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**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

**OBJECTIVES**

**HYPOTHESIS (ES)**

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

**FINDINGS**

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**STRESS RELIEVING TECHNIQUES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL STRESSORS**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this exploratory study is to identify organizational stressors and stress-relieving techniques in employees. The stress survey questionnaire was used for data collection among 118 employees selected through convenience sampling from different service sectors. We tried to explore the relationship between recognized organizational stressors, stress-relieving techniques and demographic variables. Analysis shows Job pressure, Interpersonal relationships, Role conflict, Work under load, Job insecurity and Low support are key organizational stressors. Meditation, Relaxation, Music, Ventilation, and Socialization are stress-relieving techniques used frequently by employees. Individual stress-relieving techniques are given preference over organizational interventions to relieve organizational stress. Employees use music to deal with role conflict and relaxation from job insecurity and they use socialization and ventilation to deal with a low level of support at work.*

**KEYWORDS**

organizational stressors, stress relieving techniques, organizational stress.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

 Organizational stress is pervasive in nature, affecting employees from different service sectors and organizations all over the world. The stressors or factors responsible for stress at work are many and varied, and are called organizational stressors. Job satisfaction, long working hours, high job responsibility, low level of social support from co-workers, lack of control over professional demands, uncertainty about work and unavailability of potential resolutions are some of the contributing factors of organizational stress (Colligan & Higgins, 2006).

At the same time to seek relief from stress, employees adapt by using various stress-relieving techniques like; soliciting support from friends and family, engaging in hobbies, seeking professional help and so on. Till date, research has focused on identifying stressors, stress relieving techniques (Nelson & Sutton, 1990), and the methods by which both individual employees and organizations can effectively manage stress (Kram & Hall, 1989). But one needs to understand the relationship between organizational stressors and the stress-relieving techniques used by employees so that organizations can incorporate it in their interventions for better outcomes in Organizational Stress Management.

The current study tries to identify and explore the relationship between demographic variables, organizational stressors and stress-relieving techniques in employees.

**2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE****2.1 STRESS**

Stress is a physiological and psychological response (Selye, 1976) of the body in an attempt to adapt to the changing conditions of different life situations like work, at home and in social situations. Stress has become an integral part of every individual. Selye (1976) described two categories of stress, eustress or desirable stress and distress or undesirable stress. Eustress is a pleasant, least challenging, enable to produce positive effects such as enhancement of creativity and output. Person's perception of his inability to control a stressful event results in distress, loss of productivity and decline in overall sense of well-being.

**2.2 ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS & ORGANIZATIONAL STRESSORS**

Organizational stress is the stress that is generated whilst at work. Any factors in an Organization, responsible for the job stress in employees are commonly termed as organizational stressors (Von Onciul, 1996).

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), organizational stress is a result of the interaction between an employee's personal characteristics, their work environment, the outcome expected from them, and their coping ability. Negative appraisal of the structure and functioning of the organization can lead to the development of organizational stress. An optimal level of organizational stress enables an employee to work effectively with greater satisfaction but if it remains unresolved, it not only affects the quality, productivity and creativity of their work but their health, well-being and morale also (Everly, 1990).

Out of numerous organizational stressors, we investigated time pressure, job pressure, work overload, interpersonal relations, role conflicts, and work under load, job-related health concerns, job insecurity and support.

According to Greenhaus et al., 1987, work overload affects one's physiological and psychological wellbeing resulting in a variety of strain symptoms. Too much or too little work, conflicting job demands are usually associated with work stress (Mathis & Jackson, 2004).

Compressed time schedules and flexible working hours increases satisfaction at work but the organizational stress occurs when time pressure and job pressure is high but support and control over work is low (Sparks et al., 2001).

Robert et al., 1997, stated that employee experience job stress when they are expected to play multiple roles in an organization. Role conflict and undue expectations lead to frustration due to an inability to influence the decisions related to work and organizational issues. Factors like unpleasant climate, interpersonal conflicts, distractions and lack of privacy can enhance the organizational stress.

According to Kanungo (1981), when employees with high social needs are working alone on their job without any social support, it can lead to frustration and indifference to both work and social needs. Difficult interpersonal relationships like bullying at workplace and conflict at work results in anxiety and depression in employees. Sometimes it also leads to PTSD (Post traumatic stress disorder) in extreme conditions (Hoel, sparks, & Cooper, 2001).

