

The role of work stress, organizational climate, and improving employee performance in the implementation of work from home

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Abstract.

BACKGROUND: The spread of COVID-19 around the world has caused many undesirable effects on human health. The pandemic forced the employees to resort to Remote Work (RW)/Work from Home (WFH) according to the nature of the jobs. Consequently, organizations, business process and results are affected and organizational and commercial activities are significantly reduced.

OBJECTIVE: This study investigates the impact of work stress and organizational climate on employee performance in the context of WFH in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic in micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

METHOD: This study used a purposive sampling strategy and determined using the Slovin equation and equals 95 employees in marketing, business restructuring and finance. The Partial Least Square (PLS) approach and the SmartPLS version 3.0 software for data analysis processing procedures for hypothesis testing were used.

RESULTS: The results revealed that the organizational environment has a negative and significant effect on job stress. Furthermore, job stress had a negative impact on employee performance and the organizational climate had a favorable and considerable impact on employee performance.

CONCLUSION: The lower the level of work stress, the higher the employee performance, and vice versa. Organizational climate has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, which means that the organization's climate is conducive, so the employee performance will increase and vice versa.

Keywords: Job satisfaction, job performance, job stress, workplace, WFH, COVID-19

1. Introduction

The spread of COVID-19 around the world has caused many undesirable effects on human health [1]. Therefore, governments around the world have

been taking decisive actions for public health emergency by implementing several severe measures, whether individual or institutional, represented by partial or complete closure procedures and staying at the home [2]. These procedures have required employees to resort to Remote Work (RW)/Work from Home (WFH) according to the nature of the jobs. Consequently, organizations, business process and outcomes of these business are affected while

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organizational and commercial activities are significantly reduced [3, 4].

WFH was primarily discussed by Norbert Wiener [5], as written in his book "Human use of human cybernetics and Society" the term telework / remote working / WFH refers to a theory that has been refined by Miles and Wiener [6]. Furthermore, Toffler and Alvin [7] introduced the work from home scheme to a wider audience. Thus and Nilles [8] conveyed the pros and cons of working from home. Also, Hemingway and Smith [9], state that organizational climate is one of the causes of work stress.

Because the term is no longer consistent with previous researches, the new researches by Palumbo et al. [10] revealed that organizational meaningfulness (OM) and work-related welfare weakens the side effects of FHW. Furthermore, Bellmann and Hübler [11] state that working from home or remote work (RW), and work-life balance (WLB) have a significant negative relationship. However, several studies have found different results Nakrošienė et al. [12] stated that productivity is higher at home because it can simultaneously look after family members. However, Trus et al. [13] found a significant but very weak correlation between some of the work stress factors of nurses and organizational culture and organizational climate with the primary health care team in which they work. Meanwhile, researchers Perez-Floriano and Gonzalez [14], also stated that work stress has a positive effect on work performance. Kim et al. [15] revealed that the politics of skills reduces the role of stress and work tension and provides a positive correlation to service performance.

Based on previous literature, the results of empirical analysis of previous researches are inconsistent. Therefore, this research aims to get a clear picture of the WFH concept and lessons learned in addition to steps that need to be taken in the current pandemic organizational climate situation. For the optimal application of this concept, all organizational climates should be understood, anticipated and adapted well.

2. The influence of organizational climate on job stress

The organizational climate (OC) is one of the most important factors that accompanies success of institutions. This confirms the importance of identifying the nature of the organizational climate including various elements and dimensions in organization

environment. It is known that, organizational climate represents a set of variables related to its noticeable impact on achieving goals efficiently and effectively [16]. The organizational climate reflects the organization's personality. It refers to all internal and external elements that influence workers' behavior and attitudes toward their work and company as a whole. OC also determines employees' degree of satisfaction and performance. At this moment, human resources are the center of transformation and attention. The organizational climate of sense making has a shared meaning so that employees are trying to adopt work environment's characteristics [17].

