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# Stress Management to Reduce Mild Work Stress in Cafe Employees

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Abstract. The cafe industry is part of a rapidly growing and competitive service sector, fueled by the rise of coffee consumption and social activities in various cities. Service-oriented work environments are characterized by high emotional demands, a fast-paced work pace, and pressure to ensure quality service, making work stress a critical issue in human resource management. Cafe employees, particularly baristas and waiters, are on the front lines of customer interaction and are therefore susceptible to mild work stress, which is often considered normal. However, persistent, poorly managed mild work stress can potentially develop into emotional exhaustion, decreased psychological well-being, and decreased performance. This study aims to examine the role of stress management in reducing mild work stress levels among cafe employees and its implications for psychological well-being and employee performance. This study is based on a review of empirical literature on work stress in the service sector and the effectiveness of stress management interventions in the workplace. Stress management is understood as a planned effort to identify sources of stress, modify work stress, and strengthen employees' coping abilities. The study results indicate that stress management interventions, such as coping skills training, relaxation techniques, and mindfulness approaches, are effective in reducing work stress and improving employee well-being. Organizational support through fair work arrangements and supportive leadership also strengthens the effectiveness of these interventions.

Keywords: Work Stress, Stress Management, Cafe Employees, Psychological Well-Being, Employee Performance.

## 1. Introduction

The cafe industry is part of the rapidly growing and competitive service sector, fueled by the rise of coffee consumption and hangout culture in various cities [1]. This service-oriented work environment is known for its emotional demands, high work pace, and pressure for service quality, making work stress a critical issue in human resource management in the modern service sector [2]. Literature reviews in the service sector indicate that work stress is associated with decreased performance, increased turnover intentions, and worsened employee well-being when not managed effectively [3]. In the context of cafes and coffee shops, employees such as baristas and waiters are on the front lines of customer interaction and are therefore more vulnerable to psychological stress [4]. Research in coffee shops in East Semarang District, for example, showed that work fatigue and stress levels experienced by coffee shop workers correlated with their performance, and illustrated the relatively high physical and mental burdens experienced by young workers in this sector [5]. Another study of baristas in Semarang also found that job stress and the work environment significantly influenced barista job satisfaction, which ultimately impacted service quality in cafes [6]. These findings indicate that work stress among cafe employees is no longer an individual phenomenon, but rather an organizational issue that needs to be addressed systematically [7].

Mild work stress often manifests as fatigue, irritability, difficulty concentrating, and decreased motivation, but is often considered normal in service jobs [8]. However, systematic studies show that repeated and unmanaged work stress, even if initially mild,

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can progress to burnout, a more serious psychological disorder, and long-term performance decline [9]. Studies in the service and hospitality sectors also confirm that sustained exposure to stressors such as high workloads, emotional demands, and intense customer interactions are associated with decreased psychological well-being and an increased risk of emotional exhaustion [10].

Within this framework, stress management is a crucial approach to prevent the escalation of mild to severe work stress while maintaining employee adaptive functioning [11]. Workplace stress management is understood as a series of planned efforts to identify sources of stress, reduce or modify them, and strengthen employees' coping skills to more effectively face work demands [12]. Several systematic reviews have shown that well-designed stress management programs can reduce stress levels, enhance well-being, and improve performance indicators across various organizational contexts [13]. Various stress management techniques have been developed and adapted for the workplace, ranging from coping skills training and relaxation techniques to mindfulness-based interventions [14]. A meta-analysis of workplace mindfulness training shows that this intervention is effective in reducing stress, anxiety, and psychological distress while improving employee well-being and sleep quality. Another meta-analytic study focusing on mindfulness interventions for work stress also confirms that this approach can form a strong basis for evidence-based stress management programs [15]. These findings are relevant for adaptation to the context of cafe workers through short exercises such as mindful breathing, muscle relaxation, and micro-mindfulness practices that can be inserted during work hours [16].

