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HYPOTHESES

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

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GENDER DIFFERENCE IN OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG MIDDLE LEVEL MANAGERS IN PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines gender difference in occupational stress and coping strategies among Middle level managers in private sector organizations and data were collected through five point Likert scale questionnaire. Result of the survey analyzed by using independent t-test. Female middle level managers reported sources of stress as mistakes at the job, less recognition from superior, lack of career and achievement and lack of personal level development at the job than male middle level managers. Male middle level managers reported higher stress for personality clashes with others. With respect to coping strategies, female middle level managers tend social support when they experience stress, while men tend to suppress their emotions and deal with problems in a logical and unemotional manner, and they cope stress with organizing works than females.

KEYWORDS

Coping Strategies, Gender, Occupational Stress,

INTRODUCTION

Stress is a measure of the internal acting within a deformable body. Quantitatively, it is a measure of the average force per unit area of a surface within the body on which internal forces act. These internal forces are a reaction to external forces applied on the body. Stress is defined as any condition or characteristics of the work environment which threatens the individual's psychological and physiological homeostasis (Vivaen, Thompson, 1996). End of the twentieth century women's participation of work force has increased by significant way compared with men. According to census and statistical departmental statistics, labour force has contend 66.7% male employees and 31.5% female employees. Private sector has provided 46.9% jobs for male employees and 45.1% for female employees and public sector has provided 11.9% for male and 15.5% for female employees from the overall job market. Women's entering to the job market is a critical point to discuss various matters. From various aspects occupational stress is important matter to discuss among male and female employees

LITERATURE REVIEW

WOMEN, MEN, WORK AND OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

Many researches on gender differences in occupational stress have done by western researchers. Most occupational stresses are more conducive to men's success than women's (Tharenou et al., 1994). Women's minority managerial status and male-dominated company policies have been used to claim that female managers are subjected to a greater number of work related pressure than male managers (Davidson and Cooper, 1983). With the growing no of women in management, future productivity may depend on an organization's ability to integrate women in to the mainstream of organizational life (Offermann and Gowring, 1990). Female HR professionals reported significantly more pressure and reported a greater no of stress manifestations than their male counterparts (Davidson and Cooper, 1983). Previous research has examined the degree of occupational stress and gender difference which indicates females occupational stress is bigger than males occupational stress. Former researchers has indicated that female managers suffer from role conflicts and role ambiguity (terborg, 1985), which brings with it pressure felt from tokenism (Rosen, 1982; Davidson and cooper, 1983; Offermann and Armitage, 1993) isolation (Nelson and Quick, 1985; Davidson and Cooper, 1985) and not feeling fully accepted by their peers (kanter, 1977). Female managers are also more likely than male managers to suffer from a lack of support, be this lack of encouragement from superiors (Davidson and Cooper, 1983), absence of mentors (Jick and Mitz, 1985; Terborg, 1985) or lack of social support (Davidson and Cooper, 1983 ; Offermann and Gowring, 1990).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Find out the gender difference in occupational stress among middle level managers in a private sector organization

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE AND QUESTIONNAIRE

The sample consisted of middle level managers in private sector organizations. Private organizations were selected as the sample. A total no of 120 questionnaires were distributed .110 were well completed. This constitutes a response rate of 98 per cent. The questionnaire designed as 5 point Likert scale (5=Strongly agree to 1=Strongly disagree) and questionnaire depend on Cooper's Occupational Stress Indicators and Coping Strategies. 57 Male managers and 53 Female managers who were responded to the survey. Data analyzed by using independent t-test through SPSS software.