According to Schneider et al. [18], the organizational climate is an abstraction that represents the overall cognitive arrangement of observations and experiences as a whole. Climate in an organization can be summarized as the meanings that employees ascribe to a collection of interconnected events that occur while working there. Culture in an organization can be summarized as the core assumptions and values that guide the organization's operations. Climate research is introduced with a brief history before moving on to the most significant findings, research areas, and studies related to climate strength.

A few studies have investigated the relationship between job stress and the desire to stay in a company in addition to the effect of the organizational climate. The fact that the data come from a variety of industries shows that the findings and outcomes are relevant to managers and practitioners across a wide range of industries. Stressed individuals who work in organizations with an unsupportive organizational climate had worse retention rates than those who work in organizations with supportive organizational climates. According to the findings of research study by Vong et al. [19], which shows that stressful employees who are working in organizations that are characterized by a negative organizational climate, have much less desire to stay in the organization.

Furthermore, theoretical and empirical analysis of previous researches showed some characteristics of this relationship. The study by Qi et al. [20] explained that with primary collegial leadership it is possible to minimize job stress. In another study by Hoßbach and Berg [17], the organizational climate of sense making has a shared meaning so that employees are tied to the work environment's characteristics. Also, previous research by Vong et al. [19] showed that stressful employees working in organizations characterized by a negative organizational climate have much less desire to stay with the organization. Willis et al. [21]

found that a positive perception of organizational climate or stronger identification seemed to cause less stress. Cardozo and Kwan Chung [22] assert that a positive organizational climate can reduce worker stress and fatigue [23], revealing a negative correlation between organizational climate and job stress.

According to the literature review, we found that a number of researchers believe that the organizational climate is the main driver of many job problems, especially work stress, which is represented by low satisfaction and performance, work turnover, absenteeism and job dropout. Most of the organizations' problems are due to the existence of an inappropriate job climate that leads to the formation of types of pressure on the organization's employees, which negatively affects the performance of employees. Based on all of the above, this study attempts to answer the following question: What is the impact of dimensions of organizational climate on work stress when working from home? Through this question, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H1: Organizational climate has a negative effect on job stress of WFH.

3. The influence of organizational climate and job stress on performance

The organizational climate is one of the modern concepts in management science and its importance has increased because it reflects the nature of the organization regardless of its objectives and ownership [24]. The organizational climate is one of the important and sensitive topics that deserves to be studied especially during COVID-19. This is because the organizational climate has an impact on the success of organizations and increase the effectiveness in terms of understanding and accepting the organizational climate for workers in addition to dissolution and its inconsistency with the capabilities and needs of workers [25, 26].

The organizational climate is an effective tool that helps the organization achieve its goals [27]. The organizational climate is the internal environment of the organization that may be affected by some problems that are in the form of pressures at work as a result of some wrong administrative practices that have a direct impact on organizational behavior and workers behavior, groups and organizations alike [28]. Work stress may lead to the formation of a negative organizational climate in the organization, which may lead to a decrease in performance rates [29].

Organizations now have to deal with environments that are volatile, unpredictable, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) [30]. International interconnection has increased the complexity of markets, heightened rivalry, shortened product lifecycles, and accelerated the global economy's speed [31]. As a result, enterprises will have an increased requirement for creativity and adaptability.

Contemporary life has multiple requirements that impose on the individual renewed and continuous modern demands and facing different roles in line with the rapid development and change that leads the individual to bear the job stress of various kinds as a result of work burdens and requirements [32]. According to researchers and previous studies, there is no fixed concept of job stress, as there is no profession or job that is free of pressure due to the different nature and conditions of work from one place to another.

The multiplicity of the concept of work stress as defined by Zapf and Vogt [33] is the set of pressures and situations that the employee is exposed to during her/his work. This causes them many problems, including psychological and physical such as tension, depression, fatigue and exhaustion and may be from the same person or the workplace in which they work. Likewise are those interactions that take place between workers and the work environment, and as a result the emergence of mostly bad emotional state, including anxiety and tension [34].

