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Job Stress and Work-Family Conflict: Moderating role of mentoring in Call Center Industry

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between job stress and work-family conflict. The study also examines the moderating role of mentoring between job stress and work-family conflict. The purposive sampling technique has been used to collect the data from five domestic call centers operating in Gurugram (NCR, New Delhi). The data was examined using Exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) followed by Structured Equation Modeling (SEM) to check the relationship between the hypothesis. Results revealed a significant relationship between job stress and work-family conflict. Employees who work long hours having too much work stress are more inclined to have work-family conflicts. Moreover, it was observed that mentoring acts as a moderator between job stress and work-family conflict. The study is limited to only five domestic call centers in Gurugram. Future studies should include international call centers across India for more generalized results.

Keywords: Job stress, mentoring, and work-family conflict

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern life is full of stress which ranges from personal day-to-day life to organisational activities (Sharma & Bhat, 2020). Consistently increasing rate of psychosomatic and psychological disorders, annoyance and displeasure with life, in general, reflect the high stress being experienced by the people in the present day world. During the last two decades, people's life becomes more stressful due to their demanding nature, ever-increasing need & aspirations, extensive change in their lifestyles and the physical & socio-cultural environment of society (Sharma & Bhat, 2020). Further, intense competition, pressures of meeting deadlines, the uncertainty of the future and a weakened social support system are the major determinants that create job stress among employees. In the present era, every organisation aimed to capture a top position, growing market share and returns with long-run sustainability at any cost (Lundgren et al., 2013). Due to stiff competition at a national and international level, organisations have been compelled to achieve a competitive sustainable advantage (Babatunde, 2011). The management keeps on changing their recruitment policies to keep a quality workforce, to meet the ups and downs occurring in a highly competitive environment, expecting more and more from their employees (Wani, 2013). On contrary, employees are always tried to put their efforts in an optimum manner to fulfill the expectations of management. Industrialisation, urbanisation, modernisation, competition, and increasing level of activity in society are the foundation for increasing stresses. This hectic work life continuously increases job stress globally in all countries, organisations, professions, and among employees, employers, families and society in general in Indian and western contexts (Spector, et al., 2002). This type of stress results in job dissatisfaction and lower motivation among employees. Therefore, it is a debatable issue and requires more and more knowledge, to assess about the causes which hamper the growth of employees and the remedies which can resolve this issue in a dynamic environment. Therefore the present study evaluates the impact of job stress on work-family conflict and moderating role of mentoring between these two.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Stress has become an essential part of our modern life which is unavoidable in the extremely competitive environment (Chauhan and Chauhan, 2005; Sharma & Bhat, 2020). It is the attitude of a person, which decides to what extent an individual faces stress and how successfully he manages it. Chauhan and Chauhan (2005) recommended that when the feeling is negative, one generates problems out of opportunities and causes troubles for himself while an individual with a positive mindset can describe positive elements out of challenging situations. Stress is a prevalent problem of modern business which threaten the individuals by affecting their physical & mental health and damaging their welfare which in turn imposes ill effect on the organisation. The stress that occurs in the organisation through any of its agents is known as job stress which may impact employees' physical & personal health and reduces their job satisfaction level.

2.1 Job Stress

Job stress is an important issue that is receiving attention and is specially studied by experts in organisational behaviour since if it is not administered properly can lead to a harmful impact on individuals, employees and also in the organisation. Job stress negatively influences the employee's health, performance, and employee productivity (Naqvi, et al., 2013). It is essential for work situations since a low level of stress leads to an uninterested and less optimal impact on employee performance. Similarly, if the stress level is higher, it results in fatigue, pain and burnout consequently the impact is less than optimal performance while the stress is at a medium level, the employee is excited, focused and also motivated to complete the task so that the performance becomes optimal (Staal, 2004). Parker & DeCotiis, (1983) identified job stress as a multidimensional concept with two distinct components time stress and anxiety. Time stress is a feeling of being under substantial time pressure whereas anxiety is a feeling of fear, anxiousness, uneasiness and overreaction to a repulsive situation. Further, Kyriacou (2001) opined that job stress is an experience of negative emotional states such as frustration, worry & anxiety that happen when the employee's capabilities and resources cannot satisfy his/her job demands (Malik, 2011). It is the physical & emotional state where the workforce senses an element of discrimination and emotional instability. Moreover, if people suffer from long-term or extreme job stress, their bodies will face the repercussions and wear down rapidly. It can also mitigate the confidence of an individual which leads to capacity loss to cope with challenging work and social situations.

