Working Efficiency of Contrasting Genders under Eustress, Distress, Hyper-Stress, and Hypo-Stress

** Riffat Faizan*
*** Adnan ul Haque*

Abstract

The aim of the study was to investigate the types of stressors affecting the working efficiency of distinctive genders in Pakistan. A total of 281 employees (Males = 140 and Females = 141) working in the IT sector were recruited through stratified (probability) and purposive and convenience (non-probability) sampling techniques. An online matrix based 5-point scale survey was circulated through gatekeepers. The results showed that younger females had higher 'eustress'; whereas, males had higher 'distress' due to less moral and emotional support. Overall, males were more vulnerable to stress as compared to the females. Females effectively used social support in contrast to their counterparts. Personal stressors frequently distressed females ; while, organizational stressors distressed males. The behavioural and physiological reactions resulted from hyper-stress among females ; whereas, psychological reactions were shown by males under hypo-stress. Job role affected the working efficiency of non-managers more as compared to the managers. Adequate usage of personal resources was reported to be effective for coping with the job-related stress.

Keywords : **contrasting gender, distress, eustress, hyper-stress, hypo-stress, working efficiency**

JEL Classification : G14, J82, L02, L10, L19, M0, M10

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Stress is a common feature within an organizational setting (Haque & Aston, 2016). According to Stranks (2005), stress is defined as a disturbance of body's natural equilibrium. According to Haque and Oino (2019), organizational stress is a frequent reaction to attack. Interestingly, it is considered to be intangible by nature (Ekundayo, 2014). In the organizational settings, stress is a common occurrence and is evident to affect the organizational efficiency and productivity in a certain manner (Haque, Aston, & Kozlovski, 2016 ; Haque, Aston, & Kozlovski, 2018 ; Kumasey, Delle, & Ofei, 2014). It is vital to develop further understanding about the variables of interest in the era of 'survival of the fittest,' where the employees are considered as the biggest intangible assets. Stress can affect the working efficiency of employees constructively or adversely. Distinctive types of stressors exist that affect employees, however, there is no conclusive evidence regarding the impact in terms of gender in emerging economies.

The working efficiency and attitude of employees is significantly affected by stress at work, therefore, these variables are keenly investigated by organizational researchers and experts (Haque & Aston, 2016 ; Kumasey et

* *Research Scholar,* Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA), Department of Business and Management, ABMS Open University of Switzerland, Zurich, Switzerland, EU. (E-mail : riffat@sribp.com) ; ORCID Id : https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9331-9843

** *Business Lecturer,* Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA), Business and Management, London Graduate School, London, United Kingdom. (E-mail : adnan@lgseducation.com) ; ORCID Id : https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2051-8635

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al., 2014). Stress is considered as a hindrance to the swift and effective flow of operations (Mark & Smith, 2012). Nevertheless, there is no conclusive evidence regarding the focal point, where good stress becomes bad or worst and vice versa. Stranks (2005) argued that 'personal,' 'organizational,' and 'environmental' factors affect employees at work. However, there is limited evidence regarding the relationship of these factors in terms of gender. From early 'interactional' to latest 'transactional' theories and models of stress, scholars and experts have identified various attributes of stress. There is consensus regarding stress being intangible, frequent emerging, and impacts individuals positively and negatively, despite of disagreement (Haque et al., 2016).

There is much variation in the development of stress among different individuals at the workplace. The optimal level of stress is considered as a motivational and creative force, which has the ability to drive people in achieving eustress (Zehra & Faizan, 2017). However, distress is also known as traumatic stress that is considered as destructive, and it can deprive people of their mental and physical health (Singh, 2014). Stress among people negatively affects their overall performance and health. The level of corticosterone under stress increases, which activates the glutamatergic transmission within the prefrontal cortex. It facilitates the working memory and decreases the level of testosterone that employs a negative impact of sexual motivation (Hernández - González, Hernández - Arteaga, Almanza - Sepúlveda, & Guevara, 2015).

The common symptoms of stress include : inability to concentrate, irritability, trouble in sleeping, and tension. The reaction of males and females towards stress is different because unlike men, women prefer more flexible leadership styles (Tan & Lau, 2012). Moreover, at the strategic level, organizations have high gender diversity and female representation. The career growth chances are increasing for women within the developing economies (Simmons & Nelson, 2007). There is a negative impact of occupational stress in the flow of swift operations, which is presented in the form of deprived performance and diminished productivity at the workplace (Schwarzer & Leppin, 1991).

