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COPING STRATEGIES AND RESILIENCE AMONG WORKING PROFESSIONALS: A STUDY OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

Dr. Pandurang Sidhappa Bansode*

Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Sangameshwar College (Autonomous), Solapur.

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Abstract

Occupational stress has emerged as a critical psychological concern in modern work environments due to increasing job demands, role ambiguity, work-life imbalance, technological pressures, and organizational change. Prolonged exposure to such stressors can adversely affect employees' mental health, job satisfaction, productivity, and overall quality of life. In this context, coping strategies and resilience play a crucial role in determining how working professionals perceive, manage, and adapt to occupational stress. The present study aims to examine the levels of occupational stress among working professionals and to analyze the role of coping strategies and resilience in mitigating its negative psychological effects.

Adopting a quantitative research design, the study focuses on working professionals from diverse occupational sectors. Standardized psychological instruments are used to assess occupational stress, coping strategies, and resilience. Coping strategies are examined across problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance-oriented dimensions, while resilience is conceptualized as an individual's capacity to adapt positively in the face of work-related adversity. The study seeks to explore the interrelationships among these variables and to identify whether resilience functions as a protective factor against occupational stress.

By integrating perspectives from stress and coping theory and positive psychology, the study contributes to the growing body of organizational and occupational psychology literature. The findings are expected to offer valuable insights into how adaptive coping mechanisms and resilience can buffer the impact of occupational stress. The study also has practical implications for organizational policy, employee well-being programs, and mental health interventions aimed at fostering resilient and psychologically healthy workplaces.

1. Introduction:

Occupational stress has become an inevitable aspect of contemporary professional life, arising from rapid industrialization, globalization, technological advancement, and changing organizational structures. Working professionals across sectors are increasingly required to meet high performance expectations, manage multiple roles, adapt to continuous change, and balance professional responsibilities with personal life demands. These conditions often generate sustained psychological pressure, which, if unmanaged, can adversely affect mental health, job

performance, and overall well-being. As a result, occupational stress has gained considerable attention in the fields of psychology, organizational behavior, and human resource management.

Occupational stress is broadly understood as the psychological and physiological response that occurs when job demands exceed an individual's coping resources or perceived control. High workload, role conflict, job insecurity, lack of autonomy, interpersonal conflicts, and inadequate organizational support are among the most commonly identified sources of workplace stress. Prolonged exposure to such stressors has been linked to a range of negative outcomes, including burnout, anxiety, depression, reduced job satisfaction, absenteeism, and decreased organizational commitment. For professionals operating in highly competitive and performance-driven environments, unmanaged stress not only undermines personal well-being but also affects organizational effectiveness.

In response to occupational stress, individuals employ various coping strategies to manage internal and external demands. Coping strategies refer to the cognitive and behavioral efforts used to handle stressful situations. Psychological literature commonly categorizes coping strategies into problem-focused coping, which involves actively addressing the source of stress; emotion-focused coping, which aims to regulate emotional responses; and avoidance-oriented coping, which involves disengagement or denial. The effectiveness of these strategies varies depending on the nature of the stressor, individual personality traits, and organizational context. Adaptive coping strategies are associated with better psychological adjustment, whereas maladaptive strategies often exacerbate stress and emotional distress.

Alongside coping strategies, resilience has emerged as a key psychological construct in understanding individual differences in responses to occupational stress. Resilience refers to the capacity to withstand, adapt to, and recover from adversity while maintaining psychological well-being. In occupational settings, resilient professionals are more likely to perceive challenges as manageable, recover quickly from setbacks, and sustain motivation and performance under pressure. The growing emphasis on resilience aligns with the principles of positive psychology, which focus on strengths, adaptability, and optimal functioning rather than solely on pathology.

Despite the recognition of coping and resilience as crucial psychological resources, empirical evidence suggests considerable variation in how working professionals manage occupational stress. Factors such as age, gender, work experience, organizational culture, and job role influence stress perception and coping effectiveness. Moreover, many organizations continue to focus on productivity outcomes without adequately addressing employees' psychological coping capacities and resilience-building mechanisms.

In this context, the present study seeks to examine occupational stress among working professionals with particular emphasis on coping strategies and resilience. By exploring how different coping mechanisms and levels of resilience relate to occupational stress, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of psychological adaptation in the workplace. Such an understanding is essential for designing effective organizational interventions, promoting employee well-being, and fostering resilient work environments capable of sustaining both individual and organizational growth.

