

The Effect of Work Stress on Employee Performance at the Regional Office of The Ministry of ATR/BPN in Lampung Province with Mental Health as a Mediating Variable

Fitri Melan Handayani¹, Ayi Ahadiat², Zainnur M Rusdi³

^{1,2,3}Magister Management, University of Lampung

ABSTRACT: Employee performance in government institutions is a critical indicator of public service effectiveness. At the Regional Office of the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency (ATR/BPN) in Lampung Province, performance outcomes have shown fluctuating trends, particularly in the suboptimal resolution of agrarian conflicts. Within the context of a complex bureaucratic structure, high job demands can trigger work-related stress, which—if not properly managed—may undermine employees' psychological stability and reduce their performance. Mental health plays a crucial role in sustaining employee effectiveness under such pressures. This study aims to examine the influence of work stress on employee performance and to evaluate the mediating role of mental health in that relationship. The research adopts a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design. The population includes all employees of the ATR/BPN Regional Office in Lampung Province, totaling 150 individuals, all of whom participated as respondents through a census method. Data were collected using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS. The results reveal that work stress has a significant negative impact on employee performance. Moreover, mental health statistically mediates the relationship between work stress and performance. These findings highlight the importance of effective stress management and mental health support as key organizational strategies to enhance performance, especially within the dynamic and high-pressure environment of public sector bureaucracy.

KEYWORDS: Work Stress, Mental Health, Employee Performance

I. INTRODUCTION

Human resources (HR) are a vital strategic asset in any organization, playing a central role in achieving institutional goals. HR encompasses not only the quantity of workforce but also the quality — including competence, skills, experience, and dedication of individuals. According to Siraj et al. (2022), effective HR management enables organizations to optimize employee potential, thus ensuring efficiency and maximum contribution. Therefore, investing in HR development through training, performance management, and empowerment is key to improving organizational competitiveness. In the public sector, especially within the bureaucratic structure, managing human resources becomes even more crucial due to the increasing complexity of institutional tasks. Employee performance, as stated by Motowidlo et al. (2003) and Tisu et al. (2020), reflects the value expected from individual behavior over time. It is not only about outcomes but also about the quality of contributions made toward organizational objectives. In the context of public institutions such as the Regional Office of the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency (ATR/BPN), performance is closely tied to the effectiveness and credibility of public services.

The ATR/BPN institution, with 33 regional offices and 480 land offices across Indonesia (ATR/BPN, 2020), bears significant responsibility in land registration, agrarian conflict resolution, and land administration. The Regional Office of ATR/BPN in Lampung Province, with 150 employees, plays a supervisory and coordination role in ensuring service effectiveness across local land offices. Despite positive performance indicators such as improved budget absorption (from 96.5% in 2022 to 97.56% in 2023) and successful implementation of systematic land registration (PTSL), some strategic areas — such as the resolution of agrarian conflicts — remain suboptimal, with a declining resolution rate from 40% in 2022 to 36% in 2023. Such dynamics may reflect uneven work pressure across organizational units. While some achievements, like digital transformation, may trigger challenge-type stress that enhances performance, persistent administrative burdens and unresolved policy barriers could lead to hindrance-

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type stress. As suggested by Lu et al. (2022) and Lai et al. (2022), unmanaged work stress negatively affects employees' focus, motivation, and productivity. Furthermore, past findings on the relationship between job stress and performance remain inconsistent. Some studies report positive effects of stress as a motivator (Ismail et al., 2015; Soomro et al., 2019), while others show negative or even nonlinear impacts (Nawaz et al., 2019; Purnomo et al., 2021; Yunus et al., 2018; Hamidi & Eivazi, 2000; McClenahan et al., 2007).