Robbins and Coulter [35] state that stress is usually discussed negatively, but stress also has positive goals, but the pressure is dangerous and can hinder employee performance progress when the situation is negative. According to the results of previous research by Li et al. [36], job stress has a negative effect on work performance. Kalyar and Kalyar [37] stated that stress has a negative influence on the power of wisdom and work performance [38]. Institutional stress has a negative effect on hospital employees' work performance [39] which shows a negative correlation between work performance and stress at work stress negatively affects performance [40].

Colquitt et al. [41] state that work performance includes behavior under employee control and places boundaries where behavior is relevant to job performance. Furthermore, according to Haryono et al. [42], the organizational climate has a positive effect on work performance. Ahmad et al. [43] showed a significant influence between organizational climate on overall job satisfaction and organizational climate shows a positive and significant impact on employee

performance variables. Mehralian et al. [44] state that workplace climate significantly influences employee behavior and performance. Andersson et al. [45] suggested that organizational climate for psychological safety has a positive effect on innovation performance. Mutonyi et al. [46] revealed that organizational climate has an important role in employee performance.

Through the review of previous studies that dealt with the issue of organizational climate and work pressures in order to enrich the theoretical framework of the study and benefit from it in identifying the dimensions used in evaluating the characteristics of the organizational climate and work pressures, and they were used in building the study tool necessary for data collection, identification of statistical methods and interpretation of results. Despite the importance of the topic, the researchers noted that these studies that dealt directly with the impact of the organizational climate on work pressures were limited. Based on the results of the theoretical and empirical analysis of previous research, the following hypotheses are formed:

H2: Job stress has a negative effect on work performance of WFH.

H3: Organizational climate has a positive effect on employee performance of WFH.

4. Research methodology

This study was conducted by using the descriptive statistic method and regression analysis under quantitative approach [47]. In this study, purposive sampling strategy was used. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling approach in which “things chosen for the sample are depending on the researcher’s judgment”. The Purposive sampling strategy may be effective when only a small number of persons can serve as primary data sources due to the nature of the research design and aims. Purposive sampling requires the use of personal judgment to choose cases that will help answer research questions or achieve research objectives [48].

Based on the objectives of study which include organizational climate, employee performance and job stress and purposive sampling strategy, questionnaires were structured in three different categories marketing, business sectors and finance arrangements. Choosing these three categories was based on their carrying out everyday chores and deal-

Table 1
Measurements of variables

Variables	Measurements
Employees performance according to Kuvaas [49] which then refers to Cao et al. [50]	(1) I almost always perform better than an acceptable level.
	(2) I often appear better than what can be expected of me.
	(3) I usually put extra effort into my job.
	(4) I purposely put much effort into doing my job.
	(5) I try to work as hard as possible.
	(6) The quality of my work is the best.
Organizational climate according to Isaksen and Lauer [51], which was later developed by Wojtczuk-Turek and Turek [52]	(1) In our offices, employees, and superiors trust each other.
	(2) There are approval and support from supervisors for initiatives related to the introduction of new ideas.
	(3) Management considers the opinions of employees when making decisions.
	(4) Cooperation and knowledge sharing are highly valued in organizations.
	(5) Employees are treated fairly.
	(6) The style of communication allows the free flow of information.
Work stress according to Lait and Wallace [53]	(1) I feel that I am working out of my control.
	(2) I feel overwhelmed by my work.
	(3) I feel like giving up my job.
	(4) I feel like I can't quit my job.
	(5) I feel frustrated with my job.

ing directly with (UMKM/SMEs) entrepreneurs in Central Java Province. The researchers limited respondents to 124 employees which 95 respondents were sampled using a purposive sampling strategy. The number of samples determined using the Slovin formula and known findings. All research questionnaire variables utilized in this study were using measuring tools from prior research models as showing in Table 1. We used the Likert model of a five-point scale style.

