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The Relationship Of Challenging Stressors With Job Outcomes And Project Success: Moderating Role Of Social Support

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Abstract:
A growing body of research indicates that techniques for evaluating the cognitive impact of workplace stressors must account for the influence of individuals' perceptions on their reactions. In addition, it analyses how workers perceive and are affected by job stress. As a result, his study focuses on the challenging stressors in engineering organizations, emphasizing how the engineer's perception of these stressors leads to the development of stress, which in turn affects the engineer's performance and the success of engineering projects. We utilized both primary and secondary data sources to attain this objective. It was discovered that Project Success, Engineering Performance, and Commitment are all favorably associated with Challenging stressors and Social Support.

Keywords: Challenging stressor, social support, Project success, Performance, and Commitment

Introduction:

Both industrialized and developing countries acknowledge the significance of occupational stress. Fisher (2001) asserts that scholars have paid great attention to workplace stress and its implications on productivity in recent years. According to Pflanz and Ogle (2006), a rise in stress-related episodes in the workplace causes people to lose interest in their work, become less committed to their professions, and become more intolerant of others. Lynn and Corbidge (2004) estimate that the financial consequences associated with stress are in the billions of dollars, and they note that this is true across all economic sectors. This results in non-financial issues such as increased absenteeism, missed deadlines, worker disengagement, and the eventual collapse of the organisation (Lynn and Corbidge, 2004).

According to a study conducted by Wheeler and Riding (1994), high stress levels result in decreased productivity, healthcare costs, employee turnover, and job satisfaction. Extreme stress is one of the key elements determining employee performance and commitment (Paul, Elam & Verhaut, 2007). When workers are invested in their work, it reflects in their actions and overall production, according to Dordevic (2004). According to Bhatti and Samina (2011), stress directly affects employees' commitment to their jobs. When employees are highly engrossed in their work, organizational dedication and firm performance appear to rise (Mowday et al., 2004). (Bhatti and Samina, 2011). According to Tisher et al. (1990), the success rate of project management is unacceptable. Multiple systematic reviews from diverse domains, such as the IT (Simmons and Korrapati, 2004), DOD (Dvir et al., 2006), and building industries (Chan et al., 2004), indicate that this topic has not been fully investigated in the past. Similar findings from other Asian nations, such as China (Wang & Huang 2006), India (Iyer & Jha 2006), Vietnam (Nguyen et al. 2004), and Brunei (Salleh 2009), verify the foggy nature of the overall project success rates. However, from the perspective of industrialized nations, the association between project management and success rates is high enough to merit consideration (Tusi, 2004). These explanations are acceptable because they examine the aspects that contribute to the success of projects in advanced economies from a specific perspective. However, these approaches proved incapable of bridging the gap between project management efforts and success rates in developing nations. This study aims to determine how exposure to tough stresses affects later occupational results and the success of projects in Pakistan. In addition, the study will investigate the impact of social support as a moderator on engineer performance in terms of both efficacy and project success.

Researchers, business executives, and politicians have all been eager to understand more about the causes and impacts of workplace stress since the birth of the global economy. It is becoming increasingly difficult for firms of all types to ignore the connection between poor project management and employee burnout. In recent years, stress in the workplace has been recognized as a fundamental factor impacting employee commitment and business performance in both developed and emerging nations (Lingle, 2007). Ali et al. (2014) support the notion that workplace stress has an influence on workers' productivity.

Approximately three billion people in the world are affected by a pervasive and tough problem. Globally, occupational stress is increasing, but in Pakistan it appears to be particularly severe. This inquiry of the relationship between organizational stress and its influence on employee dedication in Pakistan must consider three primary aspects.

Firstly, the stress and anxiety rates in Pakistan's diverse industries are substantially higher than in other growing nations in the region (Haque and Aston, 2016). The significance of stress varies on variables such as individual perspective, circumstance, and environment. Consistent with cognitive theory, this highlights the importance of the individual's perspective in the stress process (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984).

