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The study investigated the determinants of organisational stressors and its effect on job stress. It further investigated gender as a moderator for organisational-job stress relationship in private sector organisations. Analyses of 300 responses using hierarchical regression revealed that organizational variables (blocked career, alienation, conflict, and unfavorable work environment) had significant positive effects on job stress. Gender moderated the effects of these organizational stressors on job stress.

Keywords: Organisational variables, stress, gender.

INTRODUCTION

Organisational stress in particular, is the inability to cope with the pressures in a job, because of poor fit between someone’s abilities and conditions which affects an individual’s productivity, effectiveness, personal health and quality of work (Akinleye and Hassan, 2004a).

Job stress has been defined as an external agent disrupting the normal functioning of the individual and thus causing strain. There is an approach of looking into job stress known as the p-e (person-environment) fit approach. Researchers have identified two types of fit, the need-supply fit and the demand-ability fit. A job is stressful to the extent to which it provides the conditions for poor fit of either type to occur. The article titled “Stress in the Organizational Context” by Mandira Bhattacharya (Sen) and S S Jha, explores the interrelationship of P-E fit and retrospected fit as well as anticipated fit in the context of a wide range of independent and dependent variables. It explains that retrospected fit and current fit considered together are better predictors of psychological strain and anticipated fit and current fit considered together are better predictors of behavioral strain.

Today, workplace stress is becoming a major issue of increasing concern to employees and organizations. It has become a part of life for employees,
as life today has become so complex at home as well as outside that it is impossible to avoid stress. Experts opine that stress is the main cause for all the problems of the modern world and that it affects both the individual and the organizational health. Stress has been defined by many in different ways, as it takes different forms depending on the situation. According to Douglas (1980), stress is any action or situation that places special physical or psychological demands upon a person. According to Van Fleet (1988), stress is caused when a person is subjected to unusual situations or demands that are difficult to handle or extreme expectations or pressures.

Workplace stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur within a human being when the requirements of the job do not match his capabilities, resources, or even needs. Some experts argue that a moderate amount of stress, both physical and mental, is required for normal and healthy growth. A little degree of stress at the workplace energizes the employees psychologically and physically, as it motivates them to learn new skills and master their jobs, resulting in increased productivity. The problem arises only when stress is not managed properly.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Stress in the workplace is increasingly a critical problem for workers, employers and society. Researchers who study stress have demonstrated the direct and indirect costs of stress. (Matteson & Ivancevich, 1987). There are many variables which have been related to organizational stress. Ivancevich and Matteson (1980) proposed a model of organizational stress research that outlined the major antecedents of work stress. They noted the importance of individual differences as moderators of stress and detailed possible outcomes of stress at work. Price (2001) identified four dimensions of job stress viz., Role ambiguity, Role conflict, Workload & Resource inadequacy.

Stress is associated with impaired individual functioning in the workplace. A number of aspects of working life have been linked to stress. Aspects of work itself can be stressful, namely work overload (Defrank & Ivancevich, 1998; Sparks & Cooper, 1999; Taylor, et al., 1997) and role-based factors such as lack of power, role ambiguity, and role conflict (Burke, 1988; Nelson and Burke, 2000).

Robbins (2001) defines stress as a dynamic condition in which the individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint, or demand related to
what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important. Stress can be caused by environmental, organizational, and individual variables (Matteson & Ivancevich, 1999; Cook & Hunsaker, 2001). Organizational variables have been known to create stress for employees at the workplace resulting in job stress (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Among the numerous organizational sources of stress, only five variables were investigated in this study namely conflict, blocked career, alienation, work overload, and unfavorable work environment.

