

Occupational Stress among Married Employees: A Study of Teachers and Doctors

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Abstract

Occupational stress is one of the most serious problems that has worsen the physical as well as psychological health of employees especially married employees. The aim of conducting the study was to identify the differences in the level of occupational stress among married and single employees belonging to different professions i.e., doctors and teachers. Moreover, gender difference in occupational stress was also investigated. The data was collected through Workplace Stress Scale from doctors and teachers (N=160) of different organizations in which 80 were married and 80 unmarried. Analysis was done by using SPSS version 22. The results showed that married employees have higher occupational stress as compared to unmarried employees. Significant gender difference was found in the level of occupational stress with female scoring high as compared to male. As this study has revealed that there is high occupational stress among married employees, therefore this study recommended that married employees should equally divide their household responsibilities so that they will be free of any stress and efficiently perform their jobs.

Key words: *Occupational stress, married employees, unmarried employees, doctors, teachers.*

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Introduction

With rapid advancement in technology, an increase demand of work at workplace and increasing competition at workplace has worsen the physical as well as psychological health of employees. In fulfilling job demands, employed men and women both confronted with some sort of stress which is one of the most severe health threats in the workplace that can generate job dissatisfaction, poor performance and low productivity at workplace. Women, unlike their male counterparts, must also perform the role of homemaking. Working women's dual roles are causing them tension in their lives (Hughes & Galinsky, 1988; Kenney & Bhattacharjee, 2000). Beside these, men and women who are married experiencing extreme workplace stress owed to pressure and overload at their workplace while at the same time fulfilling family responsibilities as well. They are facing job stress due to job insecurity, low salary, long working hours, household responsibilities etc. Further, studies showed that a large number of doctors feel stress at their work place due to lengthy working hours and high patient volume which directly effects their physical and psychological health (Arya & Baroda, 2012). Doctors are also overwhelmed at work due to senior management scrutiny, coping with critical patients, night shifts, and negative press coverage (Arya & Baroda, 2012). Study conducted by Aslam et al. (2013) indicated that sleep deprivation is the most significant cause of stress among doctors, followed by working conditions, workload and unreasonable demands from patients. Workload, night shifts, and peer interactions all have a positive effect on stress levels.

Shyam Swaroop (2008), reported that more than two in every five teachers found under stress in India. The study findings showed that the most important risk factor for workplace stress among teachers is their workload. Guglielmi and Tatrow (1998) studied the occupational stress and wellbeing in teachers according to their findings teachers are not adequately paid, and they are said to be overwhelmed due to stressful working conditions, increased job pressure, and decreased professional satisfaction.

Studying the phenomenon of occupational stress is of great significance because in the modern life occupational stress is increasing day by day and it is a rising issue in most countries especially in Pakistan. Most serious health issues are occurring due to occupational stress in the modern world. Due to severe stress individuals may become psychologically disturbed such as they might feel nervousness, oversensitivity and indifference which might result in resignation from jobs (Landa et al., 2008; Yazdi & Sharifian, 2001). It is indicated

that employees' skills are reflected in their success, which is in turn related to their psychological and physical well-being. If a person is mentally healthy, he/she can efficiently perform his/her job. Therefore, the present study attempted to examine the occupational stress faced by employees of two different professions (teachers and doctors). The focus of the study is to compare the level of occupational stress among married and unmarried employees and to ascertain the gender differences among them.

Research Questions

1. Whether there are any differences in occupational stress among married and single employees of two different professions such as doctors and teachers?
2. Are there any gender differences in occupational stress among married and unmarried employees?

Literature Review

Occupational Stress

According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) stress is the negative reaction of people to unreasonable or other kinds of demands imposed on them. Palmer et al., (2004) stated that stress happens when the perceived pressure goes beyond the persons' capacity to cope. Like other individuals' employees experience occupational stress during their jobs. Unexpected obligations and stresses that do not fit with a person's experience, skills, or aspirations trigger workplace stress, restricting one's ability to cope (World Health Organization). When employees do not feel encouraged by their managers or co-workers or when they think they have little influence over work processes, workplace stress will rise. Work related stress among employees may cause various physiological as well as psychological disturbances such as cardiovascular diseases, digestive problems, skeletal-muscular diseases, post-traumatic syndrome, work-related fatigue, and might cause other behavioural issues i.e., sleep disturbances, absentees and drug addiction etc. Therefore, occupational stress results in adverse effects on employees and exorbitant expenditures of organizations (Ross & Altmaier, 1994).

Symptoms of Work-Related Stress: The work-related stress can be physiological in nature such as fatigue, headache, sleeping difficulty, muscular tension. It also includes

psychological symptoms of discouragement, anxiety, pessimism, irritability and behavioural symptoms of absenteeism, aggression, disinterest, unproductive behaviour.

