A Relationship Between Occupational Stress and Organisational Commitment of I.T Sector's Employees in Contrasting economies

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A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT OF I.T SECTOR'S EMPLOYEES IN CONTRASTING ECONOMIES

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Abstract: Aim is to examine the relationship between occupational stress and organisational commitment of employees at middle and operational level. Additionally, the occupational therapists role is examined through self-developed 'stress model' containing perceived job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and distinctive stressors. Using purposive, snowball and convenience sampling 825 responses (403 from UK and 422 from Pakistan) gathered through on-line matrix based survey questionnaire to gain quantitative perspective. Findings showed female workers are less stress than male workers. Due to low social support, non-managerial employees are vulnerable to stress than their counterpart managerial position employees. Furthermore, Pakistani workforce experience greater stress than UK workforce does. Moreover, personal factors stressed females while organisational factors affect males. Personality often hinders females' organisational commitment while role demand and organisational leadership mainly affect male employees in both countries. Females use support more often than males for overcoming stress. Managerial position males have higher affective commitment whereas managerial level females have high normative commitment and continuance commitment. Although, degree of stress is higher in Pakistan comparing to UK but causes and effects are not significantly different.
Keywords: Occupational Stress; Occupational therapists; Organisational Commitment; Contrasting Economies; Layers of Management; Social Support;

Introduction

Stress is viewed and experienced differently ranging from pleasant to unpleasant by people differently (Stranks, 2005). Seyle (1936) considers it, *frequent reaction to attack* while Ekundayo (2014) determines it intangible by nature. Conversely, Stranks (2005) argued that it is a reason behind disturbance of body's natural equilibrium. Stress is often present in working life of human (Kumasey, *et al*., 2014). Moreover, globalization and other interlinked factors increase stakes and affect organisational efficiency (Schabracq & Cooper, 2000). Thus, it is a prime focus in organisational settings to enhance understanding about it.

Research Aim

To examine the linkage between occupational stress and organisational commitment among I.T sector's employees working at distinct layers of management in contrasting economies.

Significance

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The comparative analysis platform is used for examining variables of interest in varying economies. The study overcomes previous limitation of focus upon single dimension by considering gender and designation (multi-dimensions) in economies of interest. Additionally, this study is unique using DRIVE model for examining the occupational stress in relation with organisational commitment.

Literature Review

Jamal (1990) argued that stress at workplace affecting work-related attitude of employees is reason behind keen interest of organisational researchers for a while (Kumasey *et al.,* 2014). It is hindering flow of smooth operations and efficiency of the organisations (Mark & Smith, 2011). Additionally, Ofoegbu & Nwadiani (2006) stated that stress affects employees' attitude and behaviour negatively by reducing their performance and productivity (cited from Kumasey *et al*., 2014). Individuals are affected differently by diversified causes of stress (Stranks, 2005). Here, Stranks' classified stressors namely; '*personal*', '*organisational*', and '*environmental*' stressors are included in this study.

Interactional and transactional theories of stress are included. "Person-Environment" and "Demands-Control" models are based on interactional theories suggesting interaction between person and environment (Mark & Smith, 2008). Major drawback with interactional theories is that it treats stress as external attribute emerging from single source and interaction is static while environment by nature is dynamic. Moreover, in modern day, multi-stressors are incurring simultaneously (Lazarus, 1991; Mark & Smith, 2008). Conversely, stress is considered as internal attribute transacting between individual and their respective environment is concept of transactional models (Mark & Smith, 2008). Mark & Smith (2008) DRIVE Model is developed to overcome earlier modes and theories. Nevertheless, Demands, Resources, and Individual Effects (DRIVE) model is more conclusive in contrast to earlier proposed models by considering context, connectedness, and complexities of high level along with "*perceived job stress*". Thus, it is appropriate to used DRIVE model in examining different stressors affecting organisational commitment (OC).

