

**International Journal on Multidisciplinary and Applied Research**<https://doi.org/10.63236/ijmar.1.1.1>

Date received: 11/03/25; revised: 17/04/25; accepted: 25/05/25; published:  
01/06/25

**Psychological and Workplace Stress: Basis for Company-Based Mental Health Program****Roy C. Talavera**

University of Batangas

Batangas City, Philippines

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9428-4651>**Corresponding author:** Roy C. Talavera, [roy.talavera@ub.edu.ph](mailto:roy.talavera@ub.edu.ph)**Abstract**

In today's fast-paced society, both mental and physical health are increasingly acknowledged as essential to overall well-being. Socioeconomic pressures and cultural expectations often intensify challenges such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. In the workplace, high performance demands and intense competition contribute significantly to employee stress and psychological distress. Recognizing the impact of mental health on productivity, this study examined the correlation between psychological distress and workplace stress to promote a culture of mental wellness. Employing a quantitative, descriptive-correlational, and inferential design, data were gathered through online surveys using validated tools – the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10) and the Workplace Stress Scale (WSS). Results indicated that respondents generally experienced moderate psychological distress, with positive elements noted in their work environment, such as recognition and opportunities to apply their skills. Most fell under the “mild disorder” category, with no significant differences found across demographic profiles. However, a significant relationship emerged between psychological distress and workplace stress. These findings highlight the importance of developing targeted interventions, such as Project KASAMA – a company-based mental health program designed to reduce stress and enhance overall well-being. By fostering such initiatives, organizations can alleviate psychological strain and create a more supportive, productive workplace culture.

**Keywords:** mental health, psychological distress, workplace stress.**1. Introduction**

In a competitive world, prioritizing mental health has become as critical as maintaining physical well-being. Mental health is now widely recognized as a cornerstone of overall well-being, profoundly influencing personal and professional success (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023). The intricate link between



emotional states and holistic functioning is well documented, with poor mental health affecting an individual's capacity to thrive in diverse life domains (Hamouche, 2020).

In the Philippines, the focus on mental health has grown significantly over the past decade, driven by a shift in cultural attitudes and heightened awareness of mental health's importance. Historically, mental health concerns were stigmatized and often misunderstood, leading to inadequate support systems. However, recent efforts from government agencies, advocacy groups, and mental health professionals have aimed to increase awareness, reduce stigma, and improve access to mental health services. Despite these strides, mental health challenges remain prevalent, with common issues including depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and schizophrenia. Socioeconomic disparities, rapid urbanization, and cultural beliefs further compound these challenges, creating barriers to effective mental health care.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated mental health issues worldwide, including in the Philippines, with individuals across all age groups experiencing heightened anxiety, stress, and psychological distress (Sharma et al., 2023). In workplace settings, the pandemic intensified pre-existing stressors, with job insecurity, blurred work-life boundaries, and increased workloads contributing to a surge in psychological distress (Miyanda et al., 2024). Research highlights that workplace stress, when unaddressed, not only diminishes employee well-being but also adversely impacts organizational productivity and success (Petersen et al., 2022).

The current research study aimed to explore the relationship between psychological distress, workplace stress, and the necessity of implementing structured mental health initiatives within organizations. The researcher's personal experience as a full-time faculty member navigating workplace stressor underscores the relevance of this study. By examining these dynamics, the researcher hopes to generate insights that benefit not only his well-being but also support mental health professionals, educators, and employees facing similar challenges. Ultimately, the study seeks to advocate for workplace cultures that prioritize mental resilience and holistic wellness.

Psychological distress is a significant indicator of mental health, often encompassing emotional suffering, symptoms of depression and anxiety, and physical manifestations such as insomnia (Hamouche, 2023). Depression, marked by persistent sadness and impaired daily functioning, can escalate into severe conditions such as major depression, posing risks such as suicide (WHO, 2023). Work-related distress, characterized by imbalances between job demands and individual capabilities, presents substantial physical and emotional hazards (Miyanda et al., 2024). During the pandemic, studies revealed that factors such as interpersonal relationships, role ambiguity, and management changes negatively impacted job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance (Petersen et al., 2022).

