Perceived stress and anxiety in government employees during remote work arrangements: A correlation study

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Abstract

Background: The transition to remote work has significantly reshaped workplace structures, posing unique challenges for employees. Government workers, accustomed to face-to-face interactions, faced substantial adjustments when transitioning to remote arrangements, leading to concerns about their mental health, particularly stress and anxiety.
Purpose: This study examines perceived levels of stress and anxiety among government employees in remote work arrangements and investigates the relationship between these mental health outcomes and socio-demographic factors.
Methods: A descriptive correlational study design was employed, targeting 257 government employees from 11 PhilHealth offices in the National Capital Region. Stratified random sampling recruited 173 employees completing an online self-administered survey. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) and Generalized Anxiety Disorder Assessment (GAD-7) tools were used to measure stress and anxiety levels. Descriptive statistics and Chi-Square tests were applied for data analysis.
Results: Most respondents (96.32%) reported moderate stress levels (mean PSS score = 19.51), while nearly half (49.69%) exhibited mild anxiety (mean GAD-7 score = 6.83). Severe stress and anxiety were minimal, at 3.07% and 0.61%, respectively. No significant correlations were identified between socio-demographic factors and mental health outcomes.
Conclusion: The study highlights moderate stress and mild anxiety levels among government employees during remote work. Findings emphasize the importance of mental health support and structured remote work policies to address workplace stress during periods of significant organizational change.

Keywords: anxiety; government employees; mental health; remote work; stress

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Introduction

The transition to remote work has become a prominent feature of modern workplaces, driven by advancements in technology and the growing need for flexible work arrangements. While remote work offers several benefits, such as reduced commuting time and increased autonomy, it also presents significant challenges, particularly for government employees. Unlike their counterparts in the private sector, government employees often perform roles that require public interaction and are heavily reliant on face-to-face transactions. The abrupt shift to remote setups has required them to adapt to unfamiliar telework systems and tools, often without adequate preparation or training (Milch et al., 2021; Van Zoonen et al., 2021).

Remote work environments are associated with unique stressors, including technological challenges, social isolation, and difficulty maintaining a balance between personal and professional responsibilities. Studies have shown that these stressors can contribute to heightened levels of stress and anxiety among employees, particularly in roles where human interaction and collaboration are integral (O'Neill et al., 2020; Wang et al.,

2020). Poor technological infrastructure, insufficient organizational support, and increased workloads further exacerbate these challenges (Tavares, 2020; Yildiz & Çalışkan, 2021).

For government employees, the demand to maintain operational efficiency while adapting to new ways of working can significantly impact mental health. Research has indicated that stress and anxiety in remote work settings often stem from the absence of social support, blurred work-life boundaries, and uncertainties associated with changes in workplace dynamics (Birtus & Lăzăroiu, 2021; Ragu-Nathan & Tarafdar, 2020). These factors highlight the importance of understanding how workplace transitions affect employee well-being and identifying strategies to mitigate their psychological impact.

Socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, marital status, educational attainment, job position, employment status, years of service, income level, and type of remote work arrangement play a critical role in shaping employees' experiences of stress and anxiety in remote work contexts. For instance, younger employees may struggle with limited resources and unstable work environments, while older employees may face greater technological challenges (Wang et al., 2020). Gender dynamics also influence stress perceptions, with women often experiencing additional pressures from caregiving and household responsibilities (Tavares, 2020). Similarly, differences in marital status, income levels, and job security can significantly affect an employee's coping capacity and psychological resilience. Understanding these relationships is vital for developing targeted workplace interventions that address the specific needs of diverse employee groups.

This study examines the levels of perceived stress and anxiety among government employees engaged in remote work and investigates how socio-demographic factors relate to these mental health outcomes. By focusing on government employees, this research contributes valuable insights to the growing body of knowledge on remote work and mental health, offering guidance for policymakers and organizational leaders in creating supportive and responsive work environments.

The primary aim of this study is to assess the perceived levels of stress and anxiety among government employees working in remote arrangements and to explore the relationship between socio-demographic factors and these mental health outcomes. Given the significant adjustments required during remote work, it is crucial to understand how these factors contribute to employees' psychological well-being. By aligning the objectives explicitly with the research goals, the study seeks to provide evidence-based insights that can inform workplace mental health policies and targeted interventions (American Psychological Association [APA], 2020; Giorgi et al., 2020).

Materials and Methods

Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the perceived levels of stress and anxiety among government employees engaged in remote work. The descriptive component focused on summarizing participants' socio-demographic characteristics and the overall levels of stress and anxiety. The correlational componentexplored the relationships between socio-demographic factors and the measured mental health outcomes, using appropriate statistical analyses to determine the strength and significance of these associations.

