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## **EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOR DURING COVID-19: STRESS AND COPING MECHANISM**

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### **Abstract**

The study highlights the psychological state of employees under the COVID-19 pandemic, the attendant job stress and corresponding coping mechanisms adopted to thrive amidst the situation and remain sustainable. The pandemic situation brought operating difficulties and challenges to many industries around the world, and organizational managers were challenged to have the ability to adapt to disasters and recover from such emergencies. It is found in this study that the factors of organizational culture, the abilities to organize and manage operations, the adaptation capacity as well as coping mechanisms of the organizations affect the development of organizational resilience and consequently sustainability of businesses. Workplace stress is inevitable to occur more frequently as there may be numerous stressors in life ranging from personal to professional, especially as enforced by the COVID-19 pandemic epidemic; therefore, it is recommended for modern organizational managers that when epidemic threats result, they should pay attention to the job stress faced by their employees and resolve them in a timely manner, so as to maintain high morale of employees and remain sustainable in business and there should be social support coming from the workplace as integral in helping the employees cope in such times.

**Keywords:** Employee Job Stress, COVID-19 Impacts and Coping Mechanisms.

## **Introduction**

The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on organizational structures, processes, and tactics is seen in its effects on people around the world; also its impact on people's health and restrictions on people's lives have now spurred organizational managers into strategic actions to ensure survival and sustainability (Edelheim, 2020; Sandhu & Wolf, 2020). The idea of coping and its mechanism emanates from the concept of resilience and is originated from ecology, and defined as the system that absorbs changes and can continue to develop under disturbances and changing conditions (Holling, 1973).

Organizations build resilience in the field of business administration in reaction to emergent events and changes in rival strategies (Williams & Shepherd, 2016). An organization's capabilities and strategies to face crises affect its sustainable development and increase its chance of survival after a crisis (Prayag *et al.*, 2018).

Natural disasters not only cause deaths and injuries to the people but also change people's living environment and daily routines, resulting in their psychological threats and undermining their subjective well-being (Bonanno *et al.*, 2010; Sandhu & Wolf, 2020). The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster in 2013 has resulted in serious impacts on the lives and psychological well-being of the disaster victims (Murakami *et al.*, 2020). From extant research, scholars have seldom studied how disaster threat perceptions may affect the individuals in corporate workplaces, as well as the negative impacts on employees' organizational performance (De Clercq *et al.*, 2017; Toker *et al.*, 2015).

Various studies have been carried out among health professionals to evaluate the impact of the pandemic related to job stress, depression, anxiety and insomnia; however, there are not many studies addressing the level of employee fear, irritation and stress, and depression related to uncertainty among the employees in organizations today. There have been more studies on employees' commitment to their organizations, civic engagement, life satisfaction, and depression after the COVID-19 outbreak (Park et al.,2021; Yan et al., 2021). The COVID-19 epidemic has impacted people's everyday routines, social interactions, and eating habits (Kim, 2020). For instance, people's sense of risks under COVID-19 has boosted their alcohol use both in quantity and frequency (Rodriguez et al., 2020).

Prior studies also attempt to understand whether fake news content during the COVID-19 pandemic affects people's fears (Ljungholm&Olah, 2020; Sheareset al., 2020). People feel anxious about threat perception, particularly under the threat of COVID-19 (Paredes *et al.*, 2021). According to earlier research, when people do not think that an epidemic can be controlled efficiently and hence regard it as a threat, their worry increases as the disease spreads (Goodwin et al., 2021).

The results of earlier studies indicate that COVID-19 has an impact on people's emotions, including excessive anxiety, dread of illness, depression, and psychological stress (Gibson &Janikova, 2021; Phillips &Kucera, 2021; Lewis & Zauskova, 2021). Therefore, it is entirely conceivable that people's fear of illness influences their emotions, which in turn influences their work psychology. This leads to workplace stress, which in turn creates a bad interaction between the individual and their surroundings and, ultimately, to subpar work results.