In addition, theoretical frameworks such as the inverted U-shape model (Hamidi & Eivazi, 2000) and the challenge-hindrance stressor approach (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; LePine et al., 2005; Deng et al., 2019) offer more nuanced perspectives. These views suggest that moderate levels of stress may improve performance, while excessive or ambiguous stress hinders it. Moreover, some studies assert that stress has no effect at all (Tănăsescu & Leon, 2019), suggesting that employees act as rational agents unaffected by psychological pressures (Lebesby & Benders, 2020). Despite these varying conclusions, there is a consensus that the psychological mechanism between stress and performance requires deeper exploration. In this regard, mental health emerges as a mediating variable. Mental health reflects emotional balance and cognitive resilience, which are vital in maintaining performance amid work pressure (Liu et al., 2022; Qiu et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2022). Employees with stable mental health can perform more productively and maintain workplace engagement, while psychological deterioration may lead to absenteeism, errors, and low motivation.

Previous studies indicate a gap in both theory and empirical findings. While some demonstrate direct effects of stress on performance (Sun et al., 2022), others highlight the role of mediators like mental health or burnout (Zhang & Wang, 2023). Furthermore, most of these studies have focused on the private sector or health workers, leaving a research gap in the public bureaucracy, particularly within ATR/BPN offices. This research therefore aims to fill this gap by exploring the effect of work stress on employee performance at the Regional Office of the Ministry of ATR/BPN in Lampung Province, with a particular focus on the mediating role of mental health. The study is expected to provide both theoretical contributions and practical recommendations in optimizing employee performance in government institutions through a psychological and human-centered approach.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Work Stress

Work stress is a psychological condition of tension and strain caused by an imbalance between job demands and the individual's perceived ability or resources to meet them (Satici et al., 2022). It can be triggered by excessive workloads, role conflict, and work-life imbalance (Zhou et al., 2018). Qiu et al. (2021) describe work stress as a multidimensional construct, including workload pressure, role ambiguity, limited job control, and lack of social support. In public institutions such as the ATR/BPN Regional Office, these stressors often arise from bureaucratic complexity, ambitious performance targets, and policy uncertainty (Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Cavanaugh et al., 2000).

Work stress is measured using two main indicators. The first is job pressure, which reflects emotional strain and mental fatigue caused by heavy workloads. The second is effort-reward imbalance, defined as the perception that one's efforts are not adequately compensated through recognition, rewards, or career development (Chen et al., 2022; Siegrist, 1996). This imbalance has been empirically associated with psychological distress and emotional exhaustion (Liu et al., 2022). Prolonged exposure to these stressors may lead to reduced concentration, social withdrawal, and lower engagement at work.

Multiple studies confirm that work stress significantly undermines employee performance (Chen et al., 2022; Dartey-Baah et al., 2020). High levels of stress impair cognitive, emotional, and physical functioning, resulting in fatigue, lack of focus, decreased motivation, and difficulty completing tasks. In high-pressure public bureaucracies, understanding the impact of work stress on performance is essential. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Work stress has a negative and significant effect on the performance of employees at the Regional Office of the Ministry of ATR/BPN in Lampung Province.

B. Mental Health

Mental health is a psychological state that reflects emotional well-being and an individual's ability to manage stress, maintain positive social relationships, and function effectively in both personal and professional life (Chen et al., 2022; Lu et al., 2022). Sharma et al. (2022) emphasize that mental health entails not only the absence of psychological disorders such as anxiety but also the presence of adaptive capabilities in facing job-related demands. In this sense, mental health acts as a crucial psychological resource for coping with pressures in demanding work environments.

This study uses three indicators to measure mental health: (1) emotional well-being, which refers to emotional stability and satisfaction with work; (2) stress resilience, representing an individual's capacity to cope with pressure without becoming

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overwhelmed; and (3) psychological and social functioning, which reflects confidence in handling tasks and the ability to maintain effective workplace relationships (Chen et al., 2022; Lu et al., 2022).

Prior studies have confirmed the mediating role of mental health in the relationship between work stress and job performance. According to Qiu et al. (2021) and Zhang & Wang (2023), high work stress can deteriorate mental health, leading to lower productivity, more errors, and a higher risk of burnout. Employees with poor mental health often experience a loss of focus, motivation, and overall work effectiveness. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2: Mental health mediates the effect of work stress on the performance of employees at the Regional Office of the Ministry of ATR/BPN in Lampung Province.