The impact of stress on organizational commitment has increased among males as compared to females. On the other hand, unlike males, behavioral symptoms among females tend to illustrate various physiological symptoms (Sackey & Sanda, 2011). At the operational level, there is a positive association between occupational stress and organizational commitment, which is experienced by both the genders. Work stress among employees is linked with the level of job satisfaction of an employee (Sackey & Sanda, 2008).

For instance, stress can also develop due to lack of experience to deal with human resource procedures. It might lead to development of inefficient and ineffective functional roles of the employees. The individuals, who possess high tolerance for stress, are able to thrive on several stressors that exist within their physical environment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Stress develops into a major problem when an individual is constantly under pressure and the conditions do not normalize for a long time period.

Previous studies offer limited scope regarding the types of stress affecting the working efficiency of males and females in a comparative manner (Mark & Smith, 2012). Moreover, there is no conclusive evidence regarding the variables of interest that are explored in emerging economies. The variation in eustress, distress, hypo-stress, and hyper-stress is not yet not explored to a larger extent ; although, in recent times, studies have been conducted about occupational stress within the IT sector (Kupriyanov & Zhdanov, 2014). The IT sector is facing challenges related to strategic human resource management (Chandhana & Easow, 2018) ; whereas, the study of Kala, Akbar Jan, Subramani, and Banureka (2017) revealed that occupational stress affects the work-life balance of IT sector's employees. Continued in the same vein, the present study has enhanced the body of knowledge by contributing towards the literature regarding stress variations in gender and emerging economies.

The IT sector of Pakistan is considered in this study due to the cultural awareness and in-depth understanding about the sector. Moreover, the economic opportunities have improved after recession and restoration of the democratic setup in Pakistan. The IT sector has become one of the highest GDP contributors in less than a decade as a result of improvement in the economic opportunities. Therefore, the study aims to investigate the impact of different types of stressors on the working efficiency of males and females working in the IT sector of Pakistan.

Literature Review

Recent studies have confirmed the variation in stress levels between males and females (Haque & Aston, 2016 ; Haque et al., 2016 ; Zehra & Faizan, 2017 ; Zehra, Zehra, Nisa, Ali, Zehra, & Ather, 2017). Interestingly, Haque et al. (2016) and Zehra et al. (2017) found that females were less vulnerable to stress ; whereas, Kumasey et al. (2014) found that females had higher stress as compared to their counterparts at the workplace. However, these studies did not explore the types of stressors affecting distinctive genders within the organizational settings. Tan and Lau (2012) showed that males had higher commitments as compared to female employees. On the other hand, Haque and Yamoah (2014) found that females demonstrated higher commitment. Therefore, it can be argued that commitment is associated with levels of stress. Schwarzer and Leppin (1991) proposed that individuals tend to cope up with different types of job-related stresses because it offers support function in the presence and usage of appropriate personal resources. Haque et al. (2018) argued that females are more people-oriented and participative ; while males are task - oriented and autocratic in management.

Sackey and Sanda (2011) found that the ability to perceive and receive support enables females at managerial and non-managerial positions to cope up with stress, because they constructively use personal resources. The study also found higher depression and anxiety among the male employees (Sackey & Sanda, 2011). Conversely, Brannon and Feist (1992) argued that males use personal resources more adequately as compared to females. However, the aforementioned studies did not offer insights regarding the types of stress in relation to gender. The earlier work of Sackey and Sanda (2008) found that male managers and non-managerial females used social support programmes effectively. Furthermore, Kets de Vries, Guillen, and Korotov (2009) argued that males effectively used social support due to existing organizational cultures. On the other hand, Haque and Aston (2016) and Haque et al. (2016) contradicted the above findings by stating that irrespective of the management layer, females constructively used social support as compared to males. Overall, managers were less stressed as compared to non-managers because of the effective usage of the social support programme. Often, non - managers receive higher moral support, while managers demonstrate reception of emotional support (Haque & Aston, 2016; Haque et al., 2016; Haque & Yamoah, 2014; Sackey & Sanda, 2011). Negi (2019) determined that self-efficacy acted as a partial mediator between stress and depression. Agrawal (2019) argued that impact of quality of work was also vital to determine the organizational performance.

