



# International Journal of Management, IT & Engineering

(ISSN: 2249-0558)

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**Title**

**A STUDY ON THE JOB STRESS IN ASSOCIATION WITH  
PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES OF UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES  
IN NEPAL**

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**Abstract:**

The study attempts to examine the association of the perceived job stress with some demographic, economic and job attributes of the university employees in Nepal. The analysis of data collected from the sample of 44 employees of both teaching and administrative group reveals that teaching faculties were performing their job with comparatively greater level of job stress than the administrative counterparts were. Overall, the study reveals negligible presence of respondents in high and low level of perceived job stress group (i.e one in high and two in low stressed group), indicating heavy concentration of employees (41 persons) in moderate level of stress. It indicates that the university may be converted into the dangerous zone of job stress prone behaviors of employees unless it has been managed properly in right time.

Although the perceived level of stress was found individually different, only gender and age specific attributes could establish significant association with the job stress. The other attributes had insignificant linkage with the stress.

Among all, the greatest stress score of female (163.75) indicates that working females in Nepal are still facing the problem of job stress due to ambiguity and dual career role than males. In the group wise distribution of stress, the smallest stress score was observed among the lowest family income group (126.0) indicating the greater influence of non-economic factors over the economic factors to cause stress. In contrary, greater score of high level of income group (152.4) points the dissatisfaction on the present earnings as the cause of job stress. Comparatively, high score of stress among the contract and partial teachers (153.75) specifies job insecurity was another major cause of stress in the university job. The study, thus suggests carrying out personal attributes specific programs and policies for reducing occupational stress of employees and making them committed towards the achievement of the mission of university education in Nepal.

**Key Words:** Demographic attributes, Economic attributes, Job attributes, Job stress. Purbanchal University

**BACKGROUND:**

A successful organization is built when the human resources in the organization utilize their knowledge and skills to the best of their abilities for the overall growth and development of the organization. However, people generally become fed-up with stress in the job when they fail to reach in their target or confronted with an opportunity, demand or job environment reducing their work performance. The tension is the feeling of job as stressful. Stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, demand or resource related to what the individual desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important (Cooper et.al, 2002). Thus, job stress is the confrontation with the characteristics of job environment. Occupational stress is any discomfort, which is felt and perceived at a personal level and triggered by instances, events or situations that are too intense and frequent in nature to exceed a person's coping capabilities and resources to handle them adequately (Human Factors International, 2004). Every employee is exposed to a range of stressors, at work and in personal lives affecting the personal performance. Increased pressure on the job led to significant increases health problems of workers and then adversely impact on their overall performance in organization (Siegrist, 1996).

Purbanchal University established in 1993, one of the six operating universities in Nepal, has been operating altogether 73 academic programs in Science & Technology, Management, Education, Arts, Law and other several programs through four constituent and 103 affiliated campuses in the country. During 2009/2010, altogether 15541 students have been enrolled to study different academic programs of this university. Among the campuses, 24 affiliated campuses are located in different parts of the Eastern Development Region and all of the four constituent campuses have been operating only in Birtanagar city, the major city of this region where central office of the university is located. The university is presently managed by 150 core staff and faculty members (MOF, 2010 and [www.purbuniv.edu.np](http://www.purbuniv.edu.np)).

People in stress obviously fall into the physical and psychological problems. If employees could not control stresses, it may negatively affect their work attitudes and behavior such as satisfaction, commitment, productivity, quality and health in the workplace (Seaward, 2005; Newell, 2002; World Health Organization, 2005). Job stress also creates organization's problems like absenteeism, turnover, poor job performance, accidents and errors, and alcohol and drug



abuse (Williams et al., 2001). Side by side, stress is acknowledged one of the main causes of absence from work (Mead, 2000). Evidence from a growing body of research suggests that certain individuals, in a variety of occupations, are increasingly exposed to unacceptable levels of job-related stress (Schultz & Schultz, 2002). Among others, educators have been consistently identified as a group experiencing high stress at work (Sigler and Wilson, 1988).