Workplace stress arises from a blend of job-related and personal life pressures, manifesting through various emotional, physical, and behavioral symptoms (Sharma et al., 2023). High workloads, interpersonal conflicts, and organizational changes contribute to stress, leading to reduced job satisfaction, increased absenteeism, and



higher turnover rates (Meunier et al., 2022). The WHO (2023) defines stress as a mental state triggered by challenging situations, emphasizing its dual nature as both eustress (positive) and distress (negative) (Miyanda et al., 2024). Effective management strategies, including support systems and clear communication, are vital in mitigating stress and fostering a healthier work environment (Bao et al., 2019).

Although prior studies have examined psychological distress and general work-related stress, there is a clear gap in exploring their combined impact within Filipino organizational settings, particularly in academic institutions. Few studies have addressed how structured, culturally responsive mental health programs can mitigate these issues in the Philippine context. This study addresses this gap by investigating the relationship between psychological distress and workplace stress, informed by the researcher's personal experiences as a full-time faculty member. It also explores the potential of interventions in promoting holistic wellness. By grounding the research in both empirical evidence and lived experience, this study aims to provide practical, contextually relevant insights for educators, mental health professionals, and organizational leaders seeking to foster mentally resilient workplaces.

## **2. Method**

### **Participants**

The study involved employees from various institutions, including both academic and non-academic personnel, representing diverse job classifications such as permanent, contractual, temporary, and contract of service/job order positions. Both male and female participants were included, with ages ranging from 25 to 65 years old. To ensure balanced representation across employment types and demographics, quota sampling was employed. This non-probability sampling technique enabled the intentional selection of 95 participants, ensuring that specific subgroups—based on job status and gender—were proportionally represented in the study. This method was chosen to reflect the diversity of the workforce while aligning with the study's objective of understanding the relationship between psychological distress and workplace stress across varied employment contexts.

### **Design**

The study employed a quantitative research approach to examine the relationship between psychological distress and workplace stress objectively. As defined by Creswell (2013), quantitative research involves testing objective theories by analyzing the relationships among measurable variables, often using structured instruments and statistical techniques. Specifically, a descriptive-correlational research design was utilized to assess the extent and nature of the relationship between the two variables among participants. This design was appropriate for identifying patterns and associations without manipulating any variables. Quantitative data were gathered using adopted and validated instruments—the K10 and the WSS. These tools were administered through Google Forms, enabling efficient and standardized data collection from the selected participants.



## Materials

To assess psychological distress and workplace stress, two well-established measurement tools were adopted: the K10 and the WSS, developed by the Marlin company in collaboration with the American Institute of Stress. The K10 is a widely used screening tool consisting of 10 items that measure emotional states associated with anxiety and depression over the past four weeks. Each item is rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “None of the time” to “All of the time.” This instrument provides a global measure of psychological distress and is valued for its brevity, reliability, and effectiveness in identifying varying levels of emotional strain. The WSS includes eight items designed to evaluate common sources of stress in organizational settings, such as workload, interpersonal relationships, role clarity, and work-life balance. Respondents rate each item on a five-point scale, from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always), reflecting the frequency and intensity of work-related stressors. As noted by Sharma et al. (2023), the scale offers a comprehensive framework for identifying specific stress triggers, which can guide the development of targeted interventions. Together, these tools provide reliable, validated measures to examine the relationship between psychological distress and workplace stress, contributing to a deeper understanding of employee well-being and informing strategies for promoting healthier work environments.

## Procedure

The necessary documents were prepared for data gathering. Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were observed and informed consent was provided for each participant before they answered the questionnaire on the adopted two distinct measurement tools to assess psychological distress and workplace stress. These were the K10 and the WSS developed by the Marlin company in North Haven, CT, in collaboration with the American Institute of Stress in Yonkers, NY. After gathering all the required data, it was computed and analyzed to determine the outcome and answer the research objectives.

In this study, a quantitative method of data analysis was used. Pearson R was carried out to measure and determine the relationship between the research variables in the study to assess the psychological distress and workplace stress levels among individuals who are currently working.

## 3. Results

This study investigated the relationship between the two variables, psychological distress and workplace stress.