Recent developments also indicate that stress management does not solely rely on face-to-face training but can be facilitated through technology-based programs [17]. A randomized controlled trial of a text-message-based stress management program showed that a simple digital format was well-received by employees of micro and small businesses, although its effectiveness still needs to be optimized. Furthermore, a bibliometric review of workplace coping and resilience strategies emphasized the importance of combining individual and organizational approaches to create a supportive and stress-resilient work environment [18]. These findings provide the basis for developing flexible stress management programs for cafe employees, whether through face-to-face sessions, self-paced modules, or lightweight digital support [19].

Beyond individual aspects, organizational support has been shown to play a significant role in the success of stress management interventions [20]. A systematic review of stress management and health promotion in the workplace showed that interventions that combine changes to work design, organizational policies, and employee training programs have a broader positive impact on well-being and performance [21]. Another article on the synergy of individual and organizational approaches to addressing work stress emphasizes that a work culture that cares about mental health, supportive leadership, and psychosocial support facilities are key factors in the success of stress management programs [22]. For the cafe industry, this can be achieved through fairer work schedules, open communication, and structured short breaks [23].

Based on this description, efforts to reduce mild work stress among cafe employees through stress management are a strategic necessity, both for employee health and the sustainability of cafe operations [24]. On the one hand, empirical evidence shows that work stress in the cafe and coffee shop sector is real and impacts employee satisfaction and performance [25]. On the other hand, the current literature on stress management interventions confirms that systematically designed, evidence-based, and

 

organizationally supported programs have the potential to reduce work stress, enhance psychological well-being, and ultimately improve the quality of service to customers [26]. Therefore, developing a stress management program specifically for cafe employees experiencing mild work stress is a crucial step in human resource management in the dynamic and competitive cafe industry.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Research design and Research Subjects

This study used a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental method and a one-group pretest and posttest design. This design involved one group of subjects without a comparison group (control). This design was determined for stress management purposes to reduce stress among cafe employees. The subjects in this study were 5 cafe employees aged 23-28 years who worked in a cafe in Malang Raya with a work period of more than 6 months.

### 2.2 Method of collecting data

The data collection method in this study was carried out through several techniques, namely questionnaires (pre-test and post-test), interviews, and observations. In the initial stage, the researcher conducted a pre-test by distributing a work stress scale questionnaire to all café employees who were the subjects of the study. This pre-test aimed to measure the initial stress levels experienced by employees before being given treatment in the form of a stress management program. In addition to the questionnaire, the researcher also conducted short semi-structured interviews with several employees to dig deeper into the sources of stress they experienced during work related to this test using a paired sample t-test from SPSS.

### 2.3 Intervention Procedure

The intervention consisted of stress management psychoeducation provided to cafe employees. This psychoeducation was conducted in a single session, lasting a total of 1 hour and 40 minutes. The psychoeducation included an introduction and pre-test, an introduction to stress management material, a stressful situation simulation and self-reflection, stress management strategies, a post-test, and a closing session. Icebreakers were also included among the core activities to maintain focus and increase participant motivation. Details of the activities are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Intervention Activity Schedule**

| Session | Activity | Duration |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Opening, Pre-test, and Ice Breaking | 15 minutes |
| 2 | Stress Management Lecture | 20 minutes |
| 3 | Simulation of Stressful Situations and Self-Reflection | 20 minutes |
| 4 | Stress Management Strategies | 25 minutes |
| 5 | Post-test and Closing | 20 minutes |

The psychoeducational material provided focused on work stress management. The first activity began with an opening session, which included greetings and self-introductions from the presenter to participants. The purpose of this opening was to provide an overview of the goals, benefits, and flow of psychoeducation, as well as to build rapport with participants. Following the opening, a pre-test using an initial questionnaire was conducted to determine participants' level of understanding of work stress and how to manage it. The pre-test results will serve as a baseline for comparing the program's effectiveness after the intervention. Before entering the material session, a short icebreaker was provided to increase participant enthusiasm and readiness.

 

The second session focused on stress management. The presentation was conducted using a lecture method using PowerPoint slides. Discussions covered the definition of work stress, factors that cause stress in a cafe workplace (e.g., high workload, customer demands, long working hours), signs of stress, and its impact on physical and emotional health and work performance. This session was designed to provide participants with basic knowledge and a new understanding of the importance of managing stress to remain productive and psychologically healthy. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions or share their experiences related to stressful work situations.

