

Work anxiety and performance: Systematic literature review



^{1*}Rofiqi, ²Sopiah

^{1,2} Department Management, Faculty of Economics and Business,
State University of Malang - Indonesia

e-mail:

^{1*}17.rofiqi@gmail.com (corresponding author)

²sopiah.fe@um.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This systematic review aims to examine the influence of innovation strategies on firm competitive advantage and to establish a theoretical foundation for future research on innovation and organizational competitiveness, with a specific focus on work anxiety and employee performance. The review follows the PRISMA framework and analyzes nine studies published between 2019 and 2024. Relevant literature was sourced from major academic databases, including Taylor & Francis, ScienceDirect, Springer, Wiley, Oxford Academic, SAGE Journals, and BMC. The findings indicate that most of the reviewed studies emphasize a strong relationship between work-related anxiety and employee performance, suggesting that psychological strain remains an important factor influencing organizational outcomes. However, despite the growing number of publications in recent years, the review identifies a significant gap in empirical studies exploring work anxiety from multiple perspectives and contexts. This indicates that the field is still developing and requires further in-depth investigation to better understand how work anxiety affects performance across different organizational settings. Overall, the study highlights the need for more comprehensive and multidisciplinary research to advance theoretical and practical understanding of work anxiety and its implications for employee performance.

Keywords: Work Anxiety; Employee Performance; Innovation Strategy;
Systematic Review; PRISMA



©2026 Copyright : Authors

Published by : Program Studi Manajemen, Universitas Nusa Cendana, Kupang – Indonesia.

This is an open access article under license:

CC BY (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

INTRODUCTION

Performance has become a widely discussed aspect of human resource management. In recent decades, work anxiety has emerged as a serious mental disturbance that affects work functioning and is often associated with long periods of sick leave (Muschalla et al., 2010). Work-related anxiety can be empirically distinguished from general mental health problems that are not related to work. Work anxiety does not only occur in psychosomatic conditions but also in somatic patients. As somatic illness can add significant burden to life, some patients may experience reduced work participation due to their health conditions. After brain injury, heart disease, or disc prolapse, patients may fear that their cognitive or physical capacities will not recover sufficiently to allow them to return to work. Conversely, individuals with trait-based anxiety may exhibit excessive worry when dealing with somatic disturbances, which also affects the work domain of life. Thus, although there may be rational reasons for concern, these conditions may develop into pathological work anxiety characterized by excessive and impairing worry that disrupts daily life and work ability (Schulkin & Rosen, 1998). Therefore, in occupational rehabilitation, somatic-related anxiety requires special attention in both diagnosis and treatment.

According to general psychopathology (Lewis-Fernandez & Kleinman, 1994), work-related anxiety can manifest in different phenotypes, including adjustment disorders related to work anxiety (following threatening work events or disease onset affecting work ability), social anxiety toward colleagues or supervisors, situational anxiety related to specific tasks or workplaces (e.g., working with computers or driving), hypochondriac anxiety (fear of becoming ill due to work or worsening illness due to continued work), anxiety about inadequacy (fear of being unable to meet job demands), generalized work-related worries about daily workplace stressors, and workplace phobia, which involves a complex phobic reaction to the workplace as a whole, often accompanied by panic-like symptoms when approaching the workplace (Vignoli et al., 2017). These forms of work anxiety have been observed and validated across different samples and settings (PAYNE et al., 1982).

This systematic literature review summarizes studies on work anxiety and employee performance. The review aims to explore employee anxiety at work, bridge existing gaps in the literature, and provide a foundation for future research directions. The subsequent sections of this review are organized as follows: the second section describes the methodology, including literature search, selection, and content analysis procedures used to identify and summarize relevant studies. The third section presents the analysis of the collected data. The final section discusses the findings, followed by theoretical and practical contributions, conclusions, limitations, and future research directions.

To contribute to the literature on work anxiety, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) What factors contribute to the formation of work anxiety? (2) How does work anxiety affect employee performance? (3) What interventions are appropriate for employees experiencing work anxiety disorders? Despite the prevalence of leadership-related studies in the literature, this research aims to provide an updated overview of current knowledge in the field and offer useful insights for project professionals and researchers.

