Gender differences in coping strategies to occupational stressors

Correlational study

"Gender Differences in occupational stress and coping strategies among professors"

Introduction

According to Hans Selye the term “stress” can be referred as general physiological and psychological response of the body to any stressor or event happened. Among life situations, workplace stands out as a potentially important source of stress purely because of the amount of time that is spent in this setting. Stress is an unavoidable consequence of modern living. In fact stress is much more common in employs at lower levels of work place hierarchies where they have less control over their work situation.

Occupational stress has become an important topic for study of health sector for several reasons. Occupational stress is not an objective phenomenon. It is predominantly subjective in nature, and involves the employ’s active interpretation of his/her objective circumstances. Occupational stress is the perception of a discrepancy between environmental demands (stressors) and individual capacities to fulfil these demands. Occupational stress is a combination of sources of stress at work, individual characteristics and extra organizational stressors. Some of these stressors are intrinsic to the job. Some are related to employ’s role within the organization, some to career development, some to relationship at work some to structure and climate of the organization. Occupational stress is of much concern because it can lead to various consequences for the individual as well as the workplace.

The costs of occupational stress to the organizations are primarily related to sickness and absenteeism, reduced productivity, worker replacement costs and training, and additional retirement costs. There may be further costs due to damage in production to equipment or production, costs in connection with grievance and litigation, and a potential public loss of goodwill toward the organization. Occupational stress can have several health consequences for the employees. Employees may miss days of work, make poor decisions, begin abusing alcohol and other drugs or break down and have to be replaced by other workers who need training.

Different workers have different level of anxiety and tolerances of ambiguity and different workers experience different amount of family and financial problems, however organizational role of the worker also matters. Coping has been defined as the constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that have been evaluated as taking up or exceeding the resources of the person. Research recognizes two major functions of coping: regulating stressful emotions, and altering the person–environment relation causing the distress. Problem-focused coping

includes cognitive and behavioural attempts to modify or eliminate the stressful situation. In contrast, emotion-focused coping involves attempts to regulate emotional responses elicited by the situation.

Organizational role can be referred as a position consigned to an individual in the organization, which is defined by the various expectations of different concerned people. Certain functions at the workplace are performed by the role occupant in response to her/his role expectations. The conception of organizational role has integral potent for generating stress. Causes of occupational stress can be long hours of work, heavy workload, tight deadlines, job insecurity, lack of autonomy. A variety of role related problems may arise due to these for the workers like role overload where the job demands are so great that the workers feel an inability to cope, stress will develop. Role insufficiency is when workers lack the training, education, skills or experience to accomplish the job, they feel stressed. Role ambiguity is when aspects of the job and the workplace are unclear and thus frustration and stress are likely to develop. Role conflict occurs when there are incompatible demands placed upon a person relating to their job or position. These causes can be evidently found in the professions of teachers, professors and industries. Teachers have to face different demands from the management, students, parents, as well as the society. Teaching is regarded as very stressful occupation. Increasing consciousness for education due to increasing competition among students for achieving their goals adds more pressure and stress on professors. Low social status, low economic status, lack of security of service, heavy workload, working under autocratic headmasters, monotony of work, problem of indiscipline, lack of professional aptitude, recruitment system can all be the causes of occupational stress among professors.

Occupational stress in teachers can lead to a variety of negative outcomes including emotional exhaustion, feeling of depersonalization and a sense of failure with one’s personal accomplishment, condition often referred to as burnout. The level of occupational stress may differ among professors in relation to age, gender, marital status, family type and years of experience.

Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to examine whether female professors experience more stress than male professors and how does use of problem focused solving by men and emotion focused solving by women affect the result. Also the study aims to identity various coping strategies men and women use and to what extent which coping strategy out of confrontative coping, distancing, self-control, social support, accept responsibilities, escape avoidance planful problem solving or positive reappraisal is used when they experience occupational stressors like role stagnation, self-role distance, resource in adequacy. To examine the role of marital status, age, years of experience and family type during the coping of various experienced occupational stressors. The study aims to examine the relationship between stressor experienced and coping strategy used.

