

Identifying Occupational Stress among Executive officers in Governmental and Non-governmental Organizations of Nepal

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ABSTRACT

This study was to extend the existing body of knowledge on the occupational stress index among executive officers into the context of governmental and non-governmental organizations of Nepal. A conceptual framework was developed to study the occupational stress index among executive officers in the governmental and nongovernmental sectors in Nepal. The framework so designed illustrates twelve stressors among others that are related to occupational stress. They are: role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, unreasonable group and political pressures, responsibility for person, under participation, powerlessness, poor peer relation, intrinsic impoverishment, low status, strenuous working conditions and unprofitability. Occupational stress index questionnaire was used to collect data. The overall response rate from the employees of governmental and nongovernmental organizations was encouraging. The statistical approaches used in this study brought out many finer aspects and the realistic picture of the stresses felt by the employees. The stressors, the different types of stress and their roles, the effects on the individual and the organizations, the natural effect, the possible stresses, including the stressors, have a direct bearing on executive officers have been investigated through these battery of statistical methods. This study also has revealed association among stressors when regression analysis was done by taking some of the stressors as independent variables and one them being considered as a dependent variable. The implication of research findings is discussed.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Occupation stress signifies a foremost problem for both individual and organizations. Occupational related stress among working people is drastically increasing worldwide. Stress at work place has become an integral part of everyday life and is referred as 'worldwide epidemic' by the World Health Organization. In USA, approximately 25% of the working population suffers from work related stress. The figures for Nepal are not readily available but there is no doubt that occupational stress affects a significant number of executive officers and costs heavy financial losses, human sufferings and mental illness [1]. In the UK Smith A., et al were investigating the scale and severity of occupational stress in current research revealed that 20% of the working people were suffering high or extremely high level of stress at work [2].

Occupation related stress follow in various shapes and forms. Health and Safety Executives defined occupational stress as "The adverse reaction on people by excessive pressures or other types of demand

placed on them.” Organizational stress might be harmful for physiological and psychological effects on workers [3]. Various studies have revealed that workers suffering from stress exhibit decreased productivity, absenteeism, higher number accidents, lower morale and greater interpersonal conflict with colleagues and superiors [4]-[5].

The significance of the effects of occupational stress in some professions is reported, among nurses (Dailey et al., 1986), managers (Davidson and Cooper, 1986) and teachers (Byosiore, 1988). These studies indicate that stress can be related to factors like: Physical condition (Braham, 1994); Organizational culture (Cooper, 2001; Moorhead and Griffin, 2001); Interpersonal conflict (Toates, 1995; Cooper, 2001); Personal characteristics (Caplan and Jones, 1975; Alluisi, 1982; Cooper and Roden, 1985; Hurrell, 1985; Dailey et al., 1986; Caudron, 1998; Bliese and Britt, 2001); and Job nature (Caplan and Jones, 1975; Matteson and Ivancevich, 1987) [6]-[10].

It is important to recall the differences among three intimately related terms: stressors, stress and strain [30]. Stressors are defined as the external events such as difficult relationships in the workplace or a heavy workload that contribute to the experience of stress [12]. Stress is considered to be an individual's internal response to stressors and is characterized by arousal and displeasure. Strain, on the other hand, describes the long-term effect of stress and includes psychological outcomes such as anxiety and depression.

The Executive Stress has been defined as the experience by top level officers of unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression resulting from some aspect of their work. Limited research has been conducted with respect to executive stress prevalent among IT professionals and industry. J L Thong et al. studied the information systems and occupational stress as a theoretical framework. He has highlighted that the information systems (IS) profession is a stressful profession. However, there is little theoretical or empirical research carried out on the effects of occupational stress among IS professionals. A major reason is because IS professionals and researchers are unaware of the consequences of occupational stress and unfamiliar with the occupational stress literature.

Occupational stressors have revealed that the aspects of the work environment that contingent upon strains, poor psychological health or wellbeing of the individual [3]. It is now generally accepted that prolonged or intense stress could have a negative impact on an individual's mental and physical health [14]. Work related stress is a characteristics of current economic status from which most of the individuals were suffering to different extents. In a positive sense, work stress can be a source of excitement and stimulus to achievement. In addition to this sense it could be seriously impair quality of work life, and condense personal and occupation effectiveness [6].

Stress in the workplace can affect communication effectiveness, the ability to focus on job and decision making ability [16].

Thomas et al found that the most difficult stressors to manage are “bureaucracy”, “lack of opportunity to learn new skills”, “work-family conflicts” and “different view from superiors”. His results also revealed that the patterns of stress manageability differ according to different groups. He has examined the relationships existing among individual stressors [34].

