



A Study on the Relationship between Occupation Stress Variables and Employee Engagement.

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the relationship between occupational stress variables and employee engagement. Occupational stress is prevalent and negatively impacts employee well-being, job satisfaction, and productivity. High employee engagement is crucial for organizational success in today's competitive business environment. The research investigates sources of occupational stress and their effects on employee engagement. A sample of 655 employees from two IT companies was surveyed using the Occupational Stress Inventory. The study identifies significant negative correlations between occupational stress variables and employee engagement. Specifically, work overload, lack of resources, growth opportunities, recognition, skill utilization, role ambiguity, role boundary, working conditions, and work-life balance significantly impact employee engagement. However, the relationship with supervisors and colleagues does not show a significant impact. The findings emphasize the importance of managing occupational stress to enhance employee engagement and organizational outcomes. Practical suggestions are provided to mitigate stress and foster a more engaged workforce.

Key words: occupational stress, stress, Employee Engagement, employees.

Introduction

The inability of an individual to meet the demands at one's workplace leads to Occupational stress. A conducive environment enables one to deal with the demands faced at the job. Stress experienced over a period of time will manifest its effects on significant areas of an individual and organisation. The adverse effect of the stress on the psychological, physical as well as emotional well-being of a person is called personal strain. The overall well-being of the employee reduces. Unwanted stress creates a negative feeling toward one's job which is termed Vocational strain. The complex and competitive business environment of the 21st century poses a lot of challenges for the organisations. Management understood that exceptional performance can only be achieved if the employees are committed to their work. This commitment towards their work will manifest in higher productivity and quality work. Organisations are seeking employees who are positively connected to their job. Employee's positive or negative feeling towards their job, their colleagues and the organisation that immensely influences their willingness to learn and perform at their job is called Employee Engagement. The concept of Employee Engagement has no globally acquired definition. The explanation Kahn (1990) gives for Employee Engagement is "the harnessing of organisation members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances". Employee Engagement is described by the amount of vigor, dedication, and absorption exhibited by individuals regarding their work roles at the workplace. The exuberance one exhibits on the job is Vigor. Employees high on vigor can handle the toughest situations at ease. They have the ability to sustain their energy levels in any kind of work situation and are always willing to do whatever is needed to get the work done. The spirit of perseverance one holds on towards their job, the devotion one can witness as they work is Dedication. The unwavering and absolute involvement one demonstrates toward their work is Absorption. Though there are many other factors defining Employee Engagement the above-discussed ones are significant ones at an individual level. Failure to sustain and maintain high levels of these factors will inevitably lead to low Employee Engagement. Also, factors promoting vigor, dedication, and absorption should be given importance as it is essential in today's competitive world to maintain optimum Employee Engagement levels.

The aim of the study is to understand the Occupation stress variables and their relationship with Employee Engagement.

Significance of the study

The rate of Occupational Stress experienced by employees is increasing ever before for the past few decades according to the research carried out on Occupational Stress all over the world. (The American Institute of Stress). The survey conducted by a researcher published in LinkedIn tried to assess the repercussions of the pandemic on the psychological health of the IT employees in India. Study shows that 2 in 5 employees are going through increased stress levels or anxiety (LinkedIn, 2020)(Petrone, 2019). The manifestation of these stress levels is showing in the form of disengagement

