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Anatomizing Workplace Distress on Employee Performance in Government Entities of Uganda

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ABSTRACT

The persistent phenomenon of workplace distress has adversely impacted public value creation in global governance entities especially those in developing countries. Grafted with the emotional, environmental and psychological stressors employees can only perform in an environment divorced of quadruple evil of service delivery (corruption, nepotism, cronyism and profiling) where there a robust anti-workplace distress tactics and protective distress recovery measures. Studies have been elusive in appraising workplace distress and employee performance with no exception for Uganda. With a quantitative approach using a self-administered questionnaire, this study, therefore, comprehensively examines workplace distress for 257 employees of Ugandan government entities during the 2021-2023 period. The study uses descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the obtained data. First, the findings confirm the validity of the trio distress indicators existence in Uganda used as a proxy for work distress. Second, the empirical findings indicate that all the trio distress indicators can be used in predicting work distress in Uganda. Third, the analysis at the government entity level indicates that the emotional, psychological and environmental factors are significant contributors to work distress; and exhibit the most significant poor performance risk disclosure, particularly during the area profiling pandemic. Policy implications have emerged based on the findings from this study.

INTRODUCTION

Global employment is at about 3 billion and almost all of them deal with the persistent difficult issue of workplace distress (Ali et al., 2014). Aside from being widespread, workplace distress has marked detrimental effects on the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of the employees with adverse effects on their performance. Employees nevertheless continue to operate in a setting that is becoming more and more intense due to program reviews, technology, and public and governmental expectations for service improvements besides pressures. The impacts of pressures are seen, as stated by Nekoranec and Kmošena (2015) in physiological difficulties, such as hypotension, dyspnea, gastrointestinal issues and breathing issues; emotional disorders: like inability to focus, low self-esteem, aggressive behavior, anxiety, depression and poor intellectual functioning; behavioral difficulties, including worse performance, accidents, increased volatility, substance addiction, communication issues and more. Research on distress in the workplace indicates that distress can lead to mental health issues and other health issues as well (Rivera-Toress & Araque-Padilla, 2013).

African countries are currently very concerned about work-related distress because it prevents the creation of public value because government employees perform poorly (Sajida et al., 2021; Kitole et al., 2019). Uganda is not atypical. Work during the initial twenty years following Uganda's 1962 independence was focused on inclusive and diversified participation of the entire workforce. Because everyone was actively involved in government performance procedures, it was rare for workplace-related stress causes to infiltrate the system. Over time, though, workplace-related stress became ingrained in the system and is now used as a tool to injure innocent victims. While the establishment of the Equal Opportunity Commission in 2007 was intended to bring about a new era in

the country's employee circle, this hope has not materialized. A significant portion of the workforce is still subject to lengthy wait times and significant lockdowns while trying to 'access' lucrative appointments and assignments, for example. Many current employees of Ugandan government entities have suffered as a result of being marginalized, segregated and distressed (Sendawula et al., 2018; Lutwama et al., 2013; Luboga et al., 2011).

There are, however, few studies on the subject of work-related stress and employee performance in government settings. This means that the research currently in publication, especially at the government entity level, has mostly overlooked the impact of workplace distress on employee performance. Considering that Ugandan government entities are currently making very little effort to recover from workplace distress, an examination of work distress at all levels, including both central and local government entity levels, is important. Therefore, this study focuses on employee performance about workplace distress and thoroughly investigates the workplace anguish of Ugandan employees from 2012 to 2023. The results of this study will provide insights into the service public value creation by government entities in Uganda, a developing country in Africa, enabling scholars, practitioners and policymakers to swiftly address the issue.

The purpose of this study, is, therefore, to determine how employee performance in Ugandan government entities is impacted by work-related distress. Thus, the research is directed by the subsequent precise objectives;

i. To investigate how emotional distress affects the performance of employees in Uganda's government entities.
ii. To evaluate how psychological distress impacts employee performance in Uganda's government entities.
iii. To ascertain how environmental distress influences the performance of employees in Uganda's government entities.
iv. To determine how occupational distress shapes employees' performance in Uganda's government entities.

The present study employs the Michigan model and stress recovery theory to investigate the correlation between work-related distress and employee performance. To begin with, a thorough analysis is conducted of the literature on the relationship between work-related distress and employee performance. This is followed by a discussion of the research methodology. And after that, the results and their examinations. Following that, the study's conclusion, along with any contributions and suggestions will be presented.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This review seeks to clarify the important research on workplace distress that has been conducted recently and in the past. It begins with the conceptual framework created for the research. A thorough empirical review of the study's subject comes next, and then a theoretical framework follows.

Conceptual Framework

In forecasting and explaining workplace distress vis-à-vis employee performance for public value creation, I combine these notions (Imenda, 2014). Figure 1 schematizes the link between the concepts.

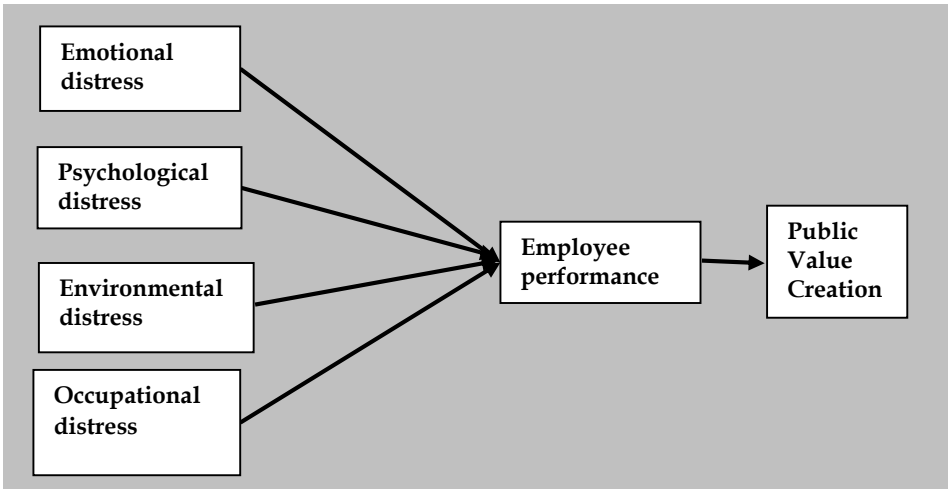

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

As envisaged in Figure 1, the study has two main variables. These are employee performance and workplace distress, being dependent and independent, respectively. They are further elaborated as follows.

