DOES STRESS AFFECT JOB PERFORMANCE OF MALE AND FEMALE EMPLOYEES DIFFERENTIALLY? A STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYEES OF SUNGI IN HAZARA REGION OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract. *Job stress is a common phenomenon that affects individual employees and their output. As male and female are generally considered two classes of employees, this paper looks at whether there is any significant difference that male and female are facing due to job stress. To investigate this question, we have tried to empirically test this phenomenon in an NGO, SUNGI. This is a qualitative study for which data has been collected through semi-structured interview. The collected data has been analyzed by Miles and Huberman's (1994) three steps of data reduction, data display and conclusion was applied. The results, almost all, are in-line with past empirical evidences on job stress and its impact on job performance. However, it is bigger for the female to cope with as compared to the male. The results have implications for all the stakeholders in the system.*

Keywords: Stress, Job Performance, NGO, Sungi,

1. Introduction

Job stress and employee performance have long been concerns for different organizations because job stress is believed to affect performance of employees in every organization. Job stress is a pervasive phenomenon which affects every firm. Employees have many of responsibilities and have long working hours as well as family commitments that make it difficult for them to meet the expectations of the employers. At the same time, it is necessary to understand reasons that contribute to stress like family conflicts, time management, work load, lack of supervision, lack of support and reward and compensation.

Any organization that is affected as a result of stress can be expected to eradicate stressful environmental factors in order to maintain productivity level and employee performance. It is obvious that stress has significant effect on employee's performance as an employee who is stressed will perform poorly (Bashir & Ramay, 2010; Shahid, Latif, Sohail & Ashraf, 2011). Stress comes

from many sources; these can be related to organizational activities, domestic problems or from any other source. A firm may not be able or eager to fully eliminate stress from workplace but it can help manage its employee's stresses of daily lives. Lazarus (1966) has defined stress as a relationship between the person and the environment that the person considers as personally significant and as taxing or exceeds a person's resources for coping. Organizational stress can be thought of as a negative and emotional response, as a result of aggressive and harmful work environment. In other words, work related stress is reaction of employees when they are faced with some demands of work, about which they can do nothing (Lazarus, 1966; Folkman, 2013).

Stress is one of the acute issues related to organizations and endangers physical, psychological, and mental health of employees which results in high cost to the organization (Matheny, Gfroerer, & Harris, 2000). It can be thought of as "the subjective feelings that may result from any number of conditions at work ("stressors" or psychosocial hazards), such as being overwhelmed by work demands that are out of the worker's control, or being harassed by a co-worker" (Burton, 2010).

Many researchers worked on stress and employee performance and this topic has remained a subject of interest since its introduction. If stress is properly managed in an organization, it can lead to good outcome like effective performance, low absenteeism, and reduced employee turnover. Although stress is a common topic and much of the studies have been conducted on stress but few have observed stress and employee performance within NGOs sector of Pakistan.

The focus of this research study is to identify the reasons which cause stress and its effects on the performance of employees of both genders in the NGOs sector in Pakistan. The study further digs out the dimensions, reasons, and level of stress in the context of NGOs of Sungi Development Foundation.

Previous researchers mostly conducted research on domains of stress related to motivation (Lu, 1999; Barney & Elias, 2010) , job satisfaction (Lu, While, & Barriball, 2005), personality traits, negative affectivity and locus of control (Spector & O'Connell, 1994) , biological vulnerabilities like genetic factors and psychological resources of a person (Schneiderman, Ironson, & Siegel, 2005) but there are few if any studies   investigating how stress affects male and female employees differentially. There is need not only to described generally problems faced by employees working in NGOs in Pakistan but also to investigate the issues that are causes of stress within the NGOs environment and to untangle the relationship between employee performance and job stress in male as well as female employees

2. Literature Review

Although it is difficult to define what stress is yet academicians and researchers have attempted to define stress. Selye (1956) used the term *stress* as early as 1956. According to him stress is a psychological and physical reaction to some specific conditions. Cranwell-Ward and Abbey (2005) defined stress as the psychological and physiological response of a person when he faces threat and challenges consciously or subconsciously and the situation that is not under his control. Stress is a condition in which person realizes the pressure on them for huge and continuous work or responsibility which he can't handle (Poole & Warner, 1998).

