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Covid-19 Related Stressors and Performance: The Case of Lebanese Employees During the Pandemic

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ABSTRACT: *In the aftermath of Covid-19 and the national lockdown, various firms and companies were obliged to operate remotely from work. This provided several challenges and opportunities to both employees and employers. The reason for carrying this study goes to this new stressful and challenging subject that took over the globe. In this study, the results for the effect of job stress related to the Covid-19 pandemic and employees' performance in Lebanon will be discussed. The effect of the three main independent stress building factors were measured that includes: perception of safety, job insecurity, and financial loss, which in return reflect on the dependent variable or factor: employees' performance in Lebanon. The measurement of inferences of these independent job stressors was accomplished by a Google-form survey, with a structured questionnaire. SPSS was the appropriate procedure used to make the inferences of the outcome. The revelation of the analysis depicts that there was no relationship between the perception of safety and the employees' performance while there was a significance relationship between job insecurity, financial loss, and performance. The study shows and indicates that to reduce the stress and enhance the performance of employees, wherever possible, specifically during a crisis, working operations need to be organized by employers.*

KEYWORDS: Employee performance, perception of safety, job insecurity, work stress, performance, financial loss.

INTRODUCTION

For employees to perform their tasks with effectiveness, many organizations face a major issue called stress. Stress is considered one of the most common challenges that employees experience in the workplace. In another word, stress can influence individuals' life and create an imbalance, which may also lead to depression. In addition, increased stress will have a bad impact on productivity and will cause loss of confidence and the ability to perform routine tasks.

Usually, stress occurs when individuals are overloaded with strain. This is evident especially during a crisis related to economic or public health and safety. In this situation, stress plays a role in decreasing organizational performance, employees' general performance, and increases error rates, poor quality of work, staff turnover, and absenteeism due to health problems such as emotional disorder, anxiety, depression, work-life imbalance, and other forms of ailments like obesity, cardiac arrests, and headaches (Mathis & Jackson, 2000).

On March 11, 2020, a global disease outbreak named Coronavirus (Covid-19) was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020). To prevent the spread of infection, many governments have declared health emergencies by enforcing physical distancing, quarantine, and closure of nonessential businesses. Without preparation, some employees had to change their work style, while others must continue their usual work. Furthermore, reports of great fear, worry, and psychological stress increased, which could have the potential of causing low-quality performance by the employee.

As people suffer from the impact of the pandemic, the collective level of workplace stress, anxiety, and uncertainty that everyone is experiencing is infecting productivity, based on the statistics it has been recorded by Marketwatch. According to statistics, 70% of U.S. workers declared that this is the most stressful time of their professional lives and 94% of employees or workers reported losing one or more hours a day in productivity (Friedman, 2020). Mental clarity is crucial for productivity according to neuroscience expert Doctor Patrick Porter: "increased stress and anxiety surrounding Covid-19, has understandably caused work productivity to plummet because your emotional state is directly connected to your ability to focus".

According to studies and research, it has been noted that stress is hovering for many years by management did not consider it seriously until these days. The main dilemma resides that there is no dedicated and concrete study that clarifies the relation between stress that employees are experiencing during Coronavirus in Lebanon and their work performance which is discussed in this paper as well as the correlation of job stressors (perception of safety, job insecurity, and financial loss) with employee performance.

Employee performance is defined by the job performance or performance of individuals at the workplace. It assesses whether an employee performs his job well or not. However, there is no definite or simple definition of the term as there are various aspects to performance. According to (Jex 2002,), employee performance can be defined as all the behavior employees engage in while at work. It may also refer to the job-related activities of a worker and how well those activities were hanged (Kane & Lawler, 1978), says that job performance is the record related to the results after practicing a job for a given period. On the other side, (Schermerhorn, 1989) asserts that job performance refers to the quality and quantity that are attained by individual employees or groups of employees after completing a given task.