Workplace distress

Etymologically, from the Old French word destresse (Modern French détresse), "distress" means "circumstances that cause anxiety". Otherwise from the Latin districtus' past participle of the verb distringere, it means "draws apart, hinders," or rather the Vulgar Latin districtia, meaning "restraint, affliction, narrowness" (Bliese et al., 2017). In the workplace, Weiss and Cropanzano, (1996) contend distress is a common occurrence for people, brought on by both unfavorable work-related incidents and situations that occur outside of the office. Stone et al., (2012) confirm distress is more experienced during the workweek than on the weekends. Studies

affirm the occurrence of distress in the kiln of being given unfavorable assignments, having interpersonal conflicts with managers, coworkers, or customers, being discriminated against, negotiating for pay, or giving or receiving unfavorable feedback (Brooks & Schweitzer, 2011; Brief & Weissm 2002) with causes count on in Figure 2.

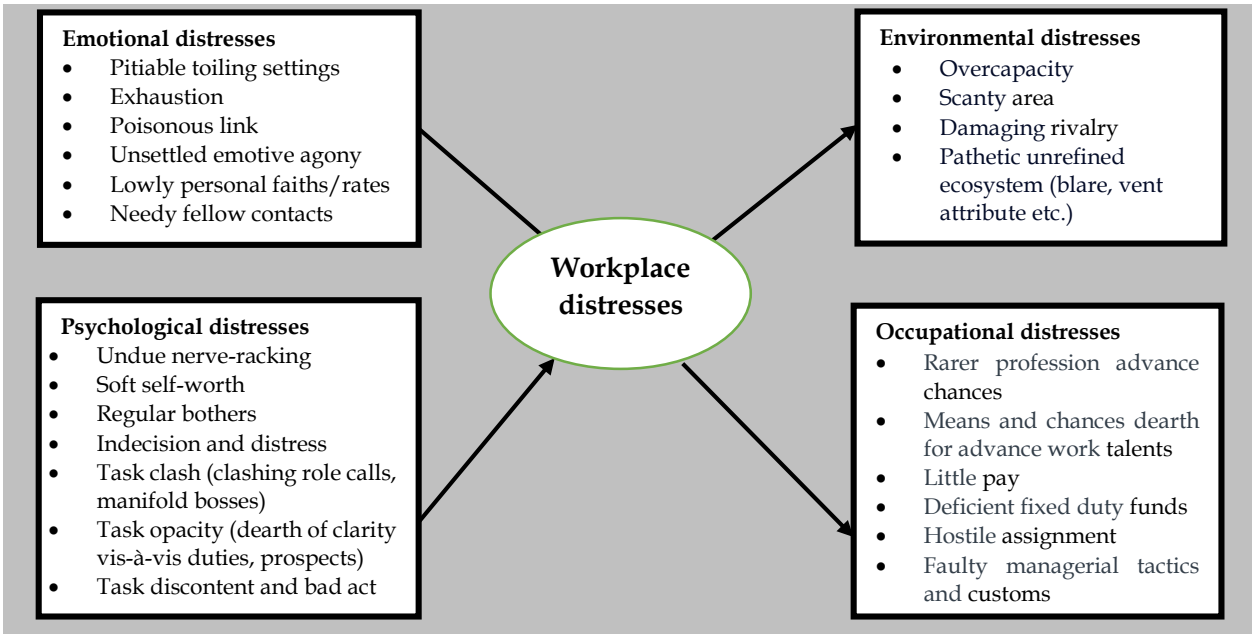

Figure 2. Major workplace distresses.

Workplace distress is caused by emotional, psychological, environmental and occupational distress as exhibited in Figure 2. *Emotional distress* is the mental anguish that results from an emotional reaction to an experience that is brought on by the impact or recollection of a specific event, occurrence, pattern of events, or situation (Rees & Cooper, 1992). Emotional distress is the source of this suffering. *Psychological distress* is unpleasant feelings and ideas that impair one's capacity for functioning (Mirowsky & Ross, 2002) with the outcome of generalized signs of sadness, anxiety, and stress (Nielsen et al., 2014) as a consequence of traumatic events (Bookwala & Jacobs, 2004). *Environmental distress* impedes individuals' requirements for comfort and well-being due to physiological and psychological reactions to unfavorable or harmful environmental situations (Evans & Cohen, 1987). *Occupational distress* is the unfavorable response that individuals have to undue obligations or pressures encompassing frustration, conflict and anxiety (Gough & McGregor, 2007). Distress is associated with important work outcomes, including decreased feelings of personal accomplishment, job dissatisfaction, emotional exhaustion, absenteeism and turnover intentions (Thoresen et al., 2003). Figure 3 shows the likely costs associated with workplace distress.