With positive intent to attain organisational goals is regarded as organisational commitment (OC). "Affective commitment (AC), normative commitment (NC), and continuance commitment (CC) are antecedent of OC" (Haque & Yamoah, 2014). The actual involvement of employee at work is regarded as AC while recognition and dedication towards workplace is NC (Haque & Yamoah, 2014). Moreover, feeling to stay in organisation is regarded as CC (ibid). The occupational stress affecting dimensions of OC are explored in this study. Haque & Yamoah (2014) argued that females exhibit high level of AC and NC in IT sector. On the other hand, Tan & Lau (2012) argued males exhibit high level of AC while Mathieu & Zajac (1990) and Haque and Yamoah argued CC is high among females irrespective of level of management. Furthermore, Kumasey et al., (2014) argued that higher occupational stress at work is evident among female workers while

males exhibit low stress. In terms of designation, Hemdi (2009) argued that non-managerial employees have high AC in comparison to managerial employees. Moreover, high level of NC is result of effective stress management, established occupational therapists' role, organisational support, and personal resources.
Schwarzer & Leppin (1991) argued that adequate use of personal resources enable workers to overcome various job-related stresses as it serves a support function.

Furthermore, Sackey and Sanda (2011) argued that females working at managerial and non-managerial positions due to their ability to perceive and receive support related to stress reduction thus use personal resources constructively. Level of anxiety and depression is higher among male workers (Sackey & Sanda, 2011). However, male workers have more "*adaptive response*" to deal with personal strain using personal resources (Brannon & Feist, 1992; Sackey & Sanda, 2011). Moreover, non-managerial females constructively use social support whereas managerial position males receive and perceive stress management programme (Sackey and Sanda (2008). Additionally, males have high level of effectiveness from social support due to organisational culture (Kets de Vries et al., 2009). Haque & Yamoah (2014) argued that within organisational settings moral support is more visible among employees. This enables workers to have higher personal affiliation and organisational commitment. Moreover, Haque and Yamoah, (2014) and Sackey & Sanda, (2011) argued that operational level employees more consistently receive moral support. We also investigated factors causing stress. Fairbrother & Warn (2003) argued that females are more stressed due to organisational and environmental factors in comparison to males.
Additionally, Cicei (2012) and Stranks (2005) found that personal factors affect the performance and causes frequent stress among employees at operational level. Females are most often experiencing stress due to organisational factors in comparison to males (Fairbrother and Warn, 2003; Kumasey et al., 2014). Additionally, operational level employees are most affected by organisational factors (Kumasey et al., 2014). Moreover, Stanks (2005) strongly argued that industries facing rapid changes have higher chances of workers being affected by organisational factors. The level of stress among male workers is higher due to environmental factors (Ceici, 2012; and Kumasey et al., 2014). Furthermore, environmental factors are causing higher stress among non-managerial positioned employees in comparison to managerial positioned employees (Stranks, 2005).

Hypotheses

Hoa: The causes and conseuqneces of stress are not significantly different for employees working at lower level and middle level of management in I.T sectors of contrasting economies.

Hob: "There is no significant relationship between occupational stress and organisational commitment among employees working at contrasting level of management in I.T sectors.

Methodology

We compared the variables of interest in contrasting economies through self-constructed semi structured survey questionnaire to examine relationship via quantitative approach. Furthermore, the sample size consists of managerial and non-managerial position employees, considering their respective gender and job role. This cross-sectional study commenced between April 2016 to October 2016 (including pilot surveys) and sample size obtained formed total 825 employees from 173 private software houses using networking and connections. Furthermore, 422 employees from 103 organisations situated at Pakistan whereas 403 employees from 70 organisations in United Kingdom approached through snowball, purposive and convenience. Research follows deductive approach with positivist philosophy to test hypotheses with an attempt to uncover trends in contrasting economies' IT sector.

Through HR department consent was approved. Only 173 organisations out of 510 organisations approved participation reflecting 34.9% response rate. On-line semi structured matrix survey questionnaire containing 30 items related to stressors, role of occupational therapist, personal strains, personal resources, antecedents of organisational commitment, and perceived job satisfaction. Six point Likert scale was used. IBM SPSS 23.0 was used for the quantitative analysis. Once, we reached our approximation by having male to female (51:49) and middle to operational (49.2:50.8). We ran (Shaprio-Wilk) normality distribution test and it reflects data is normally distributed. Mainly, independent t-test and correlation considered for measuring relationship and statistical significance. Moreover, funnel approach was adapted to facilitate research in gaining comprehensive findings about variables of interest.

