Occupational Stress Among Executive Officers of Nepal: Empirical Study

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Abstract—This paper is aimed at exploring the experiences of executive officers with occupations related stress. The status of occupational stress is evaluated based on the responses from employees of executive in different organizations of Nepal. From the frequency distribution, chi-square analysis, and analysis of variance it was found that occupational stress had influenced among executives.

Index Terms— Occupational stress, Occupational stress Index, Occupational stressors, ANOVA, F-Test, Chi-square test.

I. INTRODUCTION

Occupation 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 as. In the 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. 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.

Occupation related stress follow in various shapes and forms. Health and Safety Executive defined occupational stress as “The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them.” Organizational stress might be harmful for physiological and psychological effects on workers. 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 W. Cranwell and Alyssa, J.

The significance of the effects of occupational stress in some professions is reported, such as among nurses (Dailey et al., 1986), managers (Davidson and Cooper, 1986) and teachers (Byosiere, 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).

It is important to note that, the difference between three intimately related terms: stressors, stress and strain (L. Francis and J. Barling). 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 (S.L. Sauter, L.R.Murphy and J.J.Hurrell). 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 as an Executive. 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 revealed that the aspects of the work environment that contingent upon strains, poor psychological health or well-being of the individual (T.A. Beehr). It is now generally accepted that prolonged or intense stress could have a negative impact on the individual’s mental and physical health (C.L. Cooper, P.J. Dewe and M.P.O’Driscoll). Work related stress is a characteristics of current economic status from which most of the individuals were suffering at the times and for 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 his occupation effectiveness (J. Bridge, C.L. Cooper and C. Highley-Marchington).

Stress in the workplace can affect communication effectiveness, the ability to focus on job and decision making ability (C.J. Rees and D.Redfern). 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 between different groups. He has examined the relationships existing among individual stressors.

Occupational Stress and Job Satisfaction among managers was studied (K. 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 carried out the status of occupational stress among employees working as executives in an organization to investigate following aspects:

1. Identifying the origins of stresses being experienced by executive officers in the industry, university, in terms of individual and situational factors; and
2. Determining the interrelationships associated between different stresses and their significance

II. Method

A sample for this study is of executives who are working in, a public sector, private and government sector engaged in different fields and are situated in different parts of Nepal. For selection of respondents for the survey, a random sampling technique was used to record the responses about occupational stress. A total of more than 800 questionnaires were distributed to the employees in executive position, out of which 600 questionnaires were returned. Only 440 returned questionnaires were found with required information and were completely usable.

The questionnaires were designed to assess levels of occupational stress among Executives officers of Nepal. Occupational stress was assessed using “Occupational Stress Questionnaire OSI" in the Indian context (Srivastava and Singh, 1981). The questionnaire is consisted of 46 statements with five
alternative responses e.g., 5 for strongly agree, 4 for mildly agree 3 agree, 2 for disagree and 1 for strongly disagree. Responses were obtained on a summed rating scale format ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. Total score on this scale is considered for the assessment of occupational stress. Higher scores indicated higher perceived occupational stress or more the score on this scale indicates more stress. This scale included twelve dimensions as described in the table 1. 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 are true keyed and the remaining 18 are false keyed. These items relating to the 12 factors of occupational stress i.e. 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.

Information regarding age, gender, marital status, and number of dependent was obtained to provide personnel demographic information. Respondents were also asked to provide job related information including average family income per month in Rupees, years in services, types of organizations, and number of employees engaged in the organization.

The status of occupational stress among executives was evaluated using analysis of variance (ANOVA). The executives are first divided into three age groups as shown in the table I. Then the different age categories were examined by the effect of age in dealing with occupational stress among executives officers of Nepal.

The status of occupational stress among executives was evaluated using frequency distribution and one-sample chi-square analysis. The executives are first divided into three groups, namely low, moderate and high stress groups.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table I provides analysis of variance (ANOVA) for occupational stress in relation to age. To examine the effect of age in dealing with occupational stress, one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied between Occupational Stress Scores and different Age groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>F-Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 - 35</td>
<td>145.70</td>
<td>12.60</td>
<td>9.31**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 - 45</td>
<td>150.50</td>
<td>11.19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 - 60</td>
<td>151.07</td>
<td>12.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

**p < 0.01 (significant at 0.01 level)

Table indicates that age group 46 – 60 is more prone to occupational stress (M = 151.07) the difference between all age group for occupational stress came to be significant (F = 9.31, p < 0.01). Stress level is also high in the executives who are in 46 – 60 years of age (M = 151.07) Executives in the 25 – 35 age groups (M = 145.70) also experience less stress as most of these officers are entering their first career related job and have the pressure to excel.
This may be due to the fact that older employees have often reached a stage where career development is not their major concern and implementing a new technology, and hence a number of job characteristics which may cause stress to older staff, who do not have their career ahead of them, cause stress to older staff. The results indicate that older age group is more susceptible to stress and with increasing age people become adjust for new technique and technology to deal with stress.

