



**VILNIUS UNIVERSITY
BUSINESS SCHOOL**

INTERNATIONAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

Evelina Sužiedėlytė

MASTER'S THESIS

VIRTUALIŲ PROJEKTŲ VADOVŲ STRESAS DARBE: ŠALTINIAI, PASEKMĖS IR VALDYMAS TARPTAUTINĖJE KALBOS PASLAUGŲ ĮMONĖJE	VIRTUAL PROJECT MANAGERS' WORK STRESS: SOURCES, CONSEQUENCES, AND MANAGEMENT AT AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE SERVICE COMPANY
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SUMMARY

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INTERNATIONAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

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VIRTUAL PROJECT MANAGERS' WORK STRESS: SOURCES, CONSEQUENCES, AND
MANAGEMENT AT INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE SERVICE COMPANY

MA thesis supervisor – Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dalia Bagdžiūnienė

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Thesis Description. Traditionally considered an academic discipline for planning-oriented methodologies and, in many aspects, an application of optimization theory, project management has a long history. Other academic fields have gained a prominent interest in virtual project management in recent years. The requirement for an internal discussion on new management methods for virtual teams becomes even more relevant as the field rapidly grows due to the increase of remote or hybrid workplaces. Virtual project management stress is a complicated topic that should be looked at from various angles. The stress sources, consequences, and management of remotely working project managers at an international language service company are discussed in this study.

Aims and objectives of MA thesis. The purpose of this master's thesis is to identify the sources of work stress among virtually working Project Managers throughout project implementation, to identify the major elements that may increase or decrease the likelihood of them experiencing stress, and to examine stress coping and organizational management strategies. The study's objectives are as follows: *to prepare* a theoretical background for the study of virtual project managers' work stress: sources, consequences, and management at an international language service company; *to analyze* empirically project managers' experienced stress at work and the consequences of stress for managerial work; *to determine* stress-increasing factors in project managers' work; *to analyze* project managers' stress decreasing factors related to work and personal resources and stress management measures; *to formulate* conclusions and recommendations for stress-relieving methods on individual and organizational levels, and possibilities for organizational assistance in combatting project managers' stress in ways that benefit both the employees and the organization itself.

Methods used in MA thesis and results. To acquire empirical evidence, a qualitative research technique was adopted. The data was collected through 9 interviews with members of the Project Management department at various levels of seniority of the international language service company X. Factors that could enhance or decrease the likelihood of work stress (sources), coping methods, and stress consequences were found through the analysis of the results. The data was broken down into three degrees of seniority in the project management department: junior project manager, project manager, and senior project manager.

Conclusions. Workplace stress is common among virtual translation Project Managers, according to the findings of the study. The findings of the study reveal the most important factors that can increase or decrease the likelihood of work stress for virtual translation Project Managers. It was also revealed how stress in the workplace affects work processes - the quality of work and the result of the final product deteriorates, as well as the long-term consequences for employee self-esteem and organizational development were disclosed. Furthermore, stress coping techniques have been identified. To relieve stress at work, virtual project managers try to tackle problems that cause tension or seek relief through active distractions such as smoking, music, exercise, and emotional support.

Practical advice, as well as the research's implications and limits, are provided after the study.

SANTRAUKA

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Trumpas darbo apibūdinimas. Tradiciškai laikomas akademinė į planavimą orientuotų metodikų disciplina ir daugeliu aspektų optimizavimo teorijos taikymu, projektų valdymas turi ilgą istoriją. Pastaraisiais metais kitos akademinės sritys atskleidė didelį susidomėjimą virtualių projektų valdymui. Išaugus viešos diskusijos poreikiui nauji virtualių projektų vadovų darbo valdymo metodai tampa dar aktualesni sparčiai augant nuotolinių ar hibridinių darbo vietų kiekiui. Virtualių projektų vadovų stresas yra sudėtinga tema, į kurią reikėtų pažvelgti iš įvairių pusių. Šiame tyrime aptariami nuotoliniu būdu dirbančių projektų vadovų patiriamas stresas: šaltiniai, pasekmės ir valdymas tarptautinėje kalbų paslaugų įmonėje.

Darbo tikslas ir uždaviniai. Šio magistro baigiamojo darbo tikslas – nustatyti darbinio streso šaltinius tarp virtualiai dirbančių Projektų vadovų viso projekto įgyvendinimo metu. Taipogi, nustatyti pagrindinius elementus galinčius padidinti arba sumažinti tikimybę, kad projektų vadovai patirs stresą, bei išnagrinėti asmeninius streso įveikimo būdus ir organizacijos valdymo strategijas. Tyrimo tikslai yra: parengti teorinį pagrindą virtualių projektų vadovų streso darbe: šaltinių, pasekmių ir valdymo tarptautinėje kalbos paslaugų įmonėje tyrimui; empiriškai išanalizuoti projektų vadovų patiriamą stresą darbe ir streso pasekmes vadovaujančiam darbui; nustatyti stresą didinančius veiksnius projektų vadovų darbe; išanalizuoti projektų vadovų stresą mažinančius veiksnius, susijusius su darbo ir asmeniniais ištekliais bei streso valdymo priemonėmis; suformuluoti išvadas ir rekomendacijas dėl streso mažinimo metodų individualiu ir organizacijos lygmenimis bei organizacijos pagalbos kovojant su projektų vadovų stresu būdais, kurie būtų naudingi tiek darbuotojams, tiek pačiai organizacijai.

Darbe panaudoti metodai ir išvados. Empiriniams įrodymams gauti buvo pritaikyta kokybinė tyrimo metodika. Duomenys surinkti per 9 interviu su įvairaus stažo lygių darbuotojais iš projektų valdymo skyriaus, tarptautinėje kalbos paslaugų įmonėje. Analizuojant rezultatus buvo rasti veiksniai galintys padidinti arba sumažinti darbinio streso tikimybę (šaltinius), įveikos metodai (valdymas) ir streso pasekmės. Duomenys buvo suskirstyti į tris projektų vadovų departamento darbo stažo laipsnius: jaunesnysis projektų vadovas, projektų vadovas ir vyresnysis projektų vadovas.

Pagrindinės išvados. Remiantis tyrimo išvadomis buvo atskleista, jog stresas yra aktuali problema virtualių vertimo projektų vadovų darbo vietoje. Tyrimo išvados atskleidžia svarbiausius veiksnius, galinčius padidinti arba sumažinti virtualaus vertimo projektų vadovų darbinio streso tikimybę. Taip pat buvo atskleista, kaip stresas darbo vietoje veikia darbo procesus – prastėja darbo kokybė ir galutinis produkto rezultatas, taipogi pastebėta ilgalaikės pasekmės darbuotojų savivertei ir organizacijos plėtrai. Be to, buvo nustatyti streso įveikos būdai. Norėdami sumažinti įtampą darbe, virtualūs projektų vadovai bando spręsti problemas, sukeliančias įtampą, arba ieško palengvėjimo pasitelkdami aktyvų blaškymąsi: rūkymą, muziką, mankštą ir emocinį palaikymą iš šeimos ir kolegų.

Praktiniai patarimai, taip pat tyrimo išvados ir ribotumas pateikiami darbo pabaigoje.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	8
LIST OF FIGURES	9
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	10
INTRODUCTION	11
1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE SERVICE COMPANY PROJECT MANAGER’S WORK STRESS	14
1.2. Work stress during translation project life cycle stages.....	16
1.3. Work stress sources.....	19
1.4. Work stress consequences.....	20
1.5. Job Demand-Control-Support stress theoretical model	22
1.6. Coping strategies to manage work stress	25
1.7. Work stress management for virtual project managers.....	27
1.8. Summary.....	29
2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	30
2.1. Phase 1: the pilot study	30
2.2. Phase 2: the main research	33
2.2.1. Research framework	33
2.2.2. Research methods	34
2.2.3. Research sample.....	34
2.2.4. Questionnaire for the main research	36
2.2.5. Data collection procedure and ethical consideration	37
3. RESEARCH RESULTS	38
3.1. Project managers’ experienced stress at work	38
3.2. Consequences of stress for project managers work	39
3.3. Stress increasing factors in project managers’ work.....	42
3.4. Project managers’ stress decreasing factors related to work and personal resources and stress management measures	44
3.5. Summary of results according to the research framework.....	50

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	54
LIST OF REFERENCES	58
ANNEXES	64

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. <i>Respondents for a pilot study</i>	31
Table 2. <i>Pilot study results. Levels of stress and outcomes</i>	66
Table 3. <i>Pilot study results. Factors that increase the likelihood of stress during project implementation</i>	66
Table 4. <i>Pilot study results. Factors that decrease the likelihood of stress during project implementation</i>	67
Table 5. <i>Pilot study results. Stress management skills used by respondents</i>	67
Table 6. <i>Summary of the main study results. Junior project manager vs project manager vs senior project manager</i>	77

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1.</i> Translation project implementation life cycle	17
<i>Figure 2.</i> Yerkes-Dodson law, the relationship between an individual's performance and stress	21
<i>Figure 3.</i> Job Demand-Control-Support focal points	23
<i>Figure 4.</i> Job Demand-Control-Support (JDCS) model	24
<i>Figure 5.</i> Results of a pilot study	31
<i>Figure 6.</i> Research framework	34
<i>Figure 7.</i> Research results for senior project managers.....	50
<i>Figure 8.</i> Research results for project managers	51
<i>Figure 9.</i> Research results for junior project managers	51
<i>Figure 10.</i> Summarized research results.....	52

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

B2B - Business-to-Business

CAT - Computer-Aided Translation

FFF - Fridays For Family

ISO - International Organization for Standardization

JPM – Junior Project Manager

LSC - Language Service Company

JPM- Junior Project Manager

PM - Project Manager

SPM - Senior Project Manager

TEP - Translation, Editing and Proofreading services

VPN - Virtual Private Network

JDCS - Job Demand-Control-Support model

QA - Quality Assurance

INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the work. With the world becoming globally interconnected, the language service market has seen a steady increase in its value. Over the last 10 years, the market has doubled in its revenue, reaching 49.6 billion U.S. dollars in 2019. It is forecasted to experience growing up to 57.7 billion U.S. dollars in 2022 (Statista, 2021). The translation service market expanded by 40% during Covid-19 (Market Research Future, 2021) as the need to share information faster and to reach a bigger population grew. With relatively easy access to the market, it is continuously expanding with new language service providers forming every year. Language service companies employ project managers who take care of administrative aspects of the translation process: receive an order from a client, manage project workflow, and outsource most of the actual translation done. That is, hiring freelance linguists from all around the world to work on the project. These kinds of projects do not know the boundaries of physical location or working hours. All the more, the global pandemic caused by the COVID -19 virus forced project managers to work from home even if they did not wish to do so. With changing and unpredictable working environment causing project managers stress a need for a study on virtual project managers' work stress: sources, consequences, and management became relevant.

Background of the study. In this particular research field, a lot of investigation is annually made from the perspective of translators. An annual analysis made by the European Union called European language industry survey 2020 states that the main source of stress for independent professionals (freelancers) is communication with direct clients. It is classified as highly stressful and offers a tool to minimize the stress - reaching out to project managers in language service companies. Meanwhile, freelance translators' communication with the project manager is largely not seen as a source of stress. That shows that project managers potentially mitigate the stress levels of translators by taking over the communication with the client.

The topic of stress at work is not a new one, coined by Selye in the 1930s the concept itself is vastly analyzed by many scholars (Selye, 1976; Baffy, 2020; Beer et al., 2020; Bakker & Demerouti, 2014; Siegrist & Li, 2020, etc.). By the start of the Millennium, European Union made work-related stress management one of their main goal. Subsequently, research was done in this field creating a framework for future work, as well as efficient management tools, for example, the job demand- control-support model (Karasek, 1979), effort-reward imbalance model (Siegrist & Li, 2020), and job demand-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014) to name few. As of 1996 when PMI published PMBOK Guide (Duncan as primary author) the constraints of project management definition started to be more widely used in work-related stress research. Nonetheless, the research was centered on archaic fields of project management: analyzing construction project management, information technology industry, health care, and manufacturing (Project Management Institute, 2017). Meanwhile, translation project

management was kept as a very specific, unstudied field not known by many. In consequence, most of the research is conducted by people who had worked in the translation industry (Esselink, 2000; Pérez, 2002).

In consequence, it seems previous researchers usually concentrated on virtual translators, the management system used by project managers, or workplace stress in general. While this study looks at the work stress from another - very precise angle – virtual project managers. This thesis will fill the gap of research by examining existing theory and framework and applying them to the **research object**: virtual project managers' stress. Contributing to the development of work stress discipline in a few ways: first, by examining existing models and frameworks; secondly, by obtaining the views on project managers' stress sources, consequences, and management. Correspondingly, creating a bigger picture allows a comparison between theory and practice. As a result, an improved understanding of virtual project managers' stress working in a language service company was developed. Research creates value for project managers, language service company's CEOs, human resource offices, team leads, and other interested managerial offices.

The research aim. This qualitative research aims to study virtual project managers' work stress: sources, consequences, and management at an international language service company.

Objectives of the study. To achieve the aim, objectives within the context of language service company X are:

1. To prepare a theoretical background for the study of virtual project managers' work stress: sources, consequences, and management at an international language service company.
2. To analyze empirically project managers' experienced stress at work and the consequences of stress for managerial work.
3. To determine stress-increasing factors in project managers' work.
4. To analyze project managers' stress decreasing factors related to work and personal resources and stress management measures.
5. To formulate conclusions and recommendations for stress-relieving methods on individual and organizational levels, and possibilities for organizational assistance in combatting project managers' stress in ways that benefit both the employees and the organization itself.

Problem statement. For an author to achieve the aim and objectives of the study, the main problem of research will be answered: *what factors increase work stress for virtual project managers* , *what factors decrease the work stress for virtual project managers* , *what are the consequences of stress during project implementation, and what are stress-relieving methods used at personal and organizational levels in international company X?*

Research methodology. The key tool for gathering knowledge to comprehend the topic was primary and secondary sources. First of all, a review of the literature was performed. Followed by

empirical analysis based on a qualitative investigation that included multiple interviews with virtual project managers at international language service company X. Virtual project managers' stress during project implementation, consequences, personal sources for coping and managerial competencies will be examined using this technique.

The structure of the thesis matches with objectives:

Chapter 1. Provides an introduction to the topic of work-related stress. Prepares a theoretical background for the study of virtual project managers' work stress: sources, consequences, and management at an international language service company.

Chapter 2. Discusses the methodology that was used in gathering data (pilot questionnaire and open-ended interviews). The findings of the pilot study were presented and analyzed. Research framework-presented.

Chapter 3. Gathered empirical data from the main study was analyzed, staff views were explored. Objectives two, three, and four were answered.

In final part, conclusions and recommendations for stress-relieving methods on individual and organizational levels and possibilities for organizational assistance in combatting project managers' stress in ways that benefit both the employees and the organization itself are formulated joining the practice-theoretical perspective based on data gathered.

Keywords: work stress, virtual project managers, translation project management, language service company, stressors, work stress consequences, language service provider.

1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE SERVICE COMPANY PROJECT MANAGER'S WORK STRESS

This literature review will examine the main issues surrounding remote workplace stress. The study within this review of literature focuses on the first objective set in the Introduction. The second, third, and fourth objectives will be met by the empirical research done in language service company X, while the final fifth objective will be accomplished as a result of the findings from the first, second, third, and fourth objectives:

1. To prepare a theoretical background for the study of virtual project managers' work stress: sources, consequences, and management at an international language service company.
2. To analyze empirically project managers' experienced stress at work and the consequences of stress for managerial work.
3. To determine stress-increasing factors in project managers' work.
4. To analyze project managers' stress decreasing factors related to work and personal resources and stress management measures.
5. To formulate conclusions and recommendations for stress-relieving methods on individual and organizational levels, and possibilities for organizational assistance in combatting project managers' stress in ways that benefit both the employees and the organization itself.

A significant contribution to this research will be made by analysis of the above areas in literature. The sources of work-related stress and its consequences will be evaluated.

In unison, insights into the project manager's job workflow will be discussed to address the potential stress factors that follow the job description. Work stress can directly influence the performance of project managers (PM), so the theoretical positions for impact assessment will be outlined as well.

The aspiration is, that at the closing part of this chapter the reader will have a critical understanding of key subjects exhibited and that better recognition of area will organically justify the empirical research in the field of virtual translation project management. The theoretical background of this work is based on the analysis of five main key concepts/theories that will be evaluated and combined to explain discussed phenomena and stand as a support for qualitative research:

1. Virtual translation project manager's role in a language service company;
2. Explanation of work stress in virtual PM's work (Eustress vs. Distress);
3. Work Stress sources and consequences;
4. Stress coping;
5. Stress management for virtual project managers;

In the beginning, a good starting point is to understand the project manager's role in the language service company and the meaning of work stress. Furthermore joining the two subjects in analyzing precise research object – stress sources in virtual translation project management and consequences of stress in this particular field.

1.1. Project manager's role in language service company working with virtual translation projects

This chapter will introduce the reader to the translation market, the concept of virtual translation projects and the role PM has in the process of creating the mentioned product. Project management in the translation market is a rather unexplored research area with many different branches. This research is concentrating on the business-to-business (B2B) sector that does not do business with separate consumers (B2C).

B2B translation market is not as simple as one could imagine, for long it has been regarded as a simple word transfer from a source language to the target language, and any human who spoke two different languages could accomplish this task fully (Sofyan et al., 2018). However, the modern translation market is highly projectized and the need for better, quicker results of bigger volumes massively increased work complexity. Globalization trends and the need to expand business helped the emergence of such organizational dynamics as outsourcing, offshoring, crowdsourcing, and virtual teams (Rodríguez-Castro, 2013). The nature of today's language industry makes such skills as effective communication in virtual multidisciplinary and multicultural teams, ability to operate and master various computer-assisted translation tools (CAT) (SDL Trados Studio, MemoQ, Across, SDL Passolo, Memsource, etc.), integrating translation memories, glossaries/term base's, developing ability to follow quality assurance QA tools (LTB, Verifika, Xbench), and in general developing a mindset for life-long learning a vital skill working with translation projects (Rodríguez-Castro, 2018).