The third session involved simulations of stressful situations and self-reflection. In this session, the presenter provided examples of stressful scenarios that frequently arise in cafe environments, such as complaining customers, long lines, wrong orders, or time pressure. Participants were asked to act out these situations through simple role-plays to relive the stress they typically experience at work. After the simulation, participants were asked to reflect on their feelings, how they have responded to stress, and its impact on their emotions and work performance. These reflections were briefly written on a piece of paper and submitted to the presenter. This activity aimed to increase participants' self-awareness of their stress patterns.

The fourth session focused on stress management strategies. The material was delivered through interactive lectures and PowerPoint slides, covering various techniques employees can apply, such as deep breathing, brief mindfulness sessions, positive self-talk, time management, progressive muscle relaxation, and grounding techniques. In addition to theoretical explanations, the presenters encouraged participants to practice one of the techniques, such as deep breathing exercises or brief relaxation exercises to reduce tension. Participants were also given the opportunity to discuss which strategies worked best for them in the workplace.

After all the material was presented, a post-test was administered as a final evaluation. The post-test format was the same as the pre-test and aimed to measure participants' understanding of work stress and their ability to manage it after participating in the psychoeducation. Comparing the pre-test and post-test results will serve as an indicator of the program's success. The event concluded with a closing session, where the presenter presented a summary of the material, expressed appreciation to active participants, and encouraged participants to apply stress management strategies in their daily work lives.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1 Result

Before testing the data using the t-test technique, the data were first tested for normality. The results of the data normality test are as follows in Table 2.

**Table 2. Results of Data Normality Test**

| Analysis Type | Variable | Statistic | Sig. (p-value) | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Shapiro–Wilk Normality Test | Pre-test | 0.941 | 0.672 | Normally distributed |
| Shapiro–Wilk Normality Test | Post-test | 0.915 | 0.498 | Normally distributed |

A normality test was conducted to ensure that the collected data had a normal distribution, which is the main requirement (assumption) before conducting parametric statistical tests such as the Paired Sample T-Test. Given the limited sample size of 5 employees, this study used the Shapiro-Wilk method, which is more accurate for small samples (under 50 subjects). The test results showed that the significance value (p-value) for both pre-test and post-test data was above 0.05. This means that the normality assumption is met, so it can be concluded that the distribution of employee stress data

 

is normally distributed and the data analysis procedure can be continued using the t-test comparison test.

The data in this study were analyzed using a t-test. The t-test was intended to determine the effect of psychoeducation on stress reduction among cafe employees. The test results showed a t-value of 6.842 with a significance value (2-tailed) of 0.002. Because the significance value is much smaller than the real level of 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), it was decided to reject Ho and accept Ha. Statistically, this proves that there is a very significant difference in employee stress levels between before and after being given a stress management program. These results strengthen the conclusion that the intervention carried out has real effectiveness in helping employees manage their work stress. The data analysis also showed that the mean work stress score during the post-test (mean = 22.80) was lower than the mean work stress score during the pre-test (mean = 32.40). This indicates that stress management psychoeducation was effective in reducing work stress among cafe employees. The details are shown in the following Table 3.

**Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation Test Results**

| Variable | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| Pre-test | 32.40 | 3.57 |
| Post-test | 22.80 | 2.58 |

Descriptive statistics provide an overview of the employee stress data profile before and after the intervention. The mean pre-test stress score was 32.40, indicating that employees generally experienced relatively high levels of mental stress before participating in the program. However, after receiving stress management treatment, the mean post-test score decreased to 22.80. This 9.60-point decrease indicates a clinically significant positive change, with employees experiencing significantly reduced stress levels after participating in the training or intervention.

## 3.2 Discussion

The results of the study showed that the stress management program provided to cafe employees significantly reduced work stress levels. This finding was demonstrated by a decrease in the average stress score from 32.40 in the pre-test to 22.80 in the post-test, a difference of 9.60 points. A paired sample t-test confirmed that the difference was statistically significant ($p = 0.002$). Thus, the stress management psychoeducational intervention proved effective in reducing mild work stress among cafe employees. Theoretically, these results align with the stress and coping model proposed by Lazarus and Folkman, which emphasizes that stress arises from an imbalance between job demands and individual resources. Through stress management psychoeducation, employees gain a better understanding of the sources of stress, the emotional responses that arise, and more adaptive coping strategies. This allows for changes in cognitive appraisal of work situations, allowing pressures previously perceived as threats to be managed more effectively.