Occupational Stress and Job Satisfaction among managers was studied (Chandraiah et. al.); the effect of age on occupational stress and job satisfaction among managers of different age groups and in term of age distribution of the individual matured personal disposition related to the attainment of developmental tasks specific to each developmental tasks specific to each developmental phase and its influence on individuals perception of the situations as stressful or otherwise.

The present research article is a study on the status of occupational stress among employees working as executives in different organizations have investigated the following aspects:

- (1) Identifying the origins of stresses being experienced by executive officers of Nepal;
- (2) Determining different stresses and their implication.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

In this current study a probability sampling method, the random sampling was adopted. The main reason for adopting it was the fact that the executive officers are very scattered and their accessibilities would obviously pose inordinate delays in the collection of data which would also cause expenditure to would go up. The sample was extracted from the executive officers across different professions and hierarchy of the organizations. The duties of the executive officers were to make different types of decisions to promote the organizations. They spend most of the time in the office for the normal functioning of their organizations. A total of more than 800 questionnaires were distributed to the employees in executive positions, out of which 600 questionnaires were returned duly filled. However only 440 questionnaires out of 600 returned were found to possess required information and hence were used extensively. The respondents (55%) covered

major cities of Nepal and the data was collected from both male and female executives with a minimum of one year work experience.

The questionnaires were designed to assess levels of occupational stress among executive officers of Nepal. Occupational stress was measured using occupational stress index (OSI) questionnaire similar to the Indian context. Responses were obtained on a summated rating scale format ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. Total score on this scale is reflected for the assessment of occupational stress. Higher scores indicated higher occupational stress. Thus higher score on this scale indicates more stress. This scale comprised twelve dimensions viz. role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, group & political pressure, responsibility for persons, under participation, powerlessness, poor peer relations, intrinsic improvement, low status, strenuous, working condition and unprofitability. Each of job stressors was measured on a five-point Likert Scale in which 1 indicated “strongly disagree”, 2 indicated “disagree”, 3 indicated “neutral”, 4 indicated “agree” and 5 indicated “strongly agree”. Out of the 46 items 28 were true keyed and the remaining 18 were false keyed. Each of job stressors was measured on a five-point Likert Scale.

Information regarding gender, age, marital status, and number of dependents was obtained to provide personnel demographic information. Respondents were asked to deliver job related information including average family income per month in Nepali rupees, working experience in years, types of organizations, and the number of employees engaged in the organization.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This section presents the regression results emerging from task-related and stressors on the stress level among employees of different sectors in Nepal. As indicated in table the percentage of (R square) and percentage of (Adjusted R square) of the variation in the level of total stress was explained by the stress factors. The results showed that stress related factors were found to be significantly related to the total stress level, whereas the stress associated with the working stress factors were insignificant. Results would also showed that among the different stressors and the stress factor which one would be the most significant stressor of work-related stress level ($p < 0.01$), thus indicating the stressors that is one of the main causes of stress among EOs of Nepal. This explains that employees working in different sectors of an organization were clear about the tasks they have to perform, and the decisions they have to make. Some of the findings were in line with previous research works. Babin and Boles (1996) reported that role ambiguity leads to lower levels of job satisfaction and high amounts of work related stress among employees in service sector organizations. Menon and Akhilesh (1994) also verified that correlation exists between role ambiguity and work related stress. Beehr and Newman (1978) reported the relationship between work intensification and work-related stress level is significant ($p < 0.05$).

However, in the findings in Chonko et al (1986) and Fry et al. (1986) role conflict was not proved to be a significant cause of work-related stress among employees in the study of financial sectors in Malaysia. They indicated that role conflict, usually, is an unavoidable quality of a job and great amount of role conflict can lead to higher level of work-related stress. Cooper and Smith (1986) further maintained by stating that role conflict arises when employees are required to perform roles that conflict with their personal opinions, or when they have a number of mismatched roles to fulfill, leading to stress-related disorders. The absence of role conflict on work-related stress among employees of the financial sectors was because of the fact that Malaysian employees might not have revealed to others of their experience of conflicting role demands as pointed by Grover (1993) and employees are more likely to lie about role conflict to others when the reward or the benefit for hiding the truth is substantial. The work environment-related factors of stress, none of them, were found to be significant as to the work-related stress level

Total stress score with Demographic Variables

Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the extent to which the demographic variables of age, gender, marital status, number of dependents, income and working experiences to explain the variance in terms of total stress score amongst EO's. The demographic variables of age, gender, and marital status, number of dependents, income and working experiences significantly explains the variance in job stress amongst EOs in different sectors of organizations of Nepal.

The results of the multiple regression analysis regressing demographic variables against total stress score, as dependent variable, are presented in table 1. The coefficient of multiple correlation between the demographic variables and the total stress score, as indicated by multiple R in table 1, is 0.313, or 31.3% R square, the coefficient of multiple determination is 0.098, whilst R square adjusted is equal to 0.078 of the variation in the level of total stress was explained by stress factors.

