Coping Strategies for Stress and Mental Health in Millennial and Generation Z Tourism Employees

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ABSTRACT

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| **Aims:** This study emphasizes that workplace stress is a multi-faceted issue that affects the mental health and productivity of millennial and Gen Z employees in the tourism industry. Social pressures and work demands present unique challenges to these two generations that require serious attention from management. The findings suggest that although some coping strategies have been implemented, their effectiveness is often hampered by unsupportive working conditions. Therefore, organizations must design and foster a comprehensive organizational approach to workplace stress management and build a positive organizational culture to enhance employee well-being and organizational productivity. Organizations can create a healthier and more sustainable work environment by addressing the factors that contribute to stress.  **Study design:** This study uses a systematic literature review approach where the researcher collects, analyzes, and synthesizes information from various academic sources and previous research related to stress, mental health, and well-being of millennials and Generation Z in the context of the tourism industry. This process includes finding articles, journals, and reports on the causes of stress, its impact on productivity, and various coping mechanisms employed by young people. The researcher will also use academic databases, such as Google Scholar and JSTOR, to evaluate the quality and relevance of the literature and issues, develop a comprehensive understanding of the issues related to mental health in tourism, and provide substantial evidence-based recommendations to improve employee well-being.  **Place and Duration of Study:** This study's focus is on the literature used. It is planned to be conducted for six months, from April to September 2024. During this period, the researcher plans to collect data through a literature review of employees in various tourism industry segments to obtain valuable information about their stress experiences and coping strategies.  **Methodology:** The research methodology used a systematic literature review approach where the researcher searched and reviewed relevant academic materials such as journal articles, books, and research reports related to stress, mental health, and well-being among millennials and Generation Z in the tourism sector. The data collection process began by searching for relevant literature from academic databases such as Google Scholar and JSTOR, then selecting them based on their quality and relevance. After that, analysis was conducted to synthesize the findings from existing studies, identify the most common phenomena, and understand the coping strategies used by young people. With this methodology, this study hopes to contribute to a better understanding of mental health issues emerging in the tourism industry and provide evidence-based recommendations to improve the well-being of workers.  **Results:** **Studies on work-related stress among millennial and Gen Z employees in the hospitality industry reveal some interesting similarities and variations. In terms of the specifics of the most researched studies, they all share one common theme: work-related stress negatively impacts employee mental health and productivity. High workloads, lack of social support, and rapid technological change are identified as the primary causes of stress among employees. These employees employ various coping techniques, such as relaxation and social support, to manage stress. However, the achievement of these strategies is often compromised by hostile and unhelpful work conditions, which often increase their stress levels. While there is agreement on the negative consequences of stress, there is variation in how studies approach the issue. Some studies emphasize diverse coping strategies, with varying emphasis on social support and others on relaxation exercises or skills training. The effectiveness of coping strategies varies across individuals and contexts, suggesting that not every strategy is appropriate for every person or every situation. The relationship between high stress levels, low performance, and job satisfaction is also of concern. However, not all studies have addressed moderating factors, such as managerial support or organizational culture. In addition, recommendations for intervention strategies vary. Some studies suggest skills training and development programs, while others focus on improving organizational culture and providing mental health support**  **Conclusion:**  **The study found that many millennial and Gen Z employees in the tourism industry felt significant stress due to work demands and social uncertainty. Many relied on coping strategies such as seeking social support and implementing relaxation techniques, but their effectiveness was often affected by a less supportive work environment. These findings underscore the urgent need for organizations to develop better policies to support mental health, such as creating positive workspaces and providing adequate mental health resources.**  This study emphasizes that workplace stress is a multi-faceted issue that affects the mental health and productivity of millennial and Gen Z employees in the tourism industry. Social pressures and work demands present unique challenges to these two generations that require serious attention from management. The findings suggest that although some coping strategies have been implemented, their effectiveness is often hampered by unsupportive working conditions. Therefore, organizations must design and foster a comprehensive organizational approach to workplace stress management and build a positive organizational culture to enhance employee well-being and organizational productivity. Organizations can create a healthier and more sustainable work environment by addressing the factors that contribute to stress.  **In conclusion, the findings regarding the consequences of stress at the organizational level are considerably agreed upon, but differences in approaches, coping strategies, and intervention suggestions suggest the need for a deeper understanding of the specific contexts and characteristics of employees in the tourism sector. This is important to enable the formulation of more appropriate interventions for workers experiencing stress in their work environment.** |

