

# Employee Stress Management Factors Influencing Selected Audit Firms in the Kingdom of Bahrain

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**Abstract** - Stress disturbs the life of employees along with their productivity and disturbs their professional and personal life. This study will determine the source of stress, the impression of stress and the strategies to manage them and also determine the effectiveness of the strategies that might help employees in the Audit Firms in Bahrain. The research design used to conduct the following study was quantitative. Data is collected through primary methods and samples from 100 people are collected to perform the test. Questionnaires are used to collect data and non-probability sampling technique (snowball sampling technique) is used for sampling. Data are analysed using the SPSS statistical tool. The results of both correlation and regression analysis have found a strong association between works overload and stress management in audit firms of Bahrain. Our society has to deal with the relatively new concept of workplace stress more and more especially now while one is dealing with Covid-19 pandemic. The purpose of this present study is to determine the main reasons for and consequences of stress at work. The research also analyzes the overall current situation of stress in audit firms and general work stress and looks at some facts related to the origins of stress, and suggest ways to prevent and cope with it.

**Keywords:** Stress, Stress Management, Occupational Stress, Stress in Audit Firms

## INTRODUCTION

Stress is a mutual phenomenon which can be seen increasing among the employees and employers around the world. It is not a state of medical, somewhat the helplessness to stress which causes mental illness. The very much unavoidable consequence of this modern lifestyle is stress. Working places are full of hassles, demands, deadlines, expectations and frustrations. Dr Hans Sayle, one of the leading authorities on the concept of stress, describes stress as “the rate of all wear and Tear caused by life”. Stress can be positive or negative. Stress is good when the situation offers an opportunity for a person to gain something it acts as a motivator for peak performance (Williams, 2013). Stress is negative when a person faces social physical organizational and emotional problems. Factors that are responsible for causing stress are called stressors. Stress can be positive or negative. Sometimes, it is encouraging in a condition which proposed an opportunity to increase something and perform as a motivator for highest performance, while it acts as a harmful force once a person survives social, physical, structural and emotional difficulties (Michie, 2002)

The occupational stress is the stress began due to work and workplace. The cause of WRS (work-related stress) can be categorized into two depending on the source- Inner causes and outer causes. The internal reasons may include the mind-set of the person or the way he/she thinks. It is perception-based and comes from within (Ay & Orhan, 2015). The external causes include external factors within the organization which directly affects the employer’s performance. The factors like insecurity of the job, working hours, expectations, deadlines, managerial style, and workload and pressure ,Some of the key findings and the possible interpretations of the data. Poor Work- Life Balance. 77% of respondents feel there is still no work-life balance within the audit profession, and a whopping 84% bring their work home with them. Health Challenges. 60% of participants felt that their health had been impacted since they started at their audit job. Lack

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of sleep. They suffer from sleep disorders. Challenging Accounting Standards. Inadequate employer support (American Psychological Association, 2011). More pressure, low pay. Hands-off Preparers. Based on the survey findings, it appears that clients of these audit firms are not preparing for audits as well as expected.

Managing stress helps in completion of tasks and meeting deadlines on time. Few techniques which can help in managing stress include being proactive and planning tasks beforehand to ensure deadlines are met on time. Stress can also be managed by organizing one's daily tasks by preparing to-do lists and keeping track of your backlogs. Having a positive attitude and working with a relaxed mind also helps in managing stress. Employees should plan their leaves and take regular breaks to ensure better mental focus at the workspace. People working in audit firms not only face challenges to meet strict client deadlines they are also exposed to updates in regulatory and accounting frameworks, in this case raising issues on time and agreeing on the treatment with the client also help in no last-minute changes and less work near deadlines (Joseph & Irons, 2018).