Such kinds of diverse findings demands for new line of study. In the current turbulent environment in the country, there is no job without stress. People in every job say that they are in tension due to pressure of job. University employees are no exception in the verge of political pressure, pressure from students, engagement of faculties and administrative staff in part time job in other educational institutions and inter university competitions.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:**

Though people attempt to get release from the stressful situation with a view to getting protected from the adverse effect of the stress, they have to face stress knowingly or unknowingly in the job due to their personal attributes and work environment as well. As individual differences affect perceptions and interpretations of events around the person (Robbins et al., 2011), perceived stress also varies from person to person and job to job due to personal attributes and working environment and nature of the job. The perceived stress does not only adversely affect the health of the jobholder but also the overall performance of the employees. An employee may perceive stress due to much or little work, time pressure, new development, changes in policies and procedures (Ganapathi and Premapriya, 2008). Thus, this study is planned to know the answers of the following questions:

- What is the level of job stress among the PU personnel?
- Do faculties differ with administrative staff in relation to the feeling of job stress?
- Does the occupational stress vary across the age, gender, family size, and number of dependents, type of family, marital status, personal and family income, etc?
- Does the level of perceived stress differ in terms of job experience, natures of employment and working hours of the university staff?

## **RATIONALE OF THE STUDY:**

In general, education system of Nepal has been criticized saying that it could not provide quality education required for the nation. The activity of producing qualitative human resources mainly depends on how far the faculties and administrative staffs feel that their job and the work environment is free from any kind of stressful situation. However, in the scenario of political turmoil and deteriorated economic conditions of Nepal, people in very spare of occupations feel stress in their job due to political pressure, financial shortage and fearful actions from unwanted elements. Thus, university job is no exception of this problem.

The performance of the teachers and staff, on the other hand, depends upon the willingness to work with high morale and motivation, but it is difficult to develop willingness of the people who are already in stress and obtain better performance from them. As human being, university faculty and staff have their own peculiar type of desires, wants, beliefs, attitudes, values and expectation from the job and its environment. Non-fulfillment of these dispositions affects both their personal as well as job behavior. In our context, employees in university job as in other jobs, express their feeling of stress in unpleasant behavior at workplace. Therefore, the factors that indicate emotional state of stress arising from the appraisal of one's job or the environment of job results much in job specific job behavior.

In another context, people in these sectors have also been showing dissatisfaction of their job and they blamed for weak performance (Katuwal, 1997). Thus, with a view to materialize the mission of university, it is the right time to assess the occupational stress of the faculty and administrators members in the university job from their own appraisal and thereby formulate appropriate measures to reduce the level of stress and make them feel real sense of best performer.

## **PREVIOUS STUDIES:**

Occupational stress is the "harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match with the capabilities, resources or need of the worker" (Sauter and Murphy, 1999). It is an unavoidable characteristic of life and work (Adeyemo and Ogunyemi, 2005).

University job is also a tedious and stressful job due to its peculiar characteristics. Employees working in this sector feel stress due to the strike, campus militancy, delay and irregular payment of salary, high cost of living, underfunding of education, lack of instructional facilities, preparation of examination results, invigilation of examination, office accommodation, lack of research facilities and lack of annual leave/ holiday (Ofoegbu and Nwadiani, 2006 as in Aniedi, Offiong and Out, 2010) .

Aniedi, Offiong and Out (2010) found that that students were the greatest source of stress to academic staff with respect to interpersonal relationships along with the activities of research, sourcing funds for research. Concerning teaching, it was collation of results, while sourcing funds for career development was the highest with respect to career development. Overall result show that career development is the greatest source of stress to academic staff. The results also indicated that male and female academic differed in perceived stress level in teaching. Recommendation made include making more funds available to academic staff for research and career development purposes.

In Nepal, school teachers were experiencing mild to moderate stress. Among the possible factors, physical complains as migraine, no life outside work, excessive monitoring regimen, harassment in school and no proper break from work in school were the major five factors causing high stress among the teachers. These revealed the job condition and job types in some point were not favorable and which can be capable cause for the job stress of the school teachers in Nepal (Mandal et al. 2011).

Whereas, Rutter, Hezberg and Paice (2002) identified high self expectation slow progress on career advancement, inadequate salary, securing financial support for research, insufficient development in the field, manuscript preparation, role overload, conflicting job demands, frequent interruptions and long meetings as the other sources of causing stress in the job. At the same time, working conditions, external factors, poor motivation, and low status were also identified as the source of job stress among the academician (Lam and Punch, 2001).

While talking about the relationship between demographic variables and stress level of different occupations, it was found to be associated with age, experience, and job hierarchy. Personal variables related to job stress were gender, age, marital status, job tenure, job title, and hierarchical and educational level (Dua, 1994 ; Murphy, 1995; and Kirkcaldy & Furnham, 1999),

among which gender, age and hierarchical level were found to be the most significant, as further explanations reveal. In their study Reddy and Ramamurthy (1991) and Chandraiah et al.(2003) confirmed the significant association between age and stress level of male executive whereas stress level were not affected significantly by age in another study made by Balakrishnamurthy and Shankar (2011) among the non-gazetted officers of the Central Reserve Police Force(CRPF). However, Balakrishnamurthy and Shankar (2011) concluded that there was apparent and significant difference between stress level and distinct occupational experience of CRPF personnel in India. Sharma (2007) reported the positive relationship of occupational stress with the job experience and job hierarchy among the defense personnel in Indian context.