*Table 1 - Profile of the respondents according to gender*

Sex	Respondents	Percentage
Female	65	68.42%
Male	30	31.58%
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>100.00%</b>



Table 1 presents the frequency distribution of respondents based on gender. The majority of the participants were female, comprising 65 individuals or 68.42% of the total sample, while 30 participants, or 31.58%, were male. Interestingly, despite the lower number of male respondents, previous research suggests that men may be more susceptible to workplace distress. According to Miyanda et al. (2024), this increased vulnerability among men may be linked to their higher representation in high-risk and high-pressure job roles, which tend to expose them to greater occupational stressors.

**Table 2 - Profile of the respondents according to civil status**

Civil Status	Respondents	Percentage
Single	59	61.50%
Married	34	36.40%
Separated	2	2.10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Table 2 presents the frequency distribution of respondents based on civil status. The majority of participants were single, comprising 59 individuals or 61.50% of the total sample. This was followed by married respondents, who accounted for 34 individuals or 36.40%. Meanwhile, only two participants, representing 2.10% of the total, identified as separated, making them the least represented group. According to Miyanda et al. (2024), married individuals are more susceptible to experiencing work-related distress compared to their unmarried counterparts, possibly owing to the added responsibilities and demands associated with balancing professional and familial obligations.

**Table 3 - Profile of the respondents according to nature of employment**

Nature of Employment	Respondents	Percentage
Contract of service/Job order	4	4.21%
Contractual	7	7.37%
Permanent	77	81.05%
Temporary	7	7.37%
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Table 3 presents the frequency distribution of respondents based on the nature of employment. The majority of participants held permanent positions, accounting for 77 individuals or 81.05% of the total sample. Contractual and temporary employees followed, each with 7 respondents or 7.37%. The least represented group consisted of those employed under contract of service or job order arrangements, with only four participants or 4.21%. According to Miyanda et al. (2024), employment type can significantly influence levels of work-related distress. Specifically, individuals in non-managerial roles or with lower educational attainment are more prone to experiencing higher levels of workplace stress. Additionally, health-related concerns further exacerbate this distress by negatively impacting work performance and overall well-being. These findings suggest that employment security, role designation, and



personal health conditions are critical factors that contribute to the experience of work-related stress.

**Table 4 - Level of workplace stress**

Statements	Average Sum
Conditions at work are unpleasant or sometimes even unsafe	2
I feel that my job is negatively affecting my physical or emotional well-being.	2
I have too much work to do and/or too many unreasonable deadlines.	3
I find it difficult to express my opinions or feelings about my job conditions to my superiors.	2
I feel that job pressures interfere with my family or personal life.	2
I have adequate control over or input in my work duties.	3
I receive appropriate recognition or rewards for good performance.	3
I am able to utilize my skills and talents to the fullest extent at work.	4
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Cumulative Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Moderate stress</b>

1-1.80 for "Never", 1.81-2.60 for "Rarely", 2.61-3.40 for "Sometimes", 3.41-4.20 for "Often", and 4.21-5 for "Very often"

Total score 16 to 20: Fairly low; Total score 21-25: Moderate stress; Total score 26-30: Severe;

Total score 31- 40: Stress level is potentially dangerous.

Table 4 presents the level of workplace stress based on participants' responses to various statements reflecting their perceptions of stressors in the work environment. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating stronger agreement with stress-inducing factors. The average sum reflects the mean score for each item across all respondents, while the composite mean, calculated at 21, represents the overall average for all items combined, suggesting a general perception of moderate workplace stress. The cumulative standard deviation further indicates moderate variability in responses, highlighting that while most participants share similar stress perceptions, the intensity of these experiences varies among individuals.

Upon examining specific items, lower average scores (2) were observed for statements such as feeling that work conditions are unpleasant or unsafe, sensing a negative impact of work on physical or emotional well-being, and difficulty in expressing opinions or feelings to superiors. In contrast, higher average scores (3-4) were recorded for items such as job pressure interfering with family or personal life, having control over or input in one's duties, receiving recognition for performance, and the ability to use one's skills effectively. These findings suggest a balanced perception: while stressors exist, certain positive aspects of the work environment help buffer their effects.