Work-Related Stressors: There are various kinds of stressors at workplace that cause occupational stress among workers such as corporation culture, unpleasant management, job title and demands, relationship with colleagues and authority figure at work, lack of support, role conflict, long working hours etc.

HI. Married employees will possess high level of occupational stress as compared to single employees belonging to two different professions such as doctors and teachers.

Isikhan et al., (2004) investigated that marital status, age and job expertise are the factors that create stress among doctors. According to Mohan et al., (2010) study, the majority of female married workers face higher levels of stress than single employees. Rani and Muzhumathi (2012), stated that work family clash cause stress among female workers. Dhanabakyam and Malarvizhi (2014) concluded that the raise in work-family conflict foster job stress among married female employees. Kumar and Yadav (2014), study found that female workers above 55 years confront with occupational stress more as compare to other age groups. Balaji (2014) concluded that married female workers experience imbalance in job and family life owed to lengthy working hours, size of the family and number of dependants of the family and this could lead to mental distress and well-being of married female workers. (Nagaraju & Nandini, 2013), research findings revealed that occupational stress is high among married female workers as compared to single female workers.

Hu et al., (2014) research findings showed that position uncertainty job stress was high among female employees as compared to male and on the whole job stress and task work stress was high among married than in single employees. According to the results of Nirmala and Babu (2015), research married health care professionals face substantially higher levels of work stress than unmarried professionals.

Al-Omar (2003) determined the source of work-stress among workers (Doctors, nurse, operators, administrators, and psychotherapists) employed at MOH hospital Riyadh City, Saudi Arabia. He discovered that various factors such as lack of technical facilities, extended working hours, short breaks and lack of respect is responsible for high level of occupational stress among MOH hospital employees. Additionally, the senior workers feel less work-related stress because of their more job experience. Similarly, Chen et al. (2013),

indicated that doctors have poor psychological condition at hospitals and occupational stress result from work overload, elevated demanding from patients, professional threat, effort-reward discrepancy and furious contest for job up gradation. (Gregov et al., 2011), study showed that doctors employed in health centre experience less stress as compared to doctors employed in emergency medical centre. Kumar (2016) research revealed that doctors have high level of stress and are mostly vulnerable to experience exhaustion, a high risk of making poor judgment, exhibit unfriendly attitude toward patients, make more medical error, and have difficult interaction with colleague.

Schonfeld (1992), explored the association between work environments and depressive symptoms in newly employed teachers. Teachers' depressive symptoms rise in line with their working environments, according to the results. There is no distinction prior to jobs. It has been determined that the teaching climate induces stress. Similar results were reported by Pithers and Fogarty (1995) that teachers experience higher level of stress.

H2. There will be significant gender differences in occupational stress among married and unmarried employees?

Over the years various studies have been conducted on the relationship between demographic factors, organizational commitment and occupational stress. The findings of these studies showed the bond between occupational stress, gender and marital status. Reich and Nussbaum (1994), concluded that 60% working women in the US stated that workplace stress was their foremost trouble. According to Kodavatiganti and Bulusu (2011), female teachers suffer more from stress than men counterpart due to extended working time, insufficient assets and crowded classrooms. Gyllensten and Palmer (2005) investigated that female workers are suffering more from stress comparatively than male. HemaMalini and Washington (2014), reported that most of female workers are confronting with stress due to job uncertainty and high demands at workplace. Choi and Chen (2006), study found that Chinese female experience high level of household pressures as compared to Chinese men, while there is no significant sex difference in the experience of work overload. Bhuvaneshwari (2013) concluded that stress in married working women is owed to family responsibilities, harassment at work place, long working hours and imbalance in work and family life. These factors create stress among female employees.

According to Williams and Kurina (2002), the three factors that cause stress among female employees are an increase in work load, an increase in the rate of divorce, single motherhood, and the ageing of the people. Babin and Boles (1998), concluded that stress affected female workers more negatively as compared to men. Females are specially stressed to become a productive worker at workplace as well as fulfilling their household chores. Nezhad and Besharat (2010), examined that occupational stress and family difficulties may have harmful effect on the psychological as well as physiological health of working women. Abirami's (2011) findings revealed that managing household responsibilities and work efficiently produce stress among female workers. Toivanen (2012) explored that high psychological demands, job pressure, and poor job control have all been related to an increased risk of stroke in working women.

Parmar et al. (2015), studies found that female doctors and nurses find workplace significantly more stressful than male doctors and nurses. Like doctors, stress level among female teachers is higher as compared to male teachers (Imran et al., 2017). Antoniou et al. (2006) looked into the causes of work-related stress and fatigue among teachers in Greece's primary and secondary schools. According to their results the large number of students in the classroom, the lack of concern from students, and the difficulty in handling students are some of the sources of work-related stress among teachers. Furthermore, Antoniou et al. (2006), study found that young teachers are more exhausted as compared to their older colleagues and female teachers were found to be more depressed than male teachers.