with their work. Also, due to working remotely they are feeling lonely and are losing the connect with their organisations as well. (Lavuri, 2018). Study shows the adverse effect that stress has on the productivity of the employee. The results of the study indicated that there was a strong association of job-related stress on employees' performance. This in turn also has a very negative impact on the job satisfaction of the employee. Anyone who feels that they are not able to contribute to their work will eventually get themselves disconnected from the work and the workplace emotionally. (Tahir Iqbal, 2012) in his study gives a clear picture of how this emotional turmoil within the employee not being able to contribute to his work properly leads to unmanageable stress causing him to disengage from the work. The manifestations of this disengagement are evident in the performance, vigor, and dedication of the employee towards his work and workplace. All the documented studies show stress at the individual employee level if uncontrolled has the potential to manifest in many forms particularly hitting hard at the overall performance of the organisation, brand name, and climate of the organisation. This makes this study significant to delve deeper to understand the roots of stress-causing factors at work and the implications it possesses on Employee Engagement so that timely action can be taken for maintaining Employee Engagement and curbing and managing stress among employees by addressing the root causing factors.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the sources/variables of Occupational Stress.
2. To find out the inter-correlations of Occupational Stress variables.
3. To understand the impact of Occupational Stress variables on Employee Engagement.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The sample size of the study is 655 with 333 from CGI and 298 from ValueLabs. The sampling technique used is non-probability sampling i.e. convenience sampling and snow-ball sampling. The response of the respondents was collected through this questionnaire. The responses were gathered in person as well as through digital means by creating a Google form questionnaire. A comprehensive review of literature from various secondary sources led to proper designing of the questionnaire. The questionnaire for the study was developed using *Occupational Stress Inventory*. This takes a combined person-situation approach to the conceptualization and measurement of Occupational stress. The OSI attempts to measure: (i) the major sources of occupational Pressure, (ii) the major consequences of Occupational Stress that can be termed as personal strain. The present questionnaire was prepared taking into consideration the major sources of Occupational Stress namely Work Overload, Lack of resources, Lack of growth opportunities, Lack of Recognition, Underutilization of skills, Role Ambiguity, Role boundary, Working Conditions, Lack of work life balance, Relationship with supervisor and Colleagues. The number of items in each of the dimension is clearly specified in the below table along with the Cronbach's Alpha values.

Table 5.19: Reliability assessment and scale statistics of the survey instrument				
Occupational stress Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
Work Overload	0.850	6	20.79	5.089
Lack of resources	0.737	3	6.92	3.141
Lack of recognition	0.905	2	5.93	2.626
Lack of growth opportunities	0.837	3	8.92	3.461
Underutilization of skills	0.789	2	5.15	2.341
Role Ambiguity	0.897	5	13.01	5.401
Role boundary	0.854	3	8.32	3.662
Working Conditions	0.871	2	6.02	2.657
Lack of work life balance	0.930	2	6.24	2.709
Relationship with supervisor & colleagues	0.734	3	8.60	3.18
Occupational stress	0.901	31	106.51	25.883
Employee Engagement	0.940	17	60.34	13.71

The above table shows us that all the scales have a Cronbach's alpha value that is more than 0.7. Value of more than 0.7 Cronbach's is considered to be good. Therefore, all the scales used for developing the survey instrument have good Cronbach's value required for the study.

DATA ANALYSIS:

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT CORRELATION

- **H₀: Employee Engagement is not correlated to Occupational Stress variables** (Work Overload, Lack of resources, Lack of growth opportunities, Lack of Recognition, Underutilization of skills, Role Ambiguity, Role boundary, Working Conditions, Lack of work life balance, Relationship with supervisor and Colleagues)
- **H₁: Employee Engagement is correlated to Occupational Stress variables** (Work Overload, Lack of resources, Lack of growth opportunities, Lack of Recognition, Underutilization of skills, Role Ambiguity, Role boundary, Working Conditions, Lack of work life balance, Relationship with supervisor and Colleagues)

Following tables show the analysis for testing above hypothesis:

Table 5.96: Occupational Stress Variables and Employee Engagement Correlation

			EEMEAN	WLMEAN	LRSMEAN	LGRMEAN	LRGMEAN	USMEAN	RAMEAN	RBMEAN	WCMEAN	LWBMEAN	RSCMEAN
Spearman's rho	EEMEAN	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.130**	-.401**	-.447**	-.161**	-.238**	-.563**	-.137**	-.104**	-.163**	-.286**
		Sig. (2-tailed)											
WLMEAN		N	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655
	WLMEAN	Correlation Coefficient	-.130**	1.000	.389**	.482**	.436**	.257**	.338**	.521**	.448**	.580**	.417**
		Sig. (2-tailed)											
		N	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655
LRSMEAN		Correlation Coefficient	-.401**	.389**	1.000	.473**	.412**	.488**	.613**	.550**	.292**	.329**	.362**
		Sig. (2-tailed)											
		N	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655
LGRMEAN		Correlation Coefficient	-.447**	.482**	.473**	1.000	.660**	.633**	.702**	.437**	.408**	.496**	.702**
		Sig. (2-tailed)											
		N	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655
LRGMEAN		Correlation Coefficient	-.161**	.436**	.412**	.660**	1.000	.648**	.566**	.491**	.443**	.426**	.556**
		Sig. (2-tailed)											
		N	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655
USMEAN		Correlation Coefficient	-.238**	.257**	.488**	.633**	.648**	1.000	.606**	.449**	.416**	.376**	.629**
		Sig. (2-tailed)											
		N	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655
RAMEAN		Correlation Coefficient	-.563**	.338**	.613**	.702**	.566**	.606**	1.000	.438**	.388**	.381**	.615**
		Sig. (2-tailed)											
		N	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655
RBMEAN		Correlation Coefficient	-.137**	.521**	.550**	.437**	.491**	.449**	.438**	1.000	.379**	.482**	.515**
		Sig. (2-tailed)											
		N	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655
WCMEAN		Correlation Coefficient	-.104**	.448**	.292**	.408**	.443**	.416**	.388**	.379**	1.000	.769**	.544**
		Sig. (2-tailed)											
		N	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655
LWBMEAN		Correlation Coefficient	-.163**	.580**	.329**	.496**	.426**	.376**	.381**	.482**	.769**	1.000	.542**
		Sig. (2-tailed)											
		N	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655
RSCMEAN		Correlation Coefficient	-.286**	.417**	.362**	.702**	.556**	.629**	.615**	.515**	.544**	.542**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)											
		N	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655	655