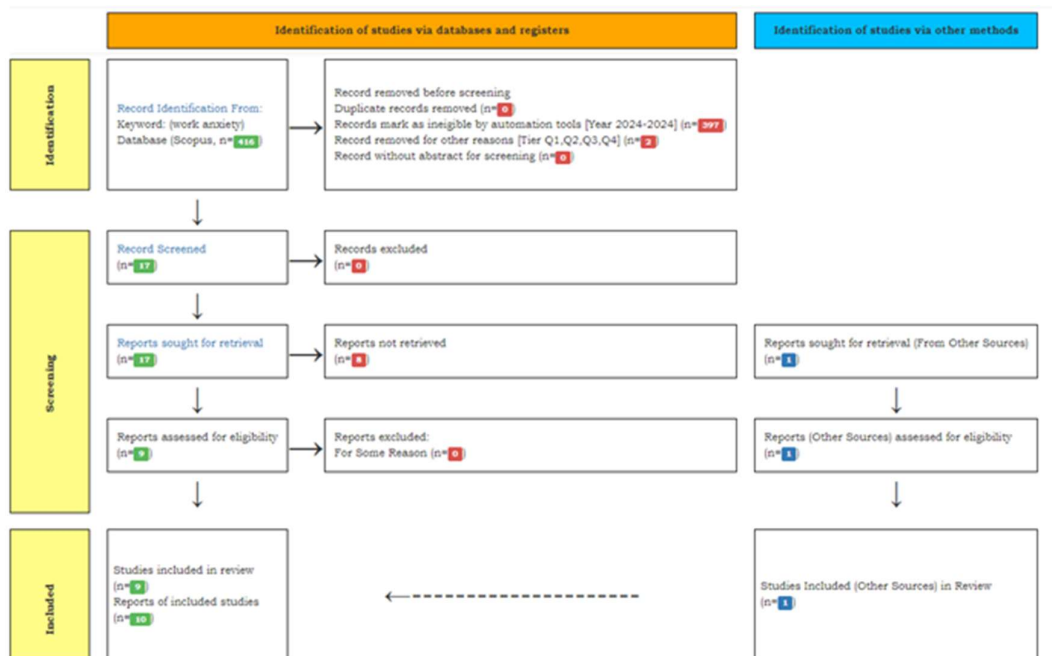
METHOD

This study uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach (Haines et al., 2024) to further develop an understanding of expatriate success and to critically analyze what is

still missing in the existing literature. Compared with narrative literature reviews, SLR reduces bias in the processes of identifying, selecting, and analyzing studies because it is based on a replicable and transparent methodology (Needleman, 2002). The selected documents were analyzed and reported following the PRISMA approach (Liberati et al., 2009), which is considered appropriate for SLR studies because it minimizes bias through a structured three-phase process of identification, screening, and reporting (Andersen et al., 2019).

The study follows the three-step PRISMA flow diagram (Haddaway et al., 2022) for study selection. The first stage involves defining search terms, inclusion criteria, and selecting electronic databases. The initial search results indicate that “expatriate success” is commonly associated with keywords such as adjustment, performance, productivity, satisfaction, turnover, and withdrawal intention. The inclusion criteria consist of document types (book chapters, conference proceedings, and journal articles), English language publications, and studies published between 2019 and 2024. The data were retrieved from databases including Taylor & Francis, ScienceDirect, Springer, Wiley, Oxford Academic, SAGE Journals, and BMC using combined search strings (“Job Anxiety”) AND relevant keywords across titles, abstracts, and subject areas.

This systematic review and meta-analysis approach follows PRISMA guidelines to ensure transparent and comprehensive reporting of the review process (Sarkis-Onofre et al., 2021). Figure 1 presents the PRISMA flowchart, which illustrates the number of articles at each stage of the selection process, from identification and screening to eligibility assessment, up to the studies ultimately included in the analysis.



Source: Watase Uake, 2024

Figure 1
PRISMA flowchart

In the screening stage, titles and abstracts of 416 studies were assessed for relevance. A total of 397 documents were excluded because they were not relevant to the

research topic (for example, studies on seasonal expatriation or unrelated contexts). In the second screening stage, 17 studies remained for full-text assessment. From these, 8 studies were excluded due to lack of accessibility. The final sample consisted of 9 studies that met all inclusion criteria. These studies were further analyzed based on journal details, publication year, authorship, research characteristics, theoretical frameworks, variables, methods, and key findings. An additional relevant article was also included, resulting in a final dataset summarized in Table1 .