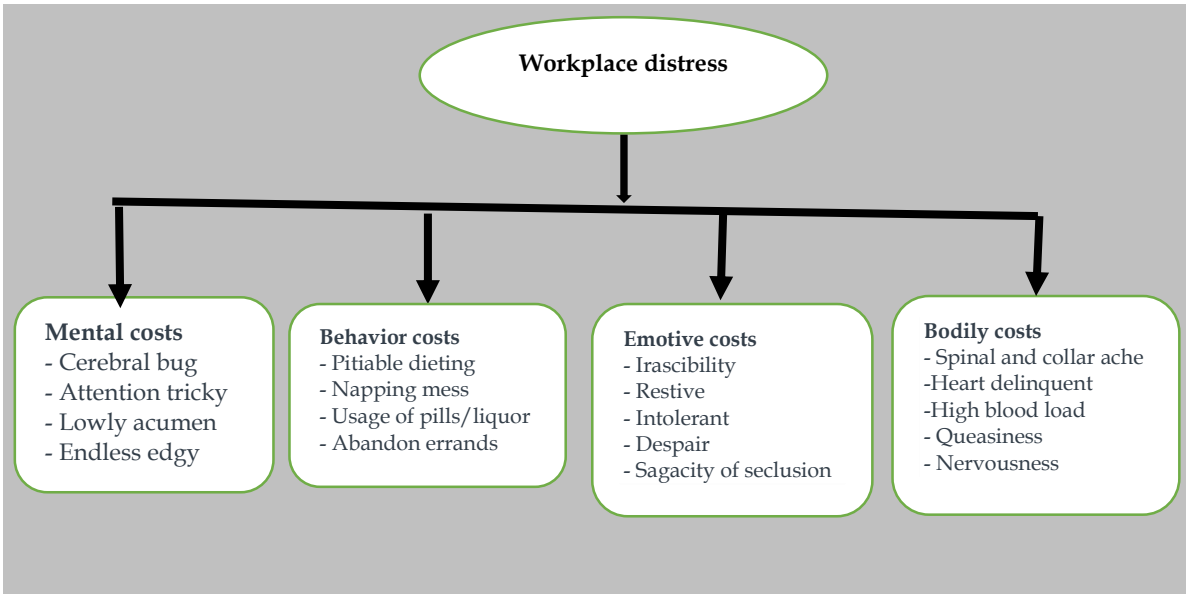

Figure 3: Costs of work distress

The costs toll on the performance of employees can be very staggering as explained in the following.

Employee performance

Performance is the completion of a given set of time-bound assigned tasks (Dhankar, 2015). Employee performance is the visible actions and behaviors of the employee that demonstrate how a task is completed (Manunatha & Renukamunthi, 2017). It is impacted by personal matters, job suitability, drive for success, workplace environment, job training and performance evaluation (Zhenjing et al., 2022). It determines the success of the organization (Mariappanadat & Kramar, 2014) including public value creation in the case of those in the public sector. Hunnur et al., (2014) clarify that companies can hire high-achieving employees by giving them the tools and chances they need in a stress-free workplace. In contrast, ineffective performance can lead to increased operating costs for the business due to resource waste (Anitha, 2014).

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The Michigan model and the stress reduction theory are used as a guide for this study. In any case, they will direct the research to determine how workplace-related stress affects employees' performance in Ugandan government entities.

Michigan Model

The Michigan model or the Role Stress Approach, the Social Environment model, or the Institute of Social Research (ISR) model was developed by French and Kahn at the University of Michigan in 1962. It emphasizes the individual's subjective impressions of stress. It contends that distress is influenced by personality traits, demography, and social support (Moreno-Jimenez et al., 2009) that cause position ambiguity, conflict, lack of participation, and job stability. workload and lack of challenge (Alkubaisi, 2015). Because of this, workplace distress would have a substantial impact on workers and eventually, the effectiveness of the entire organization would also be at risk (Ahmad et al., 2021; Arshadi & Damiri, 2013; Farler & Broady-Preston, 2012).

Stress Reduction Theory

Proposed by Ulrich et al., (1991), Stress Reduction Theory (SRT), contends that whereas artificial surroundings cause mental stress, natural environments alleviate it. SRT postulates further that variations in emotional tone and arousal contribute to the survival and successful reproduction of the species for adaptive reasons (Plutchik, 1984). It is supported in the literature supported SRT (Bratman et al., 2019) with factual knowledge of green spaces, including those with trees and bushes, to help reduce mental stress (Jiang et al., 2016; Gascon et al., 2015). Ultrich et al., (1991) contend that if humans have evolved to be nimble in the face of threatening stimuli (predators, for example), then they will also be prepared to learn restorative responses (recharge of physical energy, for example) quickly, which may also, by the same logic be highly applicable in a natural setting. However, in reaction to psychological stresses that can be more persistent, our modern environments might encourage chronic stress (Segerstrom & Miller, 2004).

Empirical review

To address a specific research topic, an empirical literature review- also known as a systematic literature review of previous empirical studies requires carrying out. Most often, random controlled trials (RCTs) are the empirical studies one looks at. Additionally, the established goals for the development of hypotheses accomplish this.

Emotional Distress and Employee Performance

It is believed that there is a relationship between employee performance and emotional distress. In their study, Wolf et al., (2016) investigated how decisions and perceptions of the individual expressing emotion can be influenced by publicly attributing an inappropriate emotional expression (distress) to a legitimate cause (passion). Findings indicate that redefining distress as a passion can enhance observers' perceptions of the expresser in situations where it is not appropriate or cannot be suppressed. Equally, the principal finding of research carried out by the primary conclusion of a study carried out by Altaf et al., (2014) alleges that age and emotional stress are directly correlated. Emotional stress was observed in people under 30 years old, with women being noticeably more vulnerable to it. Also, the study conducted by Azaga and Sharaf (2011) investigated the correlation between the use of healthcare services and stressful working conditions, as determined by the job strain model. The frequency of visits to both a general practitioner (GP) and a specialist (SP) is positively and statistically significantly correlated with high or medium job strain, according to estimates for the entire population.