MEASURES

SOURCES OF STRESS

Sources of stress adopted from Cooper et al's Occupational Stress Indicator (OSI). Sources of stress were assessed with 61 items adopted from Cooper et al.'s Occupational Stress Indicator (OSI). The psychometric properties of the OSI have been established in previous studies. Items were scored from 1 (very definitely is not a source of stress) to 6 (very definitely is a source of stress). The OSI consists of six subscales which tap six dimension of Stress as follows;

1. Factors intrinsic to the job define sources of stress start from aspects of the job. This included three areas which could influences to the stress: satisfaction of working environment, new technology, innovations & challenges and position of routine works.
2. Managerial role measures how individuals perceive the expectations that relating to the managerial works. These expectations define as the risk factor of the job, how could avoid mistakes of the job and the decision making power of the job as a Middle level manager
3. Relationships with others define as stress originating from personal contacts at work such as lack of social support from superiors, subordinators and other worker and office politics.

4. Career and achievement measures the middle level managers' perceptions of their future career development, promotion prospects and perceived threats of job obsolescence.
5. Organization structure and climate define how stress starting from the bureaucratic nature of the organization, employee performance structure, organizational resources and training and development programs for middle level managers to the organization.

COPING STRATEGIES

Coping strategies were assessed with 28 items adopted from the OSI. Items were scored from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). These items comprise six subscales which show six types of coping strategy:

- 1) Social support assesses the middle level managers' connections with employees and formal and informal social networks.
- 2) Task strategies measures the individual's planning and organizing ability for their tasks to manageable chunks.
- 3) Logic measures coping strategy which measured emotional and rational approach to stressful situations.
- 4) Home-work relationships assesses coping which involves work-family balance to dissipate stress.
- 5) Time management focuses as coping strategy to work priority setting and delegation of works to achieve the tasks.
- 6) Involvement assesses coping which involves the individual's job commitment, responsibility and acceptance of the situation in which they worked.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Of the 110 respondents, 51 per cent are male (N = 57) and 49 per cent are female (N = 53). The mean age of respondents is 33 with range from 27 to 40. Middle level managerial positions used as assistant managers, senior executives, engineers and accountants. Sixty-six per cent of the respondents are single (N = 73), While 34 per cent are married (N = 37).

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN SOURCES OF STRESS

Analyses of independent t-test were used to test whether gender differences in occupational stress and coping strategies exist. Three covariates - job title, marital status, and age group were controlled. This is to ensure that any significant gender differences found in experienced stress and coping are attributed to gender and not to any of the covariates. Results of independent t-test are presented in Table I and show that only five sources of stress (factors intrinsic to the job; managerial role; relationships with others; career and achievement; and organization structure and climate) remained statistically significant after the three covariates were introduced.

To examine further gender differences in specific aspects of the job, t-tests were performed for male and female middle level managers on various items in each dimension of the OSI. Items on which significant gender differences occur are reported in Table.

TABLE 1: RESULTS OF INDEPENDENT T-TEST ON INDIVIDUAL STRESS ITEMS BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE MIDDLE LEVEL MANAGERS

Question no	Dimension of Stress	MEAN		Significant (2-tailed test)
		Male	Female	
	Factors intrinsic to the job			
1	Satisfaction of working environment	4.02	3.64	0.01
2	Working with new technology, innovation and challenges	3.75	3.51	0.09
3	Normal routine work than different task	3.23	3.06	0.43
	Managerial role			
4	Take the risk of job	3.42	3.68	0.21
5	Afraid to do mistakes at job	2.60	3.74	0.00
6	Make decision influence to organisation	3.74	3.91	0.23
	Relationship with others			
7	Lack of subordinate support	2.68	3.15	0.06
8	Hurts from office politics	2.95	3.23	0.06
9	Not recognized from superiors	2.21	3.00	0.00
10	Personality clashes with others	3.44	2.30	0.00
	Career and achievement			
11	Promoted by Organization at correct time	3.16	2.60	0.02
12	Achieved personal level development of the job	3.89	3.08	0.00
13	Lack of opportunity to career development	2.79	2.77	0.94
	Organisation structure and climate			
14	No adequate guidelines and backup from superiors	2.60	2.38	0.30
15	No training and development structure for the job	2.32	2.68	0.12
16	Not receiving feedback from top level	2.79	2.55	0.29
17	Resources not enough to work	2.51	2.28	0.24

FACTORS INTRINSIC TO THE JOB

Male managers reported significantly higher scores on three questionnaire items relating to factors intrinsic to the job. These items are: "satisfaction of working environment", "working with new technology, innovation and challenges", "normal routine work than different tasks". Results of Sig. (2-tailed) t-tests on these items are shown in Table I.

