

**Investigation of Employees' Stress Level: The Case of
Cell Phone Industry**

Abstract

Aims: The current study investigated the stress level of employees of cell phone industry in terms of work-related stress, role ambiguity, role conflict, work intensification, relationship with colleagues, working conditions, bullying and harassment and work performance as sub-scales.

Method: A stratified random sample of 315 employees of three out of five companies was taken. One sample t-test, independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA were employed.

Results: The study concluded that an inconsiderable level of stress prevails among the cell phone industry employees. Sub-scale analysis identified 'role ambiguity' with the highest and 'relationships with colleagues' with the lowest stress level of employees. Among the three companies, employees of Warid expressed the highest whereas those from Telenor showed the lowest stress level.

Suggestions: The study suggested cell phone companies to address the 'role ambiguity' issue of their employees, and Warid Telecom is specifically suggested to take measures to improve the satisfaction level of employees to reduce their stress.

Key terms: work-related stress, role ambiguity, role conflict, work intensification, relationship with colleagues, working conditions, bullying and harassment, work performance

1. Introduction

Organizations, groups and people are experiencing turbulent work environment characterized with competition for survival resulting in the demand for meeting targets and challenges. This demand puts every one under pressure and accelerates stress (Stoetzar, 2010; Tang, & Chang, 2010; Ismail & Teck-Hong, 2011) as a consequence of overwork, job insecurity, low levels of job satisfaction, and lack of autonomy (Bickford, 2005). Stress being the natural part of life, occurs whenever there are significant positive or negative changes in our lives as the internal reaction of our body to any external action.

Job stress, different from general stress, is created when employees' abilities do not match with job's requirements and they cannot adjust themselves according to the environment of an organization (Tang, & Chang, 2010). This pressure would result in tiredness and fatigue and employees get fed up from their job and may quit.

Job stress at call centers is a hot topic of discussion these days as employees working in call centre face lots of pressure during their working hours. Factors such as day and night duties, repetition of same calls, overtime work, lack of benefits, irritating and abusive customers, competition to become most famous among the customers and much more (Kinnie, Hutchinson, & Purcell, 2000; Alison, & Al Rainnie, 2004; Ghazi, 2006; Latha & Panchanatham, 2010) are responsible for this stress. To meet the above challenges employees have a pressure on them, which results in high absenteeism, health issues, fatigue, job burnout, lack of spirit and enthusiasm, poor relationship with workers inside the organization, mental disorders etc. (Alison, & Al Rainnie, 2004; Arrington, 2008).

This paper concentrates on investigating the stress level of the employees of cellular companies.

2. Literature review

Stress is simply a natural phenomenon (Bickford, 2005) that spreads from human conception to the last breath (MedicinentNet, 2013) where internal and external forces affect the individuals who, in return, respond physically, mentally and expressively to different situations, changes and requirements of life (Lehnert, 2002) that affect them as well as their environment. It is a perception of explicit frustrating actions, life cycle, transitions and conflicts with either your confidence arrangement or your surroundings whole time (Lehnert, 2002) and a mental pressure resulting out of a particular situation or action which is against your nature.

Though usually taken as a negative experience, stress can be a neutral, negative, or positive experience (Bickford, 2005; Ismail & Teck-Hong, 2011; MedicineNet, 2013). Its positive aspect, present only at its mild level, is reported to be productive (Robbins, 2011) but the negative side of stress activates sympathetic nervous system, stimulating the release of stress hormones throughout your body (WebMD, 2013). MedicinentNet (2013), on the pattern of Arrington (2008) and David and Yamada (2008), reports that uncontrollable, unpredictable, and constant stress has far-reaching consequences on physical and mental health such as a learned helplessness that leads to depression, chronic anxiety states, high blood pressure, heart disease, and addictive disorders.

The telecommunication industry, in contrast to the wire line telephone communication, is at the forefront of the information age as it delivers voice, data, graphics and video at ever increasing speeds and in an increasing number of ways (CollegeGrad, 2013). The industry is growing by leaps and bounds and its growth rate is expected to be doubled with every passing year thereby

causing high scale recruitments. There is a huge demand for software engineers, mobile analysts, and hardware engineers for mobile handsets. Besides, there are many opportunities for marketing people whose services are required to expand the customer base (Mansoor, Fida, Nasir & Ahmad, 2011). Telecom industry, often being called “Call Centre”, a voice-based customer service, that serves as a communications platform from which firms deliver services to customers via remote real-time contact (Latha & Panchanatham, 2010) within and out of the country via wide telecom, web and database network (Ghazi, 2006) .