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At this stage, the selected articles were organized into a structured table. Each article was then evaluated and analyzed comprehensively, with a focus on research findings and the ranking of the journals in which they were published. Finally, the results from the selected articles were compared with one another, and conclusions were drawn based on this comparative analysis.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Included Studies

No	Writer	Title	Year	Journal Rank	Journal
1	John Jerrim, Rebecca Allen & Sam Sims	How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect the anxiety of teachers at work?	2023	Q2	Taylor & Francis
2	Antoine Baltassat, Louis Riffault, et al	History of mood and anxiety disorders affecting return to work and return to sports after rotator cuff repair	2023	Q1	ScienceDirect
3	Rodrigo Nunez-Cortes, Ander Espin, Sofia Perez Alenda, et al .	Association Between Pain Coping and Symptoms of Anxiety and Depression, and Work Absenteeism in People with Upper Limb Musculoskeletal Disorders: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis	2023	Q1	ACRM
4	Kathrine Sørensen, Louise Dalsager, Paul Maurice Conway, Jian Li, Reiner Rugulies	Leadership at work and risks of treatment for depression and anxiety disorders in Denmark. A nationwide prospective study with register-based follow up	2024	Q1	ScienceDirect
5	Xi -xi Zhang & Xing -lin Hao	How does fertility pressure affect Chinese working women? Negative effects of fertility anxiety on women's work engagement	2024	Q1	Spinger
6	Johannes AC Laferton, Saskia Schiller, et al.	Stress beliefs moderate the impact of COVID-19 related work stress on depression, anxiety and distress symptoms in health care workers	2024	Q1	WILEY
7	Shinhyeong Kim, Seunghon Ham, Seong-Kyu Kang, Won-Jun Choi, and Wanhjung Lee.	Beyond working hours: the association between long working hours, the use of work-related communication devices outside regular	2024	Q1	Journal of Occupational Health

		working hours, and anxiety symptoms			
8	Lisa Hodge, Heather McIntyre, et al.	My Anxiety Was Through the Roof": The Gendered Nature of Financial Stress and its Impact on Mental Health and Well-Being for Women When Undertaking Social Work Placements	2024	Q1	Sage
9	Ying Huang, Huijuan Guo, Siyuan Wang, et al.	Relationship between work-family conflict and anxiety/depression among Chinese correctional officers: a moderated mediation model of burnout and resilience	2024	Q1	BMC Public Health

Based on research conducted by Jerrim et al., (2024) (Table 1, study 1), the study examined job-related anxiety among teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teacher anxiety increased significantly during the pandemic and was substantially higher compared to pre-pandemic levels. Female teachers experienced a greater impact than male teachers, particularly those with young children. Differences were also observed between independent and state school teachers, although these differences were mainly evident during the initial lockdown period. The study further shows that on-site teaching, immediate transition to online learning, and extended working hours were all associated with increased levels of work-related anxiety.

In the second study, Baltassat et al., (2024) investigated, through a large-scale national prospective cohort study, the relationship between leadership behavior and mental health outcomes. The findings indicate that low levels of positive leadership behavior are associated with an increased risk of depression and anxiety disorders, measured through registered treatment data in national health records. The study also identified high-risk groups and examined moderating factors, including gender, age, educational attainment, household composition, employment sector, prior psychiatric history, baseline mental health status, and exposure to major life events.

The third study by Núñez-Cortés et al., (2024) examined the effect of prior depression and anxiety disorders on return to work and return to sport after rotator cuff repair. The hypothesis stated that patients with a history of mental health disorders would require a longer recovery period and show lower return rates. The findings confirm that a history of mental health disorders negatively affects return to work and sport participation. Patients with such history had approximately a four-week delay in return and were 2.8 times more likely to discontinue sports after surgery compared to those without a history of mental disorders.

The fourth study by Sørensen et al., (2024) examined the relationship between coping strategies, anxiety and depression symptoms, and work absenteeism among individuals with upper-limb musculoskeletal disorders. The findings indicate that anxiety and depressive symptoms show a statistically significant but weak correlation with work absenteeism.

The fifth study by Zhang & Hao (2024) investigated fertility-related anxiety and its impact on work engagement among Chinese working women. Based on conservation of resources theory and work-family boundary theory, the findings show that fertility anxiety increases emotional exhaustion and reduces work engagement. Emotional exhaustion partially mediates the relationship between fertility anxiety and work

engagement, while family flexibility ability and willingness moderate the effect of emotional exhaustion on work engagement.

