, and stress management techniques are significant factors in reducing stress levels among workers. Empirical findings indicate similarities rather than differences, challenging initial hypotheses and suggesting universality in the impact of experience and capability on job performance across cultures.

Keywords: Work-Related Stressors, Work Performance, Chinese and British IT Companies

INTRODUCTION

Work-related stress is acknowledged globally as a primary challenge to the health of workers and the subsequent healthiness of their organizations (Pearsall et al, 2009). Stressed workers have a higher likelihood of being poorly motivated, unhealthy, less safe and productive at work. Consequently, organizations with stressed employees are less likely to achieve success in an aggressively competitive industry (Hon & Chan, 2013). Kozusnik et al (2012) explain that stress in Chinese is a combination of two characters that represent 'opportunity' and 'crisis.' As has been denoted in the extant literature, stress has been affirmed as culminating in two implications; distress and eustress conditions. Eustress can occur when employees are in a position to address and handle external demands that have been placed on their physique and can contribute to reduced psychological and physiological stress, such as being proactive, highly productive, pleasant life, and ability to control anxiety feelings (Levin, 2009). On the contrary, distress can occur when the employee is unable to cope with the task demands that are exerted on their minds and bodies, and this heightens their psychological and physiological stress, such as unpleasant life, low productivity,

absenteeism, inability to control feelings of passive and anxiety, sickness (Ahmed and Ramzan, 2013).

Stress is a reaction to what the organization or individual feels to external pressure, it is therefore normal and anticipated and it makes an individual uncomfortable and it aids in helping them to rise in satisfying their challenges (Kotteswari and Sharief, 2014). Work performance is a central concern for organizations seeking to enhance their overall success, ensure their survival, and improve effectiveness and secure profitability (Khamisa et al, 2015). Workers in organizations are always pressured to achieve set targets within the timelines provided (Driskell & Salas, 2013). However, depending on the members, working environment, leaders, nature of the task, and other factors, which can easily become stressors, the work performance of the worker is negatively affected because of inability to coordinate seamlessly.

Therefore, this study focuses on the relationship between stressors and workplace work stress under the presentation of Eastern and Western values and the impact of stress generated by stressors on work performance. It compares and highlights the relationship between them. This study examines the differences in direction and magnitude of the effects, and the individual mediating property was incorporated as intermediate factors.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To explore employees' ideas and beliefs on the sources of work stress and types of work stressor.
2. To analyze the relationships between worked-related stressors on employees' work performances
3. To conduct a comparative study between employees' perception and behavior toward work stressors in China and British IT companies.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Based on the literature review content and the research purpose, the hypotheses that are to be put forward in this paper include the following eight hypotheses: H1 to H8.

H1: Employees' perception of ideas and beliefs positively affects their task performances through the mediating effect of work stressors.

H2: Employees' need for work positively affects their task performances through the mediating effect of work stressors.

H3: Employees' workload negatively affects their task performances through the mediating effect of work stressors.

H4: Employees' workplace role conflict negatively affects their task performances through the mediating effect of work stressors.

H5: Employees' perceptions on workplace relationship positively affects their task performances through the mediating effect of work stressors.

H6: Employee's personal work stressors affect their task performance through the mediating effect of career experience and competence.

H7: Employee's work environment stressors affect their task performance through the mediating effect of career experience and competence.

H8: British employees and Chinese Employees of IT companies are different in their perception toward work stressors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the most notable methods of addressing workplace stress to improve work performance is balancing effort and rewards. The benefit of effort-reward balance is overcoming

the imbalances that characterize efforts and rewards, eventually subjecting employees to stress. Jackson (2014) recommended that governments and all concerned stakeholders should put in place interventions to minimize effort-reward imbalance among female aid workers to help them overcome the problem of heavy drinking.

Exposure to stress during humanitarian work projects increases the stress levels of women, which eventually lures them into heavy alcohol consumption as a way of finding solace. Such heavy consumption of alcohol has been linked to poor performance among teams and individuals. Hence, women working in humanitarian contexts need to be helped by providing psychological help to help them emotionally adjust to the stresses that characterize their work. However, satisfaction with the prevailing effort-reward balance is highly subjective. Hence, it takes work to satisfy each employee.

Another effective way of reducing and addressing work-related stress is through workload management. Workload management reduces employees' exposure to excessively challenging tasks that can subject them to work-related stress. Findings from the study by Carenzo et al. (2020) revealed that lower demands/workloads and adequate supply required to implement work-related tasks could improve performance. Hence, properly regulating the workload is a significant milestone toward addressing work-related stress and eventually improving employee performance. Using the findings from their study, Similar to the argument by Mason (2017), Fan et al. (2020) emphasized that enhancing stress management skills among supervisors requires designing and implementing training or education programs. If effectively implemented, Patro & Kumar (2019) strongly believe that such training and education programs can significantly help them improve their resilience, evidenced by their ability to handle or recover from incidences of stress. Choi et al. (2016) concluded that optimal collective and individual workload could greatly reduce work-related stress and enhance the cardiovascular health of firefighters. However, proper hypertension management should be initiated to accelerate the achievement of positive outcomes.