With the outstanding and massive development in telecom industry, there is a dark picture behind these phenomena. Employees working in telecom industry have a pressure to maintain their growth and stability leading to a high level of stress (Gilmore, 2001; Alison, & Al Rainnie, 2004; Ghazi, 2006; Latha & Panchanatham, 2010). Call centre employees are facing problems like continuous mobile calls making them victim of hearing problems , full time interaction with customers, limited time (Suri & Rizvi, 2008) extra workload (Muthukrishnan, Mon, & Chaubey, 2011), tasks difficult to be achieved, ill-mannered customers and above all night shifts that create physical illness and make the employees stressful (Latha & Panchanatham, 2010). These demands may be conflicting most of the time generating stress and hampering the employee productivity (Batt, 1999; Singh, 2000).

After elaborating the meanings and scope of stress, now its typology needs to be mentioned. Different studies (Valyre, 2004; Arrington, 2008; David & Yamada, 2008; Tang & Chang 2010; Stoetzar (2010; Ismail & Teck-Hong, 2011; Ram, Khoso, Shah, et. Al., 2011) have provided stress typologies. But the following types are being focused for the purpose of this study.

2.1. Work-related stress: This is a situation where employees’ health and well-being (Bickford, 2005), and productivity is at stake as a consequence of work-load, job uncertainty, job dissatisfaction and lack of self-sufficiency (Melanie, 2005).

2.2. Role ambiguity: Lack of clarity of roles creates ambiguity that affects employee performance in a significantly negative way and spoils the confidence to perform effectively and efficiently (Tang & Chang 2010; Ismail & Teck-Hong, 2011)

2.3. Role conflict: Role conflict refers the demand for incompatible simultaneous roles (Tang & Chang 2010) where one role cannot be performed without ignoring the demands of other roles at the same time which may also be important creating frustration for the performer (Ismail & Teck-Hong, 2011).

2.4. Work intensification: Valyre (2004) describes work intensification as the situation where employees are asked to carry out their work in hurry, or they have to tackle high amounts of work, or employees may have to face rigid deadlines.

2.5. Relationships with colleagues: Stoetzar (2010) considers it as an interpersonal relationship which is governed by personality traits and environment-individual-interaction that results in cultural and social differences as a consequence of poor relationship with colleagues.

2.6. Working conditions: Stressful working conditions cause health problems and risk of injuries that may be a result of individual or situational factors (Arrington, 2008).

2.7. Bullying and harassment: Workplace bullying, usually unseen and ignored, is a menacing practice faced by countless workers at workplace which affects not only physical and mental health, but also the society and family and also generates the risk of losing job productivity and overall workforce self-esteem (David & Yamada, 2008).

2.8. Work performance: Arrington (2008) discussed tiredness and psychological disorders as the effects of stress on employees' work performance. Furthermore, job burnout, risk for workplace injury, mental disorders, weak cognitive functioning and improper attention are the consequences behind this.

To summarize the above discussion, work stress has a direct bearing on the performance of employees of cellular companies and the situation needs to be investigated in Pakistani frames.

To be more concise, the study answers the following questions:

1. What is the stress level of employees of cellular companies in terms of work-related stress, role ambiguity, role conflict, work intensification, relationship with colleagues, working conditions, bullying and harassment and work performance?
2. Is there any difference in the stress level of employees of cellular companies in terms of work-related stress, role ambiguity, role conflict, work intensification, relationship with colleagues, working conditions, bullying and harassment and work performance?
3. Is there any difference in the stress level of employees of cellular companies in terms of in terms of independent variables?

3. Method

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the stress level of employees of cellular companies. Three out of five cellular companies in Lahore were selected. A sample of 315

employees of these companies based on the stratified random sampling technique (Raza, Naqvi, & Lodhi, 2011; Raza & Khawaja, 2013) was taken as given in table 1.