Second, both small and large organizations acknowledged workplace stress's significance and total cost. Padsakoff (2017) estimates that there were 526,000 incidents of work-related stress in the United Kingdom in 2016/2017, which equates to 1,610 cases per 100,000 workers in SMEs and larger businesses. The European Union (EU) loses between $180 billion and $280 billion annually due to stress illnesses, a figure supported by research in other European nations. Additionally, it exacerbates already poor levels of job satisfaction and corporate loyalty. Work-related stress costs non-European countries an estimated AU$ 5.3 billion annually in Australia (LaMontagne et al., 2010), CA$ 8.25 billion annually in Canada (Shain, 2008), and US$ 300 billion annually in the United States (according to recent estimates) (Jauregui and Schnall, 2009). Empirical research supports the widespread belief that workplace stress can lead to undesirable effects such as burnout, physical sickness, unhappiness, poor performance, and employee turnover (Jackson and Schuler, 1985; Kahn and Byosiere, 1992; Sonnentag and Frese, 2003).

Thirdly, an insufficient social support mechanism leads to a relationship between workplace stress and a lack of employee commitment to the organization (Haque and Aston) (2016). Social support programs, which have a role in managing stress, tension, and productivity, are more readily available to employees of larger organizations (Lingard and Francis). According to the Demand-Control-Support-Model (DCSM), the detrimental consequences of stress are mitigated among socially supported workers (Janssen et al 2001). Lingard and Francis (2006) concur, saying that an individual's social support network may serve as a buffer against burnout and occupational stress. However, the level of support between the sexes is vastly unequal. In Pakistan, the lack of a social support structure among small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) and their larger competitors is the leading cause of workplace stress (Haque and Aston, 2016). Therefore, this study aims to investigate how social support can enhance performance and reduce turnover among workers whose efficacy is impacted by challenging stressors.

The following research questions will be developed to achieve the paper's aim and objectives.

1. **What is the relationship between social support in the ambivalence of challenge stressors and engineer's commitment, performance and project success?**

The literature investigates various pressures and social support systems to provide an answer to the topic mentioned above. To answer the second part of the question, we examined the relationship between theory and practice via the perspective of employee commitment and project success.

2. **What are the antecedents that restrain the organizational social support system in the ambivalence of opportunistic stressors and performance and commitment?**

To answer this question, we analyzed a variety of factors that can have an effect on the social support system in every organisation and deduced their combined effect. The relationship between stressor and commitment was investigated further by examining many other mediating factors.

3. **Investigate the engineer's need within social support system at organizational level in order to cope with stress (i.e. demand side)?**

In times of stress, the third line of inquiry focuses on the social support requirements of engineers. This study analyses the relationship between stress and social support networks from the perspective of the need for such systems, examining various models and programmes for meeting support needs.

4. **What are current organizational social support system techniques to address stressor within engineers to increase performance and commitment (i.e. supply side)?**

The fourth investigation focuses on the mechanisms by which the organization promotes increased productivity and loyalty. This investigation examines the supply side of the problem, focusing on the several ways that might be utilized to cope with stressors and enhance performance.

Stressor-Performance Relationship:

In Section 2.1, we will analyze the relationship between stressors and performance by describing the structure of stressors and presenting several perspectives on the problem. Academics, politicians, and stakeholders in larger organizations should be worried about the increasing levels of stress in Small and Medium-Sized Businesses (SMEs). Ultimately, it accelerates discovering and comprehending the various perspectives and factors influencing individual and organizational performance. There are two commonly acknowledged schools of thinking regarding how stress affects the commitment, performance, and end product of

employees. Work pressures undeniably affect individuals and their performance, as well as the overall company success of SMEs and larger competitors (Jamal, 1984; Westman & Eden, 1996).