Fairbrother and Warn (2003) and Kumasey et al. (2014) found that organizational factors often create stress for females ; whereas, Haque and Aston (2016) found that personal factors were responsible for enhancing stress among the female workers. In terms of management layers, personal factors create stress and affect the employees' performance adversely at lower levels (Cicei, 2012 ; Stranks, 2005). Conversely, Haque et al. (2016) found that organizational factors significantly contributed towards stress at managerial positions. The evaluation of literature shows that there is a gap in terms of types of stressors in relation to affecting the working efficiency of different genders. Thus, it is significant to provide a brief overview about the types of stressors considered in this study.

(1) Eustress : The positive impact of stress is regarded as 'eustress' (Seyle, 1976). This type of stress has a positive link with employees' working efficiency (Kundaragi & Kadakol, 2015 ; Nelson & Simmons, 2003). It excites employees by enhancing their working efficiency so that they can demonstrate their best and create a positive impact within the organizational setting (Kundaragi & Kadakol, 2015). However, there is still no confirmation about the transformation of good stress into bad stress (distress). Specifically considering the types of gender, there is no conclusive evidence of variation in terms of frequency among males and females (Haque & Aston, 2016).

According to Kupriyanov and Zhdanov (2014), eustress is defined as positive and healthy results of stressful events and stress response. A person tends to experience eustress if the body reacts in an adaptive manner. Eustress

has been narrated as a positive and healthy cognitive response, therefore, individuals experience positive emotions after facing a stressful situation (Fairbrother & Warn, 2003). The extent to which stress is experienced is affected by different variables, including : attitudes, personality, and perceptions of different individuals (Simmons & Nelson, 2007).

Another study conducted by Bakker and Schaufeli (2008) revealed that a positive response of an employee towards stress (eustress) resulted in increased satisfaction of the customers. Moreover, it caused increased engagement within the work communities, which was a result of the positive impact of reduced workload (Divya & Kushwah, 2011). Eustress imposes a great number of benefits on health and work life of an individual. The development of eustress extensively depends on the personality and ability of an individual to cope with stressful situations (Hulsing, 2017). The development of eustress is associated with increased creativity, physical activity, and enthusiasm. It tends to arise when there is a need of inspiration and motivation. For instance, eustress is experienced by a gymnastic before the start of a competition (Brannon & Feist, 1992).

↳ **H_1:** There is no significant difference in the functioning of eustress among males and females in Pakistan's IT sector.

(2) Distress : Distress is the opposite of eustress that adversely affects the performance of employees within the organizational setting (Haque & Aston, 2016 ; Kundaragi & Kadakol, 2015). Reduction in working efficiency of the employees negatively affects the effectiveness of an organization. Furthermore, prolonged distress arising from ceaseless worry at work leads to chronic stress (Batty, Russ, Stamatakis, & Kivimäki, 2017; Kundaragi & Kadakol, 2015). However, there is lack of conclusive evidence regarding distress experienced by males and females.

Constant alteration and readjustments in routine results in distress, which creates a feeling of unfamiliarity and discomfort. Acute distress arrives and disappears quickly; whereas, chronic distress may remain for weeks, months, or even years (Zehra & Faizan, 2017). For instance, distress is likely to be experienced by an individual, who is changing and relocating jobs continuously. A study reviewed psychological distress, experienced by working people in each sphere of life (Tan & Lau, 2012). The results showed that psychological distress negatively affected the physical as well as emotional well-being of women employees. It might result in unhappiness, distrust, lack of respect, and conflict with family members (Chawla, 2017).

The moral values of female employees suffer due to continuous change in the social environment. Women experience psychological distress as a result of industrialization and rapid change in the lifestyles of women as compared to the lifestyles of men (Divya & Kushwah, 2011). The lack of support from spouse and family is likely to increase the level of distress among women and may even lead to divorce or legal separation. However, it is believed that various levels of stress, including distress and hyper-stress, can be treated with progressive muscle relaxation therapy (Simmons & Nelson, 2007).

A study conducted by Chaudhuri, Ray, Saldanha, and Bandopadhyay (2014) revealed that level of stress among both the genders increased as a result of lack of resources, inappropriate working hours, poor compensation, and a smaller number of employees. Occupational distress develops due to psycho-physical environment and other factors such as work overload, job insecurity, or demotion. The situation of distress can be overcome by savouring the positive side of stress, rather than resolving or preventing the negative side of stress. Males are likely to experience distress due to lack of personal resources and social support. Increased level of continuance and affective commitment was demonstrated by females ; whereas, males demonstrated high level of normative commitment (Zehra et al., 2017).