Accredited virtual translation projects are structuralized by the quality standard: ISO 17100:2015. ISO 17100 is an internationally recognized standard for companies in the translation market. This document also provides information to language service companies about core process management, minimum qualification standards, resource availability, and management. Altogether, ISO standard dictates how the workflow should be managed to assure quality translation service and meet customer requirements (Dunne, 2011). ISO requires all fulfillment to be met and the person that assures the company follows the quality standard is employed PM (ISO 17100, 2015).

It is also fundamental to define and understand terminology to further research this field. A project is a short-term undertaking that aims to produce a one-of-a-kind- product, service, or outcome. The project has to have a strictly defined start and end (Project Management Institute, 2017). M. Lee (2016) emphasizes the three constraints of a project: time, budget, and quality level (defined by the customer). These three constraints define if the project is successful or not, by compromising one of the

constrain another can be amplified, the three constraints directly correlate with each other. Project Management Institute (2017) defines project constraints as scope, schedule, cost, quality, resources, and risk.

A project manager is an employee who navigates project constraints to lead virtual project teams by using various CAT tools and skills to assure project success. The 21st century is empowering efficient, a non-traditional work environment with virtual team members collaborating from different parts of the world working towards one goal without any physical interactions and that is the definition of virtual PMs who manage only virtual employees or a hybrid of traditional and virtual employees (Lee, 2014). Such unique management requires e-leadership skills and self-discipline.

In conclusion, translation PM works with unique virtual teams to create a virtual product. All work is done remotely with teams having no need to physically meet and PMs themselves working remotely having no particular need to have unmovable physical working space if technical capacities do not require.

1.2. Work stress during translation project life cycle stages

When researchers wanted to define stress they usually used one of the two ways to look at it: what is the source? What are the consequences? For example, source root would be description given by Babatunde (2013) who argues that stress is a result of various factors, that may include, but are not limited to high job demands, extensive work hours, low job control, mobbing from managers, disagreements with organization, etc.. In Lithuanian law occupational stress is described more precisely, but not far from Babatunde's description: "Stress at work - an employee's reaction to unfavorable psychosocial factors of working conditions, work requirements, work organization, work content, employee relations, and/or relations with the employer and/or third parties." (2019). World Health Organization mirrors the previous two descriptions with their explanation "Work-related stress is the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope." (World Health Organization, 2020). However, the consequences part is missing in both of those descriptions.

We could argue, that description given in medical collaboration done by Reddy, et al. (2021) who described work stress as a term that was created to define chronic long-lasting stress originated from the workplace with the consequences of stress result not only to physical but to psychological as well, is much better as it is not overly descriptive and makes sure to define the difference between stress management study field and occupational one, as well as possible consequences. This description reflects the best input and will be used for further analysis.

Work stress can be experienced in any of the following translation project life cycle stages. There is no one translation PM life cycle to be used by all companies or even all cases. The Project

Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) (Project Management Institute, 2017) organizes project phases according to their life cycle: Initiating, Planning, Executing, Monitoring & Controlling, Closing. Meanwhile, Yanan (2017) examines translation project management in more detail, none the less we can see the same pattern overlapping:

Phase 0 Initiating – customer inquiry and confirmation of order;

Phase 1 Planning – at this stage PM analyses the request, prepares project files and instructions, books resources agreeing about payment, and creates work breakdown schedule;

Phase 2 Executing – the project team receives files to be worked on and prepares their deliveries;

Phase 3 Monitoring & Controlling – is performed through all project phases, PM has to make sure that work quality meets requirements and deadlines are followed by performing sample evaluations and QA checks with every delivery;

Phase 4 Closing - reporting and final delivery done, project team released, payment approved. After a while, it is recommended to ask the client about their satisfaction levels (Project Management Institute, 2017) (Foedisch, 2017).

Figure below (*Figure 1. Translation project implementation life cycle*) shows the graphical process of the process mentioned above.

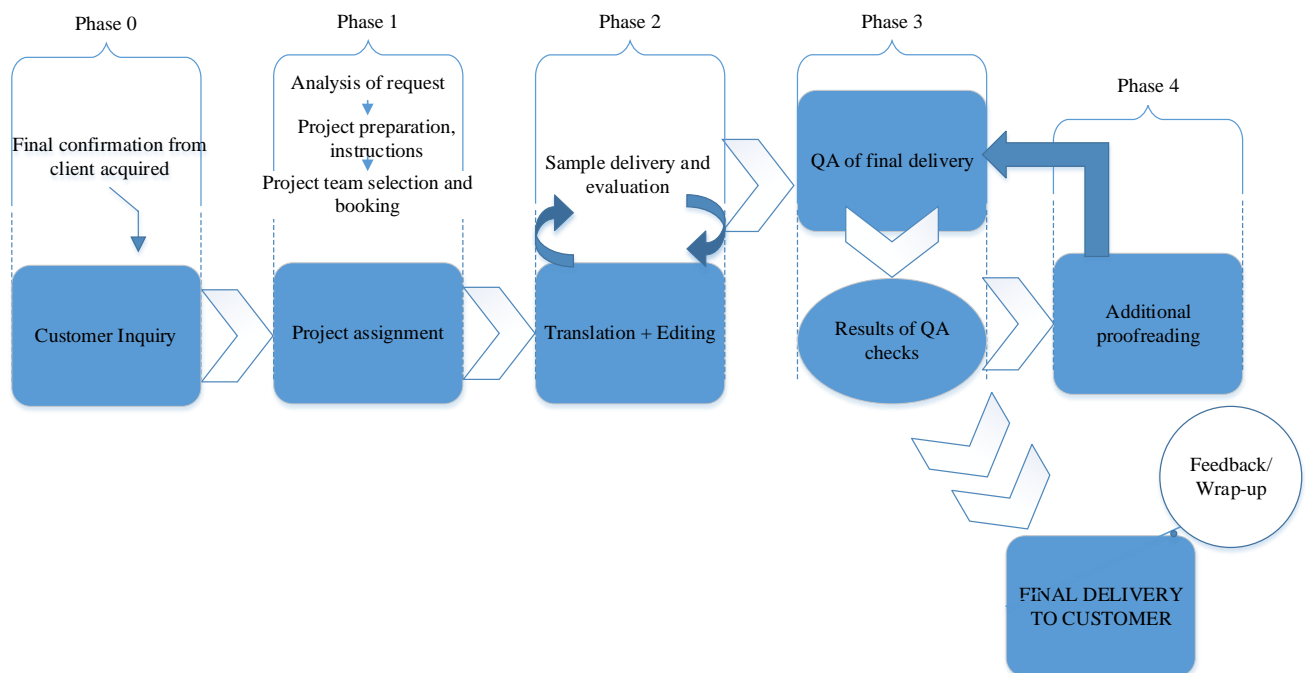


Figure 1. Translation project implementation life cycle

Source: Adapted by the author from (Project Management Institute, 2017) and (Foedisch, 2017)

Continuing, more or less most humans experience stress, it is an unavoidable component of life. The understanding and use of the term are very broad. So before analyzing work stress during translation

project implementation in virtually working translation PMs environment we have to analyze the term itself as defined in previous researches.

Most people know and use the term *stress*, but the term itself can be described in many various ways. The simplest description can be found in dictionaries, for example, the online Cambridge Dictionary describes stress as a: “great worry caused by a difficult situation”. Additionally, for business English that is for the working environment the noun is defined as a: “feeling of worry and unhappiness because you have too much work or too many problems to deal with”.

Endocrinologist Selye (1976) coined the term stress as we know it today in the 1930s, and later in his life he successfully popularized the concept, defining stress as an external event or an internal drive that threatens to upset the organism (Selye, 1976, as cited in Boruah, 2020). Furthermore, a separate type of stress was distinguished from acute stress- stress as a response to repeatedly applied stressors arouse. That is a stress that may develop not due to a particularly stressful event but more due to repetitive, constant stressors. A person’s condition in such an environment is referred to as global adaptability syndrome, which is also known as Selye’s Syndrome in scientific literature. The alarm reaction, stage of resistance, and stage of weariness are the three stages of the general adaptation syndrome, which is a nonspecific and predictable body response to numerous external stimuli - stressors (Selye, 1976, as cited in Baffy, 2020). When individuals are faced with a stressor, they are at first taken off guard, then attempt to maintain homeostasis (body’s ability to maintain a stable internal environment) by resisting the change and eventually fall victim to exhaustion after the loss of adaptability (Tan & Yip, 2018). However, writers of this time did not clarify the process of psychological or social aspects of stress, they left this area of study for future researchers. And after the Second World War stress research expanded from military work into broader areas of study especially the effect of physical environments on performance such as the impact of noise on performance (Broadbent, 1952). As well as, the concept of occupational stress (Somashekar et al., 2021a).

Work stress researchers have predominantly focused on the negative aspects of this area. Nonetheless, there is growing research and a more accepted view that stress can be positive and conducive to personal growth (Somashekar et al., 2021b). These days we can see a much broader understanding of this subject that its forefathers investigated.

All the more, some research strongly argues and has successfully proved that stress can manifest itself in both positive and negative ways depending upon the way the individual can perceive it. Negative stress is regarded as ‘distress’ while positive stress is called ‘eustress’. There are also positive situations that cause people to be stressed. It can vary from promotion at work, having a child, getting married, etc. Usually, these positive stressors have similar characteristics:

1. It is a short-term experience;
2. It makes the person feel enthusiastic and excited;

3. It improves a person's attitude and performance in the long run;
4. It also brings about a modification in the behavior of the individual usually motivating them to do more;

It is understandable why first researchers did not expand on eustress, as the events that cause undesirable outcomes are much more classified as causing stress. Such as the death of a near or dear one, lay off from work, break up, diseases, betrayal, etc. are termed as negative stress or 'distress'. The characteristics of them are:

1. It produces anxiety and unrest;
2. It is also brief but may have a long-lasting weight on the individual;
3. It is strongly diminishing a person's ability to be productive and cripples moral development (Essel & Owusu, 2017);

General understanding of stress is a very wide topic, it is clear from the literature that stress is not a single entity to be easily described. It is a combination of three components: the individual, environment, and interaction between them. The dimension of stress has become complex with evolution by researchers finding their fields to expand into. Nonetheless, broadly speaking - stress in humans is a dynamic and complex interaction between environment and individual (Lazarus, 1984).

In this research virtual PM's interactions between his working environment and project implementation stages will be observed.

1.3. Work stress sources

A stressor can be explained as a situation, person, environment, or generally anything that can evoke a stress reaction. There is plenty of stuff that can evoke a stressful reaction in a workplace. Of course, as discussed in previous chapters stressors can be temporary or ongoing. Work stressors can be grouped into the following 9 categories:

1. *Physical stressors*- particular to a harmful working environment, such as difficult/poor working conditions;
2. *Task-related stressors* – related to tight deadlines, big workload, monotonic work specifics or even interruptions, and inability to concentrate on one work;
3. *Role stressors*- associated with work position un-clarity, role overload, and even conflicting of one's responsibilities inside the workspace;
4. *Social stressors* – caused mainly by other people, classified as interpersonal aspects such as mobbing, sexual harassment, struggle to adapt in the workplace, clash with hire-ups;
5. *Work schedule-related stressor* – inability to do the job by defined hours, uneven work time arrangement, also constantly changing working hours, unplanned overtime;

6. *Career-related stressors* – everything that can cause stress related to one's livelihood including but not constricted by cutbacks, early retirement, lack of career opportunities, sense of glass ceiling, fear of layoff;

7. *Traumatic events*- major events that cannot be controlled, force majeure, and workplace manslaughter;

8. *Stressful change processes*- can vary from inside of the company as a new process or technology installation, or even more widespread such as mergers/acquisitions;

9. *Work-life balance*- family gets exposed to work-related hazards, or a person does not have sufficient time or health to have a balanced personal life (Muchinsky & Howes, 2019; Sonnentag, 2018);

Some amount of stress is essential to motivate a person to work through a challenge and as mentioned before it is called eustress, and it can be appraising and stimulating as a positive thing. Eustress cannot be defined by a stressor type, it can only be explained by the individual's perceptions of the situation (Somashekar et al., 2021b). However, if one is subjected to stressors for a prolonged time, especially without any real coping strategies in place or any support that may and should lead to a state of distress. Furthermore, result of continued exposure to unresolved stressors may cause severe short or long-term mental or physical health issues (Beer et al., 2020). Those physical and mental consequences will be discussed in the following chapter.

1.4. Work stress consequences

Stress classified as lower or higher amount than an optimal - result in a decrease of PM's performance and consequentially- increase the risk of a poor project outcome. Yerker- Dodson law illustrates worker's performance under stress, it is illustrated by an inverted-U-shaped function, see *Figure 2. Yerkes-Dodson law, the relationship between an individual's performance and stress* (Farnes, 2019).

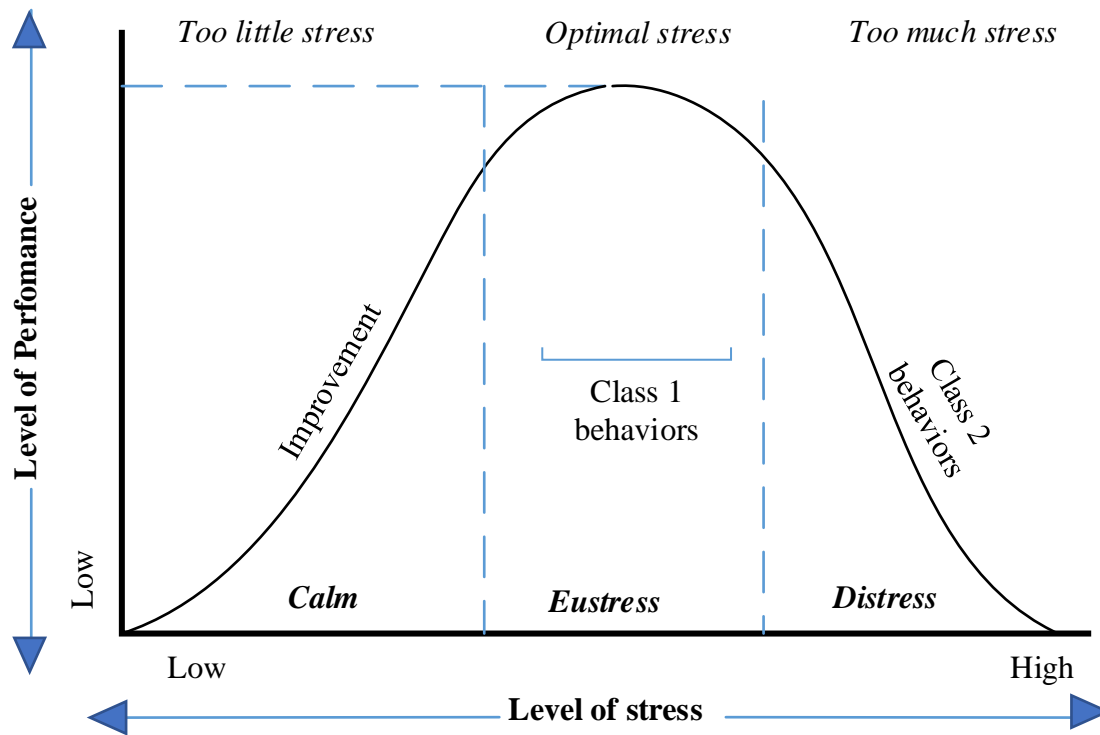


Figure 2. Yerkes-Dodson law, the relationship between an individual's performance and stress

Source: Adapted from K. Farnes (2019) who adapted from Anderson (1976)

Figure 2 demonstrates how increasing job demand influences PM's performance, eustress can be experienced up to a certain level, but unavoidably without managing stressors will result in a decline in performance. At Class 1 behaviors PM will experience energy, he/ she will be focused and work will be pleasant- they will be in problem-solving mode. In Class 2 behavior PM starts to narrow his attention only to problem-solving, will become anxious, and start to ignore important information. Feeling distress PM may find it difficult to concentrate on project tasks or even feel emotionally upset experience health issues, and start to search for anxiety-reducing options: emotional and defensive coping mechanisms (Farnes, 2019). So the stress can directly affect how PM performs and thereby possibly compromise the workplace.

As this research is mainly taken into consideration PM's experiences, we have to discuss the individual-personal symptoms of stress. Somashekar et al. (2021a) believe that outcomes of occupational stress-related symptoms can be divided into three major categories: physiological, psychological, and behavioral. Furthermore, another research stated that occupational stress is a direct influence to a low organizational commitment, high turnover rates, and might result in counterproductive work behavior (Hoff et al., 2017). Others argue, that stress overload produces at least 9 psychological and physical strain symptoms experienced by an individual:

1. *Job dissatisfaction*. 2. *Job tension*. 3. *Lower self-esteem*. 4. *Threat*. 5. *Embarrassment*. 6. *High cholesterol levels*. 7. *Increase hear rate*. 8. *Skin resistance*. 9. *Smoking* (Cooper & Mashal, 2013).