*Keywords: Workplace Stress, Stress Coping, Mental Health, Millennials and Generation Z, Tourism Industry*

1. INTRODUCTION

**Sharma et al. (2023) stated that amid today's social changes, stress has become increasingly common, especially in millennials and Generation Z. This mental health problem arises due to work pressure, demands for achievement, and rapid social change. This stress is exacerbated by being constantly connected and management that does not provide sufficient health assistance, which shows the importance of mental health management and intervention (Bliese et al., 2017). On the other hand, moderate stress can increase focus and productivity, but too much can cause fatigue, decreased job satisfaction, and cognitive disorders that result in decreased productivity (Sharma & Mathew, 2024). In addition, high-stress levels are often closely related to the frequency of new employees and the reduction of old employees due to dissatisfaction with their jobs (Trchalíková, 2023).**

**Among workers, stressors such as financial uncertainty and time pressure negatively impact their mental health, with proactive coping strategies having the potential to protect against these stressors (Kiefl et al., 2024). Pioneering work on stress, beginning in the 1930s with Hans Selye, paved the way for understanding stress as an almost unconscious physiological response that is difficult to control, along with the idea that it can lead to feelings of depression when individuals are faced with changing life demands. The multiple nature of stress, including eustress and distress, makes its impact on individuals much more complex. This is because distress can lead to anxiety and depression when stressors exceed an individual's coping capacity (Stanojlović et al., 2022) (Vincze & Vincze-Tiszay, 2020). Selye's work emphasizes the importance of coping with stress to prevent its detrimental effects on psychological well-being (da Silva et al., 2024)(Smith & Pérez, 2018). A dynamic work environment with constant pressure can cause individuals to feel stressed and unable to cope with the workload (Świtała, 2024). This has the potential to create conditions that are detrimental to workers' mental health, which can result in decreased productivity and quality of life (Ulfadila et al., 2024).**

**Millennials and Generation Z, raised in a digital context, face additional challenges exacerbating their work stress (Nazri et al., 2024). Technology and communication are so fast that there is often an anticipation to perform and respond instantly (Farman, 2018). Furthermore, a competitive work environment with minimal social support in the workplace can increase feelings of anxiety and depression, making them more vulnerable to negative stress (Tabakakis et al., 2024).**

**Millennials and Generation Z also experience unique pressures in the tourism industry, contributing to their high-stress levels caused by varying expectations and behaviours as consumers and employees. Known as digital natives, Generation Z demands highly personalized experiences while also valuing technology and caring about sustainability, diversity, and social responsibility in their travel choices (Seyfi et al., 2024). As employees, Millennials and Generation Z workers value flexible work arrangements and career advancement, which can be stressful when employers do not meet these needs in the hospitality sector (Seyfi et al., 2024). Workers in this sector often must provide exceptional service while managing change and increasing customer expectations (Prayogi et al., 2024). This phenomenon affects not only the mental health of employees but also the quality of service provided, which in turn affects the reputation and success of the tourism business (Seyfi et al., 2024). Research shows that workers in the tourism industry who are under high-stress levels are more likely to make mistakes, which, on the one hand, reduce job satisfaction and, on the other hand, damage customer experience (Devi et al., 2024).**

**Additionally, millennials and Gen Z are expected to have better technology skills and are often expected to use them in their jobs. While this can be an advantage, the need to use cutting-edge technology and adapt to rapid changes in the field can be stressful (Westover, 2024). With so many online platforms requiring quick responses to customer reviews and feedback, employees in the tourism sector often feel trapped in an endless cycle of work (Turanlıgil & Farooq, 2019).**

**As a result, it is critical for tourism companies to provide the proper training and support to help employees manage stress and build a more inclusive and healthy work culture. By focusing on employee mental health, businesses can increase productivity and create positive client experiences, which is fundamental to an industry that relies heavily on customer satisfaction.**

