



STUDY OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND JOB SATISFACTION AMONG JUNIOR AND SENIOR EMPLOYEES OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR

Arti Mansinghka,

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Psychology, Jai Narain Vyas University, Jodhpur (RAJ.)

Dr. L.N. Bunker,

Supervisor, Professor & Head, Department of Psychology, Jai Narain Vyas University, Jodhpur (RAJ.)

Abstract

The modern workplace is a complex environment where employee well-being is paramount for organizational success. This study investigates the interplay between workplace stress and employee satisfaction, examining the influence of gender, designation (junior vs. senior), and working sector (public vs. private). This investigation utilized a 2x2x2 factorial design, drawing upon a sample of 400 employees (200 male, 200 female; 200 junior, 200 senior; 200 public sector, 200 private sector) from Jodhpur, India. Data was collected using the Occupational Stress Index (OSI) and the Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS). Statistical analysis was conducted using a three-way ANOVA and post-hoc tests. The results revealed a highly significant main effect of designation and working sector on occupational stress, with senior employees and those in the private sector reporting higher stress levels. For job satisfaction, highly significant main effects were found for gender, designation, and working sector, alongside a highly significant interaction between gender and designation. Specifically, female employees, junior employees, and those in the private sector reported higher job satisfaction. It was determined that the correlation between workplace stress and job satisfaction was not statistically significant. These findings underscore the distinct hurdles encountered by various employee groups and highlight the necessity for customized organizational approaches to mitigate stress and enhance satisfaction, thereby fostering a more salubrious and productive work environment.

Keywords: Occupational Stress, Public Sector, Job Satisfaction, Private Sector, Employee Designation, Factorial ANOVA.

1. Introduction

The landscape of the modern workforce has undergone a profound transformation over the past few decades. Globalization, technological advancement, and shifting economic structures have created a dynamic yet demanding work environment. Within this context, the psychological well-being of employees has emerged as a critical area of focus for both researchers and organizations. Two of the most pivotal constructs in understanding employee well-being are work-related stress and professional contentment. These factors not only affect not only

personal well-being and life quality but also exert a direct impact on organizational outcomes such as productivity, absenteeism, and employee turnover (Spector, 1997).

1.1 Occupational Stress

The concept of occupational stress pertains to the detrimental psychological and physiological responses that manifest when the demands of a job exceed an employee's capabilities, resources, or needs. It is a pervasive issue in contemporary workplaces, stemming from factors such as excessive workload, role ambiguity, a deficiency in personal control over one's work, poor interpersonal relationships, and job insecurity. While a moderate level of stress can be motivating, chronic and unmanaged stress is detrimental, leading to burnout, anxiety, depression, and a host of physiological ailments such as cardiovascular conditions and musculoskeletal disorders (Ganster & Rosen, 2013). Understanding the specific antecedents of stress across different work environments is crucial for developing effective mitigation strategies.

1.2 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is characterized as the favorable emotional disposition an individual holds resulting from the appraisal of their job or job experiences. It is a multifaceted construct influenced by various intrinsic factors (e.g., intrinsic motivators like the work's inherent qualities, acknowledgment, a sense of accomplishment, and opportunities for personal development) and extrinsic factors (e.g., pay, working conditions, job security, company policies) (Locke, 1976). A high degree of job satisfaction correlates robustly with increased motivation, better performance, organizational commitment, and reduced turnover intentions. Conversely, diminished job satisfaction may result in disengagement, poor morale, and a decline in organizational effectiveness.

1.3 Contextual Factors: Sector, Designation, and Gender

The experience of workplace stress and professional fulfillment varies significantly among the workforce; it is heavily moderated by contextual factors. This study focuses on three key variables:

- **Working Sector (Public vs. Private):** The public and private sectors operate under different mandates and environmental pressures. The private sector is typically characterized by a profit-driven, a milieu of intense competition, potentially fostering higher pressure and workload but also offer greater financial rewards and faster career progression. In contrast, the public sector is often linked with enhanced employment stability, procedural regularity, and a service-oriented mission, but may suffer from bureaucratic inertia, fewer resources, and limited performance-based incentives. These fundamental differences are likely to create distinct patterns of stress and satisfaction.
- **Designation (Junior vs. Senior):** An employee's position within the organizational hierarchy significantly shapes their work experience. Senior (executive) employees typically hold greater responsibility, face higher decision-making pressure, and manage complex strategic tasks, which can be significant sources of stress. However, they also tend to have more autonomy, control, and higher compensation, which can be sources of satisfaction. Junior (non-executive) employees may face less decisional stress but can experience pressure from high workloads, lack of control over their work, and limited opportunities for advancement.
- **Gender:** Research has often pointed to gender-based differences in the experience of work. Societal roles, career-life balance challenges, and workplace discrimination can lead to different sources of stress and satisfaction for male and female employees.