C. Employee Performance

Employee performance is a multidimensional construct that reflects the extent to which an individual achieves expected work outcomes in alignment with organizational goals. Kudaibergenov et al. (2024) define performance as the quantitative and qualitative fulfillment of assigned responsibilities aimed at organizational objectives. According to Garengo et al. (2020), performance is the outcome of interaction between performance measurement systems and managerial processes. Inayat et al. (2021) add that performance encompasses individual or group efforts in fulfilling roles, tasks, and responsibilities. Kampkötter (2017) emphasizes performance as the ability to meet goals within a defined timeframe, while Kowshik et al. (2019) frame it as an economic indicator of employee efficiency. Within the context of public institutions like the Ministry of ATR/BPN, employee performance serves as a critical benchmark of institutional service quality and effectiveness.

The performance indicators used in this study are adapted from Kudaibergenov et al. (2024) and include: (1) attendance and punctuality, which reflect work discipline and commitment; (2) attitude and work enthusiasm, representing motivation, adaptability, and positive workplace behavior; (3) task completion, which assesses responsibility and adherence to quality and deadlines; (4) effort and dedication, which measure commitment and intrinsic motivation; and (5) problem-solving ability, reflecting cognitive flexibility and resilience in overcoming job-related challenges. These indicators offer a comprehensive framework for evaluating employee contributions—particularly in high-pressure, bureaucratic environments like those found in government land administration offices..

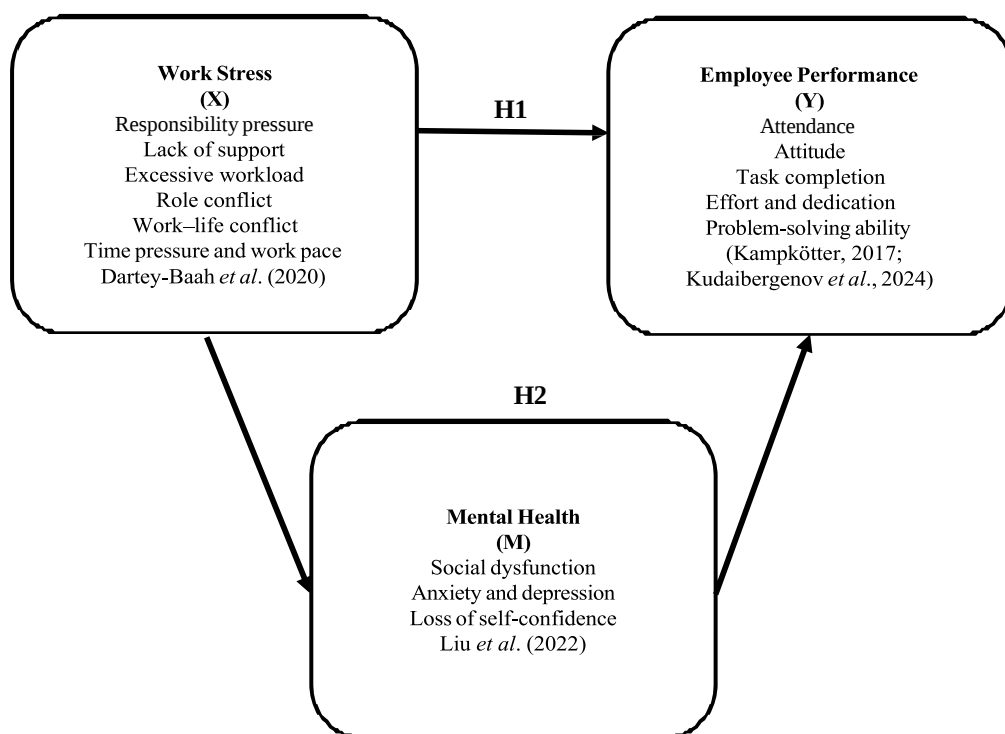


Figure 1. Framework

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employs an explanatory research design with a quantitative approach. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), quantitative research is a methodological approach that emphasizes the collection and analysis of numerical data, which can be measured and analyzed statistically. It is commonly used to test hypotheses, identify relationships between variables, and make

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predictions based on empirical data. Quantitative research typically utilizes structured instruments such as questionnaires and Likert scales through survey methods. The strength of this approach lies in its ability to produce objective, replicable, and statistically valid findings, thereby supporting data-driven decision-making. In this context, the study seeks to examine the relationship between work stress, mental health, and employee performance at the Regional Office of the Ministry of ATR/BPN in Lampung Province.

