

Job Stress and Employee Creativity: The mediating role of Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract - *The obstinacy of this study is to lessen the job stress between individuals at work place by mediating the relationship through emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence between predictor and criterion variables enhances employee well-being (creativity). Time lagged data through a self-reported questionnaire was collected from employees of Suzuki Company. Employees of Suzuki (n=150) filled the trait measure of job stress questionnaire and after three weeks' participants completed the emotional intelligence and creativity questionnaire. Supervisors of employees to counter check also filled up another creativity questionnaire. It is supported that employees with higher emotional level will perceive less stress and higher level of creativity. The consequences of this study for working with manufacturing industry to improve employee creativity.*

Keywords – job stress; emotional intelligence; creativity

1. INTRODUCTION

Collaboration between individuals and environment is always crucial. The achenes of this interaction depend on its direction; whether it is in an optimistic direction or in a pessimistic direction. Environmental ambiguity is an important contingency factor changing organization's structure and behavior from traditional to organic (Daft, 2013)[11]. In this organic and quickly changing environment, the main nervousness of the organizations is amplified prospect of job stress on working environment. Organizations are powerless to assure job safety so in turn they cannot anticipate faithfulness and creativity from employees. Competitive work places where employees are continuously under gravity to create and innovate leads to job stress. When interaction among employee and environment is hostile or demanding more than employee's capabilities then it is taken as stress and it impacts pessimistically on individuals creativity (Humpel, & Caputi, 2001)[22]. Organizations spend millions on job stress. Budgets regarding job stress were figured out at billions of dollars per year only in U.S (Greenberg, Kessler, Birnbaum, Leong, Lowe, Berglund, & Corey-Lisle, (2003)[15]. So job stress is a significant factor of interest in organizational research. Researchers are consistently in search of factors which are helpful either in encouragement of stress or in reducing the destructive effects of stress (Abbas, & Raja, 2015) [1].

When individuals are beneath the stress, they cannot use their abilities in the fitting way to meet job and work environment necessities so their creativity is affected. Employee creativity is an important and interesting factor to be worked on it; as organizations survival is with the

increased creativity of employees. Important facets of employee well-being are life satisfaction, happiness and creativity (Lyubomirsky & Lepper 1999)[29], (Carmeli, McKay, & Kaufman, 2014)[6], (Ruiz-Aranda, Extremera, & Pineda-Galán, 2014)[34].

One of these individual factors that have latent safeguarding effect on stress is emotional intelligence that the level and involvement of stress is entirely reliant on the extent of emotional intelligence that a person may entail.

Optimistic properties that emotional intelligence can have on the operative managing of job stress and the improvement of nurse well-being (Karimi, Cheng, Bartram, Leggat, & Sarkeshik, 2014)[26].

Emotional regulation refers to the progressions by which personalities affect which emotions they have, once they have them, and in what way these emotional feelings are practiced and articulated (Gross, 1998)[16], (Brackett, & Mayer, 2003)[3]. When individuals practice positive emotions, their psychological and intellectual abilities expand feeling them satisfied with life and search and explore to come up with more innovative ideas (Fredrickson, 1998)[14]. Supportive in well thoughtful how employees might magnificently advance through the creativity procedure.

Stress is an evil communication between individual and its work environment that confines employee to use its competences at determined level to reduce its well-being. Emotional intelligence of individuals helps them to cope with this stress and hence increase its well-being in the form of creativity.

This study explores how individuals at workplace can decrease their job stress by intelligently use of emotional intelligence and can enhance creativity. In today's dynamic organizations; in the speedily changing environment, the main apprehension of the organizations is amplified prospect of job stress at work place. Organizations are incapable to assure job safety so in turn they cannot anticipate loyalty and creativity from employees. Modest environments where individuals are unceasingly under gravity to invent and innovate, leads to job stress and employee creativity is decreased. So this study intends that by intelligence use of emotional intelligence, individuals at work place can reduce their job stress and can increase their well-being in the form of creativity. Focus of this study is on the mediating role of emotional intelligence.

The chief objective of this study is to explore the relationship between job stress and employee creativity. The second intension is to check the mediating role of emotional intelligence. The third objective of this study is to explore why emotional intelligence is required in manufacturing sector specifically in Suzuki Company of Pakistan.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Scheier & Carver (1992)[38], explains that how people derive a particular situation and its succeeding consequence can have a notable effect on their well-being by using their model of self-regulation of behavior as cited by Karimi, Cheng, Bartram, Leggat, & Sarkeshik, (2014). Job stress is an opposing interface between a person and its work environment. It perhaps occurs when any component of the work environment is taken as threatening in itself; as an alarming to the welfare of employees (Beehr, & Newman, 1978)[4]. Stress is a psychological pressure in a specific situation between an employee and its environment, which is perceived by individual as a frightening, or devastating his possessions, which reduces his well-being (Lazarus, & Folkman, 1984)[27].