Physical and mental issues may arise when someone feels that their job is too stressful (He et al.,2020). The idea of job stress was originally used in company management by French and Kahn in 1962. The gap between one's capabilities, available resources, and job requirements results in job stress (French, 1974). According to Parker and DeCotiis (1983), job stress is further defined as an employee's awareness or feeling of personal dysfunction brought on by perceived conditions as well as the employee's psychological and physiological responses to feeling uncomfortable, undesirable, or even threatened at work. The COVID-19 epidemic has caused a variety of psychological phenomena, including moral harm, extremely high levels of anxiety, fear of contracting a disease, acute stress, and depression. These phenomena have an impact on corporate employees' feelings of job security, job stability, and job satisfaction (Nemțeanu & Dabija, 2021).

This study therefore will help to make up for the gap in the above research. The review of the work stress impact resulting from the pandemic and the consequent effect on work outcomes also includes coping mechanisms in the discussion, which is one of the contributions of this research in the academic field. Additionally, this research can broaden the application of the information in the areas of human resources and stress management in businesses while helping to better understand the effects of the epidemic on human psychology. The results may have managerial ramifications for contemporary businesses.

### **Problem Description**

Job stress is characterized by discrepancies between the demand of the workplace and the personal skills of the person who strives to meet the needs. On the other hand, job satisfaction

also plays an essential role in preventing and handling employee stress (Hoboubi, Choobineh, Ghanavati, Keshavarzi & Hosseini, 2017). When people feel and perceive less support or cooperation from their co-workers and managers, it can lead to stress, which negatively contributes to the loss of self-confidence, and decrease in job satisfaction and performance (Poor, Ahmed, Ansari & Movahedi, 2014).

Many studies have been conducted to identify possible negative impacts of work-related stress on employee work teams as well as the organization as such – work-related stress. Babin and Boles (1996) used 328 front-line employees in upscale retail businesses to analyze the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction and found that stress levels negatively relate to job satisfaction. Additionally, Jamal and Preena (1998) found a strong correlation between workplace stress and organizational commitment, general job satisfaction, pay satisfaction, and relationships with coworkers and superiors.

Recently, a new term appeared - pandemic stress originating from the spread of Covid-19. People spent a significant portion of their daily life working online due to lockdowns introduced and have easier access to large quantities of information on the pandemic, and their increased fear over uncertainty of their employment and stability of their future income often leads to stress and depression(Ahmad& Murad,2020). One of the crucial factors in achieving organizational objectives is employee job satisfaction;employee job satisfaction refers to the employee's attitude to their job or subjective experience gained throughout their professional life, (Ju& Lee, 2016). According to Herzberg, performance outcomes are a source of both job satisfaction and dissatisfaction that occur due to certain workplace circumstances and hygiene

factors. As it is strongly tied to many organizational issues like absenteeism, staff turnover, dedication, and productivity, the issue of job satisfaction needs to be addressed.

Many researchers have confirmed the negative impact of work-related stress on mental health and decrease in employee job satisfaction (Hoboubiet *et al.*, 2017). During the Covid-19 pandemic, job security was a main stress-inducing factor, which led to a decrease in job satisfaction and contributed to mental health concerns. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected people worldwide. Besides its impact on people's health, it has restricted people's lives, from travel to sporting events and even education (Edelheim, 2020; Sandhu & Wolf, 2020). To this end, the current research undertaking is to examine employee behavior in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, their attendant stress and coping mechanisms to thrive amidst the situation.

## **Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

### **Conservation of Resource Theory (CORT)**

The underpinning theory used in the present study is the Conservation of resource theory (CORT) given by Hobfoll (1989). According to the hypothesis, people experience stress when their current important resources are in danger and new extra resources appear to be out of reach. Understanding how stressful events like the COVID-19 pandemic affect workers, their jobs, and their families may be aided by this. Resources are all work-related elements like things, circumstances, and individual traits according to CORT.