The information in this research paper has been gathered to give data and instruction about pressure, the impacts of stress, also, the most mainstream stress the board and unwinding techniques that are being utilized today. This information could be helpful for individuals who need to figure out how to respond to stress in a progressively useful, proactive way. The fundamental reason for this research paper is that the advantages of stress decrease and unwinding techniques can be best seen after they have been practised normally over some undefined time frame.

In an organization, each employee has felt the pressure of an upcoming Deadline considerably after they make the drive home. A portion of this pressure is typical, yet on the off chance that it perseveres, it can truly unleash ruin an employee's wellbeing and prosperity. Unrestrained stress in the working atmosphere can include physical special effects, for example, sleep disturbances, migraines; stomach upset and raised circulatory strain and cardiovascular sickness. The effect of employee's burnout in the working environment proceeds with passionate aftermath including tension, touchiness, and discouragement (Elder, 2014). Any employee who's at any point worked themselves to the point of burnout can likewise perceive different side effects including loss of focus, absence of inspiration, trouble with the manner of thinking, loss of memory and poor Decision building.

### Research Objectives

The following paper challenges to understand the stress level and the techniques used in achieving the following objects:

1. To measure the level of stress among employees of Audit Firms in Bahrain.
2. To analyse the effect of lack of job security on employee stress in Audit Firms of Bahrain.
3. To examine the effect of work overload on employee stress in Audit Firms of Bahrain,
4. To explore the effect of year-end deadlines on employee stress in Audit Firms of Bahrain.

### Research Hypothesis

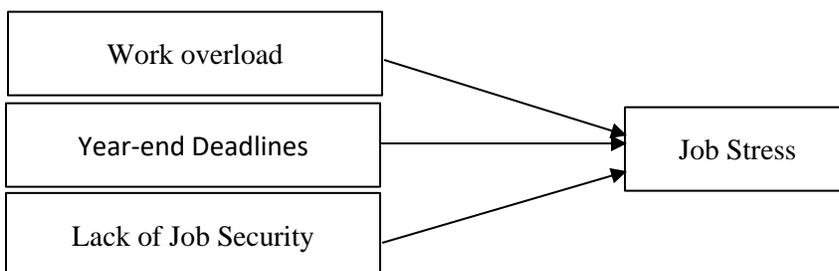
The general hypothesis of the study is as following;

**H1** There is a statistically significant impact of lack of job security on employee stress in Audit Firms of Bahrain.

**H2** There is a statistically significant effect of work overload on employee stress in Audit Firms of Bahrain.

**H3** There is a statistically significant impact of year-end deadlines on employee stress in Audit Firms of Bahrain.

### Conceptual framework



*Figure 1: Conceptual Framework*

Though a lot of factors exist which contribute to workplace stress but in this research, the factors that have been considered are work overload and lack of job security. These factors have a significant impact on causing work-related stress. Lack of job security refers to the fear an employee in a company has that I might end up being unemployed if he is unable to perform the designated tasks assigned to him. Work surplus can be described as the excessive work an employee does exceeding over the regular work assigned to him. Several cases within the middle eastern region have been recorded where workers have not been paid for the excessive work assigned and in situations like these, the workers fear challenging the organization since in doing so would incur additional legal expenses and the fear of job security

