



A STUDY OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS IN RELATION TO DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

Large scale socioeconomic and technological changes in recent years along with increasing trends in restructuring and downsizing has continued in many organizations, resulting in an increase in sub-contracting and outsourcing that have affected workplaces considerably. Stress in the workplace is a growing concern in the current state of the economy, where employees increasingly face conditions of overwork, job insecurity, low levels of job satisfaction and lack of autonomy, which is directly or indirectly affecting their home environment. The present study was undertaken to study occupational stress of employees from different careers in relation to locus and gender and its relationship with family environment. A representative sample of 108 employees from different careers based at Chandigarh and surrounding areas were taken using random sampling technique. The Occupational Stress Index by A.K. Srivastava & A.P. Singh and Family Environment Scale by Bhatia & Chadha were used as tool for the study. Mean, standard deviation, coefficient of correlation and t-test were computed to see the significant difference of occupational stress. The results of the study revealed significant difference of occupational stress in relation to demographic variables. The correlation analysis revealed positive correlation between occupational stress and family environment.

Keywords: *Stress, Occupational Stress, Demographic variable, Family Environment.*



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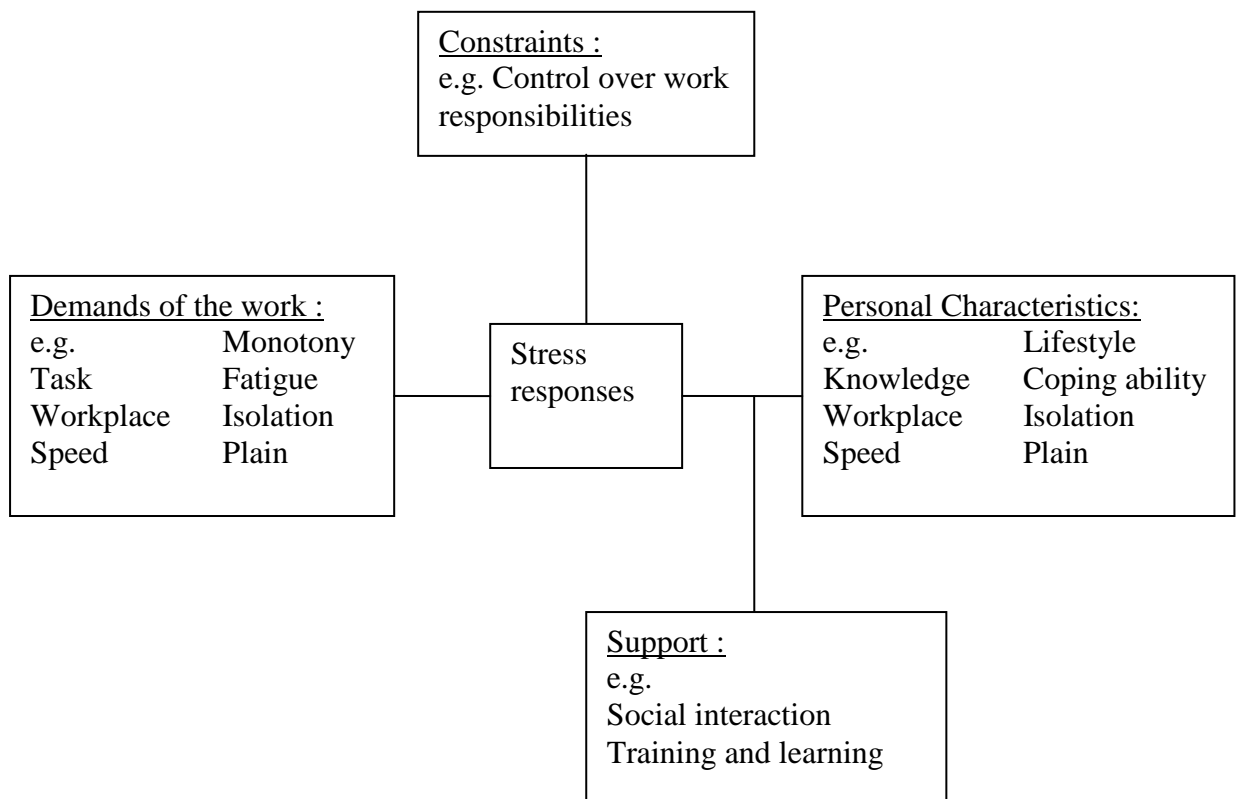
INTRODUCTION:

