

# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK STRESS AND AGGRESSION AMONG EMPLOYEES OF THE RESOURCE GROUP (TRG)

*Abeer Naseem*

*Mahira Ahmed*

Department of Applied Psychology, Kinnaird Collegefor Women, Lahore

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## Abstract

The present study is aimed to find out the relationship between work stress and aggression among employees of The Resource Group (TRG). A pilot study was conducted on a convenient sample consisting 30 employees from KASB Bank. A sample of 120 employees (60 males; 60 females, Married = 58; Unmarried = 62) was selected for the main study from TRG. The instruments used in the study were The Aggression Questionnaire (AQ) and Professional Life Stress Scale (PLSS). The results revealed that there was a significant relationship between the two variables ( $r = 0.58$ ) at  $P < 0.01$ .

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**Keywords:** Work stress, aggression, employees

## Introduction

Work stress is a seen source of creating discomfort and distress among the employees. It also affects their level of job satisfaction. On the other hand workplace aggression is an emerging problem as it creates an uneasy environment for all employees to work in harmony, also, disrupting relations among colleagues.

Contemporary definitions of stress tend to favor a transactional perspective; this emphasizes that stress is located neither in the person nor in the environment, but in the relationship between the two (Cooper, *et al.*, 2001).

Stress can be of two types; short term and long term stress. Short term stress refers to a sudden burst of energy and emotional feelings in response to situations which are seen as emergencies. Short term stress is sometimes known as acute stress. Usually people describe their short term stress in terms of feelings of anger, anxiety, and excitement rather than in terms of their physiological responses. Long term stress can occur either when a stressor is prolonged, for example long term exposure to cold, or because several stressful events occur one after another. Long term stress is sometimes known as chronic stress. People sometimes describe their experience of long term stress with phrases like 'I always feel tensed', 'I am constantly under pressure' (Haralambos & Rice, 2002).

Within the perspective the term 'work stress,' refers to the overall transactional process, not to specific elements, such as the individual or the environment. Stress arises when the demands of a particular encounter are appraised by the individual as about to exceed the available resources and, therefore, threaten well being, and necessitate a change in individual functioning to restore the imbalance (Lazarus, 1991).

To understand work stress, it is necessary to understand several concepts that are involved in the stress process. A job stressor is a condition or situation at work that requires an adaptive response on the part of the employee. Being reprimanded, having too little time, and being told about the possibility of being fired are all examples of job stressors. A job

strain is a potential aversive reaction by an employee to a stressor, such as anxiety, frustration, or physical symptom such as a headache (Spector, 2003).

Stress in the workplace is a going problem, with extensive cost to individuals, organizations and society. In 1992, the United Nations described 'job stress' as the 20<sup>th</sup> century disease because over 70% of employees worldwide describe their jobs as stressful and more than one in five reported high levels of stress at work on a daily basis (Akinboye, Aki & Adeyemo, 2002).

The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health cites the following statistics in a report presented in 1999: 40% of workers reported their job was very or extremely stressful; 25% view their jobs as the number one stressor in their lives; three fourths of employees believe that workers have more on-the-job stress than a generation ago; 29% of workers felt quite a bit or extremely stressed at work; 26 percent of workers said they were "often or very often burned out or stressed by their work (Ueunion, 2011).

Cox and Leather (1994) stated "Human aggression is typically the product of interpersonal interactions wherein two or more persons become involved in a sequence of escalating moves and countermoves, each of which successively modifies the probability of subsequent aggression".

Aggression is a specific response that individuals make to frustration. They describe frustration as an unpleasant state which an individual experiences when their attempts to attain some goal are hindered. Their theory claims that frustration always leads to aggression and that every aggressive act is the result of some form of frustration.

No matter how it is defined, workplace aggression is counterproductive and, as shown in a nationwide survey of 600 working adults, affects annually nearly 10% of the workforce. Acts of aggression are either overt or covert. Overt aggressors use physical and direct acts and make no effort to hide their identity. However, most acts of workplace aggression are covert, more subtle and anonymous, using words rather than physical measures (Douglas & Martinko, 2001).

## **Method**

### **Objectives**

To determine the relationship between work stress and aggression among employees of The Resource Group.