Additionally, the idea divides resources into various groups, such as primary resources (such food, shelter, or clothing), secondary resources (including social support, group membership,

hope and optimism) and tertiary resources (like social status and luxurious life style) (Hobfoll & Wells, 1998). For the present study, the resource list consisted of resources like social support, time, hope and optimism these resources are threatened by the current crisis leading to stress. The Conservation of resource theory (CORT) has received a wide acceptance across countries (Halbesleben *et al.*, 2014; Hobfolet *et al.*, 2016; Lin *et al.*, 2019). Studies have tested the theory and found that providing resources like training to enhance the skills of employees (in the form of resource gain) actually result in lower stress and heightened self-efficacy (Chen *et al.*, 2009). The CORT has been applied to promote the public health by proposing a framework to prevent resource loss and maintain the gain by engaging in healthy behavior (Hobfoll & Schumm, 2009). Similarly, Brummelhuis and Bakker (2012) applied the CORT to examine the work-home conflict of resources and found that personal resources like time and energy can be utilized to improve the overall outcome.

### **Stress Appraisal Theory**

Stress appraisal theory as postulated by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggested that human behavior and emotions arise from appraisal of events. In the case of stress, the situation (the stressor) is not the only factor that determines human response, cognitive appraisal of the stressor plays an unconscious role in emotional response of individuals. Long-term stress typically results in decreased performance, a shift in attitude, and work withdrawals, which frequently result in poor decisions and poor working relationships (Hallowell, 2005). Additionally, ongoing stress has been linked to a number of psychosomatic illnesses (Bliese *et al.*, 2017).

It is the examination of occurrences to ascertain one's safety in relation to his or her place in the environment. Appraisal theory explores the process by which emotions are evoked as a result of a person's subjective interpretation or evaluation of significant events or situations (Lazarus, 1999). Therefore, an event, irrespective of its importance, may or may not be perceived as stressful or harmful by an individual (Regehr & Bober, 2005). Appraisal theory posits that there are two types of appraisal, primary appraisal and secondary appraisal (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Primary appraisal is the individual's evaluation of an event or situation as a potential hazard to his or her well-being. Primary appraisal is also defined as when an individual concentrates on the magnitude of an event or situation possibly for harm (Lewis, 2001). As one example, following the WTC disaster in NYC, the study of 286 MSW students, who were just beginning their agency-based field placement when the attack occurred, reported that the students immediately became aware of the urgent need to attend to personal safety, that of self and others, with particular attention placed on the clients their field placement served (Matthieu *et al.*, 2006).

The secondary appraisal is the individual's evaluation of his or her ability to handle the event or situation. This estimation of the range of coping skills in the individuals' repertoire occurs in relation to, not necessarily after, a primary appraisal of a situation (Lazarus, 1999). Thus, the evaluation is dependent on the subjective interpretation of whether or not the event poses a threat to the individual (i.e., primary appraisal) and whether or not the individuals perceive they have the resources (inner and outer) to cope with it (i.e., secondary appraisal) (Regehr & Bober, 2005).

Following the news of the WTC disaster, the social work interns in the aforementioned study began to analyze safety in addition to feeling unprepared or unqualified to meet the responsibilities of their newfound client population while they too were struggling to identify their own coping resources (Matthieu *et al.*, 2006).

### **The Concept of Employee Job Stress**

Job stress is defined as employee's personal subjective feelings toward the environment. When important goals and results are not achieved, the employees may feel both physical and psychological stress. Moreover, job stress is also the main reason for employees' poor physical and mental health (Haveret *et al.*, 2019; Parker & DeCotiis, 1983).

A negative interaction between the individual and the environment is created by job stress. Physical and mental issues may arise when someone feels like their job's stress is too much (He *et al.*, 2020). The idea of job stress was originally used in company management by French and Kahn in 1962. The gap between one's capabilities, available resources, and job requirements results in job stress (French, 1974). Job stress was further described by Parker and DeCotiis (1983) as an employee's awareness or sensation of personal dysfunction as a result of perceived conditions and the employee's psychological and physiological responses to feeling unwelcome, undesirable, or even threatened at work. Research has shown that hospitality employees work in a highly stressful environment (Park *et al.*, 2020).