Literature review

A.S.Antoniou et al conducted a study in 2006 where result support the idea that gender influences stress and burnout, demonstrating that female teachers experienced higher levels of occupational stress compared to males, as regards the difficulties they confront in the classroom and the workload that often spills over to personal and family life and the working conditions.

Nagra V. in 2011 found that teacher educators experienced moderate level of occupational stress. Significant differences were indicated regarding occupational stress among teacher educators in relation to their gender, subject streams and marital status.

M. P. Matud in 2004 found a magnitude of the difference between women and men to be small and the percentage of variance to be low among the gender differences but he found significant differences in certain stress related variables. Women have more daily stress, with more chronic problems and conflicts and daily demands and frustrations. Although women and men did not differ in the number of live events experienced, these events seemed to impact women more since they rated them as less desirable and controllable than men did.

Martocchio and O'Leary found no significant difference in occupational stress between men and women. Various studies conducted in the West generally have yielded mix findings.

Galanakis et al in 2009 found that women experience higher levels of occupational stress than men. Nevertheless, when marital status, age, and education were introduced, no significant differences were identified. Based on the above literature review, a null non directional hypothesis was formulated that there is no significant gender difference in occupational stressors and the coping strategies used by male and female professors.

Methodology

The sample consisted of 30 professors (N=30) which consisted of 15 males and 15 females teaching in Narsee Monjee college of commerce and economics and Mithibai College of arts, science and commerce, Mumbai. The participants were randomly selected. The mean age of male participants was 35.6 years and that of female participants was 41.4 years.

Tools used: A demographic questionnaire was used to consider the co-founding variables like age, family type, marital status and years of experience. Further two standardized questionnaires were used to examine the stressors and coping strategies.

Organizational Role Stress (ORS) Scale by Pareek is a five-point scale, demonstrating how true a particular statement is for the role. The following role stresses have been taken up to prepare the instrument: "self-role distance, inter-role distance, role stagnation, role ambiguity, role expectation conflict, role overload, role isolation, role erosion, personal inadequacy, resource inadequacy". The instrument incorporates ten role stressors and 50 items in total. It is a five point scale ranging from 0 to 4. The scale has been defined in the following manner, where, 0 signifies "if you never feel this way", 1- "If you few times feel this way", "2- If you sometimes feel this way", 3- "If you frequently feel this way", 4- "If you always feel this way".

Ways of Coping Scale by Lazarus and Folkman (1985) was used to examine the coping strategies used by professors during occupational stress. The scale consisted of 66 items with 4-point Likert's scale where 0= does not apply at all to 3= used a great deal. It has 8 subscales namely confrontative coping, distancing, self-control, seeks social support, accept responsibility, escape avoidance, planful problem solving and positive reappraisal. The alpha reliability ranged from minimum .67 to maximum .78 for the subscales.

Result

The aim of the study was to find whether gender plays a role in determining the use of coping strategies during occupational stress.

