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COMMENTARY

MEASURING WORK STRESS OF MARKETING PROFESSIONALS

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Abstract

The study investigated the work stress of marketing professionals in terms of organizational factors, environmental factors and personal factors. Marketing professionals of 51 corporations from twelve sectors of industry listed with Lahore Stock Exchange constituted the sample. An adapted questionnaire having 34 items was used to collect the data. Mean scores were calculated for measuring the significance analysis. Frequencies, standard deviation, one-sample t-test, independent samples t-test, and one-way ANOVA were used to measure and compare the level of stress of the marketing professionals. The study concluded that there was an inconsiderable level of stress among marketing professionals. However, personal factors were found as the major contributors of stress, environmental factors were in the middle, and the organizational factors were causing the least stress among the marketing professionals. There was no substantial difference of opinion regarding stress among marketing professionals in terms of their gender; sector; experience; qualification; and salary. The study recommends marketing professionals seek possible ways for eradicating their work stress. The companies should also launch training and development initiatives for their employees to cope with the work stress to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness.

Key terms: *Work stress, Marketing professionals, Organizational factors, Environmental factors, Personal factors.*

Introduction

Stress is a common phenomenon these days as the increased work load in the professional life is causing every individual experience stress in one way or the other. Stress is the response persons have to extreme pressures or added sorts of loads engaged on them (United Kingdom Health and Safety Commission, 1999) whereas job stress is a condition that arises due to interaction of the people and their job and categorized by changes within people that make them to depart from their regular working (Beehr & Newman, 1978). Stress is affecting lives and one of the easiest places to catch it is the workplace (Thoits, 1995).

Stress, though usually taken as a negative, is reported (Akhtar, 2011) to have two types of namely Eustress and Distress. Eustress is taken as a positive stress and Distress comprises of negative stress. Marketing is a dynamic field and professionals engaged in

marketing face many trials in their job surroundings, considered by intensified struggle, lack of time, lack of space, nonstop technical advancements, dynamic demands from organizational patrons and benefiteres (Hall & Savery, 1986), enlarged practice of sharing and learning management and advanced technology resulting in the increased work stress (Murray & Forbes, 1986). Akhtar (2010), Robbins (2011), and Chaudhary (2012) explained three factors of work stress: the organizational factors, the environmental factors and the personal factors. Organizational factors include technological, peer interaction, and hierarchy of the organization; environmental factors cover micro and macro level interventions of the government; whereas personal factors are related to the life events and social life of employees working in the organization. Although most of the analysis of job stress overlooks the importance of outside factors and proceedings, it is becoming progressively evident that these have a huge impact (Kanungo, 1981). There have been numerous studies on work stress (Kuan, 1994; Bat, 1995; Aun, 1998; Yahya, 1998; Rana, Akhtar, Rafi, Shahzadi & Iqbal 2007; Akhtar, 2011; Chaudhry, 2012) highlighting the same sort of impact. Short-lived stress poses minute risk, but if stressful situation remains unsettled it increases the degree of wear and tear of natural system. As a consequence the risk of damage or ailment worsens (Matteson & Ivancevich, 1999; Cook & Hunsaker, 2001). High level of work stress hampers the performance (Cook & Hunsaker, 2000; Jonge, Dormann, & Vegchel, 2004; Houtman, Andries, & Hupkens, 2004) and organizations lay especial emphasis on the stress management of their employees (Cook & Hunsaker, 2000; Houtman, Andries, & Hupkens, 2004). The current study was aimed at measuring work stress of marketing professionals in terms of environmental factors, organizational factors and personal factors as sub-scales. More specifically, this study answered these questions: (i) Is there any significant level of work stress among marketing professionals in terms of environmental factors, organizational factors and personal factors as sub-scales? (ii) Is there any significant difference of work stress of marketing professionals in terms of environmental, organizational and personal factors as sub-scales? (iii) Is there any significant difference of work stress of marketing professionals in terms of gender; sector; experience; qualification; and salary as independent variables?

Methodology

This questionnaire survey investigated the work stress of marketing professionals in terms of environmental factors, organizational factors and personal factors. An industry sampling technique used by Raza & Naqvi (2011) was followed. Lahore Stock Exchange (2011) had 37 sectors of industry out of which 12 (1/3) were randomly selected which included 154 companies. Out of these 154 companies 51 (1/3) were randomly selected. In this way 51 marketing professionals (i.e. marketing managers) were taken in the sample for the purpose of data collection.

A 34 item closed-ended questionnaire was adapted from Rai (2008), Devi (2007), and a universal stress measuring tool of ISMA organization (NSAD) Questionnaire (2005). Response of items of the scale meant to investigate the work stress of marketing professionals, divided in three sub-scales namely environmental factors (10 items), organizational factors (12 items), and personal factors (11 items), against the options on the Likert scale were calculated as 05 for strongly agree; 04 for agree; 03 for somewhat agree; 02 for disagree; and 01 for strongly disagree. The responses for last item were quantified as 01 for yes and 02 for no. Mean score was used to measure the work stress of marketing professionals. Mean score 03 was taken as cut-point (Raza, Zia, Naqvi, & Ali, 2012; Raza &

Khawaja, 2013). Mean score above 03 was taken as demonstrating considerable level of work stress among marketing professionals and mean scores 03 and under were taken as demonstrating in considerable level of work stress among marketing professionals. Means, frequencies, percentages, standard deviations and *t*-values were calculated to measure the work stress. One sample *t*-test, independent samples *t*-test and one-way ANOVA were used for significance and variance analysis (Raza & Khawaja, 2013).