As Timotius and Octavius (2022) note, workplace stress can significantly disrupt interpersonal relationships and increase vulnerability to illness, with long-term exposure posing serious health risks. Likewise, Miyanda et al. (2024) emphasize that supportive work-family dynamics and sufficient sleep act as protective factors, while work-family conflict and sleep deprivation significantly heighten the risk of distress. These insights underscore the urgent need for targeted stress management interventions that promote well-being and organizational health.

**Table 5 - Level of psychological distress**

Statements	Average Sum
In the past 4 weeks, about how often did you feel worn out for no good reason?	3
In the past 4 weeks, about how often did you feel nervous?	2
In the past 4 weeks, about how often did you feel so nervous that nothing could calm you down?	2
In the past 4 weeks, about how often did you feel hopeless?	2
In the past 4 weeks, about how often did you feel restless or fidgety?	2
In the past 4 weeks, about how often did you feel so restless you could not sit still?	2
In the past 4 weeks, about how often did you feel depressed?	2
In the past 4 weeks, about how often did you feel that everything was an effort?	3
In the past 4 weeks, about how often did you feel so sad that nothing could cheer you up?	2
In the past 4 weeks, about how often did you feel worthless?	2
<b>Total Sum</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>	<b>Likely to have a mild disorder</b>

1-1.80 "None of the time", 1.81-2.60 "A little of the time", 2.61-3.40 "Some of the time", 3.41-4.20 "Most of the time", and 4.21-5 "All of the time".

10 - 19 Likely to be well; 20 - 24 Likely to have a mild disorder; 25 - 29 Likely to have a moderate disorder;

30 - 50 Likely to have a severe disorder.

Table 5 presents the assessment of the level of psychological distress based on participants' responses to statements reflecting their emotional and psychological state over the past four weeks. Each item was rated on a five-point scale, where higher scores indicated more frequent experiences of distress. The average sum column reflects the mean score per statement, while the total sum, averaging 22, indicates a moderate level of psychological distress across participants. According to the verbal



interpretation, this score falls within the range described as “likely to have a mild disorder.”

Upon closer examination, statements related to feeling tired without a clear reason, experiencing restlessness or fidgetiness, and perceiving that everything requires effort received relatively higher average scores (3), suggesting these symptoms were more frequently reported. Conversely, feelings of nervousness, hopelessness, depression, and worthlessness yielded lower average scores (2), indicating less frequent occurrences.

While the results point to a general state of mild psychological distress, they highlight the need for proactive mental health interventions tailored to this group. These findings are particularly important given the psychological vulnerability that may arise from the accumulation of life stressors, as emphasized by Ricci et al. (2024). They note that factors such as phobic anxiety, somatic symptoms, and emotional disturbances often co-occur, amplifying psychological strain. Additionally, Meunier et al. (2022) underscore the mediating role of psychological distress in the negative relationship between perceived stress and job performance, particularly in environments with insufficient health-promoting management. These insights collectively reinforce the value of early support measures to mitigate distress and enhance well-being and performance.

**Table 6 - Significant difference between gender and research variables**

		<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Workplace Stress</b>	Between groups	34.009	1	34.009	1.683	0.198
	Within groups	1879.528	93	20.210		
	Total	1913.537	94			
<b>Psychological Distress</b>	Between groups	6.355	1	6.355	0.087	0.769
	Within groups	6815.582	93	73.286		
	Total	6821.937	94			

Table 6 presents the statistical analysis comparing workplace stress and psychological distress between male and female participants. Key indicators such as the sum of squares, degrees of freedom (df), mean square, F-statistic, and significance level (Sig.) are reported for both variables. For workplace stress, the between-group sum of squares is 34.009, with a corresponding mean square of 34.009 and an F-statistic of 1.683. The p-value of 0.198 exceeds the standard significance threshold of 0.05, indicating that the difference in workplace stress levels between genders is not statistically significant and is likely due to random variation rather than gender-based differences. Similarly, results for psychological distress show a between-group sum of squares of 6.355, a mean square of 6.355, and an F-statistic of 0.087, with a p-value of



0.769. This further confirms that there is no significant difference between male and female participants regarding psychological distress.