This framework explores the influence of organizational climate on work stress and employee performance in addition to the effect of work stress on employee performance. For the measurement of latent variables, the Smart-PLS version 3.0 software was used as well. Validity and reliability tests are employing loading factor value analysis and average variance extracted (AVE) value analysis are used in processing methodologies and data analysis. In this study, Cronbach’s alpha value analysis approach was used to assess the reliability, R-Square value analysis using t-statistics to test the hypothesis using the Bootstrap procedure, Partial Least Square (PLS) approach for data analysis processing procedures

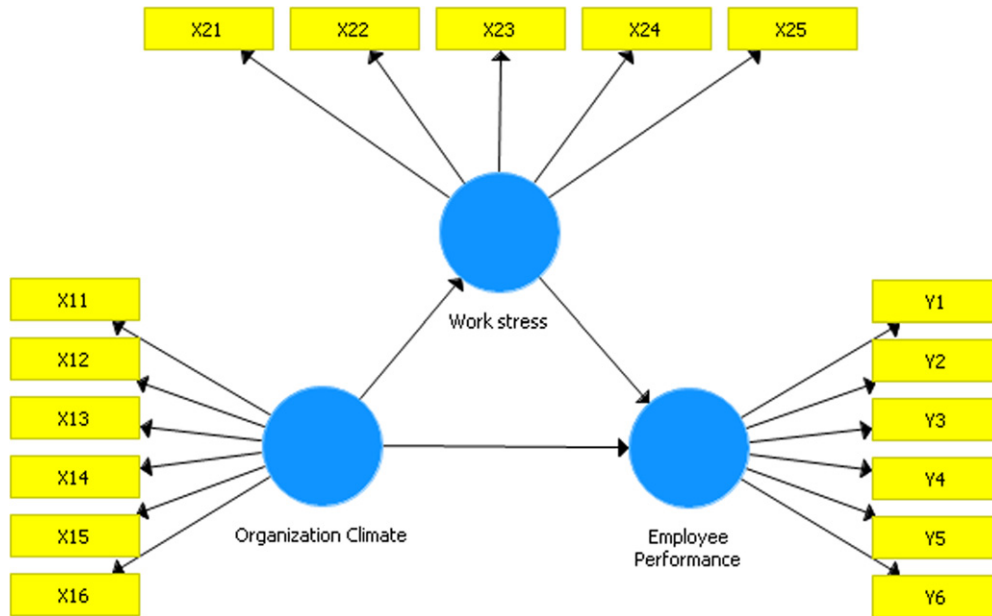


Fig. 1. Research model.

Table 2 Demographic description

Measure	Item	N	%
Sex	Female	24	26
	Male	71	74
Age	<30	22	23
	30–40	41	43
	>40	32	34
Year of service	3–10	11	12
	11–20	57	60
	>20	27	28

for hypothesis testing. Characteristics of sample are showed in the Table 2 below.

Table 2 shows that 74% more male employees than female employees, namely 26%, indicate that the gender of male employees is more dominant than female employees. This decision is adjusted to the type of work to be carried out. It must refer to the provisions of the recruitment system by the Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) of Central Java Province in terms of employee recruitment. In the age group, respondents in 30 to 40 years are more than other age groups, namely 41 or 43%. It shows that most of the Central Java Provincial Cooperative Office employees are still young and still productive. In addition to having the ability, skills, and motivation to improve employee performance, the most dominant work experience group is 11 to 20 years. This figure is the highest, namely 57 people or 60%. Because

Table 3 Loading factor value

Matrix	Organizational climate	Work stress	Work performance
X11	0.808		
X12	0.862		
X13	0.885		
X14	0.869		
X15	0.784		
X16	0.732		
X21		0.897	
X22		0.820	
X23		0.732	
X24		0.853	
X25		0.251	
Y1			0.674
Y2			0.791
Y3			0.655
Y4			0.859
Y5			0.486
Y6			0.830

senior and experienced employees are needed in this job, employees must also have extraordinary expertise in handling MSME business activities apart from having the two factors above.

