

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF AGRICULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

**ASSESSMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND ITS IMPACTS ON HEALTH,
SAFETY, AND PERFORMANCE AMONG CONSTRUCTION WORKERS: A CASE
STUDY OF EXODUS CONSTRUCTION COMPANY, ZIMBABWE**



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DECLARATION

To be compiled by the student

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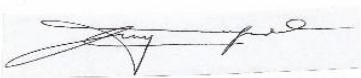
I, Evaristo Manyadze, do hereby declare that the work-related project is my original work, and has not been submitted for examination to any other examination board. All information derived from other sources is indicated in the project.

Signature of the Student  Date: 30 June 2025

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This dissertation is suitable for submission to the faculty and has been checked for conformity with the faculty guidelines.

Signature of the Supervisor ...  Date: 30 June 2025

Signature of Faculty Chairperson....  Date: 15 October 2025

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents for their enduring love, support, and tolerance throughout my academic pursuits.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Mabhungu, for the valuable inspiration, input, and support she provided in making this research a reality. Her ideas, suggestions, and criticism were very informative and insightful. I additionally wish to thank my colleagues and friends for their valuable advice. Panashe, Kudzai, Tinashe, and Absolom, thank you for your moral support.

ABSTRACT

The research aimed to determine occupational stress levels in Exodus Construction Company employees, identify main causes, and assess their effects on health, safety, and overall work performance. The study employed a mixed-methods design, which uses both quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis, and was conducted to produce results. The quantitative data collected through a questionnaire distributed to a sample of 80 employees from Exodus Construction Company. Statistical data analysis was conducted through the use of the SPSS package.

As a result, the quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics to derive mean score for the stressors and Pearson correlation analysis. The qualitative data was collected by interviewing key informants (Site supervisors, Human Resource, SHE Officer, and Machine Operator Manager) to obtain more information about the causes and impact of occupational stress among workers. The thematic analysis was utilized in the analysis of the qualitative data obtained.

The study recognized that the majority of workers, 52 %, at Exodus Construction Company are suffering from high occupational stress. The most common occupational stress factors were workload (mean = 4.180), home stress interfering with job pressure (mean = 4.160), working under hazardous conditions (mean = 4.140), conflicts with supervisors (mean = 4.020), and performing untrained tasks (mean = 4.060). Additionally, the research confirmed a high positive relationship between work stress, and work accidents ($r = 0.589$, $p = 0.000$), and a moderate positive relationship with absenteeism ($r = 0.358$, $p = 0.0011$). The study confirmed a significant negative association between work stress and general work performance ($r = -0.349$, $p = 0.013$), indicating that as stress increases, job performance decreases. Furthermore, the employees also had severe physical and mental health impacts such as depression and exhaustion.

The results of research show that there is an urgent need for Exodus Construction Company to take proactive measures to alleviate these stressors and encourage employee wellness. This is not only crucial for the safety and health of workers for the general productivity, reputation, and sustainability of the company. Further research, particularly longitudinal and intervention studies, would be useful in planning and testing effective ways of dealing with stress under the harsh working environment of the construction sector.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

SHE -	Safety, Health and Environment
PPE -	Personal Protective Clothing
SPSS -	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
HR -	Human Resource
WHO -	World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of study

Occupational stress has been one of the biggest issues affecting workers' lives and careers in recent decades, lowering workers' performance and decreasing organizational productivity in the construction sector (Iroegbu, 2014). Occupational stress harms an individual's psyche, physiology, and job (Mustapha et. al., 2024). The construction industry is a pressure sector worldwide. Employees are often subjected to strict deadlines, highly demanding tasks, hard labor, and unfavourable working conditions, and the workers are at a higher risk of injuries, accidents, and health problems than any other industrial sector (Sarhan et al. 2023). These factors contribute to elevated occupational stress levels, which, if not managed, can lead to serious repercussions for employee performance and the organization's productivity (Mustapha et al., 2024). Occupational stress is the psychological and physiological factors that affect the performance of an individual in their occupation, their health, and the overall quality of their work. It can also result from inability to handle pressure at work because of insufficient skills needed in the workplace (Suleman et al, .2022)

Globally, due to the complex nature of the construction industry, about 70 % of construction workers suffer from occupational stress in the form of anxiety, depression, low motivation, and low morale (Manivannan et al., 2022). In addition, about 70 % of construction workers are males, so this is a very male-dominated occupation, and they are more likely to suffer from mental problems, with depression levels higher than those for the general population (Roche et al., 2016)

The construction workers may experience occupational stress due to a variety of factors, including the physical strain of working in unfavourable conditions, role-related issues, lack of privacy and threats to their career development, and attainment, such as the possibility of being laid off, a significant underappreciated promotion, and unclear promotion (Vallasamy et al., 2023)

The frontline construction workers experience considerable job stress because of the intricate nature of their work, frequently in harsh and confining environments. The construction industry in Zimbabwe has contributed significantly to urbanization and infrastructure development. Hence, some challenges, such as economic instability, resource constraints, ignorance of safety by top management, and labor shortages, contribute to occupational stress as workers do their tasks under unsafe conditions (Chazireni and Chigonda, 2018). The observations recommend that employees at Exodus Construction Company face high levels of occupational stress, driven by factors such as job insecurity, interpersonal relationships, long working days, high workload, complex physical environments with many hazards, including working at height. As a result, the workers who are overwhelmed by their professional commitments often face increased occupational stress levels, which can detrimentally affect their performance. Therefore, this research focuses on determining occupational stress sources and understanding how they affect construction workers' performance.

In the realm of organizational stress management, a variety of strategies should be implemented effectively. Hence, the employer ought to structure and oversee work processes in a manner that mitigates and prevents stress risk factors, thereby minimizing potential issues (Alnizari, 2024). This strategy increases productivity by creating a work atmosphere where staff members feel appreciated and supported. The interventions that can be done by construction and other companies include ergonomic practices, taking regular breaks at work, environmental design, and management development.

From a regional viewpoint, the construction sector in Southern Africa is facing some challenges, such as a shortage of skilled labour, inadequate training programs, and limited knowledge about occupational health and safety practices (Taderera, 2012). The goal of the study is to establish the level of occupational stress experienced by employees, identify its sources, and investigate its influence on their health, safety, and general performance while at work.

The study initially helped to identify the most detrimental stressors to employee well-being and productivity. In addition, the study be capable of providing some hints on how stress affects different aspects of workers job performance including work efficiency, the incidence of accidents, reduced rates of work quality, and the absenteeism, higher rates of turnover and even serious health problems like cardiovascular disorders and mental diseases (Lingard and Turner, 2023).

This study can also look at employee coping techniques, which can help to shape exact interventions to combat workplace stress and promote good employee performance. The study's findings have potentially larger ramifications for Zimbabwe's construction sector, offering useful lessons that other enterprises facing similar issues can benefit from.

1.2 Problem Statement

The Exodus Construction Company employees are exposed to high levels of occupational stress due to the physically demanding nature of their work, poor working conditions, pressure to meet deadlines, and the inherent risks associated with construction environments. Although the company is continuously making some efforts to uphold safety protocols, there has been a notable rise in reports concerning stress-related health issues from (October 2023 to June 2024), such as fatigue, headaches, depression, respiratory problems, increased absenteeism, high turnover rates, workplace near misses, workplace accidents, and a decrease in worker productivity.

In addition, there is little information available on the specific causes of occupational stress at Exodus Construction Company and the degree to which occupational stress influences the health, safety, and performance of its workers. It therefore becomes necessary to examine the occupational stress and its impact on job performance of workers.

The purpose of this study is to provide Exodus Construction Company with essential information on the specific stresses to which their employees are subjected and the impact that these stressors have on their performance. This enabled the company to develop effective interventions to reduce stress and enhance productivity. Therefore, the research contributes to the general literature on occupational stress among construction workers, providing valuable insights that applied in best practices for stress management. Furthermore, by enhancing worker well-being and performance,

the research can increase the overall impact and capabilities of Exodus Construction Company, ultimately contributing to its long-term sustainability.

1.3 Aim.

To investigate the causes of occupational stress, and its impacts on their health, safety, and overall job performance among employees at Exodus Construction Company.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To determine the levels of occupational stress among employees at Exodus Construction Company.
2. To determine the causes of occupational stress among working employees at Exodus Construction Company, Zimbabwe.
3. To examine the impact of occupational stress on workers' safety, health, and overall job performance at Exodus Construction Company.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are employees' occupational stress levels for working at Exodus Construction Company?
2. What are the main occupational stress sources of employees at Exodus Construction Company?
3. What are the effects of occupational stress on the health, safety, and general performance of Exodus Construction Company employees at work?

1.6. Justification

The construction industry is very demanding, with tight deadlines, hazardous work environments, and physically demanding tasks, contributing to significant occupational stress among construction workers. The determination of the causes of occupational stress among employees at the Exodus Construction industry was crucial, and clarify how prolonged exposure to work-related stress can lead to major problems for employees' physical health, welfare, and performance at work.

Therefore, this research study aims at a specific construction company in Zimbabwe, Exodus Construction Company, to enable a thorough and contextual relationship between levels of occupational stress factors and their impacts on worker performance. This is because there is a lack of knowledge regarding these factors, which affects both workers' and organizational productivity. Thus, by determining the levels of occupational stress, identifying the causes of stress, and comprehending how it affects employees' operational performance, safety, and health, organizational productivity can be determined.

It is anticipated that the results not only improve worker well-being but also to the company, due to improved stress management practice. Exodus Construction can be able to improve employees' retention rates, promote a healthier working environment, and increase workers' overall job performance, leading to improved productivity.