These findings suggest that both workplace stress and psychological distress are experienced similarly across genders in the study population. The absence of statistically significant differences emphasizes the importance of addressing these mental health challenges through inclusive strategies that focus on shared stressors rather than gender-specific factors. Supporting this conclusion, Soltan et al. (2020) also reported no significant differences between age and gender groups in terms of psychological variables, reinforcing the relevance of universal mental health interventions in diverse workplace settings.

*Table 7 - Significant difference between civil status and research variables*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Workplace Stress</b>	Between groups	25.511	2	12.756	0.622	0.539
	Within groups	1888.025	92	20.522		
	Total	1913.537	94			
<b>Psychological Distress</b>	Between groups	90.348	2	45.174	0.617	0.542
	Within groups	6731.589	92	73.169		
	Total	6821.937	94			

Table 7 presents the analysis of variance (ANOVA) results evaluating potential differences in workplace stress and psychological distress across different civil status groups. The table includes key statistical indicators such as the sum of squares, degrees of freedom (df), mean square, F-statistic, and significance level (Sig.).

For workplace stress, the between-groups sum of squares is 25.511 with 2 degrees of freedom, producing a mean square of 12.756. The computed F-statistic is 0.622, and the corresponding p-value is 0.539. Since the p-value exceeds the standard 0.05 significance level, the result indicates no statistically significant difference in workplace stress levels among respondents based on their civil status. This suggests that any observed variations are likely due to chance.

Similarly, for psychological distress, the between-groups sum of squares is 90.348 with 2 degrees of freedom, resulting in a mean square of 45.174. The F-statistic is 0.617, and the p-value is 0.542, which also indicates a non-significant difference. Thus, civil status does not appear to influence the level of psychological distress meaningfully as reported by participants in this study.

Overall, the findings indicate that civil status—whether single, married, or separated—does not significantly impact the respondents' experiences of workplace



stress or psychological distress. These results point to the need for further investigation into other demographic or contextual factors that may have a more substantial role in shaping employees' mental health outcomes.

This aligns with Timotius and Octavius's (2022) research, which highlights work-family conflict as a key stressor for employees, regardless of their civil status. His study found that the prioritization of professional obligations often leads to individuals' compromising their personal and family responsibilities, creating emotional strain and internal conflict. Thus, it may not be civil status alone, but the quality of work-life balance and role conflict that contribute more significantly to employee stress and psychological distress.

*Table 8 - Significant difference between nature of work and research variables*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Workplace Stress</b>	Between groups	99.514	3	33.171	1.664	0.180
	Within groups	1814.023	91	19.934		
	Total	1913.537	94			
<b>Psychological Distress</b>	Between groups	58.547	3	19.516	0.263	0.852
	Within groups	6763.390	91	74.323		
	Total	6821.937	94			

Table 8 presents the results of an analysis examining potential differences in workplace stress and psychological distress based on the nature of work, including categories such as permanent, contractual, temporary, and job order/contract of service. The table outlines key statistical indicators, including the sum of squares, degrees of freedom (df), mean square, F-statistic, and significance level (Sig.).

For workplace stress, the computed F-statistic is 1.664 with a corresponding p-value of 0.180, which exceeds the conventional significance threshold of 0.05. This result suggests that no statistically significant difference exists in workplace stress levels across different employment categories. The observed differences are likely attributable to random variation rather than any substantial effect stemming from the nature of employment. Similarly, for psychological distress, the analysis yields a non-significant p-value of 0.852 with a mean square of 19.516, indicating that there is no statistically significant difference in psychological distress among employees based on the nature of their work. Thus, the variations in distress levels are also presumed to result from chance rather than systematic differences between permanent, contractual, temporary, or job order staff.

These findings imply that the nature of employment alone does not significantly influence the levels of workplace stress or psychological distress in the study's sample.



population. However, this does not negate the presence of stressors in the work environment; rather, it suggests that these stressors may be more closely tied to other variables such as workload, support systems, or organizational culture.