Soelton et al., (2019) investigated the impact of work-family conflict, job uncertainty and work stress on employee burnout at PT. Granada Audio Indonesia. The study's findings indicate that work stress, work-family conflict and the variable employment uncertainty all significantly positively affect burnout. The impact of stress on worker performance was investigated by Ethelmar et al., (2021) in a few South East Nigerian postsecondary institutions. The outcome of the Pearson correlation study demonstrates that role ambiguity and workload pressure significantly harmed worker performance. The study concludes that employees at five federal universities in South East Nigeria performed worse under workload constraints.

Hafeez (2018) ascertained how workplace stress affected the 2017 performance of workers at the Social Security Hospital in the districts of Okara and Sahiwal. The results demonstrated that. although role ambiguity had no significant association, workload and role conflict had a statistically significant favorable impact on employees' performance. According to the research, hospital staff members experience what is known as "good stress" or eustress. Similarly, Ade Rama et al., (2022) examined how job stress affected

Samarinda Probation Centre employees' performance in their psychosocial work environment. The findings demonstrated that work stress has a positive and significant impact on employee performance and that the psychosocial work environment has a positive and significant impact on employee performance that is mediated by work stress. Likewise, Olusegun et al., (2014) evaluated what causes stress, how it affects employee performance and how employees recognize and respond to stressors. According to the study, the following conditions had an impact on workers' performance: fatigue, sadness, weakness, headache and anger. The study indicated that job stress significantly affects employees' performance based on its findings. Given what has been said thus far, it appears that emotional distress improves worker performance. Thus H_1: *Emotional distress has a positive effect on employee performance*.

Psychological Distress and Employee Performance

In the public sector, psychological distress pertains to an employee's relationship with the environment that they consider vital for their well-being where the expectations either surpass or test their coping capabilities (Kiruja & Mukuuru, 2018). These indicate that the processes of cognitive appraisal and workplace coping serve as the two main mediators in the person-environment exchange. Leung et al., (2012) expounded that stress is a mental condition that arises from physical pressures placed on an individual.

The study conducted by Viertiö et al., (2021) examined the factors that lead to psychological discomfort among working adults, specifically focusing on gender disparities. The highest risk of psychological distress was linked to loneliness, job discontent and conflict between family and work. It was discovered that having kids, participating actively, managing job and family responsibilities well and having social support were protective factors. Panatik (2012) investigated how work design affected workers' well-being in Malaysia, a nation known for its high-power distance and collectivistic culture. The results validated the direct correlation between psychological strain and job demands, job control and social support.

Riley et al., (2021) investigated work environments, cultures and circumstances that are linked to psychological discomfort in junior and foundation physicians. Four main themes emerged from the analysis: excessive workload and unfavorable working circumstances; racism and sexism; lack of assistance; and stigma and the desire to appear invulnerable. Each of these directly affects an employee's psychological health and can be extremely distressing. Likewise, workplace stress and job performance are examined by Ismail et al., (2015). The relationship between psychological stress and job performance was substantial and beneficial.

Using a study of five interviews with seasoned managers from Vietnamese businesses, Tran et al., (2020) examined and assessed certain characteristics of workplace stress. It recognizes and categorizes typical causes, indications, manifestations and effects of worker stress. The basis for determining the cause of stress resulting from the manifestation of factors that differ from the workers' usual ones, taking into account their internal and external peculiarities, is the classification of stress in the workplace into three categories: acute stress, episodic stress and chronic stress. Additionally, the study demonstrates a high correlation between workplace stress and its effects on employee health. Stress can happen at any time and cannot be prevented. When workers put themselves under excessive strain at work by aiming higher than they can achieve, stress can have harmful consequences for both the organization and the individual.

Research conducted by Karunaithy and Ponnampalam (2013) on the impact of stress on employee performance at the Commercial Bank of Ceylon found that while stress affects bank employees' performance, its influence is greater when it comes to organizational stress than when it comes to job or individual stress. In their study, Nanda et al., (2019) investigated and analyzed the impact of workload and the psychological work environment on turnover intentions in PR EDI Indonesia employees, using job stress as an intervening variable. The findings demonstrated the detrimental and considerable impact of the psychological work environment on job stress. Drawing from the research, I suggest that *psychological distress positively impact employee performance* (H_2)

Environmental Distress and Employee Performance

Employee performance is thought to be correlated with environmental distress. Huang et al., (2021) evaluated how urban green areas affect mental health while taking into account people's psychological and physiological reactions. According to the findings, there was no discernible effect on skin temperature (SKT), but there were substantial changes in the facial electromyography (EMG), respiration sensor (RESP), photoplethysmography (PPG), electrodermal activity (EDA) and perceived restorativeness scale (PRS). Furthermore, there was strong consistency and correlation ($R<0.8$) between the physiological and psychological responses. Additionally, the results showed that high plant species richness in green spaces, aquatic landscapes, uneven terrain, cultural landscapes and areas free of roads performed well when it came to stress recovery and attention restoration. Conversely, in the low-density areas, openness had very little of an impact.

The mediating effect of health symptoms and negative emotions in the link between stressors and performance in various work patterns (task complexity and interaction) was examined by Soriano et al., (2018). When health-related symptoms are positively correlated with the assessment of environmental stressors, negative emotions are raised, which in turn impairs the performance of workers who do intricate tasks and engage in regular interpersonal interactions at work. Awada et al., (2023) investigated the relationship between employee's stress levels and the interior workplace-built environment. Stress levels among officer workers are influenced by a variety of interior design elements, including office layout, colors, furniture, access to views, distance to windows, personal control and biophilic design, as well as office environmental factors including lighting, noise, and indoor and thermal conditions.

