

Stress Management Behaviour in Working Adults: A Case Study of Operational-Level Private Sector Employees in the Capital City of Thailand

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Abstract

Workplace stress among working adults has emerged as a critical occupational health issue globally. Nevertheless, research on the individual experiences of stress management among private-

sector employees in Thailand remains limited. This study sought to bridge this research gap by examining the subjective experiences of both operational-level and managerial-level employees within private organizations in Bangkok, Thailand. The objectives of the study were: 1) to investigate the job demands associated with stress for operational-level employees in Bangkok's private sector; 2) to assess the availability and utilization of job resources by these employees; 3) to evaluate the applicability of the "demand-resource model" in explaining stress and well-being among private-sector employees; and 4) to identify the most effective stress management strategies for operational-level managers in the private sector of Bangkok. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 participants who voluntarily consented to the study. The analysis identified four major themes: job stressors, accessibility and utilization of organizational resources, the impact of imbalances between job demands and resources, and stress management strategies. Findings indicated that participants experienced considerable job demands that adversely affected their well-being.

Keywords: Stress Management Behaviour, Private Sector Employees, Operational Level

Introduction

Stress levels among operational-level employees in private sector organizations in Bangkok, Thailand, have reached alarming levels, primarily due to the high-stress expectations associated with urban workplaces. Research conducted by [Chantra et al. \(2023\)](#) revealed that employees at various operational levels within Bangkok's firms reported significant stress attributable to job demands. Notably, 40% of the employees indicated an increase in their stress levels compared to the previous year, with mental health issues linked to minimal work-life balance, family difficulties, job demands, professional challenges, and economic conditions. Additionally, [Somboonviboon et al. \(2023\)](#) reported a 25% rise in medical visits related to stress among private sector employees, underscoring the severity of escalating stress levels in the workplace. These findings highlight the urgent need for practical intervention strategies to manage stress among operational-level employees in Bangkok's private sector organizations.

Previous research has identified various work stressors associated with employees' stress experiences, including workload pressure, time constraints, and role ambiguity ([Rukhayati & Prihatin, 2023](#)). However, there remains a paucity of focused research specifically addressing operational-level employees in Bangkok. Understanding these employees' primary activities is crucial, as they are often

involved in frontline roles and encounter immediate operational challenges that can significantly impact their stress levels. To address this gap, the first research question of the study is: *RQ1. Which job demands are associated with stress for the operational-level employees working in the private organisations of Bangkok?* Identifying primary job demands is anticipated to provide a robust foundation for developing targeted interventions addressing the specific stressors faced by operational-level employees. By mitigating these stressors, organizations can enhance employee health, boost productivity, and reduce attrition rates. Although previous research has concentrated on job demands, there is a notable lack of investigation into the job resources available to operational-level employees in Bangkok for managing stress. Job demands encompass the effort, time, and energy required to perform tasks, whereas job resources include community support, autonomy over work, and opportunities for professional development (Bakker, Demerouti, et al., 2023). The second research question addressing this issue is: *RQ2. What operational-level employees in Bangkok's private sector have access to job resources?* Understanding the efficacy of job resources can enhance organizational support systems, thereby aiding employees in managing stress. This improvement can potentially lead to increased job satisfaction and overall organizational well-being. The Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) theory posits that high workloads and inadequate recovery can deplete available resources, which is associated with stress and burnout (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). Although the application of this theory has been explored in various contexts, there remains a research gap concerning its application to operational-level employees within Bangkok's private sector. To address this gap, the next research question is: *RQ3. To what extent does the demand-resource model explain operational-level employees' stress and well-being in Bangkok private organisations?* Exploring the dynamics of this issue enhances and refines our understanding of the nature of stress and its underlying causes. By applying the outlined theory, this exploration provides a foundation for a comprehensive approach to stress management. While managers are crucial in adopting various stress management practices (Amadi, 2024), existing literature does not sufficiently address the effectiveness of these practices in reducing stress levels among operational-level employees in Bangkok. The last research question of the

study is: RQ4 Which stress management behaviours are most beneficial for managers practicing at the operational level in the Bangkok private sector? Organizations can identify effective stress management strategies and provide guidance to help employees manage stress effectively. Addressing these research questions contributes to improved employee health, enhanced job satisfaction, and better organizational performance.