Keeping all the symptoms in mind we cannot avoid consideration of an individual's personality predisposition that might influence how the subject perceives the stressors, their capabilities, and their personality. A study done comprised work-related stress impact into 4 categories:

1. Physical- tension in neck/shoulders, weight increase, insomnia, fatigue;
2. Cognitive – experiences of depersonalization, perception of ineffectiveness, perceiving themselves as not valued or capable of effective decision-making;
3. Emotional – fear, powerlessness, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and even depression reported;
4. Social- difficulties to "leave work at work", fear of talking about their career choice, challenges while interacting with their personal life: relatives, friends, family (Beer et al., 2020);

More notably, in another study conducted it was revealed that stress caused by lack of financial rewards, inflexible working hours, and low control over work environment and decisions - made direct negative effect on employee's productivity and commitment, increased turnover rates, as well as encouraging dissatisfaction with the employer. Causing loss of time spent working and effectively the loss of money for the company (Ekienabor, 2016).

1.5. Job Demand-Control-Support stress theoretical model

More than a few psychological models are analyzing the occurrence of work-related stress, bus for this research the author chose to use Job Demand-Control-Support (JDCS) model by Karasek (1979) for further research as it is most beneficial for analyzing industry and application in a work setting.

Karasek's JDCS model's name reveals its focal point is working environment tasks that contradict each other, he divides it into three following segments (*Figure 3. Job Demand-Control-Support focal points*):

1. *Job demands* – psychological, physical, social, or organizational aspects that ask continues physical/psychological efforts: it can be tight deadlines or large volume of work;
2. *Job control* – the ability to perform decision making efficiently combating challenges;
3. *Social support* – from colleagues and managers (Dutheil et al., 2020);

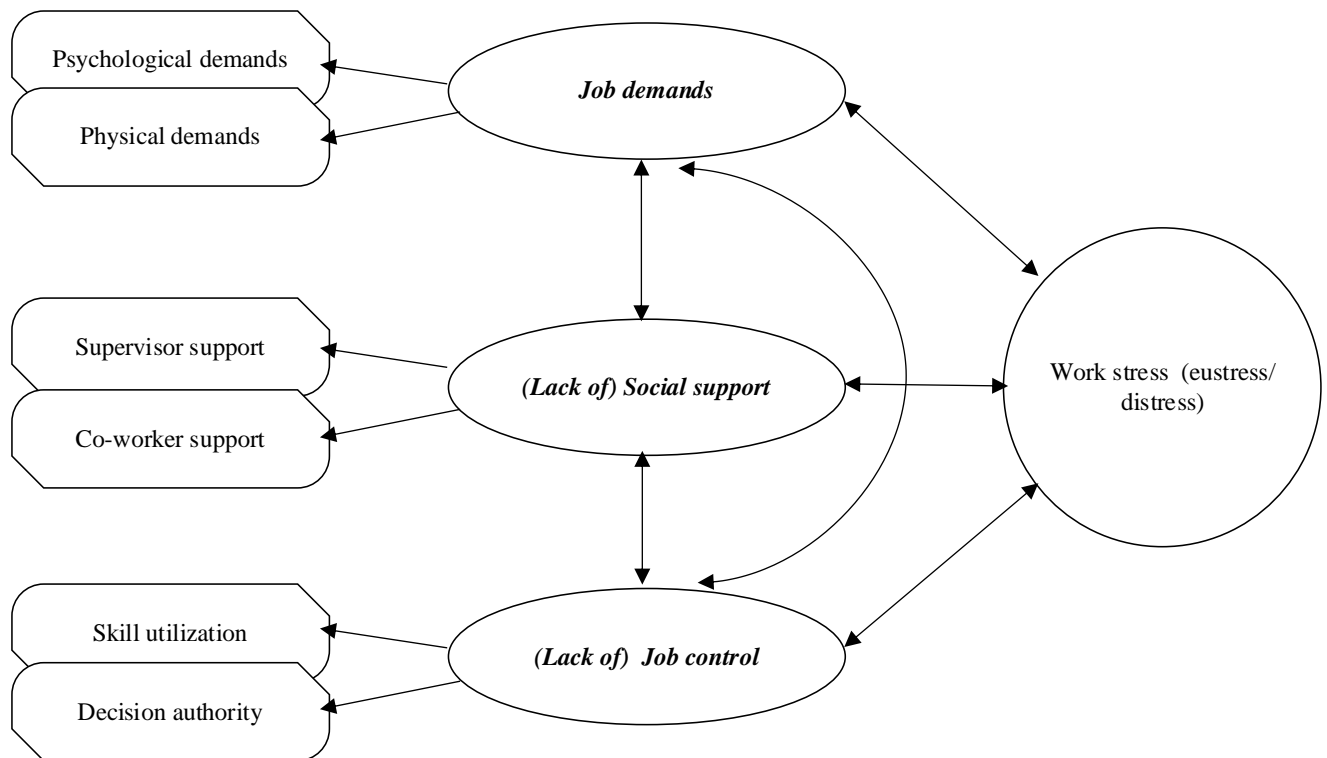


Figure 3. Job Demand-Control-Support focal points

Source: Created by author adapted from (Dutheil et al., 2020)

Individuals that experience autonomic *job control* persevere through the difficulties of job demands using their authority in making work-related decisions and utilizing their skill set to carry out work-related tasks (Ellison & Caudill, 2020). Dutheil et al. (2020) explain the job control component as a decision-making latitude interacting with persons use and improvement of skill set and the ability to have decision-making autonomy, that is person's capability to make his or her own best choices to deal with urgent work situations that present themselves as challenges, solve problems efficiently (Dutheil et al., 2020). It has been proven that a person's psychological symptoms deteriorated when job demands are high, but decision latitude is low (job control). On the other hand, strong group support automatically raises the level of decision latitude (Theorell, 2020).

In 1979 when Karasek created the JDCS model the main purpose of it was not to explain the workplace stress but to delineate the contributing factors and their influence on stress experienced by the workforce in a working environment. In the beginning, a *strain hypothesis* was created. The model itself is based on the idea: an individual experiences stress when job demand is high, but control is low (Kim et al., 2021) (Figure 4. Job Demand-Control-Support (JDCS) model).

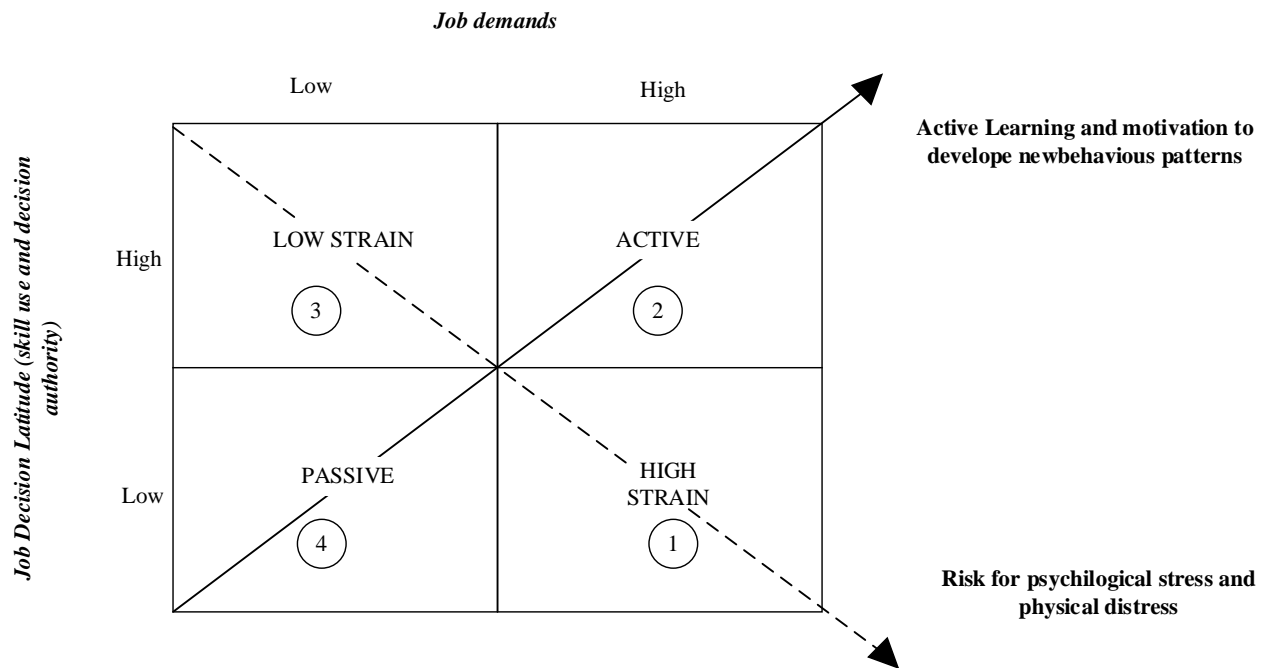


Figure 4. Job Demand-Control-Support (JDCS) model

Source: Created by author adapted from (Karasek, 1979, as cited in Dutheil et al., 2020)

As seen in the figure above, JDSCS proposes 4 work environments, also known as four quadrants that showcase different experiences individual perceives while in contact with various levels of job demands and job control:

1. High Strain/tense job strain;
2. Active;
3. Low Strain;
4. Passive;

Workers within the High job strain group that experience high demand and low control and are prone to stress-related disorders. In the quadrate for high job demands and high job control is identified as active. This is usual for highly skilled professionals that are in high occupational positions such as the heads or directors of companies. Low strain workers are in high job control and low job demands quadrant are not in any real danger of risk for mental health problems, this workplace situation is relatively rare and only typical for creative jobs as artists, architects, etc. And finally, passive jobs that have low job control and low job demand usually are not satisfying if an individual has not reached set goals.

Before mentioned *support dimension* came to light much later in 1990 with the “iso-strain“ hypothesis. The hypothesis suggests that an individual is prone to stress and other psychological consequences when high job demand is combined with low support and control. And even further a “buffer hypothesis“ for the JDSCS model states that the level of control and support negotiate the liaison

between job demands and negative psychological outcomes (Finstad et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2021; Blanch, 2016).

To conclude, if the job demands are high, the employee and managerial office should help assure high job control and support to minimize work stress.

1.6. Coping strategies to manage work stress

This paragraph will discuss the most relevant strategies employees use to combat work-related stress. When faced with a situation that raises stress - people employ a dynamic process of making cognitive and behavioral decisions to lessen stress, such process is called coping. Coping helps to reduce the negative effects caused by stress on physical health and increases the capability to psychologically adjust to a changed situation (Shin et al., 2020).

There is no one way to group coping strategies, but they are generally classified in several theories, such as *problem-focused (approach)*, *emotional-focused (avoidance)*. One strategy may be effective in a setting that another would not show results, a person can also use several coping measures (Liem et al., 2021).

Appraisal-focused coping strategies

Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman (1984, as cited in MacIntyre et al., 2020) also argue, that several coping strategies are used to battle the same situations, the coping process has two stages: primary and secondary appraisals.

During primary appraisal: problem-focused or emotional-focused coping strategies are used to allocate and change the source of stress. Problem-focused coping actively seeks information and solves difficulties to transform the environment. Emotional-focused coping entails venting sentiments, experiencing denial, and seeking social support to shift how one thinks or feels about a difficult circumstance (Shin et al., 2020). In summary, a person at first tries to change the environment to remove stressors or adapt emotionally not to feel the stressor.

Following is secondary appraisal: at this stages people withdraw and try to avoid any emotional responses, reaching for active problem solving, positive reframing, seeking social support, and any possible distractions from the stressor (alcohol, relaxation, sports, etc.). It also can be called acceptance or avoidance, this coping strategy is often associated with lower depressive symptoms (Rolin et al., 2021). On the other hand, relaxation, searching for support, and adapting to a changed life/situation/environment can demonstrate better outcomes for a person's physical health and adaptability in long run (Kennedy et al., 2019).

Adaptive / Maladaptive behavior coping strategies

Adaptive behavior is similar, but not the same as problem-focused coping, especially in cases where an employee is not able to influence the stressor by changing it. Adapting coping means that the employee has to learn and grow from their setbacks and failures. This coping strategy can also produce maladaptive behavior which is blaming others a.k.a projections, self-blame, low self-esteem which in a long time can be factors to cause or aggravate depression, anxiety, and behavioral issues (Collin et al., 2020).

Another study has shown that adults that do not have the capabilities to cope adaptively with stress start experiencing elevated levels of depression, anxiety, or other forms of distress symptoms. As a result, they find it even more difficult to employ any constructive coping methods: reappraisal, affirmation, conflict resolutions, attention redeployment, and problem-solving (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2018). Reacting to a stressor at work can call out different actions, but this coping strategy does not ignore the issue.

Humor / Cynicism

Humor as a strategy to manage stress has been researched and proved numeral times, by the research done it has been stated statistically that employees who score high on using humor are less likely to be seriously affected by a stressor compared to employees who score low on the use of humor (Fritz et al., 2017). Self-enhancing humor - keeping a cheerful perspective on the circumstances and reevaluating stressors to be understood through a prism of humor have shown to successfully buffer stress outcomes by providing a feeling of authority and preeminence (Van Oortmerssen et al., 2020).

On the other hand, uncontrolled humor can lead to organizational cynicism. An employee can start masking their emotional exhaustion with a cynical attitude, trying to diminish the stressor. Such behaviors should be noticed and controlled as organizational cynicism is often accompanied by counterproductive work behaviors, turnover intentions, and lack of commitment of mentioned employees (Naseer et al., 2021). Which is why, it is suggested that humor is one of the most effective coping techniques until the perspective of the stressor is not cynical.

Destressitizers - Relieving stress

Most recently a new term was created by The Journal of the Canadian Medical Association that joined more practical ways to cope with work stress. Any method that allows a person to relieve stress is referred to as a destressitizers (Van Oortmerssen et al., 2020). They include but are not limited to these examples:

- Time management;
- Autogenic training (Self-generating relaxation);
- Cognitive therapy (combating negative thoughts);

- Dispute resolution;
- Regular exercise;
- Getting a hobby;
- Meditation;
- Breathing exercises;
- Relaxation techniques;
- Artistic expression;
- Fractional relaxation (state of deep rest by practicing deep breathing, yoga, tai chi);
- Progressive relaxation (to relieve muscle tension);
- Spa massage therapy;
- Spending time in nature;
- Listening to certain types of relaxing music (Paneru & Lohote, 2021);

To conclude, there are different ways to approach coping method classification and there is no one way to solve stress personally. All coping methods depend on the situation and usually, there are several used at the same time.

1.7. Work stress management for virtual project managers

The previous subchapter discussed how an employee copes with stress personally, this part will analyze the tools that a managerial office can employ to assist an employee in controlling stress or growing their competence to cope with mentioned phenomena or removing the hazard. The goal of this subchapter is to examine recent research done analyzing effective ways in which job stress can be prevented or reduced in a company.

Historically studies are grouped into three levels of preventative interventions management is suggested to do:

- Primary prevention – eliminating and preventing stress altogether;
- Secondary prevention- detecting stressor and implementing processes to manage it, stress symptom reduction, or improving stress management skills;
- Tertiary prevention – focus on the already prevalent symptom of stress that has caused physical or mental harm and how the workplace can offer assistance programs to effectively recover and rehabilitate (Jimmieson et al., 2021);

We can argue that, job redesign (e.g. lowered or altered workloads, planned breaks, role ambiguity), effective leadership (e.g. respect for diversity, cultivating meaning and purpose), job resources (e.g. job ownership, peer assistance, appreciation), and especially open communication (e.g. team meetings are among the most commonly cited stress reduction strategies in work stress

management related studies. More than a few health and – well-being initiatives, as well as flexible work practices and family-friendly regulations, are strongly advised to be employed by the company's leadership (Jimmieson et al., 2021).

Tannenbaum et al. (2021) argue that management should help employees to keep a healthy work-life balance thence effectively combating stress, he puts the biggest attention to what role managers should perform to benefit employee well-being as well as their performance by employing primary prevention. Many other studies were recently done placing leadership at the epicenter of stress management for their teams, mostly discussing responsible and inclusive leadership (Ullah et al., 2021) or authentic leadership (Sainz et al., 2021).

Even more, Sainz et al. (2021) researched and proved that the more employees perceived that their employer uses authentic leadership style the more they felt like they were regarded as human by their employers and reported less stress experienced at the workplace. On another hand, Oruh et al. (2021) argue that on the eve of the recent COVID- 19 pandemic compassionate approach to managerial leadership should be employed to battle employee stress, after his research he also argued that it's the most effective approach significantly. Jimmieson et al. conducted research in 2020 which partially agrees with Sainz, they found out that these management strategies proved to be ineffective:

- Being demanding and giving instructions or instructing staff what to do without listening to their opinion;
- Handling problems in a non-collaborative manner;
- Failing to implement stress-reduction strategies;
- Generic training courses that are not tailored to the organizations needs as well as relying on poor advice from outside support agencies;
- Supervises recommending a course of action that employees interpret as a critique;
- Well-intentioned techniques are being implemented at times when employees feel hesitant or don't have time to interact with the supervisors' suggestions;

Meanwhile, Graves & Karabayeva (2020) identified the most common challenges inherent to virtual work and the management of the areas can concentrate to implement secondary prevention:

- *Technology challenges* – ensuring appropriate hardware and software, technical support is available;
- *Increases workloads* – to handle the time pressure associated with adopting technology that compels employees to perform quicker or under tight deadlines, managers should set realistic goals and deadlines;
- *Low-Quality manager- Employee relationship* – resist the temptation to micromanage virtual employees, grow trust, demonstrate reactivity in helping employees to succeed with their tasks, focus on outcomes, provide the level of autonomy suitable for the level of experience;

- *Lack of social connection* – recommendation to visit the office physically and greet the team before starting work, virtual meetings, and managers should keep employees informed about the organizational goals;

- *Burring of the work-home boundary* – setting a good example on work-life balance, organizing workshops on work-life balance and post-work recuperation, discouraging a culture of overwork;

And another study conducted by Sjöblom et al. (2019) argued that one of the most important things that employees need is assistance in learning stress management skills, workload management and even using stress management tools including their psychological resources.

