

**ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS FACTORS AMONG WOMEN FACULTY MEMBERS OF UNIVERSITIES  
(CASE STUDY: ISLAMIC AZAD UNIVERSITIES OF KHUZESTAN PROVINCE-IRAN)**

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**Abstract:** Creating a high performance organization requires determining and understanding what factors influence performance. One of the most significant factors is stress. The present study is conducted to explore the organizational stress factors among women faculty members of Islamic Azad universities of Khuzestan Province – Iran. The research method is descriptive-survey. The sample of the study is comprised of 180 full-time women faculty members with more than 3 years job experience who are drawn from selected universities with method of randomly multi-stage, according to Morgan table. To determine the organizational stress factors questionnaire developed by French and Kaplan is used. The reliability of the scale is 0.918. In addition to analyze the data one-sample t-test of Friedman and Kruskal Varice has been used. The study reveals that the organizational stress level is high among women faculty members in particular universities. Some stressors such as uncertainty in job prospects, underutilization of the capabilities and skills of teachers, organizational policy, role ambiguity, responsibility for others, and colleagues support are more obvious among statistical population than other factors.

**Keywords:** ORGANIZATIONAL, STRESS FACTORS,

## INTRODUCTION

Stress in organization is a wide spread phenomenon with far reaching practical and economic consequences. Faculty members have been respected in many countries since long time ago as they provide key professional careers (Locke & Teichler, 2007). Traditionally, people outside universities assume teaching as a stress-less profession. Recent studies are emphasizing the increasing pressure on universities teachers particularly on female members; hence resulting in changes in higher education policies and social status (N, 2008, Kinman, G, 1998, Tytherleigh, MY, 2003, 2005, Gillespie NA 2001, Barkhuizen). A significant increase in the number of students in higher education institutions, competition between higher education institutions and nongovernmental, increased emphasis on research, concern for equity and social benefit of education, and emphasizing on training while working are different kinds of these changes. Also, nowadays the stress level in academic environment has been risen up. The main mission of Iranian universities is educating skilled workforce needed in the community and this is being carried out by faculty members. Therefore, maintaining faculty members' mental health is very important. Teaching is a profession with a complex working environment, accompanied with excessive stress, challenges, and demands. The teachers can manage their classes when they feel enough attention to their physical, emotional, and intellectual situation. So in this research,

the organizational stressors among women faculty members are identified as a first and the most important step in the organizational stress management, so that it can provide the groundwork for next steps.

Theoretical Framework: Rabbins (2010) discussed the sources of the stress in four features: 1- Organizational factors. 2- Non-organizational factors. 3- Group factors. 4- Individual and personality factors.

Organizational factors are the most effective factor in organizational life that has the greatest potential in stimulating job-related stress. Many factors can cause stress in the organizations. Some of them are at macro-level and related to the job (Luthans 2003).

As people are experiencing stress symptoms and consequences, organizations can also gain such experience (Manning & Preston, 2003). Shirom (1982) has defined the organizational stress as a psychological-social stress which is related to work. There are two theories on organizational stress that their differences are related to the levels of stress or the reaction against stress (the relationship between stressors and pressures). The first type describes that what happens when the person is exposed to stress, while the second type of models look especially to the composition of the stressors which are associated with the pressures. Usually this type ignores the dimensions of flow of stress. Models that focus on stress levels: first type: (Johnson et al. 2005). The purpose of these models is to describe in details about the things that happen in the steps of the

event of the stress. The main models that are included in this category are: Stress model of trade (Lazarus R.S 1984, Folkmans) and cybernetic model (Edwards 1992), and the models of the second type: these models consider the composition of workplace factors with associated pressures; it means that it considers the reactions against stress. The main models include: the theory of individual appropriateness with environment (P.E), (Harrison 1978), the model of need a job- need to control (Karasek 1979), vitamin model (Warr 1987), and the model of imbalance between effort and reward (Siegrist 1996).