Alemu (2022) measured the impact of workplace environment elements on Wollo University employees' performance: the case of the College of Business and Economics. The results showed a favorable linear link between all workplace environment characteristics and their university workplace performance. Equally, Ade Rama et al., (2022) examined how job stress affected Samarinda Probation Centre employees' performance in their psychosocial work environment. The findings demonstrated that work stress had a positive and significant impact on employee performance and that the psychosocial work environment had a positive and significant impact on employee performance that is mediated by work stress.

The theoretical underpinnings of the physical office environment and how it affects job performance are examined by Badayai (2012). Five elements of the work environment have been identified by early studies as potentially influencing job performance: sound, temperature, air quality, light and color, and space. Despite being mainly contradictory, these findings continue to be important factors in determining how well employees perform on the job. Arifin (2020) investigated how work environment and leadership style affected employee performance and job-related stress. The study's findings suggest that the work environment significantly and favorably affects work-related stress.

Environmental stresses limit workers' motivation and make them more fatigued and easily distracted, according to research by Lamb and Kwok (2016). They contend that productivity could be increased by mitigating the impact of these stresses through the improvement of Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ) conditions. Similarly, when office workers are relocated from typical workplaces to LEED-rated facilities, Singh et al., (2011) showed an average gain in productivity of 2.86 work hours every month due to reduced environmental stress. Sawir and Abror (2020) examined the impact of workplace stress, employee engagement and work environment on worker performance. The analysis's conclusions demonstrate that employee performance is positively and significantly impacted by work engagement. A concept of reducing job-related stress by integrating mindfulness into nature-based practices is presented by Menardo et al., (2022), who examined the benefits of mindfulness-based practices and time spent in nature for managing stressful situations at work. Research indicates that having natural components in a workplace can have a healing effect on workers by lowering stress and weariness and enhancing productivity. Then, based on the literature, I suggest the following;

H_3: *Employee performance benefits from environmental distress*.

Occupational Stressors and Employee Performance

Occupational distress is generally understood to be a detrimental physical or emotional reaction that arises when an employee's skills and talents do not align with the demands of their job (Bhui et al., 2016; Bell et al., 2012). Di Fabio et al., (2018) identified occupational distress as an interactionist method that demonstrates a beneficial interaction between the respective stress levels and results. In the case of Brule and Morgan (2018), for example, it is confirmed that certain people encounter eustress (good distress) as a result of psychological and physical distress, leading to favorable effects. Consequently, job-related distress can be both a crippling and a driving force that puts pressure on staff members.

In Sri Lanka's plantation industry, Guruge and Ban (2021) found that occupational stress has an impact on employee performance. Employee performance and occupational stress were found to have a significant positive correlation ($r=.978$, $p<01$) when the major alternative hypothesis was accepted based on the data.

Descriptive analysis correlation techniques and regression analysis were used by Prasad et al., (2015) in a survey of 200 institute employees to evaluate the physiological reactions to stress and how it affects workers' performance on the job, in the organization and individually. They discovered that the primary concern of the institute's staff is job security. All variable's values fall between 2.5 and x1 and 3.5, indicating that the institute experiences medium-level stress. The main causes of medium-level stress include job stability, workload, time constraints and physiological issues including persistent back pain and stress-induced panic attacks. The study concluded that occupational stress, in general, and job security in particular, as a stress factor, had a moderate impact on the employees' performance at the institute. An employee's performance is also somewhat impacted by their physiological response to stress. Due to extended periods of sitting at work, a few workers experienced persistent neck and back pain.

In their study, Irawanto et al., (2015) examined the effects of stressors and occupational stress on the work performance of female employees, as well as the moderating role that demographic variables played in the relationship between stressors and work performance and occupational stress and work performance. The results indicate that occupational stress has a greater impact on female employees' performance than stressors, either entirely or in part and that occupational stress has a greater impact on female employees' performance before demographic variables are taken into account.

An investigation of the impact of occupational stress in Iranian organizations by Dar et al., (2011) suggested that occupational stress has a direct impact on the productivity of employees and managers. Asamoah-Appiah and Aggrey-Fynn (2017) determined the incidence of occupational stress, its root causes, how it affects worker productivity and what steps management may take to eliminate or reduce stress at work. The primary conclusions showed that Twifo Oil Palm Plantation workers experience higher levels of both physical and psychological stress. Workplace environment, relationship with coworkers and professional advancement were determined to be the key sources of stress.

Guruge and Ban (2021) fixed how employee performance in Sri Lanka's plantation industry is affected by occupational stress. The major alternative hypothesis was accepted by the data, which indicated a substantial positive association ($r=.978$, $p<.01$) between occupational stress and employee performance. Amoako et al., (2017) investigated the impact of work-related stress on employee

performance at Aspect A. Company Limited. The study's conclusions made it abundantly evident that there are a variety of stressors that might affect a company's employees' physical, mental and emotional health. The results of the study showed a negative relationship between job experience, education and marital status in the workforce. The study did discover, however, that stress among workers does improve their performance on the job (r=0.348, sig. value =.000). This suggests that employees' job performance tends to grow in tandem with their level of stress and vice versa. Based on the literature study, I propose the following hypothesis, denoted as *H4: Employee performance is positively impacted by occupational distress.*

Critique of the Literature Review

The modern workplace is "people-centered" rather than "result-oriented". Work-life balance is essential to the government service delivery system and supports objectives that are, in reality, crucial to the main goal of creating public value such as encouraging employees to actively carry out their responsibilities or carry out government initiatives. On the contrary, workplace distress is the most severe consequence for government entities with poor employee performance outcomes. However, studies examining work distress using emotional, psychological, environmental and occupational indicators, particularly at the government entity level, have largely been ignored in the Ugandan context, particularly with the emergence of the area profiling pandemic. Even so, the impact of workplace-related stress on employee performance has not been ascertained or assessed in a numerous government entity. This research closes the gap.