Table 1. 40% Stratified Random Sample

	Warid	Telenor	Ufone	Total
Population	277 (35.20%)	294 (37.40%)	216 (27.40%)	787 (100%)
Sample	110.8=111 (35.20%)	117.6=118 (37.40%)	86.4=86 (27.40%)	314.8=315 (100%)

A questionnaire adapted from Ismail and Teck-Hong (2011) consisting of 37 items (i.e. 3 items covered demographical information while 32 were stress variables and 1 item measured employees' loyalty) was used which was found reliable at 0.980 Cronbach's alpha. Responses were quantified as strongly agree, 5; agree, 4; partially agree, 3; disagree 2; and strongly disagree, 1. Frequencies, means, standard deviations, t-values, and correlations were calculated. Mean scores above 03 were taken as representing a considerable level of stress whereas mean scores 03 and below were taken as representing an inconsiderable level of stress among the employees of cellular companies (Raza, Naqvi, & Lodhi, 2011; Raza, Zia, Naqvi, & Ali, 2012; Raza, & Khawaja, 2013). One sample t-test, independent samples t-test, and one-way ANOVA were employed for significance and variance analysis.

4. Results

The demographics of the respondents, table 2, indicate that males (68.25%) were in majority. The company analysis also supports this trend. However, the female percentage (31.75%) indicates an encouraging trend of female penetration in this industry. Employees other than assistant managers and executive officers (81.3%), and those with graduation degrees (62.22%), were found in majority. At a 100% response rate, the highest sample contribution (37.4%) came from Telenor.

164 *Table 2. Demographics of the Respondents*

Variables	Categories	Warid		Telenor		Ufone		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender	Male	81	73	70	59	64	74	215	68.25
	Female	30	27	48	41	22	26	100	31.75
	Total	111	100	118	100	86	100	315	100
Designation	Assistant manager	5	4.5	5	4.2	10	12	20	6.3
	Executive officers	11	9.9	11	9.3	17	20	39	12.4
	Others	95	85.6	102	86	59	69	256	81.3
	Total	111	100	118	100	86	100	315	100
Qualification	Masters	21	18.9	42	36	34	40	97	30.79
	Graduates	74	66.7	76	64	46	54	196	62.22
	Inter	16	14.4	0	0	6	7	22	6.98
	Total	111	100	118	100	86	100	315	100

165 The correlations (table 3) between sub-scales are weaker as compared with their correlation with
 166 the total scale used for measuring stress pointing out the significance of these sub-scales which is
 167 further testified by their alpha-values (above 0.6) as given in table 4 (Raza, Zia, Naqvi, & Ali,
 168 2012; Raza, & Khawaja, 2013) .

169 *Table 3. Correlation Matrix of Scale and Sub-scales*

Sub-scales	Role ambiguity	Role conflict	Work intensification	Relationships with colleague	Working conditions	Bullying and harassment	Work performance	Stress (Total scale)
Work related stress	.785(**)	.711(**)	.711(**)	.636(**)	.665(**)	.690(**)	.726(**)	.845(**)
Role ambiguity		.768(**)	.768(**)	.726(**)	.720(**)	.732(**)	.730(**)	.873(**)
Role conflict			.732(**)	.738(**)	.745(**)	.761(**)	.794(**)	.901(**)
Work intensification				.738(**)	.745(**)	.761(**)	.794(**)	.901(**)
Relationships with colleague					.671(**)	.793(**)	.720(**)	.840(**)
Working conditions						.726(**)	.791(**)	.862(**)
Bullying and harassment							.789(**)	.866(**)
Work performance								.908(**)

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

171 One sample statistics (table 4) indicate that the level of stress (2.905) of the employees of cell
 172 phone industry is inconsiderable. The sub-scale analysis reveals that level of stress against ‘role
 173 ambiguity’ (3.060) is the highest whereas that in case of ‘relationships with colleagues’ (2.721)
 174 is the lowest. The level of stress related to ‘work related stress’, ‘working conditions’, ‘role
 175 conflict’, and ‘work intensification’ is almost same below the ‘role ambiguity’ and the level of
 176 stress related to ‘work performance’ and ‘bullying and harassment’ is almost same above the
 177 lowest sub-scale.

178 *Table 4. Alpha-values and One Sample Statistics for Scale and Sub-scales*

Scale/sub-scales	Alpha	Mean	SD	df	t-value
Total scale (stress)	0.980	2.905	1.124	314	45.871*
Role ambiguity	0.888	3.060	1.249	314	43.486*
Work related stress	0.901	2.991	1.250	314	42.446*
Working conditions	0.879	2.981	1.259	314	42.016*
Role conflict	0.849	2.968	1.286	314	40.950*
Work intensification	0.911	2.968	1.286	314	40.950*
Work performance	0.933	2.883	1.331	314	38.424*
Bullying and harassment	0.918	2.775	1.451	314	33.941*
Relationships with colleague	0.927	2.721	1.407	314	34.324*

179 *P=0.05

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181 Tukey's honestly significant difference test in one-way ANOVA reveals a significant difference
182 of opinion among the respondents regarding sub-scales (table 5).