2.1 Job stress

Stress is basically a collaboration between employee and their job places when employees take this interaction as threatening or challenging more than their resources and capabilities, their well-being may be probably in hazard (Humpel, & Caputi, 2001)[22]. (Hampal & Caputi, 2001)[22] focus on transactional aspect of stress, the relation between internal and external conditions that creates the incidence of stress and its personal characteristics.

When employees are under stress, they are not using their skills in proper way as mentally they are under pressure and present on job, such stress presentism is unproductive

as employees in stress are physically present on job but their analytical, cognitive abilities and vigor is abstracted away from their jobs, not enabling them to dedicate full attention at work (Gilbreath & Karimi 2012)[17]. This kind of presentism results loss in employee productivity by lessening in worth and extent of work. For a long time, exposure to stressful job demands results in a diverse range of negative outcomes that affects employee creativity.

2.2 Creativity

Creativity, questionably an utmost significant human trait, has allowed humans to evolve from a hunter gathering presence to a cultured free market life style. The inherent quality of all creative efforts is the hope that humans can create better life for all persons on universe. As such, it seems judicious to imagine that constructive feelings would frequently accompany this intelligence of hope that creative persons would tend to be happier and reveal greater everyday positive distress. Happiness which is referred as satisfaction with life (Diener 1984)[12], is associated with less negative and more positive feelings (Ryan and Deci 2001)[13]. However, there is difference between complete happiness and affective states. Similarly, positive feelings are not synonymous to happiness and negative feelings doesn't abolish happiness rather positive feelings accompany happiness (Cecci & Kumar, 2016)[7].

Artists are productive when they are less emotionally stable (Jamison, 1989)[23]. There is possibility that creative individuals take much relief from negative affect if they are actively engaged in creative work, some sort of negative reinforcement contingency. Qualitative research provides evidence that that scientists and artists frequently account excitement succeeding a creative intuition (Amiable, Barsade, Muller & Staw, 2005)[1]. In 1907 while talking about the "theory of relativity" Einstein explained this is the happiest thought of my life (Rothenberg, 1990)[35].

Angry moods lead to initially higher creativity that reduced over time (Bass, Dreu & Nijstad, 2011), he further explained that a person in angry mood uses haphazard and amorphous approach to creativity and tends to move from one thought category to another thought that triggers inaccessible concepts stored in memory and thinks divergently.

Few other research studies show that more creative persons get more intrinsically motivated with positive affects rather than negative affect (Amiable, Hill, Hennessey & Tighe, 1994). Existing research focused on the linkage between creativity and general stress (Brown & Darryl 2015)[5]. But linkage between creativity and stress that particularly stems from the creative effort

itself. Individuals who are extrinsically motivated find creative work more stressful inherently than individuals who are intrinsically motivated individuals who find creativity as challenge and enjoyment (Cecci et al.,2016)[7].

Individuals with the aptitude to practice equally positive and negative emotions do account being extra creative. Depending on previous research, creativity is associated more powerfully with propensity for positive than with negative affect. More creative persons also incline to be more intrinsically stimulated or self-motivated (Chang & Teng, 2017)[8].

Emotional Intelligence

Being a psychological factor emotional intelligence has withdrawn the attention of researchers. Emotional intelligence is the ability to know and understand the emotions of self and others, motivate ourselves and others and manage the emotions as well (Brown & Darryl,2015)[5]

Research stressed that emotional intelligence has important role in controlling the impact of stress. A research study conducted in china stated that emotional intelligence was negatively linked with job stress (Goleman, 1998)[18]. (Kong, Zhao, You, 2012)[25] Emotional intelligence is also positively associated with mental health (Martins, Ramalho, Morin, 2010)[31].Research has focused on linkage between job stress and emotional intelligence that emotional intelligence mediates the relation between stress and negative life events (Runco & Mark, 2007)[37] but how emotional intelligence helps to reduce stress and enhance creativity is lacking so this study stresses how emotional intelligence mediates the relation between job stress and creativity.

Based on the literature It is hypothesize that:

H1: Job stress at workplace is significantly associated with employee creativity.

H2: Emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between job stress and employee creativity.