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

The correlation numbers of Occupational Stress causing factors to Employee engagement are: Work Overload (-0.130), Lack of resources (-0.401), Lack of growth opportunities (-0.447), Lack of Recognition (-0.161), Underutilization of skills, (-0.238), Role Ambiguity (-0.563), Role boundary (-0.137), Working Conditions (-0.104), Lack of work life balance (-0.163), Relationship with supervisor and Colleagues (-0.286). Although the correlation of all the occupational stress variables is significant, it is found to be negative and weak for Work Overload, Lack of Recognition, Underutilization of skills, Role boundary, Working Conditions and Lack of work life balance and Relationship with supervisor and Colleagues. The correlation is negative and moderate for Lack of resources and Lack of growth opportunities.

- H0: Employee Engagement has no significant relation to Occupational Stress
- H1: Employee Engagement has significant relation to Occupational Stress

Table Occupational Stress and Employee Engagement Correlation

Correlations				
Spearman's rho	EEMEAN	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.350**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	<.001
	N		655	655
OCSMEAN		Correlation Coefficient	-.350**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.
	N		655	655

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

Above table helps us to draw following conclusions:

At 0.01 level of significance although there is a correlation but it is weak. Employee Engagement has weak relation to Occupational Stress. Employee Engagement and Occupational Stress are negatively and weakly correlated. As per the magnitude of the correlation, it is negative and value is 0.350.

Occupational Stress and Employee Engagement Correlation Summary

Hypothesis	p-value	Reject/not Hypothesis	Reject	Null
Employee Engagement is not correlated to Occupational Stress variables (Work Overload, Lack of resources, Lack of growth opportunities, Lack of Recognition, Underutilization of skills, Role Ambiguity, Role boundary, Working Conditions, Lack of work life balance, Relationship with supervisor and Colleagues)	.000	Reject		
H0: Employee Engagement has no significant relation to Occupational Stress variables.	.000	Reject		

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS VARIABLES ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT REGRESSION

H0: There is no significant impact of Occupational Stress variables on Employee Engagement.

H1: There is significant impact of Occupational Stress variables on Employee Engagement.

Above hypothesis was tested using multiple regression analysis. Employee Engagement was regressed at the same time on all the Occupational Stress Variables-Work Overload, Lack of resources, Lack of growth opportunities, Lack of Recognition, Underutilization of skills, Role Ambiguity, Role boundary, Working Conditions, Lack of work life balance, Relationship with supervisor and Colleagues.

The following sub hypotheses were framed to test the impact of individual Occupational Stressor on Employee Engagement.

- H₀: There is no significant impact of Work Overload on Employee Engagement.
- H₀: There is no significant impact of Lack of resources on Employee Engagement.
- H₀: There is no significant impact of Lack of growth opportunities on Employee Engagement.
- H₀: There is no significant impact of Lack of recognition on Employee Engagement.
- H₀: There is no significant impact of Underutilization of skills on Employee Engagement.
- H₀: There is no significant impact of Role ambiguity on Employee Engagement.

- H_0 : There is no significant impact of role boundary on Employee Engagement.
- H_0 : There is no significant impact of working Conditions on Employee Engagement.
- H_0 : There is no significant impact of Lack of work life balance on Employee Engagement.
- H_0 : There is no significant impact of Relationship with Supervisor and Colleagues on Employee Engagement.