**Effective stress management strategies such as skills training and social support have increased work productivity, underscoring the need to implement such programs in the workplace (Wijayanthi et al., 2024). With the increasing focus on mental health and well-being, it is equally important to look at coping strategies that can help manage stress. Coping is a process that involves efforts made by an individual to deal with and control demands that are perceived as burdensome (Tandya & Tjahjono, 2024).**

**There are significant implications that stem from a greater understanding of the concepts of stress and subjective well-being (Jeman et al., 2023). Previous research has shown that individuals with higher psychological resources can better manage stressful situations and view them as opportunities for growth (Tabakakis et al., 2024). Therefore, understanding how millennials and Generation Z manage stress and seek help is essential for developing effective intervention strategies. This study explores what coping mechanisms members of these generations use when facing stress and how they leverage stress to enhance their performance and well-being. The study also investigates what proactive measures, if any, companies take in anticipation of such conditions.**

**This study aims to assist employers and stakeholders in taking more proactive steps to improve the workplace environment by understanding the factors influencing stress and well-being. Proactive steps to address mental health in the workplace include providing psychological support services, teaching coping skills, and improving organizational culture. The better the perceived work environment, the more employees' mental health and productivity will be positively affected, along with employee retention. Therefore, addressing employee mental health issues becomes a strategic concern for organizations in achieving sustainable success over time.**

This **manuscript** addresses the importance of stress and mental health among Millennials and Generation Z employees in the tourism industry. This issue is particularly relevant given these groups' increasing pressures in their workplaces. The tourism industry is highly dynamic and prone to work stress. Millennials and Generation Z have unique characteristics and specific behaviors in dealing with negative conditions and appropriate coping strategies. The findings may enhance knowledge about mental health in the workplace and offer useful solutions for employees and employers. Due to the ever-changing workforce dynamics, this theme is important for academics and practitioners.

2. methodology

**This study adopted the literature review method, which encompasses collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing information from relevant academic sources such as stress, mental health, and well-being, focusing on the millennial and Z generation in the field of tourism, including books and journals. This process consisted of searching for articles, journals, and reports that studied factors that cause stress, its effect on performance, and the coping mechanisms young professionals use to manage stress in the workplace. It was imperative to consider the broader aspects of mental health tourism and determine if existing patterns could be used in formulating company policies to address human resource problems in tourism from the viewpoint of stress and its consequences.**

**This section describes the approach taken to collect the relevant literature for this research. Initially, only peer-reviewed academic journals, books, articles, and reports were accepted as credible sources of information. Secondly, the body of literature focused on, perceived and studied the stress and mental health issues of millennials and the members of Generation Z within the context of tourism. Finally, the literature chosen did not ignore the most recent research to make the data and findings useful in dealing with the current issues and problems. Additionally, as a wider view of the problem, the literature that examined various aspects of the coping mechanisms and the impact of stress on performance was also included.**

**In this study’s data collection and analysis, everything was done stepwise. To begin, the researcher searched for articles and publications relevant to stress and mental health for millennials and Generation Z within the tourism industry. This search incorporated academic databases. After collecting the appropriate sources, the researcher evaluated each piece’s relevance and quality based on predetermined selection criteria. Following this, the systematic review method of data analysis was followed, whereby the results of various studies were aggregated, trends were recognized, and conclusions concerning the causes of stress, its performance consequences, and the coping strategies used were drawn. Through this analysis, the mental health of people working in the tourism industry was understood, and evidence-based policy recommendations were made to help enhance the well-being of these employees.**

3. results and discussion

**Newer studies on stress have highlighted the varying effects on employee health and the organization’s productivity, which calls for a holistic approach. Chronic work stress is associated with several adverse health outcomes, such as cardiovascular disease, anxiety, depression, and fatigue. This calls for organizations to develop policies designed to counteract stress and boost the welfare of employees (Alalhareth et al., 2024). The physical work environment, including noise and poor illumination, can also escalate the level of stress. Hence, there is a need for wise design of workspaces to eliminate these stressors (Alalhareth et al., 2024).**