Supporting this interpretation, Timotius and Octavius (2022) assert that extensive job responsibilities and the absence of teamwork significantly intensify stress levels in the workplace. Their study emphasized that in environments where employees are highly dedicated to their role, often working long hours and functioning independently, the burden of work can become overwhelming. Even in the absence of formal employment distinctions, workload intensity and lack of collaborative support can drive stress and distress among staff. Therefore, while no significant difference was detected based on employment type, the findings highlight the necessity of addressing structural and organizational contributors to workplace stress, such as isolation, overwork, and inadequate team dynamics, regardless of job classification.

**Table 9 - Significant relationship between workplace stress and psychological distress**

		<b>Workplace Stress</b>	<b>Psychological Distress</b>
<b>Workplace Stress</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.276**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.007
	N	95	95
<b>Psychological Distress</b>	Pearson Correlation	.276**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.007	
	N	95	95

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 9 presents the correlation analysis between workplace stress and psychological distress, revealing a statistically significant positive relationship between the two variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.276 indicates a moderate positive correlation, while the significance level of 0.007 ( $p < 0.01$ ) confirms that this association is unlikely to have occurred by chance. This means that as workplace stress increases, levels of psychological distress also tend to increase, while conversely, as stress in the workplace decreases, psychological distress tends to lessen as well. The results underscore the interconnectedness of stressors in the work environment and the emotional well-being of employees.

The findings emphasize the importance of addressing workplace stress, not only to improve organizational efficiency but also to safeguard mental health. Reducing workplace stressors may serve as a crucial intervention point for lowering psychological distress within the workforce. Supporting these findings, Souto et al. (2022) emphasize a dual approach to promoting employee well-being, namely strengthening individual resilience and addressing organizational stressors. Their research highlights that enhancing role clarity, granting more control over work



schedules, and reducing job insecurity are essential strategies in fostering a healthier, more psychologically supportive workplace environment.

Moreover, Timotius and Octavius (2022) reinforce this relationship by asserting that elevated workplace stress negatively impacts both interpersonal relationships at home and within professional hierarchies and physical health, as chronic stress activates harmful physiological responses. They argue that prolonged exposure to such "noxious stress" poses a threat not only to individual well-being but also to workplace productivity. As such, implementing proactive stress management interventions is vital to prevent long-term psychological and physical consequences.

### **Proposed psychological intervention for psychological distress and workplace stress – Mental Health Program**

As previously discussed, a clear link exists between experiencing stress at work and facing mental strain. This indicates that when individuals feel stressed in their jobs, it can impact their mental health. Therefore, if efforts are made to decrease stress levels in the workplace, it could potentially reduce mental strain among the individuals who participated in the study.

According to Xiang et al (2020), social support at work is a protective factor against workplace mental health issues. Developing and implementing mental health support and services are crucial for preventing adverse mental health outcomes. This highlighted that inadequate psychological support from employers poses a risk factor for poor mental health. The research indicates that mobilizing resources for emotional support can enhance resilience. To mitigate the potential negative impact of uncertainty on employees, managers should cultivate a supportive workplace environment. In this regard, social support programs should be developed through ongoing communication with employees. Employee assistance should also be provided, possibly through employee assistance programs offered to both managers and non-managers. While managers play a vital role in organizational recovery during crises, they are not immune to mental health problems and require support from their team members, as noted by Hamouche (2019). Hence, the researcher-made a proposed mental health program, known as the Project KASAMA, which aims to address the identified issues and findings.



*Figure 1 – The KASAMA Project*



The term "Kasama" originates from the Tagalog language, meaning "companion," "ally," or "one who is with you." Rooted in Filipino culture, *kasama* embodies the values of solidarity, mutual support, and collective well-being (Galang, 2016; Nadal, 2020). This project draws inspiration from this concept and is dedicated to fostering an inclusive and supportive community that honors each individual's uniqueness while promoting a sense of belonging and empowerment. It aims to cultivate an environment where every member can thrive—personally and professionally—through shared growth, compassion, and meaningful connections.

This project is designed to establish a strong support system among employees, centered around several key objectives. First, it aims to cultivate meaningful and supportive relationships by fostering a culture of encouragement, guidance, and mutual assistance throughout the employees' professional journeys. Second, the researcher seeks to empower employees by equipping them with essential tools, resources, and opportunities for holistic growth, promoting ambition, determination, and skill development to help them achieve their goals.