Descriptive Statistics

	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
IRS	1.00	8.0667	4.30061	15
	2.00	9.2667	3.69298	15
	Total	8.6667	3.98561	30
RS	1.00	6.6667	5.13624	15
	2.00	7.4667	3.99762	15
	Total	7.0667	4.54049	30
REC	1.00	4.0000	4.07080	15
	2.00	7.4000	4.93964	15
	Total	5.7000	4.77168	30
RE	1.00	5.2667	4.38287	15
	2.00	6.8000	2.95683	15
	Total	6.0333	3.75530	30
RO	1.00	5.5333	5.24904	15
	2.00	7.6000	3.60159	15
	Total	6.5667	4.54619	30
RI	1.00	5.6667	4.67007	15
	2.00	7.6000	2.84856	15
	Total	6.6333	3.92589	30
PI	1.00	3.0000	3.25137	15
	2.00	5.1333	3.81476	15
	Total	4.0667	3.64770	30
SRD	1.00	4.9333	5.09154	15
	2.00	8.1333	3.39888	15
	Total	6.5333	4.55414	30
RA	1.00	3.1333	3.37780	15
	2.00	6.7333	4.07898	15
	Total	4.9333	4.10998	30
RIn	1.00	4.8667	4.42181	15
	2.00	5.6667	4.68534	15
	Total	5.2667	4.49470	30
CC	1.00	6.0000	3.90969	15
	2.00	8.0000	3.56571	15
	Total	7.0000	3.81467	30
D	1.00	7.2667	3.71227	15
	2.00	7.6667	4.63938	15
	Total	7.4667	4.13341	30
SC	1.00	8.5333	2.72204	15
	2.00	11.2667	3.93640	15
	Total	9.9000	3.60412	30
SSC	1.00	7.3333	4.62395	15
	2.00	10.4000	4.10226	15
	Total	8.8667	4.56926	30
AR	1.00	3.9333	2.57645	15
	2.00	5.0667	3.01109	15
	Total	4.5000	2.81315	30
EA	1.00	5.1333	3.60291	15
	2.00	9.2000	5.95459	15
	Total	7.1667	5.25936	30
PPS	1.00	10.3333	4.46681	15
	2.00	10.3333	3.43650	15
	Total	10.3333	3.91578	30
PR	1.00	10.9333	5.06341	15
	2.00	11.0667	3.36933	15
	Total	11.0000	4.22635	30

Table 1: descriptive statistics

According to the descriptive statistics Table No 1 it is observed that the mean score of females in Inter Role Distance is 8.0667(SD= 4.30081) and that of males is 9.2667 (SD= 3.69298). The mean score of females in Role Stagnation is 6.6667(SD=5.13624) and that of males is 7.4667(SD=3.99762). The mean scores of females in Role Expectation Conflict is 4.0000(SD=4.07080) and that of males is 7.4000(SD=4.93964). The mean scores of females in Role Erosion is 5.2667(SD=4.38287) and that of males is 6.8000(SD=2.95683). The mean scores of females in Role Overload is 5.5333(SD=5.24904) and that of males is 7.6000(SD=3.60159). The mean scores of females in Role Isolation is 5.6667(SD=4.67007) and that of males is 7.6000(SD=2.84856). The mean scores of females in Personal

Inadequacy is 3.0000(SD=3.25137) and that of males is 5.1333(SD=3.81476). The mean scores of females in Self Role Distance is 4.9333(SD=5.09154) and that of males is 8.1333(SD=3.39888). The mean scores of females in Role Ambiguity is 3.1333(SD=3.37780) and that of males is 6.7333(SD=4.07898). The mean scores of females in Resource Inadequacy is 4.8667(SD=4.42181) and of males is 5.6667(SD=4.68534).

The aim of the study was to find whether there is gender difference across all variables of both the scales. Thus, parametric inferential statistical analysis was employed i.e. MANOVA.

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Multivariate Tests[b]

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.954	12.681[a]	18.000	11.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.046	12.681[a]	18.000	11.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	20.751	12.681[a]	18.000	11.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	20.751	12.681[a]	18.000	11.000	.000
Gender	Pillai's Trace	.583	.853[a]	18.000	11.000	.631
	Wilks' Lambda	.417	.853[a]	18.000	11.000	.631
	Hotelling's Trace	1.396	.853[a]	18.000	11.000	.631
	Roy's Largest Root	1.396	.853[a]	18.000	11.000	.631

a. Exact statistic
b. Design: Intercept + Gender

Table 2: Multivariate tests

So according to the above data, F=0.853, p>0.05 which that means non significant gender difference was observed in all variables and overall. However, we also conducted a Pearson Correlation to find the correlation between the variables of both the scales among the overall population(N=30).