**The cognitive appraisal process outlined by Lazarus and Folkman is fundamentally important for understanding an individual's stress response, particularly in challenging work environments (Yeo & Ong, 2024). Stress in the workplace has increasingly been recognized as an important predictor of an individual's mental and physical health and is detrimental to organizational productivity. Rapid technological developments remain one of the main contributors to stress due to the constant adaptation demand from employees, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy and anxiety (Kiliç, 2023)(Dewe & Cooper, 2020). This technological stress is worsened by the toxic work environment characterized by unreasonable demands and pressures, which can escalate stress levels and cause mental health issues like anxiety and even paranoia (Gomathi & Rajeswari, 2024) (Tsimakuridze et al., 2022). The impact of stress at the workplace is extensive as it affects multiple body systems and could lead to severe health problems such as cardiovascular and neurologic disorders (Fagamova et al., 2023). Moreover, stress can significantly impact employees' effectiveness because it affects their psychological well-being and ability to achieve organizational objectives (Timotius & Octavius, 2022) (Singh & Verma, 2019). The modern workplace, established through globalization and technological advancement, poses new and constant challenges that require employees to engage in novel adaptive responses (Javorska et al., 2014). This is particularly evident in industries like IT, which have highly complex systems and stressful processes (Viniba, 2016). In dealing with this, organizations are encouraged to adopt stress management strategies that build and prioritize employees' well-being.**

**It may include stress mitigation programs, training, and motivational programs to assist employees in attempting to meet the demands of their roles (Viniba, 2016). Addressing the stressors in the workplace is important to maintaining a healthy and productive workforce and requires collaborative actions from management and employees (Gomathi & Rajeswari, 2024)(Chen, 2023).**

**In addition, exercise and sports training are gaining popularity to improve employees’ coping mechanisms, with special attention paid to countries like the United States and the United Kingdom (Borissov, 2024). The mental health issues that the COVID-19 pandemic has already worsened are now regarded with the utmost importance, with stress, depression, and anxiety being significant aspects of work-related illness difficulties (Alberta, 2024). To foster a psychologically healthy workplace, some measures, such as flexible working arrangements, leadership initiatives, and destigmatization of mental health issues, are highly recommended (Alberta, 2024).**

**First entering the tourism sector workforce, Generation Z faces a new mountain of challenges that can increase anger and stress. This generation, which is in the technology sector and has an entrepreneurial spirit, tends to use a different system than their existing jobs because it provides positions that are directly leadership and innovation in the tourism sector (Yazici & Ayazlar, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in increased stress in Generation Z, where they are required to make maximum efforts in dealing with tension and uncertainty accompanied by post-pandemic employment that requires adaptation and resilience (Morrone et al., 2023). In the hospitality world, as proposed by Xueyun et al. (2024:2024), a prominent factor with the many jobs, along with work attack factors, is quite significantly correlated with the passive intention to resign that faces Gen Z, indicating that paying attention to the involvement and quality of work life that Gen Z workers get is very necessary, and that means including and discussing the issue of involvement or employer. Amidst these various challenges, it turns out that their focus, both eudaimonic and hedonic, shows how to extract value from the meaning of work, captured by business owners as an opportunity to create a conducive environment and provide satisfaction in the workplace (Bagheri et al., 2024). Knowing and understanding Generation Z's different characteristics or needs will help organizations build better strategies to improve well-being and job satisfaction in the tourism sector.**

**Millennial workers in the tourism sector face significant work-related stress stemming from multiple causes, including the COVID-19 pandemic, organizational changes, and technological engagement. The pandemic has intensified existing stressors due to infection threats and job insecurity, negatively affecting employees’ satisfaction in equal measures and increasing turnover intention among tourism workers (Priyanto, 2023). The most literate technologically and thus able to facilitate employment in the industry yet also contribute to high turnover due to poor loyalty despite having good competencies are the millennial generation, which constitutes the majority of the workforce in this industry (Utami et al., 2020). Stress among these workers is compounded by organizational factors such as low social support and high perceived organizational politics, which adversely influence the employees’ performance and creativity (Kalyar et al., 2019). The intense involvement of Millennials with technology, especially smartphones, influences emotionally laden experiences and their perceptions of work, resulting in positive and negative consequences for their work-life balance (Martínez-Sala et al., 2020). The work value of this generation is diverse and comprises instrumental, cognitive, affective, and prestige that form their identity and expectations in the workplace (Papavasileiou et al., 2024).**