Performance, according to what is known as "The Yerkes-Dodson law,'' increases with mental or physiological stress but only to a certain limit. After this point, when the level of stress increases, performance decreases. In fact, nowadays, many organizations demand a lot of their employees to outrun the competition which made job stress a frequent problem. It has caused the buildup of many stressors that create a challenging and stressful environment for employees. A negative correlation between job stress and job performance exists (Ahmed & Ramzan, 2013). The prime sources of stress that considerably decrease employees' performance are work overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, responsibility for people, and lack of feedback.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stress has been approached differently during the past half a century. Since it is manifested in everyday life as a factor that can put the psychological and physical health of people at risk, stress is one of the most studied and mentioned topics in psychology (Robbins &Sanghi, 2006).

Covid-19 has attracted too much attention worldwide. This goes back to the nature of the disease, fast transmission pattern, and inadequate preparedness of health authorities to attack such an outbreak. The WHO declared it as a global pandemic and raised an international public emergency that poses a threat to physical and psychological public health. Covid-19 has been classified as a stressor since it has affected people's lives in various aspects especially in the workplace. Precedent studies on physical and psychological effects of earlier outbreaks of serious infectious diseases (like SARS), showcase increased stress, depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress among the survivors (Goulia et al, 2010). This review aims to explain stress, source of stress, job stressors related to Covid-19, with reference to job performance and relation with stress. But the researcher also tries to explain at the end that the worsening of the economic crisis in Lebanon with the Coronavirus pandemic in Lebanon.

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by coronavirus. Referring to the World health organization, a novel coronavirus is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans. They include fever, dry cough, and shortness of breath and breathing difficulties, tiredness with possible symptoms of aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat, or diarrhea (WHO, 2020).

Fear and anxiety about a new disease and what could happen can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in people. A covid-19 pandemic may be stressful for people, adults, and children. It can be stressful for an individual to be separated from others, where each one faces several emotional reactions that have an effect on his/her mental and physical health. Public health actions, such as social distancing, and quarantine can make people feel lonely which can increase stress and anxiety. Some data suggest that Covid-19 is

playing a prominent role in people's psychological well-being; actually, empirical research into this fear and anxiety about Covid-19 or "coronaphobia," as (Asmundson and Taylor, 2020) considered it, is still in the early phases of development. For example, many Americans are using prescription drugs to cope with their stress and anxiety, as demand for anti-anxiety medications has increased 34.1 % from mid-February to mid-March in the year 2020 (Digon, 2020).

Moreover, many governments, to prevent the spreading of the infection, have declared health emergencies by enforcing physical distancing, people quarantined, travel restrictions, closing borders, and canceled flights from and to countries with a high level of contamination (example: China, Italy, France, Spain, US, Canada…) and the closure of nonessential businesses. Besides the negative impact of the pandemic on individuals, adults, and children, it can lead to sharp shocks to worldwide economies and societies (MacIntyrea, 2020). According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in their latest Interim Economic Outlook (2020), they stated that "Covid-19 presents the global economy with its greatest danger since the financial crisis". Compared to an already weak 2.9% in 2019' (OECD, 2020), economic growth is seen falling to 2.4% for the whole year which can have a negative impact on business sustainability and employment. This has triggered layoffs (World Economic Forum, 2020). Some employees have been required to take immediate action to change their work styles under the direction of their company without preparation. Others must continue their usual work from the office, while some others are required to work remotely from home. Here, employees' performance could suffer as a result.

COVID-19 AND ECONOMICAL CRISIS IN LEBANON

Coronavirus crisis follows a series of crises that have plagued Lebanon in recent months. The economic crisis, which resulted from the sudden cessation of capital flows in late 2019 to the heavily indebted economy, was already devastating, and the crackdown added to the shock (Abouzied et al., 2021). While the economic crisis has mainly hit the formal sector, which relied heavily on banking and imports, the covid-19 crisis has extended the shock to the informal sector, where many workers and the poor are employed, due to the collapse of the food, retail, tourism, and transport sectors (The World Bank, 2021).