↳ **H_2 :** There is no significant difference in the functioning of distress among males and females in Pakistan's IT sector.

(3) Hyper - Stress : According to Kundaragi and Kadakol (2015), hyper-stress is defined as a stress that is within the manageable limits. Excessive workload is one of the frequent causes behind hyper-stress. Conversely, Stranks (2005) stated that hyper-stress is the resultant of money factors because money related issues adversely affect routine working capabilities and results in strain development. Moreover, development of continuous strain adversely affects individuals at the workplace and at home. According to CSHS (2010), hyper-stress is still under limit and the individuals continue to function adequately within organizational settings. Commonly, acute stress is the interchangeable word used for hyper-stress (CSHS, 2010). However, in terms of gender, the degree of variation of hyper-stress requires further exploration.

Situations of hyper-stress occur when an individual is overloaded with work or is pushed beyond what he/she can handle. For instance, this condition is likely to be experienced by a Wall Street trader. When an individual is hyper-stressed, strong emotional responses can be triggered over little things. This is common among working mothers, who at times get over-stressed due to multi-tasking as they need to juggle between family and work constraints (Folkman, 2013). Hyper-stress is considered as a real challenge for the employees as well as the organizations. Therefore, it is necessary for the employees to monitor the stress - related problems, reduce harmful facets, and promote healthy work (Joy & Radhakrishnan, 2013). However, the organizational revenue tends to increase when health and psychological well-being of the employees is enhanced.

↳ **H_3 :** There is no significant difference in the functioning of hyper - stress among males and females in Pakistan's IT sector.

(4) Hypo - Stress : In contrast to hyper-stress, hypo-stress is generated from permanent stress, which creates fatigue and boredom (CSHS, 2010 ; Kundaragi & Kadakol, 2015). Hypo-stress is not manageable because repetitive incurrence of stress makes the employees so exhausted that they lose their motivation towards work (Kundaragi & Kadakol, 2015). Fretful work reduces the excitement and inspiration. Chronic stress is an example of hypo-stress (CSHS, 2010).

On the other hand, hypo - stress develops among the individuals who are bored constantly. For instance, a factory worker with an unchallenging job often experiences hypo-stress due to performing the same tasks over and over again. It might result in restlessness and lack of inspiration. Therefore, it can be said that hypo-stress is also associated with the development of severe outcomes. Continuous bored nature may also develop certain symptoms of depression, which may affect the lifestyle and other factors negatively. Therefore, it can be said that the condition of hypo-stress is also associated with the development of physical and psychological complications accordingly (Folkman, 2013 ; Joy & Radhakrishnan, 2013).

↳ **H_4 :** There is no significant difference in the functioning of hypo - stress among males and females in Pakistan's IT sector.

Methodology

The study opts for scientific research paradigm by considering the critical realism ontological stance, objective epistemology, and quantitative methods. The idea is to obtain factual truth by confirming the relationship through mathematical objectivity. Critical realism reflects the reality through social context with objectivist epistemology to acquire data in a direct and objective manner. The study has opted for cross - sectional design, and a semi-structured 5-point scale survey questionnaire was developed as the research instrument. The cross-sectional design was preferred to collect the data within a short-term, while sub-sections were formed between major groups such as male and female and managers and non -managers. Hence, the strategy of Haque et al. (2018) was adopted in this study.

The organizations were randomly selected from all five zones of Karachi (East, West, North, South, and Central) and were sampled through stratified sampling technique. The selected organizations were registered IT firms from their official sites. A pilot study was conducted after considering seven randomly picked participants in Lahore that enabled us to make minor changes to the research instrument. Formal emails seeking permission, informing details about timing, research instrument, anonymity and confidentiality, and the purpose of research were sent. After attaining formal consent from the HR departments, the HR officers were requested to circulate the link and inform about voluntary participation with no monetary reward. Using the gatekeeper approach, the connection inside the organization was asked to circulate the instrument among the employees. The gatekeeper was employed to ensure that there was equal number of respondents within the organization. The online form was continuously monitored and tracked for convenience and purposive sampling to ensure an equal ratio in terms of gender.

