

# **The Effect of Different Demographic Variables on Mental Toughness, Occupational Stress and Mental Health Problems in Sales Girls in Pakistan**

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## **Abstract**

### ***Objectives***

The current study was conducted to carry out the occupational stress investigation for the sales girls in Pakistan in order to identify the stressors faced by salesgirls in different demographic populations, and eventually improve the quality of working conditions for them. The demographic variables investigated in the study that had an effect on Mental Toughness, Occupational Stress and Mental Health Problems, were age, monthly family income, number of family members, daily job timing, and education level.

### ***Method***

The sample consisted of N=215 salesgirls recruited through purposive sampling strategy with an age range of 15-40 years from different shopping malls, departmental stores and outlets. The instruments used for gathering data were the Demographic Questionnaire, Mental Toughness Scale (Anthony, Saleem, 2015), Occupational Stress Scale and Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995).

### ***Results***

This study brought attention to salesgirls' high levels of professional stress and resulting rise in mental health issues. Their advancing age and the timing of their everyday jobs were the main causes of their stress and mental health issues. Salesgirls experienced difficulties, setbacks, and discouragement as a result, making it difficult for them to carry out both their jobs and household duties. Depression and anxiety were symptoms of these mental health issues.

**Keywords:** sales girls, stress, occupational stress, mental toughness

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## Introduction

In general, female employees receive little attention from managers, coworkers, and society at large. Women encounter obstacles in their employment because of their responsibilities to their families, which can cause issues throughout their life (Kumari, 2014). Despite being expected to stay at home, women nowadays are being forced to select careers due to the correct education, awareness, and information as well as the rising cost of living. In Pakistan, a developing country, men are still seen as the main breadwinners for their families. In order to influence positive societal attitudes, women still have a long way to go in terms of culture, society, and the economy even though they have started working outside the home (Angayarkanni & Selvi, 2016).

Women tend to concentrate on specific industries and occupations in our country, such as basic agribusiness, sales and marketing, basic services, and handcraft production. In the private sector, there are more female-owned firms, particularly in the service and food sectors. The majority of women in the labor force are housewives. Women's working settings are linked to specific psycho-social and health difficulties. These conditions expose workers to dangers such workplace harassment, hefty workloads, persistent physical complaints, and long hours. People as a result carry a great deal of weight, which is bad for their health. Many female employees still endure the worst treatment because of pressure their stress at work, manual labor, and workplace harassment (Surti & Ambavale, 2013).

Women try to control the condition in these circumstances so that it doesn't affect their performance in any way. They make an effort to manage any stress in a healthy way by drawing on their unique resource, mental toughness. These four assets are their optimistic mindsets, which help them develop resilience, a healthy sense of self-worth, hope, and other positive feelings (Wingerden, Derks, & Bakker, 2015).

Mental strength, which is a person's impression of their capacity to successfully manage and control their condition, is this level of asset. These upbeat self-statements have been shown to accurately predict outcomes like motivation, professional achievement, execution, and overall fulfilment (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014).

Literature has often cited mental toughness as a way to deal with misfortune. While Loehr (1986) suggested that mentally tough people maintain optimal performance during their task in spite of difficulty, Pankey (1993) argued that mental toughness aids people in maintaining their coping mechanisms whenever necessary to overcome adversity. Goldberg (1998) went on to use a variety of mental faculties to define this construct. These skills were meant to develop mental toughness, which would enhance performance. As a result, a person's mental toughness gives him the ability to endure suffering (Jones et al., 2002).

However, if a person is not mentally tough, they adversely cope with stressors. There are a number of 8 circumstances that salesgirls run into, including workplace harassment, stress from the job, scheduling challenges, work-family conflicts, and organizational stressors like interpersonal expectations, organizational structure, client demands, and workplace demands (Mellalieu, Neil, Hanton, & Fletcher, 2009).