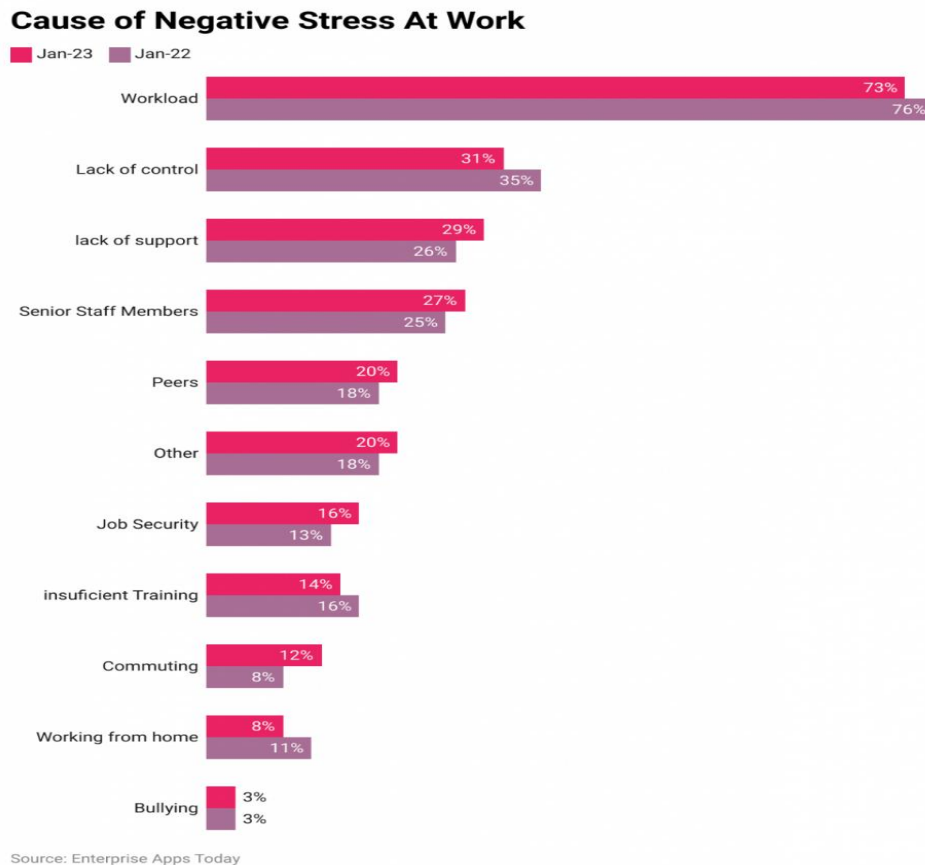


Figure 1: Cause of Negative Stress at Work
Source: (Elad, 2023)

Literature Review

Job Demand-Resource Model

The JD-R theory is a comprehensive framework frequently utilized to elucidate well-being, stress, and job satisfaction across various organizations. Formulated by Bakker and Demerouti in 2007, the JD-R Model asserts that job characteristics can be classified into two broad categories: job demands and job resources (Bakker, Demerouti, et al., 2023). Lateral relationships significantly impact employees' stress

levels and overall health, particularly in negative contexts. According to the JD-R Model, each profession encompasses specific risk factors related to job stress, which are categorized as job demands and job resources. Job demands refer to aspects of the job that require an expenditure of time, energy, and cognitive effort, often incurring certain costs. Conversely, job resources are the material or psychological factors that facilitate the achievement of work demands or contribute to personal development.

Working conditions encompass elements of the work environment that directly require energy and time, leading to physiological and psychological fatigue. Common job demands include high work pressure, an unpleasant organizational environment, emotionally challenging interactions with clients, and role ambiguity or complexity (Firdaus et al., 2023). For example, operational-level employees in Bangkok may encounter core stressors such as work overload, time constraints, role ambiguity, and challenging interpersonal interactions with customers. If these demands are not effectively managed, they can lead to significant stress, potentially resulting in burnout and other detrimental effects on well-being. Conversely, job resources are characteristics of the job that can alleviate these burdens, aid in achieving organizational goals, and foster personal growth (Skaalvik, 2023). Job resources can be categorized into various levels: organizational, relational and social, organizational design, and task-specific resources. At the organizational level, these include salary, professional advancement opportunities, and job safety. Relational and social resources involve support from supervisors and colleagues, as well as a positive team environment. Organizational design factors include clarity of work roles and involvement in decision-making, while task-level resources encompass feedback, the variety of skills utilized, and the significance of the tasks performed. For operational-level employees in Bangkok, job resources are exemplified by social support from peers and managers, opportunities for training and development, decision-making authority, and the availability of necessary tools. The JD-R Model is particularly valuable for addressing stress management, as it highlights two key pathways to employee well-being: the health impairment process and the motivational process (Pansini et al., 2023). The health impairment process posits that high job demands deplete employees' mental and physical resources, leading to stress and burnout.