Correlations

		IRD	RS	REC	RE	RO	RI	PI	SRD	RA	RIn	CC	D	SC	SSC	AR	EA	PPS	PR
IRD	Pearson Correlation	1	.457*	.477**	.139	.601**	.479**	.113	.540**	.388*	.348	-.009	.043	.058	.213	.154	.049	.284	.328
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.011	.008	.464	.000	.007	.552	.002	.034	.060	.962	.820	.762	.258	.417	.798	.129	.077
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
RS	Pearson Correlation	.457*	1	.531**	.473**	.599**	.570**	.304	.617**	.403*	.530**	.111	-.061	.074	.361*	-.051	-.038	.499**	.246
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011		.003	.008	.000	.001	.103	.000	.027	.003	.558	.751	.697	.050	.788	.842	.005	.190
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
REC	Pearson Correlation	.477**	.531**	1	.439*	.808**	.738**	.498**	.560**	.780**	.629**	.146	.097	.169	.379*	.058	.126	.138	.188
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	.003		.015	.000	.000	.005	.001	.000	.000	.442	.612	.373	.039	.762	.508	.466	.320
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
RE	Pearson Correlation	.139	.473**	.439*	1	.405*	.513**	.307	.525**	.548**	.461*	.330	.114	.263	.193	-.018	.015	.194	.020
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.464	.008	.015		.026	.004	.099	.003	.002	.010	.075	.547	.161	.306	.925	.936	.305	.918
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
RO	Pearson Correlation	.601**	.599**	.808**	.405*	1	.808**	.486**	.693**	.650**	.580**	.044	.020	.029	.241	-.152	-.055	.332	.249
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.026		.000	.006	.000	.000	.001	.818	.915	.880	.199	.422	.775	.073	.184
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
RI	Pearson Correlation	.479**	.570**	.738**	.513**	.808**	1	.649**	.544**	.682**	.758**	.152	.211	.273	.351	.017	.103	.228	.162
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.001	.000	.004	.000		.000	.002	.000	.000	.423	.264	.145	.057	.928	.587	.225	.392
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
PI	Pearson Correlation	.113	.304	.498**	.307	.486**	.649**	1	.513**	.585**	.514**	.077	.263	.404*	.280	.077	.251	-.055	.040
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.552	.103	.005	.099	.006	.000		.004	.001	.004	.687	.160	.027	.134	.685	.181	.774	.833
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
SRD	Pearson Correlation	.540**	.617**	.560**	.525**	.693**	.544**	.513**	1	.709**	.387*	.157	.030	.174	.125	-.097	.173	.284	.081
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000	.001	.003	.000	.002	.004		.000	.035	.408	.874	.359	.512	.610	.360	.129	.672
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
RA	Pearson Correlation	.388*	.403*	.780**	.548**	.650**	.682**	.585**	.709**	1	.707**	.271	.219	.435*	.288	.203	.383*	.049	.141
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.034	.027	.000	.002	.000	.000	.001	.000		.000	.148	.245	.016	.123	.282	.036	.799	.458
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
RIn	Pearson Correlation	.348	.530**	.629**	.461*	.580**	.758**	.514**	.387*	.707**	1	-.046	.207	.340	.233	.136	.084	.028	.172
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.060	.003	.000	.010	.001	.000	.004	.035	.000		.808	.274	.066	.214	.472	.659	.883	.362
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
CC	Pearson Correlation	-.009	.111	.146	.330	.044	.152	.077	.157	.271	-.046	1	-.092	.281	.586**	.222	.349	.427*	.248
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.962	.558	.442	.075	.818	.423	.687	.408	.148	.808		.629	.133	.001	.239	.059	.019	.186
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
D	Pearson Correlation	.043	-.061	.097	.114	.020	.211	.263	.030	.219	.207	-.092	1	.607**	.031	.436*	.563**	-.048	.476**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.820	.751	.612	.547	.915	.264	.160	.874	.245	.274	.629		.000	.872	.016	.001	.800	.008
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
SC	Pearson Correlation	.058	.074	.169	.263	.029	.273	.404*	.174	.435*	.340	.281	.607**	1	.376*	.593**	.599**	.147	.417*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.762	.697	.373	.161	.880	.145	.027	.359	.016	.066	.133	.000		.041	.001	.000	.440	.022
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
SSC	Pearson Correlation	.213	.361*	.379*	.193	.241	.351	.280	.125	.288	.233	.586**	.031	.376*	1	.424*	.272	.477**	.520**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.258	.050	.039	.306	.199	.057	.134	.512	.123	.214	.001	.872	.041		.020	.146	.008	.003
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
AR	Pearson Correlation	.154	-.051	.058	-.018	-.152	.017	.077	-.097	.203	.136	.222	.436*	.593**	.424*	1	.698**	.006	.447*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.417	.788	.762	.925	.422	.928	.685	.610	.282	.472	.239	.016	.001	.020		.000	.974	.013
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
EA	Pearson Correlation	.049	-.038	.126	.015	-.055	.103	.251	.173	.383*	.084	.349	.563**	.599**	.272	.698**	1	-.066	.239
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.798	.842	.508	.936	.775	.587	.181	.360	.036	.659	.059	.001	.000	.146	.000		.727	.204
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
PPS	Pearson Correlation	.284	.499**	.138	.194	.332	.228	-.055	.284	.049	.028	.427*	-.048	.147	.477**	.006	-.066	1	.625**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.129	.005	.466	.305	.073	.225	.774	.129	.799	.883	.019	.800	.440	.008	.974	.727		.000
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
PR	Pearson Correlation	.328	.246	.188	.020	.249	.162	.040	.081	.141	.172	.248	.476**	.417*	.520**	.447*	.239	.625**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.077	.190	.320	.918	.184	.392	.833	.672	.458	.362	.186	.008	.022	.003	.013	.204	.000	
	N	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