This research, therefore, aims to dissect these complex relationships through a robust factorial design. By systematically examining the main and interactive effects of gender, designation, and working sector on both

workplace pressures and employee morale, this research endeavors to provide a nuanced understanding of employee well-being in the contemporary Indian workplace.

2. Research Objectives and Hypotheses

2.1 Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the main effects of gender, designation (junior/senior), and working sector (public/private) on employees' levels of occupational stress.
2. To examine the main effects of gender, designation, and working sector on employees' levels of job satisfaction.
3. To investigate the interaction effects between gender, designation, and working sector on both occupational stress and job satisfaction.
4. To determine the characteristics and intensity of the association between occupational stress and job satisfaction in the sample.

2.2 Hypotheses

Based on the research objectives, the subsequent null hypotheses were developed for the purpose of testing:

For Occupational Stress (OSI):

- **H₀₁:** There will be no significant difference in the average scores for occupational stress when comparing male and female employees.
- **H₀₂:** There will be no significant difference in the average occupational stress metrics between junior-level and senior-level employees.
- **H₀₃:** There will be no significant difference in the average stress indicators for employees across public versus private sectors.
- **H₀₄:** There will be no significant interaction effect between gender and designation on occupational stress.
- **H₀₅:** There will be no significant interaction effect between gender and working sector on occupational stress.
- **H₀₆:** There will be no significant interaction effect between designation and working sector on occupational stress.
- **H₀₇:** There will be no significant three-way interaction effect between gender, designation, and working sector on occupational stress.

For Job Satisfaction (JSS):

- **H₀₈:** There will be no significant difference in the average job satisfaction levels reported by male versus female employees.
- **H₀₉:** There will be no significant difference in the average measures of job satisfaction between junior and senior staff.

- **H₀₁₀:** There will be no significant difference in the average job satisfaction ratings of individuals employed in the public and private sectors.
- **H₀₁₁:** There will be no significant interaction effect between gender and designation on job satisfaction.
- **H₀₁₂:** There will be no significant interaction effect between gender and working sector on job satisfaction.
- **H₀₁₃:** There will be no significant interaction effect between designation and working sector on job satisfaction.
- **H₀₁₄:** There will be no significant three-way interaction effect between gender, designation, and working sector on job satisfaction.

For Correlation:

- **H₀₁₅:** There will be no significant correlation between occupational stress scores and job satisfaction scores.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Occupational Stress and Job Satisfaction in Public vs. Private Sectors

The differentiation between the work settings of the public and private domains has long been a topic of scholarly debate. Studies often report contradictory findings regarding stress and satisfaction. Certain studies indicate that individuals in the private sector encounter greater levels of stress due to intense competition, job insecurity, and a high-pressure "publish or perish" culture (Boyne, 2002). However, this high-stress environment is often offset by greater opportunities for financial gain and career advancement, which can enhance job satisfaction. Conversely, employees in the public sector are frequently described as having lower stress due to better job security and work-life balance (Blank, 2008). Yet, factors like bureaucratic red tape, lack of resources, and perceived organizational inefficiency can lead to significant frustration and lower fulfillment at work when contrasted with their peers in the private sector.

3.2 Impact of Hierarchical Designation

An individual's standing within the organizational structure serves as a powerful determinant of their work experience. Senior-level employees, or executives, bear the weight of strategic responsibility, which can represent a significant origin of stress. They are accountable for organizational performance and must navigate complex internal and external challenges (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). However, this is often coupled with high levels of autonomy, control over resources, and influence, which are key contributors to professional contentment. Junior employees, on the other hand, may experience stress related to role overload, a lack of control, and limited input in decision-making processes. For these employees, job satisfaction is frequently linked to avenues for professional growth, supportive supervision, and a clear path for career progression.