From the perspective of cross-cultural psychology, stressors and the influence of stress on job performance may vary to different degrees or directions in different cultural backgrounds. However, cultural backgrounds are not easy to directly and specifically present but can be observed through values (Yang & Wan, 2008). The spectrum of degrees is often involved in exploring the influence of cultural values. A better way is to dichotomize the difference between the East and the West, which should be the most intuitive (Chandra, 2012). The most specific research on cultural differences between the East and the West is to take the UK and China as typical representatives of the two types of culture (Kelly et al., 2011).

METHODOLOGY

1) Population and Sample

The population for this study includes experts in the IT sector. For this study, the researcher focuses on IT experts operating in China and Britain to create a sampling frame. The researchers selected participants from each subpopulation selected to fill in the questionnaires using simple random sampling. Simple random sampling will give equal opportunities for each population member to be selected, reducing the sampling bias that characterizes non-probability sampling techniques.

After using the simple random sampling technique, the research chose 480 participants from both countries (240 from each) for further stratified random sampling. In order to reach 480 participants, the research identifies and selects the two largest firms from each zone, respectively. This resulted in 4 IT firms from each country. The research targets 60 IT experts from each firm to participate in the study, resulting in 240 participants per country. After that, a stratified random sampling technique was used in sample selection.

Table 1. List of Sample Companies

Country	China	China	UK	UK	Total
Code of the sample companies*	HH XF	KC LF	C B	DC B	-
No. of company	2	2	2	2	8
No. of participants per company	60	60	60	60	480
Total no. of participants	120	120	120	120	480

2) Research Instrument

The researcher uses the questionnaire to create a web-based questionnaire. A link is generated for dissemination during the data collection stage. Data collected using closed-ended items was put into SPSS 21 for further analysis. The study scrutinized the reliability of the questionnaire as Table 2 shows.

Table 2 Questionnaire Reliability Analysis for Latent Variables

Categories	Dimension	Cronbach's α
Work Stress: Labor's Personal Characteristics	Ideas and beliefs	0.8973
	Needs for work	0.7381
Work Stress: Workplace Environment Characteristics	Workload	0.8297
	Role conflict	0.8479
	Interpersonal Relationships	0.7712
Personal Intermediate variables	Experience and capability	0.8803
Performance	Job performance.	0.7979

Table 2 illustrates that all analyzed dimensions surpass the minimum threshold of 0.7 for Cronbach's alpha coefficient, indicative of high reliability. Specifically, the dimensions under work stress, including ideas and beliefs, needs for work, workload, role conflict, and interpersonal relationships, demonstrate substantial internal consistency. Additionally, the intermediate variables category, represented by experience and capability, and performance category, represented by work performance, exhibit commendable reliability.

RESULTS**1) Results of Path Analysis**

The researcher used path analysis based on the statistical results and information mentioned above. The estimated results are summarized in the table below, which lists the standardized path coefficients, t-values, and the model's R^2 for reference. Hereafter, the causal relationships of the overall model can be observed through five key points as Table 3 shown.

Table 3 Overall Results for Path Analysis (Model with Mediating Variables)

Constructs	Standardized Path Coefficients	t	R^2
Task Performance			
Concepts and Beliefs	0.383	5.325	0.653
Needs for Work	0.539	6.369	
Workload	-0.456	-5.580	
Labor's Role Conflict	-0.144	-2.978	

Interpersonal relationship	0.226	4.551	
Experience and capability	0.499	7.396	
Concepts and Beliefs			
Needs for Work	0.449	6.991	0.264
Experience and capability	0.478	7.136	
Needs for Work			
Experience and capability	0.348	5.103	0.137
Workload			
Experience and capability	-0.782	-7.445	0.299
Role Conflict			
Experience and capability	-0.799	-7.534	0.179
Interpersonal Relationship			

Additionally, in this study, experience and capability serve as mediating variables. The estimated results show, as intuitively expected, that it has a positive impact on job performance. Moreover, experience and capability also show significant effects on various sources of stress, positively affecting concepts and beliefs, the needs for work, and interpersonal relationships, while having a negative impact on workload and role conflict. To verify the mediating effect, this study also estimates a model excluding Experience and capability to serve as a control group. We can see the changes in the direction (positive or negative) and magnitude of coefficients, while employing the F- test to assess the necessity and validity of including these mediating variables. The results are presented in the following Table 4.