According to Kumar et al. (2013), male and female elementary school teachers have substantially different levels of overall occupational stress. Female teachers possess a higher degree of workplace stress as compared to their male counterparts. Similarly, a study by Slišković and Maslač Seršić (2011), indicated that university women teachers possess more stress than men.

Seema & Ajithkumar (2016) conducted a report on secondary school teachers' occupational stress in relation to their gender and school styles. The findings revealed no substantial difference in occupational stress between male and female secondary school teachers, but government secondary school teachers had less job stress than private teachers.

Method

Sample

In this study the target population was comprised of married and unmarried employees belongs to two different professions such as doctors and teachers. A sample of 160 employees with a varying age were selected from public and private organizations. Of these 160 samples 80 were doctors (40 female, 40 male) and 80 were teachers (40 female, 40 male). The 40 samples were then split off into 20 married and 20 unmarried doctors and teachers. Following instruments were used for the purpose of data collection.

Instruments

Workplace Stress Scale

A workplace stress scale is used to assess job stress. It's a simple test that decides how anxious people are at work. In 2001, the Marlin Company and the American Institute of Stress produced a fast test that allowed people to evaluate their job stress and compare their results to the rest of the American workforce. The Marlin Company in North Haven, CT, and the American Institute of Stress in Yonkers, NY, also validated and standardised the scale. This scale tests work-related stress based on one's impressions of their current employment. The Workplace Stress Scale is made up of eight statements that explain how one feels at work. The 8 items are classified on a 5-point scale such as never, rarely, sometime, often, and very often. A total score of 15 or lower indicates that the person is relatively relaxed, 16 to 20 (35 percent) indicates that the person is moderately low in stress, 21-25 (21 percent) indicates moderate stress, 26-30 (9 percent) indicates extreme stress, and 31-40 (2 percent) indicates that the person's stress level is potentially harmful.

Procedure

For assessing workplace stress or occupational stress among married employees, a workplace stress scale (WSS) was used. For the administration of the workplace stress scale 160 employees (doctors/teachers) were approached from public and private organizations of Swabi, Peshawar and Abbottabad. Written instructions were presented about filling the questionnaire but brief verbal account was also provided. The completion of the workplace stress scale took almost 2-3 minutes. Approval was taken from the subjects and allowed to

ask any questions related to questionnaire. Data collection process lasted for 2 months. When the data was obtained, the participants were thanked for their involvement and debriefed. Analysis was done by using SPSS version 22.

Results

The aim of the present research was to assess the occupational stress among married and unmarried employees and to find out gender differences in level of occupational stress if exist any. Descriptive analysis and alpha reliability of the workplace stress scale used in this study was found.

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1: *Descriptive statistics and reliability of workplace Stress Scale WSS (N=160)*

Scale	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Workplace Stress Scale	25.27	6.38	.83

Table 1 shows that alpha coefficient reliability of workplace stress scale is adequate. This suggests that it is internally consistent and therefore reliable for the current research.

Hypotheses Testing

Table 2: Comparison of employees on the basis of marital status on Workplace Stress Scale

Scale	Marital Status				<i>t</i> (158)	<i>P</i>	95% CI		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Single		Married						
	<i>n</i> =80		<i>n</i> = 80				LL	UL	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>					
WSS	20.38	4.85	30.16	3.18	-15.04	.000	-11.05	-8.49	2.38

WSS (N=160)

Note: WSS= Workplace Stress Scale; $P < 0.001$

Table 2 shows the differences in two groups such as single and married employees on workplace stress scale. Analysis indicates that results are significant at $p < 0.001$ and the mean difference shows that married employees ($M=30.16$) possess high level of occupational stress than single employees ($M=20.38$).

Table 3: Comparison of employees on the basis of gender on Workplace Stress (N=160)

Gender									
Variable	Male		Female		<i>t</i> (158)	<i>P</i>	95% CI		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>n</i> =80		<i>n</i> = 80				LL	UL	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>					
WSS	23.58	7.68	26.96	4.16	-3.45	.001	-5.30	-1.44	0.54

Note: WSS= Workplace Stress Scale; $P < 0.01$

Table 3 shows gender differences on workplace stress scale. Analysis shows that results are significant at $p < 0.01$ and the mean difference indicates that female employees ($M=26.96$) have high level of occupational stress than male employees ($M=23.58$).