2.2 Work-family conflict

Work-family conflict is considered to be an important issue in today's business world (Burke and El-Kot 2010). Work and family are the most essential parts of individual life that are not simply separated. The idea of work-family conflict was first introduced by Kahn, et al., (1964). Work-family conflict issues emerged during the 1980s as women started participating in the labour force to a larger extent. Work-family conflict is a bi-directional concept divided into two conditions such as work interference with family or family interference with work (Frone, et al., 1992). When duties and family-related problems interfere with job responsibilities, the uncompleted job tasks will interfere with family life. On the other way, when the troubles and duties from work interfere with the implementation of family responsibility, these responsibilities will interfere with the work. One important source of the family conflict related to work is time along with the content of the work of the employees could not be matched, subsequently, tensions would arise. Therefore, it is impossible to perform regular family responsibilities, and as a result, role conflict would arise. Hence, the role conflict between the job role and family role is assumed to be unsuited in work-family conflicts (Netemeyer, et al., 1996).

2.3 Mentoring

Traditionally, mentoring has been used in management, business and law still it is transferrable across various disciplines. Mentoring is a very complex phenomenon that varies from one situation to another and is interpreted by different people in different ways. Mentoring relationship is described by researchers in the simplest terms as comprising of a mentor and a mentee. A mentor is an experienced, highly ranked, dominant, senior member who is dedicated to providing support to a mentee's personal as well as professional growth mentoring relationships are those relationships in which a more experienced person helps a less experienced member to proceed at work (Levinson, 1978). Mentoring relationships are vital at work, where persons must develop skills within their occupation. At various stages of an individual's life, several types of mentoring relationships can arise such as partnership, confidential, and developmental relationships. Mentors discuss present issues that are related to the mentee's work and also advise mentees about how to cope with a career plan. Mentoring has proved to be extremely

useful in transferring knowledge inside the organisation and also highlights complex issues by sharing their views and ideas.

3. HYPOTHESIS

Job Stress and Work-Family Conflict

Work-family conflict occurs when employees bring problems and stress from work to their homes that negatively influence the quality of family life. Kim and Ling (2001) researched the relation between work-family conflict and workstress and they established a positive correlation between the two. Netemeyer et al. (2004) also found that work stress affects work-family conflict. The effects of work-related stress interfering with an individual's ability to engage in family activities lead to work-family conflict (Byron (2005) found that job stress is consistently related to work-family conflict. Work overload is the most relevant antecedent of work-family conflict (Major et al., 2002). Clark and Baltes (2011) revealed different components of stress i.e. role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload as antecedents of work-family conflict. The ability of employees to properly handle role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload may decrease the intrusion of work problems in employee's family affairs and hence lower will be work-family conflict. Individuals who experience stress at work, demand for high output, and lack of a supportive work relationship reported negative moods at home and a higher frequency of disagreements in their marriage (Young et al., 2014). Job stress represents an impediment to successfully meeting the family role, which in turn increases work-family conflict (Netemeyer et al., 2004).

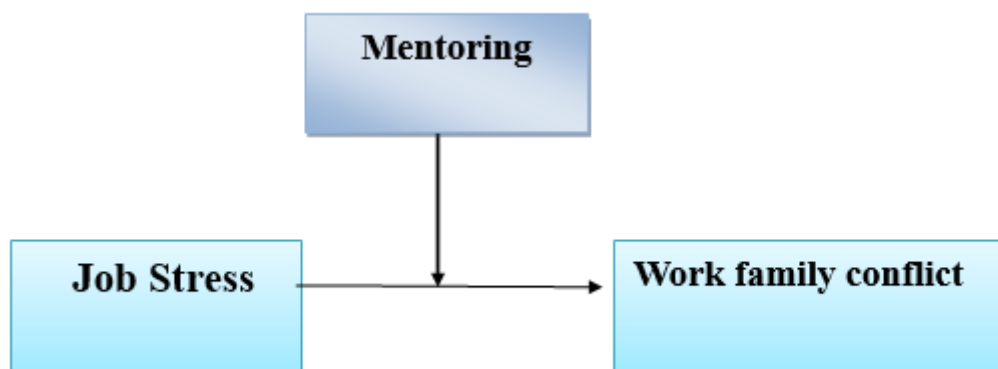
Hyp¹: Job stress has a significant impact on Work-family conflict.