3.3 The Interrelationship between Stress and Job Satisfaction

The interconnection between workplace stress and job satisfaction is conventionally viewed as inverse. High levels of chronic stress are expected to erode an individual's sense of well-being and contentment with their job (Lu, 2011). Stressors like role conflict and ambiguity have been consistently shown to negatively predict job satisfaction. However, this relationship can be complex. The "challenge-hindrance" model of stress posits that some stressors (challenge stressors) like a high workload or responsibility can be perceived as opportunities for growth and may positively relate to job satisfaction, while other stressors (hindrance stressors) like bureaucracy or interpersonal conflict are seen as obstacles and negatively relate to it (Cavanaugh et al., 2000). Therefore, a

simple negative correlation is not always guaranteed and may depend on the specific types of stressors that are widespread within that particular setting.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This research utilized a quantitative, cross-sectional research design. A 2x2x2 between-subjects factorial design was utilized to investigate the main and interaction effects of the three independent variables on the two dependent variables.

- **Independent Variables:**

- i. Gender: (Female, Male)
- ii. Designation: (Junior, Senior)
- iii. Working Sector: (Public Sector, Private Sector)

- **Dependent Variables:**

- i. Occupational Stress: Measured by the Occupational Stress Index (OSI).
- ii. Job Satisfaction: Measured by the Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS).

4.2 Participants and Recruitment

The sample consisted of 400 employees working in various organizations within Jodhpur, India. The age of participants ranged from 25 to 60 years. Purposive sampling was used to ensure a balanced distribution across the eight cells of the factorial design. The sample was perfectly balanced with 50 participants in each subgroup:

- Total N = 400
- Gender: 200 Females, 200 Males
- Designation: 200 Junior, 200 Senior
- Working Sector: 200 Public, 200 Private

4.3 Measures and Instruments

Data was gathered using standardized and validated psychometric instruments:

1. **Occupational Stress Index (OSI):** Developed by Dr. A.P. Singh and Dr. Srivastava (1984), this index measures the extent of stress perceived by an individual arising stemming from multiple facets of their employment and organization. A higher score on the OSI indicates a higher level of perceived occupational stress.
2. **Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS):** Developed by Dr. Amar Singh and Dr. T.R. Sharma (2001), this scale assesses an employee's level of contentment with different facets of their job, including the work itself, supervision, pay, and promotional opportunities. A higher score on the JSS indicates greater job satisfaction.

Note: The Employee Mental Health Inventory (EMHI) and Work Motivation Inventory (WMQ) were also administered as a component of a more extensive research initiative; however, their findings fall outside the focus of this paper.

4.4 Procedure

After obtaining necessary institutional permissions, potential participants were approached in their respective organizations. The objective of the investigation was explained, and informed consent was formally acquired from all individuals who agreed to participate. They were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The questionnaire booklet, containing the demographic information sheet and the psychometric scales, was administered in a quiet setting. The completed questionnaires were collected, and the time contributed by participants was formally acknowledged.

4.5 Statistical Analysis

The collected data was coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The following statistical techniques were employed:

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Descriptive metrics, including Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD), were computed to summarize the data for each subgroup.
- **Inferential Statistics:** To examine the primary and interactive effects, a distinct three-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed for both Occupational Stress and Job Satisfaction. Post-hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni correction method was applied to significant main effects to identify specific group differences.
- **Correlation Analysis:** Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (r) was calculated to evaluate the association between Occupational Stress (OSI) and Job Satisfaction (JSS).
- The significance level (α) was set at 0.05 for all tests.

5. Results

This section presents the results of the statistical analyses, starting with descriptive statistics, followed by the outcomes of the three-way ANOVA for each dependent variable, and concluding with the correlation analysis.

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 displays the mean values and standard deviations for the Occupational Stress (OSI Score) and Job Satisfaction (JSS Score) across all eight experimental groups.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for OSI and JSS Scores

Gender	Designation	Working Sector	OSI Mean (SD)	JSS Mean (SD)
Female	Junior	Private Sector	136.00 (6.62)	68.00 (5.39)
		Public Sector	129.00 (6.29)	63.90 (5.40)
	Senior	Private Sector	130.00 (7.84)	72.40 (5.33)
		Public Sector	128.00 (6.24)	67.20 (5.53)
Male	Junior	Private Sector	130.00 (6.60)	69.70 (5.90)

Gender	Designation	Working Sector	OSI Mean (SD)	JSS Mean (SD)
		Public Sector	123.00 (7.30)	63.30 (5.40)
	Senior	Private Sector	135.00 (7.10)	67.70 (6.17)
		Public Sector	133.00 (7.01)	63.30 (7.79)

5.2 Inferential Statistics for Occupational Stress (OSI Score)

A three-way ANOVA was undertaken to evaluate the impact of gender, designation, and working sector on OSI scores. The results are summarized within Table 2.