First-person and second-person viewpoints differ in a number of significant ways. Muse et al. (2003) assert that the relationship between the two variables is, at best, tenuous. Pearsall et al. (2009) contend that the level of stress experienced by the individual or organisation moderates the association between occupational stresses and employee performance. There is a widespread perception that some stress at work may be healthy for employees (Yerkes and Dodson, 1908). This passage acknowledges Lepine et al(2005) .'s research on the stress levels of engineers. Their research led them to the conclusion that an individual's subjective performance diminishes when their stress levels are too high. In addition, it is consistent with the inverted-U model given by Yerkes and Dodson (1908). Both perspectives indicate that reducing the pervasiveness of stressors in developed economies is an urgent task. Emerging nations exhibit a similar degree of obscurity and lack of clarity. To that purpose, the current project aimed to corroborate the already-reported high prevalence of depression in Pakistan and conduct a more in-depth analysis of the societal issues this disorder brings in that country.

Challenging Stressors and Stress Coping Strategies:

The literature recognizing the role of stress in the workplace and demonstrating the inevitability of stressful conditions in organizations is expanding (Sadri and Marcoulides 1994). According to O'Driscoll and Dewe, stress negatively influences individual and organizational effectiveness (2001). From the perspective of an individual, it contains multiple layered characteristics, such as failing mental or physical health (O'Driscoll & Dewe, 2001). Thus, we can conclude that stress directly affects productivity, and excessive stress levels have detrimental repercussions for both individual employees and the organization as a whole (Brynien, 2006). This approach is supported by Montgomery et al. (1996), who characterize workplace stress as an individual response to workplace situations. Stress in the workplace is defined similarly by Sauter et al. (1999), who state that it appears in both physical and verbal ways that are counterproductive. Because of this, there has been a significant increase in studies on how to fight workplace stress. Still, workers have differing opinions regarding which paradigms pose the biggest challenges on the job.

Cavanaugh et al. (2002) provide a two-dimensional framework in which they investigate stress resulting from both challenging and tough work situations. In the literature, challenging job requirements are frequently identified as variables that lead to a sense of personal growth and accomplishment (Cavanaugh et al., 2000). An employee’s performance on a given project is governed by job criteria relating to impediments. Work demands that represent a substantial challenge to an individual emphasize personal development and task

management. In contrast, restrictions in the workplace pertain to an employee's personal development. According to Cavanaugh et al. (2000), a class of stressors called as challenge stressors can drive employees to pursue personal objectives. According to Boswell et al. (2004), one of the primary causes of stress is a workplace that is excessively demanding and makes it impossible to acquire new knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs).

In contrast to earlier findings, several significant outcomes have been identified within the categorization of stressors. Reliability (Boswell et al., 2004), performance (Pearsall et al., 2009), job satisfaction (Podsakoff et al., 2009), and total job satisfaction were found to be positively affected by challenge stresses (Podsakoff et al., 2007). Competent employees in small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) and their counterparts in larger organizations are more likely to perceive challenge stressors as motivating (Liu et al., 2013). Therefore, challenge stressors have the ability to raise worker KSAs, thereby increasing employee motivation and corporate loyalty. Following the preceding discussion, the primary purpose of this research is to confirm findings from the current literature that engineers regard stressors offered by challenging tasks as opportunities for individual and social growth (Lepine et al., 2005). Secondly, this study demonstrates that challenging circumstances positively link the success of engineering projects (Freeman and Beale, 1992).

Moderation Effect between Social Support and Stress:

Cobb (1976) defines social support as the presence of a social network, the satisfaction and convenience of accessing social support, and the variety of social support providers. According to Kwok and Wai (2005), the psychological health of a workforce is directly tied to the presence of social support systems in the workplace. The DCSM causes stress in the workplace when demands are high, yet control and social support are inadequate (Lingard and Francis, 2006). In addition, Lingard and Francis (2006) assert that employees with a strong social support system at work are more productive and have a more positive response to stress. The results demonstrate that the SSS at the workplace buffers the relationship between the two variables.

Employees Commitment and Project Successes:

Examining staff dedication and organizational effectiveness is essential as a constant issue in engineering projects. According to Jaros (2003), commitment occurs when an individual feels a sense of loyalty, affection, and belonging toward his employer. Kanungo (1979) argues that an employee's level of dedication to their job can be equated to their emotional investment in the company. Past research has identified three primary factors contributing to an individual's dedication to a particular organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990). This research, however, will focus narrowly on engineers' commitment to the organization as a

whole and how it affects their performance and the success of the projects on which they are working. Therefore, I've divided this piece into three parts.