Third, recognizing the unique challenges individuals may encounter in their careers, the project is committed to identifying and addressing these obstacles through personalized support and targeted interventions that enhance their chances of success. Finally, the initiative aspires to help employees find purpose in their careers by aligning their passions with meaningful work. Through mentorship, career counseling, and exposure to real-world experiences, the project aims to guide individuals toward fulfilling vocations that resonate with their values and aspirations. The following three specific programs are covered by the KASAMA project as shown in Table 10.

**Table 10 – Programs covered by the KASAMA project**

	<b>Project Intervention</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
1.	<b>KASAMA Seminar - Psycho Education</b>	<p>The seminar has the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Provide adequate understanding of mental health and the effects of psychological distress and workplace stress.</li> <li>✓ Raise awareness about common mental health issues and their prevalence.</li> <li>✓ Educate employees about the importance of seeking help and reducing stigma.</li> </ul>
2.	<b>KASAMA Health Check Up</b>	<p>The counseling session aims to achieve the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Offer one-on-one counseling sessions led by trained mental health professionals.</li> <li>✓ Create a safe space for employees to express their feelings, concerns, and experiences.</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Focus on building resilience, coping skills, and self-esteem.</li> </ul>
3.	<b>KASAMA Annual Care - Retreat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Pursue emotional healing and nurturing healthy coping mechanisms, promoting self-awareness, stress management, and fostering peer support.</li> <li>✓ Empower employees by inviting speakers who have triumphed over comparable challenges to share their stories of resilience and achievement. These speakers serve as relatable role models, offering inspiration and guidance for employees to admire and learn from.</li> <li>✓ Set goals to encourage envisioning a brighter future, while promoting healthy coping mechanisms which discourage harmful behaviors.</li> </ul>

### 1. KASAMA Seminar

This seminar aims to provide psycho-education to the target employees and serve as to Launchpad for the project within the organization. It is essential to introduce mental health education and support to employees. Teaching mental health equips them with tools to manage stress and foster emotional well-being. Furthermore, it helps reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues by promoting empathy and open conversations. This psychological education enables the intervention of conditions like anxiety and depression, improving outcomes. It empowers employees with coping skills and resilience to navigate challenges and enhances professional performance. Additionally, it lowers the risk of risky behaviors, fosters supportive peer relationships, and equips them with lifelong skills for managing their mental health. In essence, it fosters well-being, reduces stigma, and prepares employees for a mentally healthy future.

Indeed, addressing mental health awareness for employees from psychological distress and workplace stress is a critical step in ensuring their well-being and success. By providing them with knowledge, resources, and a supportive environment, we can empower these employees to navigate the challenges they face and thrive professionally and personally. This foundational intervention aligns with international best practices, emphasizing the importance of mental health literacy in the workplace. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health education reduces stigma, improves early identification of psychological distress, and promotes help-seeking behavior (WHO, 2013). Countries such as Australia and Canada have implemented similar psychoeducational programs under the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) model, which significantly improved workplace mental health awareness and peer support systems (Kitchener & Jorm, 2006; Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, 2021). MHFA-trained employees reported greater confidence in providing support and a more inclusive workplace climate.



## 2. KASAMA Health Check Up

This is done quarterly. This check-up focuses on mental health and is facilitated by licensed counselors or psychologists. The confidentiality and trust inherent in counseling sessions engender a secure environment where employees can openly broach their concerns without apprehension of judgment or breaches of privacy. This trust-building process nurtures self-expression and personal growth. The counseling process to be followed during the counseling session is shown in Figure 2.



*Figure 2 – Steps in the counselling process*

Source: Hackney & Cormier, p.25 (2005)

The WHO (2019) advocates for routine mental health assessments as part of a comprehensive workplace health strategy. Furthermore, evidence from a longitudinal study in Finland (LaMontagne et al., 2014) found that periodic psychological evaluations helped reduce burnout, absenteeism, and presenteeism in high-stress industries. Confidential counseling provides a psychologically safe environment, fostering trust and openness. According to the Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA, 2020), workplaces that offer mental health check-ins and support see improved employee satisfaction and performance.