Table 2: ANOVA Summary for Occupational Stress (OSI Score)

Source	Sum Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Gender	9.00	1	9.00	0.189	Not significant
Designation	515.29	1	515.29	10.841	Highly significant (.01)
Working Sector	1971.36	1	1971.36	41.474	Highly significant (.01)
Gender * Designation	2756.25	1	2756.25	57.987	Highly significant (.01)
Gender * Working Sector	2.56	1	2.56	0.054	Not significant
Designation * Sector	590.49	1	590.49	12.423	Highly significant (.01)
Gender * Des * Sector	2.25	1	2.25	0.047	Not significant
Residuals	18632.64	392	47.53		

The analysis revealed the following:

- The main effect of **Gender** was not statistically significant ($F(1, 392) = 0.189, p = .664$).

- A highly significant main effect of **Designation** was found ($F(1, 392) = 10.841, p = .001, \eta^2p = .027$), indicating that senior employees ($M = 131.5$) experienced higher occupational stress than junior employees ($M = 129.23$). This difference was highly significant at the 0.01 level.
- A highly significant main effect of **Working Sector** was observed ($F(1, 392) = 41.474, p < .001, \eta^2p = .096$). Post-hoc analysis showed that personnel within the private sector ($M = 132.75$) reported significantly higher stress than those in the public sector ($M = 128.0$), a difference that was highly significant at the $p < .01$ significance threshold.
- A highly significant interaction effect between **Gender and Designation** was found ($F(1, 392) = 57.987, p < .001, \eta^2p = .129$). As shown in the interaction plot (Figure 1), stress levels for females decreased from junior to senior roles, whereas for males, stress levels increased sharply from junior to senior roles.
- A highly significant interaction effect between **Designation and Working Sector** was also found ($F(1, 392) = 12.423, p < .001, \eta^2p = .031$). The plot (Figure 2) shows that while stress is more pronounced within the private sector for both designations, the gap in stress between junior and senior employees is considerably greater in the private domain than in the public sector.
- No other interactions reached the level of statistical significance.

5.3 Inferential Statistics for Job Satisfaction (JSS Score)

A three-way ANOVA was conducted for JSS scores. These outcomes are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: ANOVA Summary for Job Satisfaction (JSS Score)

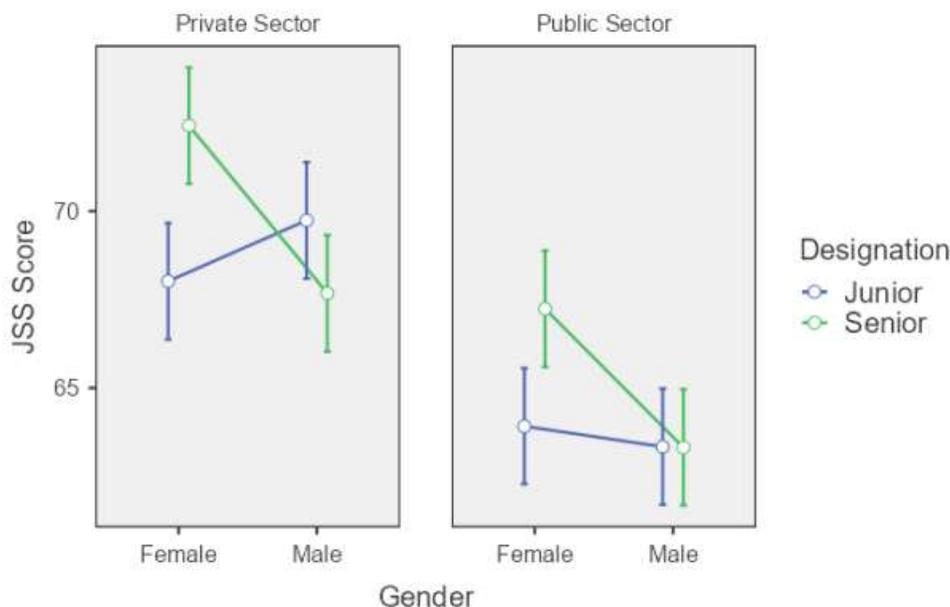
Source	Sum Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Gender	353.44	1	353.44	10.099	Highly significant (.01)
Designation	198.81	1	198.81	5.681	Significant (.05)
Working Sector	2510.01	1	2510.01	71.722	Highly significant (.01)
Gender * Designation	600.25	1	600.25	17.152	Highly significant (.01)
Gender * Working Sector	13.69	1	13.69	0.391	Not significant
Designation * Sector	5.76	1	5.76	0.165	Not significant
Gender * Des * Sector	60.84	1	60.84	1.738	Not significant