Other studies have also found association between job stress and individual characteristics of the subjects.

Thus, the reviewed studies confirm that occupational stress is a condition of job that the employees in the organization feel undesirable and threat. It varies from job to job in organizations and antecedent by some personal and job variables.

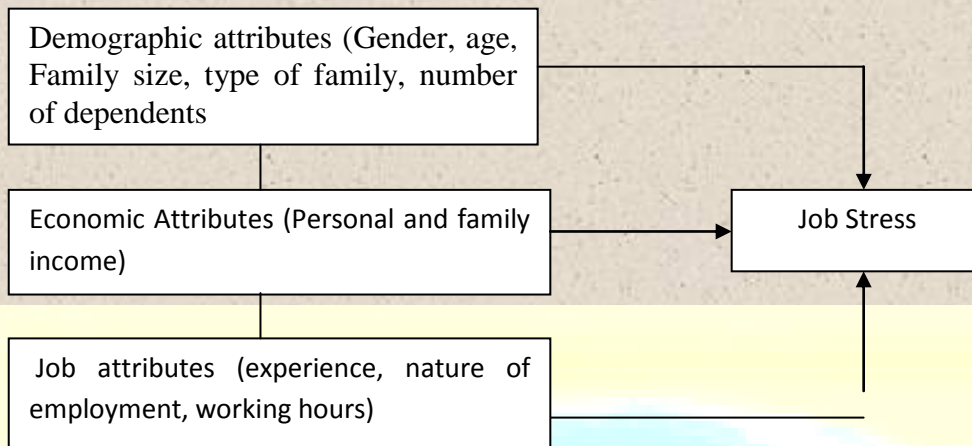
### **OBJECTIVES:**

The study was designed to achieve the following objectives:

- (i) Assess the level of stress among the employees of Purbanchal university
- (ii) Examine the difference of occupational stress between faculties and administrative employees at the university.
- (iii) Evaluate stress in association with the personal and job variables of the university employees.

### **CONCEPTUAL MODEL:**

Depending on the literature survey, the study was based on the conceptual model exhibited in the Figure 1.

**Figure 1: The conceptual model****HYPOTHESES:**

With a view to materialize the objective, following research hypotheses were tested:

1. There is no significant difference in level of perceived job stress among the administrative and academic staff in university job.
2. The level of perceived stress does not significantly vary among the university staff in terms of all personal attributes.

**METHODOLOGY:**

As specified in the objective section, the study was confined to measure the occupational stress among the teaching and administrative staff working in different campuses of Purbanchal University at Biratnagar, Ithari, Damak and Bitamode. These places were selected because of the concentration of all constituent campuses and developing as the educational hub centers of this region.

The sample respondents were selected based on accidental representative sampling technique and thus sample was comprised with 44 respondents (i.e. 7 from administrative category and 37 from academic group). The necessary information for the study was collected by means of the questionnaire developed by Katuwal (2011). The questionnaire was concerned to obtain the

information about personal attributes ( demographic, economic and job related attributes ) and perception of respondents towards the different elements of stress, in five point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 points.

The job stress part of the questionnaire was comprised with 53 statements, measuring different 11 elements of occupational stress. These elements were (i) salary and other financial benefits, (ii) working conditions, (iii) job security, (iv) role- overload, (v) nature of work, (vi) relationship at work, (vii) role ambiguity, (viii) role conflict, (ix) career development, (x) organizational structure and climate and, (xi) physiological and behavioural problems.

The personal attributes of the respondents were used for the assessment of the relationship between individual differences and the stress of the respondents. For the purpose of the measurement of individual differences of perceived job stress, the respondents were divided into different categories of personal attributes and their association was calculated with the perceived total score of the respective respondents.

As the stress was measured on 5-point scale, the total perceived score of a respondent on stress might be ranged from 53 to 265 points. The scores was further split into three levels low (falling scores between 53 to 123.7 scores), moderate (falling between the score of 123.7 to 194.3) and high level of stress (falling scores between 194.3- 265.0 scores) to assign respondents in the specific category of stress level based on their total score of job stress. The total perceived score of stress of each respondent was obtained by adding his or her perceived score of stress on each item.

Z-test was applied to identify the difference between administrative personnel and teaching faculty and One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used for measuring the differences of perceived job stress in relation to the selected personal attributes of the respondents.