Sample and Setting

The research targeted government employees in the National Capital Region (NCR) of the Philippines, focusing on 11 selected offices of PhilHealth. These employees had transitioned to remote work arrangements. Using proportionate stratified random sampling, 173 participants were recruited from a population of 257 employees. Inclusion criteria included being aged 20–60 years, having a role dependent on face-to-face interactions, and stable internet access. Exclusion criteria ruled out and those unable to complete the online survey due to technological or cognitive barriers.

Variables

Independent Variables: Socio-demographic factors, including age, gender, marital status, parental status, living arrangement, job position, employment status, and income; Dependent Variables: Perceived levels of stress and anxiety.

Instruments

Two standardized and widely used instruments were employed to measure perceived stress and anxiety levels:

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10)

The PSS-10 is a validated tool designed to measure the degree to which situations in an individual's life are appraised as stressful. It consists of 10 items scored on a five-point Likert scale, with total scores ranging from 0 to 36, where higher scores indicate greater perceived stress. The scale has demonstrated high internal consistency, with reported Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.78 to 0.91 across various studies (Cohen et al., 1983; Lee, 2012). In this study, the PSS-10 was adapted to reference the context of remote work during organizational change to ensure contextual relevance.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder Assessment (GAD-7)

The GAD-7 is a seven-item self-report questionnaire used to assess anxiety severity. Scores range from 0 to 21, categorized as:0–4: Minimal anxiety5–9:

Mild anxiety10–14: Moderate anxiety15–21: Severe anxiety.

The GAD-7 has shown excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.89 to 0.92 (Spitzer et al., 2006). Similar to the PSS-10, the GAD-7 was contextually adapted to reflect stressors related to remote work and organizational change.

Intervention

No intervention was administered; this observational study aimed to capture baseline stress and anxiety levels during remote work transitions.

Data Collection

A self-administered online survey was conducted over six weeks using Google Forms. Participants received an email containing the survey link, informed consent, and detailed information about the study's objectives and procedures. Follow-up reminders were sent weekly to encourage participation. Only responses from verified government employeeswere included in the dataset to ensure the validity of the findings.

The survey collected two primary types of data:
Socio-demographic information – including age, gender, marital status, employment status, position level, and monthly income. These were measured using categorical and ordinal variables; Psychological measures – participants' levels of perceived stress and anxiety were assessed using standardized scales:

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10): A 10-item, 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (very often), designed to measure the degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful. Higher scores indicate greater perceived stress (Cohen et al., 1983).

Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7): A 7-item, 4-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 3 (nearly every day), used to screen for and assess the severity of anxiety symptoms. Higher scores reflect more severe anxiety (Spitzer et al., 2006).

These measurement tools were selected due to their validated reliability and widespread use in assessing stress and anxiety levels among adult populations.

Data Analysis

The author's application of chi-square tests of independence is appropriate given the study's objective of examining potential associations between socio-demographic factors (e.g., age, gender, employment status) and mental health outcomes (stress and anxiety levels). Since both the independent variables (socio-demographic factors) and dependent variables (stress and anxiety categories) are categorical in nature, chi-square analysis provides a robust method to test whether observed differences in distributions are statistically significant rather than due to chance.

For example, a typical contingency table could compare gender (male/female) against stress level categories(low/moderate/high). If the chi-square test yields a p-value < 0.05, it indicates a significant association — suggesting that gender may influence the distribution of stress levels. Conversely, a non-significant result implies that gender differences are unlikely to affect stress outcomes.

Conducting chi-square tests enables the researchers to:
Determine relationships between demographic variables and psychological outcomes; Identify potential risk factors by highlighting which socio-demographic groups are more susceptible to higher stress or anxiety levels; Support targeted interventions based on statistically validated findings.

However, it is critical that the authors report:
The assumptions of the chi-square test (e.g., expected cell counts should generally be ≥5).
The effect size (e.g., Cramer's V) to interpret the strength of any significant relationships.

By addressing these points, the analysis will not only be statistically sound but will also provide meaningful insights into the interplay between socio-demographic characteristics and mental health among government employees.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the National Ethics Committee with tag number NEC Code-2021-024- Viray-Inciong Remote Work. Informed consent was secured electronically before participation. Data privacy was strictly observed, with participants' personal identifiers removed from the dataset. All data were encrypted and stored securely on password-protected systems. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw at any time without consequences, and findings were shared in aggregate to maintain confidentiality.