Stress is one of the main issues the organizational hierarchy has to deal with. According to literature on occupational stress, it is one of the largest issues facing the company (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994). To better understand occupational or workplace stress, which is

operationally defined as the perception of a mismatch between natural demands (stressors) and personal capacity to meet these demands (Topper, 2007)

All of these problems reduce women's effectiveness and production at work and at home. High turnover, unpaid leaves of absence, low work satisfaction, low-quality goods and organisations, poor internal communications, and partner conflicts are all exacerbated by job-related stress (Schabracq & Cooper, 2000).

According to Lu (1997), occupational stress is a state when one or more variables interfere with the worker's ability to maintain good physical and mental health. A person's productivity, effectiveness, and quality of work are all negatively impacted by physical ill health, which includes headache, migraine, abdominal pain, lethargy, backache, chest pain, fatigue, heart palpitations, sleep disturbance, and muscle ache (George and Jones, 1996; Newell, 2002; World Health Organization, 2005). A person's experience of anxiety, depression, burnout, job alienation, hostility, tension, rage, anxiousness, impatience, and dissatisfaction at work constitutes psychological ill health (Luthans, 1992; Millward, 2005).

A person's level of stress may vary depending on factors such as their personality [9], occupation (Rauschenbach C, Kumm S, Thielgen M, Hertel G.), and demographics (Rauschenbach C, Kumm S, Thielgen M, Hertel G., Jamal M., 2011, Affum-Osei, Asante EA, Barnie J., 2014). For instance, job stress affects men and women's degrees of psychological distress differently, yet surprisingly little attention has been paid to gender differences in these levels (Barnett CR, Marshall LN, Raudenbush WS, Brennan TR). Again, individuals working in the same setting will feel varying degrees of stress due to the interaction of numerous other factors, such as their personality and coping mechanisms (Johnson, S., Cooper, C., Cartwright, S., Donald, J., Taylor, P., Millet, C., 2005). In the literature, it has been shown how demographic factors like gender, age, marital status, and occupation relate to one another (Jamal, M., 2011, Dua, J. K., Winefield AH, Gillespie N, Stough C, Dua J, Hapuarachchi J, Boyd C).

Thus the current study was conducted to carry out the occupational stress investigation for the sales girls in Pakistan in order to identify the stressors faced by salesgirls in different demographic populations, and eventually improve the quality of working conditions for them. The demographic variables investigated in the study that had an effect on Mental Toughness, Occupational Stress and Mental Health Problems, were age, monthly family income, number of family members, daily job timing, and education level.

## **Material**

The present study consisted of 215 salesgirls recruited through purposive sampling strategy with an age range of 15-40 years from different shopping malls, departmental stores and outlets. The scales used for gathering data were Demographic Questionnaire, Mental Toughness Scale (Anthony, Saleem, 2015), Occupational Stress Scale and Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). In this research study, indigenous scale of Occupational Stress Scale for Salesgirls was developed.

The researcher created a demographic questionnaire to gather data from participants regarding their age, education, marital status, number of family members and dependents, monthly income, relationship with coworkers, and other demographic factors. It was made up of 13 components that were decided upon after extensive research and observation in accordance with the needs of the sample.

## Method

Data was analyzed using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) 21 version. An independent sample t-test was used to examine the differences in mental toughness, occupational stress, and mental health issues between age groups. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the effects of participants' education level, the number of family members, the monthly family income, the daily employment schedules, and the family size on mental toughness, occupational stress, and mental health issues.

## Results

Table 1 displays the participant's demographic information. The table demonstrated that the majority of the salesgirls had completed their intermediate education, and that no special education was required for this line of work. The majority of the participants were single. However, the majority of individuals had families with fewer than five earners while having more than five family members. The participant's income was below \$20,000, whereas that of the majority of their family ranged from \$20,000 to \$40,000. It demonstrated the possibility that they were the only family breadwinners. It was observed that the working environment and relationships among coworkers were generally favorable.