2.1 Causes of Stress

Numerous studies have been conducted on the causes of stress and their impact on employee as well as organizational performance. Major reasons for increase in level of stress include implementation of new changes and technology, downsizing, long working hours and restructuring (Savery & Luks, 2000; Savery & Luks, 2001).

Stress is the result of different element, like anxiety, frustration, anger, tension and depression which comes from different aspects of work (Salami, 2010). In a study on banking sector (Khattak, Khan, Haq, Arif, & Minhas, 2011), identified how the number of hours spent on job leads to stress thus decreasing performance. According to Blaug, Kenyson and Lekhi (2007) and Noblet and Rodwell (2008), stress is divergence between demand of job and the resources and potentiality of the employees to meet those demands. Role conflict is one of the important job stressor that is faced due to many roles (Butler & Constantine, 2005). Conley and Woosley(2000) argued that job ambiguity is a major factor that not only leads to stress but also lower performance as employees simply don't know how to express their attempts most effectively (Ning, 2005).

Furthermore, studies from Bashir and Ramay (2010) and Shahid, Latif, Sohail, and Ashraf (2011) found that bankers are under great job stress due to role conflicts, lack of feedback, climate, lack of supervision and rapid technological change etc. Trivellas and Platis (2013) revealed that stress at workplace comes from many reasons (like conflict, heavy workload and lack of job autonomy) and is negatively linked to job satisfaction. He, Zhao and Archbold (2002) in a study on police officers concluded that stressor like work and family conflict and destructive coping mechanisms are the strongest factors that affect the performance of both male and female employees in the police department.

Altangerel, Ruimei, Elahi and Dash (2015) studied the relationship between job stress and performance and found that work overload is major reason of stress among employees and in turn reduces employee performance, efficiency and productivity. They also found that stress is affects employees' health.

2.3 Effects of Stress

Stress is one of the major problems that cause many other problems, like less productivity level, poor performance, miscommunication between employees etc. Job stress is one of the major risk factor in employee health in developing countries (Hillier, Fewell, Cann, & Shepherd, 2005; Mansoor, Fida, Nasir, & Ahmad, 2011). Stress is a recognized phenomenon which put health of workers at risk and can cause common colds as well as delays in wound healing (Irwin, 2002; Irwin, 2008). Stress is well known factor that tends to cause poor job performance, lower job satisfaction, increased turnover rate, sick-leaves, accidents, and poor communication (Schabracq & Cooper, 2000; Munali, 2005). Dishinger, Howard, Kiagler, Seabrook, and Tucker (2003) stated that high stress level leads to great absenteeism, poor performance, addiction to drugs, and illness. Schorr (2001) concluded that stress is source for much negative behaviour at workplace, like poor performance, low productivity level high absenteeism rate and dissatisfaction.

Zeb, Saeed and Rehman (2015) examine the impact of job stress on employee's performance with the moderating effects of motivation found negative relationship between job stress and employee performance in banking sector of Pakistan. Babin and Boles (1998) examined to what extent stress affects male and female employees' performance. They concluded that role stress impacts female job performance more than male employees

2.4 Stress Model

The stress model used in this study is adopted from Parker's (1983) stress model.

| Job stressors | first level outcome | second level outcome |

Organizational Factors
Workload, Working Environment, Time Management, Compensation and Benefits, Support, Entertainment & Relaxation

Job Stress

Physiological

Emotional

Behavioural
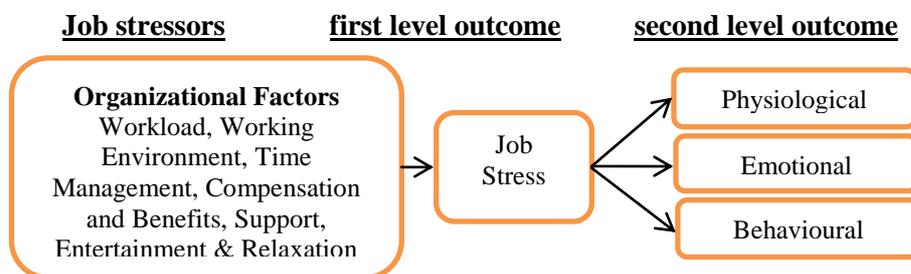
Figure 1   Stress Model

In the above mentioned stress model, organizational stressors are those that are related to work place problems. Model given above is divided in to two main outcomes, first level outcome that is job stress comes in as a result of different stressors and second level involves behavioural, emotional and physiological outcomes as a result of job stress. Second level outcome, when exceeding the coping resources of employees, not only affect organizational outcomes but also employees' health very badly.