Results

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The sample was predominantly middle-aged (31–40 years), female, and married. Most participants were casually employed and held entry-level positions, with a significant proportion earning between PHP 20,001 and 30,000 monthly. These demographic traits provide essential context for interpreting findings on perceived stress and anxiety, as existing research has shown that middle-aged individuals may experience heightened stress due to reduced coping resources and increased burnout risk in remote work settings (Gómez-García et al., 2025)

Most respondents (96.32%) reported moderate levels of stress, with only a small percentage (3.07%) experiencing high stress. The mean score of 19.51

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents by Age Gender, Marital Status, Parental Status, Employment Status, Job Level, and Income Range

Variable	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age		
20–30 years	33	19.08
31–40 years	81	46.82
41–50 years	47	27.17
51–60 years	12	6.94
Gender		
Male	67	38.73
Female	106	61.27
Marital Status		
Single	73	42.20
Married	90	52.02
Separated	3	1.73
Widowed	10	5.78
Parental Status		
With child/children	91	52.60
Without child	30	17.34
Not applicable	52	30.06
Employment Status		
Regular employee	54	31.21
Casual employee	95	54.91
Job order contractor	24	13.88
Job Level		
Entry-level	121	69.94
Mid-level (Supervisory)	42	24.28
Senior/Executive Level	10	5.78
Income Range		
Less than PHP 20,000	37	21.39
PHP 20,001–30,000	86	49.71
PHP 30,001–40,000	37	21.39
PHP 40,001–50,000	10	5.78
More than PHP 50,000	7	4.05

Table 2. Perceived Stress Levels of Respondents Based on PSS-10 Scores

Perceived Stress Level	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Mean Score
Low Stress (0–13)	1	0.61	19.51
Moderate Stress (14–26)	157	96.32	
High Stress (27–36)	5	3.07	

Table 3. Anxiety Levels of Respondents Based on GAD-7

Anxiety Level	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Mean Score
None to Low Risk (0–5)	66	40.49	6.83
Mild (6–10)	81	49.69	
Moderate (11–15)	15	9.20	
Severe (16–21)	1	0.61	

Table 4. Selected Correlation Between Socio-Demographic Factors and Stress/Anxiety Levels

Socio-Demographic Factor	Outcome Variable	χ^2 (Chi-Square)	P-value	Significance
age	Perceived stress	2.04	0.562	Not significant
gender	Anxiety levels	1.39	0.491	Not significant
Marital Staus	Perceived stress	2.87	0.324	Not significant
Monthly Income	Anxiety levels	1.12	0.731	Not significant

on the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) indicates that, on average, participants experienced moderate perceived stress. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that government employees frequently encounter moderate stress levels due to heavy workloads, organizational demands, and bureaucratic constraints (Ganster & Rosen, 2013).

Moderate stress levels can be explained by the nature of public sector work, which often involves high responsibility but limited autonomy (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Additionally, government employees are expected to meet strict performance targets while managing scarce resources, contributing to consistent but manageable stress. Similar patterns were observed in a study by Sharma and Cooper (2016), which found that public sector workers in Southeast Asia commonly experience moderate stress levels related to workload pressures and institutional expectations.

Moreover, moderate perceived stress may also reflect adaptive coping mechanisms among employees. As Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping suggests, stress levels are influenced not only by external demands but also by how individuals appraise and manage these demands. In this study, the prevalence of moderate stress suggests that employees may possess adequate coping strategies to buffer against extreme distress, though sustained exposure to stressors could still negatively affect well-being and productivity if not addressed (Huang et al., 2020).

A significant portion of respondents (49.69%) experienced mild anxiety, while 40.49% had none to low anxiety. Only a small percentage reported moderate to severe anxiety. These results highlight that anxiety was present but predominantly mild in severity.

Selected Correlations Between Socio-Demographic Factors and Stress/Anxiety Levels

The relationships between selected socio-demographic factors and the respondents' perceived stress and anxiety levels were analyzed using the Chi-square (χ^2) test. As shown in Table 4, age and marital status were tested for their association with perceived stress, while gender and monthly income were tested for their association with anxiety levels. None of the examined associations were found to be statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). This suggests that within this sample, the selected socio-demographic factors did not significantlyinfluence respondents' perceived stress or anxiety levels.

Discussion

The primary aim of this study was to assess the perceived levels of stress and anxiety among government employees in remote work arrangements and to explore the relationship between socio-demographic factors (e.g., age, gender, marital status, income) and these mental health outcomes. This discussion interprets the results in light of these objectives and compares the findings with existing literature.