1.8. Summary

The theoretical framework of this study uses The Job Demand-Control-Support model, which effectively describes how job specifics affect employees' work stress. This model provides the sources of work stress: job demands (time demands, monitoring demands, and problem-solving demands), opportunities to control it (personal and organizational), and opportunities for management to intervene. To sum up, the chosen theoretical framework helps to analyze three main concepts of this research: virtual Project Managers' work stress: *sources, consequences, and management* by categorizing the causes.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methods of the research process will be discussed in this chapter. The study was split into two parts. This chapter detailed the methodologies employed, including the research strategy, data collection, and framework for data analysis.

This qualitative **research aims** to study virtual project managers' work stress: sources, consequences, and management at an international language service company. As this research analyses people's subjective experiences, views, and beliefs that cannot be quantified statistically researcher used a qualitative technique (Percy et al., 2015).

2.1. Phase 1: the pilot study

The pilot study was the first stage of the investigation. Pilot studies, regardless of the approach used, are a useful process for preparing a full-scale investigation (in this research the Phase 2). It can be used to find and address potential practical concerns of the interviewed later on in Phase 2 research and even test the structure of questions (Majid et al., 2017). It is also suggested that piloting the interviews could strengthen the final questionnaire if tested with a small sample and modified accordingly. Based on the research topic and its individuality nature researcher decided to use pilot interviews as recommended with such topics.

This research was carried out at the language service company X. The company provides TEP (translation, editing, proofreading), website and software localization, terminology management, and linguistic evaluating services. The analyzed company primarily specializes in working with pharmaceutical, medical technology, biotech, and healthcare companies around the world. A pilot study was performed with open-ended questions. The goal of the questionnaire (which can be found in Annex 1. *Pilot Questionnaire*) was to determine what factors might enhance or decrease the chance of stress. Four open-ended questions were included in the survey, together with five demographic questions (gender, age, country, job title, and years in the project management department) to keep consistency with further research:

1. Please evaluate in general the level of stress which you experience in your work as a project manager? Is it low, medium, or high? What are the signs of experiencing stress?
2. What factors increase your stress during project implementation?
3. What factors decrease the likelihood of you experiencing stress during project implementation?

4. What concrete measures do you use to decrease or cope with the stress?

The pilot study’s sample was made up of non-probability sampling of 3 virtually working PMs in different seniority positions: junior project manager, project manager, and senior project manager (see Table 1. *Respondents for pilot study*). The pilot questionnaire was conducted by email, volunteer requests to participate were sent out on November 2021 (see Annex 2. *Participation request*), data was collected the same month (respondents’ answers can be found in Annex 3. *Results of a pilot questionnaire*).

Table 1. *Respondents for a pilot study*

No	Gender	Age	Nationality	Position	Years of experience in working with translation projects
PM 1	Female	24	Lithuanian	Junior Project Manager	<1 year
PM 2	Male	32	Lithuanian	Project Manager	2.4 years
PM 3	Female	29	Lithuanian	Senior Project Manager	3 year

Source: Composed by author

The results of the pilot study were used to identify the primary elements that could raise or decrease the likelihood of stress. As well as personal work-related stress levels together with symptoms, and personal management measures. Results of the pilot study can be seen below shown in *Figure 5*.

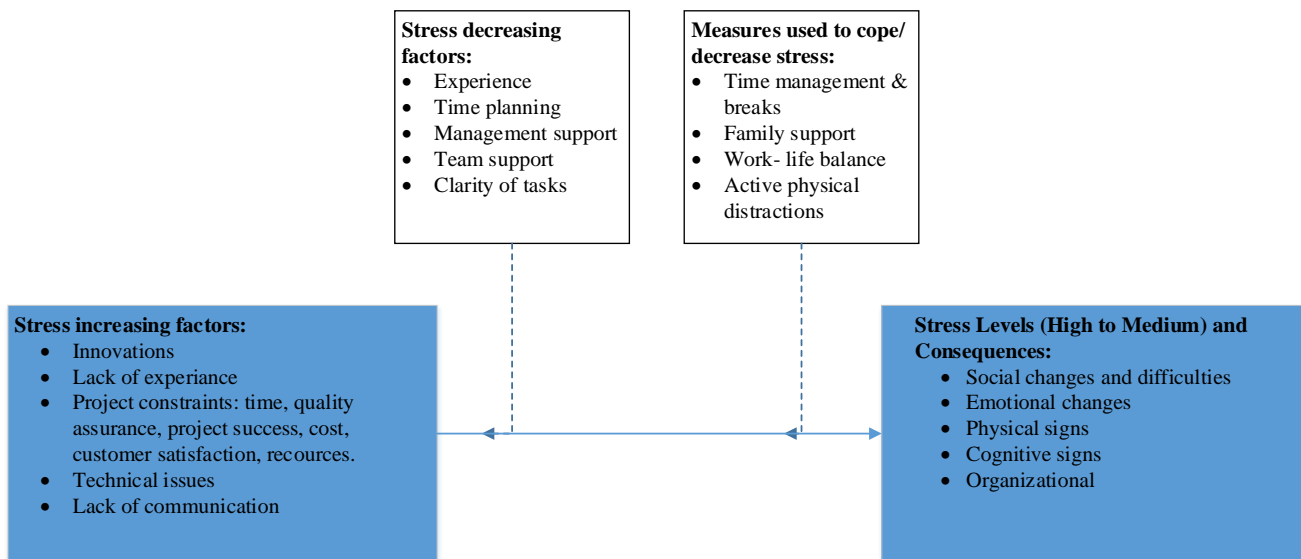


Figure 5. Results of a pilot study

Source: Composed by author

Levels of stress reported: high and medium stress included such symptoms:

- Loss of sleep;
- Having work-related dreams;
- Involuntary thoughts about work after working hours;
- Social changes and difficulties: not wanting to communicate with family, friends;
- Emotional changes: being grumpy, overly emotional, angry, agitated;
- Physical signs: headaches, neck pain, overall body tension, anxiety (mentioned all 3 times), tiredness or even exhaustion;
- Cognitive signs: inability to rationalize, implement urgent actions, losing the ability to understand and pass on instructions;

Factors that *boost* the likelihood of experiencing stress during project implementation:

- Innovations: dealing with new systems, figuring out and implementing new procedures;
- Lack of personal experience and knowledge about tools used;
- Heavy or unplanned workload;
- Stakeholder management: dealing with client complaints, reports to management;
- Snowball effect issue caused by early-stage mistakes;
- Very tight deadlines;
- Lack of resources for project;
- Project team not following deadlines;
- Incompetent team/ coworkers that need training or constant support;
- Clients expediting the deadlines, changing budget or scope middle of a project;
- Technical issues;

Factors that *decrease* the likelihood of stress during project implementation have been discovered based on the replies supplied:

- Experience;
- Good time planning: breaks, feasible deadlines, proper prioritization;
- Management support: workload distribution, company providing the possibility to take time off;
- Team support: good work environment, high availability of resources;
- Good communication between coworkers: easily accessible information;
- Clear tasks: no distractions/additional requests during the process;

Stress management skills used by respondents that have proved successful:

- Adaptability;
- Good time management skills;
- Efficient breaks with calming habits: tea, games, nature, short walks;
- Family support;
- Staying organized: making a schedule and to-do list;
- Active distractions from physical symptoms: listening to loud heavy music, singing, meditating, etc.;

The pilot research revealed that chosen sample is suitable for this study. Respondents see a direct link between their work and experienced symptoms caused by medium to high stress. Furthermore, the findings also show that there is a link between the elimination of project implementation stressors and project success. After learning the levels of stress and characteristics of stressors and management tools to decrease the likelihood of experiencing stress in the workplace researcher is enabled to examine virtual project managers' work stress: sources, consequences, and management at an international language service company.

2.2. Phase 2: the main research

2.2.1. Research framework

This study's research framework was developed based on the literature analysis as well as the finding of a pilot interview. The research was done to answer the main problem: what is virtual project managers' work stress: sources, consequences, and management at international language service company X?

The research model is depicted in *Figure 6* below. It is supported by the finding of a pilot study, along with stress management and consequences basics found during literature analysis.

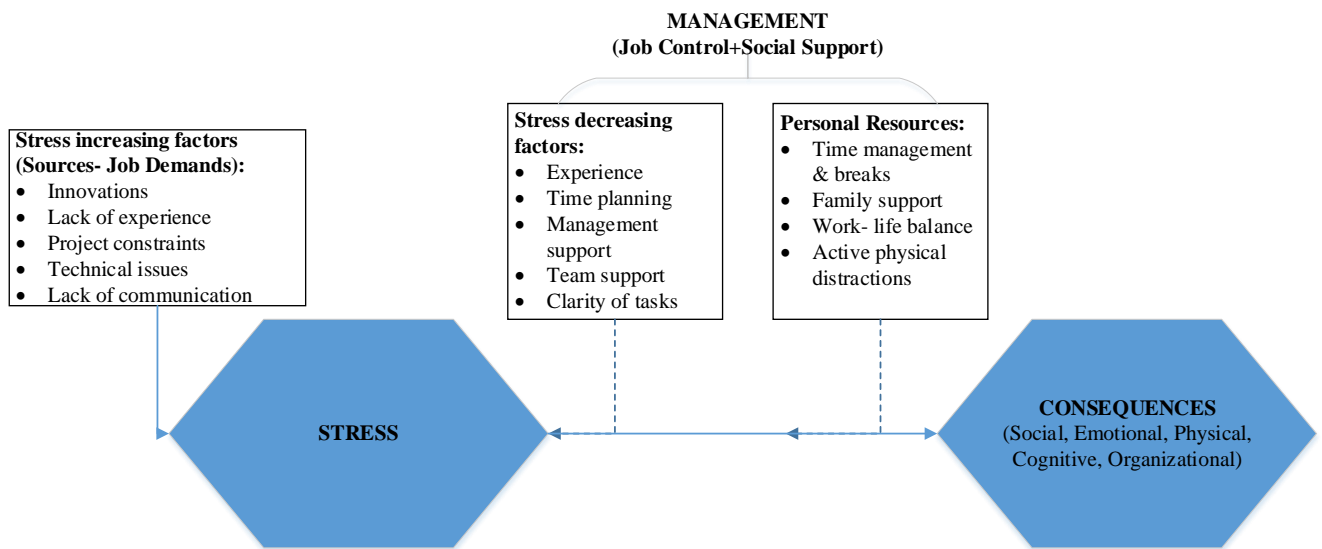


Figure 6. Research framework

Source: Composed by the author

2.2.2. Research methods

For the main study, a qualitative research technique was employed. Qualitative data were obtained primarily through interviews. However, to establish a framework around the interviews and to make sure the research problem is answered open-ended questions pertaining to the problem were prepared in advance. The interviewer was open concerning new issues and followed different directions depending on the responses of interviewees (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Nine interviews were conducted. The respondents comprised three seniority positions: junior project manager (JPM), project manager (PM) and senior project manager (SPM). All employees worked remotely. Due to COVID-19 regulations and the fact that employees work from different countries and cities interviews were conducted personally by Microsoft Teams. Interviews were recorded and transcribed to empower the interviewer to ensure valid analyses of data later on and permit the researcher to concentrate on the interview (an example of the *Transcribed Interview* is presented in Annex 5, it contains answers in uncorrected language). Findings were coded and later analyzed according to the research objectives.

2.2.3. Research sample

Non-probability convenience sampling was done by the researcher as the research problem analyzed is of a very specific group of employees (Kumar, 2019). Thereupon, respondents were chosen by the author from all 3 seniority positions used by language service company X to represent the interest of the whole project management department, the positions being: JPM, PM, SPM. Originally ten interviews were scheduled, but the researcher decided to stop the interviews as a saturation point was reached for the PM position. The research scope is nine virtually working PMs in language service

company X. Table 2 below shows all information regarding respondents' gender, age, nationality, position, and years of experience working with translation projects. The order of respondents presented in Table 2 is the order interviews were conducted.

Table 2. *Respondents in the main study*

No	Gender	Age	Nationality	Position	Years of experience working with translation projects
PM 1	Female	26	Lithuanian	Junior Project Manager	0,5 year
PM 2	Female	22	Lithuanian	Project Manager	1 year
PM 3	Male	26	Lithuanian	Project Manager	2,5 years
PM 4	Male	28	Ukrainian	Project Manager	5 years
PM 5	Female	23	Lithuanian	Junior Project Manager	0,33 year
PM 6	Male	22	Lithuanian	Project Manager	1 year
PM 7	Female	27	Georgian	Project Manager	3 years
PM 8	Male	34	Lithuanian	Senior Project Manager	10 years
Pm 9	Female	29	Lithuanian	Senior Project Manager	3,5 years

Source: Composed by author

The respondents' ages span from 22 up to 34 years, 4 men and 5 females were interviewed, and the working experience with virtual project management was from 3 months to 10 years.

Respondent by seniority: junior project manager vs project manager vs senior project manager

Employees from three different seniority positions took part in the main study: JPM (junior project manager), PM, and SPM (senior project manager). Two participants are considered to be new employees in JPM position, five in PM position, and the two in SPM position, there were only two employees in SPM position available to interview. In JPM position working experience was from three months up to six months, both respondents were female. The age of PM position respondents spans from twenty-two up to twenty-eight years age with two being female and three male, experience range was from one year to five years. Two SPM's were interviewed one male of thirty-four years old and another

female of twenty-nine years old. Male has around 10 years experience working with translation project management and female has three and a half.

2.2.4. Questionnaire for the main research

The main research questionnaire was created by joining replies from the pilot research and the literature review on the basis Job Demand-Control-Support (JDACS) model by Karasek (1979). The following are the questions all 9 respondents answered:

1. Demographic questions:

- a) Gender?
- b) What is your current age?
- c) Your nationality?
- d) What is your job title?
- e) How many years are you working in the translation Project Management department?

2. Main questions:

1. How do you understand the term “stress at work”? What is stress in your opinion?
2. Please evaluate in general the level of stress which you experience in your work as a project manager? Is it low, medium, or high?
3. What are the main signs of stress for you? How do you feel and how do you know you are under stress (physical, emotional, cognitive)? Please remember a project, when you have felt stressed - what signs made you recognize that you are experiencing stress?

Questions about symptoms can be deepened if the respondent mentions something relevant:

- a. What physical signs had you experienced when you felt stress?
- b. What emotions had you experienced when you felt the stress?
- c. What changes had been in your behavior when you felt the stress?
- d. What social changes/ difficulties you have experienced when you felt stressed?

4. What were the consequences of high stress for your work during project implementation? Maybe you have an example?

5. What factors **increase** the possibility of you experiencing high stress during project implementation?

Questions about symptoms can be deepened if the respondent mentions something relevant:

- a. Does the workload influence high stress? If yes, how does it influence?
- b. Does bad time planning influence stress? If yes, how does it influence?
- c. Does the unclarity of tasks influence stress? If yes, how does it influence?

d. Does the weak team leader, department manager influence stress? If yes, how does it influence?

e. Does the lack of communication between coworkers influence stress? If yes, how does it influence?

6. What factors **decrease** the possibility of you experiencing stress during project implementation?

7. How do you reduce or prevent your stress at work?

8. What personal skills or personal characteristics help you to reduce stress at work?

9. Do you think working remotely increases stressful situations, decreases or does not affect?

10. What measures does the company take to prevent employee stress? Maybe you have one that works best for you?

11. What concrete competencies and skills are important for a project manager to manage stressful situations and experienced stress? What concrete personal skills you would like to improve?

12. What are the main signs of team members' stress? How do you as a project manager understand that team members experience stress related to project implementation?

13. What are or could be the consequences of high stress for team members' work during project implementation?

14. How do you as a project manager help team members to reduce or prevent stress during project implementation?

15. In general, what concrete measures could be applied in your company to reduce or prevent project managers' and team members' stress and increase wellbeing at work?

2.2.5. Data collection procedure and ethical consideration

The CEO of international language service company X gave written approval to research employees in language service company X after the researcher requested it by email (See Annex 4. *Permission to conduct research in the company*).

All respondents were informed that confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed in words and writing. In addition, permission from CEO was mentioned in emails sent out (See Annex 2 Participation request). The pilot study was conducted entirely over Outlook. The main research interviews were performed personally by Microsoft Teams. The interviews were taped with the recorded permissions by the respondents themselves.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

Following the completion of the investigation, the findings were examined and will be given in the following chapter. The findings of the main study will be analyzed following the established research objectives, starting from the second objective as the first one was reached in chapter one.

1. To prepare a theoretical background for the study of virtual project managers' work stress: sources, consequences, and management at an international language service company.
2. To analyze empirically project managers' experienced stress at work and the consequences of stress for managerial work.
3. To determine stress-increasing factors in project managers' work.
4. To analyze project managers' stress decreasing factors related to work and personal resources and stress management measures.
5. To formulate conclusions and recommendations for stress-relieving methods on individual and organizational levels, and possibilities for organizational assistance in combatting project managers' stress in ways that benefit both the employees and the organization itself.

The main study's results will be analyzed within three variants - by the three seniority levels introduced in the previous chapter. Secondly, the results from the pilot and the main studies will be summarized. Summarized answers to questions from all three seniority positions junior project manager vs project manager vs senior project manager are added to Annex 6. *Summary of the main study results.*

3.1. Project managers' experienced stress at work

All three groups of respondents - junior project manager (JPM), project manager (PM), and senior project manager (SPM) reported experiencing different levels of stress. JPM reported medium levels of stress while PM reported high to medium levels. While two SPM reported low and high. From this information given it is impossible to state the general level of experienced stress in virtual project managers' everyday work. But most of the respondents commented that they experience elevated levels of stress because of the nature of the market and stress is a daily occurrence that makes it strongly visible. Keeping their answers in consideration researcher is assured that the research problem is relevant and further investigation is in order.

