



THE IMPACT OF WORKPLACE MENTORING ON IMPROVING MEANINGFUL WORK FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH WORKPLACE ANXIETY IN THE INSURANCE SECTOR IN GUANGDONG PROVINCE, CHINA



Hu Zonghua*, Amiya Bhaumik

Original Article

Lincoln University College, 47301 Petaling Jaya, Selangor D. E., Malaysia

*Corresponding Author's Email: huzonghua@lincoln.edu.my

Abstract

Workplace anxiety in the insurance sector is an emerging challenge because of stringent performance standards, regulatory pressures and complicated client communication. This study investigated the impact of mentorship in the workplace on employee anxiety in the Chinese insurance business in Guangdong province. The research, anchored on Social Exchange Theory (SET), evaluated the association between mentoring relationships (providing psychological support, expert counsel, and professional guidance) and lower workplace anxiety. A quantitative and cross-sectional research design was used for this study. An online survey method was used to collect primary data from the employees of insurance companies in Guangdong Province, China, using purposive sampling. A sample size of 300 was evaluated by utilising IBM SPSS Statistics version 28.0. Statistical analysis, an independent-samples t-test, and descriptive analysis were used to analyse the gathered information from the survey respondents. Mentoring Functions Questionnaire-9 (MFQ-9) and Work Phobia Scale (WPS) were also employed to examine the relationships among the study variables. Mentoring participation was associated with significantly lower workplace anxiety. Employees who received mentoring had a rise in their sense of purpose, value, and contribution, which led to more meaningful work. Consequently, this enhancement makes it possible for workers to experience psychological well-being and total involvement within the organisation. The research outcomes supported SET by describing that mutual trust, proper guidance, and psychological support improved employee attitudes and behaviours. The findings support SET by showing that mutual trust, guidance, and psychological support are linked to more favourable employee outcomes.

Keywords: *Guangdong Province; Insurance Industry; Meaningful Work; Mentoring; Workplace Anxiety*

Introduction

Anxiety encompasses mental symptoms such as excessive stress, depression, and bodily indications of discomfort, aches, and hypertension. Workplace anxiety can be identified by symptoms such as insomnia, altered appetite, tension and muscular pain, enduring dissatisfaction, and perfectionistic tendencies [1]. Furthermore, occupational anxiety is induced by one or more emotional pressures in the workplace. Emotional strains include feelings of anxiety, uncertainty over certain job responsibilities, nervousness about interviews for new positions or promotions, and the preparation for or execution of workplace assessments. Alongside heightened absenteeism and presenteeism, individuals experiencing workplace anxiety endure reduced work performance, challenges in concentration, and a deficiency in motivation at work. The root causes of workplace anxiety in the insurance sector are the demand for high-performance standards, inflexible regulatory guidelines, obtaining sales targets and maintaining complicated client relationships. Extended exposure to these demands can negatively impact employees' mental wellness, workplace morale and their overall

performance [2]. Engaging in meaningful work is a potential solution for workplace anxiety. Meaningful work encompasses tasks that are engaging, highly motivating, significant, and purposeful, serving a distinct objective. Furthermore, meaningful work serves as an indicator of occupational gratification, employee engagement, and absenteeism in the workplace. Indeed, meaningful work promotes employee involvement, reduces absenteeism, and enhances performance quality [3].

Workplace mentoring enhances job satisfaction for those facing workplace anxiety by fostering a positive mentality towards work, improving employee satisfaction, increasing professional output, and reducing inactivity rates. This is since workplace mentoring provides mentees with both career-oriented assistance and psychological support. Psychosocial assistance includes emotional and personal advice, companionship, good role modelling, and the enhancement of self-confidence. Career-advancement guidance comprises improved work satisfaction and boosted motivation [4]. Workplace mentoring offers psychological assurance, professional guidance and opportunities for skill development that may help individuals experiencing workplace anxiety to feel more confident in their positions and better able to manage job demands [5]. Workers can feel more confident in their job roles and create a profound sense of purpose in their work positions through regular conversations with skilled mentors. Consequently, proper mentoring can improve work satisfaction, employee engagement, and increased realisation that their efforts are significant and impactful to the organisation and its valuable clients [6].