Stress is prevalent problem in modern lifestyles. The nature of work has gone through drastic changes over the last century. It has touched almost all professions, starting from a teacher to a surgeon, or a commercial pilot to a sales executive. It is seen as becoming increasingly more common in today's workplace. Occupational stress is defined in different ways over the years. The United States National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety, in its 1999 publication entitled 'Stress at Work', defines work-related stress as 'the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker' In the Guidance on Work-related Stress issued by the European Commission in 2002, work-related stress is defined as 'a pattern of emotional, cognitive, behavioural and physiological reactions to adverse and noxious aspects

of work content, work organization and work environment'; the main emphasis is on the workplace as the source of stress. Occupational stress has been defined by Cox et al (2003) as the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope. Occupational stress can also be defined as a disruption of the emotional stability of the individual that induces a state of disorganization in personality and behavior (Nwadiane, 2006).

People appear to be working longer hours, taking on higher level of responsibilities and exerting themselves even more strenuously at work place to meet the rising expectations about occupational performance. The worker's response to work stress can be either psychological, physical or both (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994; Kristensen, 1996; Santos & Cox, 2000), and is usually categorized as being acute, post traumatic, or chronic. National surveys in the United Kingdom (Tytherleigh, Webb, Cooper & Ricketts, 2005) and Australia (Winefield et al., 2002) have reported a serious and growing problem of academic work stress with several deleterious consequences including decreased job satisfaction, reduced morale and ill health for academic staff.

Fig. 1.1 : Factors in perception and experience of stress (Martino, 2000)



Occupational stress can affect health when the stressors of the workplace exceed the employee's ability to have some control over their situation or to cope in other ways.

For example;

- Workers are overburdened with workloads that remain high regardless of their efforts: the workload is the STRESSOR.
- Employees feel anxious and their heart rate speeds up because they can not control their workloads: that is STRESS.
- Increased blood pressure, insomnia, chronic headaches: that is STRAIN.

The occupational stress in the form of extensive, regular and inflexible working hours, work overload, inter-personal conflicts at work, extensive travel, working away from home, career transition, taking work to home, unsupportive supervisor or organization can have diverse effects on the various aspects of family environment. Employees going through excess occupational stress tend to carry their worries and anxieties to their family back home which can adversely influence their behavior and the home environment. It also has negative effects on diverse aspects of their family life like marital relationship with the spouse, the development of their children, development of fetus especially in case of working women. Such stress can also have effects on themselves like faster than normal aging process, high blood pressure and related ailments / hypertension, depression (in extreme cases), various cardiovascular ailments, immune related disorders, asthma, ulcers, migraines & digestive disorders, diabetes, sleep deficiency and related disorders and the deterioration of psych-spiritual health of the individual.

There are numerous studies in the area of occupational stress; Reddy & Ramamurti, (1991); (Srivastava & Krishna, (1991); Aditya & Sen, (1993); Dua, (1994); Tewari, (1995); Dwivedi, (1997); Mishra, (1997); Bharadwaj & Mishra, (1999); Mohan & Chauhan, (1999); Aminabhavi & Triveni, (2000); Deosthalee, (2000); Chandraiah et al. (2003); Manshor and coworkers (2003); Yates & Iva, (2005); Punnett et al., 2007. The present study is an endeavor to investigate the occupational stress and family environment of employees in relation to nature of job, age and gender.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To study the significant difference of occupational stress between government and private employees from different sectors.
2. To study the significant difference of occupational stress between male and female employees from different sectors.