Therefore, 7.8% of the variance in total stress score can be accounted for by these demographic variables. Furthermore, the F statistic of 4.878 was statistically significant at the 99% level, ($p < 0.01$).

Therefore, it may be concluded that the demographic variables significantly explain 7.8% of the variance in total stress score. However, 92.2% of the variance in total stress score may be explained by factors not considered in this study.

Table 1. Regression analysis: Total stress score as Dependent variable

Stress related factors (IV)	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Sex	-2.579	2.240	-.067	-1.152	.250
Age	.182	.087	.148	2.085	.038
Marital status	-2.464	1.880	-.094	-1.310	.191
Number of dependents	1.428	.654	.141	2.184	.030
Working experiences	-.028	.078	-.021	-.360	.719
Total Income	3.511E-6	.000	.010	.173	.863
R ² = 0.098			F = 4.878		

Table 1 also indicates that when other variables are controlled, one of the demographic variables, age, was significant. Predictors of total stress score with a Beta-value of 0.148, was significant at the 0.05 level.

As age carries a positive Beta weight, the suggestion was that a direct relationship existed between age and total stress score. As a consequence the older an EO's higher is the level of stress experienced.

Table 1, further, showed that neither gender nor other variables like marital status, number of dependents, total income, and working experiences was found to be statistically significant at 0.05 levels. Moreover, it further appears as though total income, with a Beta-value of 0.01 is the poorest predictor of total stress score in the sample. It can thus be concluded that while age is significant predictor of total stress score for EO's, gender and others variables like marital status, number of dependents, and working experiences are not significant predictors of stress amongst EOs.

Role Overload with Demographic Variables

Multiple regression analysis was accomplished to determine to which extent the demographic variables of age, gender, marital status, number of dependents, income and working experiences will explain the variance in terms of role overload amongst EOs.

The results of the multiple regression analysis regressing demographic variables against role overload, as dependent variable, are presented in table 2. The coefficient of multiple correlation between the demographic variables and role overload, as indicated by multiple R in the table 2 is 0.248, R square, the coefficient of multiple determination is 0.061, whilst R square adjusted is equal to 0.040.

Therefore, 6.1% of the variance in role overload can be accounted for by these demographic variables. Furthermore, the F statistic of 2.941 was statistically significant at 99% level ($p < 0.01$). On this basis, therefore, it may be concluded that the demographic variables significantly explain 6.1% of the variance in role overload. However, 93.9% of the variance in role overload is explained by factors not considered in this study.

Table 2 indicates that when other variables are controlled, one of the demographic variables, number of dependents, was significant. Predictors of role overload with a Beta-value of 0.200, was significant at the 0.05 level.

As number of dependents variables carries positive Beta weight, the suggestion is that a direct relationship exists between number of dependents and role overload, with the EO's, the higher the level of stress experienced by EOs

Table 2 further shows that neither gender nor other variables like marital status, age, total income, and working experiences were found to be statistically significant at 0.05 level. Moreover, gender, with a Beta-value of 0.009 was the poorest predictor of role overload in the sample. It can thus be concluded that while number of dependents is significant predictor of role overload for EOs, gender and others variables like age, marital status, total income and working experiences do not predict this variable amongst EOs.

Table 2: Regression analysis: Role overload as Dependent variable

Stress related factors (IV)	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Sex	.106	.719	.009	.147	.883
Age	.007	.028	.019	.257	.797
Marital status	-.515	.604	-.063	-.853	.395
Number of dependents	.639	.210	.200	3.040	.003
Working experiences	-.006	.025	-.015	-.257	.797
Total Income	7.390E-6	.000	.067	1.133	.258
R ² = 0.061	F = 2.941				

Unreasonable political pressure with Demographic Variables

Multiple regression analysis was accomplished to determine the extent to which the demographic variables of age, gender, and marital status, number of dependents, income and working experiences will explain the variance in terms of unreasonable political pressure amongst EOs.

Age, gender, marital status, number of dependents, income and working experiences of these demographic variables will significantly explain the variance in unreasonable political pressure amongst EOs in different organizations of Nepal.

The results of the multiple regression analysis regressing demographic variables against unreasonable political pressure, as dependent variable, are presented in table 3. The coefficient of multiple correlation between the demographic variables and unreasonable political pressure, as indicated by multiple R in the table 3, is 0.218, R square, the coefficient of multiple determination, is 0.047, whilst R square adjusted, is equal to 0.026.

Therefore, 4.7% of the variance with respect to unreasonable political pressure can be accounted for by demographic variables. Furthermore, the F statistic of 2.239 was statistically significant at the 95% level, ($p < 0.05$). On this basis, it is concluded that the demographic variables significantly explain 4.7% of the variance in unreasonable political pressure. However, 95.3% of the variance in unreasonable political pressure may be explained by factors not considered in this study.