Background of study

Insurance professionals often come into conflict with negative feelings and disagreements as a because organisational and working requirements sometimes come into collision with societal norms and individual sentiments [2]. It is possible that the many procedures that are intended to resolve this kind of dispute may, inadvertently, aggravate emotional difficulties and may deepen the psychological distress that workers are experiencing. The role of a Chinese insurance agent is very challenging. Despite generous salaries for effective insurance personnel, most encounter poor sales and emotional stress, resulting in elevated employee attrition because these insurance companies always prioritise agents' sales success above the development of their workers' professionalism [3]. Therefore, it is comprehensible that Chinese insurance professionals often encounter unpleasant feelings, such as irritation, due to career dissatisfaction and persistent pressure to meet certain targets. Employees must adapt themselves to these circumstances to thrive in the sector, while insurance firms try to maintain their morale using different methods [7].

Workplace mentoring can help insurance personnel deal with professional obstacles such as skill development, sales pressure and uncomfortable customer contacts by providing direction, mental support and career-related help. Insurance employees often encounter professional challenges, such as skill development, rigorous sales pressures, and difficult service experiences, which can cause anxiety and stress among them. Guidance provided by experienced workers, mental support, and career-related assistance through mentoring relationships help mentees in comprehending their job roles and duties. The assistance received from their mentors in the workplace helps reduce uncertainty and enables them to tackle workplace challenges with confidence [1]. In the insurance industry, mentors assist company workers in recognising the wider significance and societal implications of their profession, including the provision of financial protection and stability to customers and their families. As workers cultivate a heightened feeling of purpose and contribution, they are more inclined to consider their occupation as meaningful. Meaningful work enhances employee involvement, increases motivation and job satisfaction, which helps to eliminate the adverse consequences of stress and anxiety in the workplace. This support may reduce uncertainty and help employees feel more confident, which in turn is associated with lower workplace anxiety [8].

Purpose of the research

The objective of this study was to explore the relationship between workplace mentoring and workplace anxiety among employees of insurance companies in Guangdong Province, China. It investigated if mentoring (in the form of professional guidance and psychological support) is associated to decreased levels of workplace anxiety, to guide business policies and mentorship programs that support employee well-being and performance. The research emphasised these issues to support the making of company policies and management techniques that enhanced meaningful work, reduced anxiety in the workplace, improved employee psychological health and organisational performance in the insurance industry in Guangdong Province, China. This study specifically examined the helping



procedures of workplace mentoring in reducing the adverse effects of workplace stress by enabling employees' perception of their worth, purpose, and contribution to their companies. Additionally, it also investigated the vital role of meaningful work in delivering a positive result of mentoring to alleviate anxiety levels among Chinese insurance professionals. The research employed workers as study participants from insurance companies in Guangdong Province, China, to illustrate the advantages of workplace mentorship in enhancing meaningful work and improving mental wellness. The study used a quantitative research method to analyse individual workers' perceptions of job stress, aiming to improve understanding of monitoring and workplace anxiety. The research findings were intended to provide practical insights for company managers, human resource professionals, and policymakers in constructing structured mentoring programmes that enhance employee involvement, dedication, and workplace well-being within the insurance industry. By focusing on meaningful work within China's insurance sector, these findings add significant value and relevance to existing research on workplace monitoring and work-related anxiety.

Literature Review

The function of insurance agents differs from the mental work typical of other service sectors. In other service sectors, where service providers passively await possible consumers, the insurance sector depends on its agents to actively seek out prospects and convince them to purchase the policy. Throughout the procedure, insurance brokers often encounter adverse feelings due to several factors, including recurrent rejections and a deficiency of social esteem [9]. Several reasons contribute to the diminished reputation of insurance professionals. Initially, all insurance agents are instructed to use assertive marketing strategies, including persistently pressuring potential clients until they purchase insurance. These marketing strategies often irritate consumers. Secondly, several life insurance personnel often exploit interpersonal ties in the workplace. In several instances, they have deceived individuals who placed their confidence in them. Third, to attract more people, insurers established minimal qualification standards for joining the industry. The profession's poor image suggests that societal hostility to life insurance brokers is prevalent in China. Consequently, it is comprehensible that Chinese life insurance agents often encounter unpleasant feelings, such as disappointment from rejections and hatred caused by the poor esteem associated with their business [10]. These continuous adverse experiences worsened workplace anxiety by degrading workers' self-confidence, infusing fear of failure, and generating chronic mental stress, which detrimentally impacted their overall job performance and psychological well-being.