The resulting stress reduction can also be explained through the Conservation of Resources (COR) perspective. Interventions, such as short breathing, relaxation, and mindfulness exercises, serve as a mechanism to restore psychological resources previously depleted by high work demands and emotional labor. With these restored resources, employees become better able to regulate their emotions, maintain focus, and respond to work situations more calmly and adaptively. Research conducted by Chen and Klimoski [27] shows that implementing stress management through education and structured training is effective in reducing employee work stress levels. In their study of employees, the researchers found an increased understanding of mental health in the workplace and a decrease in average work stress levels after the stress management

 

intervention. These findings confirm that an education-based stress management approach not only helps employees identify the sources of work stress but also equips them with adaptive stress management strategies, thus positively impacting psychological well-being and work effectiveness.

Furthermore, research by Hamauche and Habani [28] examined the effectiveness of mindfulness training as part of a stress management strategy in reducing work stress among government sector employees. The results showed that mindfulness training significantly reduced participants' perceptions of work stress. The researchers concluded that increasing mindfulness awareness and emotional regulation skills through mindfulness practices helps individuals respond more adaptively to work pressures. These findings reinforce the view that mindfulness-based interventions are an effective stress management approach to reducing work stress in organizational settings.

These findings also support previous research suggesting that stress management interventions, including mindfulness-based training and relaxation techniques, are effective in reducing stress and improving the psychological well-being of employees in the service sector. Although the interventions in this study were relatively short-lived, the significant results demonstrate that practical and contextual approaches can still have a positive impact, particularly on cafe employees with fast-paced work schedules and limited time. However, the results of this study need to be understood in light of the limitations of the research design. The use of a one-group pretest–posttest design without a control group limits the researchers' ability to eliminate the influence of external factors beyond the intervention. Furthermore, the relatively small number of subjects requires caution in generalizing the results. Nevertheless, as a preliminary study, this research provides relevant empirical evidence regarding the potential effectiveness of stress management in the context of cafe employees.

This study strengthens the relevance of the stress and coping theory proposed by Lazarus and Folkman and the COR theory in explaining the dynamics of work stress in service sector employees, particularly in the cafe industry. The research findings indicate that work stress is not solely triggered by objective job demands, but is strongly influenced by cognitive appraisal processes and the availability and recovery of individual psychological resources. The stress management intervention provided was proven to function as a mechanism for recovering resources depleted by work demands and emotional labor, while also strengthening adaptive coping strategies. Thus, this study provides empirical support that a psychological intervention approach based on coping and resource recovery is relevant to be applied in work contexts with high intensity of emotional interactions.

Practically, the results of this study provide an empirical basis for cafe managers that simple, brief, and contextual stress management programs can be implemented as part of human resource management. Activities such as psychoeducation on work stress, brief breathing exercises, relaxation, and micro-mindfulness practices have proven potential in helping employees manage daily work pressures. Implementing these strategies not only contributes to reducing stress and emotional exhaustion but also has the potential to improve employee psychological well-being and the quality of service to customers. Therefore, stress management can be viewed as a strategic investment for the sustainability and competitiveness of the cafe industry.

## 4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that a brief, structured stress management psychoeducation program was effective in reducing mild work stress

 

levels among cafe employees. There was a significant difference between stress levels before and after the intervention, indicating that employees were better able to manage work pressure after gaining understanding and skills in stress management. These results confirm that work stress among cafe employees is not just an individual issue but can be managed through systematic psychological interventions. Stress management plays a crucial role in helping employees recognize stress, develop adaptive coping strategies, and restore psychological resources depleted by work demands and emotional labor.

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## 6. Declaration

**Author contributions and responsibilities -** The authors made major contributions to the conception and design of the study. The authors took responsibility for data analysis, interpretation and discussion of results. The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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