Role conflict has been found to have a positive relationship with job stress (Roberts et al., 1997). When individuals are required to play two or more role requirements that work against each other, they are likely to experience job stress. This is because role conflicts create expectations that may be hard to reconcile. Foot and Venne (1990) discovered a positive relationship between barriers to career advancement and job stress. When employees perceived a lack of career opportunities, they are likely to feel uncertain about their future in the organization, which in turn, are likely to induce stress. Alienation at the work place can also lead to stress. Thoits (1995) in his study discovered that alienation has a positive effect on job stress. Feelings of alienation are likely to result when employees are required to work alone. According to Kanungo (1981), when workers believe there is a separation between their own job and other work related contexts, a sense of frustration that finally manifested in a behavioral state of apathy is likely to occur. This is particularly intense for employees with high social needs. Working alone on one’s job without social support from one’s peers and supervisors would lead to job stress (Mirovisky & Ross, 1986; Eugene, 1999). Work overload both quantitatively and qualitatively has been empirically linked to a variety of physiological, psychological, and behavioral strain symptoms (Beehr & Newman, 1978; Roberts et al., 1997; Miller & Ellis, 1990). According to Greenhaus et al. (1987), heavy workload lowers one’s psychological well-being resulting in job stress. Additionally, a work environment associated with unpleasant organizational climate, lack of privacy, a lot of hassle in conducting work, and distractions can result in higher stress (Miller & Ellis, 1990; Eugene, 1999). Thus, the hypothesis of the present study is as follows:

**H1:** Organizational variables and job stress are positively related.

**Gender and Job Stress**

A general tendency exists in the literature according to which females
experience higher level of organisational stress regarding gender-specific stressors and have different ways of interpreting and dealing with problems related to their work environment (Offerman and Armitage, 1993 in Antoniou et al., 2006). For example, Sharpley et al., (1966) found that males have statistically significant lower job stress scores, Davidson et al., (1995 in Fotinatos-Ventouratos & Cooper, 2005) found that female managers are under much more pressure than their male counterparts, and Antoniou et al., (2006) found that female teachers experienced significantly higher levels of organisational stress as compared to their male counterparts.

The existing literature on women and work has highlighted the gender role as a key constraint for women in employment (Bielby & Bielby, 1989; Campbell et al., 1994). For instance, working wives are more likely to suffer from work-family conflicts due to their heavy job and domestic obligations (Gutek et al., 1991). Women have retained primary responsibility for domestic chores, particularly child-care, even though they hold full-time jobs (Haw, 1982; Bielby & Bielby, 1989). Additionally, Barnett and Baruch (1985) noted that marriage and parenthood have been linked with increased role conflict and overload for women. Such gender role differentiation and the resultant work-family conflict would subsequently affect an individual’s work outcomes and well-being (Moen, 1992 as cited in Ngo & Tsang, 1998). Swanson and Power (1998) reiterated that the relationship between the demands of work and home is an important source of occupational stress. Past studies have shown that multiple role demands of work and home domains are additive, with combined overload leading to increased job stress, strain and illness (Gross, 1992). Additionally, female employees tend to be victims of various forms of discrimination on the basis of their sex (Northcraft & Gutek, 1993). This information seems to suggest that women are more likely to experience greater stress. Thus, one would expect the effects of organizational stressors on job stress among women to be greater compared to men. Therefore, the second hypothesis of the study is as follows:

**H2:** Females are more affected by positive organisational–job stress relationship than their males’ counterparts.

**METHODODOLOGY**

**Subjects**

Participants in the study consisted of managers attached to twenty randomly selected private sector organisations in Noida and NCR regions. A total of
500 questionnaires were distributed in proportion to the population of managers in these firms.

Measurements

The independent variables in this study are represented by organizational variables. These variables include conflict, blocked career, alienation, work overload, and unfavorable work environment. These organizational variables were measured using a 25-item questionnaire (Davis et al., 2000). Each job stressor was measured using a 5-point Likert response format ranging from (1) “Strongly Disagree” to (5) “Strongly Agree”. The dependent variable in this study is job stress. Job stress was measured using a 20-items screening inventory (Goldberg & Hillier, 1978) based on a 5-point Likert response format ranging from (0) “Never” to (4) “Almost Always”.

Method of Analyses

Job stress can be influenced by personal factors (Matteson & Ivancevich, 1999). Three personal variables (age, marital status and working experience) were controlled in the statistical analysis following previous researchers. The first and second hypotheses were tested using a four-step hierarchical regression (Cohen & Cohen, 1975).

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Response and Profile of Respondents

Of the 500 questionnaires sent out, 300 useable responses were obtained representing a response rate of 60%. The sample profile is shown in Table 1.

![Figure 1](image-url)
As shown in Figure 1, more than half (51%) of the sample consisted of males with the remaining 49% being females.

![Figure 2: Age Distribution](image)

As for age, 88% of the respondents were 40 years old and below. Only 12% were above 50 years old.

![Figure 3: Marital Status](image)

Regarding marital status, a majority (54%) of respondents were married with the remaining 46% being singles.