4.1. Descriptive analysis

Table 3 shows an indicator with a loading factor higher than 0.7 so that it can explain its latent construct. On the other hand, indicators with loading

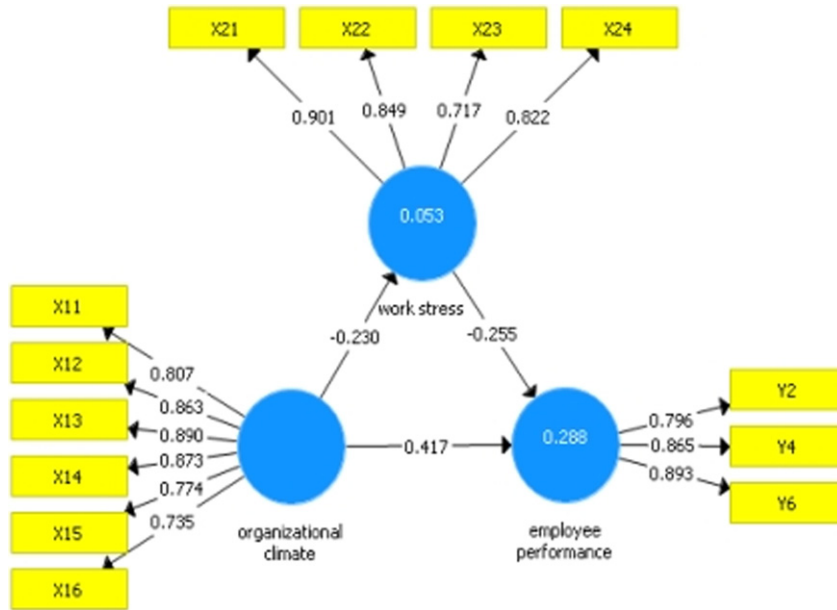


Fig. 2. Final result model.

Table 4
Average Variance Extracted result

Matrix	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Result
Organizational climate	0.681	Valid
Work stress	0.681	Valid
Employee performance	0.727	Valid

factors lower than 0.7 unreliable must be removed, because the reference weight factor using Smart-PLS 3.0 must be greater than 0.7 to be reliable. Based on the results of Table 3, the final result model was created (Fig. 2).

Based on the final result, the effect of organization climate on work stress from the original sample value has -0.230 indicating a negative effect. Furthermore, looking at the t-statistic value of 2.282 and the required t-table value of 1.96, thus the t-statistic value is greater than the t-table value with a significant level of 0.05, this indicates significant. So, it can be interpreted that organization climate has a negative and significant effect on work stress.

The effect of work stress on employee performance from the original sample value has -0.255 indicating a negative effect, then look at the t-statistic value of 2.875 and the required t-table value of 1.96, thus the t-statistic value is greater than the t-table value with a level of significant 0.05, this indicates significant. So, it can be interpreted that work stress has a negative and significant effect on employee performance.

The effect of organization climate on employee performance from the original sample value has 0.417 indicating a positive influence, then look at the t-statistic value of 4.579 and the required value of t-table is 1.96, thus the t-statistic value is greater than the t-table value with significant level of 0.05, this indicates significant. So, it can be interpreted that the organization climate is positive and significant on employee performance.

The AVE of each construct is already greater than 0.5, as seen in Table 3. Convergent validity can also be shown in the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value, which shows that each construct has a value greater than 0.5, indicating that Convergent validity is not an issue in the model being tested.