Companies and private enterprises are on the way to bankruptcy, the unemployment rate is rising, and both rising inflation (now estimated at 40% per annum) and the devaluation of the currency in the parallel market have sharply reduced actual wages (The World Bank, 2021). Within months, poverty had expanded dramatically, with the World Bank estimating it would reach 50% of the population by the end of 2020. The government has struggled to cover the cost of modernizing the health system, mitigating the impact of the shock on the poorest population (IFI, 2020).

Poverty, hunger, and unemployment have risen to record levels, as thousands of Lebanese have lost their jobs as a result of the decline in economic activity, which has fallen sharply in the last six months due to the monetary deterioration and the coronavirus, which was seen as the final blow that brought the country to complete collapse after all institutions and companies closed their doors (The World Bank, 2021).

The suffering of employees and employees in Lebanon, which has been translated into popular and demand movements, varied in intensity according to the policy adopted by each company in the light of the economic crisis, there are those who lost their job permanently and sat at home unemployed, while some departments adopted a plan to settle up to 50% of the salaries of their employees in on the parallel market 7500 Lebanese Lira sometimes (Koffman, 2020), what I lose pensions more than Contracts signed by both sides sometimes pay salaries in dollars, but the argument of the departments and institutions is that there is no green currency in the country as a result of the restrictions placed by banks on dollar deposits(The World Bank, 2021).

Lebanon has witnessed in the past period economic, financial and political crises, which were added to it, with the uprising of 17 October, the monetary crisis, and then the level of severity of the crises increased with the spread of Corona and the closure of institutions, meaning that more than 200 thousand workers joined the unemployed (World Food Programme, 2020); thus, every level of financial instability among Lebanese employees was witnessed as being the main stressor in this period of the pandemic that was accompanied by the Lebanese financial crisis (IFI, 2020).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The Person-Environment Fit theory is one of the earliest interactional theories of work-related psychological distress, suggesting that work-related stress arises due to a lack of fit between the individual's skills, resources and abilities, and the demands of the work environment (Caplan, 1987).

On the other side, the Job Demand-Control (JDC) theory supposes that work-related stress can result from the interaction between several psychological job demands relating to workloads such as cognitive and emotional demands, interpersonal conflict, job control relating to decision authority (agency to make work-related decisions) and skill discretion (breadth of work-related skills used) (Karasek Jr, 1979). The JDC model is concerned with predicting outcomes of psychological strain, and workers who experience high demands paired with low control are more likely to experience work-related psychological distress and strain (Beehr et al. 2001). However, the original concept of job demand and control was expanded in 1988 to become the Demand Control Support (DCS) theory, describing how social support may also act as a buffer in high-demand situations (Johnson and Hall 1988). As social support as a coping mechanism can moderate the negative impacts of job

stress, another later version of the JDC theory was developed to suggest that it is those individuals who experience high demands paired with low control and poor support who are most at risk of work-related psychological distress (Van der Doef and Maes, 1999). However, the perceived job demands, and decision autonomy outlined in the JDC theory have been acknowledged as being key factors in determining the effects and outcomes of work on employees' health (Cox et al., 2000) (Griffiths and Rial-González 2000).

Work-related stressors cannot always remain separate from general life stressors. Illustrating this, the Conservation of Resources (COR) Model, an integrated model of stress looks to encompass several stress theories relating to work, life, and family (Hobfoll 1989). According to this theory, stress occurs when there is a loss or threat of loss of resources. This is because individuals ultimately seek to obtain and maintain their resources, loosely described by the authors as objects, states, conditions, and other things that people value. Some of these stressors may relate to resources such as one's home, clothing, self-esteem, relationship status, time, and/or finances. In this context, work/relationship conflicts may result in stress, because resources such as time and energy are lost in the process of managing both roles effectively (Hobfoll 2001).