Table 3. Regression analysis: Unreasonable political pressure as Dependent variable

Stress related factors (IV)	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Sex	-.417	.488	-.051	-.856	.393
Age	.028	.019	.107	1.463	.145
Marital status	-.469	.410	-.085	-1.145	.253
Number of dependents	.101	.142	.047	.712	.477
Working experiences	.006	.017	.021	.343	.732
Total Income	3.982E-6	.000	.054	.900	.369
R ² = 0.047	F = 2.239				

Further Table 3 also indicates that when other variables are controlled, none of the demographic variables are significant, that is, neither gender nor others variables like marital status, age, total income, and working experiences was found to be statistically significant at 0.05 level. Moreover, it further appears as though working experience, with a Beta-value of 0.021 is the poorest predictor of unreasonable political pressure in the sample. It can, thus, be concluded that gender and others variables like age, marital status, total income and working experiences do not predict this variable amongst EOs.

Responsibility with Demographic Variables

Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the extent to which the demographic variables of age, gender, and marital status, number of dependents, income and working experiences will explain the variance in terms of responsibility amongst EOs. The demographic variables significantly explain the variance in responsibility amongst EOs in different organizations of Nepal.

The results of the multiple regression analysis regressing demographic variables against responsibility, as dependent variable, are presented in table 4. The coefficient of multiple correlation between the demographic variables and unreasonable political pressure, as indicated by multiple R in table 4, is 0.269, R square, the coefficient of multiple determination, is 0.072, whilst R square adjusted, is equal to 0.052.

Therefore, 7.27% of the variance in responsibility can be accounted for by these demographic variables. Furthermore, the F statistic of 3.511 is statistically significant at 95% level, ($p < 0.05$). On this basis, therefore, it may be concluded that the demographic variables significantly explain 7.27% of the variance in responsibility. However, 92.73% of the variance in responsibility may be explained by factors not considered in this study.

Table 4. Regression analysis: Responsibility as Dependent variable

Demographic variables (IV)	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
Sex	-.210	.409	-.030	-.513	.609
Age	.042	.016	.190	2.631	.009
Marital status	-.167	.343	-.036	-.487	.626
Number of dependents	.170	.119	.093	1.424	.155
Working experiences	.002	.014	.007	.116	.908
Total Income	1.354E-6	.000	.021	.365	.715
R ² = 0.072	F = 3.511				

Table 4 also indicates that when the other variables are controlled, one of the demographic variables, age, is significant. Predictors of responsibility with a Beta-value of 0.190, is significant at 0.01 levels.

As number of dependents variables carries a positive Beta weight, the suggestion is that a direct relationship exists between the number of dependents and responsibility, with the number of dependents increases, the higher the level of stress experienced by the EOs.

Table 4 further shows that neither the gender nor others variables like marital status, number of dependents, total income, and working experiences was found to be statistically significant at 0.05 level. It further appears as though working experience, with a Beta-value of 0.007 is the poorest predictor responsibility in the sample. Further, it can be concluded that while number of dependents in the family was a significant predictor of responsibility for EOs, gender and others variables like marital status, number of dependents, total income and working experiences do not predict this variable amongst EOs.

4. CONCLUSION

Stress is a growing concern in many workplaces today but very little research has been done on stress among executive officers of Nepal. The aim of this article was to investigate what type of stressors executive officers field personnel are exposed to while on the contribution of variables such as Role overload, Role ambiguity, Role conflict, Political, Responsibility, Under participation, Powerlessness, Poor peer relation, Intrinsic Impoverishment, Low status, Strenuous working condition, Unprofitability is doing to manage or mitigate the effects of negative long-term stress among executive officers of Nepal. To examine effects of both demographic variables and occupational stress index (OSI) on executive officers of Nepal, multiple regression analysis was used. Study results showed that executive officers of Nepal overall stress with their Role overload, Unreasonable political pressure, and Responsibility was relatively high.

Multiple regression analysis treatment and analysis was done to infer many finer aspects. The objectives of this study were to understand stress and its implications besides the effects can cause on the serious problem on their health. The stressors, the different types of stress and its role, the effects on the individual and the organization, the natural effect, the possible stresses including the stressors has a direct bearing and its role on executive officers have been investigated through these battery of multiple regression analysis method. Forecast of the stressors is also attempted by regression analysis.

The current analysis adds to the literature on occupation stress and prevention of occupation stress especially in the Nepalese context. Generally, these executives faced with the sources of stress across all organizations. The study revealed that executive officers of Nepal were suffering from stress and there were significant differences obtained in occupational stress in executive officers of Nepal basically with their Role

overload, Unreasonable political pressure, and Responsibility while testing, multiple regression analysis, demographic variables with different dimensions of stressors.

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