As the study is descriptive cum analytical research design in nature, the association of demographic and organizational attributes of respondents to the stress was calculated by using the statistical tools like mean, standard deviation, chi-square, correlation and so on.

**ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:**

The section of the study explains different dimensions of occupational stress among the university employees.

**Magnitude of stress**

As discussed above, this sub-section of the study aims to measure the extent of perceived job stress among the administrative staff and teaching faculty of the Purbanchal University. The Table 1 shows the respondents falling in the group of high, medium and low categories of job stress, with their respective numbers of 1, 41 and 2.

By the Table 1, it is clear that all most (administrative and faculty) employees of the selected campus of the university were performing their job with moderate level of stress.

**Table 1****Magnitude of Stress by the Type of Job**

Extent of Stress	Faculties	Administrative	Total
High	1 (2.70)	0 (0.00)	1(2.27)
Medium	35 (94.59)	6(85.71)	41(93.18)
Low	1(2.70)	1(14.29)	2(4.55)
Total	37 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	44(100.00)
Average Mean score	2.77	2.54	2.73
Standard Deviation	0.31	0.23	0.30
Z value	Z= 2.28*		

*Source: field survey; Z < 5 (i.e. Significant at 5%). Figures in parentheses indicate percentage.*

Rejecting the hypothesis, the finding clearly indicates that the teaching faculty have perceived their job comparatively stressful than the administrative employees in the selected campuses. The finding is also supported by the significant value of Z test (i.e. Z= 2.28, significant at 0.5 level) and the mean score of stress.

**Variation of Job Stress by Personal Attributes:**

Level of perceived stress among the university employees by their different demographic and work attributes is depicted through Table 2 to Table 4.

**Table 2****Variation of Job Stress by Demographic Attributes of Respondents**

<b>Group of Attributes</b>	<b>Sub-groups</b>	<b>Average Stress Score</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>F-Ratio</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male (N=40)	142.8	14.13	7.04*
	Female (N=4)	163.75	23.98	
<b>Age</b>	28-32 years ( N= 10)	138.6	17.15	15.49**
	33-37 years (N=11)	144.27	12.55	
	38-42 years ( N=15)	145.8	18.20	
	43-47 years ( N=4)	149.75	11.32	
	48-52 years (N=4)	152.00	19.63	
<b>Marital status</b>	Married (N=37)	145.54	15.58	0.62
	Unmarried (N=7)	140.29	19.21	
<b>Family structure</b>	Nuclear (N=18)	145.33	21.08	0.05
	Joint (N=26)	144.27	11.90	
<b>Family size</b>	3-6 persons (N= 30)	146.50	17.32	0.64
	7-10 persons (N=12)	141.5	9.20	
	15 persons (N=2)	137.00	0	
<b>Number of Dependants</b>	None (N=1)	133.00	0	0.25
	1-2 person (N=17)	144.47	19.91	
	3-5 persons (N=22)	145.95	14.53	
	6-10 persons (N=4)	141.75	6.6	
<b>Total</b>	<b>All respondents</b>	144.70	15.89	

- Significance at 0.05, \*\* Significance at 0.01



**Table 3**

**Variation of Job Stress by Economic Attributes of Respondents**

Group of Attributes	Sub-Groups	Average Stress Score	SD	F Ratio
<b>Personal income</b> (per month in '000 NPRs )	5- 9 ( N=2)	139.00	25.46	0.64
	9- 13 ( N=2)	147.5	4.95	
	13-17 ( N=11)	138.55	10.64	
	17-21 (N=15)	146.93	17	
	21-25 (N=5)	152.4	29.01	
	25 and above(N=9)	144.89	11.31	
<b>Family income</b> <b>NPRs</b> (per month )	5- 9 ( N=2)	<b>126.00</b>	7.07	1.63
	9- 13 ( N=0)	0.00	0	
	13-17 ( N=5)	138.20	12.91	
	17-21 (N=8)	156.38	11.51	
	21-25 (N=3)	151.67	2.31	
	25-29( N=6)	146.50	26.39	
	29-33 (N=4)	133.75	7.76	
	33-37(N=5)	147.2	11.92	
	37-41(N=4)	135.75	10.31	
41-45(N=7)	146.43	17.74		
<b>Total</b>	<b>All respondents</b>	144.70	15.89	

Figures in the parentheses indicate number of respondents within the subgroup.