**In strategically managing stress in the tourism sector, especially among Millennials and Generation Z, the management must build an enabling work environment that explicitly alleviates the unique stressors employees encounter. Research has shown that managing stress is critically vital for enhancing employee productivity and well-being, as high levels of stress lead to lowered productivity and psychosocial health concerns (Gomathi & Rajeswari, 2024). A caring and empathetic work environment has been shown to significantly reduce stress and increase job satisfaction, thus retaining skilled professionals in the tourism industry (Leal-Solis et al., 2024). Implementing pre-emptive stress management approaches, such as skill training and social support systems, has increased productivity and healthier workplaces (Wijayanthi et al., 2024). Moreover, health awareness programs and recreation facilities also serve as suitable stress management interventions (Hasin et al., 2024). The hospitality industry, in particular, has benefited from creating a supportive workplace culture that empowers employees, balances work-life demands, and aligns managerial style with organizational objectives (Huang & Torres, 2024). In addition, addressing toxic leadership and fostering open communication improves outcomes such as employee cynicism and overall well-being (Magdy & Salem, 2024). These integrated approaches promote employees’ mental health and enhance organizational success by creating a pleasant workplace where employees feel valued and motivated (Samat et al., 2024).**

Offering stress management training to employees is a vital step toward improving their coping skills at work, which can significantly impact the individual's wellbeing and organizational productivity.

Amiri (2024) and Wamea and Nompo (2024) argue that stress management is greatly enhanced when employees reframe challenging situations into accompanying tasks, applying, as suggested by Lazarus and Folkman, a training program that combines both problem and emotion-focused coping techniques. Such training can also incorporate adaptive coping strategies involving problem-solving, social support, and relaxation techniques linked to decreased work stress and improved employee wellbeing (Wamea & Nompo, 2024). In addition, setting reasonable work-hour boundaries is crucial in maintaining a healthy work-life balance while minimizing the chances of burnout, particularly in high-stress occupations such as nursing or health care (Kimani et al., 2024). Organizational support is essential to stress management because it promotes a healthy working environment and enhances the effectiveness of individual coping strategies (Origanti, 2024). A comprehensive stress management program, including skills training and reinforced social support, can improve mental health and work performance; this has been proven in various industries, including healthcare and the culinary industry (Vivarelli & Fenga, 2024). Besides, integrating technological tools like the My-Stress application can aid in timely assessment and intervention, thereby further enhancing efforts towards stress management ("Enhancing Organizational Performance through Stress Management: The Role of the My-Stress Application", 2024). All these point toward an interventional approach that Gomathi and Rajeswari (2024) and Młokosiewicz (2023) stress must be holistic, combining both organizational and individual elements to cope with workplace stress, thus enhancing the psychological wellbeing of employees. Mental healthcare provision is also significant in creating a healthy working environment.

Companies can better design a friendly work environment by understanding stress and the organization's response. Social support and stress management training can improve the employees' well-being by helping them deal with stress. In addition, understanding the characteristics of various generations, such as millennials and Z, also helps companies develop better work stress management strategies. Thus, the implementation of proportional stress management strategies has an impact on improving individual performance and, in turn, has a positive impact on the organization.

4. Conclusion

Stress is a complex phenomenon throughout everyday life, especially in the workplace. When it comes to Millennials and Gen Z, the most stress-inducing portions of the workforce are their most dominant, and they may face severe consequences to their physical and mental health. Research shows that stress is not only a type of anxiety; it is an uncontrolled physiological reaction to the pacing of work demands and the changes within the environment that need to be integrated regularly.