The perception of external environment threats brings psychological pressure to employees, Scholars have suggested that people exposed to these threats may experience increased strain when performing their jobs, and the threats of external environment lead to lower job

performance(Xie& Johns, 1995). The work-related anxiety caused by the perception of environmental threats to employees affects job stress and work performance (Jaramillo *et al.*, 2006). Scholars have pointed out that the prevalent job stress in the hotel industry affects employee burnout, turnover rate, and service performance (Akgunduz, 2015; Park *et al.*, 2020). Due to the COVID-19 danger, hotel staff members are uneasy and have doubts about their working conditions and personal health. We therefore propose that hotel staff experience increased job stress when they perceive a more substantial COVID-19 threat. Stress is an unpleasant emotional experience linked to affective states that are brought on by particular occurrences (Parker and DeCotiis, 1983).

Due to the nature of the industry, employees must engage in frequent social interactions that could result in stressful situations, which are the primary causes of occupational stress (Park *et al.*, 2020; Yang *et al.*, 2020). COVID-19 has decreased travel frequency and negatively impacted hotel business operations. This is also an external factor that increases the work pressure of hotel management and employees (Jiang & Wen, 2020).

Prior research also verified that employees in the service industry have higher job stress, especially frontline employees, and job stress affects their job satisfaction (Cheng &Yang, 2018; Tongchaiprasit & Ariyabuddhiphongs, 2016). Specifically, work stress leads to signs of tension, such as physical and mental fatigue, which can cause further conditions, such as obesity, hypertension, diabetes, sleep disorders, anorexia, and muscle stiffening, as signs worsen and long-term stress emerges (Sobnqwiet *et al.*, 2004). Stress can also lead to mental diseases like

depression and exacerbate existing mental health conditions (Moudon, 2009). Stressed-out personnel may do immediate harm to the business.

Kim et al. (2015) indicated that stress has a negative influence on job attitude, and Akgunduz (2015) reasoned that work stress negatively affects total job performance. Tongchaiprasit and Ariyabuddhiphongs (2016) suggested that work stress can lower job satisfaction and raise turnover intention. In other words, it can be claimed that workplace stress is a harmful negative factor that not only harms employees' physical and mental health but also has a direct impact on the productivity of the business.

### **Perceived impacts of COVID-19**

Globally, COVID-19 has had a tremendous influence on employees and workplaces. In order to understand the consequences for workers, teams, and workplace organizations, a thorough overview of prior research with roots in work and organizational psychology and allied domains is presented. Working from home and virtual teams are just two examples of the emergent shifts in work practices that are the focus of this review and overview of pertinent pieces of literature (e.g., social distancing, stress, and unemployment). This comprehensive assessment identifies problems for further study and offers insights to guide solutions while also offering a holistic way of thinking about the COVID-19's effects on employment, employees, and organizations.

## **Emergent Changes in Work Practices**

Normal work habits were dramatically disrupted by COVID-19, but it also accelerated tendencies toward the movement of work to online or virtual settings that were already taking place. The fact that WFH was previously frequently responsive to employee preferences, but that many employees were compelled to do Mandatory Work from Home (MWFH) under COVID-19 makes it challenging to extrapolate former findings.

### **Work from Home (WFH)**

In the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, around 50% of the organizations had more than 80% of their staff working from home, according to a Gartner (2020) study of 229 human resources (HR) departments. The report also predicted significant long-term increases in remote work after the epidemic. Recent trends toward remote work have accelerated because of the requirement for millions of workers to WFH in response to COVID-19, which has been made possible by the development of connectivity and communication technologies. Despite the fact that "remote work" encompasses "work from anyplace" (i.e., not necessarily home), It is well recognized that some people, such as professionals performing difficult tasks with little peer interaction, really enjoy and work better when they WFH (Allen et al.,2014).

However, despite the fact that many workers are compelled to work from home, many struggles with such basic problems as a lack of space in their homes for work-related activities. Employees who live with others, for instance, encounter more difficulties than those who live alone since they must traverse other people's area as well. The ability of employees to distinguish between

work and non-work is frequently difficult (Ramarajan& Reid, 2013). This problem has become more challenging as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic's mandated worker isolation.

While working from home (WFH) may seem desirable if it provides a safe harbor, the lack of a clear line separating one's job and personal life, as well as the lack of commutes to act as a transition between the two, may also be a strain. The variety of work arrangements will need to be researched given the potential that COVID-19 will accelerate trends toward WFH beyond the immediate effects of the pandemic (Gartner, 2020). Future studies should look at if and how the COVID-19 quarantines, which cost WFH millions, influenced innovation, creativity, and work productivity.