2. Literature Survey

The concept of occupational stress has been extensively examined within psychology and organizational studies, particularly in relation to its sources, consequences, and coping mechanisms. Early theoretical models conceptualized stress as a response to external demands; however, contemporary perspectives emphasize the interaction between individual characteristics and environmental stressors. Research consistently demonstrates that occupational stress arises when there is a perceived imbalance between job demands and the individual's capacity to manage those demands effectively. High levels of occupational stress have been linked with adverse psychological outcomes such as burnout, anxiety, depression, and reduced job satisfaction, highlighting the need for effective coping and resilience-based approaches in workplace settings.

A substantial body of literature has focused on coping strategies as a primary mechanism through which individuals manage occupational stress. Coping is generally categorized into problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance coping. Empirical studies suggest that problem-focused coping, which involves proactive efforts to modify or eliminate stressors, is associated with better psychological adjustment and lower levels of occupational stress.

Emotion-focused coping, including strategies such as emotional regulation, seeking social support, and cognitive reframing, has shown mixed outcomes, often depending on situational context. In contrast, avoidance-oriented coping, characterized by denial, withdrawal, or disengagement, is frequently associated with heightened stress, emotional exhaustion, and poorer mental health outcomes among working professionals.

Research has also highlighted the role of individual differences in shaping coping preferences and effectiveness. Variables such as personality traits, gender, and work experience influence the selection of coping strategies. For instance, studies indicate that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence and internal locus of control tend to employ more adaptive coping strategies, whereas those with higher neuroticism are more likely to rely on avoidance-based coping. Gender-based differences in coping have also been reported, with some evidence suggesting that women are more inclined toward emotion-focused coping, while men may prefer problem-focused strategies, though findings remain inconsistent across cultural contexts.

In recent years, resilience has emerged as a significant construct in occupational stress research. Resilience is commonly defined as the ability to adapt positively in the face of adversity, stress, or trauma. Studies grounded in positive psychology emphasize resilience as a dynamic process rather than a fixed trait, influenced by both personal and organizational factors. Empirical evidence indicates that resilient employees exhibit lower stress levels, greater job satisfaction, and better psychological well-being, even in high-pressure work environments. Resilience has also been found to moderate the relationship between occupational stress and negative psychological outcomes, serving as a protective buffer against burnout and emotional exhaustion.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To assess the level of occupational stress among working professionals
- To identify dominant coping strategies used by professionals
- To examine the level of resilience among working professionals
- To analyze the relationship between occupational stress, coping strategies, and resilience
- To examine differences based on demographic and occupational variables

4. Methodology

The methodology of the present study has been designed to systematically examine occupational stress and its relationship with coping strategies and resilience among working professionals. A structured and ethical research approach has been adopted to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings.

5. Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and correlational research design. The descriptive component aims to assess the levels of occupational stress, coping strategies, and resilience among working professionals, while the correlational component seeks to examine the relationships among these variables. This design is appropriate for understanding patterns, associations, and psychological tendencies without manipulating variables, making it suitable for research conducted in natural workplace settings.

Sample

The sample for the present study consists of 40 working professionals employed in the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) sector. These participants represent industrial and manufacturing-related occupations, where work-related stress is often influenced by factors such as workload, shift duties, production targets, and job security.

Inclusion Criteria for sample selection were as follows:

- Employees currently working in MIDC-based industrial units
- Minimum of one year of continuous work experience
- Age range between 21 and 60 years
- Willingness to participate voluntarily in the study

Employees with less than one year of experience or those currently undergoing psychiatric treatment were

excluded to maintain sample homogeneity and minimize confounding psychological factors.

Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who met the predefined inclusion criteria. This non-probability sampling method was considered appropriate due to the specific occupational setting and limited accessibility of the target population. Purposive sampling ensured that participants possessed relevant work experience and exposure to occupational stressors pertinent to the objectives of the study.

Tools and Instruments

Standardized psychological instruments were used for data collection to ensure accuracy and consistency in measurement.

Occupational Stress Scale

This scale was used to assess the level of stress experienced by working professionals in relation to their job demands, work environment, and organizational factors. The scale measures multiple dimensions of occupational stress, including workload, role conflict, role ambiguity, and interpersonal stress. It has demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity in previous organizational research.