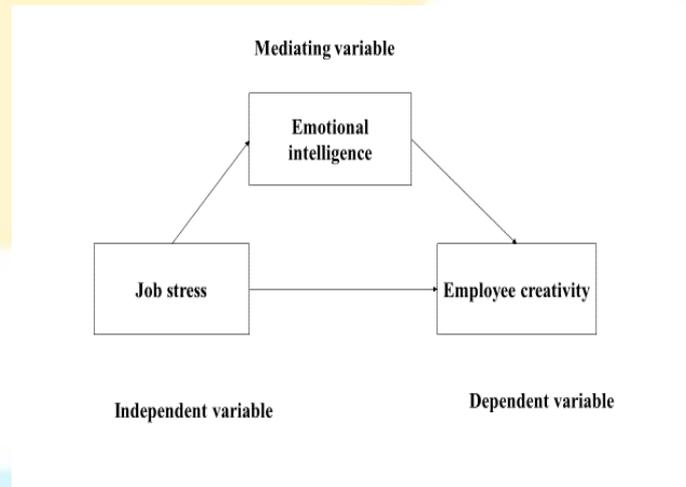


Fig 1. Conceptual model

3. METHODOLOGY

The objective of the study was to inspect the relationship between job stress and creativity. How emotional intelligence is helpful in mediating the impact of stress on creativity.

3.1 Participants

The respondents of this study were selected from manufacturing industry; The Suzuki. Among the employees of Suzuki, the service and software centers were selected from Lahore center to collect data. 350 questionnaires were distributed and 302 participants completely filled the questionnaire. Majority of

respondents were male; 64 percent, Age range was from 23 to 37, and maximum respondent's age was 28. Maximum with Mean=29.21 and S. D=3.66. Maximum no of employees was having qualification M.B.A. About 68 percent respondents were married.

3.2 Procedure

Data were collected from Suzuki; company, Lahore center. Two sectors of this manufacturing firm were selected to collect data. Simple random sampling was used to collect data from employees from Lahore center and stratified random sampling techniques were used to get data from different level employees in service and software centers. Managing director of Suzuki was

making contact to collect data from software firm and different service centers. 350 questionnaires were distributed and 315 were returned. 13 responses were excluded due to missing data. Only 302 responses were completely filled, so the response rate was 86%.

Data was collected in two time lags. Initially employees were distributed with job stress questionnaire, and after three weeks' employees were given questionnaire comprised of item regarding emotional intelligence and creativity. The reason to get time lagged data was to avoid from variance due to self-reported questionnaires. Another questionnaire regarding counter check was also filled by immediate boss.

3.3 Measures

3.3.1 Perceived Stress scale

Perceived stress scale by (Cohen, Kamarak & Mermelstein, 1983)[9] contaminated at 14 items were used for this study. Response rate was measured at 5 point Likert scale options ranging from 1. Never 2. Almost never 3. Sometimes 4. Fairly often 5. Very often.

3.3.2 Creativity

Oldham and Cummings (1996) scale was used to quantify self-reported creativity. Response rate was measured on 5 point Likert scale, oscillating from 1 = 'not at all' to 5 = 'to a very large extent,' the degree to which individuals produce novel, original and valuable notions to the firms. The sample item was "I come up with distinctive and useful ideas at job".

3.3.3 Measure for counter check creativity of employee

For counterproductive check, a questionnaire by Oldham and Cummings (1996) was used to be filled from managers to check whether employees are responding properly or exaggerating.

3.3.4 Emotional intelligence

By using Wong & Law's, 2002[42] WLEIS cited by (Libbrecht, Lievens, Beucklaer & Rockstuhl,2014)[30], emotional intelligence were used. Basically emotional intelligence comprised of four dimensions and each scale regarding each dimension consists of four questions. Self-

emotional appraisal (SEA) Will be measured by asking I have a good wisdom of why I have definite feelings most of the time, Others Emotions Appraisal (OEA), I always know my friends' emotions from their actions, Use of Emotion (UOE) I always set objective for myself and then try my best to accomplish them, Regulation of Emotion (ROE) I am able to control my annoyance so that I can handle difficulties rationally. Response rate was measured at 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 = not at all to 5 = to a very large extent.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

A Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 24 was used to predict the questionnaire data. Firstly, pilot study was conducted and Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the validity of items of selected measures (Martin et al., 2010[31]; Runco et al., 2007)[37]. Secondly, analysis of variance, Pearson correlation analysis and descriptive statistics were used to evaluate the study variables and the effectiveness of the data set (Yacob,2008)[43]. Finally, a hierarchical regression analysis, as suggested by [Cohen, Kamarak & Mermelstein, 1983][9] was used to measure the mediating effect of emotional intelligence in the theorized model. Mediating effect is a mechanism that shows how independent and dependent variables are; related with mediator and how much mediator; mediated the relationship between dependent and independent variables (Cohn et al., 1983[9]; Jaccard et al., 1990)[21].