METHODOLOGY

I offer here a roadmap. The reason for this is that without a clear research methodology, it is challenging to produce accurate and trustworthy data, come to insightful conclusions and add to the corpus of knowledge.

Research design

With a focus on employee performance as affected by workplace distress, this study, which is grounded in primary and secondary data and has a positivist methodology, is analytical and descriptive in character. Using a structured survey, the necessary data was obtained from the model representatives. It used a cross-sectional exploration configuration since it allowed the combination of the genuine overview and workplace environment stress research writing as a key system to collect data for this analysis.

Sample size and sampling technique

Using Slovin's formula, which yields a sample of 257 from a total population of 720, inferential statistics were used to generalize from the sample to the population (Furlong et al., 2000).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where: n = Sample size,
N = Total population and
e = Error tolerance (confidence level).

Since the population N =720, Error tolerance = 0.05,
The sample size is determined as:

$$\frac{720}{1+720(0.05)^2} = 257$$

Consequently, 257 employees made up the sample.

Measurements

I employed previously created instruments to gauge employee performance and workplace distress. Various instruments were employed to assess the sub-dimensions of workplace distress. The Sadat Stress Scale (SSS), split into seven subscales with 114 items, was used to quantify emotional stress (Altaf et al., 2014). Despite having 13 indicators and symptoms that appear during physical stress, the scale helps examine physical stress. I make use of it to determine the subject's level of tension.

The instrument that I employed to evaluate psychological distress was the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10), which was created by Kessler et al., (2003). With the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale, psychological distress can be easily measured. The K10 scale consists of 10 questions related to emotional state with five possible responses. This measure can be used as a quick screen to assess distress levels. From 1 for "never" to 5 for "always", each item is given a score. The results of the ten items are added together to yield a minimum score of 10 and a maximum score of 50. Relatively low scores indicate low psychological distress, and significantly high scores indicate significant psychological distress.

I used the 120-item Pressure Measurement Indicator (PMI), a self-report survey, whose 120 items were derived from the Occupational Stress Index (OSI) (Smith, 1999). The PMU is the more compact, comprehensive, and mode-dependable of the two. It is a reliable and valid tool for measuring occupational stress. Comprehensive measurements are made of all the major components of work-related stress.

Utilizing the employee performance questionnaire of Krohne (2002), I was able to collect data on the dependent variable, employee performance.

Data Collection

The structured and semi-structured questionnaires used in the study to collect primary data were used to ask respondents for information. This made it possible to respond to the structured questions in a certain way while still allowing some latitude to the semi-structured questions. For simpler analysis, the questionnaire employed was based on a five-point Likert scale. Kothari (2004) favors this questionnaire design because it is accurate in its analysis and has objectivity and precision. To give respondents time and privacy to complete the questionnaire, I employed the drop-and-pick method, in which questionnaires were collected from each respondent a fourth night later.

Data Collection Procedure

I used questionnaires in the collection of primary data. I distributed them to the participants along with a letter explaining the purpose of the study and forwarding the questionnaires. After identifying the respondents and introducing myself, I asked to have the questionnaires discounted and the returned instruments with the answers collected later.

Instrument pre-test

Before I put the study into action, I carried out a pre-test of the questionnaire to see if there were any limitations, defects or other issues with the data collection tool. If so, I had to make the appropriate changes. 10% of the sample population I used in the study, which I conducted on at least 26 non-respondents.

Reliability of the Research Instrument

I applied the internal consistency method in this study. It is justified by the idea that all of the items should measure the same constructs and as a result positively correlate with each other. When assessing internal consistency, Cronbach's coefficient alpha is the most utilized metric. I used the Statistical Package for Social Scientists or SPSS to calculate the reliability test. The range of Cronbach alpha's coefficient is 0 to 1. Scales are greater when alpha coefficient values are higher. I adopted the standard minimum alpha value of 0.7 as the minimum level for item loadings, per the recommendation of Cresswell and Cresswell (2018). Consistency between the items in measuring the relevant concept is indicated by higher alpha consistency values. I set the acceptable cut-off point for reliabilities at 0.7.

Validity of the Research Instrument

To verify the content validity, I went over the items to determine which ones were necessary for measuring the various concepts, such as employee performance, psychological stressors, environmental stressors, occupational stressors and emotional stressors. Based on the same conceptualization, I measured employee performance from Krohne's (2002) tool. I included an additional section of questions on factors related to those hypothesized in the local context of the study to help examine and distinguish the necessary elements of work.

Data Analysis and Presentation

With the use of Excel and SPSS, I conducted a quantitative analysis of the collected data. I used coding, classification and editing to process the data. I analyzed the quantitative data using both descriptive and inferential statistics. I analyzed qualitative data using content analysis, while I analyzed the quantitative data using statistical techniques like regression and correlation analysis. At the 5% level of significance, I used multiple regression analysis to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between the dependent variable- employee performance- and the independent variable. workplace distress. I used regression for the dependent to compare the dependent variable to four independent variables. I determined the combined effect that the independent variable had not the dependent when acting jointly then determined by fitting a multiple regression model, which I express as follows.