Conversely, job resources facilitate the motivational process by enhancing employee engagement, motivation, and overall health.

Job Demands in Operational- Level Positions

Work requirements refer to the aspects of a job or organizational position that demand the expenditure of energy and are associated with certain psychological costs. These requirements include factors such as workload, time pressure, role ambiguity, and the emotional intensity of interactions. Research has consistently shown that elevated job demands correlate with increased stress levels. For instance, [Harvey \(2023\)](#) found that excessive workload negatively impacts job satisfaction and contributes to burnout. Operational-level employees in Bangkok's private sector encounter distinct job demands. The high-speed nature of Bangkok's business environment results in substantial workloads and frequent overtime, leading to significant stress due to the need to handle multiple tasks simultaneously ([Herawati et al., 2023](#)). Time pressure further exacerbates stress, as employees face stringent schedules that require rapid task completion without adequate breaks or time off ([Demerouti & Bakker, 2023](#)). Role ambiguity also contributes to stress, as employees grapple with unclear job responsibilities and performance expectations ([Dodanwala et al., 2023](#)). Additionally, interactions with demanding clients, who serve as intermediaries between senior management and operational staff, can intensify stress levels ([Bakker, Xanthopoulou, et al., 2023](#)).

Job Resources and Their Role in Stress Management

Job resources encompass the physical, mental, societal, and organizational aspects of the workplace that address job demands, facilitate the achievement of work-related tasks, and promote the growth and development of employees ([Demerouti & Bakker, 2023](#)). These resources can be categorized at various levels: organizational (e.g., promotion opportunities, job stability), social (e.g., supervisor support, perceived team environment), and task-specific (e.g., skill variety, task importance). The literature review demonstrates that job resources mitigate stress and its adverse effects, enhancing employees' quality of life. [Canboy et al. \(2023\)](#) assert that job

resources counterbalance the detrimental impact of high job demands on stress and burnout. Similarly, [Tisu et al. \(2023\)](#) found that autonomy, support, and opportunities for professional development enhance employee engagement and protect against burnout. Job resources are also positively associated with a healthy working climate, subjective well-being, and overall better well-being. Operational-level employees in Bangkok can benefit from various job resources that help manage stress, with social support from colleagues and supervisors being crucial for emotional and practical assistance ([Fleming, 2024](#)). Additionally, social support can alleviate stress related to the absence of companionship in specific tasks or work environments. Some colleges and universities in Bangkok have implemented policies to prevent aggressive behaviours among private sector employees and have promoted the development of mentorship programs and team-building activities to ensure adequate social support. Autonomy also plays a significant role in reducing stress; having control over how work is performed allows individuals to operate within areas of personal comfort, thereby enhancing job satisfaction ([Berber et al., 2023](#)). Flexible work practices and employee autonomy have gained popularity among organizations in Bangkok as well.

Effective Stress Management Behaviours

Stress management behaviours are defined as activities undertaken to minimize stress. These behaviours may include physical activities, relaxation sessions, time management strategies, and the utilization of social support. Empirical research has identified several effective stress management methods. For example, the transactional model of stress and coping, developed by Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman, classifies coping strategies as either problem-focused or emotion-focused ([Wurtz, 2022](#)). The problem-focused method addresses the source of stress, while the emotion-focused method deals with the emotional response. Other studies have shown that stress-relief techniques such as meditation and deep breathing can reduce stress and enhance psychological well-being ([Van Dierendonck & Lam, 2023](#)). At the organizational operations level, various stress coping behaviours are employed, including physical exercise, timely task completion, and seeking social support from colleagues and family members. Many individuals engage in activities such as yoga

and meditation to reduce stress and enhance mental health. Stress management behaviours also involve participating in employer-supported wellness programs, utilizing flexible working options, and engaging in enjoyable activities within Bangkok's private organizations. Employer-provided training on time management and stress handling is particularly beneficial for employees. Additionally, social practices such as mindfulness meditation and regular exercise are increasingly popular among Bangkok's workforce to mitigate the impact of high job demands and stress.