**Table 1** *Frequency and Percentage of the Demographic Characteristics of the Population (N=215)*

Demographic Variable	F	(%)
Education		
Matric	40	18.6
Inter	94	43.7
Bachelors	66	30.7
Masters	15	7.0
Marital Status		
Married	52	24.2
Unmarried	163	75.8
Father's Occupation		
Non-working	57	26.5
Working	158	73.5
Husband's Occupation		
Non-working	171	79.5
Working	44	20.5
Total Family Members		
1-5	62	28.8
6-10	142	66.0
11-15	8	3.7
16-20	3	1.4
Total Earning Persons in Family		
1-3	142	66.0
4-6	62	28.8
7-9	11	5.0
Total Family Income		
20,000-40,000	87	40.5
41,000-60,000	63	29.3
61,000-80,000	41	19.1
81,000-100,000	23	10.7
Total Tenure of Job		

1-2 years	101	47.0
3-4 years	64	29.8
5-6 years	26	12.1
7-8 years	19	8.8
9-10 years	5	2.3
Monthly Income of the Participant		
1-10,000	3	1.4
10001-20,000	123	57.2
20001-30,000	73	34.0
30001-40,000	12	5.6
40001-50,000	4	1.9
Daily Job Timings		
Less than 8 hours	8	3.7
8 hours	163	75.8
More than 8 hours	44	20.5
Job Environment		
Highly Satisfactory	59	27.4
Satisfactory	146	67.9
Unsatisfactory	7	3.3
Highly Unsatisfactory	3	1.4
Relationship with Colleagues		
Highly Satisfactory	57	26.5
Satisfactory	146	67.9
Unsatisfactory	10	4.7
Highly Unsatisfactory	2	0.9

### Age

It was hypothesized that there would be difference between age groups on Mental Toughness, Occupational Stress and DASS subscales. The table displays the results of differences in age groups according to the Mental Toughness, Occupational Stress, and DASS subscales. The personal strength subscale showed a significant difference between age groups in the table. It implies that the age group of people aged 23 and older has greater personal strength than the age group of people aged 18 to 23. Additionally, it can be noted that there is a significant difference in the mean values of the age groups on the anxiety subscale, indicating that people in the 23 and older age group suffer greater anxiety than people in the other group.

**Table 2** Mean, Standard Deviation, *t* and *p* values, Lower and Upper Limits and Cohen's *d* Values of Age Group on MTS, OSS and DASS Factors (*n*=215)

Variables	M	SD	M	SD	t	P	LL	UL	
PersonalStrength	38.29	6.17	40.32	5.33	-2.55	.011**	-3.58	-.4	.35
Optimism	27.84	4.28	28.10	4.52	-.42	.670	-1.44	.92	0.05
Honesty	26.20	3.25	26.36	3.29	-.33	.736	-1.03	.73	0.04
Familial andProfessional Stress	14.33	7.24	14.99	6.71	-.68	.492	-2.54	1.22	.09
Self- Objectification	27.11	12.94	27.93	12.39	-.47	.638	-4.23	2.60	0.02
epression	8.36	4.71	9.37	4.19	-1.64	.103	-2.21	.20	0.22
Anxiety	8.00	4.18	9.22	3.84	-2.21	.028*	2.30	-.13	0.30
Stress	7.40	4.33	8.36	3.79	-1.70	.090	-2.06	.14	.23

Note. M=Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, LL=Lower Limit, UP= Upper Limit, N=215,

\**p*<0.05,

\*\**p*<0.01, \*\*\**p*<0.001

### Number of Family Members

The hypothesis was that there would be a big disparity between family size, as well as MTS, OSS, and DASS. The table demonstrates that there was no association between the participants' family size and the MTS, OSS, and DASS subscales.

**Table 3** One Way Analysis of Variance ANOVA of Salesgirls on MTS, OSS and DASS with Number of Family Members of the Participant (N=215)

Variables	1-5 (n=62)		6-10 (n=142)		11-15 (n=8)		16-20 (n=3)		F	p<
	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D		
PersonalStrength	39.66	5.80	39.11	5.86	37.00	7.46	42.33	2.51	.79	.500
Optimism	27.75	4.55	28.04	4.38	27.87	4.35	28.66	2.51	.08	.968
Honesty	26.16	3.17	26.26	3.38	26.75	2.18	28.33	1.52	.47	.699
Familial andProfessional Stress	14.46	6.99	14.52	7.18	17.37	4.50	16.00	1.00	.46	.706
Self- objectification	25.08	11.54	28.05	13.17	34.25	10.71	32.66	5.68	1.78	.150
Depression	7.77	4.64	9.19	4.43	11.37	2.66	6.66	4.04	2.59	.054*
Anxiety	8.04	3.93	8.62	4.11	11.87	3.60	7.66	2.08	2.19	.090
Stress	7.00	4.10	8.12	4.17	10.00	2.13	6.66	2.30	1.93	.126