### **Hypothesis**

**H1:** Employees working under high stress will score high on aggression.

### **Sampling Strategy**

A convenient sampling strategy was used.

### **Sample (Pilot Study)**

A sample of 30 employees (20 males; 10 females) was taken from KASB bank for the purpose of standardizing the tools. The age range was from 21 to 35 years and consisted of both married and unmarried employees.

### **Sample (Main Study)**

The sample for this study consisted of 120 employees (60 males and 60 females; 58 were married and 62 were unmarried) taken from The Resource Group. The age range of the subjects was from 22 to 42 years.

## **Research Design**

The correlation method of research is used as the researcher is determining the relationship between the two variables.

In this study, work stress is the independent variable and the independent variable is aggression.

### Instruments

Two instruments were used for the study.

#### The Aggression Questionnaire

It was devised by Buss and Perry in 1992. It attempts to measure the level of aggression. It is comprised of 29-items designed to measure the different dimensions of the hostility/anger/aggression construct. All the 29 items are rated on a 7 point Likert scale. The individual has to select a number from 1 to 7 for each of the given statement which best describes the characteristics of that individual (where 1 is least like him and 7 being the one that best describes him). It consists of 4 subscales that assess: (a) anger, (b) hostility, (c) verbal aggression, and (d) physical aggression. The range for total score is 20 to 200.

**Professional Life Stress Scale (British Psychological Society, 1989)** which is used to assess the level of stress that the individual experiences at work. It has a cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.636. It was adapted from *Managing Stress*, the British Psychological Society and Routledge Ltd., by David Fontana. It has three ranges of scores: 16-30 (moderate stress), 31-45 (stress is a clear problem), 45-60 (stress is a major problem). It consists of a total of 24 questions, out of which 11 are yes/no questions, 2 are self evaluative questions, 10 questions are multiple choice and one questions consists of 22 sub questions which are based on common features of life events and the individual has to agree or disagree with each statement.

#### Procedure (Pilot Study)

A pilot study was carried out in Khadim Ali Shah Bukhari (KASB) bank, Lahore. The main aim of the pilot study was the standardization of the tools being used for the main study. The researcher took a random sample of 30 employees (10 females and 20 males) for this purpose from KASB bank. It took an average of 4 to 7 minutes for every participant to fill both the questionnaires.

The pilot study results showed that both the scales had a cronbach's alpha of 0.636 which is a significant reliability thus ensuring standardization of the tools used for the main study.

#### Procedure (Main Study)

The procedure of the main study followed the same pattern as that of the pilot study and data was collected from a sample of 120 employees of TRG. These participants voluntarily filled out 2 questionnaires namely, The Aggression Questionnaire; and the Professional Life Stress Scale. The responses were entered manually into SPSS. Pearson product moment correlation was used to examine the degree of relationships among the two variables.

### Results

#### Hypothesis 1:

Employees working under high stress will score high on aggression.

Table 1 Pearson Correlation Product Moment between Work Stress and Aggression (N=120).

	<b>r</b>	<b>Sig</b>
<b>Work Stress</b>	0.58**	0.00
<b>Aggression</b>		

Note: \*\*P < 0.01

As the tabulated value above shows, there is a significant positive relationship between work stress and aggression at alpha level of 0.01.

### **Discussion**

The results of the present study showed a significant positive relationship between work stress and aggression at a significance level of 0.05 with an r value of 0.58. Therefore, this hypothesis is accepted. This is because when employees feel high stress, they exhibit more aggression than usual. In stressful situations, individuals are more likely to use anger as a way of expressing high stress in the workplace.

Many research studies in the past have supported this significant relationship between work stress and aggression. The nature of work is crucial in determining the relationship of work stress and aggression, so single nature organization (software house) limited the results applicability. Also the sample size studied was small thus; the research findings cannot be generalized to other organizations and situations.

### **Conclusion**

The results of the study relationship between work stress and aggression among the employees of The Resource Group showed that work stress and aggression had a significant relationship. In order for a better understanding of this relationship future research should also incorporate measures of coping skills to investigate how individuals cope with their stress and aggression levels.

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