During the pandemic period with was accompanied by a narrow financial crisis, it seemed that most of the stress was related to loss of resources. Different figures from different parts of the world have shown a numerous increase in financial loss in the worldwide economies. This, in turn, has impacted the Lebanese economy which was already suffering from a severe financial crisis. As discussed later, a numerous number of Lebanese employees' layoffs were witnessed during the pandemic and unemployment rates were increasing dramatically. Accordingly, the main stressors related to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Lebanese labor market were mostly related to loss of resources including the financial loss and the job itself keeping in mind the safety issue that was the major concern for everyone across the globe.

In reviewing the literature, different job-related stressors related to the pandemic have been identified. For instance, Brooks et al. (2020) and Xiang et al. (2020) both discussed the main stressors of perception of safety, threat and risk of contagion, and stigma and exclusion. On the other side, Gao et al. (2020), Qui et al. (2020) identified quarantine and confinement. Lastly, Brooks et al, (2020) and Zhou et al. (2020) discussed financial loss and job insecurity as being another main stressor related to the pandemic. From this review in literature and adopting the Conservation of Resources (COR) model, the three main studies were adopted of this study: Perception of Safety, job insecurity, and financial loss.

PERCEPTION OF SAFETY

In the context of the pandemic, risk perception is defined as the psychological processes of subjective assessment of the probability of being infected by the coronavirus, an individual's perceived health risk, and available protective measures (Kinateder, Kulongoski, Reneke, Peacock 2015).

Empirical evidence has shown that health risk perception may significantly increase negative consequences of health risks and affect people's self-protective behaviors.
Dionne and all (Dionne, Desjardins, Lebeau, Messier, Dascal, 2018) found that risk perception associated with medical activities was a critical predictor of epidemic prevention behaviors. Accordingly, underestimation of the knowledge related to the pandemic could lead to decreasing implementation of social distancing.

Fear and panic spread out during a pandemic. Factually, people's anxiety levels may increase following the first death, and increased media reporting is related to the number of new cases (Rubin &Wessely, 2020). In this situation, individuals are worried about their own health and the health of the members of their family. The outbreak of Covid-19 itself and the control measures taken may lead to widespread fear and panic. As an example, during Ebola disease, there were some cases of fearful symptomatic patients escaping from treatment centers, concealing sick relatives at home (Chan, 2014; Shultz et al., 2015). According to some authors, feeling unsafe and vulnerable to pandemics are predictors of poor mental health.

On another note, during this pandemic, to improve employees' awareness, knowledge, and attitudes to health and safety, workplace health and safety training should be provided to all levels of employees. Previous studies demonstrated that employees' awareness of the risks associated with the pandemic could influence their attitudes and behaviors. "According to the protection motivation theory, behavior adjustment may be achieved by playing to people's fears. Therefore, workplace health and safety training pandemic could have an impact on employees' perceived risk of COVID-19, which, in turn, influences their behavioral safety compliance and their perceived job insecurity"(Chi et al., 2020).

JOB INSECURITY

The definition of job insecurity is the "overall concern about the continued existence of the job in the future" (Sverke, &Hellgren 2002). It is a primordial work-related stressor that affects a big number of employees. It was also linked to several negative health outcomes specifically mental health.

The economic consequences on a person after losing his/her job are serious. As matter of fact, workers who face the probability of job loss may also experience much ambiguity and

uncertainty about losing their economic stability. Therefore, when workers face such uncertainties about their jobs, they may not be able to deal with the situation, which can potentially lead to higher levels of stress. To add on, job loss has less detrimental effect on an employee than job insecurity has (Lazarus &Folkman 1984).

Job insecurity is associated with distress and negative emotions and can be the most stressful experience an employee passes through. Given the rarity of such events, researchers have examined the possible psychological implications of job insecurity during pandemics. Some evidence has demonstrated marked increases in fear, anxiety and depressive symptomology related to experiencing job insecurity due to an epidemic. During a similar outbreak, the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), symptoms such as depressive and emotional stress increased from pre- to post-SARS outbreak, and job loss predicted greater increases. (Yu HYR, Ho SC, So KFE, Lo YL 2005).