More so, about the environment, due to compliance with safety standards is attributed to lower work stress, which in turn reduces environmental risks and accidents such as chemical spills, and

harmful environmental methods of disposing of waste during construction activities. A safer and more efficient construction project helps communities around construction sites by minimizing interruptions, accidents, and pollution to the environment.

The research adds knowledge on occupational health challenges to the nation and the global construction industry. It provides factual data to back up the creation of rules, guidelines, safety standards, and policy authorities, developing a nation and global culture to health-focused efforts by addressing occupational stress-related dangers in construction industries.

1.7 Assumptions

The study will assume that employees at Exodus Construction Company experience occupational stress, which is an issue that requires investigation. This is due to tight deadlines, high workloads, job insecurity, poor working environments, long working hours, high work overload, and the use of defective machinery, which negatively affects employee health and safety, affects job performance, and leads to decreased productivity and increased absenteeism.

Occupational stress has a significant impact on the safety, health, and productivity of workers. The research stands on the assumption that there is no stress in a vacuum, but rather finds an existence in different facets of an employee's work and life.

It is assumed in the research that employees would cooperate to answer the survey and present an account of their experiences in the workplace. The participants give honest answers representing their current workplace conditions, levels of stress, and the effects of stress on their performance and health.

The methods of data collection, such as questionnaire surveys and interviews, are regarded as powerful in the measurement of occupational stress levels, causes, and impacts. These methods are prepared according to the standards of research, meant to provide reliable, valid, and interpretable results.

1.8 Delimitations of the study

The study exclusively focuses on the workers at Exodus Construction Company. It aims at determining the construction workers' levels of occupational stress among construction workers, determining the different stressors involved, and looking at how such stress influences employees' health, safety, and general work performance. The research does not explore occupational stress beyond the construction sector as it focuses entirely on Exodus Construction Company and does not include employees from other industries or organizations. The data was gathered through questionnaire surveys and interviews of the employees in Exodus Construction Company, which will make the employees' voices important to the results. The study is confined to one location, the main site of Exodus Construction Company in Madokero suburb, and may not be able to cover every construction environment.

1.9 Limitations

A limitation of the studies on occupational stress is the potential for bias in self-reported assessments of stress health outcomes. Hence, this research depends on questionnaire surveys and

interviews that require construction workers to self-disclose their health issues because workers might downplay stress and their health problems out of fear of stigma or consequences from their employers. Therefore, not all data is accessible because of the high degree of secrecy in the Construction industry these days.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The chapter main goal is to elaborate state of knowledge regarding occupational stress to determine the extent of stress among workers, its causes, its effects on their health, and safety.

2.2 Types of Occupational Stress

Stress is an emotion that affects the mind, body, and behaviour, brought about by pressure or expectations placed on someone, and their capacity to encounter the burdens over a period, which causes illness (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Work stress arises when the demands of the job are incompatible with what the workers can do and the resources available to them. Therefore, stress in construction workers can be a series of demanding tasks, including long working hours, the working environment, the project environment, project deadlines, organizational lifestyle, and individual characteristics.

Occupational stress is defined as an interference with one's emotional state that results in personality and behavioural problems in the job, ultimately leading to reduced worker performance (Suleman et al., 2020). Therefore, occupational stress is not a hypothetical concept in Africa, as most workers have reported significant levels of stress due to unfavourable working conditions, extended working hours, low wages, economic instability, heavy workloads, job insecurity, and insufficient resources. As a result, occupational stress causes low output, increased absence, accidents, exhaustion, a lack of excitement for work, and poor performance among employees.

There are four types of occupational stress, which are acute, traumatic, chronic, and acute episodic stress (Taylor, 1995), cited by Ekundayo (2014). The most common and easily identifiable of these is acute stress. Normally, the body returns to normal after such stressful events are past, and normal life is resumed because the effect is short-term. Acute stress does not often result in severe or long-term damage to the body.

More so, traumatic stress is a reaction of crucial nature brought on by a traumatic experience or an intense experience, which may range from natural disasters, near misses, and accidents. However, in some people, the physical and psychological effects of trauma continue. Therefore, such stress is usually followed by flashbacks or nightmares regarding the trauma, avoidance of objects and situations that remind one of the trauma, being on guard for danger at all times, and tension.

Chronic stress exhausts an individual daily, such that a typical workday feels impossibly long. Hence, if a person continuously experiences it for many years without anyone's intervention, it may result in severe harm or death. Also, the stress might be viewed as a covert fear of some individuals, even more so for those in leadership roles. In addition, she points out that symptoms long linked with stress encompass muscle tension, changes in appetite, as well as sleep disturbances.

Finally, the acute episodic stress is likely to be experienced by impatient people, competitors, always in a rush, and quick-tempered with very strong verbal outbursts (Ekundayo, 2014). These

individuals are usually messy, on time, and attempt to do more work than they can manage. These people cannot accept or admit that they are stressed, and they influence their fellow workers.

2.3.0 Models of Occupational Stress

Occupational stress is considered either a process, an independent variable, or both. Thus, several frameworks for the comprehension of occupational stress have been proposed. This research will explain certain approaches employed to determine knowledge gaps and research similarities.

2.3.1 The Job-Demand-Control Model

When employees encounter a discrepancy between the resources they have to meet job expectations and the demands they experience, occupational stress (Bowen et al., 2014). The ability of workers to supervise and manage their duties during the workday is referred to as job demand. The two underlying aspects of work, as determined by, are job control and job demands. The model divides work-related stressors into two main categories: the psychological job demands, which include workload-related stressors, and job control, which represents an individual's options for handling job demands (Verhaest and Verhofstadt, 2016). According to the concept, excessive expectations at work, such as time constraints and workload, cause stressful reactions that have an impact on workers' health. On the other hand, employment that is high-control and low-demand is probably going to cause less stress on the body and mind than usual.

In addition, due to a person's inexperience, the largest correlation between job demands and stress can be discovered early in a person's career (Veerhaest and Verhofstadt, 2016). They contend that when workers learn and develop new mechanisms, they eventually adjust to their stressful circumstances. There is a similar association between job demands and learning, with a stronger correlation at the beginning of the career due to limited work experience; hence, all workers need precise job descriptions to achieve satisfaction early in their careers.

2.3.2 The Demand –Control –Support Model

The supervisory support, managerial support, and peer support have the potential to buffer job demands and occupational stress reactions (Odetunde, 2021). The DCS (Demand-Control-Support-Model) has been modified and expanded from JD- C Model. Employees who feel that they do not have the support of their supervisors can experience more demanding work conditions, leading to occupational stress, than those who have high support levels. Furthermore, as specified by the Demand-Control-Support Model can be used to determine factors having an impact on the employee work stress.

2.3.3 The Transactional Stress Model

One key model utilized in stress processes is that of (Lazarus and Folkman, 1987), referenced by (Obbarius et al., 2021). The transactional model is the primary theory utilized in current research in occupational stress. The model discusses how a person adjusts to their workplace and illustrates that the way a person appraises situations plays an important role in how they manage to cope with stress. The individuals notice how important these stressors are to them (primary appraisal), and the individual's capacity to deal with the ensuing stress (secondary appraisal) after the worker's

interaction with the stressors. Lazarus and colleagues' cognitive motivational-emotional model has helped advance the investigation of specific appraisal processes that incite different emotional reactions. To unite stress and emotional research, transactional stress theory is placed within the general investigation of emotions.

2.4.0 Causes of Occupational Stress

Every employee experiences occupational stress for a variety of reasons, which change based on the kind of organization and the work environment. Construction workers were found to be more stressed than workers in other industries with relation to the risks of hazards, injuries, and accidents, workload, and time pressure, according to the Working Climate Index (2023) survey, referred to by (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2024). The external forces, emanating from the micro organization or the macro environment, that induce stress in the individual (Ekundayo, 2014). Figure 1 is a stress model, which identifies the four causes of stress and the three categories of occupational stress consequences based on (Cooper, 1985), cited by (Enshassi et al., 2015). The four categories are organizational factors, individual factors, environmental factors, and personal characteristics.