Junior project manager vs project manager vs senior project manager

After asking respondents how they understand work stress, both JPMs and PMs described works stress as a physical and psychological reaction, while SPM only described psychological effects. Even more interestingly SPM explained stress in a way they feel in contact with the stressor. Meanwhile, JPM and PM mostly concentrated on the outside factors that make them stressed. JPMs reported situations of

being blamed for a lack of knowledge, being in a situation where issues solving information is not accessible. PMs agreed with the description and added: demands to meet high expectations set by employer or client, delays by client or project team, and negative feedback towards them. All three groups of respondents described stress in a similar psychological way: feeling like you are in danger, entering flight or fight mode, feeling the urgency of the situation.

All in all, all three groups reported work stress as a situation of abnormality, where a typical working way is impossible because of mental and physical reactions.

3.2. Consequences of stress for project managers work

Personal consequences of work-related stress. Emotional, physical, cognitive

All three groups of respondents listed an extensive list of symptoms they experience under stress they vary from emotional, physical, and cognitive to social.

Regarding emotional consequences, all answers seem to be similarly describing stress consequences as respondents becoming angry and feeling symptoms of anxiety. The unique part about the junior project managers (JPM) group was the mentioning of low self-esteem and breaking down in front of coworkers and family. Both JPM and project managers (PM) reported a feeling of fear. While only PMs reported feeling apathy, becoming overly calm, feeling of being drained, becoming moody, and feeling hatred.

Reported physical symptoms were not as similar. Senior project managers (SPM) and JPM groups reported crying as one of the most common symptoms, they mentioned it to be a coping method as well. PMs and JPMs reported an increase in heartbeat. No other symptoms were similar. PMs report difficulty to relax, headache, early period, trouble sleeping as the most common symptom. Where JPMs reported sweating, voice change, shaking hands and body, or even rise of temperature.

Furthermore, cognitive symptoms were the ones all three groups spent the most time elaborating. Both JPMs and PMs reported the fear to ask for support or questions, both of these groups also reported overthinking, but JPMs mentioned overthinking about what others might be thinking about them, while PMs reported overthinking about other people: project team, colleagues, client, and project steps. All three groups reported that problem-solving becomes difficult or impossible, because of hectic thoughts, inability to focus, irrational decisions. While PM's and SPM's also reported fight of flight mode when all concentration goes to problem-solving and ignoring everything around you, possibly causing even more stress along the way, SPMs named such situation inability to prioritize, throwing between jobs. While only JPM's reported destabilized time perception, feeling *like time is flying by* leads to rushing with decisions and answers creating even more issues and stress later on.

Conclusively, all groups also reported social/behavioral changes and JPMs were unique in this question as they reported using a mask as a consequence of stress, a mask to pretend to be strong and not to break down in front of family or colleagues. They likewise reported finding it difficult to understand when they can show their real face or mask, especially in work-life balance. While PMs also reported distancing themselves from family and coworkers, but more in a sense of searching for stress relief in solace. PMs jointly reported that there is a possibility of passive-aggressive communication and no willingness to help if a person is experiencing stress, this was reported not as a personal experience. SPM also reported the change in their communication, stating that they employ sarcasm and due to the fact might answer questions not fully or unprofessionally, calling it an inability to filter out emotions. PMs were once again unique with emphasizing the difficulty to keep a normal work-life balance, reporting not being able to get rid of thoughts about work after work, having less motivation to have after-work activity, and personalizing negative feelings towards colleagues, project team, and management.

Organizational consequences of work-related stress in project implementation

Respondents additionally were asked to think about possible consequences of stress to project implementation and process overall, from the stress experienced by PM and team members separately to find out all possible organizational consequences by allowing PM to think freely. JPM concentrated on the consequences of their direct work. While PMs and SPMs listed unhappy clients, losing clients' trust and SPM added more details that failing to manage stress can lead to losing clients and vendors. All three groups agreed that stress can lead to losing or wasting project's money, JPMs mentioned rushing and hiring wrong vendors, PM's elaborated that it can as well be caused by back and forth of instructions or working packages sent to the project team, in consequence having to pay them additionally. From all of the respondent's answers, it was clear that they all talked about issues that arise from the stress that caused them to lose productivity. SPM reported that a big stressor can lead to several days of unproductivity and fear to repeat the mistake, actively avoiding doing the same task again.

Another consequence was mentioned was with regards to the project team. JPM reported that stress makes it more possible that wrong instruction will be passed along, PM mentioned that private information leak is also possible while SPM mentioned that all mistakes done by PM or unrecognized stress experienced by team members can lead to a team not delivering quality assurance (QA) reports or project team not delivering final quality of a product.

SPM also mentioned that stress that slows productivity can lead to skipping lunch and breaks as a direct result making it difficult to get out of the circle of associating work with stress and accumulating overtime that costs money for the company. JPM and PMs also mentioned that constant stress can lead to hating your workplace and wanting to quit.

Summarized Results

The consequences of work stress can be divided into two groups: personal and organizational, dividing personal consequences into even smaller subgroups:

a. Personal:

- *Emotional consequences* - becoming angry, anxious, low self-esteem, breaking down in front of your family and coworkers, fear of uncertainty, worrying, annoyance, easily irritated, frustration, fear, feeling hatred, getting angry quick, moody, being overly calm, feeling overwhelmed and agitated, feeling apathy, drained, nervousness, inability to filter out emotions, might reply rudely, sound angry, using sarcasm.

- *Physical consequences*- increased heartbeat, sweating, voice change, shaking hands/ body, crying, a rise in temperature, headaches, increased heartbeat, lack of energy, early period, trouble sleeping.

- *Cognitive consequences*- time perception (increase), irrational decisions, saying stupid things, rushing with your answers/advice that will be regretted later, being afraid to ask questions/support, overthinking about what others might be thinking about you, inability to focus on tasks, freezing (unable to move on), rapid steps (solving problem), lack of focus, overthinking: project steps, client, team, all concentration goes to problem-solving, feeling like everything is falling apart, searching for any possible distraction, problem-solving becomes difficult, writing multiple messages with mistakes, hectic thoughts, the mind shutting off, not being able to think clearly, answering questions not fully/unprofessionally, throwing between jobs, being unable to prioritize, not being able to start problem-solving, unable to work by the process.

- *Social consequences* - putting on a mask- pretending to be strong, feeling conflicted when to show real face, when to hide experienced stress, trying not to show stress to your family, no willingness to help, passive-aggressive communication, personalizing work and feelings for colleagues/ project team, distancing from family and coworkers, after work thoughts about work, less motivated to have after-work activity.

b. Organizational: bad quality of final product, losing client, losing vendors, losing trust, wanting to quit the company, private information leak, disinformation, wrong file delivery, mismanaging of workload, loss of money, a decrease of productivity, intended sabotage from the project team (wrong delivery, disappearing, not delivering quality assurance reports), searching for a way to cut corners, being scared to work with the same task, overtime, skipped lunches and breaks (exact vocabulary).

3.3. Stress increasing factors in project managers' work

Respondents were asked what factors increase the likelihood of workplace stress. JPMs listed most cases going into detail, they had few similarities with PM position stating that high workload is the main source of stress. Meanwhile, SPM mentioned increasing workload in a sense of unplanned additional workload and did not mention high workload.

Another similarity between SPM and PM was comments that could be classified as consequences of bad time management: not knowing how to say no, unexpected urgent requests, overtime. Meanwhile, SPM mentioned only possible unplanned workload elaborating that it comes in form of inexperienced coworkers that have multiple repeating questions.

All three respondent groups had several similarities in naming their stressors. The first one was shifting project constraints: asking for an extension, a bigger budget, not having available resources (vendors mainly), and concerns regarding final product quality. SPM named it as a management fail, meaning the project was unsuccessfully managed, while SPM and PM used other words listing: not having instructions, linguist disappearing, not finding available vendors, a mistake at the project preparation stage.

Another similarity between PM and SPM groups was how they answered about clarity of tasks being one of the stressors, both groups concentrated on the fact that un-clarity of tasks are a consequence of bad instructions, the nature of bigger projects, client working in another time zone- unable to answer questions fast enough, information loss coming from miscommunication with the client. Meanwhile, JPM mainly concentrated and often used word experience, making it clear that they believed the experience will lower their stress levels.

Another similarity of all three groups was the mentioning of stakeholder management. However, SPM's mentioned only two stakeholders: the project team and the client. Stressor in client management was the possibility of disappointing them, by not being able to meet their requirements. All three groups reported client and project team management as a stress factor especially if inexperienced, new linguists were selected to work and micromanagement is needed to assure good quality final product. JPM and PM mentioned linguists disappearing, project teams asking for extensions, language pairs being overbooked- not having enough resources, linguists working in other time zones.

JPM group respondents were unique in regards to stressors question, they mentioned lack of colleague support as stressor, it was not as broadly considered in other groups. *Lack of support from colleagues*- fear of asking for support, lack of communication from coworkers about work-related stuff and not work-related, short answers to asked questions that lead to asking questions again and again- feeling inadequate because of this reason, colleagues blaming for mistakes done accidentally, having a worse opinion about you because of that reason. Colleagues not sharing lessons learned after their project or not writing instructions subsequently causing other PMs to repeat the same mistakes. Not

having instructions- physical or by word, feeling left alone to deal with your issues. Because of lack of knowledge, support from colleagues or other colleagues not sharing knowledge that they have.

Meanwhile, PMs and JPM had one thing in common, mentioning *management* as a stressor. While JPMs concentrated on interactions with contradicting management that asks for several things at the same time (take breaks, but also do this added value work (ADV)), not knowing how to say no to management, constant reporting to management, not being able to take critique from management objectively, management that micromanages, management that sets high requirements. PMs concentrated on situations where not knowing your goal, company's direction, or being left alone with the task, to sum up – a general ambiguity of the tasks caused by weak management.

Another common stressor was *not being able to meet expectations*- for JPMs management who set high standards/ expectations, for PM's and SPM's – not meeting client's requirements.

Likewise, both JPMs and SPM mentioned technical issues as a stressor, but SPM mentioned poor internet connection and remote VPN working slow, causing systems to work slower. Meanwhile, JPM mentioned technical issues and a lack of support fixing them, or not having instructions on how to solve them individually.

Keeping in mind the concept of virtual PM respondents were asked directly if they think that working remotely affects them. PM and SPM groups respondents answered that they do not see it as a stressor, but understand that as a new employee you could find it to be a distraction. As well as, learning how to disconnect from work living in the same environment (*to shut off*) - it can be difficult and might need practice. JPM responded that in some ways it does affect them negatively as it is more difficult to find urgent help or advice. Henceforward, time managing becomes difficult when you have to take into consideration not only your time and meetings but your colleagues as well.

Summarized Results

To summarize findings researcher will join all reported factors that increase the possibility of work stress (Job Demands) categorizing them into the most recognizable groups. Reported stressors are as follow:

- Technology challenges;
- Unexpected increased workloads/ or poor workload management/ poor time planning;
- Low support from colleagues, communication issues;
- Low quality manager- employee relationship;
- Lack of social connection with employees, colleagues, and team members;
- Unclear goals and instructions;
- Lack of experience;
- Lack of guidance, instructions, support;
- Stakeholder management;

- Change in project constructs;
- Working with inexperienced coworkers, project team, management;
- Difficulty in keeping work-life balance;

3.4. Project managers' stress decreasing factors related to work and personal resources and stress management measures

Respondents were asked what factors could decrease the likelihood of a possibility to experience stress during project implementation and how they prevent stress at work, do they have any skill or personal characteristics that help them. To depersonalize the question third person question of what competencies and skills are important for a project manager to manage the stressful situation and experienced stress was also asked.

Personal coping methods

Respondents from all three seniority positions named short breaks as being very important for their wellbeing, to add all three groups explained that breaks have to be taken efficiently that is leaving the room or even house/apartment, that is going outside. Junior project managers (JPMs) stated that ignoring your phone during breaks is just as important, while PMs said that once the working day is overall communication channels leading to work should be ignored and shut off. Having good rest after work and especially on weekends was said to be even more important. Additionally, active ignoring of any work-related thought after work should be exercised, killing the thought right away, as one responded said: "It comes easy with practice".

Furthermore, all three groups shared different active attention redeployment (*Destressitizers*) they use daily/weekly to cope with their stress levels. JPMs mentioned smoking, crying, and eye exercises. PMs also mentioned eye exercises, and added gym visits, as well as hiking in nature. Meanwhile, senior project managers (SPM) went into more detail naming: listening to relaxing or harsh metal music while singing/shouting along, also doing yoga, breathing exercises and meditation, vocalizing good thinking about yourself.

Another coping method used by all project managers (PM) and JPM respondents was a *reappraisal coping method*, all three respondents named it in different wording. JPM said reorganizing the problem helps- putting everything into boxes, trying to think about the problem from "Birds Flew", stepping outside your point of view and seeing another picture, and understanding that stress helps to grow and learn. Meanwhile, one PM mentioned problem depersonalizing, which works if the stressor is negative feedback: "thinking that the feedback is to the project manager's chair- not me", and understand that feedback is something to be learned from.

Another coping method used by SPM is problem-solving with the support of people, a responded found it helpful to talk about the project with other people to get recommendations and additional

knowledge on how to solve it. Besides advised to requesting for help in proofreading important emails before sending them, they said not overthinking and distancing themselves from a problem is a problem solution as well. All three groups of respondents in their own words mentioned the need for problem mineralization.

While talking about personal skills a question about important characteristics of a good PM came up and JPM mentioned respectfulness (respecting everyone, even if they made a mistake). PMs had more resources naming self-awareness, prioritization skills, being optimistic and self-reliant, ability to control emotions, critical thinking, cold nerves, being extroverted, self-confident, and equanimity as good skills to have to work stress-free. SPM had their ideas, advising constant self-growth, education by listening to interview and podcasts with famous people proficient at stress management.

Factors that decrease the likelihood of workplace stress

All three respondent groups agreed that *working remotely* helps them with managing the likelihood of experiencing stress, one PM described it as “working in your safe space”. Another feature that all three groups mentioned was *support from colleagues*, groups used different wording to describe it. JPM’s like a feeling of togetherness - complaining about issues together allows them to humanize colleagues and understand their behavior better. Just important for them is not work-related communication with them, as it allows them to ask for assistance fear-free. Meanwhile, PM group mentioned that they would like to get more colleagues, to share their workload with. To end, SPM likes to get support from experienced colleagues who have managed similar projects to theirs, additionally being able to share workload and ideas.

In additions, all three respondents have a work strategy that helps them to minimize the likelihood of experiencing stress, that strategy is risk management, by having a to-do list at the beginning of the day (JPM&PM), micromanaging the project team by emails and calls, always leaving a time buffer for every delivery including final one (SPM), being careful in reading instructions and working by them (PM).

There are also factors that hat PM group acknowledges would help them to avoid stress, such as good time management, good technical knowledge, and good communication skills. Trustable linguists with experience, fast communication from clients, working with familiar projects and clients. PM group also mentioned wanting more freedom with the project, no tight deadlines, good budget, good vendor prices as well as having a normal workload, and feeling no pressure to take more work. Together with having time to try forecasting all possible issues and consequences and effectively risk managing most of the stressors should be avoided.

Stress management and prevention at an organizational level

To keep consistency with the research model questions about social support from colleagues and managers were asked, to find out about organizational management at a team and department levels. The first one was: what measures does the company take to prevent employee stress? Followed by how do you as a project manager help team members to reduce or prevent stress during project implementation? And completing with what concrete measures could be applied in your company to reduce or prevent project managers' and team members' stress and increase wellbeing at work?

All of the international language service company X company respondents' identified that the company is already attempting to reduce stress among Project Managers. All three respondents recognized management vocalizing the importance of stress management as well as good work-life balance by expanding teams and promoting a good working environment and workload sharing. Reinforcing the importance of breaks, lunch, and leaving work on time. PMs and JPMs especially are happy to see Friday for family (FFF) initiative where PM can stay at home not working, but still, be paid, as well as understanding when a day off is needed, not being strict with working from 9 AM to 6 PM. JPM and SPM mentioned no blame policy used in communication, which they find very attractive. JPM also like positive experience and weekly thank you where colleagues can prize and point out good experiences or help received by colleagues. JPM also escalated the need for more shadowing by TL or other colleagues. All three groups would like more seminars or workshops about work management, stress management, time planning. Junior prefers to have such seminars after work or during the whole day, but not mid-working day. All three groups like team building and non-official meetings with coworkers and even would like to meet the project team (freelance linguists) in some event. PMs were unique in stating that they would like more freedom in choosing clients and projects they work with also more instructions on work with every client. While seniors enjoyed small gifts from the company, remember that recently they got a stress ball as a gift. SPM group was unique once again with the suggestion of hiring a psychologist or company paying for such service. SPMs also would like to see some presentations or workshops from colleagues in their project management department. Despite the position, almost all respondents shared the importance of non-official communication, calls, and checkups from management.

Project managers were also asked how they motivate and assist their own unique project team members whom they have never seen and probably will never see. All groups concentrated on social support, talking, calming their teams down, and helping to explain instructions again. JPMs escalated the importance of avoiding being rude and using a passive-aggressive style of talking. Meanwhile, PMs and SPM talked about physically helping team members to finish their work and deliver files on time. PMs mentioned that all responses should be prioritized in a way that the linguist team would get the

response fastest, together with extending deadlines to give them more time, SPM agreed and mentioned extension of deadlines as the most common and useful stress relief strategy for team members.

Summarized Results

To conclude, personal coping methods and factors that decrease the likelihood of experiencing stress can summarize them into two components: *Job control* - the ability to perform decision-making efficiently combating challenges, and *Job support*- from colleagues and managers (Dutheil et al., 2020).