Significant employment and enhanced social support may mitigate the impact of anxiety in the workplace. Workplace mentoring may enhance the significance of work for those experiencing workplace anxiety by providing social support via improved career-related and psychological assistance [8]. Nonetheless, significant employment alone is insufficient to enhance the mental well-being of those facing workplace worry. Employment should also be fulfilling. In this sense, gratifying work refers to tasks deemed delightful or satisfactory. Workplace mentoring may enhance job happiness for those facing workplace anxiety by fostering good emotions towards work, improving job satisfaction, elevating job performance, and reducing attrition rates. Workplace mentoring provides mentees with both career-related and psychological assistance. Psychosocial assistance includes emotional and personal advice, therapy, companionship, good role modelling, and the enhancement of self-confidence. Career progression assistance encompasses enhanced work satisfaction and heightened motivation [11].

Homans [12] described in the theory that social behaviour is an exchange process whereby people want to enhance benefits and reduce costs in their relationships with other people. The theory demonstrated that the main reason for continuing a relationship with others is to obtain some benefits, such as assistance, acknowledgement, confidence, or expertise, to surpass the time, work, or other costs associated. Positive social exchanges promote frequent engagements, enhance commitment, and cultivate collaborative endeavours. The theory explained that in an organisational system, when workers receive support, equitable treatment, and substantial resources from their colleagues and management, employees are more inclined to display loyalty, work engagement, and enhanced performance [12].

Psychological anguish may affect all members of an organisation in an uncertain work environment that demands adaptability. This situation necessitates that all organisational members use their skills to the best; yet this may undoubtedly lead to psychological suffering when they fail to meet the established objectives [4]. The discomfort may lead to mental health degradation, resulting in diminished performance instead of facilitating beneficial contributions.



This condition aligns with expert studies indicating that psychological discomfort adversely impacts employee and organisational performance. Anxiety may also arise from various organisational variables, whereby, from the standpoint of SET, the organisation is seen as a domain of exchange including leaders and members [10]. It is believed that disagreements often arise throughout the exchange process, resulting in mental distress. Conflicts often arise due to inequity in transactions. Injustice inside an organisation pertains to the dimensions of formal justice and social justice. This disparity leads workers to feel unappreciated, rendering their efforts for leadership and the organisation seem futile. When this scenario is unacceptable, emotionally fragile workers can encounter emotional distress and potential worsening of mental health [13]. While existing literature has explicitly analysed workplace mentoring, workplace anxiety, and meaningful work, there is a scarcity of empirical studies exploring how workplace mentoring fosters meaningful work for employees experiencing job anxiety in the insurance sector, specifically in Guangdong Province, China. This study sought to fill the specific research gap by empirically investigating the interrelationships between workplace mentoring, meaningful work, and workplace anxiety among insurance personnel in Guangdong Province, China. Furthermore, the study aimed to investigate the aspects of SET by describing how collaborative relationships, defined through mutual trust, professional guidance, and psychological support between mentors and mentees, cultivate significant work experiences and enhance employees' mental well-being.

Research question

- What is the association between workplace mentoring participation and workplace anxiety among insurance employees in Guangdong Province, China?

Methodology

Research Design

The researcher applied a quantitative and cross-sectional research design for the analysis of the research to examine the impact of workplace mentoring on the employees' experience of workplace anxiety. The researcher utilised SPSS Statistics version 28.0 to evaluate the collected information. Statistical analysis was used to evaluate the role of workplace mentoring on workers' experience of occupational anxiety. When p-values are <0.05 , research findings are considered statistically significant. It also established compelling proof that workplace mentoring had a significant influence on employees' experience of workplace anxiety. Furthermore, the descriptive analysis method helped in comprehending the important aspects of the data.

Sampling

The researcher used a purposive sampling method to collect samples from suitable participants. The RaoSoft software was utilised to determine the optimal sample size for the study, which was identified as 249 individuals. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed among the targeted population to get the required appropriate responses. However, only 60% of survey respondents returned, which determined that 300 was the final sample size of the research study.

Data and Measurement

The researcher conducted an online survey to gather primary data from the selected employees of the 59 insurance companies of China. The survey was executed by providing pre-structured questionnaires to selected workers who had worked in the insurance industry for a minimum of one year and were at least 20 years of age. The structured questionnaires included the demographic data of the study participants. The data collection was conducted using an online survey utilising Email and Microsoft Teams.

