

Workplace stress can create feelings of loneliness, uncertainty, grief, and fear. Increased stress at work can lead to mental health challenges that can be harmful to our health. The type of stress we experience can vary from person to person due to many different factors. Stress in the workplace can come from concerns about job security, a lack of access to resources, having to learn and take on new responsibilities, and dealing with confrontation from customers, patients, co-workers, or supervisors. These causes can affect overall performance, productivity, and how they engage with others at work and at home in our personal lives. More than 80% of US workers have reported experiencing workplace stress, and more than 50% of them believe their stress related to work impacts their life at home. (The American Institute of Stress, 2021). This essay discusses the causes and effects of workplace stress in the United States today. It then describes how workplaces can make a difference in helping employees manage stress and why employers need to care more about this issue.

One cause of stress in the workplace for U.S. workers comes from concerns about job security. As Artificial Intelligence has evolved, worries about which jobs are affected, potential layoffs, or reduced hours raise many fears and questions about job security. In addition, having a lack of resources, including access to tools, equipment, and training needed to perform your work correctly and safely, can also cause unnecessary stress in the workplace. Workers taking on new responsibilities for which they are not trained or paid more can create more pressure and stress. Pressure to perform well without clear instructions can lead to workplace confrontations between co-workers, supervisors, and clients. Research from the American Psychological Association suggests that 50% of employees find that a lack of paid time off or sick leave hurts stress levels at work. (American Psychological Association, 2018)

The selected examples above are some of the leading causes of stress in the workplace for U.S workers. Not only can these workplace stressors affect employees' mental health, but they can also lead to an increased risk of cardiovascular diseases. Increased workloads and pressure to perform well can lead to a higher risk of heart attacks and hypertension (The American Institute of Stress, 2023). The effect of stress in the workplace can hurt job performance and growth, which could eventually lead to burnout. Unnecessary stress in the workplace can cost businesses billions of dollars in absenteeism, decreased productivity, high employee turnover, and healthcare costs (Dr. Paul Rosch, 2024). Workers, managers, and business owners can all take steps to address their own workplace stress and develop a safe and empathetic workplace environment (The American Institute of Stress, 2023).

Empathetic management practices can encourage communication and compassion amongst teams, creating a safe environment for employees to be transparent about their mental health and stress levels. This positive environment can reduce stress and prevent burnout (The American Institute of Stress, 2023). Employers can combat workplace stress in many ways, such as allowing time for healthy stress management practices and taking short breaks throughout the workday to destress. Employers can also reduce stress in the workplace by shortening long work hours, offering incentives, and allowing flexibility in their employees' schedules to allow time for their personal lives.

Other ways to optimize employees' well-being include encouraging employees to take breaks, establishing healthy boundaries, and creating a fun work environment. Employees should feel encouraged to speak up about concerns without fear of retaliation. Another way to cope with workplace stress is by not letting your PTO days go to waste. Taking the time to recharge can be an effective way to unwind and relax outside of work. Developing healthy ways to cope with stress outside of work is essential. Reducing workplace stress benefits everyone in the organization. It can improve morale, lead to an increase in productivity, and improve physical health. These benefits can reduce employee turnover; the World Health Organization estimates that for every U.S. dollar employers spend treating common mental health issues, they receive a \$4 return in improved health and productivity (WHO, 2024).

Overall, if workplace stress goes unmanaged, it can harm an organization and its employees. If not managed effectively, it can cost the organization billions, cause mental health challenges, and even lead to a decline in physical health for employees. The type of stress employees experience varies from person to person. Noticing the signs early can help prevent burnout and reduce high employee turnover rates. Incorporating stress management practices into the workday shows employees that their mental and physical well-being matters. Encouraging open communication and demonstrating flexibility and empathy leads to job security, improved performance, productivity, and happiness at home. Suppose employers choose not to do anything to manage workplace stress. In that case, it will put employees at risk for more accidents and injuries, costing the organization and putting them at risk for lawsuits.

## References

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