$Y = \beta 0 + \beta 1X1 + \beta 2X2 + \beta 3X3 + \beta 4X4 + \varepsilon,$

Where;

Y= Employee Performance
β0= constant (coefficient of intercept),
X1= Emotional distress;
X2= Psychological distress;
X3= Environmental distress;
X4= Occupational distress;
β1…β4= Regression coefficient of four variables.
ε = Error term.

I separated the tests on each of the independent to ascertain which regression coefficients might not. I considered the entire model significant if the beta null hypotheses. I had to reject the null hypothesis if the null hypothesis was not rejected. I based the conclusion on the p-value. To put it another way, if the p-value is less than 0.5, I have determined the results were not productive of chance and that the model as a whole is significant with good predictions of dependable variables. A p-value greater than 0.05 indicates that the model was not significant and could not account for variables observed in the dependent.

FINDINGS

Profiles of Respondents

Table 1 displays the respondent's demographic information.

Table 1: Final Participants' Demographic Profile

N		
Gender	Male (%)	55.2
	Female (%)	44.8
Age	20-30 years (%)	38.8
	31-41 years (%)	31.0
	42-52 years (%)	19.0
	53-65 years (%)	11.2
Education	Postgraduate (%)	44.8
	Bachelor's degree (%)	29.3
	Diploma (%)	24.6
	Others (specify) (%)	1.3
Tenure	5 years and above (%)	42.4
	3-4 years (%)	24.6
	1-3 years (%)	18.0
	Less than 1 year (%)	15.1
Level	Top (%)	13.3
	Middle (%)	30.2
	Lower (%)	56.5

The biodata of the final respondents is displayed in Table 1. There were 44.8% female respondents and 55.2% male respondents in the final sample. The mean age of the respondents was 38.8%. Of the sample, 1.3% had other qualifications, 24.6% had a diploma, 29.3% had a bachelor's degree and 44.8% had a postgraduate degree. Concerning employment duration, the majority of respondents (42.6%) had worked for the entity for more than five years, followed by 24.6% with a tenure of three to four years, 18.0% with a tenure of one to three years and 15.1% of respondents who had joined the entity recently and had a tenure of less than a year. A higher proportion of respondents (56.3%) were ranked at lower levels, compared to 30.2% at middle levels and 13.3% at highest level.

Construct Reliability, Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

In Table 2, I present the construct reliability, statistical descriptive data and correlations.

Table 2: Construct Reliability, Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

		Reliability	Descriptive		Correlations					
			Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Emotional	.752	3.74	1.38	0.431	0.080				
2	Psychological	.840	4.69	1.08	0.113	0.382	0.172			
3	Environmental	.732	4.79	1.09	0.072	0.013	0.454	0.433		
4	Occupational	.705	3.83	1.40	0.151	0.041	0.051	0.424	0.456	

Upon evaluating Cronbach alpha values (α), construct reliability was demonstrated. Table 2 displays a Cronbach alpha value (α) that indicates the internal consistency of items in their respective constructs, which ranges from 0.705 to 0.840. Cronbach's alpha (α) values reported by Hair et al., (2010) are above the 0.60 threshold. As a result, construct reliability was sufficient and supported by actual information. Everything had a purpose inside of their structures.

A range of 3.83 to 4.79 was then observed for the mean scores of all factors. A significant correlation between employee performance and each of the four dimensions of workplace distress was found in an association study, however. Employee performance was found to be significantly correlated with psychological stresses ($r=0.382$, $p<0.05$), emotional distress ($r=0.431$, $p<0.05$), environmental distress ($r=0.454$, $p<0.05$) and occupational distress ($r=0.424$, $p<0.05$).

Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

The purpose of this study was to determine how much each independent variable- emotional, psychological, environmental and occupational distress- can influence the dependent variable, or employee performance. Table 3 shows the relative contributions of each independent variable to the regression equation model.

Table 3: Goodness of Fit by Adjusted r Square

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.884[a]	.715	.611	10.25486	.715	181.913	1	114	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), emotional, psychological, environmental, occupational

The model's overall correlation at 88.4% is pretty reasonable. The adjusted R square indicates that the model has a goodness of fit of 28% explanatory power. Additionally, the fact that the difference between the adjusted R square shows less than 5% indicates the sample of sample error. The dependent variable and independent variables exhibit a significant positive correlation as indicated by the R value of 0.884. The percentage of variable in the dependent variable or the degree to which changes in the dependent variable is expressed by the coefficient of determination (R^2) and the four independent variables under investigation account for 71.5% of the variation in employee performance as indicated by the R^2. This implies that 26.5% of employee performance is influenced by other factors not covered in this study. This suggests that these factors are highly significant and should be taken into account in any attempt to improve employee performance in Uganda's government organization. The study also showed the model is statistically significant in predicting how environmental, psychological, emotional and occupational distresses affect employee performance, with a p-value of 0.000 <0.05.

In Table 4, I provide evidence that the overall model was significant, with the F critical at the 5% level of significance being 0.000.

Table 4: Variance Analysis for the overall significance of the model

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	29.741	4	22.034	121.742	.000[b]
	Residual	71.462	219	0.1724		
	Total	102.355	231			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), emotional, psychological, environmental, occupational

Two results are presented in Table 4. First, the overall regression model is significant at the 1% level of significance; second, the model's goodness of fit or explanatory power is significant because the F-statistic is greater then -4 cut-off for F, which is further supported by a sig. value of less than 0.01.

The results of the process used by this study to obtain the regression coefficients are displayed in Table 5. The dependent variable's relationship to the four independent variables was ascertained through multiple regression analysis.