From a stakeholder's point of view, it's possible to draw connections between employees' devotion and their actions and the quality of their work as a whole (Dordevic, 2004). There is a correlation between employee dedication and turnover, say Manimala and Kumar (2012). Dordevic (2004) corroborates this view, arguing that a high turnover rate signifies dissatisfaction among workers, leading to poor business results. However, it has several positive effects on the organization and the performance of both employees and the firm itself. As defined by Rajendran and Rose (2005), organizational commitment is a subset of employee commitment that includes both job and career dedication. This shows that employees with a high level of commitment may outperform those with a lower level of commitment (Mowday et al., 2004). According to Bhatti and Samina (2011), when faced with a difficult stressor, an individual's dedication to the project, as and his or her performance and productivity a direct hit. They went on to say that the presence of stress significantly effects employee commitment, eventually increasing turnover rate or lowering commitment, and that this is true both within SMEs and their bigger counterparts.

As a second point, Kuen and Fernando (2009) looked at what makes manufacturing businesses successful projects and found that there are two key dimensions to project success: direct and indirect. As Kuen and Fernando (2009) describe, the value a project creates and the happiness of its direct end users are the two most important metrics of its direct success (micro project success). However, macro project success is measured by the organisation and is an indirect measure of the project's success (Kuen and Fernando, 2009). Westerveld (2003) argues that project managers view success factors as levers they can pull to improve the likelihood of achieving their goals.

To increase the likelihood of a project's success, it's important to influence the correct things at the right moment (Savolainen, Ahonen, & Richardson, 2012). To achieve this goal, it is necessary to conduct a thorough analysis of Critical Success Factors (CSFs) in relation to the organization's goals and objectives, focusing on foreseeing potential repercussions and selecting suitable responses (Mobey and Parker, 2002).

Thirdly, job performance is related to job attitude and withdrawal behavior, which in turn is related to job commitment and Project success (Miloslavic and Johnson, 2011). Individuals' performance on the work can be defined in terms of their success in completing tasks and making effective use of resources, as stated by Jamal (1984). There are four distinct theorised links between stressful work factors and their effects on productivity at work. Relationships between the two variables are broken down into four distinct types in the literature: negative linear, positive linear, curvilinear/U-shaped, and no relationship (Jamal, 1984).

The first scenario is where workers view work stress as highly negative, leading to poor productivity, high turnover, and a diminished chance of success for any given project (Westman & Eden, 1996). Second, in the U-shaped relationship between job stress and performance, it is explained that when stress levels at work are low, an individual's performance improves (Robbins, 2011). Robbins (2011) counters that high levels of persistent job stress lead to a decrease in effort and poor performance. Meglino (1977) argues that proponents of healthy relationships view stress at work as a welcome challenge. He goes on to say that when people are under minimal stress, they are neither challenged nor motivated to perform. Individuals do about as well as one would expect them to at the medium stress level because they are only somewhat stimulated in response to the task. When pressure is intense, an individual is most challenged, and as a result, their performance improves (Meglino, 1977). Finally, the psychological contract approach between an employee and their employer is the source of the no-correlation-between-stress-and-performance hypothesis. In the lack of any correlation, it can be assumed that high chronic job stress has little to no effect on an employee's performance. As a result, Taveggia and Kaplan (1998) contend that no relationship can be faulted for viewing stress as either functional (increasing performance) or dysfunctional (reduced performance).

Research Methodology:

This section considers the research question, proposed technique, and the research's nature, goal, and strategy. When choosing a methodology, it is essential to consider the conceptual foundations of the research as well as the study's organization, data, and analysis techniques. The plan specifies how a sample will be taken from the wider population, what data will be collected, and what model will be used for analysis.