Job Stress, Mentoring and Work-Family Conflict

Mentored employees recognise themselves as an imperative part of the organisation and they feel committed to accomplishing their work under the vision of the organisation. Purcell (2004) recommended that mentors need mentors at various times or at least somebody with whom they can talk about issues. Mentoring provides career-enhancing functions to young adults like coaching, sponsorship, facilitating exposure and offering challenging work as well as protection (Lo et al., 2014) and in a psychological sphere, the mentor offers counseling, confirmation and friendship which help the young adult to develop a sense of professional identity and competence. Mentoring has also been recognised as an influential tool in career growth as career psychologists are advised to find mentors who can help professionally and it is also associated with psychological benefits. Those individuals matched with mentors experienced decreased feelings of hopelessness (Keating et al. 2002) so effective mentoring reduces the effects of stress on work-family conflict. Moreover, successful mentoring matches can help young people develop better relationships with their families as well as other adults (Rhodes et al. 2005). Mentor also acts as a role model and provides guidance and support to employees from time to time which helps subordinates to come closer to the mentor (Eby et al., 2013). This helps the subordinate to share his problems with a mentor (superior) openly. Ultimately all these things help in reducing work pressure as well as family-related problems. The relationship between job stress and work-family conflict will decline if the mentor provides positive psycho-social support. Hence, it can be concluded from the above discussion that the relationship between job stress and work-family conflict will be low in presence of a positive mentor or if the mentor provides social psychological function.

Hyp²: Positive mentoring will lower the impact of job stress on depression, deviant behaviour and work-family conflict and vice versa.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Keywords: *Job stress = independent variable, work family conflict = dependent variable and mentoring = moderating variable*

5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Following steps have been taken to make study more meaningful

5.1. Generation of scale items

Three constructs i.e. job stress, mentoring and work-family conflict have been used in the present research. The job stress scale which includes role stress, role ambiguity and work overload was generated from (Conley & You, 2013); work-family conflict (Armstrong et al., 2015; Grandey et al., 2005) and for mentoring (Scandura and Ragins, 1993) was used.

5.2. Data Collection

The Purposive sampling technique has been used to collect the data from five domestic call centers operating in Gurugram (NCR, New Delhi). Only front-line employees were contacted who have experience of working with the present organisation for more than 6 months. Out of 400 questionnaires distributed to the front-line employees, only 312 questionnaires were returned with an effective response rate of seventy-eight percent. Participants completed a series of questionnaires that included job stress, mentoring and work-family conflict scale.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Exploratory Factor Analysis has been performed to classify the factors of various scales used in the present research. The test of the aptness of EFA has been confirmed by Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) since the value came out to be greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010) which represents sample is adequate and signifies its importance for more analysis. The item with factor loading (< 0.50) was deleted (Hair et al., 2010). Initially, the job stress construct was composed of 25 items. After the application of EFA, 18 items have been retained that got converged under three factors (role stress, role ambiguity and work overload). Further, the work-family conflict scale comprised 18 items that were condensed to 7 items under one factor and mentoring scale of 15 items converted into three factors namely psychosocial support, career development and role modeling. KMO values of each construct are above 0.70 and the total variance explained by each construct is more than sixty percent (Hair et al., 2010).

6. DATA ANALYSIS

6.1 Results

The structural Equation Model (SEM) was used to test the hypotheses such as the relationship between the latent and observed variables. After applying SEM, the impact of job stress on work-family conflict was investigated. To assess model fitness, validity and reliability of scales (CFA) confirmatory factor analysis has been used. Items with less (SRW) standardised regression weights are deleted i.e. (< 0.50) (Hair et al., 2010). The goodness of Fit has been evaluated with different fit indices such as (AGFI) adjusted goodness of fit index, (CFI) comparative fit index, (GFI) goodness of fit index, (NFI), normed fit index, (RMSEA) root mean square error of approximation and (RMR) root mean square error. The models verify every construct since all the values i.e. badness of fit (RMSEA and RMR) incremental fit (CFI and NFI) and absolute goodness of fit (AGFI and GFI) are within acceptable criteria (Table 1). Construct reliability has been checked by composite reliability and Cronbach alpha. Composite reliability and Cronbach alpha values are equal to or higher than 0.70 which shows reliability is good (Hair et al. 2010). In the