Organisational Stress Management Programs

Organizational interventions are crucial for managing workplace stress, as they aim to address the root causes of stress within various organizations. Such interventions can significantly improve employees' quality of working life, performance, and work attitudes. Examples of organizational stress interventions include conducting stress audits, providing stress awareness and prevention education and training, promoting stress awareness and work-life balance, offering flexible work options, and fostering a supportive organizational stress culture (Anchors et al., 2024). Continuous monitoring and feedback on these programs are essential for maintaining their effectiveness and ensuring they meet employee needs. Research reviews indicate that well-implemented stress management interventions can effectively reduce stress while enhancing employee health and performance. For instance, Birdee et al. (2023) observed that incorporating stress management techniques such as cognitive behaviour training and relaxation training in the workplace can reduce stress and improve workers' well-being. In Bangkok's private institutions, challenges include increased workload, limited acceptance of mental health issues, and insufficient funding for comprehensive programs. Nevertheless, there is potential to leverage technology for administering virtual stress management programs and integrating mindfulness and meditation into organizational health enhancement strategies.

For operational-level employees, programs should focus on enhancing job resources, including increasing support, granting decision-making discretion,

providing stress management training, and conducting regular work-life balance campaigns. These programs and policies should be tailored to fit the needs of Bangkok's workforce and be culturally sensitive to maximize positive engagement. Additionally, the success and sustainability of these programs rely on periodic evaluations and adjustments based on employee feedback.

Methodology

The primary objectives of this qualitative study are to examine stress coping behaviours and to assess the adequacy and implementation of organizational stress management practices within Bangkok's private sector, with a focus on operational-level employees. To achieve these objectives, the research strategy and data collection methods were designed to gather comprehensive information, which is why semi-structured interviews were employed. This qualitative research design was chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of operational-level employees' experiences and perceptions regarding stress management. Such an approach facilitates the natural observation of phenomena, potentially uncovering complex insights that might be overlooked in quantitative analyses. The study sample comprised 18 operational-level employees and supervisors from private organizations in Bangkok. Purposeful sampling was utilized to mitigate biases related to gender, age, employee type, and industry type (López, 2023). Thus, the study engaged a diverse cohort of participants to capture a wide range of perspectives on stress management. Semi-structured interviews were employed to gather both general and detailed accounts of individual stress management behaviours, as well as participants' perceptions of organizational stress management programs. Data analysis was conducted using Thematic Analysis, which involved familiarizing oneself with the data, repeatedly reviewing the data, systematically coding important features, generating themes, reviewing and naming these themes, and ultimately composing the report (Elad, 2023). Informed consent was secured from participants, and approval was obtained from the review board. Participants were provided with comprehensive information about the study's objectives, methods, and their right to withdraw at any time. Throughout the study, participants' identities and any potentially identifying details were kept confidential.

This methodological approach established a robust foundation for identifying patterns in stress management behaviours and evaluating the effectiveness of organizational stress management strategies.

Results

The researcher conducted the thematic analysis of the interview transcripts using the six-stage model outlined by (Braun & Clarke, 2006), as depicted in Figure 2.

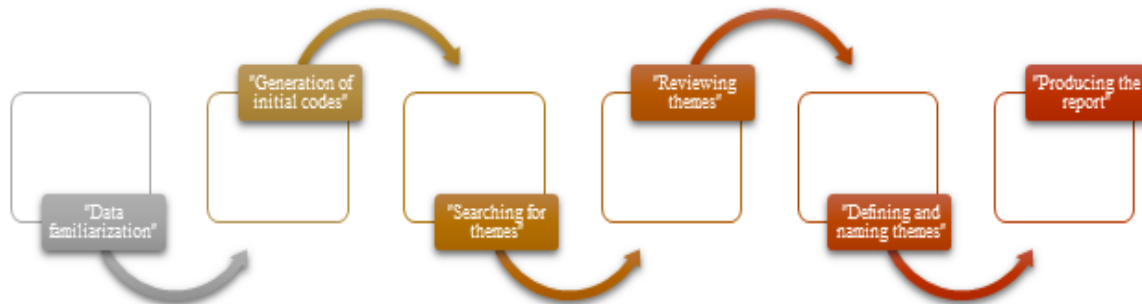


Figure 2: Phases of Thematic Analysis

Key Themes

Figure 3 illustrates the mind map of the themes derived from the thematic analysis.