Employee's perception of insecurity at job has a relationship with their occupational stress. When an employee perceives a lack of career opportunity or hindrance in current job, he is likely to feel insecure about his future in the organization (Foot and Venne, 1990). This is further enhanced by an increasing trend of restructuring and downsizing in many organizations (Sparks et al., 2001).



**2.3 STRESS RELIEVING TECHNIQUES**

We cannot prevent the etiology of stress, but the consequences of stress can be dealt by using appropriate coping or stress-relieving techniques (Stranks, 2005). These are the cognitive or behavioral efforts to alter the environment or to manage the emotions generated during stressful situation. People tend to use a variety of strategies to cope or deal with the stressful situation, but the extent to which one strategy is used over another varies according to the situations and the availability of coping resources (Folkman and Lazarus, 1986).

An organization also tries to assist employees during stressful period through specific services like primary, secondary and tertiary levels of stress intervention. EAP (Employee assistance programme) are designed to benefit both employers and employees (Murphy, 1988).

Social support is often recommended as an effective means of reducing stress (Griffith et al. 1999). Ventilation and socialization allows one to seek social support for emotional reasons, getting moral support, sympathy and understanding. Socialization can be instrumental in problem solving by seeking advice, assistance and information. Ventilation helps to focus on the distress one is experiencing due to stress and to ventilate those feelings to seek relief (Carver, 1989).

Listening to music is the technique most frequently used by employees to overcome the problem of stress (Sharma, 2008). Time management is planning ahead and thinking about how to deal with upcoming stressors. It involves coming up with an action plan, thinking about the steps to be taken. Waiting for an appropriate opportunity to take action is called restraint coping (Carver, 1989).

Organizational stress leads to distress in employees. The process of laughing or 'laughter therapy' helps to come out of that distress. Professional support or expert advice, like counseling, helps them to resolve personal or psychological problems (Kutz et al., 1985). Exercise is any activity that promotes physical fitness. Regular exercise enhances overall physical health as well as mental well being (Selvamurthy, 1993).

Stress reaction and relaxation response (Benson, 1975) are the body and mind's built in response mechanisms. Relaxation and meditation are methods which enable an individual to soothe the mind and body and come out of the after effects of stress (Kabat-Zinn et al, 1982).

As stress-relieving techniques can be a moderating factor for the negative effects of organizational stress, we tried to identify current stress-relieving techniques used by employees.

In occupational stress research, a broad system of variables including personality factors, environmental /organizational factors and coping strategies are studied extensively in isolation as well as in association. The studies related to these variables have resulted in extensive organizational stress literature but have not led to very many implications for the management of occupational stress. The employee does not know all the temporal relationships between these variables, so the awareness of these findings amongst employees can be a cornerstone in the organizational stress management process.

**3. HYPOTHESIS**

H01: Organizational stressors and stress relieving techniques are independent of each other.

H02: Organizational stressors & stress relieving techniques have no relationship with demographic variables.

**4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**A) Sample:** In this exploratory research, a sample of 118 employees (79 males, 39 females) was drawn from employees in different service sectors of different cities in India.

Sampling method: Samples selected through Convenience sampling (Kothari & Garg, 2014).

**TABLE 1: SOCIO ECONOMIC INDICATORS**

Socio Economic Indicators	Frequency	Percentage	CITY	NO	%
<b>Age</b>			Pune	<b>51</b>	43%
Under 25 yrs	9	8%	Bangalore	<b>32</b>	27%
26 – 35	63	53%	Mumbai	<b>20</b>	17%
36 - 45	31	26%	Nasik	<b>3</b>	3%
46 - 55	13	11%	Delhi	<b>4</b>	3%
56 +	2	2%	Other	<b>8</b>	7%
Total	118	100	Total	<b>118</b>	100%
<b>Marital status</b>					
Married	82	69%	<b>TYPE OF INDUSTRY</b>	NO	%
Unmarried	36	31%	Automobile & Auto ancillary	<b>5</b>	4%
TOTAL	118	100	Information technology (IT) & ITES	<b>26</b>	22%
<b>Gender</b>			Pharmaceutical	<b>1</b>	1%
Male	79	67%	Manufacturing	<b>6</b>	5%
Female	39	33%	Engineering & industrial machinery	<b>7</b>	6%
TOTAL	118	100	Electrical & electronics	<b>1</b>	1%
<b>Job status</b>			Network & Telecom	<b>3</b>	3%
Permanent	106	90%	Business services	<b>13</b>	11%
temporary	12	10%	Chemical	<b>1</b>	1%
TOTAL	118	100	Construction & infrastructure.	<b>5</b>	4%
<b>Family status</b>			Healthcare	<b>10</b>	9%
Joint family	46	39%	Other	<b>40</b>	33%
Nuclear family	72	61%	TOTAL	<b>118</b>	100%
TOTAL	118	100			
<b>Income group</b>					
Below 25,000	32	27%			
25,001 -40,000	28	24%			
40,001 – 55,000	22	18%			
55,001-70,000	9	8%			
Above 70,000	27	23%			
TOTAL	118	100			