In this research, French (1972) and Caplan's model was used for the first time for the measurement of organizational stress at the University of Michigan, and after that, it was used in different geographic communities and different environments, as well as various samples, including nurses and physicians (Prins 1981), hospital staff (Vanden Berg, Braam1981), architects (Borrier et.al.1982), and industrial workers (Winnubst et.al.1982). In this model, stress has been studied as continuous events. Continuous events include the ideal space and mental space and the persons' reaction to these environments. The results of this reaction refer to the person and environment. Organizational stress in this model is included of the following things: 1- workload. 2- Ambiguity in the role. 3- Responsibility for others. 4- Underutilization of skills and abilities of the person. 5- Role ambiguity. 6- Participation in making decisions. 7- Lack of superior support. 8- Lack of colleagues support. 9- Uncertainty in the future of job. 10- Institutional policies.

Many of the studies that have been done, about organizational stress factors refer to the above cases. Henri and Evans (2008), in their study came to the conclusion that excessive workload, lack of support from superiors, and also unwillingness superior to the employees' performance has been concluded as one of the sources of stress by employees. Ahlam ,B,et.al. (2012), in their study showed the following cases as the sources of organizational stress: Lack of participation in decision-making, lack of authority of the faculty members, which have a little chance of being involved in making decisions which are related to university policies, lack of in-service training and promotion opportunities, roll contradiction, role ambiguity, high workload, and also no feedback from the performance. In Sliskovi's research, he expressed the high workload, role conflict, and relations with superiors based on hierarchical, that are one of the organizational stresses among universities faculty members. Gohar Abbas,et.al. (2012) in his study concluded that faculty members are suffering from increased pressure. Also he named the ambiguity in the roll is one of the organizational stressors that have the greatest influence on faculty members, and being

stagnant role (no upgrade), as other important factors. (Hui and Chan 1996), expressed overload teaching, time pressure, and lack of guidance practices are the most stressful aspects in this Region.

Stress is a very widespread phenomenon in the organization. This phenomenon can be managed by unavailable results of practical and economics. So that the damaging effects of it (leaving the organization, absenteeism, loss of competitiveness of the organization, etc), can be prevented. And also to increase efficiency and improve the performance of moderation and maintain organizational productivity and it can become constructive from destructive.

Therefore, in this study we intend to identify the organizational stressor's factors among women faculty members as the first and important step in managing organizational stress to prepare the context for the next steps. The overall aim of this study was to determine the organizational stress among women faculty members of Islamic Azad universities of Region six. So in this regard, ten questions were raised:

From the perspective of women faculty members of Islamic Azad university of Region six-Iran, can workload, role ambiguity, partnership, underutilization of abilities and skills of people, lack of superiors' support, lack of peer support, the conflict in roles, responsibility for others, the uncertainty of future occupational and organizational policies, create stress?

\_Are the organizational stress factors identical from the perspective of women faculty members of Islamic Azad universities of the Region six-Iran?

\_From the perspective of female faculty members, which one of the factors does create the greatest stress in selected universities?

## METHODOLOGY

Type of research in this study is descriptive - survey. Statistical population includes 180 women faculty members of full-time and with a history of more than three years in the selected universities of Abadan, Ahvaz, Dezful, and Mahshahr. 118 women faculty members were selected by method of multistage randomly according to Morgan chart. For collecting data from the organizational stress questionnaire which was designed in 1972, French and Caplan, and based on the theoretical foundations of organizational stress model, include 33 questions (cooper, 1988), that after translation from English language and revision, the validity of the questions was approved by two expert teachers. Questionnaire reliability of organizational stress obtained by Cronbach's alpha coefficient in a sample of 118 researched people in the rate 0/92, which shows the consistency and internal consistency of the scale

mentioned. For data analysis of inferential statistics, (one-sample t-test, Freidman test, and Kuruskal Varice),

and SPSS software were used.

**FINDINGS**

Chart 1- Single-sample t-test to evaluate the status of organizational stress factors from the perspective of faculty members

Organizational stress factor	Theoretical average	Experimental average	T level	Degrees of freedom	Significance level
Workload	3	3/037	3/96	22	0/0000
Underutilization of skills	3	3/66	5/49	22	0/0000
Role ambiguity	3	3/83	4/36	22	0/0000
Responsibility for others	3	3/73	3/87	22	0/0000
Partnership	3	2/41	6/34	22	0/001
Superior protection	3	2/45	-3/42	22	0/0000
Colleagues Support	3	3/34	-6/31	22	0/0000
Uncertainty in the future job	3	2/47	-2/10	22	0/616
Conflict in roles	3	3/44	-4/87	22	0/0000
Organizational policy	3	5/36	-4/87	22	0/0000

of the Azad University of Abadan:

According to the chart 1, and with emphasis on T rates which is obtained, we can say that there is a significant correlation between experimental average and theoretical average at level  $\alpha = 0.01$ , for all organizational stress factors (except Uncertainty in the future of job).