Cornbach's alpha 0.77 indicates internal consistency of items on scale. Moreover, for ensuring respondents' credibility, we used demographic variables by checking their background with over 50% of organisations. Crosschecking with HR department was made regarding demographic variables and their confirmation enabled us to proceed. This was to ensure integrity of responses is maintained to large extent.

Results

Descriptive statistic showed that majority of the respondents are male (51%), having Bachelors degree (49.7%), lies in between 29-38 age bracket (47.6%) working at middle level (50.8%) and having on average 3-to-5 years experience (29%). However, comparative analysis revealed there are fractional differences considering economies of interest.

Table 1: Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means

		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Affective Commitment	Equal variances assumed	.232	.630	2.52	823	.012	.19819	.07840	.0443	.3520
Normative Commitment	Equal variances assumed	4.14	.042	2.33	823	.020	.18651	.07999	.0295	.3435
Continuance Commitment	Equal variances assumed	.069	.793	2.32	823	.020	.18708	.08050	.0290	.3451
Personal Strain	Equal variances assumed	.004	.950	-.028	823	.001	-.00228	.08100	-.1612	.1567
Personal Resources	Equal variances assumed	16.61	.000	4.73	823	.000	.34995	.07398	.2047	.4951
Occupational Role	Equal variances assumed	6.30	.012	.673	823	.001	.05201	.07723	-.0995	.2036
Occupational Therapist Role	Equal variances assumed	4.06	.044	1.55	823	.121	.14837	.09555	-.0391	.3359

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances reflects higher sig value than 0.05 thus, we read from '*equal variance assumed*'. Results showed that there is statistically significant difference between affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment of male and female ($p=0.012 < 0.05$, $p=0.02 < 0.05$, & $p=0.02 < 0.05$). However, there is no statistical significant difference in affective, normative, and continuance commitment of managerial and non-managerial employees in contrasting economies ($p=0.789 > 0.05$, $p=0.215 > 0.05$, & $p=0.930 > 0.05$). Interestingly, the personal resources are used, perceived, and received by males and females differently ($p=0.000 < 0.05$) and statistically significant difference between managerial and non-managerial employees' usage of personal resources is evident ($p=0.021 < 0.05$). It is evident that managerial and non-managerial level employees experience stress differently due to their occupational role. The statistical significant difference showed that managerial level employees experience higher stress than non-managerial positioned employees do ($p=0.000 < 0.05$). Additionally, there is statistical significant difference between contrasting genders considering their occupational role causing stress ($p=0.000 < 0.05$).

The correlation (parametric test) showed that weak linear relationship correlation between role of occupational therapist and personal resources as well with actual job role exist. Additionally, job role has strong positive linear relationship with AC (0.923), NC (0.878) and CC (0.821). Moreover, the correlation coefficient is very highly significantly different from zero for NC ($p=0.000 < 0.01$) and CC ($p=0.000 < 0.01$) whereas correlation coefficient is not significantly different from zero between job role and AC ($p=0.008 > 0.01$). Conversely, personal resources have moderate linear relationship with AC (0.593), NC (0.612) and CC (0.517) reflecting over 50% variation in these attributes are due to use of personal resources to deal with stress. Additionally, the correlation coefficient is very highly significantly different from zero for NC ($p=0.000 < 0.01$) and CC ($p=0.000 < 0.01$) whereas correlation coefficient is not significantly different from zero between personal resources and AC ($p=0.008 > 0.01$). In addition to that, the correlation coefficient is not very significantly different from zero between personal strain and AC ($p=0.554 > 0.01$), NC ($p=0.943 > 0.01$) and CC ($p=0.817 > 0.01$).