**B) Research instrument:** The self report questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument to gather information about existing stressors at work and various stress relieving-techniques used by respondents.

a) Variables identification

'Stress' has multiple dimensions. So to understand the existing stressors, initially; face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted to gather information about these stressors and the stress-relieving techniques practiced by employees were noted. Twenty-five (25) such interviews were conducted in Bangalore and Pune.

b) Questionnaire formulation

With the help of the literature review and analysis of the information gathered during interviews, 20 stressors and 15 stress-relieving techniques were identified to formulate our first draft of the questionnaire. This questionnaire was circulated through employee friends and their colleagues. Some volunteers were asked to fill up the questionnaire in our presence to understand the potential difficulties/ambiguities that respondents may face while filling up the questionnaire. During this process we received feedback on

- a- Overlapping of variables
- b- Repetitions
- c- Difficulties in conceptual understanding
- d- Questionnaire framework
- e- Five-point Likert scale used

After incorporating the feedback a new questionnaire was designed and this was again circulated amongst the same set of respondents and the whole process was repeated.

The second draft of the modified questionnaire was then referred to a group of experts in the subject and their feedback was incorporated. This process was repeated and implemented again to iron out and further streamline the questionnaire.

c) Final version of the questionnaire

At the end of the above-mentioned process, the final version of the questionnaire was formulated. The two parts of this final version were:

1- Organizational Stressors with 45 variables under 9 constructs,

- a) Time Pressure
- b) Job pressure
- c) Job Overload Stress
- d) Interpersonal relationship
- e) Job-Related Health Concerns
- f) Role conflict
- g) Job Under load stress
- h) Job insecurity
- i) Support

2- Stress relieving techniques with 10 variables under 1 construct

A) Organizational interventions:

- 1) EAP ( Employee Assistance Programme)
- B) Individual stress relieving techniques:

a) Short term outcome -

- 1) Music
- 2) Laughter therapy
- 3) Ventilation & catharsis
- 4) Time management
- 5) Socialization including outing

b) Long term outcome -

- 1) Meditation
- 2) Relaxation
- 3) Exercise including a walk
- 4) Counseling

**C) Analysis:**

Factor structure and alpha reliabilities:

Sample size (n) = 118

We have conducted exploratory factor analysis on the organizational stressors and Stress relieving techniques. Analysis of the database was conducted to check the reliability of the scale and explore the factor structure of the instrument.

**TABLE 2: INSTRUMENT’S RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS**

Cronbach's Alpha	KMO	N of Items
0.94	0.8	55

The instruments under study were reliable with coefficients **0.94**, exceeding the minimum acceptance level of 0.70

For organizational stressors and stress-relieving techniques, a principal component analysis was used to obtain the rotated component matrix. Poorly performing items were not considered, in order to improve the scale’s reliability. Exploratory factor analysis indicated that the questionnaire was tapping 6 stressor domains and 4 coping domains so 6 new variables for stressors and 4 for stress-relieving techniques were computed using the factors of internal consistency estimates.

Computed variables for stressors were: 1) Pressure 2) lpr (inter personal relationship) 3) Role conflict 4) Under load 5) Job insecurity and 6) Support. And for Stress relieving techniques were: 1) Meditate 2) Venting 3) Relax and 4) Music. These new variables were used for further analysis.

**TABLE 3: MEAN SCORES AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF THE VARIABLES USED IN STUDY**

Variables	Mean	Std. deviation
Pressure	19.92	6.434
lpr	6.38	2.766
Role conflict	8.48	3.73
Under load	8	3.453
Job insecurity	7.83	4.09
Support	10.23	4.521
Meditate	5.22	2.138
Music	3.25	1.127
Venting	9.38	2.654
Relax	6.86	2.872

The mean score and standard deviations for each variable can be seen in table no 3. For organizational stressors mean values ranges from 6.38 to 19.92 with SD of 2.76 to 6.43 and for techniques, mean values range from 3.25 to 9.38 with SD of 1.12 to 2.87.