The main focus of this study is on the job performance that is mentioned in behavioural consequences but there are health consequences as well; apart from performance, job stress also affects employee health and is the cause of conditions like headache, stomach pain, blood pressure, fatigue, and emotional outcomes like anger, depression, anxiety etc.

3. Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature and the overarching research strategy used in this study is the case study approach. Case study approach basically means analyzing a social phenomenon through thorough analysis of an individual case. The case may be a person, a group, an episode, a process, a community, a society, or any other unit of social life (University of Southern California, 2018). All data relevant to the case are gathered, and all available data is organized in terms of the case. The case study method gives a unitary character to the data being studied by inter relating a variety of facts to single case. It also provides an opportunity for the intensive analysis of many specific details that are often overlooked in other methods. We have tried to employ the method in the interpretivist sense of building theory (Bhattacherjee, 2012).

The focus of this study is the NGO sector, therefore, only one organization i.e. SUNGI foundation Abbottabad is taken as unit of analysis and as case in order to explore the causes of job stress and its effects qualitatively. As compared to other approaches in qualitative research case study helps to get better understanding about the context, depth and complexity. It also aims to focus deeply on one case and gain an insight about wholeness and unity of case. Case study is known as strategy more than a method. As Goode and Hatt (1952) explained that case study is not a specific process but a way of putting in order social data so as to defend the unitary character of the social item being studied? This strategy also gives an interesting comparison with the reductionist approach of some quantitative research.

Data for this study was collected through focus group interview where a set of open ended questions were asked from all the participants of the focus groups. Purposive sampling was used in this study. Interviews consisted of

items like workload, time management, family conflicts, and lack of support, working conditions, external conditions, compensation and reward. Employees of the organization were asked about these factors. The researcher keenly observed the workplace in order to get valid results and in order to see the performance of employees. After getting data through interviews were listened, recorded and written one by one.

4. Data Analysis

For data analysis Miles and Huberman's (1994) three steps of data reduction, data display and conclusion was applied. The effect of stress on employee performance was analyzed in light of the themes derived. All three steps of analysis discussed main constructs i.e. job stress and the themes derived from main constructs like work load, working condition, family conflicts, reward and compensation, external environment and time management etc.

We found that diverse causes of stress like work load, time management, working condition, lack of support, compensation and reward, family conflicts, external environment and working environment etc. affect employees' performance positively as well as negatively. The focus group interviews were conducted keeping in view the following themes.

While analyzing job stress different themes came out that cause stress at workplace and affect employee's performance. First, we are going to discuss workload.

4.1 Work Load

Work load is major factor that causes stress in the NGO. Respondent said that in Pakistani NGOs it is not possible that employees are not going through workload problems. If we compare international NGOs and local NGOs we will find that international NGOs have low burden and workload as compared to the local NGOs as shown by documents and observations. When the interviewer asked about burden of work in context of Pakistan from Interviewee "B" he replied that,

When asked about stress difference among international and local NGOs an employee replied: *"If I compare burden of both international NGOs and local NGOs then former have fewer burdens than later."*

Workload that comes from emergency projects, absenteeism of employees and meeting deadline for projects. Employees get burdened when they have to handle many urgent projects and also have other deadlines to meet. If someone is absent from office, then work load of the other colleagues increases. Employees in NGOs have a lot of burden so they can't manage time. One

respondent stated that he never went home in day light due to burden of work remarked: *"I have worked 9 years in this NGO but I did not go home ever in day light. I always felt the load of work."*

Interviewees felt that working hours when increased from normal, become work stress and burden as employees have to travel somewhere or have to do additional work as quoted below:

> *"The normal working hours span around eight hours but the element of stress comes in due to the factor of travelling to far flung areas which adds additional hours to the daily routine. As far as the workload is concerned all the employees share in the duties and responsibilities around the office."*

When asked about burden and work load, another one replied: *"Yes! Many times, we have to handle many projects within deadlines so it becomes burden for an employee to complete task within that deadlines."*