4.1.1. Reliability test

Table 5 shows that the value of Cronbach’s alpha for all constructs above, which is 0.70, so that all constructs have good reliability in accordance with the minimum required limits. Table 6 shows that the inner model is evaluated using R-Squares for the dependent variable. The R-Square value for the work stress construct is 0.053. It interpreted that the magnitude of the influence of organizational climate variables on work stress is 5.3%. Likewise for the employee performance construct of 0.288, it is interpreted that the magnitude of the influence of organizational climate variables on employee performance is 28.8%.

Table 5
Cronbach's alpha result

Matrix	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Result
Organizational climate	0.906	0.927	Reliable
Work stress	0.860	0.895	Reliable
Employee performance	0.811	0.888	Reliable

Table 6
R-Square value

Matrix	R.Square	R.Square adjusted
Work stress	0.053	0.043
Employee performance	0.288	0.272

4.1.2. Path coefficients and *p* value

Table 7 shows that the Inner model can also be evaluated using the *t*-test with a significance level of 0.05 (*t*-statistic > *t*-table). The *t* test is used for hypothesis testing which is carried out through bootstrapping procedures in the Smart-PLS program. The significance level used was 95% ($\alpha = 0.05$) with a *t*-table of 1.96. If the *t*-statistic value is less than 1.96 then the hypothesis is rejected.

Table 6 shows the results of PLS calculations which state that they have a direct influence between variables with the implied value of *p*-value < 0.05. On the contrary, it is clear that there is no direct effect if *p*-value > 0.05. Based on the table above, it can be stated as follows:

- Organizational climate has a significant direct effect on work stress with a *p* value of $0.023 < 0.05$.
- Work stress has a significant direct effect on employee performance with a *p* value of $0.004 < 0.05$.
- Organizational climate has a significant direct effect on employee performance with a *p* value of $0.000 < 0.05$.

5. Discussion

This study determines the influence of organizational climate factors as predictors of work stress.

Specifically, this study examines the potential effects of organizational climate with the following dimensions of factor loading values, such as: employees and superiors trust each other, approval and support from supervisors for initiatives related to the introduction of new ideas, management considers employees' opinions when making decisions, cooperation and knowledge sharing, employees are treated fairly and communication styles free flow of information. Regarding the results of all high loading factors, results reveal that a good evaluation of the organizational climate can reduce work stress, while the unfavorable psychological atmosphere felt by employees causes stress. Likewise, the regression analysis results show a negative effect on work stress. So, this finding strengthens the previous researches and theories [54] that state organizational climate is one predictor of work stress.

This research is an attempt to explain the implementation of WFH during the outbreak of COVID-19. So, this research was conducted to determine the potential influence to assess the influence of work stress factors as predictors of employee performance at the Cooperative office in Central Java Province. By examining the possible effects of work stress with the loading factor value on the following dimensions such as: feeling out of control, feel overwhelmed with work, feeling like giving up, feeling unable to leave work, and feeling frustrated, only one dimension has a low loading factor, namely feeling frustrated with the job 0.25; this means that the respondents have not received attention to the level of frustration with the managerial job. However, the other four dimensions have high loading factors, this shows that managerial level is still consistent in maintaining work stress stability. Thus, the regression analysis results show a negative effect on employee performance. These findings do not support the research results [38], which states that job stress positively impacts job performance.

Many previous studies have shown that organizational climate is a major predictor of employee performance. So, this study was conducted to determine potential effects by examining the possible effects of employee performance with the following

Table 7
Path coefficients result

Matrix	Original sample	T-statistic	P-value
Organizational climate → Work stress	-0.230	2.282	0.023
Work stress → Employee performance	-0.255	2.875	0.004
Organizational climate → Employee performance	0.417	4.579	0.000

dimensions of factor loading values, such as: always performing better than an acceptable level, appearing better than what can be expected from me, put extra effort in my work, put much effort into doing the job, try to work as hard as possible and work best, from the loading factor value it appears three dimensions have to load the low factors are: 0.674, 0.655 and 0.486. So, it can be interpreted that the results of the questionnaire tested on employees of the Central Java provincial cooperative service still hope for consistency in climate support that can improve the ability of leaders and employees to work together. Thus, this can improve performance both in terms of effectiveness and efficiency [55]. Therefore, the results of the regression analysis show a positive influence on employee performance, so that the findings of this study support [46] that organizational climate has an important role in employee performance and Iksan and Haryono [42] stated that organizational climate has a positive effect on work performance.