Hence, by reference to the averages, and asserted that the experimental average in most of the cases is higher than the theoretical average, so we can say that all factors

(except for peer support and Conflict in roles), cause organizational stress from the perspective of women faculty members of I.A.U. Abadan -Iran

Is the average rank of organizational stress factors different from the perspective of women faculty members I.A.U. Abadan -Iran?

Chart 2- Freidman test, examining differences between the rank averages of organizational stress factors in Abadan I.A.U. - Iran:

Test statistic	Degrees of freedom	Number	Significant level
56/517	5	23	0.000

As it can be seen in the chart 2, the significant level of test statistic is less than 0.05; thus, the average of organizational stress factor is not the same. On this basis

Freidman's test, has shown the average rating of organizational stress factors as it has come in chart 3:

Chart 3- ranking of the average of organizational stress factors at I.A.U. Abadan -Iran

Organizational stress factors	Rank average
Workload	5/36
Underutilization of skills	6/62
Role ambiguity	7/10
Responsibility for others	7/24
Partnership	6/91
Superior support	4/95
Colleagues support	4/48
Uncertainty in future of the job	2/39
Conflict in roles	4/65
Organizational policy	6/72

According to the findings of chart 3, Responsibility for others has been the highest average rank, and Uncertainty in the future of job has been the lowest average rank.

How is the organizational stress factors' situation from the perspective of women faculty members I.A.U. Ahvaz - Iran?

Chart 4- Single-sample t-test to evaluate the status of organizational stress factors from the perspective of of women faculty members I.A.U. Ahvaz -Iran

Organizational stress factors	Theoretical average	Experimental average	T level	Degrees of freedom	Significance level
Workload	3	2/57	-10/50	36	0.000
Underutilization of skills	3	3/45	3/01	36	0.000
Role ambiguity	3	2/10	-8/59	36	0.000
Responsibility for others	3	2/99	3/78	36	0.000
Partnership	3	1/56	9/73	36	0.342
Superior support	3	3/93	1/49	36	0.000
Colleagues support	3	2/99	-4/17	36	0.000
Uncertainty in future of the job	3	3/24	-1/78	36	0.202
Conflict in roles	3	2/35	-1/67	36	0.079
Organizational policy	3	3/56	2/54	36	0.000

According to the chart 4, and with an emphasis on the T-rate which is obtained, we can say that there is a significant correlation between the experimental average and theoretical average at level  $\alpha=0.01$  for all organizational stress factors (except Partnership, Uncertainty in the future of job and Conflict in roles). Hence, by reference to averages and asserted that the experimental average in most cases is higher than the

theoretical average; thus, we can say that all the factors from the perspective of faculty members in Ahvaz unit cause the organizational stress (Except Partnership , Uncertainty in the future of job and Conflict in roles).  
\_Is the average of organizational stress factors' rank different from the perspective of faculty members at Islamic Azad University in Ahvaz unit?

Chart 5- Freidman's test, examining the differences between the averages of organizational stress of women faculty members I.A.U. Ahvaz -Iran:

Test statistic	Degrees of freedom	Number	Significance level
124/69	5	37	0.000

As it can be seen in the chart 5, the significance level of the test statistic is less than 0.05; thus, the average of organizational stress factors is not the same. On this

basis, Freidman's test has shown the ranking of the organizational stress factors' average, which is mentioned in the chart.

Chart 6- ranking the organizational stress factors' average at I.A.U. Ahvaz -Iran:

Organizational stress factors	Rank of average
Workload	5/93
Underutilization of skills	6/63
Role ambiguity	5/91
Responsibility for others	5/67
Partnership	5/16
Superior support	5/27
Colleagues support	5/78
Uncertainty in the future of job	5/43
Conflict in role	5/58
Organizational policy	6/98

According to chart 6, organizational policy factors have been in the highest level of average rank, and Partnership had the lowest average rank.

\_How is the organizational factors' situation from the perspective of the faculty members at I. A. U. Dezful-Iran?