Males have satisfied with working environment, but working with new technology, innovation and challenges they have little bit of pressure than females as well as they are working under normal routine works than female workers in the work place. However as an overall dimension which factors intrinsic job factor which does not have a significant difference among male and female middle level manager in the work place.

MANAGERIAL ROLE

Female middle level managers scored significantly higher on the following items relating to the managerial role: "Afraid to do mistakes at the job", "Make decisions influence to the organization" "Lack of subordinate support". Results of Sig. (2-tailed) t-tests on these items are shown in Table I. Female managers were more afraid to do mistakes the job and they does not have the subordinates support like male counterparts. Those were major source of job stress than male counter parts. However they reported their influencing rate to decision making was higher than male managers to the work.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

Women reported a significantly higher score several items on this subscale of the OSI: "Hurts from office politics", and "Not recognize from superiors" were significantly higher than male managers. Other hand males scored higher for the "Personality clashes with others" at the office. Results of Sig. (2-tailed) t-tests on these items are shown in Table I. Generally, Middle level managers have extensive interactions with others in the organization as they need to deal with many different parties and fulfill the expectations of users, customers, clients, managers and departments. In this case female managers are rich with personal relationships without clashes. According to the research female managers has showed a considerable amount of stress originating from office politics and on lack of superior recognition in the office. While organizational politics also plague male managers, female managers may be more stressed by this as they are often excluded from political networks in the organizations.

CAREER AND ACHIEVEMENT

The following items related to career and achievement: "Promoted by the organization at correct times", "Achieved personal level development of the job", "Lack of opportunities to career developments". Results of Sig. (2-tailed) t-tests on these items are shown in Table I. Lack of opportunities for career development and lack of personal level development at the job often results in female managers perceptions that they are undervalued, thereby leading to much frustration and stress.

Another plausible explanation why female were show lower level promotion at the work place this was higher scores as a source of stress than their male counterparts. Freedman and Phillips suggest that the absence of career mentors and role models may lead women to recognize the lack of opportunities in their workplace and consequently adjust their aspiration levels downwards to match the career paths or jobs that appear to be available to them.

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE AND CLIMATE

Organizational structure and climate indicate the following factors: "no adequate guidelines and backups from superiors", "lack of training and development structure for the job", "not receiving feedback from top level", "Resources are not enough to work ". Results of t-tests on these items are shown in Table I. Male managers indicated inadequate guidance and support from superiors, as well as organizational resources not sufficient to perform tasks, may be construed as a loss of control, thereby resulting in stress reactions. On the other hand, Female managers perceive a lack of feedback from top level and lack of training and development from the organization. However there were no significant difference of stress among male and female mangers regarding the organizational structure and climate.

COPING STRATEGIES**TABLE 2: RESULTS OF INDEPENDENT T-TEST ON INDIVIDUALS COPING STRATEGIES ON JOB STRESS BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE MIDDLE LEVEL MANAGERS**

Question no	Individual Item	MEAN		Significant (2-tailed test)
		Male	Female	
18	Social Support			
19	Can easily understand subordinates	4.04	4.06	0.88
	Can seek social support for any issue	2.77	3.81	0.00
20	Task strategies			
21	Plan work as much as manageable	4.21	3.92	0.00
	Good team player	3.88	3.85	0.76
22	Logic			
23	Emotional when fallen in to stressful situation	2.60	3.34	0.00
	Rational my managerial decision	3.40	3.49	0.50
24	Homework Relationship			
25	Successfully balance work and family	3.68	3.94	0.07
	No family affected problems to work	3.25	3.23	0.91
26	Time management			
27	Delegate task and finish on time	3.35	3.34	0.95
	Good practice to priority setting	3.68	3.77	0.35
28	Job Involvement			
29	Good individual job commitment	4.00	3.98	0.87
	Accepts work under any pressure	3.81	3.64	0.33