Note. M=Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, N=215, \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

### Family Monthly Income

It was hypothesized that the Family Monthly Income and MTS, OSS, and DASS would differ significantly. The table demonstrated that there was no correlation between the subscales of mental toughness and monthly family income. Self-objectification was significantly correlated with family monthly income. It was clear that those with low monthly family incomes struggled more with self-objectification. Additionally, a strong correlation between family monthly income and DASS subscales was observed. According to the significant value, it meant that participants with lower monthly family incomes reported higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress.

**Table 4** One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of Salesgirls on MTS, OSS and DASS with Monthly Family Income of the Participant (N=215)

Variables	20000-40000 (n=87)		40000-60000 (n=63)		60000-80000 (n=41)		80000-100000 (n=23)		F	p<
	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D		
PersonalStrength	39.22	5.52	38.93	6.69	39.97	5.72	38.39	5.00	.87	.479
Optimism	28.10	4.37	27.46	4.68	28.65	4.39	27.34	3.53	.92	.449
Honesty	26.18	3.23	26.41	3.07	26.51	3.57	25.69	3.41	.60	.662
Familial andProfessional Stress	15.50	7.40	14.50	6.55	12.26	6.81	15.91	6.41	1.73	.144
Self- objectification	28.96	11.74	26.03	12.90	24.26	13.54	32.69	11.43	3.11	.016*
Depression	8.81	4.38	9.60	4.78	7.19	4.19	10.04	3.78	3.11	.016*
Anxiety	8.49	4.04	8.93	3.89	7.60	3.90	9.91	4.38	2.51	.043*
Stress	8.00	4.09	8.24	4.24	6.53	3.72	8.91	3.96	2.58	.038*

Note. M=Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, N=215, \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

### Daily Job Timing

It was hypothesized that the timing for everyday jobs and the timing for MTS, OSS, and DASS would differ significantly. The table demonstrated that occupational stress and mental health issues rose along with the daily time commitment of the employment. According to significance values, the hypothesis was accepted that there was a significant relationship between daily job timings and occupational stress, particularly familial and professional stress, as well as mental health issues, or stress.

**Table 5** One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of Salesgirls on MTS, OSS and DASS with Daily Job Timing of the Participant (N=215)

Variables	Less than 8hours (n=8)		8 hours (n=163)		More than 8 hours (n=44)		F	p<
	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D		
PersonalStrength	40.75	3.28	39.10	6.19	39.45	4.98	.33	.716
Optimism	29.12	3.27	27.87	4.61	28.09	3.69	.33	.717
Honesty	27.25	2.31	26.20	3.41	26.36	2.84	.40	.668
Familial and Professional Stress	9.12	6.46	14.52	6.79	16.04	7.42	3.43	.033*
Self-objectification	20.62	12.80	26.88	12.34	31.00	13.22	3.11	.047*
Depression	6.87	3.97	8.69	4.42	9.70	4.77	1.67	.190
Anxiety	6.12	2.85	8.43	3.91	9.50	4.60	2.72	.068
Stress	5.37	3.66	7.65	3.97	9.00	4.47	3.41	.035*

Note. M=Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, N=215, \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

### Education Level

It was hypothesized that the education level and the MTS, OSS, and DASS would differ significantly. The table demonstrated that there was no significant relationship between participants' educational level and the MTS, OSS, and DASS subscales. However, it may be assumed from mean values that persons with high qualifications also have high mental toughness, experience less occupational stress, and have less mental health issues.