**Table 4**

**Variation of Job Stress by Job Attributes of Respondents**

Group of Attributes	Sub-Groups	Average Stress Score	SD	F Ratio
<b>Experience level</b>	1-4 years(N= 6)	138.16	15.83	0.63
	5-8 years (N=16)	144.63	13.36	
	9-12 years(N=22)	146.55	18.06	
<b>Nature of employment</b>	Permanent (N=29)	144.34	17.83	0.75
	Temporary (N=11)	142.36	13.20	
	Contract & partials	153.75	4.99	
<b>Working hours</b> ( per day)	Below 3 hours (N=18)	139.94	18.34	2.78
	3-6 hours (N=26)	148.00	13.72	
<b>Total</b>	<b>All</b>	144.70	15.89	

Figures in the parentheses indicate number of respondents within the subgroup.

By the analysis of the data in the Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4, it is clear that the minimum average score of stress of the respondents was 126 points while 263.75 and 144.70 points were the maximum and average stress score (ASS) of the respondents respectively. As a whole, the average score of all respondents indicates that employees working in the campuses of Purbanchal University were skewed towards moderate level of job stress.

Among all, the greatest stress perceivers were female respondents with 163.75 point of average stress score (ASS) and the respondents whose monthly income was in between Rs. 5000.00 to Rs. 9000.00 were belonged to small stress perceiver (ASS=126).

Although the all respondents were moderately stressed, the perceived stress of respondents was found different within their sub-groups. Among them, comparatively greater perceiver were those whose monthly family income was Rs. 17000.00 to 21000.00 (ASS=156.38) followed by the respondents in contract or partial job (ASS= 153.75), per month personal income of Rs. 21000.00 to 25000.00 (ASS= 152.4), 48-52 years of age group (ASS= 152.00) and monthly family income of Rs. 21000.00-25000.00 (ASS= 151.67). Likewise, the respondents of 43-47 years of age (ASS= 149.75), 3-6 working hours (ASS= 148.00), personal income of Rs 9000.00-13000.00 (ASS= 147.50), monthly personal income of Rs. 17000.00-21000.00 (ASS=146.93), job experience of 9-12 years (ASS= 146.55), 3- 6 members of family and monthly family income Rs. 25000.00 - 29000.00 (ASS=146.50) had also perceived the stress score greater than the average score. The respondents with the monthly family income of Rs. 41000.00-45000.00 personal monthly income Rs. 25000.00 and more, 3-5 person dependants, 38-42 years of age, married and living in nuclear family structure had also expressed greater stress than the average respondents had perceived.

This extreme of perceived score within the sub-groups implies that Nepalese working female, even in high qualification required job like in university, are still facing the problem of job stress due to role ambiguity and dual role career. At the same time, the lowest ASS of the employees in the lowest family income group denotes that other than the economic factor creates stress among the university employees though they were weak in economic condition. The factors may be problem of job security.

Similarly, as the high level of income group had shown a comparatively greater level of stress, the study gives focus that the university employees in Nepal are not satisfied with their present

earnings. Likewise, higher level of average stress score of contact/ partial jobholder (153.75) within the group indicate that their source of job stress was the problem of job security along with the burden of large and joint family.

However, in statistical terms, only the gender and age specific demographic characteristics, among all, were found significant at 0.5 percent and 0.1 percent respectively with the perceived job stress of respondents. One -way ANOVA shows that marital status, family structure, family size, number of dependents, personal and family income, experience, nature of employment and working hours could not be strong predictors of stress among the university employees. This finding supports the hypothesis that the level of perceived stress does not vary among the university staff in terms of all personal attributes.

### **CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION:**

In overall, concentration of all most all respondents (93.18 percent) in the moderate form of job stress indicates that the university is in a dangerous zone of high level of job stress prone behaviors of employees. Consequently, it may turn into serious problem of job stress if the university could not formulate the plan and policies to address the stress prone behavior of employees properly.

The data analysis proves that the employees of the Purbanchal University are not comfortable from the perspective of job stress. So that university should keep in mind the demographic and work characteristics of individuals while developing the programs and policies for acquisition, development, utilization and maintenance of human resources. At the same time, stress prone characteristics provide a guideline for university authorities to understand and predict how employee will perceive different types of job stress. Thus, authorities are suggested to formulate appropriate plan, policies and program for the prevention of occupational stress among the staffs, recognizing the affect of different demographics and work characteristics of employees.

Still, we have to be aware that interpreting differences in levels of stress is a difficult task since there are many intervening factors. Although, as the study has identified the magnitude of job stress among the faculty and administrative employees of Purbanchal University, it can be used to minimize the stress and increase their performance by providing appropriate facilities suitable to

the work-demographic attributes of employees that cause stress to them. The study is also expected to be a valuable empirical contribution to the study of Work Psychology and Organizational Behavior courses in university level education.

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