3. To study the relationship between occupational stress and family environment of employees from different sectors.

HYPOTHESES:

1. There will be no significant difference in occupational stress between government and private employees.
2. There will be no significant difference in occupational stress between male and female employees.
3. There exists no significant relationship between occupational stress and family environment.

METHOD:

Descriptive survey method was applied by the investigator.

SAMPLE:

The study was conducted on a randomly selected sample of 108 employees from different careers (teachers, doctors, managers, engineers, clerks, commercial) from Chandigarh and surrounding areas.

TOOLS:

The following tools were employed by the investigator for the study:-

- Occupational Stress Index by Srivastava & Singh (1983)
- Family Environment scale by Bhatia & Chadha (1993)

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS:

The data collected through the tools was subjected to statistical analysis and results were drawn out. The statistical techniques like mean, standard deviation and t-test was applied on the data to find the significant difference. Pearson's product moment correlation was calculated to find the relation between occupational stress and family environment.

TESTING OF HYPOTHESES AND RESULTS:

- **The first objective of the present study** was to study the significant difference of occupational stress between government and private employees. The hypothesis framed to achieve the above said objective was that there will be no significant difference in occupational stress between government and private employees. From the table-1, calculated t-ratio ($t=9.07$) for the effect of occupational stress on employees from Government and private sector was found to be significant meaning that there exists significant difference in the occupational stress of Government and private sector employees.

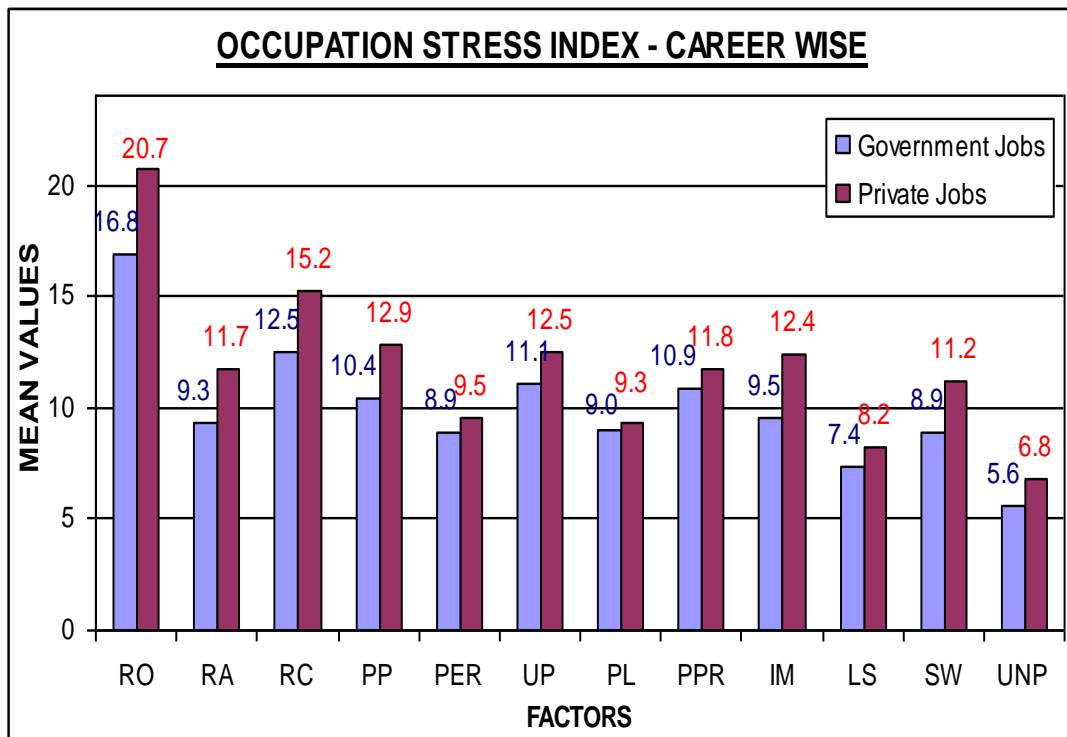
Thus, the hypothesis namely “There will be no significant difference in occupational stress between government and private employees” stands rejected.