Several researchers reported that in industrial setting job satisfaction, job performance and job involvement increases with age and as a result occupational stress would decreases. Regarding the relation with age a previous study of age group in relation to stress can be explained in the terms, that the individuals matured personality 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. Sources and assessment of stress among managers have been well recognized since the late 1970s. Ivancevich and Matteson (1980) acknowledged four categories of work stressors: physical environment, individual level (a mixer of role and career development variables), group level (primarily relationship-based) and organizational level (a mixture of climate, structure, job design and task characteristic) Schuler (1982) also sort out seven categories of work stressors in organizations: job qualities, relationships, organizational structure, physical qualities, career development, change and role in the organization. Quick and Quick (1984) anticipated four categories of stressors: task demands, physical demands and interpersonal demands.

Mc Grath, 1976 defines stress as an involvement of an environmental situation that perceived as presenting demand which threatens to exceed the person’s capabilities and resources for meeting it, under conditions where he or she expects a substantial differential in the rewards and costs from meeting the demand versus not meeting it. From the acknowledged evidence, it is clear that as far as work life is concerned extreme stress is so aversive to employees that they will try to avoid it by withdrawing either psychologically (through disinterest or lack of involvement in the job etc.) Physically (frequent late coming, absenteeism, lethargy etc.) or by leaving the job entirely (Beehr and Newman, 1978). It inclines the individual to develop several psychosomatic illnesses; in contrast, the absence of extreme stress would result in more satisfied, happy, healthy and effective employees. However, the stress one experiences in the job vary from mild to severe depending one’s physiological, psychological and social make up (French and Caplan, 1970, Margolis et al., 1974., Miller 1960 and Wardwell et al., 1964).

Stressors at the individual level have been studied more than any other category. Role conflicts, role ambiguity, role overload and under load, is widely examined individual stressors (Mc Grath 1976; Newton and Keenan, 1987). It is also reported by many researchers that the low job satisfaction was associated with high stress (Hollingworth et al., Abdul Halim, 1981; Keller et al., 1975; Leigh et al, 1988).
Table II provides number of executives with low, moderate and high level of stress along with percentage values. The one-sample test chi-square values eliciting the significance of the difference in the level of stress among executives are also shown in the table. It can be seen from the table that the level of stress due to ‘Under participation’, ‘Powerlessness’, ‘Poor peer Relation’, and ‘Strenuous working condition’, is high among 52.0%, 68.6%, 52.7%, and 48.4% of the executives. That is, occupational stress among executives is found to be mainly due to ‘Under participation’, ‘Powerlessness’, ‘Poor peer Relation’, and ‘Strenuous working condition’ in their work place. When all stress factors are pooled together, it is found that the level of stress is moderate for majority of the executives (70.9%). The one sample test chi-square values are significant for all dimensions of occupational stress as well as for total occupational stress, in turn indicating that there is a significant difference in the level of occupational stress (low, moderate and high) among executives.

### IV. CONCLUSION

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 same sources of stress across all organizations.

Frequency distribution analysis along with one-sample chi-square test is carried out to evaluate the status of occupational stress. The executives are categorized into three groups based on the stress level relative to each occupational factor as low, moderate and high. It was found that stress due to ‘strenuous’ was very high whereas the stress due to all other occupational factors was low among executives.
The result of the study from the analysis of variance (ANOVA) table indicate that there were significant difference in occupational stress among executive officers in the age categories. It was also noticed that the executive officers were experiencing the different level of stress.

The importance of this study cannot be overemphasized for the long-term survival of any organizations planning to build a healthy working environment while reducing the risk of work-related diseases and accidents. 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 to level of stress has its own significance. The findings of this study thus need to be acknowledged in implementing a healthy working environment. Careful and well-planned implementation strategies that consider the amount of work, role clarity, and training and development can provide a fruitful result to the employees and organizations.

REFERENCES