Apart from the difficulties that individuals may encounter when using WFH, it is noteworthy that (a) many employers were reluctant to use WFH prior to COVID-19 because they believed they would have little control over workers who were out of sight and reach, and (b) there is good reason to believe that new surveillance techniques will be used in conjunction with different WFH arrangements.

In fact, companies were implementing and creating technology to track the whereabouts of employees even before COVID-19 (e.g., with socio-metric sensors; Bhaveet al., 2020). When employees are working remotely, managing by walking around is not an option, but the fast-growing use of videoconferencing has made it possible for virtual sightlines. However, these virtual sight lines carry a risk since they intrude on privacy and heighten perceived tension. There is also evidence to suggest that such remote and automatic monitoring may centralize

decision-making and, in the absence of preventative measures, may cause employees at lower organizational levels to be less creative (Nell et al., 2020).

### **Virtual Teamwork**

The COVID-19 initiative increased virtual teamwork, which has been seen to influence prosocial and helpful conduct in workplace settings. The growth of virtual teams has been accelerated by COVID-19, therefore it will be helpful for organizational managers to monitor and research technologies that can make it possible for such teams to perform at their best. For instance, the confluence of remote work and a world crisis raises concerns about how emotions like anxiety and tension might be adequately expressed and managed in the special environment of digitally connected work where social and emotional signs are generally scarce (Lindebaum et al., 2018).

However, prior research has shown that teams who collaborate virtually tend to be more productive brainstormers than teams that collaborate in person (DeRosa et al., 2007). The creative benefits that can result from frequent face-to-face meetings, however, have been proven to be missed by remotely engaging teammates, according to research that focuses on individual performance (Allen et al., 2015). The rapid expansion of virtual teams presents a chance to investigate novel issues and create interventions to enhance teamwork in virtual environments; in this endeavor, particular attention must be paid to the multifaceted ways in which virtuality differs among distant teams (Mak& Kozlowski, 2019). In the expanding field of teamwork

research in healthcare settings, where doctors and nurses in emergency rooms have long worked together (Salas et al., 2018),

### **Virtual Leadership and Management**

In the midst of a crisis, the importance of leaders in determining organizational results that have a broad influence on workers at all levels is especially evident. It is comforting to know that leadership can function well from a distance, especially with the COVID-19 problem requiring millions of employees at various hierarchical levels to WFH (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002). Prior study demonstrates that effective leaders are those who possess the domain expertise to make the best choices and offer assurance through a well-balanced combination of optimism and pessimism about the future. To put it another way, effective leaders work to reify their vision, which is a symbolic condition of affairs that the group connects with, at all times (Antonakis et al., 2016).

Future research should investigate another hypothesis, which is that the transition to high-virtuality work arrangements will encourage more collaborative interactions because physical indications of dominance (such size) are less obvious in virtual surroundings.

The degree to which remote leaders are persuadable if they (a) clearly state their institutional values that will guide institutional actions, (b) recognize and openly discuss the tribulations and hopes of their collectives, (c) communicate clearly an ambitious vision of the direction that the unit would then head toward, and (d) demonstrate confidence that strategic goal will be achieved

should all be examined in research on the effectiveness of leaders during and after the COVID-19 crisis.

Future studies should investigate a different possibility: that these abilities, which are referred to as charismatic skills (Antonakiset al., 2016), call for specialized knowledge in addition to training and investment. According to Stoker et al. (2019), crises can in fact cause changes in leadership styles. As a result, businesses should anticipate being better prepared by making sure they have made enough investments in professional development. Future studies should determine whether and how organizational dedications to staff professional development during the crisis pay off in the long run. At a more fundamental level, it will be critical to evaluate how changes brought on by COVID-19 to training programs—such as their transition to the online environment—will affect their accessibility, effectiveness, and efficiency (Cascio, 2019; Salas et al., 2012).

