OCCUPATIONAL STRESS: A SURVEY OF WOMEN MANAGERS IN MALAYSIA

Yu Ghee Wee*, Mohamed Dahlan Bin Ibrahim, and Sapto J. Poerwowidagdo

There is always a growing interest among researchers in examining stress experienced by employed married women as these women try to balance the demands of work and juggle their roles in the family. The aims of this research are to identify major sources of stress experienced by women in all levels of management (including supervisory, junior, middle and senior manager), examine the stress outcomes (behavioral and health), compare as well as isolate those major findings that women reported with those of their male counterparts. In analyzing the level of occupational stress women managers faced as compared to male managers, other factors taken into consideration are their coping abilities, management styles and also Type A coronary-prone behavior pattern. The sample consists of 63 female managers and 37 male managers, selected randomly from three industries namely banking/finance, hotel/hospitality and business services sector, all located within the area of Klang Valley. Overall, the major sources of stress and the effects upon the health of female managers, compared with male managers are identified. Comprehensive models and figures depict clearly the sources of work stress that are problems for women in contrast to men managers, whereby all these pressures contributed to manifestations of psychosomatic symptoms and poorer work performance by women managers. It can be concluded that, cumulatively, women managers are experiencing significantly higher pressure stemming from home, work and social factors than are men managers; Women managers are also facing greater number of stress outcomes (behavioral and health) than are men managers.

Field of research: occupational stress, women managers, coping abilities

1. Introduction

Research on the problems faced by women in management has, until now, concentrated on women in senior positions, that is, those who already overcome any barriers to success in their career (Davidson and Cooper, 1983). It is time for an in-depth research that would identify the specific problems experienced by women at all levels of management, examine the stress that is often the outcome of women’s entry into this male-dominated world, and compare women’s experiences in management with those of their male counterparts.

*Dr. Yu Ghee Wee, Prof. Dr Mohamed Dahlan bin Ibrahim and Prof Dr. Sapto J. Poerwowidagdo, Faculty of Entrepreneurship and Business, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan. Email: yughee@umk.edu.my, dahlan@umk.edu.my, sapto@umk.edu.my
The lack of data in the country to show how many women managers exist makes it all the more difficult to determine the position of women in management in Malaysia (Darshini, 2001). For example, in knowing the accurate number of women entrepreneurs, countries like US have statistics showing the number of businesses opened and run by women and the contributions these entrepreneurs are making towards the country’s gross domestic product. In Malaysia, however, our assumption that there has been a rise in the number of business owners who are women in recent years is based on the growing number of associations representing them in the various industries (Darshini, 2001). Despite of the difficulties in getting statistical data, which could reflect the recent position of women managers in our country, the authors had particular strong interest in identifying sources of stress, coping abilities and stress outcomes of women managers. The fact that Malaysian women are less inclined to come forward and discuss their needs and problems including occupational stress, makes it mandatory for authors to resort to this research topic. Major objectives of the study were as follows:

- To highlight the major pressures and stress experienced by women in management (including supervisory, junior, middle and senior managers), as described by women managers themselves.
- To isolate the major problems and pressures of being a woman as compared to a man manager.
- To isolate and compare the major effects of these specific pressures in terms of behavioral and health outcomes between women and men occupying all levels of managerial hierarchy.
- To relate the findings to the needs of women managers and to propose recommendations for organizational changes in order to minimize some of the pressures and barriers faced by women managers.

2. Literature Review

For the past two decades, the participation of women in the labour force has increased from 32.2 percent in 1970 (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 1973) to 47.1 percent in 1995 (Malaysia, 1996). In conjunction with this, the labour force participation rate of married women was 58.2 percent in 1991 compared with 51.2 percent in 1980 (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 1995). Since women are increasingly occupying both work and family roles simultaneously, investigations into their well-being focusing on multiple social roles and the ways in which individuals manage the responsibilities associated with them, are inevitable. Besides emphasizing on the well being of women manager, this research never overlooked female single managers. To clearly recognize the sources of stress, problems and stress outcomes faced by these single and married female managers, authors attempted to isolate the major problems and pressures of being a woman as compared to a man manager. Issues of gender inequality have always been taken into consideration when it comes to analyzing the status of women in this male-dominated society.

Both male and female managers experience occupational stress. However, in 1999, a global survey was published detailing how men and women throughout the world
perceived stress of daily living (Peeke, 2000). This study found that the majority of women, across cultures, perceived more stress in their lives than men. Not surprisingly, the stress was greater for women with children, and greatest for single working mothers with childcare responsibilities.

One of the disappointments in much of the writing on stress is that the issue of what exactly it is has been ducked. This is understandable because it is a complex subject, and many writers would say, “People do not want to know what it is, they want to be told how to cope with it”. One of the difficulties is that stress has never been defined satisfactorily. Before contemplating any form of stress outcomes it is important to have understanding on a model of stress. This model can be equated to a map of the general landscape giving us direction and helping us to see our way forward. All of us carry around in our heads some form of idiosyncratic model of stress; some people’s models or ideas may be more sophisticated, complex, or explicit than others did. For the purpose of this research paper, it is important to articulate that model at an early stage, as it is the basis for understanding all that follows.

2.1 Causes of Stress

In order to fully examine the sources of stress on female and male managers, it is important to appreciate all the environmental and individual causes of stress. It is essential to highlight both organizational and extra-organizational factors on individual at work. Compared to the number of studies done on male managers, there is a scarcity of quantitative research material relating specifically to occupational stress in female manager (Davidson and Cooper, 1983).