The sixth study by Laferton et al., (2024), examined the moderating role of stress beliefs on mental health outcomes among healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings indicate that stress beliefs significantly moderate the relationship between work-related stress and symptoms of depression, anxiety, and psychological distress, identifying stress beliefs as a key psychological factor influencing mental health under high-pressure working conditions.

The seventh study by Kim et al., (2024), investigated the relationship between long working hours, use of work-related communication devices outside regular working hours, and anxiety symptoms. The results show that among 46,055 participants, 55.7% used work-related communication devices outside working hours, 17.7% worked long hours, and 5.8% experienced anxiety symptoms. Compared with the reference group, individuals using communication devices outside working hours without long working hours showed higher odds of anxiety (OR: 2.18; 95% CI: 1.97–2.41). The highest risk was observed among individuals experiencing both long working hours and device use outside working hours (OR: 2.57; 95% CI: 2.24–2.97).

The eighth study by Hodge et al., (2024), examined the financial stress experienced by female social work students during unpaid placement programs in Australia. The findings show that financial burdens significantly contribute to poor physical and mental health outcomes and negatively affect students' participation in work-related activities. Many students were required to stop paid employment during placements, creating tension between educational requirements and financial survival.

The ninth study by Huang et al., (2024) examined the relationship between work-family conflict, burnout, resilience, and anxiety/depression among correctional officers. The findings show that work-family conflict significantly increases burnout and psychological distress. Burnout partially mediates the relationship between work-family conflict and mental health outcomes, while resilience moderates the negative effects.

Based on the reviewed studies, work anxiety is consistently shown to have a significant relationship with employee performance and psychological well-being across different occupational contexts.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

According to the study's findings, work anxiety is a complex phenomenon that is impacted by a number of individual, organizational, and workplace factors, such as heavy workloads, long workdays, effective leadership, work-family conflict, financial strain, and a history of mental health issues. The systematic review's findings also show that work anxiety negatively affects workers' performance and well-being, as seen by lower productivity, more absenteeism, increased burnout and emotional tiredness, and decreased job engagement. As a result, treating work anxiety necessitates an integrated strategy that includes organizational interventions like managing workloads, establishing work-life balance policies, and implementing supportive leadership, as well as individual interventions like fostering resilience, offering psychological support, and early detection of mental health disorders.

By providing a current summary of the factors, effects, and treatments associated with work anxiety, this study helps organizations create policies that promote workers' mental health and improve their productivity. Future research is recommended to develop a more comprehensive model by examining the roles of psychological safety, perceived organizational support, and job autonomy as factors that may reduce work

anxiety, as well as resilience as a mediating or moderating variable. These variables are crucial to analyze because, according to the Job Demands-Resources Theory, organizational and personal resources can minimize the influence of job demands on employees' well-being and performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