According to results of hypotheses testing, the organizational climate has a negative and significant effect on job stress. Lait and Wallace [53] proved these results stating that maintaining a positive organizational climate can reduce work stress levels to a lower level. The results of the dimensional value of 0.901 from the work stress variable, for the question: I feel that I am working out of my control for, this is the highest value, so this is to become a reference priority for the executive office of the cooperative office of the Central Java province of Semarang-Indonesia to make improvements. According to Pritchard and Karasick [56], organizations should avoid job descriptions that are too rigid, cut bureaucracy, and complexity to increase flexibility in their work processes. According to Ekval [57], organizational climate embodies culture, combining feelings, attitudes, behaviors that shapes organizational life that has a purpose. From these findings, it can be interpreted that controlling the organizational climate and stable work stress on employees can support their roles and duties, especially for employees who provide direct services to UMKM business actors throughout Central Java in an optimal manner.

This study has crucial implications for managers who aim to improve employee performance by strengthening or developing a positive work environment. Managers aspiring to higher positions should be aware that when it comes to reviving creativity and innovation in the workplace, they must consider a variety of factors. According to Potosky and Ramakr-

ishna [58], the need to comprehend one's workplace behavior at the individual level is typically influenced by one's felt support from the immediate work environment. Then the organizational climate, how can it form performance management values with street-level bureaucrats, shape performance management behaviour [59]. Here, organizational climate influence is positively related to management performance values, which strongly supports management behavior's performance.

In this study, it was found that the implication of an effective organizational climate is to increase a conducive atmosphere in controlling work stress levels. According to Hemingway and Smith [54], organizational climate is one of the causes of work stress. Lapidus et al. [60] examined formalization as a substitute for organizational leadership which directly affects job stress. Sohi et al. [61] stated that a centralized organization has a low level of flexibility because employees with limited autonomy and being controlled by them because stress at work.

6. Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the research that has been carried out, it can be concluded that the organizational climate has a negative and significant effect on work stress, which means that a conducive organizational climate will reduce the level of work stress and vice versa. Job stress has a negative and significant effect on employee performance. This means that the lower the level of work stress the better will be the employee performance, and vice versa. Organizational climate has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, which means that the organization's climate is conducive, so the employee performance will increase and vice versa.

6.1. Managerial implications of the research

The discussion and conclusions of this study can be used as a reference in improving employee performance:

- It is vital to develop a positive corporate climate by making the workplace more open, supportive, and focused on high-performance goals.
- Communication between coworkers must be done with a positive attitude that promotes mutual understanding, caring, and respect, so

that communication works smoothly and does not damage each other's feelings.

- After the organization's accomplishments, employees can be motivated to work even if the rewards aren't monetary. The rewards can be in form of praise that's directly related to their achievements, or rewarding people by offering them the chance to develop themselves in an additional way to show appreciation for their efforts.
- Employees continue to grow and develop, which should lead to improved work performance and additional value for both individual and institution.

6.2. Suggestions for future research

The research was limited to the cooperative office of the Central Java Province in Semarang, Indonesia. As a result, more research can be done at other agencies. Other data analysis methods, such as LISREL and AMOS, will be used in future research in addition to SEM smart-PLS, which is all that can be used in this one. This study only looks at organizational environment characteristics and job stress as a starting point for more researches into other aspects that influence employee performance. Lastly, this study contains two phases: one during the COVID-19 outbreak, which is the focus of this study, and the second phase will be conducted following COVID-19.

Conflict of interest

None to report.

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