keeps the workers pressed and most of these incidents go unreported. Both the factors; lack of job security and work overload are major factors that constitute stress in employees, as discussed by previous studies. The hypotheses of this research revolve mainly around these two factors which are that these factors do impact the level of stress in employees of an audit firm. The main task being performed by employees of an audit firm is the auditing of different companies and the job itself is demanding and the employees are required to put in a lot of effort which leads to high-stress levels in employees. Working on project deadlines causes impatience in the audit teams which causes multiple misunderstandings and could result in lowering the moral level of teams and possible verbal harassment.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study utilized a descriptive research design since it is aimed at describing the impact, if any, of resistance to change to employee productivity. The respondents are the original population or the selected samples of the study, helps the researcher to obtain precise data to comprehensive the research stages by gaining physical data representing the chosen population and samples. The defendants are one of the important characteristics of descriptive research, which is based on analyzing a real situation in a particular area. The researcher distributes the questionnaire among the financial executives of the audit firms to gather the necessary information. The classification of the research respondents which are 100 external auditors. The justification of selecting the above 100 respondents for the data collection of the study related to the pressure management techniques of staffs in audit firms is to collect the authentic and appropriate data which lead to the appropriate results of the study. The people mentioned have the experience of the audit firms who can provide the data authenticity through the real-world experience related to the audit firms. The people were chosen from different audit firms to conduct comprehensive information from the experience of people working a different kind of jobs in the firm. The targeted population for this study consisted of all the external auditors working in the selected audit firms operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The criteria for selecting the employees were mainly that the employees should be currently working at the selected firm as external auditors, at the time of the study, there were approximately 250 external auditors. In this study, the investigator uses the non-probability sampling method in which the most suitable type is used is the snowball sampling technique. The reason of using this technique to analyse the stress management techniques of employees in an audit firm is that the researcher has the contact with only a few people who worked in the audit firms of Kingdom of Bahrain. Furthermore, the researcher takes help and collect data from the reference of that particular employee of the audit firm and reach to the other targeted people.

### **Research Instruments**

The research instruments are closely related to the sampling design. Where the nature of the target sample has already been determined, therefore, the questionnaire instrument was used as a primary source of collecting preliminary data to obtain exact, accurate data on the target sample's situation. Therefore, the Questionnaire of five-scale was designed based on each variable and hypotheses of the study to obtain an inclusive analysis and findings that support the direction of the study. It has the larger validity along with the anonymity of the respondent which is most important for respondent because this research is grounded on the data related to the audit firm in which the confidentiality of the management of the firm is important.

### **Data Processing and Statistical Treatment**

This step is very important for obtaining statistical results, which are processed using advanced statistical analysis systems, which provide very important outputs for building results and the study summary which is based on very perfect statistical data. Thus, the SPSS statistical analysis software will be used to find many outputs such as, means scores, standard deviations, as well as the correlation and regression and Cronbach's alpha, will be used.

### **Reliability Analysis**

Reliability analysis has been conducted for identifying the consistency in the scale used in the study. For analysis, the value of Cronbach's has been taken into consideration with the threshold point of 0.60.

Table 1: Research Variables

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Number of Units</b>
Lack of job security	0.863	5
Work overload	0.981	5
Year-end deadlines	0.984	5
Employee Stress	0.992	8

The above-mentioned reliability statistics show that the value of Cronbach's alpha for all variables is above 0.60 which shows that the scale used in the questionnaire for each variable was reliable and valid.

### PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

The researcher has collected information by using a survey questionnaire which was conducted from the external auditors who have been working in audit firms in Bahrain. The researcher has used descriptive analysis, correlation and regression by using SPSS to analyse the information. The researcher has included correlation analysis for determining the relationship amid the variables whereas regression analysis has been used to analyse the influence of the independent variable on the dependent one. The chapter has also incorporated the reliability analysis for identifying the overall consistency in the scale used in the questionnaire.

Table 2 : A Demographical Information of Sample (100 external auditors)

Demographic Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage	
<b>Gender</b>	Male	79	79%
	Female	21	21%
<b>Age</b>	18-24 years	14	14%
	25-34 years	25	25%
	35-44 years	16	16%
	45-54 years	15	15%
	55+ years	30	30%
<b>Academic Qualification</b>	High School or less	1	1%
	Diploma	31	31%
	Bachelors	43	43%
	Masters	15	15%
	PhD	10	10%
	Others	4	4%
<b>How long you have been a part of this organization?</b>	Less than 2 years	44	44%
	3-5 years	26	26%
	5-10 years	12	12%
	More than 10 years	18	18%

As per the table above, there has been 79 male and 21 female respondents who took part in the survey. Amongst these respondents, 14 were between age margin of 18 and 24 whereas 25 have been between 25 and 34. 16 respondents have been between 35 and 44, 15 have been between 45 and 54 and lastly, 30 of them have age 55 and above. 1 respondent had an education level of high school where 31 have done diploma. 43 respondents have done bachelors whereas 15 have done masters. Lastly, 10 respondents have PhD degree as their education level. In terms of experience, 44 have less than 2 years' experience, 26 respondents have 3 to 5 years' experience, 12 respondents have 5 to 10 and 18 respondents have more than 10 years' experience as shown in the table above.