According to Roscoe (1975), the sample size of higher than 30 and less than 500 is sufficient in drawing logical conclusions. However, according to Haque et al. (2016), anything over 200 responses is effective in reaching logical conclusions. Therefore, the present study opted for a similar strategy to determine the sample size. Within the scientific research, "margin of error" of ±3 is allowed only if there is a control over the confidence level and sample size (LeBlanc, 2004). To a greater degree, the parameter of population (*P*) affecting the value of prior judgement value ($\hat{p}$) could not be controlled. Thus, M.E margin of error formula is effective to attain probable estimation of the population to draw the sample size ($M.E = \frac{z\sqrt{\hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}}{n}$) (Jamal, 2013 ; LeBlanc, 2004 ; Rumsey, 2002). In social science research, up to ±4 could be used (LeBlanc, 2004). This is a social science research using scientific approach. Therefore, margin or error is ±4, which means 0.04 for measuring the sample size with $z = 1.96$ for 95% confidence interval, $\hat{p}$ = prior judgement of the correct value of p is estimated as .3. Thus, by using this formula, minimum sample required is 278 ; so, we ensured that we attain more responses than the derived value.

After reaching 281 respondents (141 males and 140 females), the constructed hypotheses are statistically tested. SPSS (version 23.0) software and funnel approach have been used for in-depth exploration of the variables of interest. The Cronbach's alpha value (0.78) indicated that there is internal consistency among the items on a scale that confirms the reliability aspect. Shapiro - Wilk test was used after choosing from parametric and non - parametric test. The test enables us to locate the distribution of the data. Interestingly, the value (p - value = 0.612) reflects that the obtained value is greater than $\alpha = 0.05$. The derived value indicates that the data is normally distributed, therefore, the parametric test has been used. Pearson's correlation has been used to inspect the strength of the correlation between the variables of interest ; whereas, *t* - test is used for testing the hypotheses to determine the statistical significance through numeric expression. Using the triangulation approach, the reliability, credibility, and validity of the respondents and research pattern is ensured ; 10 males and 10 females were picked randomly and were cross - checked by the HR officer by giving employment ID number and confirming their demographic information such as age, experience, qualification, and designation. The cross checking confirmed that the respondents were reliable, and that the information is valid. Moreover, the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents throughout the research process was also ensured.

Analysis and Results

The descriptive statistics reveal that there is an almost equal split in terms of gender, however, the participation of males as respondents was fractionally higher as compared to the females (50.17% against 49.83%; Table 1). Majority of the participants were between 29 - 38 years of age (58%), holding bachelor's degree (53%), and worked at the operational level (48.3%) with 3 - 5 years of experience (62%) (Table 1).

Parametric Pearson correlation test reflects a positive moderate linear relationship between female employees and 'eustress' ($r = 0.682$; Table 2). It indicates that 68% of the variation in the females' working efficiency is

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Demographic Variables	Descriptive Statistics					
Gender	**Male**			**Female**		
	50.17%			49.83%		
Age	**18-28**	**29-38**	**39-48**	**49 or Above**		
	12%	58%	21%	9%		
Education	**High School**	**Bachelor**	**Master**	**Diploma/Other**		
	7%	53%	29%	11%		
Management Level	**Operational Level**		**Managerial Level**		**Strategic Level**	
	48.3%		32.5%		19.2%	
Experience	**> 1 year**	**1-2 years**	**3-5 years**	**6-8 years**	**9-10 years**	**11 or Above**
	3%	14%	62%	8%	7%	6%

incurred due to eustress. Hence, significant evidence against the null hypothesis is established ($p = .000 < 0.05$; Table 2, where *** = *very significant*). The results of correlation coefficient indicate significant association. Negative and moderate relationship is established between female employees and 'distress' ($r = -.521$; Table 2). Only 52% variation in working efficiency of females results from distress and no significant evidence is found against the null hypothesis ($p = .067 > 0.05$; Table 2).

A weak positive relationship is found between female employees and 'hyper-stress' ($r = .365$; Table 2) and significant evidence identifies against null hypothesis in this regard ($p = .004 < 0.05$; Table 2, where ** = *significant*). Only 36% of variation in working efficiency occurs due to hyper-stress. The statistical test shows a negative moderate relationship between female employees and 'hypo-stress' ($r = -.328$; Table 2). Thus, 32% of the variation in working efficiency results from hypo-stress, however, there is no statistically significant evidence found against the null hypothesis (p - value $= .891 > 0.05$; Table 2). In this study, there is no relationship established between female employees and hypo-stress. Furthermore, female working efficiency is found to have a strong positive upward relationship with personal resources ($r = .812$, $p = .001 < 0.05$; Table 2), emotional and moral support (p - value $= .788$; $p = .000 < 0.05$; Table 2), and personal factors (p - value $= .693$; $p = .002 < 0.05$; Table 2).