But, during Covid-19 outbreak, after the forced lockdowns, the short working hours, staff lay-offs and redundancies were bound to happen. The real danger lies in the possibility of increasing poverty, with a felt effect for years to come. So, nations have to stop this jobs crisis from turning into a social crisis. In some countries, employees used job retention program to cut hours while employees keep their pay and jobs. In others, unemployment rates have skyrocketed, but many employees will take their jobs back or get new ones once the economics re-open and activity picks up. This increased percentage impacts negatively the psychological state of workers who are still employed, as they are afraid of losing their jobs at any moment, because of the high unemployment rate around the world.

Moreover, the effect of Covid-19 on businesses would significantly increase the person's feeling of job insecurity, which can harm the mental health of employees who are touched by the organizational reforms of closure and reduction of working hours during the pandemic. This negative impact of job insecurity has been explicitly registered and documented in literature on mental health in the workplace (Strazdins et al., 2004, Virtanen et al., 2002).

In addition, greater job insecurity due to Covid-19 was related to greater depressive symptoms after accounting for demographic characteristics, health status, other Covid-19 experiences, and anxiety symptoms, which means that employers should aim to decrease jo insecurity and financial concerns during the pandemic to attack the associated mental health issues and consequences (Wilson et al., 2020).

FINANCIAL LOSS

Like job insecurity, due to the loss of income, the situation will hurt the individual's financial capacity because of the loss of income. It can also reach quarantined people since they are not able to work at all. Studies related to Covid-19 showed that people who stopped working due to the outbreak reported stress and poor mental health. Similarly, the study of Mihashi et al. (2005), in the case of SARS, highlighted that income reduction highly

predicts psychological disorders. Furthermore, regardless of income levels, the economic crisis unleashed by the outbreak of Coronavirus is hurtful for economies. So, as an afterthought, financial loss may be considered as a long-lasting stressor related to Covid-19.

"Undoubtedly, the counter-pandemic measures have had sudden and profound economic impacts. Given the coming recession, automatic stabilizers will provide a significant economic stimulus to those who needed it" (Ruiz Estrada et al., 2020). This is not a normal recession but rather a stagpression. In the short period, so long as confinement and lockdown constraints are on, the potential output will remain much lower, and economic contraction is already on its way with irreversible economic repercussions and consequences. In previous recessions, along with export subsidies, trade protectionism policies enabled businesses to recover in the medium term. But the current pandemic constitutes the traditional policy response irrelevant. Each government must preserve the country's productive capacity restoring consumer spending, business investment, and market expectations.

Lebanon has been plagued by a series of crises that was followed by the pandemic outbreak. The economic crisis which relied heavily on banking and imports has mainly hit the formal sector while the pandemic has extended the shock to the informal sector, leading to the collapse of the food retail, tourism, and transport sectors, and that is where many workers especially the poor are employed,

The government has struggled to cover the cost of modernizing the health system, mitigating the impact of the shock on the poorest population. As thousands of Lebanese have lost their jobs because of the decline in economic activity, (which has fallen sharply in the last six months due to the monetary deterioration and in parallel with the whole coronavirus pandemic) poverty, hunger, and unemployment have risen to record levels.

The definition of unemployment for the International Labor Organization based on the three conditions must be met both with people who are in the working-age, i.e., between 15 at work, being classified as unemployed if they are looking for work, they are ready, able, and willing to work without finding an opportunity in this direction. In response to what was happening, the Central Statistics Department in Lebanon, funded by the European Union CommissionLebanon, launched the largest specialized survey for the labor force to identify living conditions of families in 2018-2019, and with technical assistance from the International Labor Organization (ILO), it was reported that the unemployment rate in the Metn district was 7.1% and 17.8% in the district of Minya.