Findings

The scale used in the current study was found reliable at 0.912 Cronach's alpha. Among the 51 marketing professionals, 50 were male and 01 was female. The sector split of marketing professionals was found as chemical, 4; banking, 7; food, 3; cement, 3; automobile, 6; fertilizers, 5; glass, 4; oil & gas, 2; paper & board, 2; tobacco, 4; insurance, 5; and textile, 6. In experience category 49 (96%) had above 10 years' experience and rest of the 02 were between 5 to 10 years. Of the total 51, 48 (94%) were master degree holders, 03 were M. Phil and none of them was PhD. The salary analysis revealed that 75% of the marketing professionals were enjoying a salary up to PRS100,000.

Combined mean score for all the three sub-scales is 02.007, which is significantly below 03. The mean scores for all the 33 individual Likert scales items were also below 03. Analysis of the sub-scales of work stress, however, categorized personal factors (2.118), environmental factors (2.078), and organizational factors (1.824) in order of level of stress as indicated by the marketing professionals.

All the 51 marketing professionals opted to "yes" when asked whether they want to continue their current job? Analysis of the independent variables in terms of sector; experience; and qualification showed no difference of opinion among the respondents.

Discussion

The results indicated that among the 51 marketing professionals, 50 were male and 01 was female. This tendency reflects the prevailing male dominance in the marketing profession. However, the female are also penetrating in the profession especially in the banking sector (Raza, Zia, Naqvi, & Ali, 2012) which was contributing just 14% in that study.

The current study strived to answer three basic questions. The First research question was, Is there any significant level of work stress among marketing professionals in terms of environmental factors, organizational factors and personal factors as sub-scales? The combined mean score for all the three sub-scales is 2.007, which is significantly below 03. The mean scores for all the 33 individual Likert scales items were also below 03. Contrary to studies like (Cook & Hunsaker, 2000; Jonge, Dormann, & Vegchel, 2004; Houtman, Andries, & Hupkens, 2004), the situation reflects an inconsiderable level of stress among the marketing professionals. One possible reason for the results could be the 75% of the marketing professionals enjoying salary up to PRS100,000 whom were mostly master degree holders. In an economy like Pakistan where finding such a lucrative job is a dream of most graduates, could be the major source of satisfaction for the marketing professionals. This may be the reason, and an encouraging aspect of the respondent profile, that highly qualified people are entering in this profession as 03 of them were M. Phil. This is a limitation of the sample, otherwise PhD holder marketing professionals are also known to the researchers. These argument gets strengthen from the results of the last item of the questionnaire where all of the respondents wished to continue their current jobs. Had there been a considerable level

of work stress, the marketing professionals would have preferred to leave their current organizations. Here the first research question is answered.

The second research question was, Is there any significant difference of work stress of marketing professionals in terms of environmental, organizational and personal factors as sub-scales? Analysis of the sub-scales of work stress categorized personal factors (2.118), environmental factors (2.078), and organizational factors (1.824) in order of level of stress as indicated by the marketing professionals. It means that, though at an inconsiderable level, personal factors which included their personal lives, their family problems and issues, their commitments and engagements are the major potential source of work stress (Semmer, 2003). The respondent profile indicates that majority of the respondents are young people who are establishing themselves in different spheres of their life and hence are feeling stress out of these activities. Environmental (i.e. including social, political and economic) factors were in the middle position and organizational factors such as organizational culture and climate were the lowest contributor to the work stress of the sample marketing professionals. One possible cause of this tendency could be the same demographic aspect of the respondent as they are not in basic decision making positions in their organizations and are relatively less concerned about environmental and organizational factors which are mainly survival issues in business organizations (Robbins, 2011). The second research question is thus answered.


The third research question for the study was, Is there any significant difference of work stress of marketing professionals in terms of gender; sector; experience; qualification; and salary as independent variables? The results of background variables discovered no substantial difference of opinion among the marketing professionals regarding the work stress in terms of gender, sector of the industry, experience on the job, qualification, and salary. It means that both male and female marketing professionals, from all sample sectors of the industry, with all categories of experience, qualification, and salary are of the same opinion regarding work stress in terms of personal, environmental, and organizational factors. One possible reason could be situations where all of them were facing the same level of problems that gives answer to the third research question of this study.

In this way, all the research questions are answered and the objectives of the current study are achieved.

Conclusions and recommendations

The study was aimed at investigating the work stress of marketing professionals. The scale used in the current study was found reliable at 0.912 Cronbach's alpha. Out of 12 sectors of the industry, banking, automobile, fertilizers, insurance, and textile sectors were the major contributors in the sample.

An overall in considerable level of stress was found among the marketing professionals. In this state of affairs, however, personal factors were the major contributors towards stress, environmental factors found in the middle, and organizational factors occupied the lowest position as indicated by the marketing professionals regarding their work stress. All the 51 marketing professionals having male dominance; 10 years' experience; master degree; and a salary up to PRS100,000 as their major demographic characteristics, expressed the similar feelings regarding their work stress and wished to continue their current jobs.

The study recommends marketing professionals seek possible ways to fulfill their personal needs for eradicating the work stress. The companies should also give fair space to the employees for their personal lives and priorities and launch training and development initiatives for their employees to cope with the work stress to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness. 

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Change is not a sideline in the business of leadership; it is integral to the whole idea; to describe a man who left things exactly as he found them as a "great leader" would be a contradiction in terms.

Antony Jay