Table-1 : Showing mean, standard deviation and t-value of total sample and Variables for Occupational Stress

Sub-sample	Total (N)	Mean (M)	S.D. (σ)	t-value	Level of significance
Total sample	108	131	16.7		
Government	55	120.24	10.97	9.07	0.01
Private	53	142.23	13.99		
Male	62	135.77	18.69	3.91	0.01
Female	46	124.63	10.69		

Even the mean value of occupational stress is more in private employees than government employees. The results of the study are in tune with the study by Bharadwaj & Mishra (1999), Chang-qin Lu; Din Tung Au; Sandy S. W. Leung (2009). The probable reason for higher occupational stress among private sector employees is job insecurity, work pressure, longer hours of working, higher expectations from employer etc.

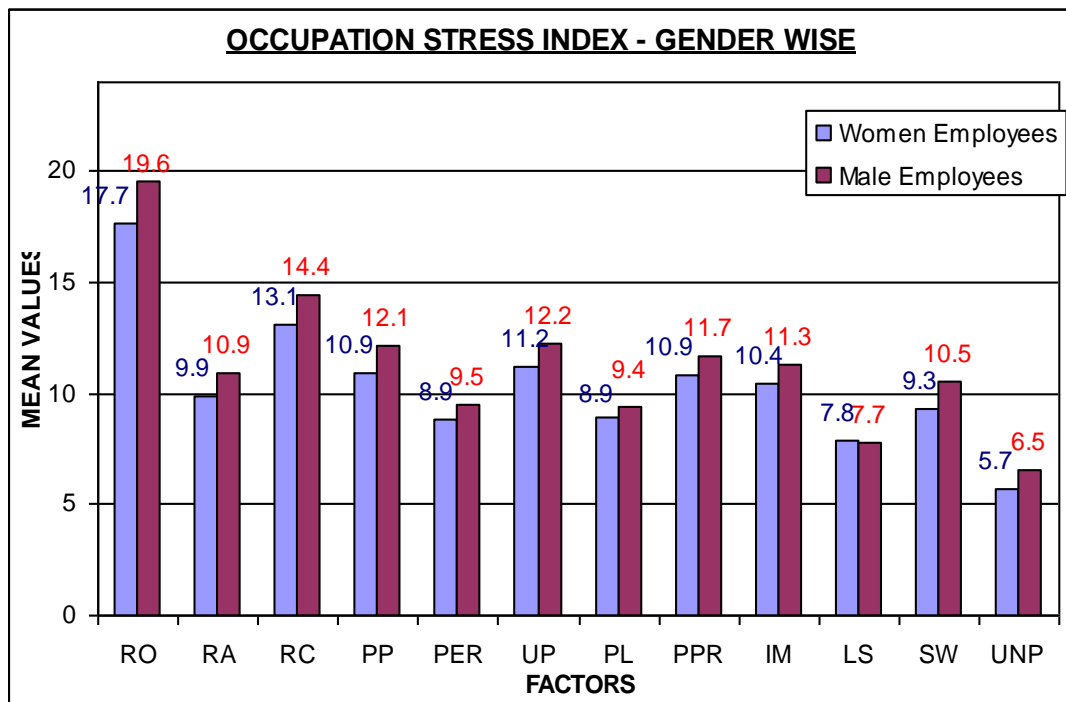
Graph 4.1: Trends of Mean values of variables of occupational stress for different careers



• The **second objective of the study** was to study the significant difference of occupational stress between male and female employees. The hypothesis framed to achieve the above said objective was that there will be no significant difference in occupational stress between male and female employees. From the table-1, the t-ratio on the scores of occupational stress of male and female employees was found to be significant. Thus, the hypothesis namely “There will be no significant difference in occupational stress between male and female employees” stands rejected.