5. RESULT & DISCUSSION

The results show a significant positive relationship between the organizational stressors: an increase in one stressor leads to an increase in another.

TABLE 4: CORRELATION BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLE AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRESSORS

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 Job status	coeff	1	0.089	0.141	-0.023	-0.142	-0.253**	-0.157	-0.071	-0.143	<b>-0.191*</b>	-0.068	-0.136
	Sig. (1-tail)		0.174	0.069	0.404	0.066	0.004	0.052	0.228	0.066	<b>0.024</b>	0.241	0.084
2 Gender	coeff		1	.159*	-0.023	-0.093	-0.199*	-0.043	-0.039	-0.052	0.052	-0.076	-0.011
	Sig. (1-tail)			0.046	0.403	0.164	0.017	0.327	0.34	0.292	0.295	0.215	0.455
3 Marital status	coeff			1	-.247**	-.361**	-.347**	-0.035	0.135	0.033	0.05	0.022	0.09
	Sig. (1-tail)				0.004	0	0	0.358	0.079	0.363	0.303	0.41	0.182
4 Family status	coeff				1	-0.041	-0.165*	<b>0.201*</b>	0.028	0.034	0.033	0.093	-0.048
	Sig. (1-tail)					0.334	0.041	<b>0.018</b>	0.384	0.36	0.367	0.169	0.313
5 Age	coeff					1	.405**	0.042	-0.133	-0.143	0.038	0.043	-0.044
	Sig. (1-tail)						0	0.331	0.081	0.065	0.347	0.327	0.328
6 Income	coeff						1	0.082	0.075	<b>0.161*</b>	0.095	-0.017	0.045
	Sig. (1-tail)							0.199	0.216	<b>0.045</b>	0.165	0.431	0.323
7 Pressure	coeff							1	.374**	.503**	.315**	.273**	.519**
	Sig. (1-tail)								0	0	0	0.002	0
8 lpr	coeff								1	.609**	.356**	.357**	.516**
	Sig. (1-tail)									0	0	0	0
9 Roleconflict	coeff									1	.412**	.441**	.621**
	Sig. (1-tail)										0	0	0
10 Under load	coeff										1	.436**	.484**
	Sig. (1-tail)											0	0
11 Jobinsecurity	coeff											1	.489**
	Sig. (1-tail)												0
12 Support	coeff												1
	Sig. (1-tail)												

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

We find a significant negative relationship of under load stress with job status ( $r = -0.191, p < 0.05$ ) indicating that **work under load** stress occurs more often in permanent employees. Job pressure and family status have a significant positive relationship ( $r = 0.201, p < 0.05$ ), i.e. **job pressure** is more in employees living in joint families. **Role conflict** has a significant positive relation with monthly income ( $r = 0.161, p < 0.05$ ), i.e. stress of role conflict increases with an increase in monthly income.

TABLE 5: CORRELATION BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLE AND STRESS RELIEVING TECHNIQUES

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Job status	coeff	1	0.089	0.141	-0.023	-0.142	-0.253**	-0.101	<b>-0.158</b>	0.072	-0.054
	Sig. (1-tail)		0.174	0.069	0.404	0.066	0.004	0.145	<b>0.049</b>	0.229	0.287
2. Gender	coeff		1	.159*	-0.023	-0.093	-0.199*	0.083	<b>0.193*</b>	0.097	-0.14
	Sig. (1-tail)			0.046	0.403	0.164	0.017	0.192	<b>0.021</b>	0.157	0.072
3. Marital status	coeff			1	-.247**	-.361**	-.347**	-0.011	0.126	0.118	-0.043
	Sig. (1-tail)				0.004	0	0	0.456	0.094	0.112	0.329
4. Family status	coeff				1	-0.041	-.165*	0.038	<b>-0.163*</b>	0.141	0.096
	Sig. (1-tail)					0.334	0.041	0.346	<b>0.043</b>	0.07	0.158
5. Age	coeff					1	.405**	<b>0.197*</b>	-0.056	-.103	0.081
	Sig. (1-tail)						0	<b>0.019</b>	0.279	0.141	0.2
6. Income	coeff						1	-0.103	-0.104	-.157	-0.05
	Sig. (1-tail)							0.14	0.138	0.051	0.302
7. Meditation	coeff							1	.305**	.218*	.291**
	Sig. (1-tail)								0.001	0.011	0.001
8. Music	coeff								1	.256**	.209*
	Sig. (1-tail)									0.004	0.015
9. Venting	coeff									1	.386**
	Sig. (1-tail)										0
10. Relaxation	coeff										1
	Sig. (1-tail)										

There is a significant negative relationship between Music and Job Status ( $r = -0.158, p < 0.05$ ). Music and Status of Family ( $r = -0.163, p < 0.05$ ) shows that **primarily employees who are permanent and living in nuclear families use Music as a stress-relieving technique**. There is a positive significant relationship between Music and Gender ( $r = 0.193, p < 0.05$ ), suggesting females listen to music more often than males to relieve stress.