4.1 Respondents' Characteristics

Majority of respondents were male (67 percent), Age range was from 23 to 36 and maximum respondents age was 27 Maximum with (Mean=29.21 and S. D=3.36). About 67 percent respondents were married. 43 % male respondents were married. Maximum no of employees was having qualification M.BA. Descriptive statistics are given in table 1. Maximum job tenure was 12 and males were having maximum job tenure with (Mean=5.07and S. D=2.218), the details are given in table1 part 2.

Table 1 Respondents' Characteristics

Descriptive Statistics			
Gender		Frequency	Percentage
Male		201	67%
Female		101	33%
Total		302	100
Marital status			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid Male	Single	70	34.8%
	Married	131	65.2%

	Total	201	100
female	Single	31	30.6%
	Married	70	69.4%
	Total	101	100
Qualification			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	B.E Mech	52	17.1
	B.Sc Eng	37	12.4
	B.Tech m	20	6.7
	BBA	11	3.8
	BS ME En	40	13.3
	Dip Mech	35	11.4
	M.BA	101	33.3
	M.BA,B.E	6	1.9
	Total	302	100.0

Table 2 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive Statistics						
Gender		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Male	Job tenure	65	1	12	5.11	2.115
Female	Job tenure	36	2	9	4.89	1.879

Table 2 represents the outcome of Pearson correlation analysis and descriptive statistic. The means for the all variables ranging from 1.67 to 29.7 ranging from moderately high to highest level of creativity.

Table 2 also shows the results of testing the relationship between job stress and employee creativity. First, job stress was significantly correlated with employee creativity, ($r = .352, p > 0.01$) (supported hypothesis1), job

stress was also significantly correlated with employee emotional intelligence ($r = .421, p > 0.01$), (supported hypothesis2), emotional intelligence was also significantly correlated with creativity ($r = .266, p > 0.01$). These statistical results showed that emotional intelligence is an important mediating for reducing employee's job stress and enhancing creativity.

Table 3 descriptive and bivariate correlation

Level	Study variables	Mean	S.D	Stress	Creativity	Emotional intelligence
	age	29.30	3.362			
	Job tenure	5.03	2.027			
	Marital status	1.67	.474			
	Stress	3.4160	.21777	1		
	Creativity	3.4641	.33220	.352**	1	
	Emotional intelligence	3.6489	.30045	.421**	.266**	1

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

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4.2 Outcomes of testing research hypotheses

Table 3 shows the results of testing hypotheses using a hierarchical regression analysis. It shows that demographic variables were entered in Step 1 and then followed by entering independent variable (job stress) in Step 2, and in step 3 emotional intelligence was used as dependent variable. In step 4 emotional intelligence was used as independent variable and creativity as dependent variable while in model 5 both job stress and emotional intelligence were entered and emotional intelligence mediated the relationship between job stress and employee creativity level. In table 3, the outcomes of hierarchical regression analysis were computed in the five models. Model 1 showed that none of the control variable was related with job stress. Model 2 displayed that job stress ($\beta=.284, p<0.01$) was found to be a significantly related to creativity, accounting for 19 percent of the

variance in dependent variable creativity. Model 3 that was run among job stress and emotional intelligence; where predictor variable was job stress and outcome variable emotional intelligence, it revealed that the job stress was significantly correlated with emotional intelligence ($\beta=.426, p<0.01$), accounting for 12 percent of the variance in dependent variable emotional intelligence. Model 4 was run between emotional intelligence and creativity. The results showed that emotional intelligence was significantly correlated with creativity ($\beta=.51, p<0.05$). In Model 5 the mediation was run among independent variable (job stress), and dependent variable (creativity) and mediator variable (emotional intelligence), the results showed that the effect of job stress was reduced so partial mediation was run at SPSS.