present research Cronbach alpha value of job stress (0.717), work-family conflict (0.781) and mentoring (0.750) are within the acceptable limit i.e. 0.70, which proves that the data is reliable. Composite reliability values of the constructs such as 0.843 (job stress), 0.897 (work-family conflict) and 0.816 (mentoring) show the adequate reliability of the constructs. Further, discriminant and convergent validity has also been established. The average variance extracted (AVE) of the scale with 0.5 or above confirm its convergent validity (Hair et al., 2009). The study results suggest that convergent validity exist since average variance extracted (AVE) values for job stress (0.698), work-family conflict (0.700) and mentoring (0.703). Moreover, analysis of discriminant validity is also estimated to check the extent to which a variable is different from other variables (Hair et al. 2010). It has been proved by comparing the squared correlations among different constructs with the average variance extracted (Hair et al., 2010). The average variance extracted for every construct is greater than the squared correlation thus discriminant validity has been proved (Table 2). Additionally, fit indices are within the acceptance limit.

Upon checking the hypothesis the relationship between job stress and work-family conflict was examined where the results revealed a substantial impact of job stress on work-family conflict (SRW=.72, p=0.00). Therefore, we accept the **Hyp¹ Job stress has a significant impact on work-family conflict.**

Table 1. Confirmatory Factor analysis

Constructs	KMO	VE (%)	χ^2/df	GFI	AGFI	RMR	RMSEA	NFI	CFI
Job Stress	0.718	56.953	4.059	0.971	0.946	0.032	0.064	0.989	0.928
Work-Family Conflict	0.683	67.017	1.019	0.997	0.993	0.004	0.007	0.997	0.999
Mentoring	0.564	50.111	4.855	0.986	0.953	0.056	0.072	0.894	0.911

Table 2. Discriminant Validity and Correlation Analysis of Latent Constructs

Constructs	Job Stress	Work-Family Conflict	Mentoring
Job Stress	0.698		
Work-Family Conflict	(0.053) 0.231	0.700	
Mentoring	(0.036) - 0.191	(0.002) 0.047	0.703

Note: Values on the diagonal axis represent Average Variance Extracted and values in parenthesis represent the squared correlation between the constructs. The values with an asterisk represent correlations values.

6.2 Moderation

The study examined the moderating role of mentoring between job stress and work-family conflict. Multiple regression analysis was performed with job stress as an independent variable and work-family conflict as a dependent variable. Data were classified into low and high mentoring based on the median of mentoring (i.e. 3.74). The data below the median value was considered a low mentoring group whereas data above the median value was considered a high mentoring group. Further, Unconstrained and constrained models of job stress and work-family conflict were developed for both low and high mentoring groups to determine the insignificant paths between the models. Since no path was found to be insignificant, no deletion was made. Thereafter, the value of chi-square and degree of freedom (df) were recorded as 1417.502 and 172, respectively, as compared with the constrained model's chi-square (1434.761) and df (174). The difference of chi-square values (Table 5.1) at a 95% level of significance was found to be less than the calculated value, suggesting that both the groups are different which also depicted that mentoring moderates the relationship between job stress and work-family conflict. Results revealed that when mentoring is high, the relationship between job stress and work-family conflict gets weaker ($\beta = 0.546$), and on the other hand, when mentoring is low, this relationship becomes stronger ($\beta = 0.358$). It indicated that mentored employee feels less stress which results from low work-family conflict and increase their business performance. Thus, the **Hyp²** stands accepted.

Table 3: Moderation results

Moderator	Relationship	Models	Chi-square	Degree of freedom
Mentoring	JS - WFC	Unconstrained	678.723	122

		Constrained	696.022	124
		Difference	17.299	2
Keywords: JS- Job stress, WFC-Work family conflict,				