The population of this study consists of all 150 employees at the ATR/BPN Regional Office in Lampung Province, as detailed in internal organizational records (2025). Given the relatively small and manageable size of the population, the study adopts a census method, where all members of the population are used as respondents, thereby eliminating the need for sampling. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained directly from the respondents through a structured questionnaire, which was distributed to all employees and designed to gather measurable data on each research variable. This instrument was developed to address the research objectives and problem formulation. Secondary data were obtained indirectly through various sources, including academic literature, books, journals, and credible online publications, all of which served to support the primary data. The process of data collection adhered to a systematic approach to ensure relevance and accuracy (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The use of both types of data is essential to enhance the comprehensiveness and credibility of the findings, and to ensure the validity and reliability of the research outcomes.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY TEST RESULT

This study tested the validity and reliability of each research construct before conducting further analysis. The validity test applied a unidimensional approach to ensure that each indicator accurately reflected its respective construct. According to Hair et al. (2014), a loading factor greater than 0.50 and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of at least 0.50 indicate adequate convergent validity. The results show that all constructs met the AVE criteria: work stress (0.679), mental health (0.832), and employee performance (0.904). These values demonstrate that the indicators used in this study are valid and capable of measuring each variable appropriately.

Table 1. Validity Test Result

Variable	Question	Outer Eeihts	AVE	Desc
k Stress (X)	X1	0,840	0,679	Valid
	X2	0,820		Valid
	X3	0,831		Valid
	X4	0,821		Valid
	X5	0,818		Valid
	X6	0,814		Valid
Mental Health (M)	M1	0,925	0,832	Valid
	M2	0,910		Valid
	M3	0,900		Valid
	M4	0,933		Valid
	M5	0,909		Valid
	M6	0,926		Valid
	M7	0,895		Valid
	M8	0,900		Valid
Employee Performance (Y)	Y1	0,943	0,904	Valid
	Y2	0,946		Valid
	Y3	0,950		Valid
	Y4	0,957		Valid
	Y5	0,959		Valid

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Reliability was evaluated using Construct Reliability (CR), which assesses the internal consistency of indicators within a construct. As noted by Hair et al. (2014), a CR value ≥ 0.70 is considered acceptable. The findings indicate strong reliability across all variables, with CR values of 0.927 for work stress, 0.975 for mental health, and 0.979 for employee performance. These results confirm that the measurement instruments used are both valid and reliable, and thus suitable for further structural analysis.

Table 2. Reliability Test Result

Variable	Question	Desc	CR	Desc
Work Stress (X)	X1	Valid	0,927	Reliable
	X2	Valid		Reliable
	X3	Valid		Reliable
	X4	Valid		Reliable
	X5	Valid		Reliable
	X6	Valid		Reliable
Mental Health (M)	M1	Valid	0,975	Reliable
	M2	Valid		Reliable
	M3	Valid		Reliable
	M4	Valid		Reliable
	M5	Valid		Reliable
	M6	Valid		Reliable
	M7	Valid		Reliable
	M8	Valid		Reliable
Employee Performance (Y)	Y1	Valid	0,979	Reliable
	Y2	Valid		Reliable
	Y3	Valid		Reliable
	Y4	Valid		Reliable
	Y5	Valid		Reliable

B.

C. NORMALITY TEST

The normality test in this study was conducted using SPSS through both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk methods. According to Ghazali (2016), data are considered normally distributed if the significance value exceeds 0.05. Based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the significance value was 0.735, which is greater than 0.05, indicating that the residual data are normally distributed. Thus, the data satisfy the assumption of univariate normality and are appropriate for further structural model testing.