**Table 6** One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of Salesgirls on MTS, OSS and DASS with Education Level of the Participant (N=215)

Metric	Metric (n=40)		Inter (n=94)		Graduation (n=66)		Masters (n=15)		F	p<
	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D	M	S.D		
PersonalStrength	38.72	6.58	38.72	5.99	39.83	5.39	41.20	4.98	1.12	.339
Optimism	27.47	5.51	27.85	4.17	28.28	4.05	28.53	3.99	.38	.763
Honesty	26.37	3.34	25.89	3.41	26.46	3.13	27.60	2.38	1.34	.260
Familial and Professional Stress	16.12	6.68	14.09	7.21	14.89	6.61	12.93	7.95	1.11	.342
Self-objectification	27.72	12.92	27.74	13.25	27.37	11.98	25.80	12.17	.10	.956
Depression	8.62	4.33	8.87	4.67	9.01	4.39	8.33	4.65	.12	.944
Anxiety	9.15	4.10	8.00	4.05	8.83	4.05	9.40	4.04	1.18	.315
Stress	8.69	4.33	7.70	4.22	7.70	3.81	7.20	4.17	.73	.534

Note. M=Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, N=215, \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to find the relationship between demographic variables and mental toughness, occupational stress and mental health problems in salesgirls. For this, (N=215) salesgirls from different shopping malls, outlets and departmental stores were selected to collect data of this research study. The following scales were used demographic questionnaire, Mental Toughness Scale (Anthony & Saleem, 2015), Occupational Stress Scale and Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). In this research study, indigenous scale of Occupational Stress Scale for Salesgirls was developed.

In our culture, working women in Pakistan face a variety of concerns, including insecurity, excessive work demands, personal and family obligations, and last but certainly not least, the narrow-mindedness of our society. Despite the high prevalence of education in our culture today, women are still viewed as inferior beings. In working women, all of these variables contribute to stress and its attendant mental health issues.

It was predicted that the DASS subscales for mental toughness, occupational stress, and age would change significantly between age groups. Older age is one of the major factors contributing to mental health issues in Pakistani women, claim Gadit and Mugford (2007). The personal strength subscale showed a statistically significant difference between age groups. It implies that the age group of people aged 23 and older has greater personal strength than the age group of people aged 18 to 23. Additionally, the anxiety subscale reveals a substantial difference in mean values between age groups, indicating that people aged 23 and older experience anxiety more frequently than other age groups. According to a study by Kumar and Yadav (2014), working women over the age of 35 had greater issues than working women in other age groups who were under 35.

It was predicted that there would be a strong correlation between MTS, OSS, and DASS and Family Monthly Income. The findings showed that there was no significant correlation between the subscales of mental toughness and monthly family income. Self-objectification was significantly correlated with family monthly income. Additionally, a strong correlation between family monthly income and DASS subscales was observed. According to the findings, 79.5% of the participants' husbands and 26.5% of their fathers were unemployed. It could result in heightened stress levels and mental health problems. According to Mohamed et al. (2017) those who have high family incomes, experienced less stress.

The findings showed that occupational stress and mental health issues rose as daily job time length increased, supporting the prediction that there was a substantial association between daily job timings and occupational stress and mental health issues. Long working hours are significantly associated with mental health issues and occupational stress, claim Jeon et al. (2014). Long work hours, workplace stress, and overwork can cause physical and psychological issues like stress and harmful habits.

The link between education level and MTS, OSS, and DASS was predicted to be substantial. The distribution of data was not uniform across all groups, therefore there was no discernible difference between participants' education levels and the MTS, OSS, and DASS subscales, according to the results. However, it can be observed from mean values that people with higher levels of education are more mentally tough, experience less occupational stress, and have fewer issues with their mental health. According to a study by Emmanuel, Bismark, Joseph, and Adom (2014), workers with lower levels of education were more likely to feel occupational stress.



## Conclusion

The goal of the current study is to investigate how demographic factors may affect salesgirls' mental toughness, professional stress, and mental health issues. This study brought attention to salesgirls' high levels of professional stress and resulting rise in mental health issues. Their advancing age and the timing of their everyday jobs were the main causes of their stress and mental health issues. Salesgirls experienced difficulties, setbacks, and discouragement as a result, making it difficult for them to carry out both their jobs and household duties. Depression and anxiety were symptoms of these mental health issues.

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