$Y=\beta 0 + \beta 1x1 + \beta 2x2 + \beta 3x3 + \beta 4x4 + \varepsilon$, becomes Y=9.747-0.470X1-0.52X2-0.832X3-0.878X4. This is by the SPSS-generated Table below. Employee performance is therefore equal to 6.745+0.570 (emotional) + 0.442 (psychological) + 0.612 (environmental) + 0.778 (occupational).

Regression analysis revealed that employee performance was 6.745 when all factors (psychological, emotional, environmental and occupational) were held constant at zero. Coefficients: The significance of each predictor is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Result of Regression Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	6.747	1.368		7.872	.000		
	Emotional	0.570	0.242	0.144	3.110	.000	.713	1.122
	Psychological	0.442	0.132	0.132	3.163	.000	.760	1.197
	Environmental	0.612	0.124	0.343	5.152	.000	.942	1.308
	Occupational	0.778	0.115	0.421	4.384	.000	.752	1.173

Dependent Variable: Employee performance

The dependent variable changes as a result of changes in the independent variable as shown in Table 5 above. Employee performance chances by .144 for every unit increase in pressure at work due to variable emotional (β=.144, p<0.05). The psychological variable (β=.132, p<0.05) shows that for every unit change in psychological distress, the employee's performance changes by .132. Every

unit change in environmental distress causes an employee performance change of .343, according to the environmental variable (β=.343, p<0.05). Each unit change in occupational distress causes a .421 change in employee performance, according to the fourth response occupational (β-.421, p<0.05). At 1%, every variable is noteworthy. The variance inflationary factor or VIF, is less than 2, which is a strict cutoff for multicollinearity, meaning that there is no multicollinearity in the model. A summary of the tested hypotheses is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Synopsis of the Evaluation of Hypothesis

Number	Hypothesis	Results
1	H1: Emotional distress has no positive effect on employee performance.	Rejected
2	H2: psychological distress does not positively impact employee performance	Rejected
3	H3: Employee performance does not benefit from environmental distress.	Rejected
4	H4: Employee performance is not positively impacted by occupational distress	Rejected

DISCUSSION

When considering how well employees perform at work, workplace distress among them is a significant concern. The research findings, when interpreted, clarify the constructs influencing employee performance that may bear similarities to earlier studies on the same topic. Previous studies have concentrated on variables similar to those examined here, but they did so separately. Warraich et al., (2014) opine for employees to comfortably create value, they must experience no distress. Sucharitha and Basha (2020) investigated employee performance in connection to stress at work. As many participants felt under pressure to perform better by leadership, the results demonstrate that high levels of stress hurt their performance. Workplace stress's effect on employee performance was ascertained by Iskamato (2021). Workplace stress has a notable and detrimental impact on employee performance, according to test results.

The study conducted by Ismail et al., (2015) investigates the connection between employee performance and workplace distress. Employee performance and psychological distress were positively and significantly correlated. Furthermore, there was a significant positive correlation between psychological stress and employee performance. This result indicates that stress levels in the studied organization, both physiological and psychological, are significant predictors of employee performance. Similarly, Anu and Kumar (2018) assessed the factors that influence work-related stress in Keralan software professionals and the effects of each of these factors on employee performance. The study highlights the inverse relationship between job distress and employee performance, as well as the significant influence of role ambiguity, compensation and benefits, workload and fear of disobedience.

Kitole et al., (2019) determined how work-related stress affected Kenyan public sector employees' performance. The results of the investigation demonstrated, as indicated by the R-value of 0.866, a significant positive correlation between the independent and dependent variables. Similarly, the impact of job stress on employees' job performance in Pakistan's banking sector was studied by Bashir and Ramay (2010), who found that stress had a negative correlation with job performance. Specifically, stress hurts employee performance. Also, Kishori and Vinothini (2016) estimate that between 50% and 75% of diseases have stress-related workday losses totaling approximately 100 million (*Uganda shillings*…). Likewise, Manjunatha and Renuekamunthi (2017) demonstrated that performance in numerous society domains was correlated with occupational stress.

In Health Social Security Organizser Agency Medan, Harmen et al., (2019) examined the impact of the sources of job stress dimension (environmental stressors, organizational stressors, individual stressors) on employee performance. The determination coefficients (R2) yielded a result of 0.378. This indicates that 37.8% of the explanation for employee performance comes from environmental, organizational and individual stressors, while the remaining 62.2% is accounted for by factors not included in this study. Ethelmary (2021) looked at how stress affected workers' performance in a few chosen South East Nigerian postsecondary institutions. The outcome of the Pearson correlation study demonstrates that role ambiguity and workload strain significantly harmed worker performance.

CONCLUSION

Early studies categorized sound, temperature, and air quality. light and color and space as the five elements of the work environment that can influence job performance. Individual employee performance can be significantly impacted by workspace, according to this study. Because of this, spatial arrangements and density have a significant impact on employee performance, even if there is no evidence that the naturally occurring spatial arrangement affects job performance. Some theoretical and practical implications arise from the present study's findings. By examining the impact of particular aspects of workplace distress on employ performance, this study has expanded upon previous research from a theoretical standpoint. The combine effects of the variables on employee performance are most significant. About management ramifications, executives or owner-managers can utilize the study's findings as a roadmap for creating strategies that will greatly engage employees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Workplace distress is a modern problem that must be immediately handled because it is a workplace hazard. Since each person still influences their lifestyle, thoughts, emotions and problem-solving style, there is no "one-size fits all" approach to distress management. Try to alter the distressful environment as much as once can and schedule some time to unwind and recharge. Finding the real source of distress is the first step. Employees are the ones who have the most firsthand knowledge of workplace-related issues, so it is crucial to involve them in this process even though employers are legally required to ensure a proper evaluation of workplace distress causes. Their knowledge can help in the planning and execution of the solutions if they share it with the supervisors and employers.

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