Table 4: Hierarchical regression analysis

Variable	Dependent variable			
	Creativity		Emotional intelligence	Creativity
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Control variables				
Gender	.029	.182	-.008	.268
Age	-.420	-.174	-.231	-.182
Marital status	-.025	-.120	.109	-.126
Job tenure	.380	.164	-.002	.204
Independent variable				
Job Stress		.284**	.426***	
Emotional intelligence				.051*
MEDIATOR				
Job Stress				
Emotional intelligence				
R2	.069	.185	.116	.231

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study established that emotional intelligence performances as a mediating variable in the relationship between job stress and creativity in manufacturing sector, the Suzuki. The findings of this research established that emotional intelligence acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between job stress

and employee creativity in manufacturing sector, the Suzuki. In manufacturing sector, especially at Suzuki, employees need to interact with customers on daily basis, if they are working under stress their level of creativity may be affected in a positive way if intrinsically they are motivated for work. At the same time if they are emotionally intelligent, they can manage their own as well as other person's emotions to handle stressful

situation positively. The complete outcomes of this research are in expected directions. What traces below is first, a more inclusive review of this research results to demonstrate the core findings of the study and second, a detailed discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of this study's findings, limitations, future research directions, and conclusion will be followed.

Hypothesis 1 was proposed that there exists a significant relationship between job stress and employee creativity, it was supported. Results indicate that stress have positive impact on employee creativity. The results supported the view point of More creative persons also incline to be more intrinsically stimulated or self-motivated (Chang & Teng, 2017)[8]. Creativity is enhanced by if an individual undergoes an episode of negative affect which in verse produces positive impacts so stress enhances creativity (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 2006)[20]. The results are also in line with studies (Yaacob, 2008)[43]. that challenge stressors are more effective for creativity.

Hypothesis 2 was proposed that emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between job stress and employee creativity.

The results confirmed that emotional intelligence mediated the relationship between job stress and employee creativity. These results are in line with the study which show the direct and indirect impact of emotional intelligence on creativity (Runco, Mark, 2007)[37] and (Cohn et al., 1983)[10].

5.1 Theoretical Implication

This study has theoretical implications in a sense that approach used to handle job stress at manufacturing firm is emotional intelligence. Novelty of this study is emotional intelligence is playing its mediating role in handling job stress and enhancing employee creativity. Theoretical contribution to knowledge is that employees under stress increases their creativity by managing their emotion and using them in appropriate way. Employees who use their capability to manage their own emotions and other person's emotions at service departments of manufacturing firm, while dealing with customers can reduce job stress and enhance creativity. This study has supported the results of (Jaccord, Turrisi & Wan, 1990)[21] that emotional intelligence helps to reduce job stress at work place and emotional intelligence plays a significant role in enhancing employee's creativity (Rich, 2016)[36].

An additional characteristic of this study is that emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between job stress and employee creativity. This study focused that emotional intelligence is the more powerful factor as compare to cognitive abilities, which helps to enhance creativity, and coping with stress.

5.2 Practical Implications

The findings of this study have some practical implications; identification of emotional intelligence as a mediator in job stress process will have a remarkable potential as a stress management technique. This concept of emotional intelligence is well developed and widely used in western countries while in Asian countries like Pakistan it is lagging behind from practical implications. This study suggests human resource policy making and recruitment system of manufacturing industries to add specific testing features of emotional intelligence in recruitment and screening interviews. If emotional intelligence questionnaire is added for psychometric tests used for recruitment and selection will be a quite effective technique to higher emotionally intelligent people. Secondly after selecting the required employees organizations should conduct training sessions on job stress and emotional intelligence and creativity Which will help employees: how to cope with job stress by using emotional intelligence to increase creativity and promote innovative ideas. Research also supported that emotional intelligence can be enhanced by training to cope with job stress (Niks, Irene, Jan, Gevers, Houtman, 2017)[32]. Organizations require innovative and creative persons who can learn and adapt fastly changing environment very easily. So the concern of creativity can relatively be addressed from the aspect of individual's emotional intelligence.

5.3 Future directions and Limitations

This study is not free from limitations like all studies. Therefore, the conclusions of this research should be considered with caution. Firstly, the selection of research design is cross sectional; the data was collected through self-reported questionnaires in a single survey at two times, which is not free from common method variance. In future studies mixed method design including qualitative as well quantitative research can provide improved insights on the agenda of discussion. Secondly, this study was conducted in a single manufacturing firm, The Suzuki, Pakistan with enough sample size, which is insufficient for generalizability. Future research should consider a larger sample size with different manufacturing firms, while considering their service sectors. The mediating variable of this study is emotional intelligence, which has different perspectives with respect to its effectiveness in different cultures (Zhang, BU & Wee, 2016)[45] This study is carried out in Pakistan, which may have another cause of non-generalizability. Current research has focused on emotional intelligence to mediate the relationship between job stress and creativity; other variables can also be used to check this relationship.

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