Chart 7- Single-sample t-test to evaluate the status of organizational stress from the perspective of women faculty members of I.A. U. Dezful-Iran:

Organizational stress factors	Theoretical average	Experimental average	T level	Degrees of freedom	significance
Workload	3	3/33	2.44	34	0.000
Underutilization of skills	3	2/96	1/46	34	0.000
Roll ambiguity	3	3/47	3/44	34	0.000
Responsibility for others	3	3/28	3/43	34	0.000
Partnership	3	3/14	2/17	34	0.000
Superior support	3	2/53	-8/20	34	0.614
Colleagues support	3	2/93	-1/64	34	0.000
Uncertainty in future of the job	3	3/82	-9/56	34	0.506
Conflict in role	3	2/54	-7/56	34	0.064
Organizational policy	3	3/54	3/23	34	0.000

According to the chart 7, and with an emphasis on obtained T levels, we can say that there is a significant correlation between the experimental average and theoretical average at level  $\alpha=0.01$  for all organizational stress factors (except for superior support, Uncertainty in the future of the job and role conflict). Hence, by reference to averages and asserted that the experimental average in most cases is higher than the theoretical

average, so we can say that all of the factors (except for superior support, Uncertainty in the future job and role conflict), cause organizational stress from the perspective of women faculty members I.A. U. Dezful-Iran.

\_Is the average of organizational stress factors' rank different from the perspective of women faculty members of I.A. U. Dezful-Iran?

Chart 8- Freidman's test, examining the differences between the averages of organizational stress factors' ranks I.A. U. Dezful-Iran:

Test statistic	Degrees of freedom	Number	Significance level
87/212	5	49	0.000

As it can be seen in the chart 8, the significance level of the test statistic is less than 0.05; thus, the average of organizational stress factors is not the same. On this

basis, Freidman's test has shown the average of organizational stress factors' ranking as it has come in the chart 8:

Chart 9- ranking the average of organizational stress factors at I.A. U. Dezful-Iran

Organizational stress factors	Rank of average
Workload	5/77
Underutilization of skills	6/55
Roll ambiguity	5/77
Responsibility for others	6/44
Partnership	6/10
Superior protection	4/18
Colleagues support	4/60
Uncertainty in the future job	5/26
Conflict in roles	4/74
Organizational policy	7/45

According to the findings in chart 9, we can say that organizational policy factor has the highest average rank, and Superior support factor has the lowest average rank.

\_How is the organizational stress factors from the perspective of women faculty members I.A. U. Mahshahr-Iran

Chart 10- Single-sample t-test to evaluate the status of organizational stress from the perspective of women faculty members of I.A.U.Mahshahr-Iran

Organizational stress factors	Theoretical average	Experimental average	T level	Degrees of freedom	Significance level
Workload	3	3.3922	4.853	36	0.000
Underutilization of skills	3	3.6294	3.743	36	0.000
Roll ambiguity	3	2.1765	-4.806	36	0.000
Responsibility for others	3	3.2176	783	36	0.039
Partnership	3	3.2353	1.436	36	0.030
Superior support	3	2.8971	-676	36	0.504
Colleagues support	3	2.5490	-2.615	36	0.000
Uncertainty in future of the job	3	3.7765	4.0123	36	0.037
Conflict in role	3	2.6765	1.783	36	0.084
Organizational policy	3	3.9794	5.765	36	0.000

According to the chart 10, and with an emphasis on the T levels, we can say that there is a significance correlation between theoretical average and experimental average at level  $\alpha = 0.01$ , for all of the organizational stress factors (except for superior support and uncertainty in future of the job). Hence, by reference to averages and asserted that the experimental average in most cases is higher

than the theoretical. So we can say that all of the factors (except for superior support and role conflict), cause the organizational stress from the perspective of women faculty members of I.A.U.Mahshahr-Iran.

\_Is the average of the organizational stress factors' rank different from the perspective of women faculty members of I.A.U.Mahshahr-Iran ?

Chart 11- Freidman's test, examining the differences between the averages of the organizational stress factors' rank Of I.A.U.Mahshahr-Iran

Test statistic	Degrees of freedom	Number	Significance level
62.340	5	24	0.000

As it can be seen in the chart 11, the significance level of test statistic is less than 0.05; thus, the average of the

organizational stress factors is not the same. On this basis, Freidman's test has shown the ranking of the organizational stress factors' average as it has come in the chart 12.