Reaching Job Control with personal resources

During the interview respondents also stated what personal resources they use to manage or prevent excessive stress levels. They identified personal attributes that are required, as well as the active distraction methods they employ:

- Efficient and periodical breaks: avoiding phone during breaks, changing environment;
- Smoking;
- Breathing fresh air;
- Reorganizing the problem (putting everything into boxes), trying to think about a problem from afar;
- Physical distractions: crying;
- Relaxation: eye exercises, exercising, hiking in nature, relaxing music, breathing exercises, meditation, breathing exercises, yoga, singing, shouting, listening to harsh metal music, having good rest, vocalizing good things about yourself;
- Personality traits: being respectful, cold nerves, self-confidence, being extrovert, critical thinking, Equanimity- calmness and composure, especially in a difficult situation, ability to control emotions, being optimistic and self-reliant;
- Constant self-growth, education, listening to interviews with famous people proficient at stress management, being educated in basic psychology;
- Active problem solving: prioritizing, proofreading important emails before sending them, asking a colleague to read them, stepping outside of the body, and reevaluating the situation;
- Understanding that stress helps you grow;
- Being able to evaluate your capabilities;
- Depersonalizing the problem – feedbacks is for the chair- not me;
- Minimalizing the problem;
- Shutting off all communication channels connected to work;
- Ignoring all thoughts about work;
- Talking about the project with other people;
- Distancing yourself from issues;

- Not overthinking;

Reaching Job Control with factors likely to decrease stress

When we talk about job control, we are talking about elements that can help the employee feel less stressed at work while working on a project. Respondents talked about such factors:

- Not work-related communication with colleagues;
- Humanizing coworkers understanding that they are under stress as well;
- A feeling of togetherness - complaining about issues together, sharing and receiving ideas, asking for assistance from coworkers, sharing the workload with coworkers;
- Having a clear plan for the day, writing it down;
- Booking reliable linguists with experience;
- Having more freedom with project, no tight deadlines, good budget, good vendor prices;
- The client provides clear expectations and instructions;
- Reliable linguists with experience;
- Working with the same clients and projects;
- Fast communication from a client;
- Normal workload;
- Expansion of department, more coworkers;
- No pressure to take more work;
- Carefully reading all instructions;
- Working by instructions;
- Trying to forecast all possible issues and consequences- risk management;
- Good technical knowledge;
- Working remotely;
- Working with experienced teams;
- Having a colleague that managed a similar project before, discussing issues with them;
- Micromanaging project team and leaving time buffer for a team, also checking up on them, even with mass emails if needed;
- Working remotely;

Receiving job support from colleagues and managers

Respondents listed such support received from management and colleagues:

- The company being vocal about stress;
- Reinforcing the importance of breaks and lunch, leaving work on time;
- Paying for overtime;
- No blame policy;
- Weekly thank you initiative;
- Positive experience initiative;
- Additional days off;
- Workshops for: time managing, reporting to stakeholders, stress management;
- Seminars;
- Avoiding to compliment overload and normalizing chaos;
- Shadowing of new employees;
- Expanding teams;
- Friday for family (FFF) initiative;
- Encouraging self-management;
- Helping to relocate workload;
- Emphasis on teamwork;
- Management asks about how a person is feeling;
- Team building: meetings with colleagues from the office;
- Possibility to plan working hours on their own;
- Team buildings;
- Gifts: Stress Balls;
- Keeping a good working environment;
- Controlling assistance from other departments;
- Encouraging nonofficial communication;

Even though organizations use many ways to safeguard employees from work stress, respondents had their methods to deal with stress in their teams as well as suggestions to realize their needs:

- Giving freedom to choose clients/ projects;
- Support of psychologist (hired by a company or provided such possibility);
- Workshops/seminars from outside and colleagues separately;
- Providing instructions about every client;
- Motivating teamwork, minimalizing errors, and spreading positivity;
- Scheduling a call to check up on the feelings of team members;

3.5. Summary of results according to the research framework

Figures added below summarize the finding of factors that increase and decrease the likelihood of work stress during virtual translation project implementation in international language service company X, as well as an awareness of what stress is and what its consequences are. Figures 7, 8, and 9 show research results for senior project managers, project managers, and junior project managers, respectively.

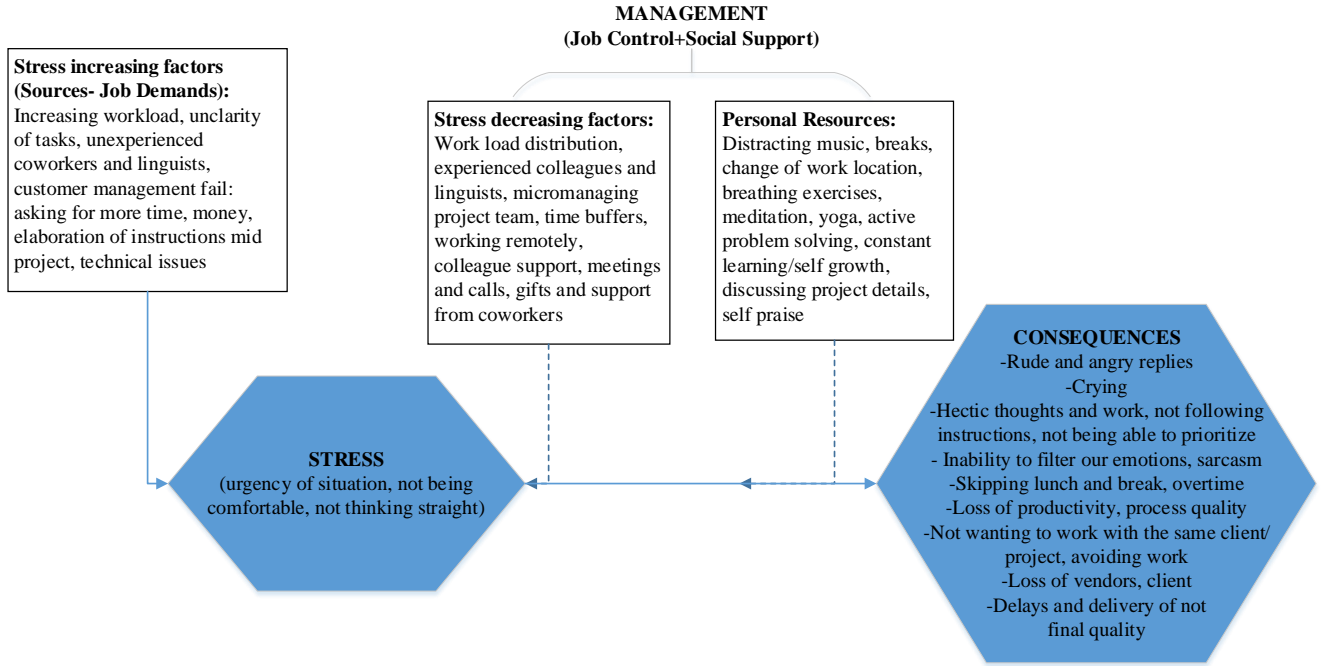


Figure 7. Research results for senior project managers

Source: Composed by the author

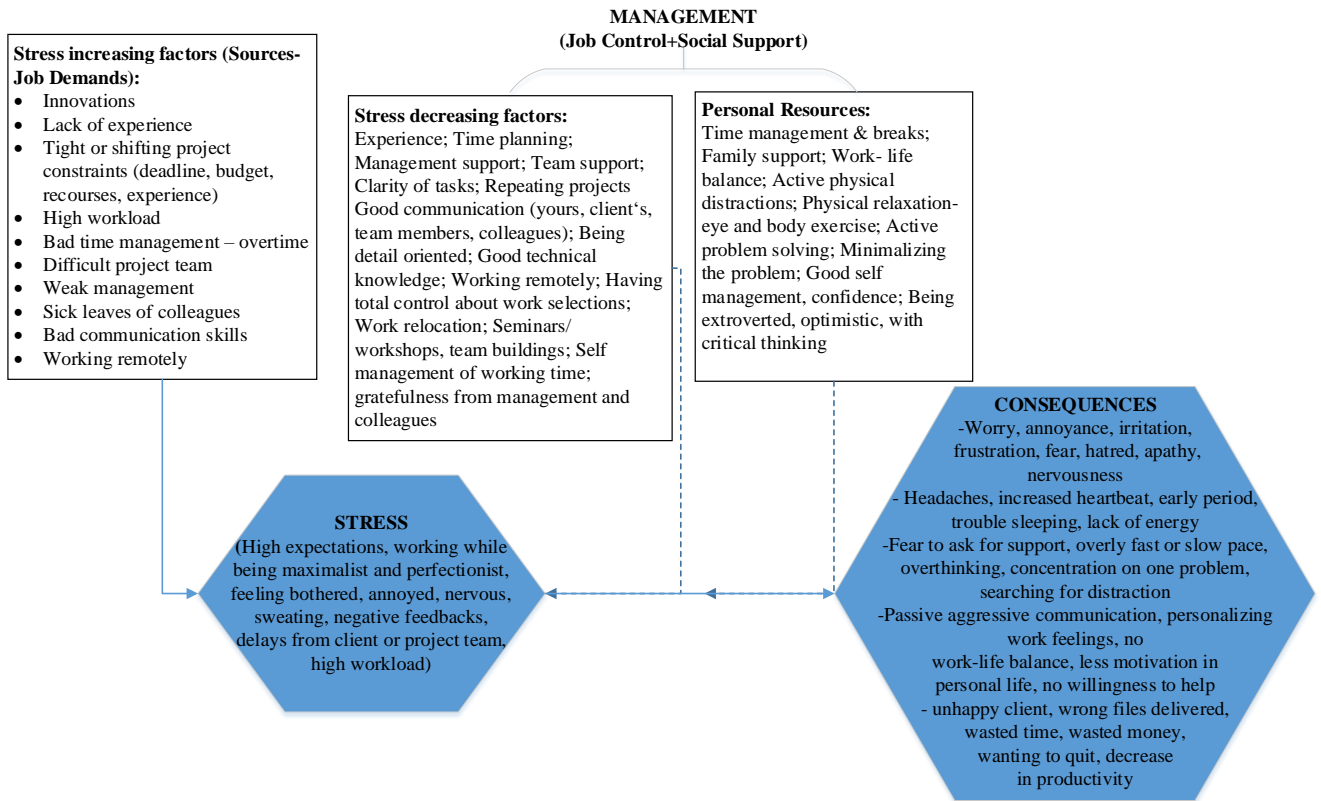


Figure 8. Research results for project managers

Source: Composed by the author

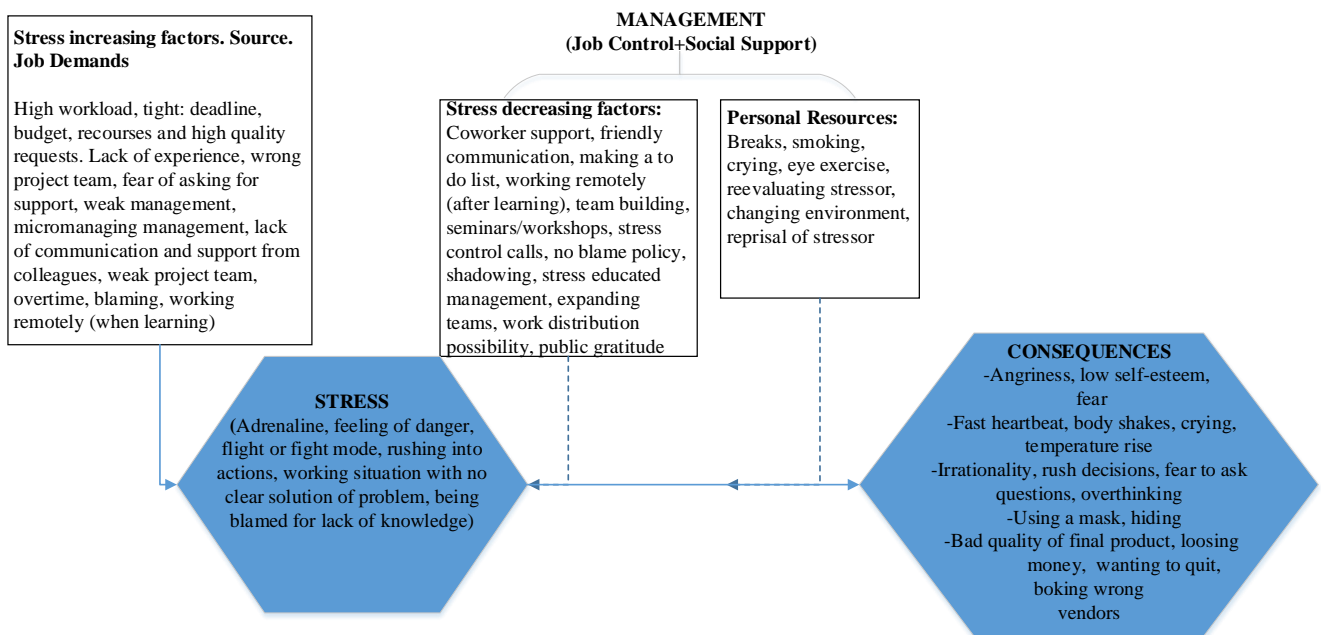


Figure 9. Research results for junior project managers

Source: Composed by the author

The final summarized results about virtual project managers’ work stress: sources, consequences, and management during translation project implementation in international language service company X also the understanding of stress are presented in Figure 10 below. These results are

summarized very broadly by the author, for a more unedited answer in original wording please see Annex 6.

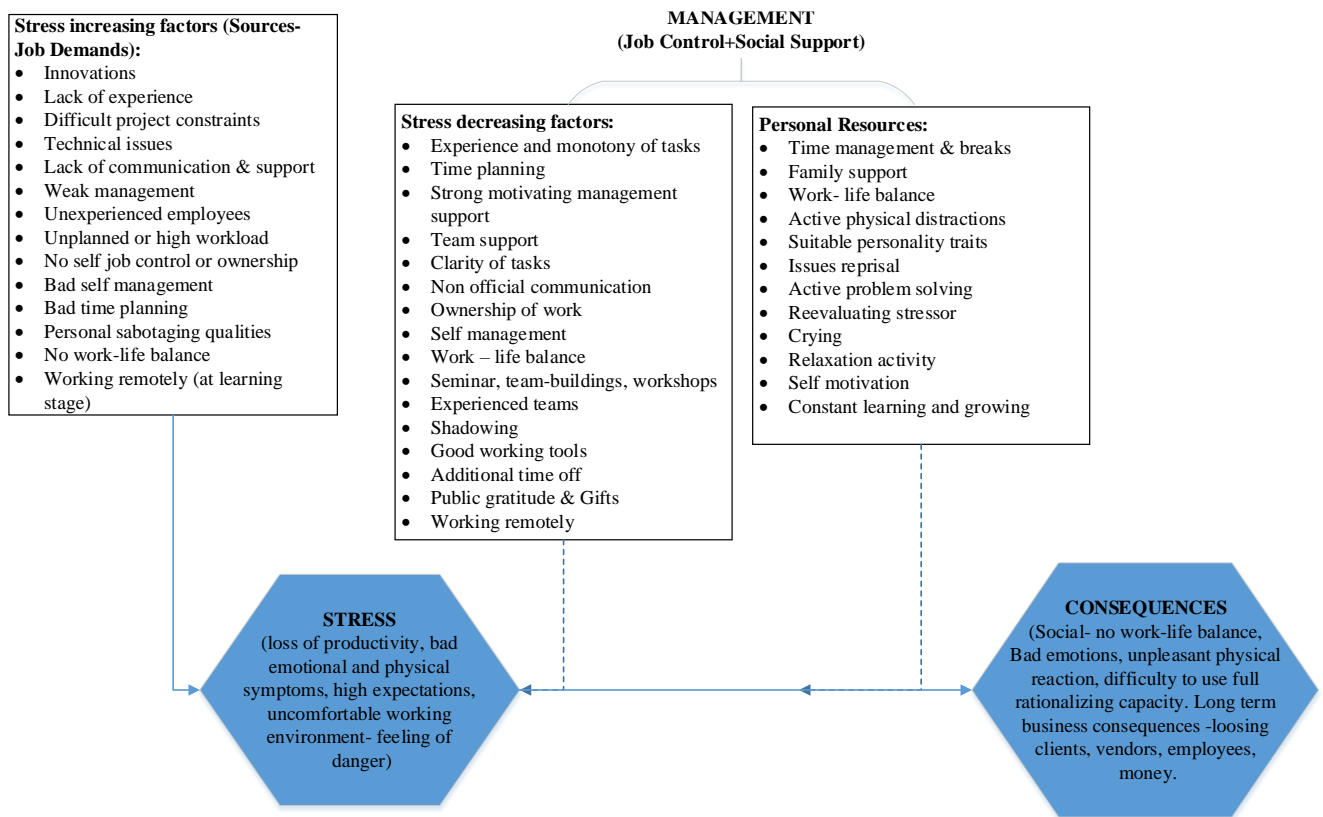


Figure 10. Summarized research results

Source: Composed by the author

In conclusion, Karasek's (1979) Job Demand-Control- Support model is not only useful in analyzing specific subjects but also proved to be correct as the respondents demonstrated that stress decreasing factors are mainly the ones that Karasek names as effective. All together, acquiring job control named as experience and knowledge by respondents and social support from colleagues and managers are the main factors that respondents named to likely decrease their work-related stress. Also, there seems to be no correlation between job seniority position and experienced stress levels and depends on a person themselves and the level of experience or self stress management skills they have. As mentioned in the theory part, workers within the high job strain group that experience high demand and low control are prone to stress-related disorders and this proved to be a reality as all respondents that reported experiencing high or medium stress levels had various physical and emotional side effects and as a most effective decreasing method mentioned experience. Only one respondent with more than ten years of experience, who reported having strong job control, mentioned that he is experiencing low stress by that mean placing himself in quadrate for high job demands and high job control.