Causes of Stress

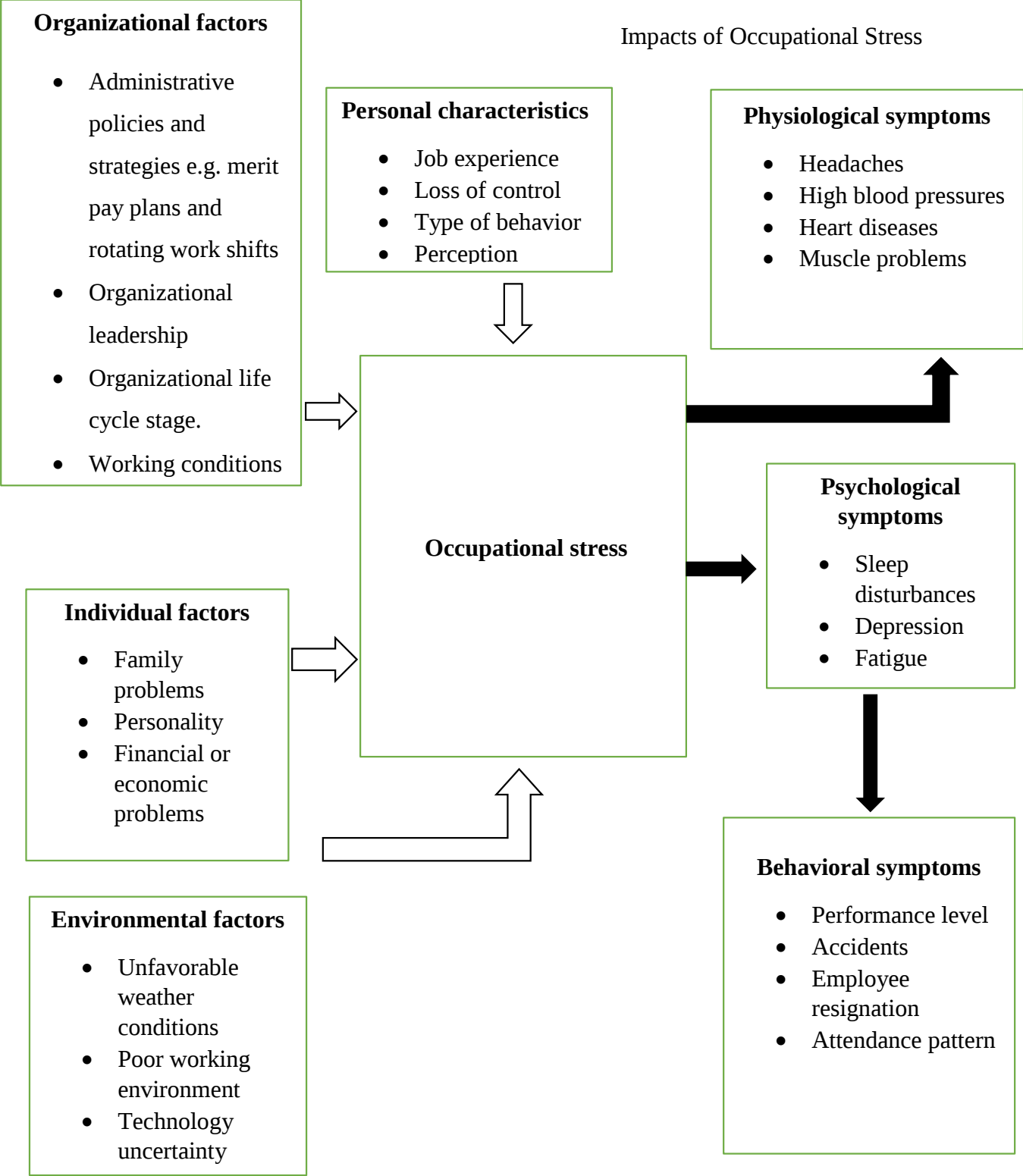


Figure 2.1: The Stress Model

2.4.1 Organizational Factors

The organizational level stressors are associated with the organization's working conditions, such as organizational processes, administrative policies, strategies, organizational design, and structure. Therefore, organizational factors that lead to work-related stress, caused by work relationships such as (superior or subordinate conflict, workplace bullying, dark leadership, and discrimination), and an organizational structure such as (formalization, management style, and involvement in decision-making). Also, intrinsic job tasks (such as work overload, time pressure,

lack of job control, and unfavourable working conditions), and career development (such as lack of job security, over promotion, under promotion) (Wijesooriya and Wijesooriya, 2021).

Those in higher positions frequently provide directives that put construction employees, who are frequently at a lower level of the hierarchy of most construction projects, under stress (Liang et al., 2021). Additionally, it was highlighted that physical stress has a negative correlation with safe behaviour, and that higher stress levels are a strong predictor of workplace productivity because they could potentially be used as an extrinsic motivator for employees. Failure to report incidents at work, and be involved in policymaking or lack of organizational support, may be followed by the sudden, unexpected changes in project possibilities that are inherent (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2024). Collectively, they may exacerbate workers' sense of fear and absence of protection and participation possibilities, which leads to an increase in occupational stress levels.

Time pressure is one of the leading sources of job stress in the majority of firms, as they strive to fulfil project deadlines. It happens when workers are compelled to complete work within an unrealistic timeframe. In addition, the excessive workload is one of the significant sources of time pressure at work. The workload can lead to burnout since no time would be available for breaks, and inadequate time management skills lead to item deficits in the workplace. The inadequate time management and prioritisation of tasks can cause failure to meet deadlines and accumulation of work, resulting in psychological stress, including anxiety and stress, due to workers feeling overwhelmed and unable to manage workloads (Kordzanganeh et al., 2021)

The occupational stress increases when the staff is insufficient, and the current workers will be required to work more to address the needs of the job. The staff can experience stress, anxiety, and failure to manage their workload due to unrealistic working requirements, which may result in job stress (Gómez-Salgado et al., 2023). The workers will become stressed and frustrated when given work that is beyond their experience or skill level, which eventually leads to decreased productivity and job satisfaction. Peer and supervisor pressure to work at high standards can also become a causal element in job stress because of an overload of work.

Furthermore, employment uncertainty contributes to occupational stress among employees. Job insecurity is a phenomenon that happens when workers are preoccupied with the security of their jobs and might be precipitated by various situations like organizational restructuring. And downsizing (Kuehl et al., 2019). Hence, job insecurity can be a source of work stress since employees become anxious and concerned about their fate. Economic problems, such as recession or downturn in the workplace, could result in job insecurity.

2.4.2 Individual Factors

The family problems can be one of the significant stressors on construction employees, causing them to worry (Nwaogu & Chan, 2022). Excessive working hours and prolonged shifts can make construction workers skip family commitments, resulting in poor relationships, a lack of time for household attention, and recreational periods. In addition to coping with issues like non-

standard working hours, work-life balance, and parental leave, gender audits in the traditionally masculine construction industry highlight the necessity of cultural change to challenge biases. In some instances, a poor work-life balance may be the result of social isolation is another stressor related to the nature of the work, and it results in the feeling of being excluded from social contact, which causes psychological distress (Gómez-Salgado et al., 2023).

2.4.3 Environmental Factors

Construction work environments can be unsatisfactory due to poor hygiene and hazardous lead context-related mental health stressors to employees (Fagbenro et al., 2023). These unsatisfactory environments are common where there is dust, dirt, and excessive noise, and where employees fail to have adequate conveniences like food providing, and bathroom facilities in open-field environments.

Therefore, construction workers are exposed to unfavourable hot conditions, causing thirst, fatigue, headache, dizziness, nausea, and muscle aches, which can affect construction workers' health and performance. Hence, working in very hot or low temperatures exists as a work atmosphere stressor, while unsatisfactory conditions, poor lighting, and dust are significant sources of stress for construction workers, and that work in offices under unsafe conditions is a work environment stressor (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2024)

2.4.4 Personal Characteristics

There are possible levels of stress in construction among different traits of workers that include age, gender, education, and profession (Chiang et al., 2023). Hence, it is feasible to determine the stressed construction workers after working day, the findings with an occupational stress scale (North Haven and American Institute of Stress, 2001)

There are some reasons that lead to occupational stress which are including insufficient safety working training, inadequate protective equipment, and the disparity in incentives and treatment, causing construction workers to feel that their company does not support them (Leung et al., 2021). Hence, extrinsic stressors external to the work setting, including adverse financial situations and worries about future uncertainties, affect individual performance.

2.5.0 Impacts of Occupational Stress

Occupational stress can develop into psychological, physical, and behavioural problems for workers if it is persistent (Leung et al., 2021). This is yet knowledge gap, typical stressors that have been identified among construction workers with various instruments being used to measure stress levels, such occupational stress scale. Main issues affecting an organization's productivity are work-related stress, distress, construction employees' safety, health, and production at work.

2.5.1 Effects of Occupational Stress on Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to how well an individual carries out their job obligations and responsibilities within a company, including the quality and quantity of their work. The construction workers are directly involved in highly demanding power in construction activities,

and they are highly accountable for errors while doing their work due to occupational stress leading to reduction of quality of work (Ekundayo, 2014). Occupational stress is not beneficial for employees, contributing to low morale, higher risk of accidents, increased occupational hazards, absenteeism, increased turnover, decreased performance, and increased medical care expenses, which contribute to the productivity of the company.

Once occupational stress rises the work performance decreases, and vice versa. The occupational stress relates to mental disorders like irritability, hostility, sleepless nights, anxiety, aggressive behaviour, and memory loss, resulting in poor employee performance. There is excessive workload, long working hours, poor work organization, inadequate social, and welfare support (Chen et al., 2022).

2.5.2 Effects of Occupational Stress on physical and mental functioning.

The extreme occupational stress levels increase the risk of accidents, mental health issues, and negative physical, psychological, and occupational outcomes. These consequences begin with depression and anxiety and ultimately lead to stress, which negatively affects mental and physical health. (Hasin et al., 2023).

There are several risk factors at work, such as long working hours, working in an awkward posture, and repetitive tasks exacerbate the link between stress and musculoskeletal injuries among construction employees who work under unfavourable working conditions. In addition, employees may experience poor motivation, job dissatisfaction, and a lack of love for their work. This may decrease attention and responses to emergency scenarios or safety-threatening conditions.

In addition, due to failing to address this issue of occupational stress among workers, the construction companies can lead to decreased production and reduced work abilities for impacted individuals (Gómez-Salgado et al., 2023). Furthermore, the demanding nature of their jobs, construction workers may have diminished focus and concentration on tasks, which can raise the likelihood of workplace accidents and human mistakes.

2.5.3 Effects of Occupational Stress on Behavioural

Occupational stress may undermine a person's logical decision-making and reduce adherence to occupational safety procedures, causing misbehaviour and disregard for safety protocols at work (Turner and Lingard, 2020). The behavioural outcomes of stress include increased absenteeism, turnover, and low productivity in the organization due to poor performance of workers. This may also include increased smoking, intoxication, and doing shortcuts without following safety protocol at work (Fagbenro et al., 2023).