Due to the number of challenges they face, millennials are more likely to feel the added burden of integrating their professional and personal lives. Frustration and stress become chronic when trying to match the pressure they put on themselves with what their surroundings expect. In many circumstances, the uncertainty of the economy combined with the high expectations of being a performer in a given workplace may worsen the situation even further, creating a chronic stress cycle.

Generation Z is indeed experiencing driving problems beyond some of the abovementioned problems. During the scouting, they experienced pressure from social media, including self-comparison and expectations. In general, the unlimited flow of information and the expectation to perform well can increase anxiety and feelings of dissatisfaction. In the social context, this generation group is plagued by various reserves and emotional social cariño. Mainly related to the uncertainty of future career prospects, those already working experience stress and are always anxious regarding the ability to adapt to change.

Stress during work is an important problem requiring special attention in the service's tourism use. In this sphere of economy, the employees are usually faced with a paradoxical situation where they are expected to deliver high-quality customer service in a rapid and often unpredictable work environment. This work environment is also harsh to stress, mental health, and productivity—as assessing demonic, empty soul. Therefore, there is a need to understand stress performance to address these needs in Oman and provide appropriate support.

Companies should act to control the situation of suffering from stress, namely, by using stress monitoring strategies that produce results. This can include teaching stress management skills, creating flexible work hours, and providing access to mental health services. Stress in the work environment needs monitoring to bring fresh air within an organization where members can operate optimally. This is crucial for growth. With flexible workplaces, companies are more likely to help younger employees, especially millennials and Gen Z employees, address stress and serve as a channel to improve their productivity.

In addition, it is crucial to create an organizational culture that enhances employees' psychological well-being. Companies should foster social support and open communication among coworkers so that employees feel more involved and supported in dealing with work-related issues. In this manner, stress can be managed collaboratively, enabling employees to feel more empowered when experiencing challenges.

Work-related stress can also be subdivided into positive (e.g. eustress) and negative stress. Eustress can motivate an individual to achieve beyond their standard capabilities, while negative stress can lead to decreased performance or even deterioration of health. This clearly shows how crucial it is to identify these differences and develop proactive measures to address and transform negative stress into constructive stress.

Stress management at work is not only an individual obligation; it is everyone's business. Management, in particular, must take a more active stance regarding the working environment by identifying relevant stressors and applying appropriate remedial measures. This will help increase job satisfaction, productivity, and the mental health of employees as a whole.

Attitudes towards stress across generations need to be further studied. Companies can identify stress reduction programs that are more appropriate for each employee if they understand the characteristics of each generation. This needs to be considered, considering the rapid changes in the world of work and the many new challenges the younger generation faces.

This manuscript has some limitations that may affect the results' validity and generalization. First, reviewing literature through systematic reviews might restrict analysis to only published works, especially applicable to studies that have not received great attention. Second, focusing on workers in the tourism sector may create challenges in generalizing results to other industries because of the different stress levels and work habits in different fields. In addition, the reviewed literature does not include all contextual boundaries, such as the cultural and regional differences that affect the experiences of stress and coping mechanisms employed. Lastly, primary data lacking for quantitative data analysis on every attempt with coping techniques employed by Gen Z and Millenials sets the limit to deeply understand how effective each technique is and in what situations. Therefore, drawing upon a wider methodological framework, further research is necessary to construct a fuller picture of stress management in the workplace.

Competing interests

The author claims that there is no conflict of interest related to the study. All data and information pertaining to this study were collected clearly and ethically with no influence from any party whatsoever.

The author ensures that all the quotations and references in the examined work have been given due credit, and there is no attempt to conceal or distort facts for personal or group interests on one's behalf. This study intends to provide clear and helpful information about stress in the workplace, particularly with the millennial and Z generation scope.

In case there are possible conflicts of interest in the future, the author pledges to reveal them transparently and takes all recommended actions to protect the integrity of this research. The author hopes that the findings of this research serve as a basis for better understanding and management of stress in the workplace without damaging bias or ill intentions.

**COMPETING INTERESTS DISCLAIMER:**

Authors have declared that they have no known competing financial interests OR non-financial interests OR personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

**Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)**

The author hereby declares that generative AI technologies such as Grammarly and Quillbot were used during the manuscript's writing, translation, and editing.

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