Findings and Discussions

From the statistical tests, it is evident that antecedents of organisational commitment; AC, NC, and CC differs in gender's perspective. Through funnel approach, we found that majority (47%) in UK's male workforce have Affective Commitment while Pakistani male workforce have comparatively low (39%). Considering designation, it is evident that both females in managerial and non-managerial level have exhibited over 60% AC in UK and Pakistan. Moreover, AC is significantly affected by occupational stress. Thus, our findings oppose the work of Haque and Yamoah (2014) in gender perspective that males demonstrate high level of AC. Additionally, considering designation, our findings contradict the work of Hemdi (2009) that managerial position employees have low AC in contrast to non-managerial level employees. Interestingly, majority (63%) in Pakistan do not see therapist role effective while in UK majority (52%) finds it useful. Moreover, in Pakistan majority (58%) received moral support while in UK (64%) gain emotional support at workplace. Overall Pakistani workforce receives low emotional support as well as moral support than UK employees. In terms of management's layer, Pakistani workforce has low support at both operational level and middle level in contrast to UK workforce. Thus, high overall support at workplace in UK is reflecting role of occupational therapist more constructive.

Overall majority of male workers have high NC in contrast to female workers, irrespective of their experience and age factor. Results revealed that Pakistani workforce only exhibit 36% NC while UK's workforce demonstrates 51%. UK male-to-female ratio regarding normative commitment is 63:37 while Pakistani male-to-female ratio is 59:41. Considering designations, non-managerial employees in both Pakistan and UK, males have high NC than managerial level employees. Thus, this study contradicts work of Haque and Yamoah (2014) that high NC is among cultural-oriented females. Moreover, Hemdi (2009) findings are

opposed because in Pakistan higher NC is evident despite no presence of occupational therapist.

Majority (58%) of workforce exhibits CC towards existing organisations. From gender's perspective, overall females have scored high CC (79%) in contrast to male (21%). Additionally, females at non-managerial position exhibit 58% while 80% at managerial position have high CC. Overall, low scores of CC is evident at non-managerial positions while higher scores are visible at managerial position (66%). In terms of economies of interest, Pakistan scores low (37%) while UK scored high (63%). On the other hand, CC is 50% each evident among males and females in Pakistan. However, only 31% female at non-managerial positions showed CC towards organisation while 69% at managerial level have strong CC.

Hence, present findings revealed that AC, NC, and CC are comparatively higher among UK workforce than Pakistani workforce. Moreover, Mathieu and Zajac (1990); Tan and Lau (2012); and Haque and Yamoah (2014) are opposed by present findings because we found females have high AC and CC, while males have high NC. Additionally, social support at workplace reduces stress and increase organisational commitment of managerial position employees is unique finding. Furthermore, non-managerial position employees have high situational commitment while emotional attachment is highly visible among managerial positioned employees.

Interestingly, our findings suggest females deal with stress more effectively than males, especially at middle level. Additionally, in contrast to UK, Pakistani workforce is more vulnerable to stress due to inadequate usage of personal resources. Hence, present study has striking difference with work of Kumasey et al., (2014) that found males exhibit low stress. Nevertheless, findings support Kahn and Byosiere (1990) argument that personal strain and job-related stress is low among managerial position employees. Schwarzer and Leppin (1991) work stating workplace support and personal resources assist employees in effective performance are also confirmed by present study. Additionally, Sackey and Sanda (2011) findings that job related stress of female workforce at both lower and middle level reduces due to their ability to perceive and received support and usage of personal resources are supported by present findings. Funnel approach showed that "adaptive response" to overcome workplace stress is evident frequently among males in both economies of interest. Hence, through present study we support previous work of Sackey and Sanda, (2011).

It is evident that managerial and non-managerial level employees experience stress differently due to their job role. The statistical significant difference showed that managerial level employees experience higher stress than non-managerial positioned employees do ($p=0.000 < 0.05$). Additionally, there is statistical significant difference between contrasting genders considering their occupational role causing stress ($p=0.000 < 0.05$). Majority in both economies (61%) stated moral support increase organisational commitment thus Haque and Yamoah (2014) findings are confirmed. Moreover, evidence from Sackey & Sanda (2011) and later Haque & Yamoah (2014) stating moral support is common at operational level is confirmed by present findings.