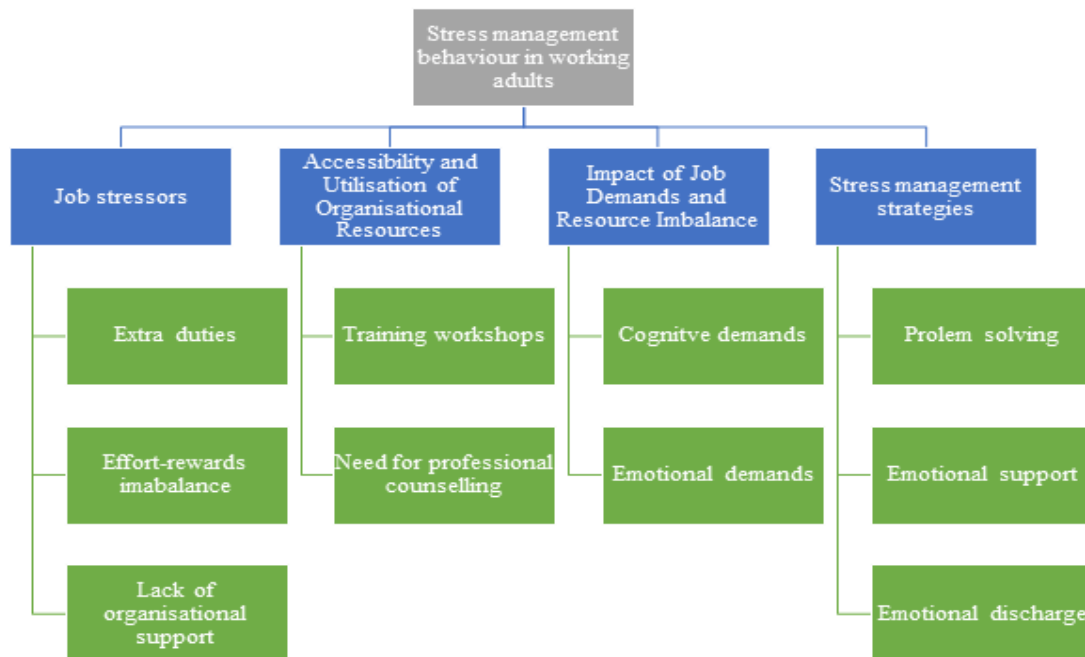


Figure 3: Mind map for Thematic Analysis

Job Stressors

“RQ1: Which job demands are associated with stress for the operational-level employees working in the private organisations of Bangkok?” Most participants identified supervisory duties as a principal source of workplace anxiety and stress. Instances were reported where operational-level employees were assigned tasks beyond their job descriptions and were required to handle multiple responsibilities concurrently. For example, the third respondent emphasized: *“Sometimes, we are expected to perform extra duties, which becomes a source of pressure and stress.”* Participants in operational roles also cited a lack of supervisory support from their managers as a significant source of job stress. The twelfth respondent expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the role of the supervisor: *“I always get panicked while being monitored by my supervisor. It makes me anxious and stressed.”* Similarly, the fourteenth respondent shared a comparable opinion: *“I don’t like being constantly monitored. It makes me feel very conscious about my task performance. And when I’m too conscious, I can’t seem to focus on the task.”* *“Sometimes, I feel as if my supervisor just wants to catch me slipping while monitoring my performance. This has been a source of immense anxiety and panic for me.”* In addition to regulatory pressure, respondents also highlighted the negative impact of inequitable compensation relative to their extra efforts. Regarding managerial positions, participants in managerial roles also expressed dissatisfaction with their workplace duties. For example, the eighteenth participant shared: *“As a part of the monitoring units, I have to provide my services as well as monitor to activities of my team. This has been very challenging and stressful for me.”* One participant expressed particular concern about being held accountable for the overall poor performance of the team. The ninth respondent stated: *“When you have to answer for the performance of the whole team, things get a little more stressful.”*

Accessibility and Utilisation of Organisational Resources

“RQ2: What operational-level employees in Bangkok’s private sector have access to job resources? How can they prevent stress?” Nearly all respondents recognized the essential role of stress management training in their workplaces. For instance, the tenth respondent shared: *“My company encourages employees to participate*

in stress management trainings. We're taught several stress management techniques there."