The Pearson correlation test shows a positive weak linear relationship between males and 'eustress' ($r = .182$; Table 3). Only 18% of the variation in the working efficiency of males results from eustress. In addition to that, the correlation coefficient results show no significant relationship as no significant evidence is against the null hypothesis (p - value $= .074 > 0.05$; Table 3). Moreover, a positive strong relationship is found between males and

Table 2. Correlations for Females' Working Efficiency and Variables of Interest

Correlation Variables	Pearson Correlation	Sig Value	Results	Interpretation
Working efficiency & eustress	0.862	0.000	$P < \alpha$	***
Working efficiency & distress	-0.521	0.670	$P > \alpha$	No significance
Working efficiency & hyper-stress	0.365	0.004	$P < \alpha$	**
Working efficiency & hypo-stress	-0.328	0.891	$P > \alpha$	No significance
Working efficiency & personal resources	0.812	0.001	$P < \alpha$	**
Working efficiency & moral and emotional support	0.788	0.000	$P < \alpha$	***
Working efficiency & personal factors	0.693	0.002	$P < \alpha$	**

Table 3. Correlations for Males' Working Efficiency and Variables of Interest

Correlation Variables	Pearson Correlation	Sig Value	Results	Interpretation
Working efficiency & eustress	0.182	0.740	$P > \alpha$	No significance
Working efficiency & distress	0.821	0.000	$P < \alpha$	****
Working efficiency & hyper-stress	0.601	0.006	$P > \alpha$	No significance
Working efficiency & hypo-stress	0.733	0.0000	$P < \alpha$	****
Working efficiency & personal resources	0.812	0.000	$P < \alpha$	****
Working efficiency & moral and emotional support	0.788	0.001	$P < \alpha$	**
Working efficiency & personal factors	0.693	0.001	$P < \alpha$	**

'distress' (r =. 821 ; Table 3). Hence, 82% of the variation within the working efficiency of males is because of distress. Furthermore, strong significant evidence is established against the null hypothesis (p - value = .0000 < 0.05 ; Table 3, where **** = *very highly significant*). Therefore, the study confirms the association between the variables of interest. There is a moderate positive association between males and 'hyper-stress' (r =.601 ; Table 3), but no significant evidence is found against the null hypothesis (p - value = .006 > 0.05 ; Table 3) ; 60% of the variation in working efficiency occurs due to the existing hyper-stress. Moreover, there is a strong and positive relationship between males and 'hypo-stress' (r = .733 ; Table 3). Hence, 73% of the variation in the working efficiency of males occurs due to hypo - stress. There is a strong and statistically significant evidence against the null hypothesis (p - value =.0000 < 0.05 ; Table 3, where **** = *very highly significant*). Furthermore, the working efficiency of males has a positive association with organizational factors (r = .712, p - value = .000 < 0.05; Table 3), but a moderate relationship is observed with emotional and moral support (r = .532, p - value =.002 < 0.05 ; Table 3) and personal resources (r =.499 ; p - value =.001 < 0.05 ; Table 3). Nevertheless, the relationship with all the three is found to be statistically significant.

The Table 4 presents the values from 'equal variance assumed' because equality of variance score is greater than 0.05. The results reveal that there is statistically a significant difference between eustress (p-value = .024 < 0.05 ; Table 4), distress (p - value =.001< 0.05; Table 4), hyper-stress (p - value = .0000 < 0.05 ; Table 4), and hypo-stress (p - value =.013 < 0.05 ; Table 4) of males and females. The detailed analysis also reveals that eustress among females and males differs significantly. Therefore, we reject H_1 due to significant evidence against it. Moreover, distress, hyper-stress, and hypo-stress among the distinctive genders differ significantly. Therefore, significant evidences against the null hypotheses enable us to reject H_2, H_3,and H_4.