The result of the regression is as follows:

Occupational Stress and Employee Engagement Regression

Model Summary ^b										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
						F Change	df1	df2		
1	.685 ^a	.469	.461	.6054633	.469	56.937	10	644	<.001	1.542

a. Predictors: (Constant), RSCMEANN, LRSMEAN, WLMEAN, WCMEAN, LRGMEAN, RBMEAN, USMEAN, RAMEAN, LWBMEAN, LGRMEAN

b. Dependent Variable: EEMEAN

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.922	.107		36.643	<.001
	WLMEAN	.328	.037	.337	8.768	<.001
	LRSMEAN	-.157	.031	-.199	-5.056	<.001
	LGRMEAN	-.250	.038	-.350	-6.526	<.001
	LRGMEAN	.096	.028	.153	3.410	<.001
	USMEAN	.157	.032	.223	4.852	<.001
	RAMEAN	-.436	.036	-.571	-12.238	<.001
	RBMEAN	.062	.028	.092	2.237	.026
	WCMEAN	.079	.030	.127	2.642	.008
	LWBMEAN	-.129	.032	-.211	-4.078	<.001
	RSCMEANN	.018	.037	.023	.490	.624

a. Dependent Variable: EEMEAN

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	208.724	10	20.872	56.937	<.001 ^b
	Residual	236.081	644	.367		
	Total	444.805	654			

a. Dependent Variable: EEMEAN

b. Predictors: (Constant), RSCMEANN, LRSMEAN, WLMEAN, WCMEAN, LRGMEAN, RBMEAN, USMEAN, RAMEAN, LWBMEAN, LGRMEAN

The value of R square for the studies connected to social sciences is usually less than 50 percent. (Frost,2019). The model explains 68.5 percent of variation in Employee Engagement. Factors other than the independent variables taken in the study may be the reason for the residual variation. As adjusted R square is usually considered for comparing different models, in this study it has no big relevance as our objective is not comparing models.

The F-value in the Analysis of Variance is significant at .05 level. So, there is significant impact of Occupational Stress variables on Employee Engagement. The null hypothesis is rejected.

The t statistics of the coefficients of independent variables are all statistically significant ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$) except for Relationship with supervisor and Colleagues. Therefore, we can conclude that Work Overload, Lack of resources, Lack of growth opportunities, Lack of Recognition, Underutilization of skills, Role Ambiguity, Role boundary, Working Conditions, Lack of work life balance have significant impact on Employee Engagement.

Regression coefficients of (Work Overload, Lack of resources, Role boundary, Working Conditions, Lack of growth opportunities, Lack of Recognition, Underutilization of skills, Role Ambiguity, Lack of work life balance (0.328, 0.157, 0.062, 0.079, 0.250, 0.096, 0.157, 0.436, 0.129) are significantly different from zero while the coefficients of Relationship with supervisor and Colleagues (0.018) are not significantly different from zero. On the basis of these values, we can conclude that the variable Relationship with supervisor and Colleagues, working conditions and Role boundary impact on Employee Engagement is not so significant.

The following table gives us a complete picture of the main research hypotheses for testing impact of Occupational Stress variables on Employee Engagement.

Occupational Stress Variables on Employee Engagement Hypotheses Summary

Hypothesis	p-value	Reject/not Reject Null Hypothesis
There is no significant impact of Occupational Stress variables on Employee Engagement.	.001	Reject
a) There is no significant impact of Work Overload on Employee Engagement.	.001	Reject
b) There is no significant impact of Lack of resources on Employee Engagement.	.001	Reject
c) There is no significant impact of Lack of growth opportunities on Employee Engagement.	.001	Reject
d) There is no significant impact of Lack of recognition on Employee Engagement.	.001	Reject
e) There is no significant impact of Underutilization of skills on Employee Engagement.	.001	Reject
e) There is no significant impact of Role Ambiguity on Employee Engagement.	.001	Reject
e) There is no significant impact of Role Boundary on Employee Engagement.	.026	Reject
e) There is no significant impact of Working Conditions on Employee Engagement.	.008	Reject
e) There is no significant impact of Lack of work life balance on Employee Engagement.	.001	Reject
e) There is no significant impact of Relationship with supervisor and colleagues on Employee Engagement.	.624	Do Not Reject