Table 3. Normality Test Result

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

Unstandardized Residual

N			150
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean		,0000000
	Std. Deviation		2,98992831
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute		,043
	Positive		,043
	Negative		-,038
Test Statistic			,043
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) ^c			,200 ^d
Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed) ^e	Sig.		,735
	99% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	,724
		Upper Bound	,746

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D. Goodness of Fit

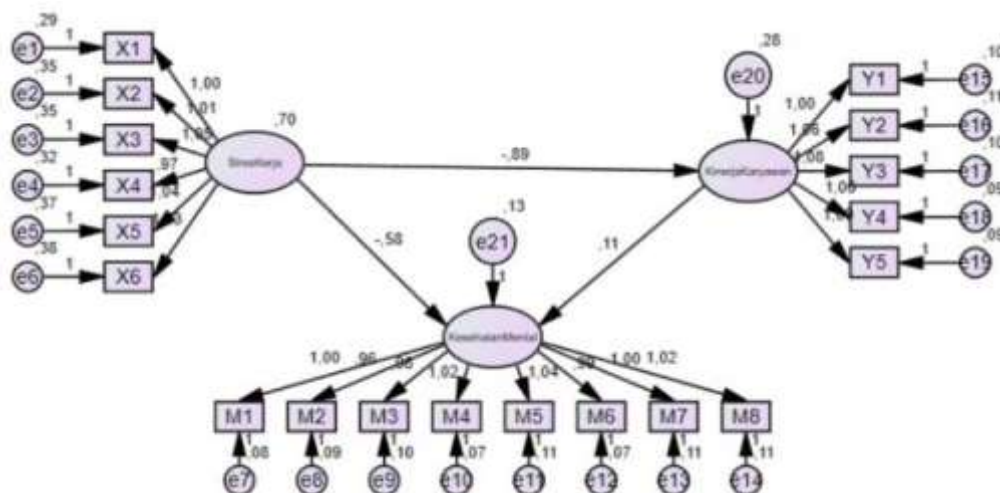


Figure 2. Inner Model Result

The structural model was evaluated using multiple Goodness of Fit (GOF) indices to assess how well the model fits the observed data. According to Hair et al. (2014), a model is considered acceptable if at least four to five fit indices meet the recommended cut-off values and represent the three main categories of model fit.

Table 4. Goodness of Fit Result

Goodness Of Fit Index	Cut of Value	Result	Desc
Root Mean Square Error of Approx (RMSEA)	≤ 0.08	0,135	Marginal Fit
Goodness Fit of Index (GFI)	≥ 0.90	0,717	Marginal Fit
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	≥ 0.90	0,870	Marginal Fit
Parsimoni Normed Fit Index (PNFI)	> 0.5	0,758	Acceptable
Parsimone Comparative Fit Index (PCFI)	> 0.5	0,785	Acceptable
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	≥ 0.90	0,901	Good Fit
Inceremental Fit Index (IFI)	≥ 0.90	0,901	Good Fit
CMIN/DF	≤ 3.00	3,700	Marginal Fit
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	≥ 0.90	0,886	Marginal Fit

The results indicate that several indicators—such as CFI and IFI—fall into the Good Fit category, while PNFI and PCFI are categorized as Acceptable, indicating an adequate level of model parsimony. Although some indices, including RMSEA, GFI, NFI, CMIN/DF, and TLI, fall into the Marginal Fit category, the overall model still meets the minimum criteria required for structural testing. Based on the threshold set by Hair et al. (2014), the structural model is deemed sufficiently fit and valid for further hypothesis testing and interpretation..

E. Hypothesis Testing

The purpose of hypothesis testing is to determine the direct effect of the independent variable (X) on the dependent variable (Y). In this study, there are two hypotheses: the first examines the effect of work stress on employee performance, and the second analyzes the effect of work stress on employee performance mediated by mental health. A significant effect is indicated when the p-value is below 0.05 and the critical ratio (CR) exceeds the cut-off value of 1.96..