2.5.4 Negative Impacts of Occupational Stress on the Organization

Occupational stress can harm organizational productivity by decreasing efficiency. Stress is responsible for decreased organizational productivity due to decreased overall employee performance, decreased quality of work, increased employee turnover and absenteeism, and increased illness issues like anxiety, depression, headache, and backache.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study used a mixed technique, combining quantitative and qualitative data and analytic methodologies. This strategy aimed to get a thorough understanding of the link between occupational stress and workers' performance.

3.2 Study area description

The research was done at Exodus Construction Company in Zimbabwe. The Exodus Construction Company provides a wide range of construction services, with a specific concentration on housing complexes, real estate brokerage, commercial and industrial developments, project management, road construction and rehabilitation, and the construction of commercial buildings like medical centers, schools, warehouses, and water sewage reticulation. The Exodus construction company offices are located in geographical coordinates 30° 96' 33139" E and 17° 79' 71048" S in Madokero suburb in the west of Harare along Kirkman Road, where Madokero Residential Development is carried out. This massive project involves the construction of several hundred residential units and comprises essential infrastructure developments, including the construction of well-paved roads, reliable water supply systems, and effective sewage management. The Exodus Construction Company is also building community amenities, such as parks, playgrounds, and malls. Figure 3.1 shows the physical location of Exodus Construction Company.

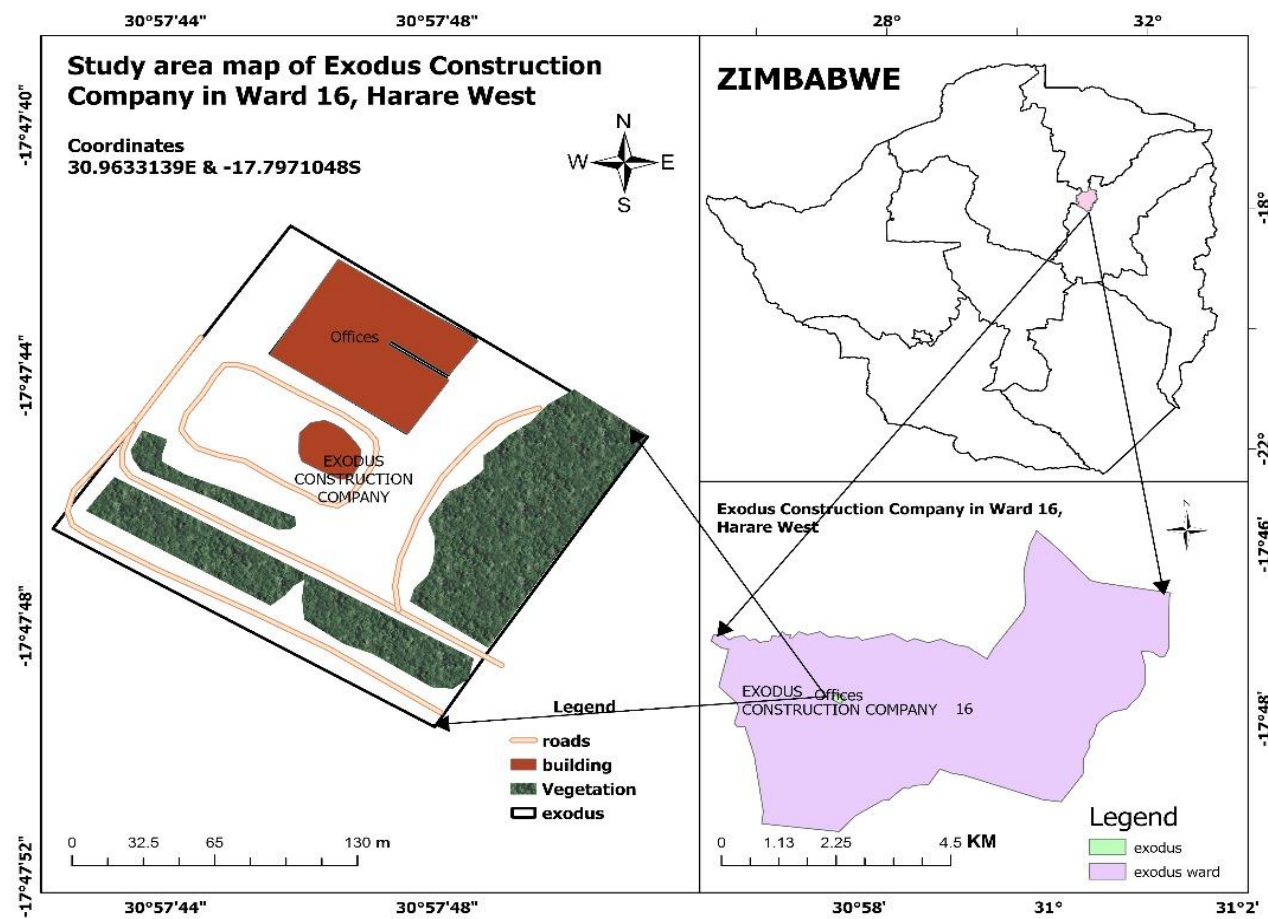


Figure 3.1: Location of Exodus Construction Company.

3.3 Research design

The study used a mixed research method, which uses both quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis, and combined to produce results. The quantitative data was obtained using questionnaires

to determine levels of occupational stress score for each respondent using a Likert Scale (such as 1 = never to 5 = very often). In addition, the questionnaires were used to identify work-related factors that cause stress, and analyse the frequency of accidents, health complaints, absenteeism rates, and overall job performance. In addition, interviews with workers' representatives at Exodus Construction Company were conducted to obtain qualitative data on personal experience, identifying the sources and health problems experienced by workers due to occupational stress.

3.4 Study population

The total population for this study is 400 employees in Exodus Construction Company. This population included the 245 site workers, 25 site supervisors, 40 engineers, 70 machine operators, 5 safety officers, and 15 administrative staff. Therefore, they provide information about occupational stress levels, their causes, and how it affect workers’ performance.

3.5 Questionnaire sample size and sampling technique.

The questionnaire sample size was calculated using Slovin’s method (Adhikari, 2021), as indicated in Appendix 1. The determined sample size was 80 responses. To assure the representation of Exodus Construction Company’s important personnel, a stratified random selection approach was adopted. The population was divided into suitable strata depending on department membership (e.g, human resources, engineer, site workers, machine operator, SHE officer, and Site Supervisor). As a result, individuals were picked in each stratum using simple random sampling. The sample for each category was determined using the population proportion of each category. This is presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Questionnaire sample size

Category	Population	Percentage of Population	Sample size for each Department
Site workers	245	61.25	48
Site supervisors	25	6.25	5
Engineers	40	10	6
Machine operators	70	17.5	17
SHE Officers	5	1.25	1
Administration staff	15	3.75	3
Total	400		80

3.6 Interview sample size and sampling technique

Qualitative data was collected on a sample size of 15 participants through conducting interviews with 1 Human Resource Manager, 5 Site Supervisors, 2 SHE Officers, 1 Officer in charge of machinery, and equipment, 6 Site workers leaders at Exodus Construction Company. The study

utilized a purposive sampling technique to gather from 15 participants, ensuring a diverse range of experiences and opinions regarding on occupational stress in Exodus Construction Company. The specific criteria for purposive sampling technique in this study were to select department leaders who could provide rich and diverse insights about the type’s occupational stress experienced by workers such as physical and mental.

3.7 Data Collection Instruments

Quantitative data was collected using a questionnaires, and qualitative data was gathered using interviews. The confidentiality and privacy of their answers were guaranteed, and participants were aware that participation was optional.

3.7.1 Questionnaire

The structured questionnaire, as appended in Appendix 2, was used as a primary data collection tool to gather information on the levels of work-related stress on workers at Exodus Construction Company, its causes, and its impacts on health, safety, and overall job performance. The questionnaire comprised sections A to F to address the objectives. Section A collected data on employees’ demographic information, Section B is focused on occupational stress assessment, and Section C contains questions on work-related factors that cause stress. Section D focused health health-related questions, Section E gathered data on safety concerns, and Section F collected information on job performance and satisfaction.

The questionnaire was administered to employees both electronically and physically, so that even those who do not have access to computers or cell phones are able to complete the questionnaire. The respondents were asked to score their impression of the amount of occupational stress offered in the questionnaire by picking those that applied to them on 5 –5-point Likert scale (Fordjour et al., 2020). The levels of occupational stress among construction workers were measured using an occupational stress scale of North Haven and the American Institute of Stress (2001. It comprised eight items with a 5 –point response pattern, 1-5 (never to very often). The presentation of occupational stress score among workers at Exodus Construction Company is shown in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2 Occupational Stress Score at Exodus Construction Company.

Total score	Presentation of stress level
≤ 15	Very calm
16 -20	Quite low
21 -25	Moderate
26 -30	Severe
31 – 40	Very high

3.7.2 Interview

This research incorporated face-to-face structured interviews conducted with the following worker representatives: 1 Human Resource Manager, 5 Site supervisors, 2 SHE Officers, 1 Officer in charge of machinery and equipment, 6 Site worker leaders at Exodus Construction Company. The comprehensive interview guide is appended in Appendix 3. The face-to-face interviews were important because they allowed further probing of the information to know the causes of work-related stress on construction workers, while the interviewees were determining the causes of stress, and were describing how stress influences workplace safety, performance, risks, and hazards at Exodus Construction Company. Therefore, the interview required additional questioning of the interviewee to obtain data that is more reliable. Nonverbal data was collected through observation of their working environmental conditions while conducting the interview.

The interviews took place with their officers to maintain anonymity and gain a thorough understanding. Moreover, the interviews also have an advantage of allowing the discussion and deeper exploration of delicate subjects that would have been challenging to include in questionnaire survey questions.