183 *Table 5. One-way ANOVA with Tukey HSD for Multiple Comparisons of Stress Level for Sub-*
184 *scales in terms of Companies*

Dependent Variable	Respondents (I)	Mean differentiate (I-J)	
		Respondents (J)	
		Telenor	Ufone
Work related stress	Warid	1.704 (*)	.381(*)
	Telenor		-1.323 (*)
Role ambiguity	Warid	1.887 (*)	.5607 (*)
	Telenor		-1.327(*)
Role conflict	Warid	1.998(*)	0.295
	Telenor		-1.703 (*)
Work intensification	Warid	1.998(*)	0.295
	Telenor		-1.703 (*)
Relationships with colleague	Warid	1.926 (*)	.624 (*)
	Telenor		-1.302(*)
Working conditions	Warid	1.859 (*)	0.082
	Telenor		-1.777 (*)
Bullying and harassment	Warid	2.216 (*)	.835(*)
	Telenor		-1.381 (*)
Work performance	Warid	2.029 (*)	0.083
	Telenor		-1.946(*)

185 *The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

186
187 Table 5 indicates the employees of Warid are under the highest level of stress, for 50% sub-
188 scales against the employees of Ufone and for all the sub-scales against the employees of

Telenor who expressed the lowest level of stress in almost all of the sub-scales. Table 6, however, shows male employees reflecting a significant higher level of stress in all of the sub-scales as compared with females and company-split of gender analysis also provides the similar results.

Table 6. Independent Samples t-test for Multiple Comparisons of Stress Level for Sub-scales in terms of Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	Sig
Work related stress	Male	215	3.205	1.209	4.598	0.000
	Female	100	2.530	1.218		
Role ambiguity	Male	215	3.237	1.221	3.762	0.000
	Female	100	2.680	1.230		
Role conflict	Male	215	3.130	1.235	3.329	0.001
	Female	100	2.620	1.332		
Work intensification	Male	215	3.130	1.235	3.329	0.001
	Female	100	2.620	1.332		
Relationships with colleague	Male	215	2.837	1.426	2.169	0.031
	Female	100	2.470	1.337		
Working conditions	Male	215	3.209	1.230	4.888	0.000
	Female	100	2.490	1.185		
Bullying and harassment	Male	215	2.944	1.449	3.083	0.002
	Female	100	2.410	1.393		
Work performance	Male	215	3.023	1.284	2.78	0.006
	Female	100	2.580	1.387		

In response to the last question, do you want to continue this job?, 97.5% respondents said yes and only 2.5 % said no.

5. Discussion

The demographics of the respondents have indentified males as the majority section (68.25%) in all the sample telecom companies. However, the female contribution in the sample (31.75%) highlights an encouraging trend of female infiltration in this industry. One possible cause of this tendency, similar to the banking sector (Raza, Zia, Naqvi, & Ali, 2012), could be the increased female induction in higher education sector (Raza, Majid, & Zia, 2010) that serves as a nursery for business entrepreneur (Raza, & Naqvi, 2011). This argument also gets strength from qualification and designation analysis where 62.22% of the respondents were graduates and 81.3% employees were those other than assistant managers and executive officers, the fresh university graduates.

The correlations between sub-scales are weaker as compared with their correlation with the total scale and alpha-values of these sub-scales are above 0.6 establishing their significance (Raza, Zia, Naqvi, & Ali, 2012; Raza, & Khawaja, 2013) and the worth of predictions to be made on the basis of their analysis.

The current study pursued three basic questions of which the first was, “what is the stress level of employees of cellular companies in terms of work-related stress, role ambiguity, role conflict, work intensification, relationship with colleagues, working conditions, bullying and harassment and work performance? The level of stress in the cell phone industry as pointed out by the respondents (2.905) represents an inconsiderable level of stress among the employees of selected cellular companies, in terms of work-related stress, role ambiguity, role conflict, work intensification, relationship with colleagues, working conditions, bullying and harassment and work performance, as per criterion laid down for the purpose of current study. This finding does not fully support the work of Gilmore (2001), Alison and Al Rainnie (2004), Ghazi (2006), and Latha and Panchanatham (2010) who reported a high level of stress at call centers. One possible cause of this tendency may be the deteriorated state of economy where finding a job is troublesome. This argument gets support from the responses against the last question of the scale where 97.5% of the respondents wished to continue their current job despite the problematic job attributes.