Statistical Software

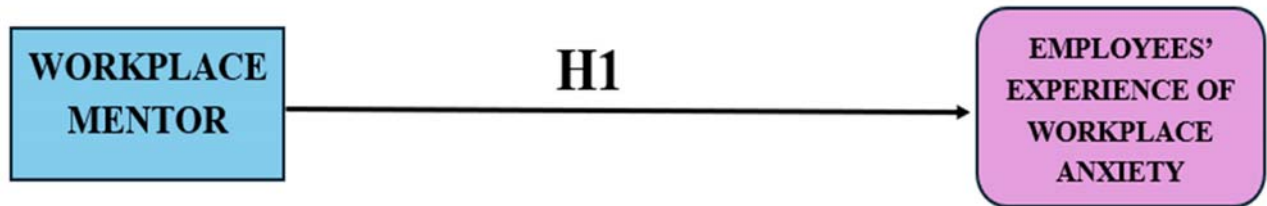
IBM's SPSS version 28.0 software was used by the researcher to evaluate the study findings, which were acquired by a survey-based quantitative research approach.

Statistical Tools



The researcher employed a descriptive analysis process to understand the primary aspects of the gathered information. Moreover, the researcher used two principal tools, the MFQ-9 and WPS, to evaluate the relationship between workplace mentoring and employees' experience of workplace anxiety in the Chinese insurance industry of Guangdong Province. These research instruments were important to analyse the research variables.

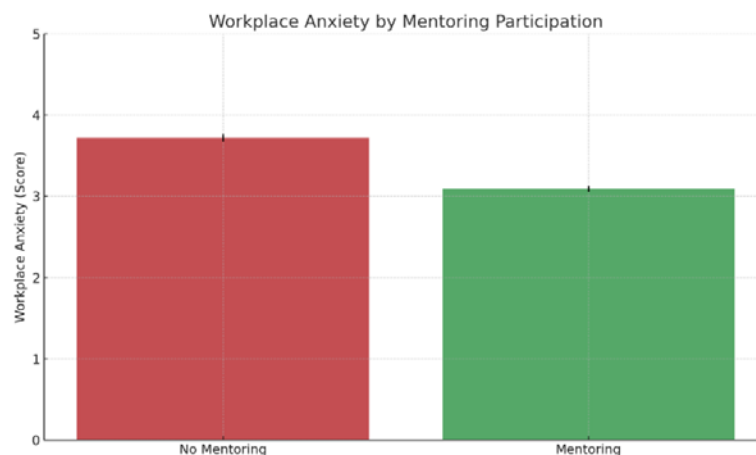
Conceptual Framework



Results

Participating in mentorship programs at work lessens the signs of occupational stress. This idea may be investigated by looking at the relationship between mentoring and the level of workplace anxiety that workers encounter. Two complementary statistical techniques were used: (1) group comparison or comparing the anxiety levels of individuals with and without mentoring; and (2) identifying the connection between anxiety and mentoring involvement. First, an independent-samples t-test was used to compare the mean anxiety scores of workers who participate in mentoring—mentors or mentees— $n = 180$ vs those who do not— $n = 120$. Significant differences in anxiety levels were found in the research. Mentoring participants reported lower average anxiety levels than non-participants ($M = 3.09$, $SD \approx 0.50$). This difference was statistically significant when Welch's correction for unequal variances was used, t (about 296) = 11.25, $p < 0.001$. Cohen's d is around 1.25. While non-mentored workers were more likely to feel "sometimes too often" anxious at work, mentored employees described their anxiety symptoms as ranging from "sometimes" to "rarely," on average.

Figure 1: Workplace Anxiety by Mentoring Participation



Collected by Author

The above figure shows average levels of anxiety at work based on mentorship participation (with standard error bars). According to the figure, the green bar represents employees who either have a mentor or act as one, while the red bar represents those who do not. A 1–5 scale was used to assess anxiety; higher scores imply more anxiety. Compared to those who did not participate in mentoring ($M = 3.7$), those who did reported significantly lower levels of anxiety ($M \approx 3.1$). The error bars (± 1 SE) do not overlap, visually indicating a reliable difference. In addition to the group comparison, a Pearson correlation between all workers' anxiety levels and mentoring involvement (coded 1/0) was calculated. The result of this computation was $r = -0.54$ ($p < 0.001$). This relationship covers a rather broad range and provides significantly different evidence for the t-test result. Although this is a cross-sectional connection (and so the researcher cannot prove causation from this data alone), the outcome is consistent with the argument of the hypothesis that mentoring helps reduce anxiety. It seems sensible that mentoring would provide psychological support, self-assurance, and coping mechanisms to reduce anxiety in the workplace. For instance, mentees often get advice on how to handle work-related stress and may feel more secure knowing they have a mentor's support. On the other hand, mentors may find their anxiety reduced by helping others and reiterating their expertise and significance. In fact, many the sample's mentored persons said (in open-ended replies) that having a mentoring relationship made them feel less anxious and alienated when faced with challenges at work. About 29% of the variation in anxiety levels may be explained by mentoring participation, according to the $r = -0.54$ correlation ($r^2 = 0.29$). This coefficient highlights the potential role of mentoring as an anxiety-reducing tactic in a complex organisational setting and is significant for a single element. Employees who take part in occupational mentoring programs report much lower levels of anxiety at work than those who do not. By highlighting the psychological benefits of mentoring, which likely contribute to the indirect explanation of the more significant work experiences observed, this study provides credence to the alternative hypothesis.