The unemployment rate varies by sex, with 10% among men and 14% among women, and at the level of age groups, the calculation of the unemployment rate among young people aged 15 to 24 shows that it reached the highest levels during 2018 and 2019, recording 23.3%. Coming the 17thof October 2019, Lebanon already started to witness economic, financial, and political crisis, then the severity level increased with the spread of Corona and the closure of institutions, which resulted in more than 200 thousand workers becoming unemployed.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study was primary research depending on quantitative data translated to numbers. The data was gathered and assembled specifically for the research project at hand while secondary data, was data that have been previously collected for some project other than the one at hand. A cross-sectional, one-time, online survey was conducted. The study used a deductive approach to show the impact of stress during Covid-19 on employees' performance in Lebanon. Data for the current study were collected by e-distribution where the researcher created the survey using the Google Form platform, then the survey link was circulated to employees around Lebanon randomly from October 12-29, 2021. There were four main variables, the employees' performance was considered as a dependent variable, and job stressors related to COVID-19 were the independent variables (Figure 1). The main hypothesis of the study was: Ha: There is a negative correlation between COVID-19 related stressors and Employees' Performance.

From the above hypothesis, three sub-hypotheses were deduced to include the independent variables related to COVID-19 stressors including the perception of safety, job insecurity, and financial loss, as follows:

Ha1: There is a negative correlation between perception of safety and employees' performance.

Ha2: There is a negative correlation between job insecurity and employees' performance.

Ha3: There is a negative correlation between financial loss and employees' performance.

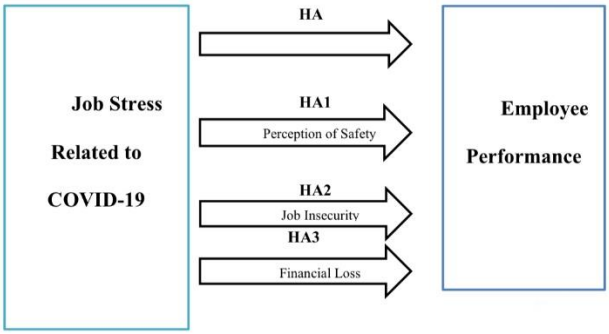

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of the Study

The survey was designed and powered by Google form, and it was administered and distributed online via WhatsApp and Facebook since it is a very popular and convenient way to reach all the participants. This survey consists of 32 questions distributed over five sections: Demographics, job stress, perception of safety, financial loss, and employee performance, using the Likert Scale (1=Strongly agree,2= agree,3= neutral,4= disagree, and 5= strongly disagree). The study included the demographic variables: gender, marital status, age, educational level, employment type, salary, COVID-19 infected cases in a family, and old aged members in the family, and it was done on 161 individuals. Reliability and validity were tested through pretesting of the questionnaire with a few participants and statistically using Alpha Cronbach (Table.1). For the demographic, social, and situational variables, the following were hypothesized.

Ha4: There is a statistically significant difference in stress levels among employees from different demographic groups including gender, marital status, age, educational level, employment level, and salary.

Ha5: There is a statistically significant difference in stress levels between employees who has a family member suffering from a chronic disease or a special medical case and those who don't.

Ha6: There is a statistically significant difference in stress levels between employees having an old-aged family member and those who do not.

Table 1: Alpha Cronbach Reliability Testing for Questionnaire

Reliability Statistics		
	Cronbach Alpha	N of Items
Perception of safety	0.622	5
Job insecurity	0.617	5
Financial loss	0.730	5
Stress	0.796	15
Employees Performance	0.694	9
All the test	0.657	24

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The results for the level of stress on employee performance in terms of perception of safety showed that 83.3% of the participants chose to agree (strongly agree and agree), while 11.6% were neutral and 5.1% disagree (strongly disagree and disagree). On average, the weighted mean for the perception of safety is 1.83 (Table 2), which may be interpreted that there is agreement that the perception of safety has no impact on employee performance.