4.2 Working Environment

Working environment impact employee performance, if employees are not provided with good environment they will be stressed and will not perform well. When asked about working environment of SDF Abbottabad, most of the respondent's response was positive such as:

a) *"We provide equal opportunities to male and female employees. We are providing friendly environment to all employees. The working environment is friendly as well as enabling. In-house facilities like generators and UPS are provided to cater to staff needs and to provide a weather-proof environment. Every staff member has access to multimedia facilities and laptops to enable them to function effectively in their daily tasks and to reduce their burden. Resourcefulness is the key to effective performance."*

b) *"SDF has provided a good environment. The Management makes some polices, rules and regulations, employees are bound to follow these policies and rules. So work at SUNGI work goes smoothly. Working environment depends upon employee behavior and attitudes."*
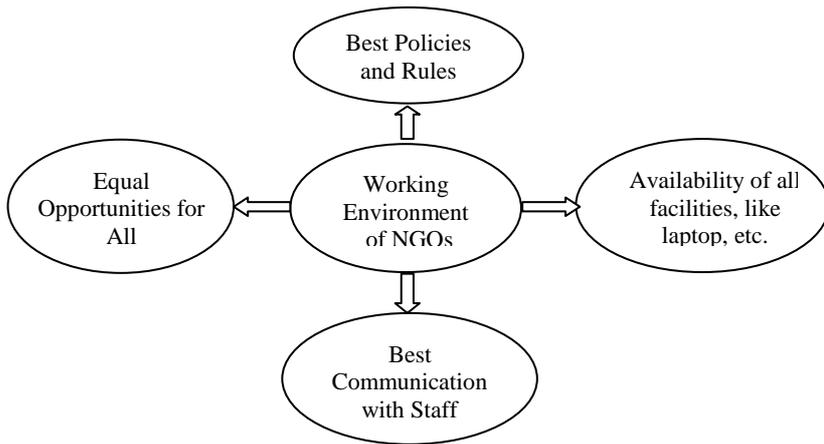
Figure 2: Working Environment of SDF

All respondents thought that Sungi has very cooperative, friendly and flexible environment. Employees can communicate their problems to the management. All facilities are available within NGO like, generator, transportation, ups, laptops etc. and the internal environment of the office is good. Male and female employees are provided with equal opportunities. Employees were questioned about burden and stress at their duty timings. One of the opinions was that working environment depends on colleagues' behavior and attitude.

Figure 3: Work environment basic instruments

Best working environment depends on these three factors described (figure 4) that makes workplace environment flexible and stress-free. Sungi has tranquil environment so employees get stressed less. When asked about working environment of SUNGI, an employee expressed:

"As compared to other private sector organizations, we are provided with high-quality environment with all facilities. Environment is very cooperative and friendly. I, personally get support and freedom on my

job position. Very friendly environment, all subordinates cooperate with each other for their work."

Hence we can deduce that none of the employees gets stressed due to work environment as SUNGI NGO provides very high-quality environment.

4.3 Time management

Time management is difficult, employees sometime have to travel from one place to other and it is mostly time consuming but according to some Interviewees' it's a personal issue-- time management depends on personality traits, how an employee is going to manage. But if time is not well managed for work definitely stress will crop up and will, negatively affect employee performance.
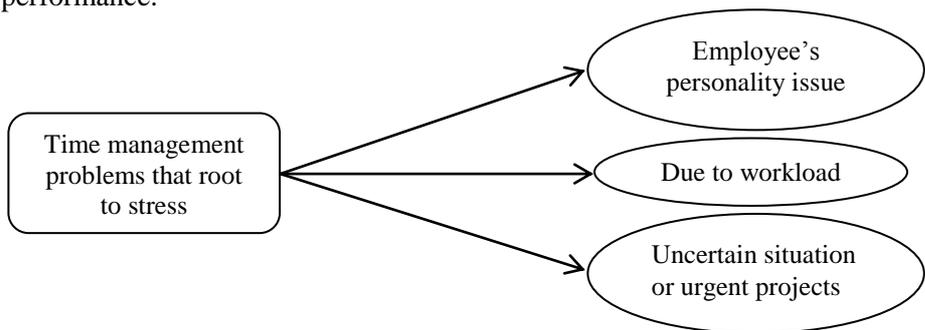