3.8 Data analysis

The research yielded both quantitative and qualitative data, which will be examined using relevant approaches.

3.8.1 Quantitative data analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), a computer program, was utilized for quantitative data analysis collected with questionnaires.

To determine the levels of occupational stress among Construction employees at Exodus Construction Company, the quantitative data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics. This was done by creating a composite occupational stress score derived from (8 questions in Likert scale) on the questionnaire and categorizing the total scores using the occupational stress scale (Northern Haven, and American Institute of Stress, 2001).

To determine the causes of occupational stress among workers in Exodus Construction Company, the quantitative data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics. The mean and standard deviation were calculated to understand the central tendency and variability in the reporting frequency, illustrating the major causes of work stress.

To examine the impact of occupational stress on work, safety, health, and overall job performance at Exodus Construction Company using correlation analysis. Therefore, association analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between occupational stress levels with the frequency of accidents, absenteeism, and overall job performance among employees.

3.8.2 Qualitative data analysis

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method, which was used to identify, analyse, and report patterns in qualitative data to explore the interview transcripts. It captures the complexity of the lived experiences of workers to identify common stress, and coping mechanisms used by workers to manage stress that may not be evident from the quantitative data alone.

3.9 Ethical issues

The permission to conduct this study, obtained before data gathering in the informed consent process, plus ethical standards. Research protects the anonymity of the participants during data collection by assessing the number of returned instruments and not exposing their identities. This offers confidentiality and privacy. The research was not misled, misunderstood, or invent data to protect respondents. The data presentation was impartial and free of prejudice, and the research was not discussed with participants or others outside the investigation. The collected data was used only for study purposes.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data obtained at Exodus Construction Company to achieve the research objectives.

4.1.1 Response rate

The study’s questionnaire sample size was 80 individuals, and 50 completed the questionnaires, yielding a reply rate of 62.5 %. Target of responses should be at least 60%; hence, the response is good, as suggested by Frinchman 2010). The fact that the response rate is good means that the results from the research can be depended upon.

4.1.2 Demographic

The data acquired through the questionnaire shows that most of the participants (74%) are males, and very few (26%) are females. This is because the construction sector has long been characterized by male domination, with a substantial gender difference in employment (Roche et al., 2016). The results for Exodus Construction Company do follow this trend, with a vast majority of male workers.

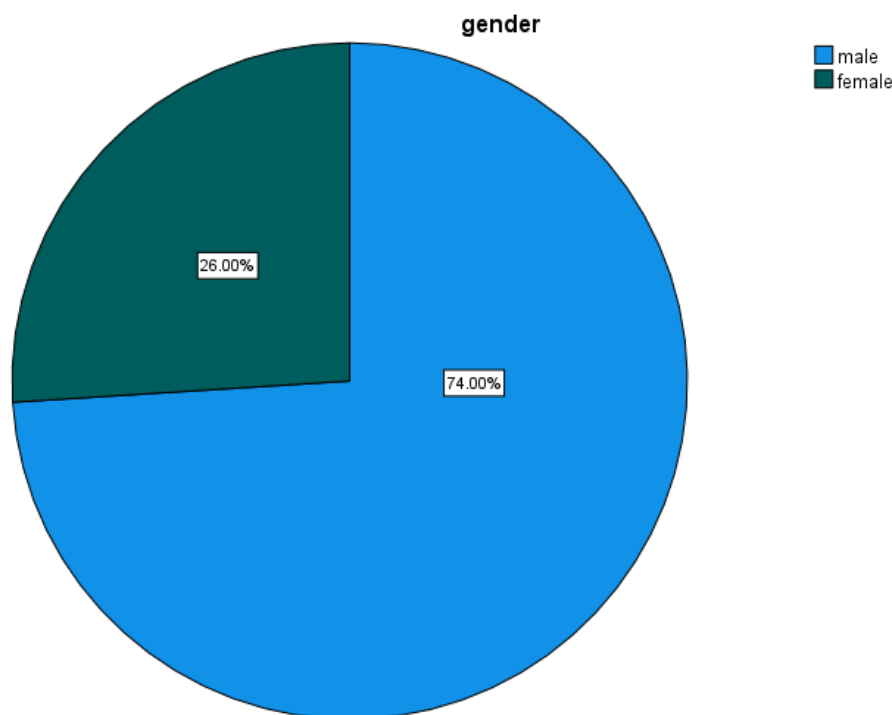


Figure 4.1: Gender response rate

The largest group with high respondents is the site workers, who recorded 40 % engaged in manual labour and on-site construction activities. The second largest group is machine operators, with 24% of the workforce handling heavy equipment and machinery necessary for various construction tasks. Site supervisors make up 14 % of the workforce and are responsible for monitoring site procedures to ensure that projects are finished on schedule, within budget, and by safety requirements. In addition, Engineers with 10 % of the workforce are responsible for planning, designing, and executing construction projects. The Administration Staff, with 8 % for supporting the operational aspects of the company, including project management, human resources, and

financial administration. The SHE Officers, with 4 %, focus on safety, health of employees, and environmental compliance, and identify hazards and risks. Table 4.1 below shows the job role response rate:

Table 4.1 Job role response rate

Job role	Frequency	Percent
Site worker	20	40
Site supervisor	7	14
Machine operator	12	24
SHE Officer	2	4
Engineer	5	10
Administration staff	4	8
Total	50	100

4.1.4 Reliability test

The validity of the dataset for the different scales was tested with the Cronbach’s Alpha test. Reliability is considered bad when less than 0.6, acceptable 0.70, and 0.8, and good if more than 0.80 (Hair, 2015). Therefore, Cronbach’s alpha scores on the causes of occupational stress are 0.836, which are presented in Table 4.2

Table 4.2 Reliability test results

Cronbach’s Alpha	Number of items
.836	10 (Causes of occupational stress)

4.2 Levels of occupational stress among workers at Exodus Construction Company.

The results show a clear trend of increasing rates of stress among workers as the levels of occupational stress increase. There are 2 workers with scores of ≤ 15 , meaning a few workers who have a low level of occupational stress among workers at Exodus Construction Company. The second category 16-20, includes only 3 workers, indicating that even this group is quite rare on the levels of occupational stress among workers at Exodus Construction Company. The category 21-25 has 6 employees, indicating there are moderate levels of occupational stress among workers Exodus Construction Company. The category 26-30 also indicates a high proportion of 13 employees, indicating there are many workers who are experiencing high levels of occupational stress at Exodus Construction Company. The majority of the workers at Exodus Construction Company experience higher levels of occupational stress, as evidenced by the fact that the largest number of 26 employees fit within category 31-40. Figure 4.2 shows the level of occupational stress among workers at Exodus Construction Company.