Source	Sum Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Residuals	13718.56	392	35.00		

The analysis yielded the following:

- A highly significant main effect of **Gender** was found ($F(1, 392) = 10.099, p = .002, \eta^2p = .025$). Post-hoc comparison confirmed that female employees ($M = 67.88$) had significantly greater professional fulfillment compared to their male employees ($M = 66.0$), a difference that was highly statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level.
- A significant main effect of **Designation** was observed ($F(1, 392) = 5.681, p = .018, \eta^2p = .014$). Post-hoc tests showed that junior employees ($M = 67.59$) indicated superior job satisfaction relative to senior employees ($M = 66.29$). This difference was significant at a $p < .05$ threshold.
- A highly significant main effect of **Working Sector** was found ($F(1, 392) = 71.722, p < .001, \eta^2p = .155$). Individuals working in the private domain ($M = 69.45$) reported markedly greater job satisfaction compared to their public sector counterparts ($M = 64.44$). This difference was highly significant at the 0.01 level.
- A highly significant interaction effect between **Gender and Designation** was found ($F(1, 392) = 17.152, p < .001, \eta^2p = .042$). The interaction plot (Figure 3) reveals that for females, job satisfaction increases from junior to senior roles, while for males, job satisfaction decreases from junior to senior roles.
- None of the remaining interactions demonstrated statistical significance.

Figure 3: Interaction Plot for JSS (Gender * Designation)



5.4 Correlation Analysis

A Pearson's correlation was computed to assess the linear relationship between the Occupational Stress Index (OSI) and the Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS).

Table 4: Correlation between OSI and JSS

Variables	Pearson's r	Significance	N
OSI Score & JSS Score	-0.006	Not significant	400

The results showed an extremely faint, inverse relationship connecting occupational stress with job satisfaction ($r = -0.006$, $n = 400$). This association failed to achieve statistical significance ($p = .912$). Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{015}) that there is no significant association between these two constructs cannot be rejected.

6. Discussion

This study aimed to dissect the intricate dynamics connecting workplace stress and professional fulfillment by examining the roles of gender, designation, and working sector. The findings provide a multi-layered perspective on employee well-being, revealing several significant main and interaction effects.

6.1 Interpretation of Key Findings

Occupational Stress: The results for occupational stress challenge some common assumptions while reinforcing others. The observation that senior staff encounter more stress than their junior colleagues aligns with literature highlighting the pressures of executive responsibility and decision-making (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Similarly, the finding that employees in the private domain indicate higher levels of stress aligns with the notion that competitive, profit-driven environments are inherently more demanding (Boyne, 2002).

However, the most illuminating results were the interactions. The profoundly significant interplay between gender and designation (at the 0.01 level) is particularly noteworthy. For males, stress increased with seniority, fitting the traditional model of career pressure. For females, however, stress decreased with seniority. This could suggest that as women advance into senior roles, they may gain greater autonomy and control, which acts as a buffer against stress, or alternatively, that only individuals with a particular resilience to stress succeed in reaching senior positions. The highly significant interaction between designation and working sector (at the 0.01 level) further clarifies the picture: the stress gap between junior and senior staff is far more pronounced in the private sector, suggesting that the "climb to the top" is significantly more stressful in a corporate environment than in public service. The main effect for gender was not statistically significant, suggesting that, overall, neither gender is more stressed than the other, but the experience of stress at different career stages is vastly different.

Job Satisfaction: The ANOVA for professional fulfillment also yielded rich results. The finding that private sector personnel exhibit greater satisfaction achieved high statistical significance ($p < .01$). This contradicts some literature but may reflect the specific sample, where the benefits of the private sector (e.g., higher pay, performance rewards) may outweigh the drawbacks (e.g., higher stress). The finding that junior employees are more satisfied than senior employees, which was significant at the 0.05 level, is intriguing. It may suggest that the responsibilities inherent in senior positions outweigh the perks, leading to diminished satisfaction over time, or that junior employees have more optimistic career outlooks.