The ninth respondent noted that the company also invests in training employees to use new operational tools, aiming to help them manage the stress associated with modern technology. *"Though I find the adaptation to modern technology very stressful, I've to acknowledge the fact that my organisation arranges regular training workshops to reduce the associated anxiety and stress."* Regarding access to stress management resources, some respondents indicated that these trainings were mandatory for all employees. However, other participants expressed dissatisfaction with the available resources. For instance, the seventeenth respondent suggested: *"There should be frequent professional counselling for evaluating the mental health of employees."*

Impact of Job Demands and Resource Imbalance

"RQ3: To what extent does the demand-resource model explain operational-level employees' stress and well-being in Bangkok private organisations?" Participants were asked to describe specific elements of their job demands that contributed to their current mental state. The analysis revealed that "job demand" was a major contributing factor to employee stress. Most respondents perceived job demands as having a detrimental impact on their well-being. Additionally, respondents highlighted the cognitive demands of their roles. For instance, the seventh respondent shared: *"There are so many things that we have to keep in mind and being busy the whole time just aggravates the daily routine, adding more mental load."* Participants also emphasized the emotional demands of their jobs. The sixth respondent expressed the view that: *"We're always expected to regulate our emotions after getting worked up due to the huge workload. We're always advised to not let our mental health affect our performance."* Participants also highlighted the imbalance between their job demands and available resources, noting how this discrepancy exacerbated their deteriorating well-being. *"I feel the organisational resources become particularly insufficient when we're dealing with an innovative task. We aren't supposed to expect high levels of organisational support while dealing with an immense workload."* When asked about how a balanced demand-resource situation contributes to their well-being, respondents agreed that achieving a balance between demands and resources aids in managing

their daily routines. For instance, the eighth respondent shared: *“When I’m not expected to exceed our available resources in terms of job demands, I experience a positive change in my overall well-being.”*

Stress Management Strategies

“RQ4: Which stress management behaviours are most beneficial for managers practising at the operational level in the Bangkok private sector?” Interviewees were asked to identify beneficial stress management strategies they practiced at work. Respondents cited various strategies, which were categorized into problem-focused, emotional support-focused, and emotional discharge strategies. For instance, the fifth respondent viewed proper planning as an effective method for managing workplace stress: *“I make proper plans on how to deal with the problem. Effective planning can also help me deal with the stress that comes with the workload.”* Some respondents also considered consulting with superior colleagues as a means of managing workplace stress. The third respondent shared: *“I often spend time with more experienced colleagues and learn from their experiences. This helps me find several techniques to deal with challenging situations.”* The ninth respondent viewed social support as instrumental in managing a work-life balance: *“My colleagues often share techniques, which work in sustaining an ideal balance between work and life.”* Some respondents discussed emotional discharge techniques that helped them channel their negative energy. The second and tenth respondents highlighted the benefits of routine exercise. The second respondent shared: *“I’ve developed a 20-minute work routine for which I wake up early in the morning. This helps me spend some time on my self-care and build stamina to work under stressful situations.”* Some respondents also mentioned spending time with family to manage stress. [Table 1](#) provides a summary of the stress management strategies cited by the respondents.

Table 1: Stress Management Strategies

| Stress Management Strategies | Interviewees |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| Problem-Solving | |
| Planning | R5, R8, R9, R14, R17 |
| Time Management | R4, R6, R11, R18 |
| Task Breakdown | R1, R7, R12, R15, 19 |
| Emotional Support | |

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Seeking Social Support | R3, R9 |
| Spending Time with the Family | R1, R11, R14 |
| Emotional Discharge | |
| Exercise | R2, R10, R16 |
| Meditation and Mindfulness | R5, R1 |