Table 4. Overall Results for Path Analysis (Model without Mediating Variables)

Constructs	Standardized Path Coefficients	t	R ²
Task Performance			
Concepts and Beliefs	0.397	6.551	0.455
Needs for Work	0.819	14.693	
Workload	-0.856	8.203	
Labor's Role Conflict	-0.436	4.115	
Interpersonal relationship	0.398	6.687	
Concepts and Beliefs			
Needs for Work	0.452	6.788	0.271
Interpersonal relationship			
Concepts and Beliefs	0.334	6.125	0.501
Workload	-0.481	6.798	
Labor's Role Conflict	-0.511	7.622	

2) Summary Results of Research Hypotheses

Table 5. summarizes the empirical results of each hypothesis in this study.

Table 5. Summary of the empirical result for the hypotheses

Hypothesis		Results
H1	Employees' perception of ideas and beliefs positively affects their task performances through the mediating effect of work stressors.	Valid
H2	Employees' need for work positively affects their task performances through the mediating effect of work stressors.	Valid
H3	Employees' workload negatively affects their task performances through the mediating effect of work stressors.	Valid
H4	Employees' workplace role conflict negatively affects their task performances through the mediating effect of work stressors.	Valid
H5	Employees' perceptions on workplace relationship positively affects their task performances through the mediating effect of work stressors.	Partially Valid
H6	Employees' personal work stressors affect their task performance through the mediating effect of career experience and competence.	Partially Valid
H7	Employees' work environment stressors affect their task performance through the mediating effect of career experience and competence.	Partially Valid
H8	British employees and Chinese employees of IT companies are different in their perception toward work stressors.	Valid

DISCUSSION

Based on the finding on adaptability, workers with a broad range of experiences and abilities are generally more adaptable. They can quickly adjust to new situations, technologies, and processes, making them valuable assets in dynamic work environments. For efficiency, experienced and skilled workers know how to manage their time and resources effectively. They can accomplish tasks faster and with fewer errors, increasing overall efficiency. For innovation and creativity, workers with a high level of ability and experience are often more creative and innovative (George, & Zakkariya, 2015). They have the confidence and knowledge to experiment with new ideas and approaches, leading to improvements and advancements in their work. For teamwork and leadership, experience can also enhance a worker's ability to work in a team and lead others. Experienced workers can mentor less experienced colleagues, improving the team's overall performance (Yadav & Dabhade, 2014).

As for customer satisfaction, in roles that involve interacting with customers, the experience and capability of workers can lead to better customer service, understanding of customer needs, and the ability to resolve issues effectively, thereby improving customer satisfaction and loyalty (Choi, Schnall, & Dobson, 2016). In summary, the experience and capability of laborers directly contribute to enhanced job performance through improved efficiency, problem-solving, decision-making, adaptability, and innovation. These factors benefit the individual worker and contribute to the organization's success and competitiveness.

The finding addresses the effect of laborers' 'experience and capability' on work stressors (Driskell, & Salas, 2013). Theoretically, the laborers' experience and capability could depress work stress. Empirically, the confirmatory factor analysis of this study predominantly indicates

significant negative results on the five work stressors. There are at least eight possible reasons, including increased competence, effective problem-solving, efficient time management, adaptability to change, enhanced decision-making, resilience, social support networks, and knowledge of stress management techniques (Ahmed & Ramzan, 2013). This competence helps reduce the uncertainty and anxiety associated with task performance, as workers feel more confident handling job responsibilities effectively (Khamisa, et al, 2015).

For effective problem-solving, with more excellent problem-solving capabilities, experienced workers can anticipate and address potential issues proactively, reducing the likelihood of stress caused by unexpected problems or last-minute crises (Patro, & Kumar, 2019). For efficient time management, skilled and experienced workers are often better at managing their time. They can prioritize tasks effectively, avoid procrastination, and ensure work is completed within deadlines, which can significantly lower stress levels. For adaptability to change, workers with a broad range of experiences and abilities are generally more adaptable to changes in the workplace, whether it is a new technology, process, or organizational structure. This flexibility can reduce stress associated with change and the unknown (Day, 2017).

As for knowledge of stress management techniques, with experience comes knowledge, including understanding effective stress management techniques (Kotteeswari, & Sharief, 2014). By fostering a sense of competence, enhancing problem-solving abilities, improving adaptability, and supporting efficient decision-making, experience and capability are significant buffers against work stress. Organizations can further support their workers by recognizing the value of these attributes and providing opportunities for ongoing skill development and experience acquisition (Wu et al., 2012). Finally, the finding also addresses the difference in workers' experience and capability between the West and the East (Chandra, 2012).

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