Figure 4: Time management problems that root to stress

Various respondents argued that it become difficult to manage time due to work load. For example

a) *"To attend a meeting in an adjacent city involves getting up really early and travelling for couple of hours one sided and then spending the whole day in meetings and then travelling back for couple of hours take its toll. It's difficult to finish tasks during office hours. As the CEO there is no particular time for work. Regular holidays, special holidays, even Eid holiday is spent in working to some extent as the work takes priority. As social mobilization has no fixed time as it is a constant job."*

b) *"Due to workload it becomes difficult to manage time as yesterday I went to Rajanpur to handle one project. I was feeling too much burden at that time. I and my colleagues got free at night and then we took dinner and came back late at night. Next morning we were at duty at the opening hour."*

One of the respondents replied that time is difficult to manage when uncertain situations related to work arise, as also employees can't do work on time when they are doing projects in groups and teams.

c) *"I completed 95% work within time. If 5% work is not done within time, there will be uncertain things behind for reason. May be another official work comes which you have to complete urgently. Another reason could be when you are working in a team. If any person in the team is missing or he/she is delaying work, it will affect your performance as well. And it creates stress for the other employees".*

In most cases, it is the female staff member who causes a delay in the work.

4.4 Lack of Support

Support is always there from subordinates, colleagues and chief executive officer. If employees have no support from management for their work, they will never get relaxed and will not perform well. Employees expressed:

"Our NGO is like a family. We get support and cooperation from all our colleagues. We get moral support always.

"Yes always, any employee facing a problem in his work can share his problem with the management and the management resolves his/her problem and provides them support and cooperation.

"Yes of course whenever I need help management supports me during my difficulties."

All respondents responded that SUNGI foundation always provided them with support hence lack of support never become the cause of stress.

4.5 Family conflicts

Most of the interviewees responded that, family issues interfere with job that cause stress and effect performance but job commitments also interferes with family. In fact, job and family affect each other at every workplace. When respondents were asked about family conflicts one of them replied:

"Staff members, too have priorities-among them, family has a bigger weight so they are allowed to take time off in a flexible manner to take care of their family issues. A successful family life contributes to career and vice versa. If employee is not able to cope with family issues definitely they will feel stressed, even on job and that will affect his job performance negatively. Employee commitment will be less and absenteeism level will increase. Sometimes when I am not able to give my full attention and time to my family then obviously my family gets

disturbed. But when I am stressed at job due to my family conflicts, I just ignore all problems for a while and concentrate on my job."
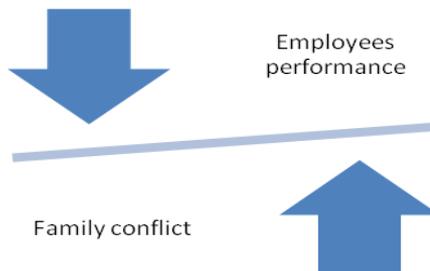

Figure 5 Position between Employee's Performance and Family Conflicts

All our respondents agreed that employee family responsibilities and job are opposed to each other and if employees are getting disturb due to family obviously they will be stressed at workplace and their job performance will be affected. And if this stress is due to job then employee will remain stressed even at home and their family will be affected due to job pressures. This was expressed in these words:

"*My job tensions affect my family poorly. But if I am stressed due to my family, it does not affect my job. If I am stressed due to my family SUNGI will allow me to take a day off…. The family is affected by the job but the job has rarely come under pressure from family. It is a one sided effect on most occasions. Being a founding member, I have a tendency to treat the organization as my offspring   just like one's own child. Job has the priority since it takes up most of the time which is reserved for family as family outings are curtailed and wife and kids are deprived of quality time….Yes of course, sometime I overcome my stress but if it takes serious turn then I leave office for some time. I write proposals for projects so it becomes difficult for me to write while I am stressed.*"

But another respondent was female and according to her experience her family suffers due to her job and she gets stressed. She replied:

"Most of the time my family is disturbed due to my job."

Another respondent experienced both situations of stress. He felt stress at job due to family and at home due to job. When he was asked about family job conflicts he replied:

"Of course, sometimes, I get stressed at the workplace due to family problems and at other times I remain stressed at home due to workload."

4.6 Compensation and Rewards

Employees are satisfied from their salaries as SUNGI has competitive packages, but they do not feel satisfied when they compare their salaries to international NGOs' reward and compensation system. Some employees claimed that they are not doing job because they are needy as they have many other resource for finance so they don't feel about how much they are getting for their job. But the respondents felt that some employees are getting more than they deserve.