**Older age groups use meditation more often** as a stress-relieving technique.

TABLE 6: CORRELATIONS BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL STRESSORS AND STRESS RELIEVING TECHNIQUES

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Pressure	Co-Coeff	1	0.398**	0.491**	0.321**	0.264**	0.512**	-0.011	-0.016	0.155	0.135
	Sig. (1-tail)	.	0	0	0.001	0.006	0	0.914	0.871	0.112	0.168
2 lpr	Co-Coeff		1	0.628**	0.409**	0.437**	0.537**	0.009	0.032	0.065	0.067
	Sig. (1-tail)			0	0	0	0	0.922	0.739	0.501	0.485
3 Roleconflict	Co-Coeff			1	0.462**	0.422**	0.609**	0.011	<b>0.188*</b>	0.109	0.059
	Sig. (1-tail)			.	0	0	0	0.909	<b>0.048</b>	0.257	0.543
4 Under load	Co-Coeff				1	0.434**	0.485**	0.032	0.056	0.125	0.117
	Sig. (1-tail)				.	0	0	0.743	0.569	0.202	0.234
5 Jobinsecurity	Co-Coeff					1	0.416**	0.067	-0.004	0.12	<b>0.259**</b>
	Sig. (1-tail)					.	0	0.494	0.969	0.222	<b>0.007</b>
6 Support	Co-Coeff						1	-0.042	0.095	<b>0.220*</b>	0.154
	Sig. (1-tail)						.	0.671	0.339	<b>0.025</b>	0.12
7 Meditation	Co-Coeff							1	0.316**	0.166	0.305**
	Sig. (1-tail)							.	0.001	0.084	0.001
8 Music	Co-Coeff								1	0.243*	0.178
	Sig. (1-tail)								.	0.011	0.064
9 Venting	Co-Coeff									1	0.335**
	Sig. (1-tail)									.	0
10 Relaxation	Co-Coeff										1
	Sig. (1-tail)										.

Results show that there was a significant correlation between Stressors and the choice of stress-relieving techniques as:

- a. Positive significant relation between Role Conflict and Listening to Music ( r = 0.118, p = 0.048 )
- b. Positive significant relation between Job Security & Relaxation ( r = 0.259, p = 0.007 )
- c. Positive significant relation between Support & Venting ( r = 0.220 p = 0.025 )

This shows that employees with role conflict at the job level use **listening to Music** as a stress relieving technique more than other techniques. Employees with job insecurity use Relaxation to relieve their stress and employees without adequate Support find relief by socialization and venting their frustrations.

**6. CONCLUSION**

This study contributes to the identification of organizational stressors in different service sectors. Consistent with earlier studies (Gillespie et al., 2001), these sources of stress are job pressure, interpersonal relationships, role conflict, low support, work under load and job insecurity. It’s interesting to note that stress-relieving techniques used by employees include meditation, relaxation, listening to music, socialization and ventilation. This reflects employee awareness of stress relieving techniques and an avoidance of standard practices like EAP in organizational settings. Employees prefer individual short-term stress relief techniques over organizational interventions and long-term methods like counseling and exercise.

Demographic variables like job status, family status and monthly income emerged as good predictors of stress in employees as well as predictors of stress-relieving techniques. Thus we rejected our second null hypothesis of there being no relationship between demographic variables with stressors and stress-relieving techniques. There is a definite relationship between role conflict & music, job insecurity & relaxation, support & venting out. Thus we rejected our first null hypothesis of there being no relationship between organizational stressors and stress-relieving techniques.

While a variety of studies have been conducted on this subject, each of them differs in terms of variables selected, instruments used and sample sizes. This study aims to contribute significantly to the repertoire of knowledge on organizational stressors, stress relieving techniques and the relationship between them. By increasing the awareness of these lifestyle factors, this study also hopes to empower employees to better manage their stress and anxiety.

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