It was found that when participants experience more role stagnation, they were more likely to opt for social support signifying a positive correlation between both the variables which is significant at 0.05 level i.e. 0.361 among overall population. Participants experiencing more role stagnation also opt for planful problem solving which has a positive correlation which is significant at 0.01 level i.e. 0.499. When participants experience more role expectation conflict are more likely to seek social support signifying a positive correlation of 0.379 at 0.05 level. Participants experiencing more personal inadequacy tend to cope through self control signifying a positive correlation of .404 at 0.05 level. Also a positive correlation is found between role ambiguity and self control with a score of .435 on 0.05 level. Participants experiencing role ambiguity also opt more for escape avoidance signifying a positive correlation of .383 at 0.05 level.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine whether there is a gender difference among occupational stressors and coping strategies in the professors. Results indicate that there is no significant gender difference across all variables and overall. In accordance to past researches and current study it can be said that there exist a gender difference in certain dimensions of stressors and coping like females experience more Role Erosion and Role Overload than males, however there is no inferential statistic conducted to support this finding. The results are consistent with past research where no difference was observed among genders, overall.

Conclusion

Recently some authors have criticized the psychological theories of coping with stress and have recognized differences in psychological development between men and women. Also, there is growing interest in studying women's lives and the unique circumstances that they face. The strength of this study is that almost all participants have minimum 4 years of experience which makes them use to the environment and their job. Although, family type and marital status were included considering them as cofounds, most of the participants being married and belonging to nuclear family type, have shown no difference in experiencing stressors among gender. The sample size of the current study is too small to generalize it to larger population also participants were randomly selected overlooking the streams they are into. Also a parametric inferential statistics is to be employed to increase the credibility of the study also to examine the gender differences among each variable of both the scales.

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