

MEN'S ABILITY OF COPING WITH STRESS WHEN BUILDING THEIR CAREERS

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ABSTRACT

Conflicts between workplace and family have been a topic of research for years. Initially, scientific literature only examined women actively participating in the labour market according to this view-point. However, research related to men is also widespread nowadays. The authors of this paper analysed the question from a relatively rarely mentioned aspect, namely the stress tolerance capacity. That is to say, the scope of stress and career converge at several loci. Stress is an unavoidable agent of the struggle for promotion, progress and effectiveness. The authors aimed to organise the results of a self-made examination aiming to evaluate the significance of stress, i.e., stress tolerance ability among male employees. The primary analysis measured male workers' career concepts via questionnaires. This current study has attempted to answer which factors influence stress tolerance.

KEY WORDS

career, male worker, stress tolerance, survey, family

INTRODUCTION

The current study was conducted as part of a larger study, in which we examined the ideas that men with and without children had of their careers. The study was conducted using the results from a questionnaire that was created by the authors. For this study, it was also this survey which was used. We aimed at finding the answer whether stress-coping mechanisms have influence on the outcome of the career building of men, in addition, what is the extent of this influence. We have assumed career to be primarily important for young and highly qualified males. Also, we intended to justify if personal relationships (in particular the family) provide protection against the effects of stress thus resulting in an enhanced stress-coping skill. As a consequence, we selected those questionnaires which showed stress coping ability a decisive factor in the formation of workplace career, based on repliers' considerations. From these, we selected the answers given in which it was stated that the individual believes that the ability to cope with stress is an important factor when developing a career. The topic is important because men have an approach where they are generally less likely to complain and try to solve their problems themselves — or in worse cases — keep their problems to themselves. [1] This fact, however, can be seen as a ticking bomb that could be the basis for numerous emotional and physical changes.

Literature Overview

Over the years, numerous different theories have been proposed regarding the conflict between work-life and private-life. In this overview, we will select some of the relevant publications. Initially, the literature focused primarily on women who were raising children,

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however, later the studies expanded to include men as well, for in this context, men are subject to completely different rules.

For example, Lachance-Grzela's and Bouchard's (2010) studies showed that men and women view their role at the workplace and at home differently. [2] This is partly because men's work is primarily in the labour market, and is work carried out for money.

According to Duxbury, Higgins and Lee (1991, 1994), traditional gender roles significantly impact how sensitive individuals are to the effects of their environment. Men who place more emphasis on their work, because of them being more sensitive towards problems at the workplace, may be more likely to have family problems that can be attributed to work. [3], [4]

According to Clark's (2000) border theory, every employee has two environments (spheres), the home and the workplace, between which they commute day by day. [5] From these spheres only the workplace shall be examined here, but this is a larger section of our study that is concerned with both environments.

1999 saw the introduction of Edwards' and Rothbard's theory that examines the distribution of human resources. [6] This hypothesis emphasises the role of the use of resources: the individual shares his or her time, attention and energy between his or her private-life and life at the workplace. In relation to this, in the current work, it is necessary to take into account that stress at the workplace and at home are not separate from each other, and in fact, in many cases, they mutually become stronger and lead to the unsolvable conflict between the work and private life.

It is a relatively new phenomenon that with the expansion of info-communication, in the future, rather than the office jobs, which dictate the time and place, we shall complete our tasks separately from each other and in a separate space. Consequently, the workplace can no longer fulfil the socialisation requirements of its workers, therefore, there will be fewer or no relationships at the workplace. [7]

The importance of stress management is also highlighted by the fact that it is treated as a competency in Varga's, Boda's és Szira's study, which outlines competence and its necessity in business development. [8]

Nowadays, workplace stress in addition to the conflict between professional and private life are more and more frequent. According to the researches of the World Health Organisation, [9] stress occupies a high position among the risk factors of non-communicative diseases.

The Current Study

A voluntary, online and anonymous survey, which was completed by male employees, formed the basis of the original study that dealt with men's visions of their carriers. In order to increase the number of elements, the snowball method was used to circulate the questionnaire. During the course of the survey, a total of 191 responses were sent back, which could then be evaluated.