Data Analysis:

This section's major objective is to analyze the data using SPSS and questionnaires before describing the results. Descriptive and reliability research was undertaken with 220 individuals in Lahore as a preliminary phase. In addition, a proper sampling procedure was employed in conjunction with the construction and dissemination of structured questionnaires to assure the integrity of the data. Here are examples of the numbers required to calculate not just the cumulative percentage, but also Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and item-to-total correlations. This method was used to test hypotheses to confirm the correctness and trustworthiness of the data received from participants. Using IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, the moderating function of social support in the relationship between challenging stresses and positive job outcomes and project outcomes in Pakistan was also investigated (IBM SPSS).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Challenging Stressor	3.73	.800	.640	.498	.164	.127	.327
Social Support	3.91	.664	.441	.486	.164	.057	.327
Project Success	3.8120	.66952	.448	.525	.164	.319	.327
Engineer Performance	3.7235	.74938	.562	.297	.164	.292	.327
Commitment	3.7273	.88356	.781	.700	.164	.393	.327

The descriptive analysis contains descriptive statistics which measure the central tendency. It demonstrates how data is concentrated in one area and how dispersed the remaining numbers are. In this investigation, the researchers employed the mean and standard deviation to zero in on the study's main point and surrounding environment, respectively. Table 1 displays mean, standard deviation, variance, Skewness, and Kurtosis values. When examining the mean, it is evident that all variables fall within the normal range. Since all categories had mean values above 3, most respondents were either indifferent to or tended toward an agreement with the questionnaire's assertions.

Table 2: Correlation and Reliability analysis

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Challenging Stressor	**(.908)**				
2. Social Support	.738**	**(.917)**			
3. Project Success	.927**	.857**	**(.944)**		
4. Engineer Performance	.463**	.509**	.590**	**(.865)**	
5. Commitment	.446**	.523**	.594**	.731**	**(.824)**

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

Table 2 of the correlation analysis depicts the relationship between the explanatory variable and the dependent variable. In addition, the significance of the correlation between the variables is made clear. According to the preceding table, there is a correlation between Challenge Stressors and Commitment of 0.446**. The reliability analysis for the variable "Challenging stressor" reveals a high value of 0.908, indicating that it is highly reliable. Pearson's correlation value, which indicates the strength of the relationship, is.446** with p.001, indicating that the results are statistically significant and that there is a strong relationship between Challenge Stressor and commitment. Furthermore, the correlation

between "Social Support" and "Commitment" is.523** with a p-value of.001, which is statistically significant.

Moreover, the reliability analysis for the project success variable is 0.944, suggesting that this variable is also quite reliable. The correlation between Project Success and commitment is 0.594** with p.001, which is also statistically significant. The reliability analysis for the variable engineer performance reveals a value of 0.865, suggesting that this variable is also exceptionally reliable. The correlation between Engineer's Performance and Commitment is.731** with a p-value of.001, which are both statistically significant. Additionally, commitment is quite reliable, with a reliability analysis of 0.824.

Table 3: Regression Analysis

		B	T	Sig.
Challenging Stressor →	Project Success	0.775	36.394	0.00
Challenging Stressor →	Engineering Performance	0.433	7.703	0.00
Challenging Stressor →	Commitment	0.492	7.353	0.00

Table 3 of the Regression Analysis displays the coefficient of determination (r) for each independent variable in relation to the dependent variable. The accompanying table shows that an increase of one unit in Project Success results in a comparable increase of 0.775 units in Challenging Stressor (p.05), indicating a strong relationship between the two variables. The unstandardized "B" for Commitment is.492 units or 49.2% with a corresponding t value 7.353, which means that one unit or 1% increase in Commitment will increase.492 units or 49.2% in Challenging Stressor; similarly, the Beta value for Engineering Performance is.433, with corresponding t value 7.703 and significance value p.05; this is statistically significant. If the "P" value is less than 5% (P0.05), the model is considered to be statistically significant. All three hypotheses are supported since the data show a positive correlation between demanding Stressor and the independent variables of Project Success, Engineering Performance, and Dedication.