The second research question was, “is there any difference in the stress level of employees of cellular companies in terms of work-related stress, role ambiguity, role conflict, work intensification, relationship with colleagues, working conditions, bullying and harassment and work performance?” The sub-scale analysis highlights the level of stress against ‘role ambiguity’ (3.060) as the highest one that falls in the considerable region at the scale used to measure stress, and that in case of ‘relationships with colleagues’ (2.721) as the lowest falling in the inconsiderable region. It means that employees of cell phone companies are facing role ambiguity at a considerable level of stress. One possible cause of this move could be the absence of clear job descriptions and job specification that causes a considerable level of stress (Ismail & Teck-Hong, 2011; Robbins, 2011). The inconsiderable level of stress against relationships with colleagues may be result of a desirable citizenship behavior of the respondents contrary to the findings of Raza and Naqvi (2011). The level of stress related to ‘work related stress’, ‘working conditions’, ‘role conflict’, and ‘work intensification’ is almost same falling in the inconsiderable

region below the ‘role ambiguity’ but higher than the level of stress related to ‘work performance’ and ‘bullying and harassment’ which are almost same in the inconsiderable region above the lowest sub-scale. Thus, the total stress picture of the cellular companies reveals that the situation is better regarding all the sub-scales except the role ambiguity that needs improvement.

The third research question was, “is there any difference in the stress level of employees of cellular companies in terms of independent variables?” The post hoc analysis reveals a significant difference of opinion among the respondents regarding sub-scales where employees of Warid are under the highest level of stress. It means that Warid employees are facing the worst job attributes as compared with the Ufone and Telenor. By February 2012, Warid employees were serving the needs of only 14.5million customers out of total 116million clients, the lowest in the country (IndexMundi, 2012). But the situation may be the result of deficient management practices at the company resulting out of the 70:30 partnership of Warid Telecom and SingTel (IndexMundi, 2012). Ufone with 22.4million customers comes at the middle position reflecting a better job situation as compared with Warid Telecom against 50% sub-scales but an adverse one as compared with the employees of Telenor serving 28.8million customers against all the sub-scales. The findings indicate the lowest level of stress expressed by the employees of Telenor with the highest sample contribution (37.4%) that reflects a better strategic managerial approach at Telenor as compared with the other two companies in all of the sub-scales.

At the end, the overall gender analysis shows male employees reflecting a significant higher level of stress in all of the sub-scales as compared with females and company-split of gender analysis also provides the similar results. One possible reason of this trend could be the higher level of satisfaction of the female employees reflecting their compromise with the prevailing job market conditions.

Thus, the findings of the current study have answered the research questions achieving the objectives of investigating the stress level of employees of cellular companies.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

The cell phone industry exhibits the male dominance in their employees despite the growing female participation in this industry. Majority of the employees of cellular companies are graduates and those other than assistant managers and executives.

The alpha value of the scale used for the study and correlations and alpha-values for the sub-scales established their significance and the worth of predictions made on the basis of their analysis.

The overall level of stress of the employees of cell phone industry is inconsiderable and this argument is strengthened from the fact that an absolute majority of the respondents is willing to carry on their current jobs. However, sub-scale analysis reveals that level of stress against 'role ambiguity' is the highest and that of 'relationships with colleagues' is the lowest. The level of stress against 'work related stress', 'working conditions', 'role conflict', and 'work intensification' sub-scales is almost same below the 'role ambiguity' and the level of stress related to 'work performance' and 'bullying and harassment' is almost same above the lowest sub-scale.

The employees of Warid are under the highest level of stress, for 50% sub-scales against the employees of Ufone and for all the sub-scales against the employees of Telenor who expressed the lowest level of stress in almost all of the sub-scales. Male employees reflecting a significant higher level of stress in all of the sub-scales as compared with females and company-split of gender analysis also provides the similar results.

The study suggested cell phone companies to address the 'role ambiguity' issue of their employees through making the job descriptions and job specifications clear. The Warid Telecom is specifically suggested to help employees enhance their motivation level by reducing their job stress which would enhance the employee productivity in return.

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