

# Economic stress at work: Its impact over absenteeism and innovation

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## Abstract

Economic stress has been recognized as a major threat to the well-being and performance of workers, especially during times of global economic crisis. An interesting and relatively unexplored research topic concerns the associations between economic stress and employee job outcomes such as innovative behaviors, indispensable for business survival. The aim of the present study was to investigate the relationship between economic stress, absenteeism and innovation. We considered both a direct and a mediation hypothesis and hypothesized that economic stress can have a negative influence on innovation directly and indirectly through increased absenteeism. A cross-sectional study was performed during 2018 and 2019 in an Italian food factory. A sample of 578 employees completed the Stress Questionnaire, the Janssen's nine-item scale and a single-item regarding absenteeism. All relationships are supported by empirical data. As expected, the results indicated that economic stress is negatively related to innovation and positively related to absenteeism, which, in turn, plays a mediating role in the relationship between economic stress and innovative behavior. Herewith, those employees with higher levels of economic stress show higher levels of absenteeism contributing at the same time to a decrease in innovative behaviors. These findings show the importance of economic stress in understanding individual work outcomes and highlight the need to promote adequate intervention programs.

## Author keywords

Absenteeism

Economic stress

Innovation

Innovative behavior

Mental health

Work related stress