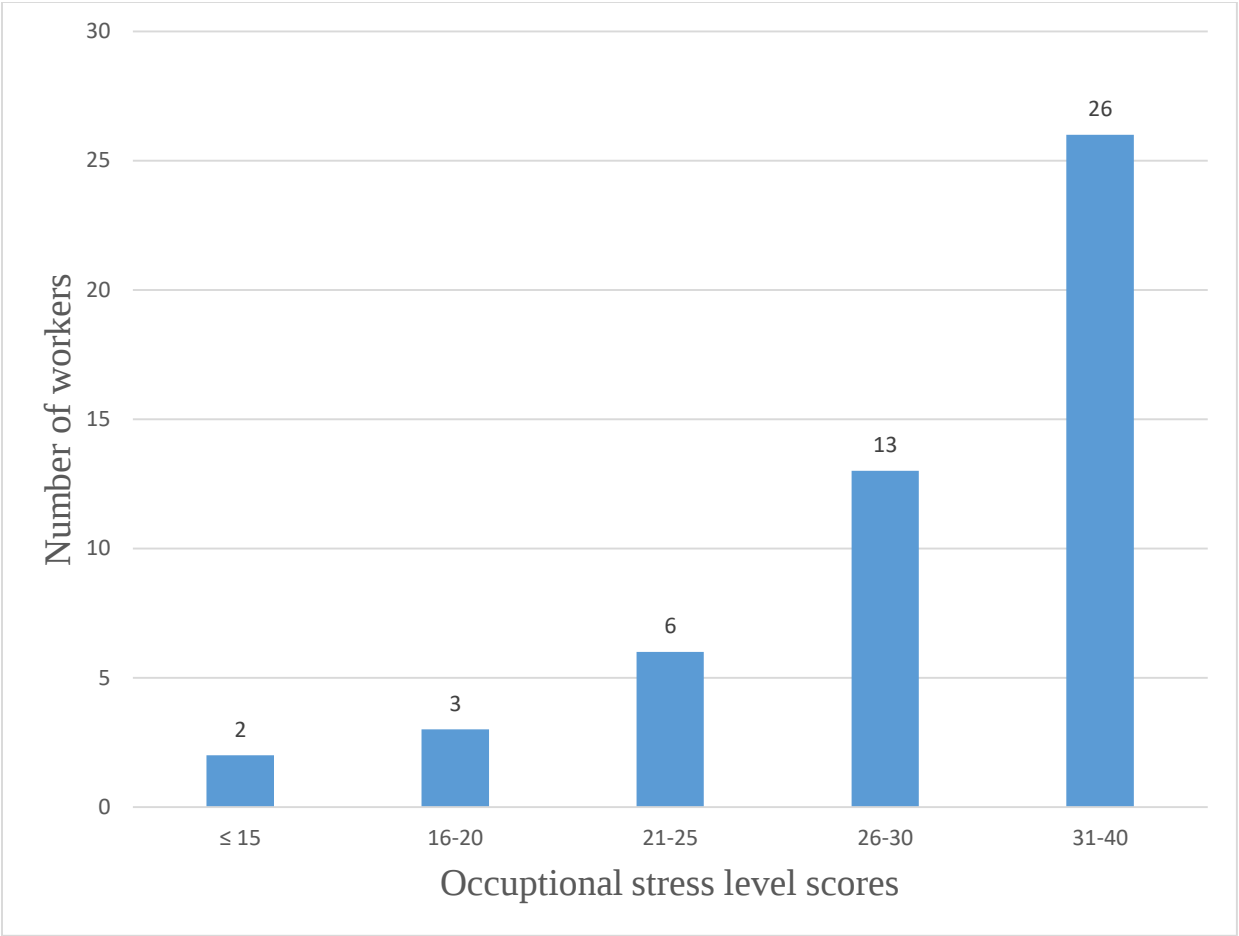


Figure 4.2: Occupational stress score at Exodus Construction Company

4.3 Causes of occupational stress among working employees at Exodus Construction Company.

The excessive workload had a mean of 4.180, and a standard deviation of 1,207 which is higher than the neutral 3.0 on a 1 to 5 scale. It simply indicates that, on average, Exodus Construction Company employees believe that they experience stress due to heavy workload, making it a serious stressor. During the interview, the Site Supervisor stated that ‘the amount of work we need to do, and the timeframe in which we need to do it, is unrealistic. The workers are stressed when there is too much physical labour and not enough workers to do the task.

The average grade for the untrained tasks had a mean of 3.060 standard deviation of 1.168, indicating that it is a major obstacle to efficient work performance. The problems with managers or supervisors, employees on average report feeling pressured, with a high mean score of 4.020 standard deviation of 1.237. The interpersonal or managerial factors are significant contributors to occupational stress on workers.

Job insecurity had an average rating slightly lower than neutral, with a mean of 2.580, and a standard deviation of 1.326, indicating that employees at Exodus Construction Company are insecure about their jobs. The HR Officer explained that ‘owing to economic challenges, the company is retrenching some workers in departments. Since the company’s reorganization, there has been an increase in employee tension and a decrease in output levels due to workers seeking jobs to avoid termination.

The high average 4.160, standard deviation 0.934, indicates that workers, on average, agree that stress emanating from home interferes with their job pressure, reflecting the spill over of home

stress into the work sphere. In an interview, the Site Supervisor stated that, ‘most of us as workers have been receiving low salaries for the past 4 months, and this stresses us, we are not able to afford the needs of our families, such as paying school fees for our children’.

The workers also concurred that they are operating under hazardous conditions in their workplaces, with a high mean score of 4.14, and a standard deviation of 1.030 on a scale of 1 to 5. The employees' mean score is 2.840, standard deviation 0.934, indicating that they are working long hours. The SHE Officer said, ‘As a result of long working hours to meet the deadlines lead to fatigue, but they will not complain because they are afraid of losing their jobs. It is an unhealthy situation, and it affects them even mentally; hence, occupational stress levels increase. In addition, Site supervisors said that workers always complain about their overtime payments, which the company does not pay them. Everyone should be permitted to work overtime, according to the employment agreement; however, the workers believe that the company is abusing this clause.

The salaries range mean is 2.060, and the standard deviation is 0,711, which shows that the employees' average salaries range reported is in the lower ranges. The Site Supervisor stated that, ‘we are in a bad situation as most of us earn salaries within the range of (\$500 -\$750). Hence, as workers, we are significantly affected by stress because we are not receiving our regular salaries, which have been reduced to a lower range for the past 4 months. Thus, we are unable to handle this situation because we are used to getting good salaries that enable us to meet our needs.

This is a major issue that directly contributes to work-related stress and possible injury. As a result, it is evident from these ratings and interview responses that Exodus Construction Company employees are experiencing occupational stress stemming from multiple causes that affect the safety, health, and job performance. The average ratings on the causes are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Causes of occupational stress at Exodus Construction Company.

Descriptive statistics					
	N	Minimum (The lowest rating given by the respondent)	Maximum (The highest rating given by the respondent)	Mean	Std Deviation
Heavy workload	50	1	5	4.180	1.207
Untrained tasks	50	1	5	4.020	1.168
Problems with supervisors	50	1	5	4.020	1.237
Job Security	50	1	5	2.580	1.326
Stress and home life interfere with job pressure	50	1	5	4.160	0.934
Working conditions	50	1	5	4.140	1.030
Long working hours	50	1	4	2.840	0.934
Salary range	50	1	4	2.840	0.934
Valid (listwise)	50				

4.4 Impacts of occupational stress on workers' health, safety, and overall job performance at Exodus Construction Company.

The average rating of 1.160, standard deviation 0.037, indicates that the majority of workers confirmed that they experience exhaustion because of work-related stress. This extreme fatigue can result in worse decision-making, slower reaction times, non-following of safety protocols at workplaces, and a higher risk of physical accidents at workplaces. Furthermore, the average score for anxiety and depression is 1.380, and the standard deviation is 0.490, suggesting that most workers are dealing with mental health problems as a result of work-related stress, as presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Physical and mental health effects due to high occupational stress levels at Exodus Construction Company.

Descriptive statistics					
	N	Minimum (The lowest rating given by the respondent)	Maximum (The highest rating given by the respondent)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Do you feel fatigued because of stress at work?	50	1	5	1.160	.370
Do you experience mental health issues (e.g., anxiety, depression) due to work stress?	50	1	5	1.380	.490
Valid N (listwise)	50				

The Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to test the association between occupational stress levels, and the incidence of workplace accidents. The research found a high positive association ($r = 0.589$ and $p < .001$), as shown in Table 4.5 below. This illustrates that when occupational stress levels rise, so do the number of reported workplace accidents. In an interview, the SHE officer noted that, ‘ most of the workers report to work under the influence of alcohol and smoking, which is prohibited by the company, but as the SHEQ team, we are not able to curb the situation because the company does not have functional breathalyzers’. Therefore, it is not simple for us to identify whether an individual is intoxicated or not, but we have begun observing employees' behavior while at work. The workers believe that alcohol and cigarettes would allow them to forget their troubles temporarily. The intoxication can increase the incidence of accidents when employees neglect to obey the job safety regulations.

Table 4.5: Correlation of occupational stress and frequency of accident occurrence.

Correlation			
		Occupational stress score	How often do workplace accidents occur?
Occupational stress score	Person correlation	1	.589**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	50	50
How often do workplace accidents occur?	Person correlation	.589**	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	50	50
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)			

Furthermore, the investigation assessed the connection between occupational stress level ratings and the frequency of absence. Pearson's association coefficient of $r= 0.358$, and the significance value $p = 0.011$, indicating a positive relationship. This shows that as occupational stress levels increase, the average number of workdays lost due to stress-related absenteeism also increases, as illustrated by Table 4.6 below.

Table 4.6: Correlation between occupational stress and frequency of absenteeism.

Correlation			
		What is the average number of workdays you lost due to stress-related absenteeism?	Occupational stress score
What is the average number of workdays you lost due to stress-related absenteeism?	Pearson Correlation	1	.358**
	Sig.(2 tailed)		.011
	N	50	50
Occupational stress score	Person Correlation	.358**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	
	N	50	50
** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)..			

The total job performance of employees, and their occupational stress level score have a negative Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.349, and a significance level of 0.013. Also, in an interview with HR, emphasized that it is hard to manage employees with minds somewhere else. Occupational stress is one of the primary causes of decreased employee overall job performance. We have not been able to achieve the target since last year. The work stress could be the cause; a second reason is retrenchment, as it is pointless to have a large number of individuals who cannot achieve the target objectives. This shows that when the stress score rises, the job performance declines among workers, as shown by Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7: Correlation of occupational stress score and overall job performance among workers at Exodus Construction Company.

Correlation			
		Occupational stress score	How would you rate your job performance?
Occupational stress	Person Correlation	1	-.349**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.013
	N	50	50
How would you rate your job performance?	Pearson Correlation	-.349	1
	Sig.(2–tailed)	.013	
	N	50	50
** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)			

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The results from chapter 4 on the levels of occupational stress, its sources, and its effects on Exodus Construction Company employees are thoroughly discussed in this chapter, along with a comparison to previous studies.

5.2 Levels of occupational stress among workers at Exodus Construction Company.

The employees in Exodus Construction Company experience high levels of occupational stress, which was categorized from ($\leq 15 - 40$), by the Occupational Stress Scale designed by North Haven and the American Institute of Stress 2001). Hence, the majority of employees (52 % of 26 of the 50 workers) scored within the highest level of stress (31 -40), and another considerable number (26% or 13 of the 50 workers) were within the second-highest bracket of employees experiencing extreme occupational stress (26 -30). In addition, a few workers (18 % or 9 of the 50) experiencing moderate levels of stress are within the category of (16 -25), and a very few number of workers (4 % or 2 of the 50) have relatively low levels of stress (≤ 15).

The results specify a favourable association between the sum of workers and the stress score. As a result, an increase in the occupational stress score corresponds to an increase in the sum of workers experiencing the same degree of occupational stress. Therefore, this demonstrates a substantial occupational stress issue at Exodus Construction Company, since the majority of employees have severe to possibly deadly stress levels according to the Northern Haven and American Institute of Stress (2001). These findings are consistent with some research, which describes that construction activity as intrinsically stressful due to its demanding nature, long working hours, short deadlines, and dangerous working conditions, which result in occupational stress (Gomez-Salgado et.al, 2023). Hence, the high-pressure environment of construction projects frequently results in severe psychological strain for personnel, as appears to be the case with Exodus Construction Company.