Analysis revealed that overall female employees in comparison to male employees are more adversely affected by personal factors (57.8% against 42.2%, $p < 0.05$) indicating results are statistically significant. Moreover, comparing Pakistan and UK, it is evident that personal factor causing stress to females-to-male ratio (68.1% against 31.9%). Significant stressor affecting males' organisational commitment is financial problems. Conversely, personality is key stressor for females. Personal factors affect operational level employees more than middle level employees (36.3% against 63.7%, $P < 0.05$). Thus, present study has striking difference with the findings of Fairbrother & Warn (2003) showed that female are more stressed due to organisational and environmental factors whereas in this study females are more stressed due to personal factors. In addition to that, Cicei (2012) and Stranks (2005) arguments are supported by present findings that non-managerial level employees are affected by personal factor more often than managerial level employees.

Examining organisational factors causing stress to workforce revealed that overall male workers experience higher stress than female workers do (59.6% against 39.4%, $P < 0.05$). Hence, results are statistically significant. Interestingly, comparing male workforce in contrasting economies showed that organisational factor causes higher stress in UK than Pakistan (81.3% against 19.7%, $p < 0.05$) whereas there is no significant difference between female workforce's performance and organisational commitment being affected by organisational factors in both countries; Pakistan and UK respectively (50.3% against 49.7%, $p > 0.05$). Thus, indicating that there is no statistical significance. Moreover, male non-managerial employees experience higher stress in comparison to managerial position employees whereas females at managerial position are more vulnerable to stress. Role demand is the main stressor among all included organisational factors affecting the males' performance and organisational commitment. Furthermore, interpersonal demand is key stressor among female workers in both economies. Additionally, organisational leadership, and organisational structure are other visible organisational factors affecting the performance and commitment of both male and female employees in contrasting economies.

This study opposes the work of Kumasey et al., (2014) and Fairbrother and Warn (2003) that female experience stress at work more often due to organisational factors. However, in terms of designation, the findings are aligned with the work of Kumasey et al., (2014) that operational level employees are more vulnerable to stress. The study findings are consistent with the argument of Stanks (2005) that organisational factors hinder the performance of employees at workplace in fast-paced industry.

The analysis also revealed that overall male workers' performance and organisational commitment in comparison to female workers are significantly affected by environmental factors (62% against 38%, $p < 0.05$). Interestingly, the common stressor for both male and female in contrasting economies has been technological uncertainties (environmental factor). Additionally, environmental factors causes stress more often among UK's workforce at operational level whereas in Pakistan, it causes often stress to male workers at middle level while

female workers at operational level. Thus, there in terms of designation, non-managerial position employees face higher stress than managerial level employees in both economies (65.3% against 34.6%, $p < 0.05$). Again, the findings of this study support the previous empirical studies of Ceici (2012) and Kumasey et al., (2014) that female workers in comparison to male workers are more likely to be affected by environmental factors. In addition to that, study also support the notion of Stranks (2005) that in comparison to middle level, operational level employees are more stressed due to environmental factors.

Conclusion

Males and females experience stress differently. Females have lower occupational stress than males. Furthermore, stress affects managerial positioned employees' performance and organisational commitment low than non-managerial level employees. Moreover, in comparison to Pakistani employee, UK employees experience lower stress due to support programme. The leading stressors are organisational factors, specifically role demand and organisational leadership. However, for females, personal factors are most common stressors hindering their organisational commitment. Overall, organisational commitment is higher among female workers due to support system at workplace.

Employees at managerial position perceive and receive support positively and thus find it more effective than operational level employees do. Moreover, females effectively use support at workplace therefore exhibit low stress than males. Considering economies of interest, UK's IT sector has more effective support system to overcome stress than Pakistan's IT sector. However, males have higher NC whereas females have higher AC and CC at managerial level, in both economies of interest. Comparing economies, Pakistani workforce score lower AC, NC and CC than UK's workforce. Moreover, CC is less evident at operational level while NC is more evident at middle level. Low occupational stress and high level of support at workplace increase organisational commitment. Moreover, effective support, use of personal resources, role of occupational therapist, loyalty, and emotional connection with the organisation are reasons for high organisational commitment among middle level employees. Thus, it is confirmed that there exist a relationship between occupational stress and organisational commitment of employees working at middle and operational level in contrasting economies.

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