The findings in the table 3 have indicated that the responses related to the variables of year-end deadlines, lack of job security and work overload have been either between agree or strongly agree or close to agree.

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.Deviation
Stress	100	.00	3.38	1.1200	.94380
Year-end Deadlines	100	.00	3.20	1.0940	.93440
Lack of job security	100	.00	3.80	1.5360	.81792
Work overload	100	.00	3.80	1.4020	1.02553
Valid N (list wise)	100	.00			

Table 4: Correlations Analysis

		Job Stress	Lack of Job Security	Work- overload	Year-end Deadlines
<b>Job Stress</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	0.803**	0.981**	0.991**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	100	100	100	100
<b>Lack of Job Security</b>	Pearson Correlation	0.803**	1	0.791**	0.803**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000
	N	100	100	100	100
<b>Work- overload</b>	Pearson Correlation	0.981**	0.791**	1	0.978**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000
	N	100	100	100	100
<b>Year-end Deadlines</b>	Pearson Correlation	0.991**	0.803**	0.978**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	100	100	100	100

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

As seen in the above table, the correlation amid the stress and lack of job security is 0.803 which is highly significant and positive. The correlation amid the stress and work overload is found to be 0.981 which means that stress and work overload are significantly related. Lastly, the correlation amid the stress and year-end deadlines is 0.991 which is also strongly significant and positive.

Table 5 : Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.993a	0.986	0.985	0.11411

a. Predictors: (Constant), Year-end Deadlines, Lack of Job Security, Work-overload

Regression analysis is the technique that is used for analysing the influence that the independent construct can have on the dependent construct of the investigation. The table can be depicted above in the form of a model summary that shows the overall impact of lack of job security, work overload and year-end deadlines on the stress of the external auditors. It is signified in the table that the value of R is 0.993 which stated that the influence of lack of job security, work overload and year-end deadlines on the stress of the external auditors is positive and significant. However, when the error was being excluded from the model the value of R-square which was 0.986 had turned into the value of adjusted R square which is 0.985. It also indicates that the increase in the levels of lack of job security, work overload and year-end deadlines leads towards high-level stress of the external auditors.

The table 5 is associated with the ANOVA which is also regarded as the test of variance and model significance. The alpha value for the ANOVA table should be less than 0.05 in order to ensure that the model used in the study has been significant. It can be signified in the table above that the sig value is 0.000 which is less than 0.05 and it shows that the model used in the study has been significant and the findings have been based on the reliable results free from error or chance.

Table 5 : ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	86.935	3	28.978	2225.522	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	1.250	96	.013		
Total	88.185	99			

a. Dependent Variable: Job Stress

b. Predictors: (Constant), Year-end Deadlines, Lack of Job Security, Work-overload

Table 6 : Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 Constant	-.044	.028		-1.580	.117
Lack of Job Security	.018	.024	.015	.746	.458
Work-overload	.240	.053	.261	4.509	.000
Year-end Deadlines	.732	.060	.724	12.221	.000