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN COPING STRATEGIES

To examine whether gender differences exist in coping strategies Sig. (2-tailed)-t test procedures were performed. The results in Table 2 show that gender differences exist for only three of the six coping strategies subscales. Female managers reported significantly higher scores on social support than their male counterparts while male managers reported significantly higher scores on logic (less emotional when fallen in stressful situation.) as a coping strategy than their female counterparts. And male managers plan work as manageable then female managers. No significant gender difference was found for task strategies, home-work relationships, and job involvement. To examine further gender differences in specific aspects of coping strategies, t-tests were performed for male and female middle level managers on various items in the social support, time management and logic subscale of OSI. Items on which significant gender differences occur are reported in Table 2.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

Female managers reported significantly higher scores on questionnaire items relating to social support for any issue as a coping strategy. Results of t-tests on these items are shown in table 2

These results are also consistent with the findings of previous studies. For example, McDonald and Korabik found that females were more likely to talk to others about their problems and seek social support when they experienced stress in a similar way, Burke and Belcourt found that women tended to talk to their friends and family about Work-related problems more than men did. These findings seem to suggest that women are more willing to articulate their problems than men.

LOGIC

Female managers reported significantly higher scores on questionnaire items relating to emotional when fallen in to stressful situation as a coping strategy. Results of t-tests on these items are shown in Table 2. Generally, the results show that men may find it more difficult to articulate their problems and may suppress their emotions and not let their stress show possibly because such behaviours are in line with societal norms and expectations. This is particularly so in an Asian culture where articulation of problems by men is perceived as a sign of weakness.

TASK STRATEGIES

Male manger were more manageable when plan the works. There were significant differences among male and female mangers. Results of t-tests on these items are shown in Table 2. Rationality of this would be, their mind freedom and less responsibilities from the home- work balance.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this study is to investigate gender differences in occupational stress and coping strategies among middle level manager. Results of independent t-tests reveal that gender differences exist in five of the OSI sub-dimensions, namely: Satisfaction of working environment ,Afraid to do mistakes at job, Achieved personal level development of the job, Personality clashes with others and Career promotions and achievement. Other sub-dimensions relating to the ISO (Occupational Stress Indicator) were not reported significant difference between male and female middle level managers job related stress.

Gender differences were found for three coping strategies, namely social support, Time management and Logic. Female middle level managers were more likely to seek social support than male middle level managers in dealing with stress. On the other hand, male middle level managers were more likely to engage in "logic", i.e. suppress their emotions and deal with stress in an objective and unemotional manner.

The results of the study are instructive in that they seem to suggest that some factors has changed since Davidson and Cooper's influential study on occupational stress among male and female managers more than a decade ago. Consistent with Davidson and Cooper's study, this results suggest that most of the factors which generate stress among female managers with gender discrimination from organizational policies and other colleagues at the workplace. The results of this study suggest that one of the source of stress for female middle level mangers arises from fear of making mistakes. This fear may stem from their lack of

confidence or lack of knowledge and skills in performing work tasks or nature of gender as psychological effect. In fact, Freedman and Phillips noted that women who are in male-dominated professions generally tend to lack confidence in their ability to excel in their jobs compared with their male colleagues.

Female middle level managers also scored significantly higher than their male counterparts on stress stemming from "Hurts with office politics". Nelson et al. attribute this to the marginalization of women from the organizational political networks. And the managerial position has traditionally been a male dominated one. Female middle level managers in the study scored significantly higher than their male colleagues on stress originating from inadequate support from their superiors and others at work. To the extent that supervisor support, encouragement and guidance are crucial in assisting the female middle level managers to get ahead in her profession, managers should make a conscientious effort to ensure that their female staff receive the support and guidance they need from their superiors.

Both male and female managerial positions exist and both parties are giving considerable contribution to the productivity. According to the research stress factor has change when relevant to the gender not like earlier time. It would be the development of physical facilities to do work for the female, social support for them as well as changing the attitudes of females for the balance career life as well.

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