Another potential, that further study should investigate, is that the operation of assessment and appraisal systems will be one of the more crucial COVID-19-related leader-subordinate actions to take into account. For instance, if office circumstances do not permit direct monitoring of subordinates, there may be a shift to results-focused assessment, which earlier research has shown to be typically effective (Pritchard et al., 2008).

Working remotely, however, may diminish subordinates' ability to get leadership feedback over longer periods of time, and recent research indicates that a lack of learning opportunities is linked to weaker organizational commitment and a higher risk of attrition (Vandenberghet al., 2019). Future studies could also look at how trust can be developed remotely with online

interactions so that newcomers are not disadvantaged due to the lack of face-to-face interactions with their supervisors (Dunbar, 2018).

### **Emergent Changes for Workers**

In addition to the immediate impact of COVID-19, there is also likely to be a diverse range of social-psychological, health-related and economic costs of the pandemic for individuals, including for those (a) whose work was made virtual or remote, (b) who continued as “essential” workers, and (c) who were laid off either temporarily or permanently. While the previous section on work practices focused on those whose work was made virtual, this section as well as the rest of this article has broad relevance for everyone affected by COVID-19, including essential workers and those who have been laid off.

### **Coping Mechanisms and Resources**

In the face of these attendant realities, coping mechanisms at the disposal of organizational managers include proactive organizational resilience, which is to build organizations’ readiness for changes, and reactive organizational resilience, which is to respond to and recover from crises (Jia *et al.*, 2020). Also included in some academic definitions of resilience are management and leadership, staff core competencies, market sensitivity, situational awareness, and preparedness strategies (Tibayet *et al.*, 2018).

For coping strategies, crisis management, and the long-term survival of an organization, resilience is crucial. Organizational resilience influences how the company adjusts its operational strategies during a crisis and also has an impact on how employees feel under duress at work

(Tibayet al., 2018). Scholars have indicated that companies should focus on building complete resilience of mobility, rather than building step-by-step planning capability (Somers, 2009). Organizations demonstrate their resilience in an uncertain environment by adjusting their strategies, cooperating with their strategic partners, employee participation, continuous innovation and learning, and changes in management as the environment changes (Melian-Alzola et al., 2020). Accordingly, stress management is essential for consistent performance, and leaders help staff members cope with stress during uncertain situations (Jyoti & Bhau, 2017).

### **The Role of Leaders Influences Workplace Stress.**

Supportive leadership techniques assist followers in coping with stress and uncertain circumstances (Abbasi, 2018). Additionally, training programs allow people to change their perspective on stress management by being present in the moment rather than emotionally responding to it (Jamieson et al., 2018). It is possible to cultivate a "stress optimistic mentality" to effectively manage stress levels (Crum et al., 2017).

As a potential stressor, it was noted that job instability was brought on by the economic crisis both during and after the pandemic. (Giorgi et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2020) that adversely affected employee wellbeing and productivity. These findings underpin the relevance of examining the integrated effect of leadership behaviors, e-training, and employment security to manage academic staff's stress level and performance during the phase of virtual transformations. However, there is a gap in the current literature on leadership behavior, e-training, and employment security for academic staff during the pandemic crisis.

A review of the available literature revealed that research on leadership behaviors in the educational context is scarce. Most studies have been conducted in traditional and non-virtual scenarios (Hallinger *et al.*, 2020). Rare studies examined different aspects of leadership behaviors and practices in the educational context, for instance, instructional leadership (Liu & Hallinger 2017), contextual leadership (Noman *et al.*, 2016), and the role of leadership in financial management (Myendeet *et al.*, 2018). Meanwhile, there is a lack of studies, which addressed the role of leaders in managing performance of academic staff at the virtual workplace. According to Wieczorek and Manard's (2018) assertion, more study is needed on leadership experience in relation to the difficulties posed by new policies and economic pressures (Hallinger *et al.*, 2020). The input-process-output (IPO) model serves as the foundation for a conceptual framework that incorporates the JD-R theory. This conceptual model broadens our understanding of the workplace demands during the pandemic crisis that lead to stress, anxiety, and burnout in employees: tolerance of work transition, complexity, work burden, skill discretion, and the physical environment. Meanwhile, leadership behaviors, e-training, and employment security are some of the job resources that serve as input in the process of stress management; hence, productivity, adaptability, and performance are key outputs.