Table 1: Effects of Mentoring Engagement on Occupational Anxiety

Variable	Mentoring Group ($n = 180$)	Non-Mentoring Group ($n = 120$)	Statistical Test / Value	Interpretation
Mean Anxiety Score ($M \pm SD$)	3.09 $\pm$ ~0.50	3.70 $\pm$ ~0.50	$t(296) = 11.25, p < 0.001$	Significant difference: mentored employees report lower anxiety
Effect Size (Cohen's d)	—	—	$d \approx 1.25$	Large effect size
Visual Representation (Figure 2)	Green bar (± 1 SE)	Red bar (± 1 SE)	No overlap in SE bars	Visual evidence of significant group difference
Pearson Correlation (Mentoring & Anxiety)	—	—	$r = -0.54, p < 0.001$	Substantial negative correlation
Variance Explained (r^2)	—	—	$r^2 = 0.29$	Mentoring explains ~29% of anxiety variance

Collected by Author

Discussion

The outcomes of this study demonstrated that employees who participated in workplace mentoring reported significantly lower levels of workplace anxiety than those who did not. Positive mentoring in the workplace helps workers suffering from work-related stress by providing proper guidance to justify their job role. This research finding corroborates a previous study, which indicated that workplace mentoring provides social support to mentees by serving as a source of counselling material, allowing them to freely express their views about work or discuss strategies for managing workplace anxiety. It also discovered that mentoring enhances "confidence, optimism, perseverance, and resilience" among mentees. This research indicated that being a mentee correlates with enhanced interpersonal interactions. It was again determined that workplace mentoring provides mentees with psychological support, including emotional and personal advice, therapy, or companionship, which contributes to the enhancement of their self-confidence [14]. Nonetheless, whereas prior studies mostly focused on the psychological and career-related advantages of workplace mentoring, they did not specifically investigate the function of meaningful work as an instrument through which mentoring alleviates workplace anxiety. This research fills the gap by showing that proper mentoring improves workers' feelings of purpose and worth, encouraging meaningful work and reducing workplace anxiety. Additionally, Meng et al. [15] elucidated the relationship between meaningful work and depression, anxiety, and stress, as well as the impact of job satisfaction on that relationship. They proposed that meaningful work can reduce the prevalence of mental health concerns, contingent upon high job satisfaction among workers. Research indicated that meaningful work reduces depression rates in the absence of job satisfaction, while concurrently diminishing stress and anxiety when job satisfaction is high [15]. However, these research findings indicated that workplace mentoring improves meaningful work for insurance workers struggling with workplace anxiety [16]. Employees who get guidance from their mentor are more likely to believe that their work is valued and meaningful as well as useful for the company where they work. By incorporating research variables within a single conceptual framework, the research outcomes extended the application of SET to the Chinese insurance sector and provided empirical evidence that workplace mentoring acts as an effective organisational support system for encouraging meaningful work while alleviating employees' anxiety in the workplace.

These results suggested that workplace mentoring creates meaningful work experiences and helps businesses improve the mental health of workplace anxiety sufferers. Mentoring is thus a key organisational technique for promoting meaningful work and increasing employee outcomes in Guangdong Province, China's insurance business.

Conclusion

The study investigated the association between workplace mentorship and workplace anxiety among insurance personnel in Guangdong Province, China. Employees in mentorship connections reported much decreased anxiety. These findings are consistent with Social Exchange Theory, which suggests that reciprocal support and trust between individuals in the workplace are related to more positive employee outcomes. Organised mentorship programs may therefore be a beneficial tool for organisations in improving the mental well-being of employees in the insurance business. The study concluded that workplace mentoring acts as an essential organisational tool to encourage meaningful work at the same time alleviating insurance worker anxiety. It also emphasised the need to incorporate structured mentoring programmes for the overall improvement of employees' mental well-being, organisational performance and workplace commitment in the insurance business.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

Acknowledgement

The authors are thankful to the institutional authority for completion of the work.