Table 4: Comparison of female employees (single, married) on WSS

Female Employees									
Scale	Single		Married		<i>t</i> (78)	<i>P</i>	95% CI		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>n</i> =40		<i>n</i> = 40				LL	UL	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>					
WSS	23.97	3.02	29.95	2.76	9.22	.000	-7.26	-4.68	2.06

Note: WSS= Workplace Stress Scale; $P < 0.001$

Table 4 illustrates mean, standard deviation and *t* value of female employees on WSS. The study's findings are significant at the 0.001 level, and the mean differences suggest that married female employees ($M=29.95$) score high on the WSS than single female employees ($M= 23.97$).

Male employees									
Scale	Single		Married		<i>t</i> (78)	<i>P</i>	95% CI		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>n</i> =40		<i>n</i> = 40				LL	UL	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>					
WSS	16.80	3.50	30.37	3.58	17.12	.000	-15.15	-11.99	3.83

Table 5: *Comparison of male employees (single, married) on WSS*

Note: WSS= Workplace Stress Scale; $P < 0.001$

Table 5 depicts mean, standard deviation and *t* value of male employees on WSS. The findings are significant at the 0.001 level, and the mean differences show that married male employees ($M=30.37$) score high as compared to single male employees ($M= 16.80$) on the WSS.

Table 6: *Comparison of married employees on WSS*

Married Employees									
Male		Female		<i>t</i> (78)	<i>P</i>	95% CI		Cohen's <i>d</i>	
<i>n</i> =40		<i>n</i> = 40				LL	UL		
Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>					
WSS	30.37	3.58	29.95	2.76	.59	.554	-1.00	1.85	0.13

Note: WSS= Workplace Stress Scale; $P > 0.05$

Table 6 points to mean, standard deviation and *t* value of married employees on WSS. The study's findings shows that the results are non- significant at the 0.05 level suggesting that there is no difference in WSS scores between married male and female employees.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to determine the level of occupational stress encountered by married employees. It was predicted that married employees will possess high level of occupational stress as compared to single employees belonging to two different professions such as doctors and teachers. Results of the study revealed that marital status is linked with occupational stress (see Table 2). The ultimate conclusion of this study is that married workers go through higher degree of workplace stress as compared to unmarried workers. These findings were inconsistent with those of Rahmani (2013), who discovered the degree of stress did not differ significantly according to marital status. In other words, single and married persons experience similar levels of stress. Another study conducted by Bentil (2016) revealed that female bankers reported that their marital status is associated with job stress. Particularly married female believed that their job-related stress is linked with their marital situation while unmarried female bankers showed disagreement about the link between work-related stress and marital status. According to the findings, divorced and married female bankers are marginally but considerably influenced by workplace stress, whereas singles and widows are not.

Another hypothesis stated that there will be significant gender differences in occupational stress among married and unmarried employees. This hypothesis was supported.

According to the results of this study, there was significant variation in the level of workplace stress faced by male and female workers on WSS. The literature review showed inconsistent results regarding gender differences and occupational stress. According to Salami (2005), women feel greater job overload and are more likely to acquire stress than their male colleagues. Furthermore, in this regard, Alarape and Afolabi (2001), concluded that married women, regardless of their employment situation or marital status, face more psychological distress than males. In line with the current study, Emmanuel and Collins (2016), findings revealed that the majority of employees were moderately to severely stressed, with female workers experiencing higher levels of occupational stress than their male counterparts. The study also depicted that there is no difference in the level of occupational stress among married male and married female employees on WSS suggesting that married employees experience equal amount of stress at workplace. These findings were consistent with those of Haque and Aston (2016) ,who have also found no significant gender differences in occupational stress among in-service staff.

This research also confirmed that there exist occupational stress differences among female workers on the basis of their marital status with married female employees scoring high as compared to single female employees (see Table 4). Different studies indicated the relationship between these variables in her study Parveen (2009) , discovered that single female employees face less stress than married female employees. Domestic obligations, marital adjustment, child care problems, and family relationships are all sources of stress for married female workers.

Conclusion

To summarise, this study found significant differences in workplace stress among married and unmarried employees. In contrast to unmarried workers, married employees have a higher degree of occupational stress. This study also found significant variations in occupational stress between male and female workers but married employees either male or female experience equal amount of stress.

Recommendations

It is suggested that for married employees helpful working atmosphere, less working hours, appropriate management and guidance should be provided to decrease stress. The study has revealed that there is high occupational stress among married employees as

compared to single employees. This study invites instant consideration of the policy makers to control occupational stress among married employees. Decrease in stress level will aid to enhance competence which will eventually lead to improve performance. This research will assist Ministry of Education and administrators and institutions to initiate the stress management programs and training session to deal with stress to get best from teachers and doctors to prosper Pakistan's future.

Limitation

Some of the demographic variables like age, socioeconomic status, job experience, residential area, religion, birth order and other important personality characteristics that may have significant effect on job stress among married employees were ignored in this study.

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