### **Findings**

When organizations face an externally unfavorable business environment, organizational leaders and managers put up resilient strategies in order to cope with the realities of turbulence and this consequently would elicit a positive impact on employee psychology. This study found that COVID-19 and its perceived threat is negatively associated with job satisfaction, which can

prove that the disaster has a substantial influence on the job satisfaction of employees. This finding with previous studies on the impact of disasters on people's psychological well-being is in consonance. This finding is consistent with earlier research on corporate employees' organizational citizenship behavior, life satisfaction, and depression under the influence of COVID-19 (Park et al., 2021; Yan et al., 2021).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between threat perception, job stress, and job satisfaction as well as the mediating role of job stress in the impact of catastrophe threats. People worry about the future because they sense threats, and their anxiety increases if they believe that an outbreak is difficult to control (Goodwin et al., 2021; Krupiet al., 2020; Paredes et al., 2021).

The work-related anxiety caused by the perception of environmental threats on employees can affect work stress (Jaramillo *et al.*, 2006). The results of this study confirm that COVID-19 increases the job stress of employees, which in turn affects their job satisfaction. As previous studies on COVID-19 did not simultaneously investigate the relationship between threat perception, job stress, and job satisfaction, the results of this study can make up for this research gap and provide further insights into this topic. Employees during situations such as this generally witness high work pressure, which affects their burnout, turnover rate, and service performance (Akgunduz, 2015; Park *et al.*, 2020). This study notes that even awareness of the threat of an epidemic affects job stress and job satisfaction.

Therefore, business managers are expected to always promote resilience in order to effectively respond to changes in the environment, and more importantly, enhance the morale of employees.

During an epidemic such as the COVID-19 case, companies can reduce the work pressure, and job stress of employees, thereby increasing job satisfaction and reducing turnover. Previous research found a significantly positive relationship between coping mechanisms and the resilience of organizations. We corroborate in the same view, thus, through the factors of the organizational culture, as well as the abilities to organize and manage operations, the adaptation capacity of the organizations affects the development of resilience and sustainability of organizations.

### **Conclusion**

Employees operate under intense pressure in a fiercely competitive workplace. Although the right amount of pressure on the job can motivate workers to work harder, too much strain that cannot be appropriately released can have negative physical and mental impacts as well as impact organizational performance. The idea of environmental risks from the outside can put personnel under psychological stress.

Organizational managers need to be able to respond to emergencies and disasters since COVID-19 has posed operational hurdles and difficulties to numerous sectors throughout the world. Employee stress is primarily brought on by the uncertainty that the pandemic brings. High levels of stress have a negative impact on productivity, employee job satisfaction, and organizational trust, which could lead to the collapse of the entire business. Therefore, firms must address the issue by determining the amount of employee stress, its causes, and developing solutions to problems. Therefore, it is now more important than ever for organizations and individuals to

make a variety of adjustments in order to manage in the face of this turbulence and have an understanding of how to adapt to these changes and problems.

### **Recommendations**

There may be numerous stressors in life that span from personal to professional, especially as imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, thus workplace stress is bound to occur more frequently.; therefore, it is recommended for modern organizational managers the following;

- i) There should be social support coming from the workplace as integral in helping the employees cope with stress.
- ii) When epidemic threats result in greater job stress for the employees, business managers must pay attention to the job stress faced by the employees and resolve them in a timely manner, so as to maintain high morale of employees and provide good service quality.
- iii) There should be a strong social network at the workplace to play a crucial role in addressing high-stress levels.
- iv) It is pertinent to establish a trustworthy relationship and a conducive work environment for openness; for an environment with a strong social bond among the employees who empower and support each other will undoubtedly help reduce stress levels through sharing.
- v) Though the findings suggest that managerial support is valued the most, formal employee assistance programs were non-existing in almost all the organizations.

- vi) The wellbeing of the employees could be significantly impaired if the organization does not have strategies to reduce the stressful conditions in their company.
- vii) There should be flexibility and IT assistance as the main elements of support provided by organizations by actually investing in fostering creativity and being more compassionate with the employees.

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