The questionnaire contains multiple sets of questions. From these, the first set determines the specifications of the sample, while the second set examines the role of family and the workplace. Subsequently, general career-oriented questions were posed, followed by questions focused on specifically male or female careers. The questionnaire contained predominantly closed questions, which generally uses numerical variables, however, there were also nominal questions that required a complete answer.

In the current study, only the responses in which the ability to cope with stress was selected, as being one of the factors that could help career success, were used. After compiling the current descriptive statistics, the answers given to individual questions were analysed using

statistical methods. This was done in order to gain answers to our questions and confirmations for our hypotheses. We thought that, among other things, careers are important primarily to those who possess higher qualifications and also for young employees. The question of whether the family has a long-lasting protective role, with regards to stress, was also examined.

Analysis

Sample Specification

The returned questionnaires were categorised, in a number of ways, according to the answers given to the first set of questions. All of the participants, due to the nature of the study, were male, who could be further categorised by age group, qualifications and position. Based on this, it can be established that those of 40-50 years were the largest age group. Over half of the participants had matura and nearly one third had a degree. This ratio arguably corresponds with the official national statistics.

From the questionnaire mentioned above, specialist aspects were used to select the responses used in this study. Those submissions were selected that had stated that, in a career at a workplace, the ability to cope with stress is important. The topic of stress, examined by János Selye, is very diverse and is a phenomenon that is examined in detail in numerous professions. That is why, instead of examining the stress of the workplace itself, the stress-resistance of employees, was examined. More specifically the results of techniques with which an individual can combat the negative effects of stress was examined.

174 responses, from 191, met the criteria outlined above. The following examinations and analyses are concerned only with those responses that do meet the criteria. Firstly, it became necessary to create a new set of descriptive statistics from the current sample. This gave the following results. The distribution of the age groups did not differ considerably, but it was apparent that it tended towards the younger generations. The proportion of 21-30 year olds was, based on the initial number of participants, 26.7%. In this case, this has grown to 27.6%, while the proportion of the age group comprised of 41-50 year olds decreased from 32.5% to 31%. [10] Arguably, this could partly be because for older, more successful employees, meeting other's expectations and being promoted is not as imperative as for young employees. At the same time, it is also possible, that the older age group, with a family, who have had their basic needs and aspirations met, instead encounter difficulties in this aspect of their lives. For those just starting out their careers, generally prior to starting a family, for the young generation, the workplace and adapting to the environment plays the main role. This is why they see adapting to workplace stress as more important.

Regarding the analysis of the marital status, fewer categories were seen to be sufficient than the number contained within the original questionnaire. This was because, unlike in previous studies, the current analysis was not based on family background. Therefore, the five categories

used to analyse marital status (single, married, in a long-term relationship, divorced, widowed, other) [9] were combined to form two groups. The first group was comprised of married men, in addition to men who were in long-term relationships, who for the current study, were regarded as the group who had a family (regardless of whether or not they had children). The second group contained all other participants who were single men. According to this grouping, from the sample of 174 persons, 73% of the men lived with a family and 27% were single men.

In our analysis, the spread of data, based on positions, was examined both for the original and the combined samples. Comparing the two groups to the original sample, it can be seen that both the percentage of senior management and the percentage of employees was higher (12.6% and 49.7%) [9]. The reduced sample used in the current study, comprising 174 participants, showed the same ratio for senior management (10.9%) and employees (46.6%). This change, on the one hand, has the implication of an increasing workload on employees and subsequently, it becomes more important for them to be able to safeguard themselves from this. On the other hand, it also implies that the reduction of stress at the workplace is also increasingly the task of the senior management, in addition to the traditional HR-oriented approach.

Results

Before the focus of the study, the ability of coping with stress, could be examined in detail, it was decided that the current, smaller samples should also be examined from the perspective of the original study. This was concerned with which participants clearly insisted on a professional career, as well as for whom it was possible to avoid this attachment. The most noticeable result was seen with either the family group or with the single men. 34.7% of those with a family found career development very important, while for single men, this percentage was 61.7%. These results bring multiple things to our attention. For example, it shows that approximately one third of men with families still class their professional career as being important alongside their families, which may possibly be a source of Work-Family Conflict (WFC). These career aspirations may be the result of the phenomenon which we showed in another study [11], that in 51.8% of families, the men's salary is larger than the women's. At the same time, our previous study also showed that men who have a family are more open to compromise, as 74.3% completely support their partner's career as well. [9] Our other observation was that a significant proportion of single men, 61.7%, were career-oriented. The most logical explanation for this is that, for single men, the workplace essentially takes the place or even replaces the family, as this is predominantly where they can be successful. In the following studies, the relationship between career and the ability to cope with stress was examined. Initially, the importance of the career and one's tolerance to stress was considered more generally.