Table 4. Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t*-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig	*T*	*Df*	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Eustress	Equal variances assumed	.34	.831	2.03	280	.024	.1891	.077
Distress	Equal variances assumed	6.2	.072	1.81	280	.001	.1685	.081
Hyper-Stress	Equal variances assumed	.87	.139	1.65	280	.0000	.1708	.082
Hypo-Stress	Equal variances assumed	.02	.590	-.02	280	.013	-.003	.083

Note. $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$, $^{****}p < 0.0000$

The working efficiency of males and females is significantly different under eustress, distress, hyper-stress, and hypo-stress. The funnel approach identifies that eustress enables the employees to form a positive impact. The findings support the earlier work of Kundaragi and Kadakol (2015). In contrast to males, females within the IT sector of Pakistan are found to constructively use social support, including peer support, physical support, and emotional support (31% against 74.7% ; Table 5). Thus, the present study supports the findings of Sackey and Sanda (2011). Females tend to utilize the support programme effectively in comparison to males, therefore, we contradict Kets de Varies et al.'s (2009) findings. However, these results confirm the results obtained by Haque and Aston (2016) and Sackey and Sanda (2011). Distress among males is found to be significantly higher as compared to distress among females at lower layer of the management due to lack of moral and emotional support (68% against 21% ; Table 5). These results support the earlier findings of Haque and Aston (2016) and Haque et al. (2016).

The organizational factors enhance distress among males (69%) ; while, personal factors cause more distress to females (52%). The personal factors cause stress to females, and organizational factors cause stress to males, therefore, the results oppose the outcomes obtained by Kumasey et al. (2014). The findings reveal distinctive reactions from males and females functioning in the IT sector of Pakistan. These results are found to be aligned with the findings of Haque and Aston (2016). As can be inferred from the Table 5, females demonstrate physiological and behavioural reactions under hyper-stress (65% against 17% ; Table 5) ; whereas, majority of the males state psychological response (81%). Furthermore, psychological reactions are exhibited greatly by males under hypo-stress (86%); whereas, females exhibited physiological and behavioural responses under hypo-stress (59%). This is a new development because previous studies did not offer any evidence regarding this issue. Through the funnel approach, we also find that in contrast to males, younger females demonstrated higher level of eustress, especially between the ages of 18-28 years. The study finds that distress and hyper-stress are manageable; while, hypo-stress is not easily manageable, therefore, the results, to some extent, support the study of Kundaragi and Kadakol (2015). The study depicts that females showed less hypo-stress as compared to males, which reflects that females usually face decreased hyper-stress and males are more stressed. Haque et al. (2016) also found that females were less vulnerable to stress. However, it is also a unique finding that acute stress is found to be higher in females ; while, chronic stress is higher among males.

Females using the support programme scored higher in using personal resources to cope up with job-related stress (63% against 29% ; Table 5) as compared to males. The study opposes the work of Brannon and Feist (1992), which stated that males were more effective as compared to females in using personal resources to cope up with work-related stress. Overall, the findings suggest that personal resources play a significant role in dealing with

Table 5. Funnel Approach to Draw Proportional Analysis Between Genders

Constructs	Male	Female
Eustress	52%	71%
Distress	68%	21%
Organizational factors causing distress	69%	12%
Personal factors causing distress	23%	52%
Physiological and behavioural reaction under hyper-stress	17%	65%
Psychological reaction under hyper-stress	81%	35%
Physiological and behavioural reaction under hypo-stress	14%	59%
Psychological reaction under hypo-stress	86%	31%
Personal resources to cope up with job-related stress	29%	63%
Support Program (peer, physical, and emotional support)	31%	74%

Table 6. Funnel Approach to Draw Proportional Analysis Between Managers and Non-Managers

Constructs	Managers	Non -Managers
Social Support	76%	22%
Personal resources	71%	28%
Job role affecting working efficiency	29%	53%
Tele-working	52%	31%
Flexible working hours	36%	53%
Occupational therapist effective in reducing stress	61%	12%
Social events, workshops, etc. could reduce stress	57%	26%

job-related stress, a finding that is consistent with the study results obained by Schwarzer and Leppin (1991). The present study reveals that males are more vulnerable than females due to job-related stresses, a finding which differs from the results obtained by Kumasey et al. (2014), Haque and Aston (2016), Haque et al. (2016), an Zehra et al. (2017).