On comparing the mean scores of male & female employees (Table-1), it was also found that occupational stress score of male employees was higher than those of female employees.

Graph 4.3: Trends of Mean values of variables of occupational stress for different Gender groups



Studies conducted by Deosthalee (2000) found that male employees were more stressed than female employees. But the studies of Payne & Furnham, (1987); Wilkinson, (1988); Santiago et al., (2008) are contradictory to the findings of the present study which confirmed that females were more stressed than males. Findings of studies conducted by Singh & Sehgal, (1995); Aminabhavi & Triveni, (2000); Van Dick & Wagner, (2001); Kyriacou & Chien, (2004); and Johannsen, (2011) are not in line with the present findings. These studies revealed that no significant difference existed between the stress levels in relation to gender. The reason probably may be that women cope with stress better than their

male counterparts. They are more likely to seek emotional support from others in stressful situations, whereas men try either to change the stressor or use less effective coping strategy, (Tyagi and Sen 2000).

- The **third objective of the study** was to study the relationship between occupational stress and family environment. The hypothesis framed to achieve the above said objective was that there will be no significant relationship between occupational stress and family environment.

Table-2 : Mean, S.D. and correlation of effect of Occupational stress on Family Environment for different sector employees

Groups	Scale	Mean	S.D.	Correlation (R)	
Total sample	OSI	131.08	16.67	- 0.794	Negatively correlated
	FES	248.68	26.30		
Government sector	OSI	120.24	10.97	- 0.618	Negatively correlated
	FES	266.38	19.78		
Private sector	OSI	142.23	13.99	- 0.640	Negatively correlated
	FES	230.31	18.50		

Table-3 : Mean, S.D. and correlation of effect of Occupational stress on Family Environment for different gender groups

Groups	Scale	Mean	S.D.	Correlation (R)	
Total sample	OSI	131.08	16.67	- 0.794	Negatively correlated
	FES	248.68	26.30		
Female Employees	OSI	124.63	10.69	- 0.820	Negatively correlated
	FES	257.47	22.91		
Male Employees	OSI	135.77	18.69	- 0.773	Negatively correlated
	FES	242.16	26.93		

Coefficient of Correlation between Occupational Stress and family environment for the Total Sample (N=108) as evident from Table 3 is negative and significant at 0.01 level. Therefore, the two variables are negatively correlated meaning that if occupational stress is more the family environment will be bad or unhealthy and vice versa. This indicates that occupational stress does have impact on the family environment. So, **Hypothesis-3** is also rejected. Study of Yates & Iva, (2005) supports the findings of the present investigation which concluded that the job was extremely increasing the stress towards the family life.

SUGGESTIONS:

There is great need for employers to engage in stress management training and adoption of employee wellness programs with promotion of mental wellness, nutrition and basic wellness. This will increase awareness of work stress among workers hence implementation

of best coping strategies. Employee assistance program headed by the Human Resources personnel should be created to increase social support to workers. Such a program could allow workers to reduce home pressure as the program will aid workers to support their dependents with expenses like school fees and medical aid when there are payment delays. The program could also help workers who are tenants to buy residential stands and develop them thus reducing home pressure.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS:

Occupational stress plays a very significant role in determining the family environment. The findings of the present study have proved that this is true. The study has great implication for the teachers as well. As a teacher, it is very important to understand the psyche of the child which greatly depends upon the type of environment he is having at home. Parents through their love, affection, individual attention, appreciation, trust and provision of healthy environment at home can enhance the adjustment of their children in different spheres of their life. Neglect by parents may also lead to aggressive behavior tendency of the child. The study is also useful for providing guidance service to the children if needed.

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