Sometime employees at SUNGI feel satisfied about their salaries, at other times not so, as their salaries depends on project duration and funds provided for that projects. A respondent replied: *"Sometime I am satisfied but sometimes I am not, it does depend on project nature and funding."*

SUNGI NGO employees are satisfied with their salaries and packages but whenever they compare their salaries to international NGOs packages they get stressed and feel less confident. Another respondent said:

"The compensation element is unsatisfactory in local NGOs as compared to international Non-government organizations. International organizations have numerous perks like ample time off after every three months with added values like health insurance and travelling allowances. Compensation rewards and benefits do play an important role in an employee's performance…Somewhat, I received 80 thousand from this NGO. But if I join foreign NGO there will be much higher salary for my position."

One of the respondent said that he is not performing in this NGO for money as he had earned so much from working in the international NGOs and he can use this money even for next ten years into the future. But when he was asked about salaries in NGO of SUNGI, he replied:

"Job is not my financial need as before joining this NGO I was in England. I earned much *more working for international NGOs. Beside my job I have other sources of income….I think yes; many people here are getting competitive salaries more than they deserve."*

But when this question about rewards and compensation was asked from another respondent her point of view was different from Interviewee B. Interviewee D was not satisfied from her job salary as she thought that she

should be paid more than her current salary according to her job designation; she is gender program manager and performing many duties at her job place.

"I am not fully satisfied with my salary as if I compare my job designation to any foreign NGO I could get more than what I am receiving here."

It is interesting that both male and female are equally paid.

4.7 Relaxation and Entertainment

Sometimes employees get time for relaxation and entertainment but sometime they have no time to get relaxed at the workplace. Entertainment is always there for those employees who think tea and lunch break could relax them. When respondents were asked about relaxation time one of them replied:

"Yes. We have time for relaxation and entertainment during job so that employees get relax and reduce their anxiety. We go for trips to get entertained…. The participation is optional but the staff took part in it whole heartedly and all the highlights are posted on social media for publicity and morale building purpose. This contributes to reducing burden on the staff.

But according to one respondent, tea, lunch break and tours could not be considered as relaxation time. When they were asked about it they replied*: "Tea and lunch time cannot be considered as relaxation time. It is part of the daily routine."*

One of the respondents replied that SUNGI allows leaves to employees so that they get some time to get relaxed.

"Yes we get two days off within a week. Most of the times we get free at 4pm. We have annual leaves. Any special tour system is not introduced in the organization but NGOs allow employees to go abroad."

One of respondents replied that tea and lunch break provides relaxation to employees according to him:

"The daily routine includes tea breaks and lunch breaks during work which helps the staff members to relax."

To sum up the views of all respondents about relaxation and entertainment time, we posit that some employees think that break time could relax employees and help them to reduce job stress. But other employees think that just break time is not enough for relaxing. It means that many of the employees are stressed even at break time.

4.8 Consequences of Stress

Stress has severe consequences for employee health. Employees having stress suffer from severe headache, back pain, stomach pain, blood pressure however in such situations employees feel uneasy to do work at office (Irwin, 2002; Antoniou, Davidson, & Cooper, 2003; Burton, 2010). To such questions one of the employee said: *"I get angry, starts suffering pain in backbone, and, also, stomach pain."*

Another consequence of stress is poor performance as employees take days off and can't pay attention to their work, their performance drops. Most of the times they think of escaping from workplace for some days *"I take time off and leave office for some time. But if I am in office then I focus on doing my work."*

Some employees however, argued that they perform best under stress as it depends on personality traits, but if stress becomes excessive, they have to leave office and it happens many time to them. One expressed: *"It depends mostly on personality traits. May be someone performs better in stress and burden. I also performed best under stress."*

Major factor for stress is family issues due to which employees feels restless at work. Employees get worried when they cannot go home even after the office hours are off.

When my father was diagnosed with cancer, I was stressed for the next six to eight months. It affected my performance badly and I even thought about quitting my job"

4.9 Gender Based Comparison

We investigated both male and female employees of the organization. Our findings suggest that female employees occupy two spheres i.e. home and then at office. They want to become perfect in both. So it is a bigger challenge for females to manage both office and home.