7. Discussion

The important contribution of this research confirms the relationship between job stress, work-family conflict and mentoring. This study examined job stress and work-family conflict among call center employees of five domestic call centers operating in Gurugram (NCR, New Delhi) India. The results reveal that the level of job stress among call center employees is at a high level. The entire mean value of job stress is also at a high level. Based on items of job stress that were asked to the employees, this study has found that all respondents experienced job stress and a high portion of the employees may practice stress that arises almost every day. The level of stress is at a high level, the results give a signal that the administration should be proactive and examine the causes of stress as practiced by the workers before it rises further because prevention is always better than cure. Job stress significantly and positively affects work-family conflict which is similar to past studies (Clark and Baltes., 2011). Further, the study also found the moderating role played by mentoring between job stress and work-family conflict. Mentoring plays a very important role in human development (Germain, 2011) and is measured as a device of upward mobility of mentees (Scandura, 1992). Mentors' support to their subordinates builds their intimacy, trust and interpersonal nearness resulting in optimistic work and job attitudes as well as greater success in career and lesser possibility of intentions to leave among the workers in the organisation (Eby et al., 2013). Therefore, workers will be more committed if there is a visible mentoring system in the organisation and persons with mentors account for more positive outcomes of careers compared with non-mentored persons (Rajendran 2012). The implication of job stress either to human being or businesses have been confirmed by many studies. At an individual level, it will influence the workers mentally, physically and psychologically. At the organisation level, it would influence directly and indirectly the organisation performance and productivity. Therefore, the basic reasons for employee stress need to be recognised and reasonable strategies should be developed to deal with them. The intensity of work-family conflict among the call center employees appears to be high. This implies that the workloads of the workers interfere with their family roles. SEM results show a significant positive relationship between stress and work-family conflict. This indicates that when the workers experience a level of job stress will be high, the level of family conflict will also high. Additionally, when teamwork or mentoring has been introduced have been introduced between independent (job stress) and dependent variable (work-family conflict) level of job stress is low. The findings of the study indicated that mentoring played an important role between job stress and work-family conflict since multiple regression analysis was performed with job stress as an independent variable and work-family conflict as a dependent variable and findings revealed that when mentoring is high, the relationship between job stress and work-family conflict gets weaker, and on the other hand, when mentoring is low, this relationship becomes stronger. It indicated that mentored employees feel less stress and more which results from low work-family conflict and increases their business performance.

Based on the above findings the various suggestions emerged are:

1. Managers should calculate the optimum staffing requirements as per the flow of calls and also by keeping track of shrinkages. So that the agents get proper time to handle the calls.
2. The call monitoring process should be followed by Call coaching programs i.e. the specific call quality issues identified for improvement while monitoring should be sought out by working on customer service skills by adopting one-to-one training sessions known as coaching. By developing the customer service skill, agents will be at much ease while handling the customers and their feeling of work stress will be minimised.
3. Dialog scripting should be minimised to some extent because too much dialog scripting hampers the quality of calls and creates frustration in employees.
4. This study reveals lack of task variety is one of the reasons for job stress; it is human nature that people want to grow and learn new things. Identify ways to keep people learning and developing even after a few years on the job. For example, a few hours of work per week on a special project can help keep employees challenged and interested in the job.
5. Call center employees in India are facing job stress which not only affects their health but also reduces their performance, and decreases their retention rate which ultimately influences overall organisational performance.
6. Organisations should provide mentoring workshops periodically to have the minimum level of stress thereby reducing the work-family conflict among the employees.

7. The training programme should find a place in organisation regularly to reduce work-family conflict and performance-related stress.

8. CONCLUSION

Over the period, the call center business matured and the procedures were still not well placed. When practices associated with human resources are in a proper place, the working becomes easier and clear. Management must formulate policies and incentives as well as promotions should be given which encourage the employees to perform. The success of a call center organisation is based upon the effective and efficient performance of its workers. A higher level of job stress may not affect only the serious physical and/or mental ill health of the workers themselves, but it is also harmful to the organisations in which they work. The proper management of job stress through mentoring is the theme of the present study since mentoring holds a very important role in the reduction of stress and conflict resulting in greater success in the organisation. Hence, the fundamental reasons for workers' stress need to be clarified and realistic strategies must be developed to deal with them so that the intensity of work-related conflict among the call center employees should be identified and try to solve their work-related issues which help the employees to feel stress-free which is also important for the achievement of people management in a call center like service organisation which is not only the welfare of workers but also organisations.

9. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The data of the study is drawn only from one service sector. i.e. call centers thus the study needs to be replicated in another service sector. This study is also restricted to single relationships. i.e. stress and work-family conflict. In the future, some other outcomes of stress such as deviant behaviour and depression need to be studied. Finally, the study is confined to the national call center of Gurugram (Delhi, NCR) only. Future research can wide the circle of study for better generalization of results.

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