In addition to that, managers use social support (76%) and personal resources (71%) more effectively as compared to non-managerial employees (22% and 28% ; Table 6). The working efficiency of managers is affected less adversely by job role as compared to the non-managers (29% against 53% ; Table 6). The employees were asked if they would like to suggest something that could be effective in reducing work-related stress. In response to that, 52% of the managers stated working from home (tele-working), while 36% stated flexible working hours/rotation in shifts would be effective in reducing work-related stress. On the other hand, non-managers (31%) reported tele-working, while 53% stated flexible working hours as an effective means to reduce work-related stress (see Table 6). The employees were also asked about their opinions regarding the introduction of an 'occupational therapist' at the workplace. Majority of the managers agreed that occupational therapists should be a part of the organizational setting because they offer professional counselling, while only a handful of non-managerial level employees reported them to be effective (61% against 12% ; Table 6). According to the managers, the arrangement of social events, workshops, etc. could help in reducing stress (57% ; Table 6), while only some of the non-managerial level employees reported that these could be effective in stress reduction (26% ; Table 6). All these are new developments because there was no evidence from the available literature regarding these attributes.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the working efficiency of males and females significantly varies under eustress (good stress), distress (bad stress), hyper-stress (acute manageable stress), and hypo-stress (chronic non-manageable stress). Females experience higher eustress as compared to their male counterparts. Additionally, younger females demonstrate high level of eustress ; while males from all age brackets exhibit higher distress. The chronic (non-manageable) stress among males occurs due to failure to incorporate personal resources and deal with stressors. The acute (manageable) stress in females is due to effective usage of social support and personal resources at the workplace. Additionally, lack of moral and emotional support at work significantly contributes towards distress among males. The working efficiency of males is significantly affected by organizational factors as it causes higher stress, which may even lead to hypo-stress. On the other hand, personal factors affect the working efficiency of females, but their level of stress varies as it could generate eustress and at times distress transforming into hyper-stress. Females at operational level exhibit higher distress as compared to other levels ; whereas, males on all management layers exhibit higher distress than their counterparts do. Overall, hypo-stress is found to be

frequent among males, but managers have lower chronic stress as compared to the non-managerial employees due to effective emotional support.

The stressors affect the working efficiency of females less because of moral, emotional, and peer support programs. The consequences of stress also vary in terms of gender. Females experiencing hyper-stress or hypo-stress exhibit behavioural and physiological reactions ; whereas, males show higher cognitive, behavioural, and psychological reactions. Overall, females have significantly lower hypo-stress as compared to males, irrespective of the operating management layer. As compared to males, females are found to be less vulnerable to stress and their working efficiency did not decline to a larger extent. The personal resources enable employees to cope up with stress. Hence, it is confirmed that workplace support plays a significant role in improving employees' working efficiency and ability to transform little stress to good stress.

Managerial Implications

The study recommends the management of IT sectors to introduce flexible working schemes such as 'tele-working' and 'shift-rotations.' The organizations should consider professional occupational therapists to ensure that their best resources have adequate cushion in shape of counselling when the employees experience acute and chronic stress. Moreover, the managements need to organize social events, workshops, etc. frequently as part of social support because it will convey the sense that the management cares for employees. The ABC (awareness, balance, and control) strategy proposed by Haque and Oino (2019) can be used in the IT sector in order to create awareness related to job - related stressors. A practical scenario-based learning environment should be created to promote balance, while the managers should continue to supervise the workload so that there is control on the different types of stressors affecting the employees. These implications would help to improve the working efficiency of employees and reduce their stress levels.

Limitations of the Study and the Way Forward

There are certain limitations in the research, although adequate means and procedures are used to draw logical conclusions. Therefore, it has been suggested that the future studies need to improve the research strategy to enhance the generalizability factor. The present study is a cross-sectional research, and has only considered specific regions to ensure that the research is in-depth. However, future researchers should consider a longitudinal (panel) study to examine the events in two different time lags. It will offer more concrete evidence regarding the research variable by exploring variations in responses after a certain time frame. Moreover, a comparative analysis in terms of economies could increase generalization of the findings because investigating variables in distinctive types of economies contribute to superior knowledge as compared to the region - specific context. The present study has offered statistical significance, but future research needs to extend it by including in-depth interviews with experts and employees to attain a qualitative perspective. Although, the present study has numerically expressed the results, but inclusion of interviews would provide deeper understanding about the research phenomenon.

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About the Authors

Riffat Faizan is a Research Scholar at the ABMS Open University of Switzerland. She delivers guest lectures to graduate and undergraduate students at ABMS University. She is an experienced freight broker skilled in operations management, logistics management, time management, and customs brokerage.

Adnan ul Haque is a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) from the University of Wales, TSD-London. He is a Business Lecturer at London Graduate School and an Online Mentor for Oxford Brookes University for BA (Hons) students working on final research projects.