Table 2: Average Means for the Set of Questions on each Variable using Likert Scale

Variables	Average Means
Perception of safety	1.83
Job insecurity	2.32
Financial loss	2.44
Employees Performance	2.45

The results showed in terms of job insecurity that, in general, the average weighted mean of 2.32 explains the disagreement of the employees. The results from the five questions revealed the outcomes of the weighted mean of 2.23 (Table 2). It may be interpreted for the level of stress, as it may not be evident with job insecurity. Furthermore, the reason may be that, due to the mentality of the survey participants, their fear of losing their job leads them to prove that their performance is high and not affected by the covid-19 pandemic.

The results about the level of stress on employee performance with financial loss revealed that the average weighted mean of 2.44 (Table 2), which reflects that they disagree that financial loss affects employee performance. This might also mean that because employees are already facing an economic crisis in Lebanon since 2019.

The results showed that 62.9% of the employees chose to agree (strongly agree and agree), while 17.9% are neutral and 19.2% disagree (strongly disagree and disagree). The level of stress during the COVID-19 pandemic may not reflect its impact on employee performance. This can be interpreted that stress is normal and employees may not consider it as a big factor or toeffect overall work performance. In addition, the mean is 2.45 (Table 2). Hence, it can be concluded that the relationship is neutral.

Using the Pearson correlation test, results showed that the significance level is greater than 0.05 in the case of the correlation between perception of safety and employees' performance, which showed that there was no significant correlation between the two variables (Table 3). In the other two cases of the independent sub-variables (job insecurity and financial loss) and the case of the independent variable (stress) and their correlation with the dependent variable (employee's performance) Sig. is less than 0.05, which means that there is a significant correlation between the independent variables and the dependent

variable. Looking at the negative value of Pearson correlation value ranged between 0.250 and 0.329, it means that the correlation is weak and inversely proportional between the independent sub-variables (job insecurity and financial loss) and the independent variable (stress) with the dependent variable (employees' performance).

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Testing for Dependent vs. Dependent Variable

Correlations		
	Employees Performance	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	Pearson Correlation
Perception of safety	0.437	0.062
Job insecurity	0.003	-0.237
Financial loss	0.000	-0.329
Stress	0.001	-0.250

According to the results of the One-way ANOVA, the significance level is less than 0.05, in all cases except for Age, which means that marital status, educational level, employment type, and salary affects the level of stress, while the there is no significance difference between the level of stress across age intervals (Table 4).

Table 4: ANOVA Testing for Differences of Level of Stress among Demographic Groups

ANOVA	
Stress	
	Sig.
Marital Status	0.000
Age	0.180
Educational Level	0.026
Employment Type	0.022
Salary	0.001

According to the T-test results, the Significance level is 0.001 less than 0.05 (Table 5), which means that there is a significance difference between the means of stress of the groups of who have a family member(s) that suffer from chronic diseases or have a special medical case and for those who did not have any. In the table above, the mean of those who have members suffering chronic diseases (2.05) is less than those who do not have (2.34), which means that respondents having a suffering member in the family have higher agreement levels for statements about stress, thus, higher stress levels.

Table 5: T-Test for Differences of Stress Levels between those who have a Family Member with a Chronic Disease and those who Don't

Group Statistics					
Do any of your family members suffer from chronic diseases or special medical case		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig.
Stress	Yes	80	2.05	0.55	0.001
	No	80	2.34	0.49	

According to the T-test, the significance level is 0.021, which is less than 0.05 (Table 6), meaning that there is a significance difference between the means of stress of the groups who have an old-aged member(s) in their family and for those who do not. In the table below, the mean of those who have an old-aged member(s) (2.08) is less than those who do not have (2.28), which means that the respondents having an elderly in the family have a higher agreement level for statements about stress; thus, higher stress levels.