The research question to understand the relationship between Occupation stress and personal strain is "Are Occupation stress variables and Employee Engagement associated?". The hypotheses for this are: 1) Employee Engagement is not correlated to Occupational Stress variables. 2) Employee Engagement has no significant relation to Occupational Stress variables. Empirical analysis reveals that Employee Engagement is correlated to Work Overload, Lack of resources, Lack of growth opportunities, Lack of Recognition, Underutilization of skills, Role Ambiguity, Role boundary, Working Conditions, Lack of work life balance, Relationship with supervisor and Colleagues but the correlation is negative and is weak. Occupational Stress and Employee Engagement have negative and weak correlation.

Impact of Occupation stress variables on Employee Engagement.

Hypothesis or the research question "What is the impact of Occupation stress variables on Employee Engagement?" is "There is no significant impact of Occupational Stress variables on Employee Engagement. Sub hypotheses for testing the impact are: There is no significant impact of Work Overload on Employee Engagement. a) There is no significant impact of Lack of resources on Employee Engagement. b) There is no significant impact of Lack of growth opportunities on Employee Engagement. c) There is no significant impact of Lack of recognition on Employee Engagement. d) There is no significant impact of Underutilization of skills on Employee Engagement e) There is no significant impact of Role ambiguity on Employee Engagement. f) There is no significant impact of role boundary on Employee Engagement. g) There is no significant impact of working Conditions on Employee Engagement. h) There is no significant impact of Lack of work life balance on Employee Engagement. i) There is no significant impact of Relationship with Supervisor and Colleagues on Employee Engagement. Regression analysis for testing the impact of Occupation stress variables on Employee Engagement showed that there is significant impact of Occupation stress variables on Employee Engagement. Except for Relationship with supervisor and Colleagues, the remaining variables namely Work Overload, Lack of recognition, Role boundary, Working Conditions, Lack of resources, Lack of growth opportunities, Underutilization of skills, Role Ambiguity, Lack of work life balance, have a significant impact on Employee Engagement.

The research question to understand the relationship between Occupation stress and personal strain is "Are Occupation stress variables and Employee Engagement associated?". The hypotheses for this are: 1) Employee Engagement is not correlated to Occupational Stress variables. 2) Employee Engagement has no significant relation to Occupational Stress variables. Empirical analysis reveals that Employee Engagement is correlated to Work Overload, Lack of resources, Lack of growth opportunities, Lack of Recognition, Underutilization of skills, Role Ambiguity, Role boundary, Working

Conditions, Lack of work life balance, Relationship with supervisor and Colleagues but the correlation is negative and is weak. Occupational Stress and Employee Engagement have negative and weak correlation.

Conclusion

Employee Engagement and Occupation stress are correlated. Although Employee Engagement and Occupation stress variables are correlated, not all Occupation stress variables show significant impact on Employee Engagement. Work overload, Lack of resources, Lack of growth opportunities, Underutilization of skills, Role Ambiguity, Role boundary, Working Conditions, Lack of work life balance, have a significant impact on Employee Engagement. Contrary to the literature review, relationship with supervisor and colleagues does not show any significant impact on Employee Engagement.

Suggestions and managerial implications of the study

The following suggestions are made based on the results of primary research:

- Employees need to be given an opportunity to keep on adding new qualifications and skill sets so that it enables them to expand their horizons of understanding about their subject area. This will give them confidence in dealing with the uncertainties related to core area of their work. Also, the feeling of insecurity arising out of lack of resources in terms of skill sets can be addressed.
- Efforts in the direction to bring inclusiveness within the teams is needed as this will bring in lot of support to the employees to handle challenges at workplace. This will also bring in healthy relationships within teams and also with the subordinates and supervisors. The outcome of healthy relationships also can be seen in the involvement of employees in their work. This will also help in keeping stress in control and also enhance the engagement levels of employees.
- Engaged employee's recognition and providing them with perks and incentives will pave the path for others to follow.
- Empowering employees by providing them opportunities to contribute in creative ways away from their normal day to day duties will infuse fresh energy and enthusiasm and belongingness towards their company. This will go a long way in establishing a strong relationship with their company.
- Recognizing efforts and performance of the employees fairly is very crucial for sustaining the engagement levels of employees. A proper system should be followed with transparency. This will help to alleviate the apprehensions employees have regarding system used for assessing performance.

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