![Figure 4: Working Experience](image)
As for working experience, 58% of the sample had been working for more than 6 years while the rest 42% have less than 5 years experience.

**Table 1** Reliability Coefficients of the Instruments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blocked Career</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alienation</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Overload</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfavourable Work Environment</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Stress</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen from Table 2, the instruments used in this study were reliable, with coefficients ranging from 0.76 to 0.94, which exceeded the minimum acceptance level of 0.70.

The mean score for each study variable can be seen from Table 2.

**Table 2** Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blocked Career</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alienation</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Overload</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfavorable Work Environment</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Stress</td>
<td>54.32</td>
<td>12.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 2, it can be observed that the mean value for each of the organizational variables ranges from 2.14 to 3.24, with the standard deviation of 0.63 to 0.79. The mean score computed for job stress was 54.32 with a standard deviation score of 12.36.
As shown in Table 3, when the five personal variables were entered into the regression analysis in the first step, the coefficient of determination (R²) was found to be 0.246 indicating that 24.6% of job stress is explained by the demographic variables. In step 2, by adding the five independent variables, the R² increased to 75.4%. This R² change (0.526) is significant. This implies that the additional 52.6% of the variation in job stress is explained by the organizational variables (conflict, blocked career, alienation, work overload, and unfavorable work environment). The F-statistics is significant suggesting that the proposed model was adequate. From the second step, the R² changed to 78.6%.
regression model, it can be observed that alienation (Std $\hat{a} = 0.322$), and conflict (Std $\hat{a} = 0.314$) had a significant and positive relationship with job stress at 0.05 level. Additionally, unfavorable work environment (Std $\hat{a} = 0.097$), work overload and blocked career (Std $\hat{a} = 0.324$), had a significant effect on job stress but at the 0.01 level. These results provided full support for the first hypothesis of the study.

To test whether gender serves as an independent variable, a third regression was undertaken. As can be seen from Table 3, gender had positive relationship with job stress.

To examine the moderating effects of gender, a fourth regression model was developed by adding the interaction terms. As shown in Table 4, the $R^2$ increase of 35.2% is significant. This means that gender did serve as a moderator in the relationships between the organizational variables and job stress which proves our second hypothesis.

CONCLUSION

The results obtained from this investigation indicated all the five organizational variables namely blocked career, alienation, conflict, and unfavorable work environment had positive relationship with job stress. The finding pertaining to the positive relationship between blocked career and job stress supports those by previous researchers (Foot & Venne, 1990). The finding on the relationship between alienation and job stress is at par with those discovered by prior scholars (Sashkin, 1984; Thoits, 1995). The finding on the positive relationship between conflict and job stress is consistent with those obtained by Roberts et al. (1997). When employees are required to fulfill conflicting role requirements, they are likely to experience job stress. This is because role conflicts create expectations that may be hard to satisfy. The finding relating to the positive relationship between unfavorable work environment and stress is consistent with that of past scholars (Eugene, 1999).

Gender had an impact on the relationship between the organizational variables and job stress.

This result is supported by the study by Ganster and Schaubroec (1991) who pointed out that women experience greater level of stress as they are more vulnerable to the demands of work to the extent that they often have more non-work demands than men. Gregory (1990) notifies that, for female professional, gender stereotyping in the work place ads to the role conflict
Organisational Variables and Job stress experience. The results of bivariate analysis conducted by Fontinatos-Ventouratos and Cooper (2005) revealed significant differences in terms of physical and psychological well-being against the male and female sample.

From the organisational point of view, the findings from this research suggest that organizations need to pay attention to organizational factors that are likely to act as job stressors. In order to reduce stress among managers, organizations should provide sufficient opportunities for their managers to move to higher positions in the organizational hierarchy, create cohesive cross-functional work teams, communicate clearly its expectations, and foster a conducive and pleasant work environments that the issue of gender does not come in existence.

This study is limited in scope, and given that there may be other individual, job, organizational, non-work, and environmental factors that may also affect stress. In spite of the limitation, the implications of the findings of this study are indeed significant for HR practitioners.

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VISION

With the realization of one’s own potential and self-confidence in one’s ability, one can build a better world. According to my experience, self-confidence is very important. That sort of confidence is not a blind one; it is an awareness of one’s own potential. On that basis, human beings can transform themselves by increasing the good qualities and reducing negative qualities.

- The XIV Dalai Lama