"As every working woman performs double duty and want to be perfect, so they get more stressed than males at workplace. As females are playing double role---at the home and then in the office so it becomes difficult for them to manage their role. So I think females get more stressed then male. I think female get more stressed because they are engaged to double duty at home and at the workplace; and another thing is, working outside of home is somewhat difficult for females."

While one male employee opined that females work in a relaxed environment while males and females have equal level of opportunities and work.

"If male and female are stressed due to family, we can't say that he or she is over-burdened or feeling stressed because, it is domestic issue. But burden means that employees have to meet project deadlines. So work burden is always equally affecting performance of male and female employees".

Sometimes females get stressed due to sexual harassment (Nelson & Burke, 2018) but according to an interviewee

"Both have equal opportunities at work and both (male and female) are equally treated. Female get relaxed environment at work. They never get harassed. And if such an event occurs, the perpetrator will be terminated from his job."

So it seems that it is not due to the workplace and attitude and behavior of other male employees but due to her family issues, hectic job routine, children responsibilities, job issues as females have to manage both work and home respectively, so female feel   more stressed than male employees at SUNGI. Robinson (2003) while studying the stresses faced by women physicians in Canada found that female doctors do face stress due to conflicts between their careers and the decision to be a mother and a wife.

5. Conclusion

Employees at Sungi felt stressors affected their performance negatively. The main reasons of stress they mentioned were workload, travelling, field work, poor time management, family conflicts and it is relatable to the previous studies mentioned in this paper earlier. Workload is maximum due to deadlines of projects, emergency projects, and if any employee is absent from team it increases work load for the other employees. Working environment always affect performance of employees (Bhui, Dinos, Galant-Miecznikowska, Jongh, & Stansfeld, 2016).

Another thing that becomes apparent is that due to workload, time is difficult to manage for employees and they get stressed. However according to respondents and the researchers' view point, time management could be personality issue, depends on employee how he/she is going to handle shortness of time. As work at an NGO entails fieldwork, employees have to deal with community and with people from different cultural backgrounds; it becomes difficult for them to cope with such situations. Most of the time employees have to travel from one place to another as part of the job, managing time becomes crucial. Work load, time management, and travelling are linked to each and affect each other. If the external environment of an NGO is bad, it will create stress for employees.

Family conflict is another major factor that cause stress at the workplace. Family issues and employee's performance go against each other. If there is any problem at workplace or any issue related to job, employee will be stressed even at home and family life will be affected. Similarly, family issues can lead to stress at workplace. These results are similar to He et al.,(2002)

Stress exists within NGOs and just tea and lunch break are not being enough, as many employees can't get relaxed at tea breaks as they consider break time as a part if daily routine. Reward and compensation is perfect as compare to other non-governmental organizations but when employees compare their salaries and benefits to international NGOs, they become dissatisfied and stressed as Antoniou, Davidson and Cooper (2003) have reported in their study. All employees shared their problems with each other. It is evident in the case of Sungi, job stress affects employee performance negatively. These results are similar to studies by Bashir and Ramay (2010), Altangerel et al. (2015) and Zeb et al. (2015).

Although all employees feel stressed in the context of workplace, females get more stressed as they have a dual role of managing home and children as well as the office work. So as compared to male employees, female employees reported considerably higher levels of stress (Rivera-Torres, Araque-Padilla, & Montero-Simó, 2013). These are caused by career and family conflicts, marriage and child bearing issues. Clearly, female employees are still not getting the required emotional support from their partners (Reddy, Vranda, Ahmed, Nirmala, & Siddaramu, 2010). Some stress outcomes are unique to female employees and are not common among male employees such as nervousness and tiredness, uneasiness (Maurya & Agarwal, 2015; Nelson & Burke, 2018).

Limitations

Kagan (2016) has aptly complained that the tendency on the part of common person to classify any event as stress has rendered the concept useless. According to him there can be 'good', 'tolerable', and 'toxic' categories of stress. The same problem was faced by the researchers when discussing stress with the respondents, many of whom used the word *stress* in the everyday sense, without any distinction among the good, tolerable and toxic forms. Nor did they seem to know about the threshold levels of stress. This may have repercussions for our results. Another limitation is that being a qualitative study conducted in one organization, we have to be careful in generalizing the findings to other contexts.

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