5.3 Causes of occupational stress among construction workers at Exodus Construction Company

The heavy workload appeared as a key stressor, with a mean score of 4.18, suggesting that employees at Exodus Construction Company believe that they are stressed due to the heavy workload. Individual experiences of workload stress vary from mild to very high, as indicated by the standard deviation (1.207). The Site Supervisor also pointed out that unrealistic project timeframes and insufficient labour could strain workers' health, leading to stress. This aligns with the Job Demand –Control Model, which states that high job demands, such as heavy workload, combined with time pressure, contribute to greater occupational stress among workers (Bowen, 2014). According to several studies, heavy workload causes employees' stress levels to rise more than other factors in the workplace.

The untrained tasks had a mean rating of 3.06. This means that the inadequacy of proper training in some of the tasks makes their execution hard to do efficiently, and leads to stress among the

majority of employees in Exodus Construction. The workers who are less skilled or competent to execute their tasks might feel anxious and lack self-confidence. Mostly, poor safety training, poor personal protective equipment, and construction workers' perception that their company does not care for them cause work stress (Leung et al, 2021). The safety issues are a cause of constant concern since most construction workers entail labour, use of heavy machinery, and the handling of dangerous chemicals. Second, new technology introduced to limit the use of manual labour, and to increase efficiency is causing stress to construction workers who were used to labor manually, and were not familiar with computers, and automation (Oladinrin et al, .2014) Furthermore, interpersonal conflict, and supervisors or management issues were also highly rated as stressful, with a mean of 4.02 (SD 1.237). This signifies that the leadership behaviour, communication competence, or supervision type in Exodus Construction Company contributes to occupational stress among workers. This link, coupled with poor supervisory feedback, conflicts with managers' increases occupational stress among construction workers and undermines overall job performance (Chen et al., 2024). Similarly, insufficient supervisory support and negative relationships are reported to have a positive correlation with higher occupational stress in construction workers (Dodanwala et. al., 2021).

The mean score of job insecurity (2.580) was marginally lower than the midpoint value, and the standard deviation was 1.326, indicating that there is a tendency towards job insecurity at Exodus Construction Company. The job insecurity mostly hurts the employees who have inadequate qualifications, particularly site workers. If they lose their current job, it will be difficult for them to get another job. This is also supported by the qualitative data of the HR Officer, which confirms that constant retrenchment due to economic instability and restructuring of the company has aggravated worker stress since they fear job loss. This aligns with prior studies that indicated that job insecurity damages employees' confidence and performance capacity, resulting in work-related stress, and increased risk of near misses and accidents (Abbe, 2011).

There was a strong agreement that home and work-related stress interfered with job performance, with a mean score of 4.16 (SD 0.934). This implies that a conflict between work and family obligations may arise from high levels of pressure associated with the workplace, affecting an individual's personal life or vice versa. This was made clear by the Site Supervisor's remark that poor pay affects family necessities (such as school tuition). The finding is well supported by research on the work-family interface, which shows that work-family conflict is a major cause of stress for workers, especially in industries with high workload like construction companies (Poms et, al 2016). The employees may become more stressed and strained because of conflicting work and home responsibilities, which may then exacerbate psychological suffering.

The employees in Exodus Construction Company strongly agreed that they work under dangerous conditions that bring about significant occupational stress, with a mean score of 4.160. The findings are consistent with a study that indicates that unsanitary conditions, such as dust, and loud noises, are common in construction work environments. Additionally, workers may not have access to sufficient amenities, such as restrooms, and catering, which provide privacy in open field conditions (European Agency for Safety, Health at Work, 2024). The transitional

model states that stress caused by adverse environmental conditions and high task demands would exhaust the energy of an individual, endangering the well-being of the individual (Ramos et al. 2014). The workers work in hazardous settings, especially in developing countries, due to lax implementation of safety laws, which raises the risk of accidents and stress levels.

The findings indicate that the workers at Exodus Construction Company experience occupational stress from working long hours at a mean rate of 2.840. The qualitative comment from the SHE Officer is significant to a study it demonstrates how long working hours make the employee exhausted, and negatively affect mental health. This is an excellent illustration of how job demands and instability can propel workers to develop stressful working patterns. Long working hours are a recognized stressor, resulting in exhaustion, reduced recovery time, and increased danger of mistakes and accidents. This aligns with research showing that workers on the construction site worked longer hours, and were more likely to burn out than those who work in the head office (Lingard et al, 2014). The supervisor's remarks about unpaid overtime worsen this by raising questions of exploitation and unfair labour practices, two major stressors. The overwork hours negatively affect the productivity of employees by interfering with their physical and psychological well-being. According to a UK employee survey of commitment and overall performance, most workers were dissatisfied with the existing workplace culture that forced them to work excessively long hours and tight deadlines (Enhassi et al, 2015).

Exodus Construction workers have a low salary rating of 2.060, indicating that they do not earn significant amounts of money. This, coupled with the Site Supervisor's additional statement about receiving less pay in the past four months, indicates that financial issues are a serious concern for employees, and it will be difficult to meet their family's needs. Poor salary and financial pressure have been repeatedly linked with higher stress, reduced well-being, and a demotivating influence on performance. In developing countries, work stress is caused by informal working arrangements, weak enforcement of labour regulations, and inaccessibility of labour protections. For example, Asia and African workers are frequently sacked without compensation, leading to financial problems and job insecurity (Ibem et al., 2011)

5.4 Impacts of occupational stress on workers' health, safety, and overall job performance.

A majority of the workers at Exodus Construction Company indicated that they felt tired because of work stress, with a 1.16 mean score (SD 0.370). This aligns with studies that stated that chronic stress can harm thinking capacity and predispose an individual to accidents and illness. Long working hours and stressful work schedules can lead to sleep abnormalities and chronic fatigue (Bowen et al, 2013).

Apart from that, the mental health problems are rated on average at 1.38(SD 0.490). Likewise, the majority of workers reported that they have experienced psychological problems like depression or anxiety due to stress at work. Serious physical and mental health conditions are caused by continuous stress while working in the construction sector. It has been established through research that work stress is a serious cause of mental health illness, and construction workers experience anxiety and depression (Wijesooriya, 2021).

The relationship between occupational stress score and frequency of accident occurrence had a positive factor of $r = 0.589$ and a significance of $p = 0.000$. This is a statistically strong positive correlation, indicating that as occupational stress increases due to work demands and unfavourable working conditions, the frequency of accident occurrence also becomes higher. The observation by the SHE officer that workers might be working while under alcoholic or drug-induced influence as a maladaptive coping mechanism for stress points to a risky pipeline through which stress can undermine safety. This is consistent with a wealth of research that indicates stress can impair mental abilities, including focus, attention, and judgement, raising the risk of human mistakes, and accidents (Cooper, 2005). In the construction sector, work-related accidents and occupational disorders are also linked to occupational stress (Leung et al., 2021). The employees who experience occupational stress are mentally unfit to work, which frequently leads to accidents because they are careless or distracted while doing work. Therefore, if occupational stress is not identified and appropriate steps are not taken to support the impacted workers, there is typically a rise in workplace accidents, which affects the workers' safety, health, and overall job performance.

The data revealed a positive relationship between occupational stress levels and the frequency of absenteeism, association coefficient $r = 0.358$ and a significance of 0.011, showing a high level of positive correlation. This suggests, the greater the stress levels, the higher the stress-related absences are among workers at Exodus Construction Company. This also means that work stress leads to excess organizational costs in terms of absenteeism, medical expenses when workers get injured or ill. Therefore, due to decreased worker performance, stress can cause heightened absenteeism, greater turnover, and diminishing productivity in the organization (Bowen et al, 2014).

Additionally, results show that occupational stress levels and workers' total job performance are negatively correlated, with an association of $r = -0.349$, and a significance level of $p = 0.013$. This suggests that stressed employees perform worse at work. Stress at work can affect motivation, focus, and output, which can lead to subpar work. These findings are in line with a study conducted on Spanish employees that discovered a significant inverse relationship between work performance and work stress (Ramos et al, 2014).

Thus, stress at work demotivates employees' engagement and job happiness, which influences their performance. Another study observed the impact of job stress on employees' performance and proposed that occupational stress had a negative effect on a worker's well-being, safety, and general job performance (Zafar et al., 2015).

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the major findings of the study of occupational stress among employees of Exodus Construction Company, and offers practical suggestions for mitigating the noted problems.

6.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that workers at Exodus Construction Company experience high levels of occupational stress. The stress results from a combination of factors, which include excessive workloads, poor supervisory relationships, hazardous working conditions, and job insecurity. These stressors have a negative effect on employees' health, manifesting as mental illness, fatigue, and a negative effect on safety and job performance.

6.3 Recommendations

Workload and Resource Management.

- Conduct a proper audit of the current workload allocation to ensure that tasks are assigned realistically and equitably.
- Recruit additional employees and optimize the deployment of the existing workforce to match project demands and prevent staff from being overburdened.

Enhance safety precautions, training, and implementation of the substance abuse program.

- Provide regular, thorough, and mandatory safety training of all employees, and conduct rigorous enforcement of safety rules.
- Implement a comprehensive substance abuse policy that includes the investment in functional breathalysers, access to confidential employee assistance programmes (EAPs) for substance abuse issues, and engaging in awareness campaigns on the risks of working under the influence of alcohol.

Training for Project Management Supervisors

- Train all supervisors and managers in effective communication, conflict management, and compassionate leadership skills.
- Educate supervisors on how to provide constructive feedback and backing to their teams to foster a positive work environment.

The employee support and well-being.