All the more, all three groups listed similar stress-coping methods as in research done by Paneru & Mohote (2021) meditation, exercise, spa, music listening, humor/cynism (Van Oortmerssen et al., 2020), and appraisal-focused coping strategies (Shin et al., 2020). Similar to recent research done by Jimmieson, et al. (2021) who named: job redesign, effective leadership, job resources, open communication as the management methods to help with work stress, the same methods were named by respondents in this research. As well as, work lifw balance (Tannenbaum et al., 2021) , authentic leadership style (Sainz et al., 2021). Furthermore, the named factors increasing the likelihood of stress: technology challenges, increased workload, lack of social connection, no work-home balance also partially agrees with research done by Graves & Karabayeva (2020).

All together, we can see that this research shows that common specifics of work-related stress complies with the most recent research done in this field.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this research virtual Project Managers' work stress: sources, consequences, and management during translation project implementation in international language service company X were analyzed and after reviewing data collected it is visible that miss management of work stress can cause physical, emotional, social, and cognitive issues to the employees resulting in long term business issues.

Project Managers experience low to high-stress levels, medium being the most common one, stress is relevant not because of the size of the stressor, but the constant presence of stressors in an everyday working environment defined as the nuances of the market specifics.

The main *consequences* of stress at work are bad emotions, unpleasant physical reactions, and cognitive issues like difficulty to use full rationalizing capacity and social where employees find it difficult to disconnect from work and communicate with their social circle, reporting even having difficulty motivating themselves to do anything after work. All these consequences lead to mismanage of work and loss of productivity, to be more precise: losing clients, vendors, wanting to quit, fearing to take up the same project, and all together losing profit.

The main *factors that increase* the likelihood to experience high stress can be called job demands are wrongly implemented innovations, lack of experience of colleagues, team members, management, and PMs themselves. Additionally, unfavorable project constraints such as tight deadlines, weak, new, or lack of resources, insufficient budget, and inability to assure needed quality, and overall fear for project success prove to be one of the most common sources of stress. More notably, weak management that cannot communicate well is the source of project managers' not knowing their goals, direction company is going, not understanding if their work is suitable for the company's goals can result in PMs not having an ownership mindset for their work. In addition, bad communication, self-management, personal sabotaging qualities, no work-life balance, technical issues, and bad time management skills can increase the likelihood of PM experiencing stress, as well as working remotely at the beginning of their career in mentioned position.

However achieving job control and social support helps project managers to *decrease the* work stress, the management of stress fall on the shoulders of project managers themselves as well as the company. Factors that help to *decrease stress* are: support from the team, colleagues, management, and other departments, good work-life balance and ownership of work, good working tools, experience, and good time planning, with good communication skills. Even more, active physical distractions like exercises, music, hiking, and smoking can help to combat the already present stress. Moreover, such personal resources as self-motivation, positivity, constant self-growth, and good self-management can also help to decrease the likelihood to experience high stress.

Comparing three different seniority levels present in the project management department, some differences of factors that cause stress are visible. Junior project managers usually tend to find a lack of experience and support from their colleagues as the biggest stressors. Meanwhile, senior project managers tend to see inexperienced colleagues asking multiple questions as unplanned workload and the biggest source of stress. PMs fall in both of these categories finding stress in bad communication, lack of support, and multiple questions at the same time as a factor that increases stress the most. Where junior project managers tend to see possibilities for stress decreasing factors in expanding project management department, educating project teams, and relocating more help and assistance toward colleagues, project managers suggest giving more autonomy to their choices of management and work selection, wanting to take more ownership with minimal support of relocating work if needed. PMs would like to grow their competencies in self-management as well as understand the goals of the company. While SPM sees the education of less experienced colleagues in the same department as the most urgent solution to combat their experienced work stress. All three groups would enjoy seminars, workshops, and team building to grow their expertise from outside professionals and their colleagues. There seems to be SPM and PM who already are investing their time and money in self-education and growth in fields like self-management and stress relive topics.

All three groups of project managers recognized that the company is already trying to assist project managers to combat work-related stress by encouraging work-life balance, motivation, and public appraisal or in form of small gifts. All three groups of respondents believed that there should be more support from the company.

Recommendation for the company

The research that was done on virtual Project Mangers' work stress: sources, consequences, and management during translation project implementation allows to develop of recommendations for businesses on preventing stress at work. As respondents' answers complied with a model used in a recent research done by Jimmieson, et al. (2021). They will be summarized in the same three stages presented by Jimmieson:

1. Primary prevention:

- Organizing longer shadowing period for JPMs;
- Monitor personal workload and distribute workload if needed;
- Individualizing expectation requirements and growth plan to meet individual employee's capabilities and resources;
- Implementing a buddy system (a person whose primary workload would be assisting coworkers with their questions);

- Constant educating of managerial office of new leadership styles, expanding their competencies with seminars, workshops;
- Clearly defining employees goals, work responsibilities;
- Planning more non-official social gatherings, team- buildings;
- Planning a meet up in the physical office to meet and greet colleagues at least once at the beginning;

2. Secondary prevention:

- Empower work ownership by sharing the company's goals, thought line behind business choices, opportunities for workers to participate in decision making that will affect their jobs;
- Motivate employees by encouraging personal growth, especially project manager and senior project manager groups. Organize seminars and workshops. Extensive basic and personalized training for junior project managers;
- Protect employee work-life balance. Keep and manifest the Friday for family initiative, allow different working hours if possible. Discourage overtime and praising overwork;
- Carefully monitor the working environment, communication style, and employee satisfaction levels, implementing organizational hygiene strategies to combat issues found;
- Motivate employees with access to gym membership, food or groceries, small gifts;

3. Tertiary prevention:

- Provide an opportunity for psychological counseling/therapy;

Limitations of the Study

As with every research, also this one has its limitations. First of all, qualitative research was chosen due to the general complexity and sensitivity of the research topic. However, the sampling of 9 respondents makes it impossible to generalize the findings, even though they provide a rich and detailed picture of the experiences and perceptions of individuals working in the virtual translation project management field. Secondly, the interviews were done remotely in a span of 3 weeks, therefore, the researcher of the study was unable to detect changes and trends over time. The results may differ from, those obtained on daily basis. Thirdly, qualitative research can result in subjective findings, hence a recommendation for examining virtual project managers' work stress: sources, consequences, and management in depth using quantitative research with a larger sample of respondents is in order. Fourthly, the limitation of language fluency should also be noted, all interviews were conducted in English, meanwhile, neither respondents nor the interviewer speaks English as their mother tongue.

Nonetheless, the working environment for project managers is in English so this limitation should not have a meaningful impact. Last of all, the initial limitation of this work is the fact that the analysis was done in one company where the author of this research is currently working as a team lead of researched subjects – virtual translation project managers, this fact could implicate the sincerity of answers received.

Implications for future studies

For future studies, the findings from the present research can be included in another study with different theoretical resources or research frameworks. Even though the researched company is operating as an international one seven of nine interviews were conducted with people from Lithuania and only two from Ukraine and Georgia, which limits this research and prevents from getting more perspective on results from different countries or even continents. This opens an opportunity for future research, as more multinational respondents could be examined. Furthermore, it is possible to further explore work stress during project implementation and how the diminishing quality of work responds to the project success and profitability, examining more of business consequences in the monetary approach.

To conclude, this research gives information to further investigate bigger and more multicultural research scope or to put greater emphasis on project outcomes and financial gain.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1

Pilot questionnaire

1. Demographic questions:

- a. Gender
- b. What is your current age?
- c. Your nationality?
- d. What is your job title?
- e. How many years are you working in the Project Management department?

2. Pilot questioner:

1. Please evaluate in general the level of stress which you experience in your work as a project manager? Is it low, medium, or high? What are the signs of experiencing stress?
2. What factors increase your stress during project implementation?
3. What factors decrease the likelihood of you experiencing stress during project implementation?
4. What concrete measures do you use to decrease or cope with the stress?

Annex2

Participation request

The subject of the email: request to participate in a study

Dear X,

My name is Evelina Sužiedėlytė. I am a student at the Business School of Vilnius University studying International Project Management (MA) and preparing my final thesis.

The topic of my research: Virtual Project Managers' work stress: sources, consequences, and management at international language service company. I have requested and obtained permission from CEO to perform this research in the company.

I'd be grateful if you could share your project implementation experience and answer a few questions. I've attached a Microsoft Word document where you can type your replies.

Confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Best Regards,

Evelina Sužiedėlytė

Annex 3

Results of pilot questionnaire

1. Please evaluate in general the level of stress which you experience in your work as a project manager? Is it low, medium, or high? What are the signs of experiencing stress?

Table 2. *Pilot study results. Levels of stress and outcomes*

No	Response
PM 1	Medium – the level of stress depends on the day and certain situations. The signs of experiencing stress for me include headaches, neck pain, overall body tension, anxiety, or tiredness.
PM 2	High. Certain situations cause anxiety, lack of sleep, having dreams about work, thinking about work even after work hours, not wanting to communicate with the family, or just generally being grumpy.
PM 3	I would say it is rather high. The signs of experiencing stress for me would be: inability to think straightly of further actions that need to be done anymore, inability to think calmly, rushing and not reading all the needed information because of the rush, feeling exhausted, and thinking about work-related matters after work, etc.

Source: Composed by the author

2. What factors increase your stress during project implementation?

Table 3. *Pilot study results. Factors that increase the likelihood of stress during project implementation*

No	Response
PM 1	Heavy workload, urgent tasks while being busy or very tight deadlines, lack of resources or knowledge on a certain subject.
PM 2	Dealing with new systems, figuring out new procedures, dealing with client complaints, dealing with situations where you made a mistake at some point in the project implementation process.
PM 3	Late linguists, several people writing and asking questions at the same time, clients expediting the deadlines, tools lagging or not working properly and etc.

Source: Composed by the author

3. What factors decrease the likelihood of you experiencing stress during project implementation?

Table 4. *Pilot study results. Factors that decrease the likelihood of stress during project implementation*

No	Response
PM 1	Workload distribution, high availability of resources, feasible deadlines, easily accessible information, and good overall work environment,
PM 2	Experience, ability to learn and adapt your current knowledge to solve issues that you never encountered before, being able to take a time off, leave a stressful situation for a while and get back to it later with a clear head.
PM 3	Proper prioritization of the work that needs to be done, no distractions during the process, rational thinking of the impact of your actions (whether to reply ASAP, or can this wait until the current step you are doing is finished), etc.

Source: Composed by the author

4. What concrete measures do you use to decrease or cope with the stress?

Table 5. *Pilot study results. Stress management skills used by respondents*

No	Response
PM 1	I try to plan better and write down tasks and projects that I have for the day, so nothing would be forgotten. Also, I try to use means and techniques to optimize my work in order to be more productive and save time. Overall, staying organized and taking breaks are the main means that help me to cope with stress.
PM 2	Breaks helps a lot as well as spending time with the family, especially with the kid.
PM 3	Listening to loud heavy music during project's preparation, maybe singing along sometimes as well; resting from work every +/- 2 hours (by resting, I mean going to the other room, going away from PC for a bit); making some tea; meditating for a couple of minutes if other measures do not work; sometimes during lunchtime going for a walk play some games.

Source: Composed by the author

Annex4

Permission to conduct research in a company

The subject of the email: Permission to conduct research

Dear Mr./Ms. X,

I am studying for a master's degree in International Project Management program at Vilnius University and am researching the stress of project managers during project implementation. I would like to get your official approval to conduct face-to-face interviews together with email questionnaires with several of your employees in the project management department.

This work will be conducted under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. X. Confidentiality, as well as anonymity, are ensured. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to request. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Annex5

Transcribed interview

Introduced the purpose of the interview and research done. Explained main terms used in an interview: team member, company, department manager. Explained that their name and the sound of the interview will not be used, received permission to record the conversation.

[Started recording]

Question: I just started recording our conversation and want to ask. Do you agree with recording this interview?

Respondent: Yes I do.

Q: Today we will talk about Virtual Project Managers' work stress: sources, consequences, and management. In the beginning, I would like to ask you some general demographic questions. What is your current age?

R: 26.

Q: What is your nationality?

R: Lithuanian.

Q: And what is your job title?

R: Project Manager.

Q: How many years are you working in the translation Project Management department?

R: Close to 2 1/2.

Q: Thank you. Moving on to the first question. How do you understand the term stress at work?

R: Uhm, well uhm I would say my concept of stress at work is when uh, you're really bothered by something you're kind of sweating, you're annoyed, you're nervous about something. And all of those, like emotions accumulated into stress. If we would have to put something into like an example then you're not meeting the client's deadline, then you feel stressed because you want the client to be happy, for example.

Q: Please evaluate in general the level of stress which you experience in your work as a project manager? Is it low, medium, or high?

R: I would say it is rather high.

Q: Okay, thank you. And what are the main signs of stress for you? You already mentioned a few, but maybe you can tell me not only about physical but emotional ones or cognitive?

R: Yeah, well, uh, in the emotional sense I would say that you're kinda you feel worried, you feel annoyed or easily irritated. Perhaps since you're already stressed out and if something additionally goes wrong. You you get angry quicker, uhm? And then... Yeah, I would say mostly like nervousness, anxiousness and and you get more easily irritated.

Q: How about the changes in your behavior? Do you feel any?

R: Uhm... Well, you always try to remain professional when you're at work, but maybe if you're stressed if you get a question, your answers are not as elaborate and you just answer in shorter sentences, perhaps since. Uh, you just feel like you don't have time and you're stressed already and you just want to like, you know, move on to deal with other things. So I would say that's one of the... my maybe behaviors that could be identified as something that is stress related.

Q: And what social changes or difficulties you have experienced when you felt stressed?

R: Social in what sense? Like in communicating with others?

Q: Yes, and social like in your entire inner circle your family as well.

R: Oh OK. Uhm well in that case some. I'd say you kind of become more moody, maybe calm. And, uh, just uhm also, maybe less motivated to do anything after work, since you feel kind of drained. So you want to just lay down or like just not do anything, so... Might say these sort of things are kind of the results of a stress or a stressful day.

Q: Thank you very much. And moving on, what were the consequences of high stress for your work during project implementation?

R: Uhm... Well I'd say - it's difficult to determine them, but I'd say perhaps it depends what causes the stress. If, for example, the stress is workload related, then you might not be as detail oriented as you usually are, since if you have a bunch of tasks that you're not, uh, managing to do on time. Then you start to rush and then you might miss some details which could, as a result lead to even more stress, but it's, uhm, yeah, so I would say maybe some mistakes in project implementation could occur when because of rushing, because you're stressed out and you want to deal with everything as quickly as possible.

Q: Could you tell me more about your project implementation, maybe you have precise examples?

R: Uhm, uh, I wouldn't say I have precise examples per say but, uh. Uhm, well, basically when you're stressed and you're working on a project, you usually try... And something that could cause stress. During project implementation is that you feel like it's not in your control, since sometimes linguists disappear and everything just falls into shambles because you didn't... Well, you always try to expect these sort of things, but you you hope these sort of things just don't happen, but occasionally they do. And that can cause a high amount of stress. Since we already had everything planned out, and that plan kind of falls apart and then you have to figure everything out and then you have to see if you'll make the deadline or not. And then if you won't, then you need to, you know, inform the client and they won't be happy. And all of these. Sort of things cause potentially stress.

Q: OK, thank you, and what factors increase the possibility of you experiencing high stress during project implementation?

R: Well, I'd say in our line of work if we would use specific examples then I would say potentially using new linguists can cause extra stress, since we don't know if they're reliable yet or not. But uhm, also tight deadlines can cause extra stress since it's it's way more difficult to accommodate a project with a tight deadline, especially if a language pair is busy as it is and also high workloads could also be one of the stressful factors in project implementation. If you just have too many projects to deal with at the same time.

Q: Okay, thank you. And do you think that bad time planning influences stress? If yes, how does it influence?

R: I would say yes, since one of the.... I would say one of the main skills that a project manager should have is a proper time management and the if that's, if that's not something that you're particularly good at that, then you kind of need to learn it, since if you won't, then. it will definitely cause additional stress since some people then tend to like work overtime, and that's never good and you're then overworked and even more stressed and uh, so yeah, if you manage your time properly I think it's one of the ways to reduce stress and work to manage your time properly.

Q: Thank you and does then clarity of tasks influence stress in your work line? If yes, how does it influence?

R: I would say yes, somewhat since some if a task is not something that you're familiar with and it has complex instructions though. And you realize that some linguists will also have to interpret these instructions correctly, so then you basically just have extra work and you have to micromanage a bit more. Uhm, like the project itself since, uh, just to make sure that those unusual instructions are followed so that the client would be happy and the basically it's just more work for you and it can lead to more stress.

Q: And does a weak team leader or department manager influence stress? And again, if yes, how does it influence?

R: This one is difficult for me to say... I would say probably yes, but since I don't feel that, uh, in my work from history that we had a particularly weak leader, so it's hard to say, but I would like I would assume I would guess that if a team or a department has a weak leader then it would be. It could be stressful since perhaps your goals may not be clear or uh, the direction at the like the direction and pace at where you're going, like as a whole department is not clear and then like ambiguity can also lead to stress. So that would be my interpretation.

Q: Thank you very much and continue. Does the lack of communication between coworkers influence stress?

R: Uh, yes I would say so some for example. That's something that occasionally happens when someone is away from work and maybe they did not manage to reassign everything they had. And then you find out that there was something else that was not assigned and. Now we have to deal with it. So, umm, and

that's just basically you receive an extra task that you didn't plan for that you didn't expect, and you know if you're already having a difficult day and you're already swarmed with tasks that come up these like. Unexpected the projects due to not communicating or miscommunicating can also definitely increase your levels of stress.

Q: Okay, and what factors decrease the possibility of you experiencing stress during project implementation?