References

1. Jia-Ying J, Zhou L, Shen W, Xiuli L, Huizhen J, Wentsao P. Performance evaluation and analysis of Chinese insurance companies under uncertain financial markets. *Heliyon*. 2023;9(11). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e21487>
2. Mohsin M, Jamil K, Naseem S, Sarfraz M, Ivascu L. Elongating nexus between workplace factors and knowledge hiding behavior: mediating role of job anxiety. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*. 2022;441-457. https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S348467?urlappend=%3Futm_source%3Dresearchgate.net%26utm_medium%3Darticle
3. Keerthi Dinesh T, Shetty A, Kini RS. Effects of web-based mindfulness interventions on employee work stress in the life insurance industry: a narrative review. *Economic research-Ekonomska istraživanja*. 2025;38(2):61-88. <https://doi.org/10.32728/er-ei.38.2.3>
4. Nunan JLR, Ebrahim AB, Stander MW. Mentoring in the workplace: exploring the experiences of mentor-mentee relations. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*. 2023;49(1):1-11. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v49i0.2067>
5. Mallepally A, Mallepally A. Women entrepreneurs and startups: breaking barriers. *International Journal of Advances in Business and Management Research (IJABMR)*. 2025 Aug 8;3(Suppl 1):86-92. <https://doi.org/10.62674/ijabmr.2025.v3isuppl1.011>



6. Kanapathipillai K, Hasbullah NB, Jaaffar NNB, Hong OS. Synergizing training and development in the workplace: analysing the influence of mentoring, delegation, empowerment, and job rotation on employee commitment in the insurance sector, Malaysia. *European Journal of Human Resource Management Studies*. 2024;8(1). <https://doi.org/10.46827/ejhrms.v8i1.1795>
7. Nelson SL. The impact of workplace mentoring on meaningful work for people with workplace anxiety in the insurance industry [DBA dissertation]. Newberg (OR): George Fox University; 2022.
8. Verma P, Kumar V, Singh S, Mittal A, De T, Rishi M. The prevalence of stress and anxiety level among working employees in different service sectors during pandemic. *International Journal of Procurement Management*. 2024;19(1):59-73. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJPM.2022.10051450>
9. Weziak-Bialowolska D, Lee MT, Cowden RG, Bialowolski P, Chen Y, VanderWeele TJ, McNeely E. Psychological caring climate at work, mental health, well-being, and work-related outcomes: evidence from a longitudinal study and health insurance data. *Social Science & Medicine*. 2023 Apr 1;323:115841. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2023.115841>
10. Ateeq A, Abdulrazaq AY, Alzoraiki M, Milhem M, Al Astal A. Assessing the influence of work-related pressure on employee performance: a case study of solidarity insurance company in the Kingdom of Bahrain. In: Awwad B, editor. 2024. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-54379-1_29
11. Sunny CTT, Muttungal P, Davidson BG. Greening the workplace: can sustainable practices reduce anxiety and enhance meaningful work engagement? *Northeast Journal of Complex Systems (NEJCS)*. 2025;7(1):6. <https://doi.org/10.22191/nejcs/vol7/iss1/6>
12. Homans GC. Social behavior as exchange. *American Journal of Sociology*. 1958;63(6):597-606. <https://doi.org/10.1086/222355>
13. Anwar MZ, Widodo W, Suprihanto J. Consequence of psychological distress on performance achievement: a social exchange theory perspective. *Intangible Capital*. 2023;19(2):93-109. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3926/ic.2128>
14. Erdogan B, Kudret S, Campion ED, Bauer TN, McCarthy J, Cheng BH. Under pressure: employee work stress, supervisory mentoring support, and employee career success. *Personnel Psychology*. 2025;78(1):123-144. <https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12662>
15. Meng L, Du J, Lin X. Surviving bench stress: meaningful work as a personal resource in the expanded job demands-resources model. *Current Psychology*. 2023;42(21):17757-17768. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-02956-9>
16. Roy M, Das S, Majumder T, Ray N. Evolving workplace priorities: a study on gen z's core values. *International Journal of Advances in Business and Management Research (IJABMR)*. 2025 Sep 12;3(1):1-1. <https://doi.org/10.62674/ijabmr.2025.v3i01.001>