The data contained within the Table 1. shows how much importance the participants attach to the ability to cope with stress: this is important to everybody who is trying to progress in their career, while the rest of the participants do not see it as being an important aspect.

Table 1. The importance of career and stress management

Importance of Career	Importance of Stress Management
Exclusively career oriented	35 49.30 %
The career is important	34 47.89 %
The career is not important	0

	0 %
Total	69
	100 %

Source: own table

Following this, the role and proportion of the importance of stress management was examined. It was examined in detail, using the groups created through descriptive statistics. There were no significant differences between results obtained for the different age groups. Having a qualification for career is already inevitable these days. Effective education is a crucial factor of a successful career nowadays. This fact is proven by several researches. [12] The data above illustrate that coping with stress is essential to the low-skilled employees as well, because this ability gives them the power for progress and for studying efforts. It can clearly be seen, from the data contained within the Table 2., that as the level of qualifications increases, so is the ability to cope with stress seen as being more important. Persons with higher qualifications are more likely to get higher positions and along with that, more responsibility, which in turn causes more stress. This is supported by our own analysis, which can be seen in the table below. The importance of coping with stress among low skilled workers cannot be overemphasized. [12] Even if the stakeholders do not feel so does the statement above continue to prevail.

Table 2. The relationship between qualifications and the stress management

Qualifications	Importance of stress management in the relevant category (%)
Elementary (8 year elementary school)	0.00
Secondary education (without matura)	35.00
Secondary education (with matura)	40.96
Higher education	53.70
Total	43.75

Source: own table

The Table 3. shows that the ability to cope with stress is important primarily for the middle management (75.76%), who are in direct contact with both the employees and the senior management. At the same time, it can be seen that the ability to cope with stress is at least one and a half times as important for every management position than for employees.

Table 3. The relationship between the type of job one has and the importance of stress management

Job	Believes it is important	Total responses per category	Importance of stress management per category (%)
Employee	24	89	26.97
	% 34.29		
Junior management	7	16	43.75
	% 10.00		
Middle management	25	33	75.76
	% 35.71		
Senior management	11	21	52.38
	% 15.71		
I do not work	3	10	30.00
	% 4.29		
Total	70	169	41.42

Source: own table

Figure 1. The working hours and the importance of stress management



Source: own chart

As the number of working hours increases, so does the importance of stress management. (Figure 1.) It means that the more hours are spent at work, the more possibility there is of stress being present.

We also examined whether men with families, or those who are single, see that the ability to cope with stress is more important. Our results do not show a difference between the two groups (with both groups, around 40% found it to be an important ability).

CONCLUSION

Conclusion and the Direction of Future Studies

The study, which was conducted based on the sample available, used data from a larger work, in order to examine a specific topic. In this analysis, the men's ability to cope with stress and their career building was examined. We sought answers to the questions posed before the start of the project, while for the rest of our hypotheses, we sought for evidence that confirms or refutes them.

We started with the assumption that having a career is important primarily to those who are more qualified and to young employees. This assumption, based on the sample examined in this study, was confirmed. Our study also examined whether family, or long-term relationships, have some form of protective role against stress. However, based on the sample we used, this role could not be shown. On the other hand, we have succeeded to justify the hypothesis, namely, it is significant for male workers to successfully handle stress in order to establish a prosperous worklife.

Due to the fact that, with the use of the sample, we have been able to shed some light onto the relationship between having a career and the importance of the ability to cope with stress, in the future, it would be logical to carry out another study, with a larger number of participants, with a (more) representative sample, from which we hope to get a more in-depth assessment. The direction in which to carry out the sample selection and its specification could be broadened to contain more possibilities, and the samples collected from this can be compared in categories, such as between company types, or between the public sector's and private sector's results. More details may also be examinable, if the examining-processing statistical method is broadened.

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