REFERENCES

- Andersen, J. H., Malmros, P., Ebbelhoej, N. E., Flachs, E. M., Bengtsen, E., & Bonde, J. P. (2019). Systematic literature review on the effects of occupational safety and health (OSH) interventions at the workplace. *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment and Health*, 45(2), 103–113. <https://doi.org/10.5271/sjweh.3775>
- Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2017). Job demands-resources theory: Taking stock and looking forward. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 22(3), 273–285. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000056>
- Baltassat, A., Riffault, L., Villatte, G., Meyer, N., Antoni, M., & Clavert, P. (2024). History of mood and anxiety disorders affects return to work and return to sports after rotator cuff repair. *Orthopaedics and Traumatology: Surgery and Research*, 110(5), 103854. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.otsr.2024.103854>
- Haddaway, N. R., Page, M. J., Pritchard, C. C., & McGuinness, L. A. (2022). PRISMA2020: An R package and Shiny app for producing PRISMA 2020-compliant flow diagrams, with interactivity for optimised digital transparency and Open Synthesis. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 18(2), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1230>
- Haines, K., Lumpkin, S. T., Grisel, B., Kaur, K., Cantrell, S., Freeman, J., Tripoli, T., Gallagher, S., Agarwal, S., Cox, C. E., Schmader, K., & Reeve, B. B. (2024). Systematic Literature Review of Health-Related Quality-of-Life Measures for Caregivers of Older Adult Trauma Patients. *Journal of Surgical Research*, 297, 47–55. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jss.2024.01.011>
- Hodge, L., McIntyre, H., Morley, C., Briese, J., Clarke, J., & Kostecki, T. (2024). “My Anxiety Was Through the Roof”: The Gendered Nature of Financial Stress and Its Impact on Mental Health and Well-Being for Women When Undertaking Social Work Placements. *Affilia - Feminist Inquiry in Social Work*, 39(3), 499–516. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08861099231225228>
- Huang, Y., Guo, H., Wang, S., Zhong, S., He, Y., Chen, H., Zhou, J., & Wang, X. (2024). Relationship between work-family conflict and anxiety/depression among Chinese correctional officers: a moderated mediation model of burnout and resilience. *BMC Public Health*, 24(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-17514-6>
- Jerrim, J., Allen, R., & Sims, S. (2024). How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect the anxiety of teachers at work? *Educational Review*, 76(5), 1134–1157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2023.2293455>
- Kim, S., Ham, S., Kang, S. K., Choi, W. J., & Lee, W. (2024). Beyond working hours: the association between long working hours, the use of work-related communication devices outside regular working hours, and anxiety symptoms. *Journal of Occupational Health*, 66(1), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1093/joccuh/uiad004>
- Laferton, J. A. C., Schiller, S., Conrad, D., Fischer, D., & Zimmermann-Viehoff, F. (2024). Stress beliefs moderate the impact of COVID-19 related work stress on depressive, anxiety and distress symptoms in health care workers. *Stress and Health*, 40(4), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smi.3410>
- Lewis-Fernandez, R., & Kleinman, A. (1994). Culture, Personality, and Psychopathology Culture-Bound Ideologies of Psychology and Psychiatry. *Journal of Abnormal*

- Psychology*, 103(1), 67–7.
- Liberati, A., Altman, D. G., Tetzlaff, J., Mulrow, C., Gøtzsche, P. C., Ioannidis, J. P. A., Clarke, M., Devereaux, P. J., Kleijnen, J., & Moher, D. (2009). The PRISMA statement for reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses of studies that evaluate healthcare interventions: explanation and elaboration. *BMJ (Clinical research ed.)*, 339. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.b2700>
- Muschalla, B., Linden, M., & Olbrich, D. (2010). The relationship between job-anxiety and trait-anxiety-A differential diagnostic investigation with the Job-Anxiety-Scale and the State-Trait-Anxiety-Inventory. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 24(3), 366–371. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2010.02.001>
- Needleman, I. G. (2002). A guide to systematic reviews. *Journal of Clinical Periodontology*, 29(SUPPL. 3), 6–9. <https://doi.org/10.1034/j.1600-051x.29.s3.15.x>
- Núñez-Cortés, R., Espin, A., Pérez-Alenda, S., López-Bueno, R., Cruz-Montecinos, C., Vincents-Seeberg, K. G., Püschel, T. A., Calatayud, J., & Andersen, L. L. (2024). Association Between Pain Coping and Symptoms of Anxiety and Depression, and Work Absenteeism in People With Upper Limb Musculoskeletal Disorders: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, 105(4), 781–791. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apmr.2023.07.003>
- Payne, R. L., Fineman, S., & Jackson, P. R. (1982). An interactionist approach to measuring anxiety at work. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 55(1), 13–25. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8325.1982.tb00074.x>
- Sarkis-Onofre, R., Catalá-López, F., Aromataris, E., & Lockwood, C. (2021). How to properly use the PRISMA Statement. *Systematic Reviews*, 10(1), 13–15. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13643-021-01671-z>
- Schulkin, J., & Rosen, J. B. (1998). From normal fear to pathological anxiety. *Psychological Review*, 105(2), 325–350. <http://psycnet.apa.org/record/1998-01102-006>
- Sørensen, K., Dalsager, L., Conway, P. M., Li, J., & Rugulies, R. (2024). Leadership at work and risk of treatment for depressive and anxiety disorders in Denmark. A nationwide prospective study with register-based follow up. *Psychiatry Research*, 337(January). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2024.115870>
- Vignoli, M., Muschalla, B., & Mariani, M. G. (2017). Workplace phobic anxiety as a mental health phenomenon in the job demands-resources model. *BioMed Research International*, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2017/3285092>
- Zhang, X. X., & Hao, X. L. (2024). How does fertility pressure affect Chinese working women? Negative effects of fertility anxiety on women's work engagement. *Current Psychology*, 43(20), 18389–18403. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-024-05661-x>