Table 4: Moderation Analysis

		β	T	Sig.
Challenging Stressor *Social support → Project Success	-	0.125	44.572	0.00
Challenging Stressor *Social support → Engineering Performance	-	0.079	9.429	0.00
Challenging Stressor *Social support → Commitment	-	0.091	9.166	0.00

Table 4 of the Moderation Analysis depicts the strength of the link between each independent variable and the dependent variable, as moderated by the moderator variable. The link between Challenging Stressors, Social Support, and Project Success has a beta value of.125, a t value of.44572, and a p-value of.05. This indicates that a 1% improvement in Project Success is mediated by a 12.5% increase in Challenging Stressor, assuming Social Support remains unchanged. Likewise, a one-unit or 1% improvement in Engineering Performance in response to the Social Support variable and the Challenging Stressor is statistically significant (Beta =.079, t = 9.429, p =.05). The unstandardized "B" for Commitment and the Social support variable is.091 units or 9.1%, with a corresponding t value of 9.166, indicating that a 1% increase in Commitment will result in a.091 unit (or 9.1%) increase in Challenging Stressor via moderator variable. If the value of "P" is less than 5% (P0.05), the model is statistically significant. The findings indicating that Challenging Stressors, Social Support, Project Success, Engineering Performance, and Commitment all have positive relationships with one another support all three hypotheses.

Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations:

This section concludes the study by analyzing the data to identify the relationship between Challenging Stressors and Job Outcomes and project success. The primary objectives of the study were to (1) determine whether engineers who had access to social support were better able to deal with the ambivalence of challenging stressors; (2) examine the antecedents that limit the organizational social support system when dealing with an ambivalence between performance and commit, and (3) examine the social support needs of engineers at the organizational level to deal with stress (i.e. demand side), and (5) develop an empirical model of the relationship between social support and stress (i.e. the demand side). A simple random sampling technique was used to choose a sample of Lahore engineering firms to meet the study's objectives. It was discovered that the bigger the pressure a project team encounters during operationalization, the higher the probability of project success. A solid social network close by can make all the difference for Lahore engineers under comparable circumstances. Additionally, engineering staff pressures positively influence project commitment, which aids in achieving the project's objectives.

Findings and Discussion:

Previous research has established a correlation between the capacity to manage stress in the workplace and enhanced organizational performance. Various sectors have been the subject of previous studies in emerging nations, particularly in Pakistan. However, when applied to the context of engineering firms, these strategies need to be revised to address the challenging circumstances and project commitment. This study's statistical analysis was based on the aforementioned theoretical works and literature. In accordance with the study's hypotheses, we discover:

According to the descriptive analysis, the majority of respondents positioned themselves in the middle of the range, agreeing with or having no opinion about the questionnaire's assertions.

Correlation analysis of the study's variables indicated a substantial relationship between the Challenge Stressor and Commitment. Social support is substantially connected with a person's level of commitment. While there is a strong correlation between commitment and project success, there is also a strong correlation between engineer performance and project success.

Thirdly, all study variables were subjected to reliability analyses, which validated their dependability. The coefficient of variability for the Challenging stressor is.908. The analysis of dependability for social support is 0.918, for project success, it is 0.944, and for engineer performance, it is 0.865. The fact that all variables in the study are reliable is significant evidence of this.

The association between each independent and dependent variable was also evaluated using regression analysis. If you increase Project Success by one unit or 1%, the stress level generated by the project's problematic variables will increase by 0.775%, or 0.75 units. Similar to the relationship between Challenging Stressors and Engineering Performance, a 1% increase in Engineering Performance leads to a 0.433 percent increase in Challenging stressors. Similarly, a 1% increase in Commitment will result in a 49.2% increase in Challenging stressors.

Recommendations:

Engineering firms should provide more social support for their employees to boost project commitment and overall business performance. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and their larger counterparts maintain constant contact channels. Employees who feel there is no social support system could also discuss the matter with top management. They may be able to retain their performance and obtain a competitive advantage in the tobacco sector if they implement these strategies.

Limitations:

This study includes a few small drawbacks. It is vital to highlight that the empirical investigation was conducted just in one of Pakistan's major cities (Lahore). In addition, although organizational culture is commonly recognized as a key obstacle, it exists to help both SMEs and their larger competitors. Personality and knowledge of the social support system within organizations can differ greatly from person to person.

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