Discussion and Conclusion

The primary objective of this study was to examine the key job stressors and stress management strategies employed by private-sector employees in Thailand. The findings addressed all four research questions formulated in the initial section of the study. The first research question focused on identifying job-related elements that contribute to stress among operational-level employees. Interview respondents highlighted several factors, including expectations to perform duties beyond their job descriptions, effort-reward imbalances, and a lack of organizational support. These insights reveal the stressors impacting the well-being of both operational-level and managerial employees in Thailand. The results align with findings from (Rasool et al., 2021), which demonstrated that a toxic workplace environment adversely affects employee well-being. Consequently, this study's findings are consistent with existing literature. Additionally, a significant outcome of the study is the observation that employees experience stress when they perceive their efforts are inadequately rewarded. This sense of unfair treatment at the workplace has been identified as a major contributor to employee stress in this study. Additionally, employees expressed dissatisfaction with the role of their supervisors, prompting questions about the influence of supervisors on employee well-being. The second research question investigated the impact of organizational factors on employees' stress management. While some participants were content with the level of organizational support provided, others advocated for reforms in organizational policies to enhance comprehensive mental health support for employees.

The third research question examined the applicability of the "demand-resource model" to stress management and employee well-being in Thailand's private sector. Participants reported frequent cognitive and emotional demands and highlighted a significant gap between these demands and the available resources at their workplace, which exacerbates stress. This finding aligns with Breugh (2021)

research, which emphasizes the critical role of resource availability in managing employee stress. Consequently, the study suggests the need to enhance job resources while reducing demands to achieve a better balance. The fourth research question explored the stress management strategies that participants found effective. The results identified several strategies, categorized into problem-solving, emotional support, and emotional discharge. Respondents reported that exercise and spending time with family were particularly effective in alleviating stress. This finding is supported by [Della Valle et al. \(2020\)](#), who also found yoga to be effective in reducing employee stress. The present study indicates that employees employ a range of stress management strategies. Some individuals use personal activities such as exercise and meditation, while others seek support from supervisors to learn stress management techniques and better manage their workload.

Conclusion

To investigate stress management behaviours among working adults in Thailand, 18 in-depth interviews were conducted with operational and managerial-level employees from the private sector. The study identified three primary job-related stressors: expectations to perform duties beyond job descriptions, an imbalance between effort and reward, and a lack of organizational support. Additionally, the study revealed diverse responses to the available organizational resources, highlighting the need for reforms to better support employees' stress management. The research also uncovered various cognitive and emotional demands that negatively impact employee well-being. Furthermore, the study identified several effective stress coping strategies, including emotional support from colleagues and family, as well as self-care activities such as exercise and meditation. These findings provide a foundation for further investigation into stress management among working adults.

Implications of the Study

Theoretical Implications

Despite the extensive literature on workplace stress among employees, there are notable gaps concerning stress management in private sector employees in Thailand. Consequently, this study offers valuable contributions to the existing body of knowledge. By focusing on operational employees and managers in Thailand, the study significantly enhances current research. A key contribution is its extension of the "Job Demand-Resource Model" literature, demonstrating how imbalances between job demands and resources can disrupt daily functioning and overall well-being. The study highlights how cognitive and emotional demands contribute to employee stress and hinder their ability to manage workloads effectively. Therefore, this research underscores the importance of addressing employee well-being to improve perceptions of organizational support and maintain a balanced demand-resource dynamic.

Practical Implications

The present study suggests that organizations should prioritize providing accessible stress management training for their operational employees and managers. Stress management workshops can enhance employees' coping skills. Furthermore, the findings indicate the necessity of offering adequate organizational support to employees. It is crucial to balance job demands with rewards to prevent frustration over additional job responsibilities. Employees should also be encouraged to engage in self-care activities, such as exercise and mindfulness. Additionally, fostering an environment where employees feel comfortable expressing their concerns about workload and organizational goals is essential.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The present study has several limitations. Notably, its findings are specific to private sector employees in Bangkok, Thailand, and may not be generalizable to other geographical or organizational contexts. Additionally, there may have been hesitation

among employees to disclose their experiences due to the sensitive nature of the topic. Nonetheless, the interviewer ensured a supportive environment to facilitate honest feedback. For future research, adopting a quantitative design is recommended to further explore the determinants of job stress and contribute to the existing literature. Future studies could also examine stress coping mechanisms among employees and the impact of organizational support on workplace stress, as this is an emerging area of research.

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