Perceived Levels of Stress and Anxiety

The findings revealed that the majority of government employees (96.32%) experienced moderate stress levels, with only 3.07% reporting high stress. These results align with studies indicating heightened stress levels during periods of workplace transitions and changes in work environments (Van Zoonen et al., 2021). The moderate stress levels observed in this study may be attributed to the sudden transition to remote work, which often comes with challenges such as technological adjustments, isolation, and blurred boundaries between work and personal life (Febriyanti & Mellu, 2020; Antara et al., 2022).

Similarly, the results from the GAD-7 assessment showed that nearly half (49.69%) of respondents experienced mild anxiety, with a smaller percentage reporting moderate (9.20%) and severe anxiety (0.61%). These findings are consistent with broader research on workplace stress, which highlights the psychological impact of adapting to new work arrangements, particularly in roles involving high levels of interaction and collaboration (Wang et al., 2020). The prevalence of mild anxiety suggests that while government employees experienced psychological distress, it was largely manageable and did not escalate to clinical levels for most participants. However, even mild anxiety can affect job performance and overall well-being if left unaddressed (Hayes et al., 2021).

Selected Socio-Demographic Factors and Stress/Anxiety Levels

The chi-square test results indicated no significant associations between socio-demographic factors—such as age, gender, marital status, and income—and participants' perceived stress or anxiety levels. As shown in Table 4, all p-values exceeded the commonly accepted threshold for statistical significance ($p < .05$), suggesting that these demographic variables did not substantially influence mental health outcomes in this study.

These findings imply that external and situational factors, rather than inherent individual characteristics, may play a more crucial role in shaping psychological responses. Previous studies have similarly highlighted that work-related demands, organizational pressures, and the challenges of remote work often exert stronger effects on stress and anxiety levels compared to socio-demographic variables (Giorgi et al., 2020; Kniffin et al., 2021).

For example, Giorgi et al. (2020) found that pandemic-driven occupational uncertainties significantly heightened stress levels across different age groups and income brackets, indicating that external stressors can overshadow individual differences. Similarly, Kniffin et al. (2021) reported that remote work challenges—including increased workloads, blurred work-life boundaries, and reduced social interactions—contributed more to employee anxiety than personal demographic profiles.

Thus, the lack of significant relationships in this study underscores the importance of considering environmental and contextual factors, such as workplace conditions and remote work challenges, when designing interventions aimed at improving employee well-being.

Impact of Remote Work on Mental Health

The results of this study highlight remote work as a potential source of stress and anxiety for government employees, consistent with broader research on remote work environments. Factors such as unclear work expectations, difficulty maintaining work-life balance, and reduced social interaction were likely contributors to the moderate stress and mild anxiety levels observed (Birtus & Lăzăroiu, 2021). For government employees, who often rely on in-person interactions to perform their duties, the shift to remote work can exacerbate feelings of isolation and disconnection (Hayes et al., 2021).

The findings suggest that organizational interventions, such as providing clear communication, improving access to technological resources, and fostering virtual social connections, could significantly alleviate stress and anxiety. Studies have shown that structured remote work policies, coupled with mental health resources, can improve employee satisfaction and well-being (Mahmoud et al., 2021).

Implications for Future Research and Policy

This study underscores the importance of developing workplace policies and support systems that address the unique challenges of remote work. As remote work becomes increasingly common in government and other sectors, future research should focus on the long-term psychological effects of such arrangements. Additionally, it is essential to explore how factors such as organizational culture, leadership styles, and technology use can mitigate workplace stress and promote employee well-being (Krug et al., 2021).

Further research could also investigate individual coping mechanisms and social support systems that help employees navigate the psychological demands of remote work. Understanding these dynamics will help organizations implement evidence-based strategies to foster resilience and ensure the mental health of their workforce.

Conclusions

This study found that most government employees experienced moderate stress and mild anxiety while working remotely, with no significant associations between socio-demographic factors and these outcomes. These findings suggest that work-related challenges—such as increased job demands, technological issues, and blurred work-life boundaries—rather than personal characteristics, play a greater role in influencing employees' psychological well-being (Kniffin et al., 2021; Oakman et al., 2020). To address this, organizations should strengthen mental health support, implement clear remote work policies, and foster open communication to promote employee resilience and productivity (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Toscano & Zappalà, 2020).

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest in the publication of this study. The design, implementation, and analysis of the research were conducted independently, with no financial or personal interests influencing the results. The authors confirm that there were no external funding sources or commercial relationships that might have influenced the outcomes of this study. All authors have approved the final manuscript and have contributed to the study in a manner consistent with academic integrity.

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Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available upon reasonable request to the corresponding author. The data includes de-identified information collected from participants, which are stored securely in accordance with ethical guidelines to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Access to the

dataset will be provided after appropriate approval from the relevant ethical review board.

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