a. Dependent Variable: job Stress

The table overhead is the table of coefficients, which shows how significantly each variable can influence the dependent variable. It can be seen in the given table that only work-overload and year-end deadlines have individually influenced stress of the employees whereas lack of job security has not individually influenced stress of the employees as the sig value is 0.458 which is greater than 0.05. Nevertheless, combined all these independent factors have significantly influenced the stress levels of the external auditors. This also means that a higher level of lack of job security, work overload and year-end deadlines has led towards the high-level stress amongst employees.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The accumulated outcomes of the research indicate that the combination of all the independent variables of the study, including lack of job stress, work overload, and year- end deadlines are highly associated with stress management. Moreover, based on the results of the descriptive analysis the high level of stress has been found amongst the employees of audit firms that are operating in Bahrain. The results of correlation analysis confirm the positive relationship between all the independent variables and dependent variables of the study. On the other hand, the results of regression analysis have found the significant impact of year-end deadlines and work-overload on stress management. However, as per the findings of regression analysis, there is no significant impact has been found of lack of job security on Job Stress. Considering the hypotheses of the study, the first hypothesis is to find if there is a statistically significant influence of the lack of job security on employee stress in audit firms of Bahrain. The correlation findings have indicated a significant and positive association amid the stress and lack of job security. The second hypothesis of the study has been linked with finding if there is a statistically significant effect of work overload on employee stress in Audit Firms of Bahrain. The correlation findings of the study have indicated a strong and significant association amid employee stress and work overload. The third hypothesis of the study has been formulated for finding if there is a statistically significant impact of year-end deadlines on employee stress in Audit Firms of Bahrain. The correlation findings have indicated that there a significant relationship between year- end deadlines and employee stress.

The main rationale of this study has been linked with investigating the stress level amongst employees and techniques of stress management in the context of audit firms in Bahrain. To achieve the main aim of the study, the use of quantitative research method has been made by conducting the survey questionnaire. The responses of the survey questionnaire are analysed by carrying out the different statistical test, including descriptive analysis, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. Based on the overall findings of the study, the combination of all the independent variables has found to be highly associated with the dependent variable of the study. However, findings of the study

reveal that lack of job stress has not made a significant impact on stress management. Based on these findings, the research hypothesis regarding the significant impact of lack of job security on employees stress has been rejected. On the other hand, both the remaining hypothesis regarding the significant impact of work overload and year-end deadlines have accepted.

Ensure a safe working environment. Providing positive reinforcements like Employee of the Month initiative or simply recognizing & appreciating efforts by a certificate or a bonus/ gift voucher would be an excellent motivator and shall result in improved performance. Hire more employees which shall reduce the work overload. This shall reduce the need for overtime by reorganizing duties or employing extra staff. Provide growth opportunities to all equally and ensure time management (American Psychological Association). Initiate Socializing activities and discuss grievances and other issues with employees and further take appropriate action when possible. A stress management policy should be embedded in place along with the consultation of the employees. Workshops & Counselling sessions can be a part of this drive. Providing Job security: Taking into consideration the continued rise in the cost of living, house prices, and the recent budget changes, more than ever employees want to feel that our jobs are secure with a steady income to support us and our families (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994). Concerns about job security may be real or perceived, however, the impact is often the same. Unanswered or ignored, this can have a negative impact on employees' health, engagement, performance. It can have a direct impact on all of these behaviours. For example, an employee who thinks their job is at risk may be more likely to look for work elsewhere, tell others negative things about the organization, and exert less effort in their work if they think they do not have a future there. Especially when it is for a prolonged period of time, can also have a negative impact on employee health like emotional resilience which will negatively influence performance. To deal with Job insecurity, Employers should proactively communicate (Chua & Wong, 2018). Have a say so or seek feedback/reactions and follow this up with a plan or next steps. Equally, celebrate the successes. Ensure employees concerns /queries are highly visible and resolved. Ensure Positive reinforcements are done fairly and consistently. Promote good work, set achievable expectations. Employees should feel empowered and valuing their contribution is key. Most importantly, when hiring an employee, provide a detailed written job description (Chowdhury & Hioe, 2017). This will allow employees to periodically review what's expected of them so they can be sure they are meeting their obligations.

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