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Table 5. Hypothesis Test Result

Hypothesis	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Desc
The Effect of Work Stress on Employee Performance	-0,886	0,078	-11,292	***	Accepted

The Effect of Work Stress on Employee Performance

The results of hypothesis testing show that work stress has a significant negative effect on employee performance. The estimated coefficient is -0.886, with a critical ratio (CR) of -11.292 and a p-value of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 threshold. This confirms that the higher the level of work stress experienced by employees, the lower their performance. These findings support the first hypothesis and are in line with previous research by Iskanto (2021), which found that excessive work stress negatively affects employee performance. Similarly, Chen et al. (2022) argue that work stress directly contributes to reduced productivity and work effectiveness due to emotional fatigue and psychological pressure.

In the specific context of the ATR/BPN Regional Office, work-related stress can arise from various sources such as overwhelming service targets, complex administrative processes, and the pressure of resolving agrarian conflicts. High public expectations and workload demands often exacerbate stress levels, leading to concentration problems, mental exhaustion, and a decline in task motivation. Without adequate stress management strategies, these conditions may significantly lower employee performance. Therefore, it is crucial for public institutions to address stress-inducing factors by implementing strategic interventions such as workload balancing, providing psychological support, time management training, and strengthening communication between supervisors and subordinates. These efforts are essential to create a healthier and more productive work environment that supports employee well-being and sustained performance.



Figure 3. Sobel Test Result

The Mediating Role of Mental Health in the Relationship Between Work Stress and Employee Performance.

The results of the second hypothesis testing, conducted using the Sobel test, indicate that work stress negatively affects mental health (coefficient = -0.827), while mental health positively influences employee performance (coefficient = 0.242). The Sobel statistic value is -3.2057 with a two-tailed significance of 0.0013, which is below the threshold of 0.05. This confirms that mental health plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between work stress and employee performance. In other words, work stress impacts employee performance not only directly but also indirectly through its detrimental effect on mental health.

These findings align with Chen et al. (2022), who argue that mental health acts as a key mediator between job stress and productivity. The study by Zhang and Wang (2023) similarly supports this conclusion, showing that emotional stress caused by high work demands contributes to mental disorders such as anxiety and depression, which subsequently reduce work performance. The data suggest that declining mental health—triggered by excessive stress—leads to emotional fatigue, reduced concentration, and even increased absenteeism.

In the context of the ATR/BPN Regional Office in Lampung Province, job-related pressures include high administrative workloads, complex land conflict resolution, and increasing public service expectations. These stressors can undermine employees' psychological well-being and, in turn, impair their performance. Therefore, managing employee stress and strengthening mental health are crucial. This can be addressed through strategies such as stress coping training, organizational

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support systems, and workplace wellness programs. By prioritizing mental health, the institution can better sustain employee productivity and service quality in a demanding bureaucratic environment..

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis and discussion of the research findings, it can be concluded that both proposed hypotheses are empirically supported. First, work stress has a significant negative effect on employee performance. Employees experiencing high levels of stress tend to show decreased focus, lower motivation, emotional exhaustion, and reduced productivity. In the context of the ATR/BPN Regional Office in Lampung Province, stressors such as workload intensity, complex administrative responsibilities, and public service pressure directly contribute to performance decline. Second, mental health plays a mediating role in the relationship between work stress and performance. Prolonged stress can deteriorate employees' psychological well-being—manifested in anxiety, fatigue, and loss of motivation—which, in turn, negatively impacts job outcomes. These findings underline that employee performance is not only determined by external work demands but also by internal psychological resilience. Therefore, mental health becomes a crucial bridge that explains how stress translates into either high or low employee effectiveness.

In light of these findings, several practical recommendations are proposed. Organizational stress management must become a strategic priority, involving more balanced workload distribution, enhanced managerial support, and open communication channels for employees to express work-related concerns. Moreover, mental health maintenance should be integrated into workplace wellness programs, with initiatives that promote a supportive work culture, fair recognition, and activities that nurture emotional balance. Institutions are also encouraged to conduct periodic assessments of employees' psychological well-being and job performance to detect early signs of burnout and ensure long-term productivity. By addressing both the sources of stress and the psychological needs of employees, organizations can foster a healthier, more resilient, and high-performing workforce.

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