Chart 12- ranking of the organizational stress factors' average of I.A.U.Mahshahr-Iran

Organizational stress factors	Rank of average
Workload	6.47
Underutilization of skills	6.85
Roll ambiguity	3.41
Responsibility for others	6.44
Partnership	6.24
Superior support	6.06
Colleagues support	4.85
Uncertainty in future of the job	7.15
Conflict in role	4.74
Organizational policy	7.43

Based on the findings in chart 12, organizational policy factor has the highest rank of average, and role ambiguity has the lowest rank of average.

\_Is the organizational stress factor situation different between the faculty members in four I.A.universities-iran?

Chart 13- Kuruskal Varice test, examining the differences between the average ranks of the organizational stress in I.A. Universities which are under study:

I.A.universities organizational Stress factors	Abadan	Ahvaz	Dezful	Mahshahr	Test statistic	Significance level
Workload	101.21	49.91	107.85	98.83	44.450	0.000
Underutilization of skills	109.30	59.54	74.35	105.91	34.787	0.000
Role ambiguity	111.13	81.30	43.09	100.05	40.997	0.000
Responsibility for others	111.81	53.10	77.0 0	110.2 8	48.091	0.000
Partnership	103.60	58.54	86.41	102.69	29.244	0.000
Superior support	81.6 1	87.60	77.47	91.31	1.891	0..595
Colleagues support	87.95	81.27	91.10	82.01	1.196	0..75 4
Uncertainty in future of the job	92.71	80.30	88.22	81.03	2.060	0.56
Conflict in role	60.64	97.52	83.54	93.28	15.466	0.001
Organizational policy	88.51	83.98	84.10	83.64	274	0.065

According to the chart 13, and the emphasis on the amount of test statistics which are obtained, it can be concluded that the status of some of the organizational stressors such as Superior support, Conflict in role,

Uncertainty in future of the job, role ambiguity, colleagues support, are differed from the perspective of women faculty members of I.A. Universities which are under study, and the rest are same.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the contribution of this study rests on identification of some organizational stressors such as Superior support, role Conflict, Uncertainty in future of the job, role ambiguity, colleagues support were differed from the perspective of the women faculty members in above universities . The findings of this study are corresponded with those obtained by Gohar and colleagues (2012). And the status of other organizational stressors such as workload, underutilization of skills and faculty members' capacities, participation, responsibility for others, and role ambiguity have been different among the universities which are under study that is consistent with those discovered by Winfeild's research (2003). In other words we can say that some of the stressors in different organizations cause stress, but there are also some factors that cause stress in some organizations, and do not cause stress in some others.

\_From the perspective of women faculty members of I.A. universities which are under study, organizational policy, and uncertainty in future of the job, have accounted the most organizational stressors among the factors which have been studied. This result was consistent with the study of Azam and colleagues (2012), but it did not match with the\_researches of Ruthman (2005), Gohar (2012), and Ahlam and colleagues (2011).

\_At each of the four universities which are under study, workload, underutilization of skills and capacities of women faculty, organizational policy, responsibility for others, and colleague support were considered organizational stressors from the perspective of the women faculty members .The result is consisted with the studies of Silkuvich and his colleagues (2011), Henry and Evans (2008), Kinman (1996), and Dean (1995). Controversy to that uncertainty in future of the job did not considered as the organizational stress factor ,that does not have conformity with the result obtained by Ahlam and colleagues (2011), Henry and Evans (2008), and Dean (1995).

## SUGGESTIONS

In this study, the organizational stress factors were identified at the universities which are under study from the perspective of their women faculty members. For reducing and controlling these factors there are some recommendations:

- Providing a supportive environment for women faculty, job enrichment, reducing organizational conflicts, avoiding inflexible laws as much as possible at workplace, creating a suitable physical environment for staff, etc.

- Management participation can stimulate women faculty members to take a part in organizational decision making which leads to reduction of organization stress.

\_Reviewing the university's policies seem essential because it is considered as the most organizational stressor from the perspective of women faculty. Cases such as promotion to higher ranks, job security, payments (tuitions), rapid changes in rules and regulations, staffing adjustments, and job assignment are annoying and stressful for women faculty members.

\_ Position assignment on the basis of political status in universities causes job dissatisfaction and mental disturbance at work particularly for women faculty members due to their isolation from political matters.

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