- Enact a confidential Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) to provide help to employees with personal, financial issues, and mental illnesses.
- Revisit and amend the overtime policies to make them transparent, equitable, and free from exploitative practices.

- Promote a work culture that encourages employees to take their due time off and respects people's time to prevent burnout

Workers' Compensation and Job Security for workers at Exodus Construction Company.

- Carry out a comprehensive review of the organization's compensation and pay system to make compensation fair and competitive.
- Pay all wages, and overtime wages regularly to prevent financial difficulties at work.
- Enhancing open communication to employees regarding the plans, and growth of the organization is required to eliminate fear associated with employment insecurity.

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APPENDIX 1

Sample size calculation for the Questionnaire.

As indicated below, Slovin's Statistical formula was used to determine the sample size (Adhikari, 2021). The formula is expressed as $n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$

Whereas:

- n = vital sample size
- N = total population (400)
- e = margin error 10% (0.1)

Sample size calculation

$$n = \frac{400}{1 + 400(0.1)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{400}{1 + 400 (0.01)}$$

$$n = \frac{400}{1 + 4}$$

$$n = \frac{400}{5}$$

$$n = 80$$

Therefore, using Slovin's formula, a study of 400 workers at Exodus Construction Company requires size of 80 participants.

APPENDIX 2

Research Questionnaire

Dear Participant.

I'm Evaristo Manyadze, part 4 student at Bindura University of Science Education. As part of my study, titled 'An assessment of occupational stress, and its impacts on health, safety, and overall job performance among construction workers: case Exodus Construction Company.

I appreciate your effort to complete the following form. The goals of the study is to assess occupational stress levels, identify workplace stressors, and determine the effects on construction workers. Your response remains anonymous and is only for academic purposes. The survey questionnaire can take 20-25 minutes to complete, and it consists of both multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions.

Your participation is highly valued.

Yours Sincerely

Manyadze Evaristo

(0713165885/ evaristomanyadze27@gmail.com)

Instructions

- Please answer each question carefully and select the response that best represents your answer.
- Tick () on the appropriate box or provide the necessary information where required.

Section A: Demographic information

1. Age Group

- ☐ 18- 25 years.
- ☐ 26- 35 years.
- ☐ 36 – 45 years.
- ☐ 46 – 55 years.
- ☐ 56 years and above.

2. Gender:

- ☐ female
- ☐ male

3. Marital Status:

- ☐ Single

- ☐ Married
 - ☐ Divorced
 - ☐ Widowed
4. What's your salary range?
- ☐ Below 200
 - ☐ \$200 - \$350
 - ☐ \$350 - \$500
 - ☐ \$500 - \$750
 - ☐ Above \$750
5. Job role:
- ☐ Site worker
 - ☐ Site supervisor
 - ☐ Machine operator
 - ☐ SHE Officer
 - ☐ Engineer
 - ☐ Administration staff
6. Construction experience:
- ☐ < 1 year
 - ☐ 1 – 5 years
 - ☐ 6 – 10 years
 - ☐ 11 – 15 years
 - ☐ More than 15 years
-

Section B: Occupational Stress Assessment

(Based on the Perceived Stress Scale, PSS)

Guidelines: In the last four months, kindly rate the frequency you have encountered on the following circumstances.

Question	Response				
	1 Never	2 Rarely	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Very often
7. Do you feel overwhelmed by your workload?					
8. Have you ever been unable to control an important stressor in your job?					
9. Did you feel nervous or stressed due to work-related responsibilities?					
10. Do you feel under pressure to meet unrealistic work deadlines					
11. Do you experience difficulties sleeping due to job-related stress?					
12. Are you working in unsafe conditions at your workplace?					
13. Do you feel that stress at home interferes with your job pressure?					
14. Do you have trouble telling your superiors; how you feel about the way, things are at work?					

Section C: Work-related factors

Instruction: Put a tick/ cross against the number corresponding to your response.

Question	Response				
	1 Totally Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutrally	4 Agree	5 Completely Agree
15. Do experience stress due to a heavy workload?					
16. Do you feel that a lack of proper training makes it difficult to perform your job effectively?					
17. Do you feel stressed due to issues with supervisors or management?					
18. Do you feel secure with your job?					
19. Do you feel that the condition of tools and machinery adds to stress levels?					
20. Did the organisation provide adequate personal protective clothing equipment for your job?					

21. What is your weekly work schedule?

- ☐ Less than 30 hours
- ☐ 30 – 40 hours
- ☐ 41 - 50 hours
- ☐ More than 50 hours

Section D: Health-related questions

Question	Response	
	Yes	No
22. Do you feel fatigued due to stress at work?		
23. Has work-related stress caused you to suffer from mental health conditions like anxiety or depression?		
24. Does work-related stress affect your overall health and well-being?		
25. Do you feel that your employer takes the health concerns of employees seriously?		

Section E: Safety concerns

26. Have you ever been involved in a workplace accident?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

27. If so what is the frequency of accidents at work?

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Rarely

Section F: Job performance and satisfaction.

28. How would you rate your job performance?

- ☐ Outstanding
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Below average
- ☐ Poor

29. Have you ever been passed over for a promotion due to stress-related performance issues?

☐ Yes

☐ No

30. What is your level of job satisfaction?

☐ Extremely pleased

☐ Pleased

☐ Neutral

☐ Unsatisfied

☐ Very Dissatisfied

31. Have you ever taken off because of stress at work ?

☐ Yes

☐ No

32. What is the average number of workdays lost due to stress-related absenteeism?

☐ 1 – 3 days per month.

☐ 4 - 6 days per month

☐ More than 6 days per month

☐ Never

APPENDIX 3

Interviews guide

Im Manyadze Evaristo, part 4 student conducting my research, which seeks to improve your knowledge of sources of work stress, job performance, and workplace safety. Your answers during this interview are used exclusively for scholarly purposes. Kindly feel free to be as candidate and open-minded as you can when answering the questions, I will ask for about 15 - 20 minutes.

Shall we start?

Demographic

Age:

Marital position:

Work experience:

Qualified role:

Department A: Open-ended interview questions for human resource manager

1. What programs are in place to help employees suffering from high work-related stress?
2. What is the link between stress levels and absenteeism or staff turnover?
3. Are there any stress management training programs for employees and supervisors?
4. Does the company provide an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or other alternatives for mental health support?
5. What obstacle does HR encounter when attempting to put stress management techniques into practice?

Department B: site supervisors

1. What is the most difficult part of your job as the site supervisor?
 2. How do you think workplace stress affects the construction workers' performance and efficiency?
 3. How often do safety violations or accidents occur at your workplace due to stress?
 4. What are the leading causes of occupational stress among on-site workers?
 5. How do you deal with stress in your role as a Site supervisor?
 6. Does the company have any support processes or structure to assist supervisors and employees in dealing with occupational stress?
 7. What advice do you think the company can give to effectively reduce workers' stress?
-

Department C: Safety, Health, and Environmental Management

1. What are the causes of work-related stress on this company?
 2. How often are incidents, injuries, and accidents related to stress at work?
 3. What are the most common health problems on weekly or monthly reports reviewed among workers?
 4. What measures does the company have in place to mitigate the workers from occupational stress?
 5. Do the workplaces have any wellness programs designed specifically to reduce occupational stress and mental health issues?
-

Department D: Officer in charge of occupational machinery and equipment [How often do machine operators report being anxious or exhausted while on duty?](#)

1. Have you observed any changes in machine operator performance that you think are occupational stress-related?
 2. Does occupational stress enhance the risk of mistakes or accidents using heavy machinery?
 3. What are the most prevalent stressors for machine operators on this construction site?
 4. How does the management team assist the machine operators in controlling their workload?
-

Department E: Site worker leaders

1. What aspects of your work cause occupational stress?
2. How does stress affect the ability to do tasks safely and efficiently?
3. How often do you have a lot of stress at work? What physical or mental symptoms do you experience?
4. How often does stress at work cause you to make mistakes or contribute to an accident in your workplace?
5. Are you comfortable to discuss stress- related issues with the Human Resource Manager or Site Supervisor?
6. What are the coping mechanisms you think are effective to avoid or minimize occupational stress at work?

APPENDIX 4: RESEARCH PERMISSION LETTER

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE



Bag 1020

BINDURA, Zimbabwe

Tel: 263 - 71 - 6505

Cell :0778371588

Email : vamugure@gmail.com

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

18 October 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH PROJECT

PROJECT TITLE: *ASSESSMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND IMPACTS ON HEALTH, SAFETY, AND PERFORMANCE AMONG CONSTRUCTION WORKERS. A CASE STUDY OF EXODUS CONSTRUCTION COMPANY, ZIMBABWE.*

ACADEMIC SUPERVISORS: DR. MABHUNGU

This letter serves to inform you that **MANYADZE EVARISTO**, Registration Number **(B210215B)** is a fourth year student at Bindura University of Science Education, in the Department of Environmental Science. During his fourth year of study he is supposed to do a research project in his area of specialisation.

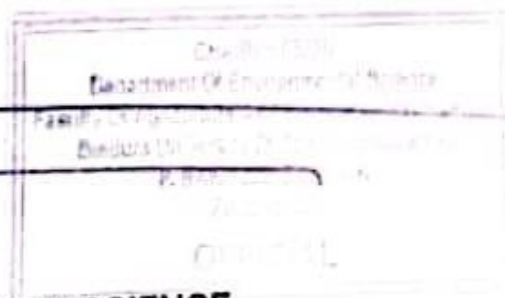
Please assist in any possible way. Data collected will be used for academic purposes only and will not be published without your prior consent.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours faithfully.


Mr T. Nyamu gure

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

A handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to the recipient or a witness.