R: Well yeah, so as I said, the proper time management definitely decreases stress and also it just it could depend on the projects themselves. Like for example if the deadline is not tight or if it's flexible. Then you ought to automatically feel less stressed since you feel sort of more freedom on what you can do, how you could do it, since you can approach a project in different ways when you have more time to deal with it. So yeah, and the I guess uh, when you work with reliable linguists. That also is sort of uh, less stressful.

Q: OK, thank you. And how do you reduce or prevent your stress at work yourself?

R: Uhm, I would say also like time management is key here since you just sort of try to plan out your whole day right from the start that way you kind of know what to expect throughout the whole day and how how you're going to deal with everything so... Uhm... That's sort of one of the ways I deal with it, but even if something unexpected comes from you, try to not get too startled or anything. But also I feel like with experience you do get less stressed about situations since you already experienced them, like it's likely you experienced this before already, so you know like how to approach things. When you're new then I feel like you feel way more stressed when you encounter something unexpected. So just, uh, I guess experience and time management and a well even though we are in a business and everything. But at the end of the day come your health is what's really important. So even if someone like did not get their project on time. It's not like somebody died or fell ill, so it's not the worst thing in the world. Of course it's not good, but something way worse can happen in the world. So that's sort of a thought. That kind of makes me less stressed about things.

Q: That's an amazing idea, maybe you could go into more details explaining if you have some habits that would help you physically deal with stress?

R: Like I don't know if I have any particular habits or it's it might be hard to pinpoint anything specific, but uhm... Yeah, I don't know if I have any habits like that.

Q: That's OK, or maybe you have some personal skills or personal characteristics that help you to reduce stress at work?

R: Uhm, well I would say from whatever happens at work.... Well, OK, uh... One of the things that I tend to do not, for example, to not stress out after work, is to basically like try to like as soon as I'm done with work I try to like shut off any communication that's, uh, related to work. I don't, I have all of my notifications turned off, so just I wouldn't have any thoughts about work when I'm done working. Since

uh, when you're stressed it's really easy to like to start like having thoughts about your job even after work and then you have dreams and nightmares and then you don't rest at all. So I think one of also one of the most important things is to like get a good rest after work so and like especially on the weekends. So I guess that would be like my secret tip of how to manage your stress is just to try to not think about it once you're done with your work day and then have a good enough rest or like go to the gym to like clear your. Uh, clear your mind from work, so yeah.

Q: Thank you and do you think working remotely increases stressful situations, decreases or does not affect?

R: Uhm, that's a good question. Uhm, I would say... maybe it doesn't affect it too much. Uhm, it's... I guess it depends person by person, but for me personally uhm, I'd say it neither has an effect or nor doesn't and I feel the same way. Well, I guess in a way you could say that since you're at home, you're like in your familiar place or whatever, but at the same time it could be more difficult to shut down from work after you're done, since you're still in the same place where you started work in the morning, so it's sort of neither here nor there.

Q: Okay, and about the company, what measures does the company take to prevent employees' stress? Maybe you have one that works best for you?

R: Well, I know one of the measures was and probably still is that they offer like seminars that are related to this topic, but I never tried them yet, uhm. Uh, and also you know. They also sort of try to encourage like not like to take everything, but take as much as you can and then if you cannot manage we use teamwork to like reallocate, reallocate tasks and so on. So I feel like the emphasis on teamwork is what really does help with stress, since if you're really swamped, you usually don't feel alone and you can find people to help you out and to like reduce your stress levels by reducing your workload. So I think that's like the most important aspect of it and the one that helps me the most.

Q: Thank you and is there a situation where experienced stress benefits the implementation of the project? Maybe you have an example?

R: If your like experienced stress benefits like project management?

Q: Yes, project implementation stages.

R: Oh yeah. OK uhm well. Well, it's hard to say, but if you feel if you feel stressed and then you feel responsibility, and that's also a good thing since you have to be responsible to be a good enough project manager, so.... In a way you could say that perhaps some stress could help, since if you feel responsibility then you'll be even if you're stressed, you'll be responsible enough to like read the instructions properly to relate them to the linguist and so on, but... It depends on the person, I think. Because like, it depends how they deal with stress. Since you know there's this saying like. I don't know how it is like pressure creates diamonds or whatever but uhm, so it just depends how a person deals with stress, but I can see

some situations that, uh that stress could be beneficial I guess. Not too much stress but like a moderate amount I guess.

Q: And for you personally?

R: Uhm, for me personally, sometimes yeah. I feel like you know, even though no one likes to feel stressed, but uh, it can like help you out sometimes like to it can initiate your critical thinking and like think up of a like quick solution in case like something unexpected happens. So yeah, sometimes I would say it's good like a small amount of it could be OK I guess. But I don't think (laugh) it should ever be encouraged to stress your employees out, ever.

Q: And you mention responsibility feeling. Could you elaborate on whom this responsibility should fall?

R: Basically, you feel responsible for the project. I would say since you're the one managing it, you're like the gateway between the linguists and the clients, so let me think. You feel the responsibility to the client to deliver a good quality like uh, a good quality product, uh, on time and like I feel like that's the probably one of our most important responsibilities as project managers.

Q: OK, thank you. And you already mentioned few skills, but what concrete competencies and skills are important for our project manager to manage stressful situations and experience stress? What concrete personal skills you would like to improve?

R: Well, as I mentioned before, time management is really important and critical thinking is also really important so that you can think on the fly and come up with solutions quickly and the you don't get startled by stressful situations, since you're already used to them. And also like, uhm, I guess it's like part of critical thinking, just not to get too scattered since some, like you get stressed and then you're like: oh no, I don't know what to do and you're just you're not thinking straight so I think like just. Managing your stress levels like not getting too emotional. Here's what, uh? These are like good qualities for some. Uh, project managers to have to to like manage their stress. As for, what I personally I would like to be improved Well, since I've worked for a bit here, uhm, I feel like some some of these skills have already improved, but I guess everything by, uh, a little bit. Like critical thinking and time management, and like not getting emotional and so on.

Q: OK, thank you. And another question would be what are the main signs of team member stress? How do you as a project manager understand that the team member experiences stress related to project implementation?

R: Uhm... Well uhm... Usually when someone says they're burning, that usually means they're stressed out and they're overworked and they have a bunch of work to do and also like. I guess. I don't know if that really happens in our team. Not maybe not, but what I would imagine that maybe like passive aggressive answers or something like that to questions could happen, but I don't think that's something on our team that really does happen. Uhm, other than that, uh, I would say. Just yeah, when people are

they say that they're burning and they. And you know when you're burning, you're not really willing to help others since you yourself need help. So, if someone is not available to help, you can assume that it's probably a bit stressed since they have a lot of work to do.

Q: Thank you and what are or could be the consequences of high stress for team members' work during project implementation?

R: Uhm, I would say that perhaps like communication could be not as great since if people are overworked then they won't want to like how should I put it like communicate in detail? They might as mentioned before, like answer in short sentences and just say OK and that's it. Uhm, so yeah, I would say it's like if the whole team is stressed then comm... commit... communication. Communication is something that definitely could like. Have, uh, basically stress could have a negative impact on communication.

Q: Maybe you could go into more details, especially about project implementation stages and what could go wrong there?

R: Like for the team as a whole or for a specific team member?

Q: For specific member's work.

R: Well, I would say I guess as mentioned before, they might also like misread something by rushing or miss, like an instruction that's important to the client or some. Just they could mismanage something like miss a deadline because you already like are doing other projects and then you didn't see that the your earlier one is already past the deadline and stuff like that. So just basically I would say missing things like instructions that line since I guess either don't manage or mismanage your time, and those would be the consequences of it.

Q: Thank you and how do you as a project manager help team members to reduce or prevent stress during project implementation?

R: Well, I would say the same way that they helped me is that you will overtake something or you come take like some part of the project. And if for example, if someone cannot start, then another member can start then like look for linguists and then give it back to the the Team member that asked for help so that they could proceed with like. Preparing files and stuff like that so we can overtake parts of projects. We can now overtake the whole projects. We can swap responsibilities for, for example, maybe doing one task is easier for one member, but it's harder for another so you can like swap the tasks just so it would be easier for them. Yeah, stuff like that.

Q: Thank you and the last question. In general what concrete measures could be applied in your company to reduce or prevent project manager's and team member's stress and increase well-being at work?

R: Uhm, well, I think one of the things that. Well, I kind of like that they introduced this benefit the Fridays For Family benefits. Since I thought that it was quite a good idea since some members at

different times get a free day before weekend from which during which, if they're not called in back to work. Hopefully they like distress and so on, but other than that, I would say uhm just to promoting like teamwork and promoting umm, uh, like the healthy workload is something that would be, I mean, we already do that but maybe do more of it, doing more of it or reminding people more of these things would be good for like stress relief.

Q: Could you please elaborate on the stress relief measures you mentioned?

R: Like for example, just reminding employees that to take as much work as you can. Not like so that they wouldn't feel obligated to take absolutely everything. It doesn't matter if you can or not, just take it. So for example, just to the promoting culture that you should take as much as you can, not as much as you're like being dealt and also... Yeah I would say that and I guess that's it.

Q: Thank you for taking the time to talk with me.

R: You're welcome.

Q: And I will stop recording right now.

R: OK.

Annex 6

Table 6. Summary of the main study results. Junior project manager vs project manager vs senior project manager

Question type	Junior project manager	Project manager	• Senior project manager
Recognizing work-related stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adrenaline • Feeling of danger • Flight or fight mode • Rushing into actions • The working situation with no clear solution to a problem • Being blamed for lack of knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand to meet high expectations set by employer or client • Trying to meet expectations while being maximalist and perfectionist • Feeling bothered, annoyed, nervous • Sweating • Not meeting deadlines • Multiple issues happening at the same time • Negative feedbacks • Delays from client or project team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling urgency of the situation • Not being comfortable at work • Not thinking straight
Levels of work stress experienced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High • Medium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High (because its daily experience) • Low
Workplace stress consequences and outcomes (emotional, physical, cognitive)	<p>-Emotional:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angriness • Anxiety • Low self-esteem • Breaking down in front of your family and coworkers • Fear of uncertainty <p>-Physical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased heartbeat • Sweating • Voice change • Shaking hands/ body • Crying • Rise of temperature 	<p>-Emotional:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worry • Annoyance • Irritation • Frustration • Fear • Hatred • Getting angry quick • Moody • Being overly calm • Overwhelmed and agitated • Apathy, drained • Nervousness <p>-Physical:</p>	<p>-Emotional:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Might reply rudely, sound angry <p>-Physical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crying <p>-Cognitive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hectic thoughts • Not being able to think clearly • Throwing between jobs • Being unable to prioritize • Not being able to start problem-solving

	<p>-Cognitive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time perception increase • Irrational decisions • Saying stupid things • Rushing with your answers/advice that will be regretted later • Being afraid to ask questions • Overthinking about what others might be thinking about you <p>-Social:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting on a mask- pretending to be strong • Feeling conflicted when to show real face, when to hide experienced stress • Trying not to show stress to your family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty to relax • Headaches • Increased heartbeat • Lack of energy • Early period • Trouble sleeping <p>-Cognitive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afraid to ask for support • Inability to focus on tasks • Freezing (unable to move on) • Rapid steps • Lack of focus • Overthinking: project steps, client, team • All concentration goes to problem solving • Feeling like everything is falling apart • Searching for any possible distraction • Problem solving becomes difficult • Writing multiple messages with mistakes <p>-Social:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No willingness to help • Passive aggressive communication • Personalizing work and feelings for colleagues, project team • Distancing from family and coworkers • After work thoughts about work • Less motivated to have after work activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to work by the process <p>-Social:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answering questions not fully, unprofessionally • Inability to filter out emotions • Using sarcasm
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<p>Workplace stress consequences and outcomes (organizational, for project implementation)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bad quality of final product • Choosing wrong project team • Not keeping project budget or profitability • Not following client's and employers instructions • Not being able to help • Passing along wrong instructions • Wanting to quit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unhappy client • Wrong file delivery • Technical mistakes: using wrong systems or using the system wrong • Private information leak • Sharing wrong working packages • Miss managing workflow schedule • Wasting project teams time • Changing deadline for project team • Wasting money • Additional work trying to recreate project • Snow ball effect from small issues not noticed on time • Decrease in productivity • Intended sabotage from project team • Loosing clients trust • Wanting to quit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skipping lunch and breaks • Overtime • Loss of productivity • Jumping from one project to another, not doing any of them well • Urgent decisions that lead to money loss • Long term consequences: not working normally for several days, being scared to repeat mistake again, avoiding work • Loss of client • Loss of vendors • Delays • Project team not delivering QA reports • Project team delivering not final quality
<p>Sources. Factors that increase the likelihood of workplace stress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High workload • Shifting project constraints: time, budget, resources, quality • Unexpected workload (additional ADV, new projects, updates) • Lack of experience • Not having instructions • Fear of asking for support • Contradicting management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High workload • Bad time management- overtime- burnout • Not knowing how to say no • Un-clarity of tasks • Project team working in another time zone • Client from another time zone • Miscommunication with client • Management, coworkers not being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing workload • Working with big projects • Inclarity of task • Unexperienced coworkers • Multiple repeating questions from coworkers • Unexperienced linguists selected • Late deliveries • Not being able to meet client's requirements

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not knowing how to say no • Not being able to communicate about workload • Reporting to management, taking questions from superiors personally • Micromanaging management • Management setting high standards/expectations • Not being able to meet expectations • Lack of communication and support from team or colleagues • Short answer to asked questions • PM not sharing lessons learned from their mistakes leading to you repeating the same mistake • Colleagues blaming for mistake done • Linguists disappearing • Project team asking for extensions • Client's pressure • Mistake at project preparation stage • Technical issues • Not finding available vendors • Bad time planning • Overtime leading to overburning • Working remotely (for new employee) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • able to answer technical questions • Disappearing linguists • Using new linguists • Language pairs being overbooked • Having to micromanage linguist • Not knowing your goals • Not knowing company's direction • Ambiguity of tasks caused by management • Unexpectedly reassigned work • Sick leave of coworker, project team • Being left alone to deal with issues • Bad communication skills • Working remotely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer management fail: asking for more time, money, elaboration of instructions mid project
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<p>Factors that decrease the likelihood of workplace Stress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not work related communication with colleagues • Humanizing coworkers understanding that they are under stress as well • Feeling of togetherness - complaining about issues together • Asking for assistance from coworkers • Making a to do list • Working remotely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a clear plan for the day, writing it down • Good time managing • Reliable linguists with experience • Having more freedom with project, no tight deadlines, good budget, good vendor prices • Client provides clear expectations and instructions • Working with the same client/project • Fast communication from client • Normal workload • Expansion of department, more coworkers • No pressure to take more work • Carefully reading all instructions • Working by instructions • Trying to forecast all possible issues and consequences- risk management • Good communication skills • Good technical knowledge • Working remotely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing workload with coworkers • Working with experienced teams • Having a colleague that managed similar project before, discussing issues with them • Sharing and receiving ideas • Micromanaging project team • Leaving time buffer for team • Checking up on them, even with mass emails if needed • Working remotely
<p>Personal coping methods</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaks • Smoking • Breathing fresh air • Reorganizing the problem (putting everything into boxes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small breaks (every 1h) • Walking outside home or working room • Eye exercises • Cold nerves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relaxing music • Talking about project with other people • Breaks • Changing work location • Breathing exercises

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying to think about problem from a far • Crying • Avoiding phone during breaks • Eye exercises • Changing environment • Respecting everyone, even if they made a mistake • Stepping outside of the body and reevaluating the situation • Understanding that stress helps you grow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to evaluate your own capabilities • Prioritizing • Depersonalizing the problem – feedbacks is for the chair- not me • Minimalizing the problem • Shutting off all communication channels connected to work • Ignoring all thoughts about work • Having good rest • Exercising, hiking in nature • Equanimity- calmness and composure, especially in a difficult situation. • Self confidence • Being extrovert • Being educated in basic psychology • Ability to control emotions • Being optimistic and self-reliant • Critical thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meditation • Vocalizing good things about yourself • Proofreading important emails before sending them, asking colleague to read them • Listening to harsh metal music • Singing / shouting • Listening to interviews with famous people proficient at stress management • Constant self-growth, education • Yoga • Distancing yourself from issues • Not overthinking
Stress Management, prevention at organizational level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company being vocal about stress • Reinforcing importance of breaks and lunch, leaving work on time • Paying for overtime • No blame policy • Weekly thank you initiative • Positive experience initiative • Additional days off 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy access to time off • FFF initiative • Seminars • Encouraging self-management • Helping to relocate workload • Emphasis on teamwork • Management asking about how person is feeling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gifts: Stress Balls • Keeping the good working environment • Controlling assistance from other departments • No blame policy • Support of psychologist (hired by company or provided such possibility) • Team building

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops for : time managing, reporting, stress management • Seminars after work, not during • Avoiding to compliment overload and normalizing chaos • Shadowing of new employees • Expanding teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing instructions about every client • Shadowing of new employees • Meetings with freelance linguists • Meetings with colleagues from office • Seminar/workshops • Giving freedom to choose clients/ projects • Possibility to plan working hours on their own • Team buildings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops/seminar from outside and colleagues separately • Encouraging non official communication
Team-based prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working as a team • Being polite and respectful • Reshuffling your own work to help team • Avoiding being passive aggressive • Doing work together • Calming team by a call or emails • Restructuring their work or instructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rewriting instructions • Helping to deliver work • Overtaking and reassigning their work • Calming them down by minimalizing error • Quick communication-prioritizing responding to them first 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advising • Sharing information • Calling them and talking • Scheduling a meeting • Reassigning work • Extending deadline • Sharing ideas on how to improve their work • Sharing stress management ideas • Manually doing their work

Source: Composed by author