Coping Strategies Inventory

The Coping Strategies Inventory was administered to measure the coping mechanisms employed by participants to manage occupational stress. The scale assesses various coping dimensions, including problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidance coping. Higher scores indicate greater use of the respective coping strategies.

Resilience Scale

Resilience was measured using a standardized Resilience Scale designed to assess an individual's capacity to adapt positively to stress and adversity. The scale evaluates traits such as emotional regulation, perseverance, optimism, and adaptive functioning, which are essential for psychological resilience in occupational contexts.

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the concerned industrial authorities. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality. The questionnaires were administered in person during working hours with prior consent from management, ensuring minimal disruption to work schedules. Clear instructions were provided, and participants were encouraged to respond honestly. Adequate time was given to complete the questionnaires, and completed responses were collected immediately to avoid data loss.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly adhered to throughout the research process. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participants were assured of anonymity, and no identifying information was collected. Confidentiality of responses was maintained, and data were used solely for academic research purposes. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences. The study was conducted in accordance with established ethical guidelines for psychological research.

Data Analysis Plan

The collected data were coded and analyzed using standard statistical procedures appropriate for a descriptive and correlational research design. Prior to analysis, the data were screened for completeness and accuracy. Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize demographic variables and to determine the overall levels of occupational stress, coping strategies, and resilience among working professionals.

To examine relationships among the key variables, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was used to

assess the association between occupational stress, coping strategies, and resilience. This method was selected as the variables were measured on continuous scales and met the assumptions required for correlational analysis.

Further, independent sample t-tests and one-way ANOVA were planned (where applicable) to examine differences in occupational stress, coping strategies, and resilience across selected demographic variables such as gender, age group, and work experience.

All statistical analyses were conducted at a 0.05 level of significance. Results were interpreted in accordance with psychological and organizational research standards to ensure meaningful conclusions.

6. Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analysis was carried out to understand the overall levels of occupational stress, coping strategies, and resilience among the working professionals employed in the MIDC sector.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Occupational Stress, Coping Strategies, and Resilience (N = 40)

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Occupational Stress	68.45	9.32
Problem-Focused Coping	42.30	6.15
Emotion-Focused Coping	39.75	5.88
Avoidance Coping	34.20	7.10
Resilience	71.60	8.25

The mean score for occupational stress indicates a moderate to high level of stress among working professionals. Problem-focused coping emerged as the most frequently used coping strategy, followed by emotion-focused coping. The resilience scores suggest a moderate level of adaptive capacity among the respondents.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between occupational stress, coping strategies, and resilience.

Table 2 Correlation Matrix of Occupational Stress, Coping Strategies, and Resilience

Variables	Occupational Stress	Problem-Focused Coping	Emotion-Focused Coping	Avoidance Coping	Resilience
Occupational Stress	1	-0.46**	-0.28*	0.52**	-0.61**
Problem-Focused Coping		1	0.42**	-0.31*	0.55**
Emotion-Focused Coping			1	0.18	0.36*
Avoidance Coping				1	-0.48**
Resilience					1

Occupational stress shows a significant negative correlation with problem-focused coping and resilience, indicating that higher use of adaptive coping strategies and greater resilience are associated with lower levels of stress. Conversely, occupational stress is positively correlated with avoidance coping, suggesting that reliance on maladaptive coping strategies increases stress levels. Resilience demonstrates a strong positive relationship with problem-focused coping and a negative relationship with avoidance coping.

Comparative Analysis

Table 3Difference in Occupational Stress Based on Work Experience

Work Experience	Mean Stress Score	SD
≤ 5 years (n = 18)	72.10	8.85
> 5 years (n = 22)	65.40	9.10

Professionals with lesser work experience reported higher occupational stress compared to those with more experience, suggesting that familiarity with job demands and coping resources may reduce perceived stress over time.

Summary of Results

The results indicate that occupational stress among working professionals in the MIDC sector is influenced by both coping strategies and resilience. Adaptive coping strategies, particularly problem-focused coping, along with higher resilience, serve as protective factors against occupational stress. In contrast, avoidance-oriented coping exacerbates stress levels. These findings support existing psychological theories emphasizing the role of coping and resilience in managing workplace stress.