Table 6: T-Test for Differences of Stress Levels for those who have an Old Family Member and those who don't

Group Statistics					
Do you have old aged member (70 and above) in the family		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig.
Stress	Yes	67	2.08	0.62	0.021
	No	93	2.28	0.46	

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented economic ramifications and job loss. It includes the many challenges that workers faced and are still facing during Covid-19, with a combination of job insecurity and the associated financial concerns in combination with a growing prevalence of stress. New research from Ohio State University highlights that Covid-19 not only affected the mental health, and wellbeing of people but also their engagement and performance at work. Researchers further noted that a global pandemic may lead some people to think about their life and health, which will understandably make them more stressed and less engaged at work. Other researchers also found that these challenges and risks can be offset by an effective manager who can manage the reduction in stress levels among employees and work on improving their engagement using various pro-social behaviors towards their team. In this context, researchers explained that "business leaders who are attentive to their employees' emotional needs and unite them behind a common purpose made a positive difference, and helped workers stay engaged at work, as well as contributed to their communities."

This study is sought to determine the relationship between job stress related to the Covid-19 pandemic and employees' performance in Lebanon. 161 participants were surveyed through a list of 32 questionnaires distributed over five sections. Section one included 8 demographic questions addressing the participant's gender, age, marital status, educational level, employment status, monthly salary, and whether he/she lives with an elderly family member. Section 2,3,4 consists of 15 direct questions related to COVID-related stressors. The first category focused on the perception of safety (knowledge, fear, and health risks), the second category focused on job insecurity (working hours, promotions, unemployment), the third category focused on financial loss (salary, social benefits, and financial concerns). The last section consisted of 9 questions that focused on. dimensions that included quality, quantity, time, support, engagement, commitment, and communication. The participants were random employees in Lebanon.

The findings revealed that when evaluating the level of stress in the workplace on employee performance, the majority of the responses indicated positive remarks. However, numerous responses also reflected the likelihood of agreement with the impact of stress on employee performance. Results from the correlation indicated that there is a correlation of job stress on employee performance. Findings from the regression results implied that there is a significance relationship between job insecurity ($0.003<0.05$), financial loss ($.000<0.05$), and employee performance, while the perception of safety has no significant relationship with $p=0.437$.

The correlation between the three main dimensions or determinants of job stress that were chosen for this study were all anticipated except for the perception of safety. These findings contradicted the literature that was studied including (Chan, 2014; Shultz et al., 2015; Chi et al.2020), the claim that the importance of perception of safety in elevating the level of stress. The absence of the relationship within the Lebanese society may have different explanations. For instance, it can be related to the lack of having enough information about the fatality of the virus, which was different from previous studies about COVID-19 among the Lebanese population that showed that there is a lack of valid information and high levels of misconception related to the virus among the Lebanese (Awwad et al., 2021). Moreover, the Lebanese culture is mainly a religious one where destiny, illness, and death are mostly related to the will of GOD (Aghacy, 2004); thus, the safety dimension is ignored by employees as a leading factor for job stress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is not surprising that employee stress and anxiety are the resulting stressors during the pandemic. Ongoing uncertainties coupled with complex family needs and potential financial strains present a unique challenge for everyone. Businesses and HR leaders across the globe must revisit their strategies for ensuring business continuity and employee satisfaction, where reassuring employees is of paramount importance. There must exist valid techniques that can boost every employee's performance, along with tips to handle

covid-19 related fear and family care issues. Even further, ensuring business continuity through remote working and using technology has facilitated this transition. Furthermore, it is very important to provide more information aout the virus and its consequences, so all employees understand the precautionary measures that they should be taking. Since the perception of safety seems was not considered important for stress levels, this implies that employees will be more prone to transmitting the virus. Lebanese institutions need to enhance the employees' knowledge about the virus and work on educating their employees about the perception of safety during this pandemic.

Despite all the stress, every one of us is prone to catch the Covid-19 virus. It is a challenging matter for many companies' culture and management practices, because they have to communicate, plan, and support employees. However, this study recognizes the fact that there are limitations as to the number of respondents, scope of the study and the variables used. Therefore, it is suggested that further studies should be conducted with a larger sample, a wider scope, and inclusion of more variables as appropriate.

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