## 3. KASAMA Annual Care

This annual event is designed to allow participants to step back, recharge, and reflect. The retreat and recollection offer a tranquil setting for self-care, mindfulness, and personal growth, ensuring participants feel rejuvenated to tackle their personal and professional endeavors. Recollections or retreats hold significant importance. These experiences provide a temporary escape from the stress and turmoil often present at home, offering a tranquil environment for emotional recovery. Additionally, retreats encourage self-reflection, foster peer support, and promote mental well-being through



activities like mindfulness and stress management. Workshops at these events equip employees with essential life skills, such as communication and conflict resolution, empowering them to better navigate family challenges. Retreats offer a safe space for open discussions, the opportunity for fresh perspectives on family issues, and the chance to build resilience. Some retreats also explore spirituality and ethics, aiding employees in finding guidance and strength when facing moral dilemmas related to their family situations. Hence, these experiences contribute to the overall well-being of employees, granting them valuable tools to handle the complexities of their home environments.

This intervention is inspired by therapeutic retreat models practiced in Singapore, the UK, and the Philippines, which are grounded in holistic approaches to mental wellness. Retreats have been shown to reduce cortisol levels (a stress hormone) and enhance self-awareness, resilience, and interpersonal connection (Hyland et al., 2015). These events incorporate wellness workshops on stress reduction, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution – skills essential in both professional and personal domains. This aligns with the Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) model endorsed by the International Labour Organization (ILO), which promotes the integration of psychological support and personal development in organizational culture.

The programs mentioned above seek to address and alleviate psychological distress and workplace stress among employees. The programs comprise various components aimed at fostering a supportive work environment and enhancing mental well-being. The focus is on stress management, resilience building, and coping strategies, led by mental health professionals. Employee support groups provide a platform for open discussions and peer support, creating a sense of community. Mindfulness sessions, educational materials, and access to counseling services are introduced to equip employees with tools for managing mental health. The researcher also advocates for flexible work arrangements to reduce traditional work-related stressors. Mental health awareness campaigns, including success stories and expert insights, work to reduce stigma. A confidential feedback mechanism ensures ongoing evaluation and adaptation of the program. By launching this comprehensive initiative, the aim is to prioritize the collective well-being of employees, leading to increased job satisfaction and reduced psychological distress.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This section provides the following conclusions based on the research study's interpretation of findings: Firstly, the demographic profile of participants reflects a workforce that is largely composed of individuals in stable employment, with a considerable proportion identifying as female and single. This highlights the importance of considering diverse employee backgrounds when designing workplace wellness initiatives. Secondly, the study found that participants generally experience a moderate level of psychological distress. While workplace stressors are present, employees also identify positive workplace elements, such as acknowledgment for achievements and opportunities to apply their skills effectively, suggesting a dynamic interplay between stress and motivation. Thirdly, psychological distress among participants typically falls within a mild range. While signs of distress are present,



they are not at a level that indicates severe impairment, underscoring the importance of early intervention and ongoing support to prevent escalation.

In addition, the analysis revealed no statistically significant differences in psychological distress or workplace stress when examined across demographic variables. This suggests that these experiences may be broadly shared across various employee groups, reinforcing the need for universally accessible mental health interventions. The results show that there is a significant relationship between psychological distress and workplace stress. Furthermore, a significant positive relationship was found between psychological distress and workplace stress. This indicates that higher levels of stress in the work environment are associated with increased psychological strain, emphasizing the interconnectedness of organizational conditions and individual well-being. Finally, the findings support the potential benefits of developing organization-based mental health programs. Implementing comprehensive and inclusive support systems aimed at reducing workplace stress can contribute meaningfully to the psychological well-being of employees. Such programs should be proactive, culturally sensitive, and grounded in evidence-based practices to foster resilience, promote positive mental health, and sustain productivity across the workforce.

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### This paper may be cited as:

- Talavera, R. C. (2025). Psychological and Workplace Stress: Basis for Company-Based Mental Health Program. *International Journal on Multidisciplinary and Applied Research*, 1(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.63236/ijmar.1.1.1>