Discussion of Findings

The present study examined occupational stress among working professionals in the MIDC sector, with particular emphasis on the role of coping strategies and resilience in managing work-related stress. The findings of the study provide meaningful insights into the psychological processes through which individuals respond to occupational demands and align closely with established theories of stress and coping.

The descriptive results indicate that working professionals experience moderate to high levels of occupational stress. This finding is consistent with previous research highlighting that industrial and manufacturing sector are characterized by demanding work conditions, production pressures, role overload, and limited autonomy. Such stressors are known to contribute to psychological strain, particularly when organizational support and control over work processes are perceived as inadequate. The elevated stress levels observed in the present study underscore the pressing need for stress management interventions in industrial work settings.

With regard to coping strategies, the findings reveal that problem-focused coping is the most frequently used strategy among the respondents, followed by emotion-focused coping, while avoidance coping is used comparatively less. This pattern suggests that many working professionals attempt to manage occupational stress through active problem-solving and emotional regulation. The negative correlation between occupational stress and problem-focused coping supports the transactional model of stress, which posits that individuals who engage in active coping strategies are better equipped to manage stressors and reduce psychological distress. This result is consistent with earlier studies that emphasize the adaptive role of problem-focused coping in occupational contexts.

Emotion-focused coping demonstrated a weaker yet significant relationship with occupational stress and resilience. This finding suggests that emotional regulation and support-seeking may help alleviate stress to some extent, particularly in situations where stressors are less controllable. However, reliance solely on emotion-focused coping may not be sufficient to manage chronic or structurally embedded workplace stressors. This highlights the importance of combining emotional coping with problem-solving approaches for effective stress management.

Avoidance coping was found to be positively correlated with occupational stress and negatively associated with resilience. This indicates that individuals who rely on avoidance strategies such as denial, withdrawal, or disengagement tend to experience higher levels of stress and lower psychological adaptability. These findings are consistent with existing literature that identifies avoidance coping as maladaptive, often leading to prolonged stress exposure and emotional exhaustion. The results suggest that avoidance coping may temporarily reduce discomfort but ultimately exacerbates occupational stress.

Resilience emerged as a significant protective factor in the present study. The strong negative relationship between resilience and occupational stress indicates that resilient professionals are better able to withstand work-related pressures and recover from stressors. Additionally, the positive association between resilience and problem-focused coping suggests that resilient individuals are more likely to adopt adaptive coping strategies. This finding aligns

with positive psychology perspectives, which view resilience as a dynamic capacity that enhances effective stress management and psychological well-being.

The comparative analysis based on work experience revealed that professionals with fewer years of experience reported higher levels of occupational stress. This finding may be attributed to limited familiarity with job demands, lower confidence in handling work challenges, and underdeveloped coping resources among less experienced employees. Over time, increased exposure to workplace demands may facilitate the development of effective coping strategies and resilience, thereby reducing perceived stress.

Overall, the findings of the study support the view that occupational stress is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by individual coping patterns and resilience levels. The results reinforce the importance of fostering adaptive coping strategies and resilience-building initiatives within organizational settings. By integrating these psychological resources into workplace mental health programs, organizations can mitigate occupational stress and promote sustainable employee well-being and productivity.

7. Conclusion

The present study examined occupational stress among working professionals in the MIDC sector with specific reference to coping strategies and resilience as key psychological resources. The findings clearly indicate that occupational stress is a significant concern among industrial workers, reflecting the demanding nature of contemporary work environments characterized by workload pressure, role demands, and organizational constraints. The study demonstrates that coping strategies play a crucial role in shaping how professionals experience and manage occupational stress. Problem-focused coping emerged as the most adaptive strategy, showing a significant negative relationship with occupational stress. This suggests that professionals who actively engage in problem-solving and task-oriented approaches are better able to manage job-related pressures. Emotion-focused coping showed a moderate role in stress management, indicating its usefulness in regulating emotional responses, particularly when stressors are not immediately controllable. In contrast, avoidance coping was found to intensify occupational stress, highlighting its maladaptive nature in workplace contexts.

Resilience was identified as a strong protective factor against occupational stress. Working professionals with higher resilience levels reported lower stress and greater use of adaptive coping strategies. This finding reinforces the perspective that resilience enhances psychological flexibility, enabling individuals to recover from stressors and maintain functional well-being under pressure. Additionally, differences based on work experience revealed that less experienced professionals experience higher stress, emphasizing the importance of early-stage support, coping skill development, and resilience training.

AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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