The main effect of gender was highly significant at the 0.01 level, with females reporting higher satisfaction. This result, combined with the highly significant gender*designation interaction (at the 0.01 level), provides a compelling narrative. For females, satisfaction increased with seniority, whereas for males, it decreased. This implies that for the female participants in this study, achieving a senior position is a highly rewarding experience, potentially overcoming barriers and leading to great fulfillment. For men, the increased stress and responsibility of senior roles may lead to a net decrease in job satisfaction.

Relationship between Stress and Satisfaction: Perhaps among the most surprising outcomes of this research was the absence of a statistically meaningful correlation between occupational stress and job satisfaction. The conventional wisdom that higher stress leads to lower satisfaction did not hold true for this sample. This could be explained by the challenge-hindrance stressor model (Cavanaugh et al., 2000). It is possible that for many employees, particularly in the private sector, high-stress roles are also high-challenge roles that offer significant rewards (financial and intrinsic), thus neutralizing the negative influence of stress on overall satisfaction. This finding highlights that the connection between stress and fulfillment is not universal and is highly dependent on the context and the nature of the stressors involved.

6.2 Comparison with Prior Research

The outcomes of this investigation exhibit both convergence with and divergence from prior scholarly work. The higher stress in senior roles and the private sector is a common theme in occupational health literature. However, the complex interactions involving gender provide a more nuanced perspective than is often found. The higher job satisfaction in the private sector, while not universal, has been reported in studies where financial incentives and career opportunities are highly valued. The non-significant correlation between stress and satisfaction is a key point of departure from many studies but supports more complex models of stress, suggesting that not all stress is "bad" for satisfaction.

6.3 Strengths and Limitations

This research possesses multiple strengths, notably its substantial and perfectly balanced sample size (N=400), which enhances statistical power. The use of a 2x2x2 factorial design allowed for a sophisticated analysis of interaction effects, providing insights that a simpler design would miss. Furthermore, the use of standardized and validated psychometric instruments ensures the reliability of the measurements.

However, the study also has limitations. First, its cross-sectional design precludes the inference of causality; for example, it is unclear whether senior roles cause stress or if less-stressed individuals are promoted. A longitudinal study would be needed to establish causal links. Second, the sample was drawn from a single geographical location (Jodhpur), which may constrain the applicability of these results to broader contexts or cultures. Finally, the reliance on self-report measures is susceptible to the potential for social desirability bias, which could lead participants to under-report stress or over-report satisfaction.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Summary of Key Findings

This research offers persuasive evidence indicating that workplace stress and professional fulfillment are complex phenomena influenced by an interplay of an individual's gender, their position in the hierarchy, and the sector in which they work. Senior employees and those in the private sector experience significantly elevated levels of work-related stress. However, this is moderated by gender, with seniority increasing stress for men but decreasing it for women.

Regarding job satisfaction, superior levels were reported by individuals in the private sector, junior-level staff, and female employees. Again, an interaction showed that satisfaction increased with seniority for women but

decreased for men. Critically, no significant direct association was identified between work-related stress and professional contentment, suggesting that a high-stress role does not necessarily equate to a low-satisfaction role in this context.

7.2 Practical Applications
The findings present significant practical ramifications for organizations seeking to improve employee well-being and productivity:

1. **Targeted Interventions:** It is advisable for organizations to transition beyond one-size-fits-all wellness programs. As an example, firms in the private sector should focus on stress-management programs specifically for senior male executives, who appear to be a high-risk group.
2. **Enhancing Public Sector Satisfaction:** Public sector organizations should investigate the sources of lower job satisfaction and implement strategies to improve them, such as enhancing recognition programs, providing clearer career paths, and empowering employees.
3. **Supporting Female Leaders:** The finding that women's stress decreases while satisfaction increases with seniority is a positive sign. Organizations should continue to foster environments that support and reward female leaders, as this appears to be beneficial for both the individual and the organization.
4. **Rethinking Stress:** It is crucial for managers to recognize that not every form of stress has a negative impact. By focusing on creating "challenge" environments rather than "hindrance" environments, organizations can maintain high performance without necessarily sacrificing job satisfaction.

To conclude, this study emphasizes that a profound and contextually sensitive comprehension of the workforce is fundamental to cultivating work environments conducive to the success of all employees.

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