This multidimensional approach acknowledges that stress at work can also affect an individual in her home and social environment, and vice versa. Thus, when isolating the sources and effects of stress in a specific occupational group, i.e. women managers, one also has to be aware of the importance of the extra-organizational sources of stress, which can affect the behavior, performance and the mental physical health of an individual at work (Davidson and Cooper, 1981a). Particular emphasis will be placed on specific potential causes of stress in the work environment previously identified by numerous research studies. These will include the discussion of such stressors as:

(i) Those intrinsic to the job (including acquiring managerial skills);
(ii) Relationships at work (including sexual harassment);
(iii) Organizational structure and climate (including career development issues);

Also, the other two extra-organizational areas which have been singled out as sources of stress and which authors intend to review are:

(iv) The home and social environment, e.g. career versus home conflicts; marital/relationship problems, etc.
(v) The individual differences and determinants, e.g. the ‘culture trap’; Type A coronary prone behavior patterns etc.
The main sources of stress intrinsic to job that seem to affect women managers are work overload and underload (feeling undervalued and consequently not being given enough demanding work to do); leadership; having to acquire managerial skills (e.g. being assertive, confident, etc); and attending or being unable to attend training (Davidson and Cooper, 1983).

2.1.1 Work Overload

French and Caplan (1972) viewed overload as being either quantitative (i.e. having too much to do) or qualitative (being too difficult) and suggested these could lead to a range of stress-related illness. Quantitative overload refers to having too much to do. You may be competent at your job but time pressure, long hours, unrealistic deadlines, frequent interruptions, and lack of appropriate rest intervals can elicit a stress reaction. Qualitative overload means the work is too difficult and the job exceeds the technical and intellectual competence of the individual. The job may involve continuous concentration; high level decision-making and dealing with sophisticated information and the individual may lack the ability to cope with it. Numerous studies have found that women managers are frequently subjected to work overload due to the pressure to work harder to prove themselves against their male counterparts (Larwood and Wood 1977; Terborg, 1977; Harlan and Weiss, 1980). Indeed, many female managers claimed that they had to be better at their job than their male colleagues in order to succeed. This performance pressure has also attributed to general male attitudes towards women managers, which rest on the assumption that women operate under constraints beyond their control (Terborg, 1977).

2.1.2 Work Underload

Job underload, on the other hand is associated with boring, routine, repetitive and under stimulating work environments and has been linked with ill health (Cox, 1980). In other words, The job fails to provide meaningful psychological stimulation. The individual may feel bored because of the job’s repetitive nature or frustrated because there is no opportunity for self-expression. For woman manager in particular, pressures connected with having too little to do can occur in situation such as underpromotion. Women are often steered with managerial directions, which offer low ceilings on the managerial hierarchy and/or newly created positions with vague job descriptions and limited power (Langrish, 1981). Although women are likely to be clustered at the lower level of most organizations, recent data suggests that male and female perform similarly in managerial positions and have similar degrees of managerial potential (Bartol, 1980; Braun, 1982). Hence, differences in the capabilities and performance of females and males do not constitute likely explanations for the low representations of females in managerial positions.

2.1.3 Leadership

Women in managerial position appear to enjoy the leadership role, and there is no evidence to support the contention that women are less efficient managerial leaders than men (Petty and Bruning, 1980). Even so, problems can evolve from proportion of male and female subordinates who feel uneasy working for a female superior. Apparently, women can be labeled as ‘bossy’ whereas men are labeled as ‘leaders. A recent study investigating responses of male and female managers in American
state public human service organizations found a direct relationship between having been supervised by a woman and attitudes toward the motivation of women to manager (Ezell, Odewahn and Sherman, 1981). The authors suggested that being in direct contact with a woman as superior may dispel traditional female role stereotypes such as women not being as career oriented as men. Certainly, dissatisfaction come from subordinates can be a source of stress for superiors and vice versa. Richbell(1976) proposed that women who remained in discriminating organizations, could develop feelings of resentment and became dysfunctional in terms of leadership and the service they provided for their subordinates and clients. Moreover, Larwood and Wood (1979) point out that frustration or success of a superior is felt acutely by those below her; if a female manager is able to relay her success and confidence to her subordinates, any doubts they have about working for her disappear.

2.1.4 Being Assertive and Confident

Another potential source of stress for female managers is the pressure to adopt male managerial attributes and skills, such as being more assertive, confident, decisive, and delegatory. Herbert and Yost (1978) reviewed the relevant literature and concluded that women do possess the qualifications and skills required in management and scientific positions. Nevertheless, due to a combination of socialization and the being members of a minority group, lack of self-confidence and unassertiveness have sometimes been found to be failings of women managers. This can ultimately result in feelings of frustration and stress, besides hampering career advancement. Lack of self-confidence also affects the ability to delegate: ‘delegation seems to be the skill most women executives have trouble developing’ (Larwood and Wood, 1977). It appears that women occupying junior management positions are particularly susceptible to problems associated with lack of confidence and assertiveness, compared to their male counterparts (Larwood and Wood, 1977).

2.1.5 Training

Dissatisfaction with training and inadequate training has been shown to be potential source of occupational stress for female managers (Davidson and Cooper, 1983). Indeed, many women in the lower levels of management lag behind their male counterparts when it comes to the provision of education and training. This is due to a mixture of socialization and lack of opportunities (Wanless, 1981).

2.1.6 Relationships At Work

Relationships at work, which include the nature of relationships and social support from one’s colleagues, superiors and subordinates, have been related to job stress (Cooper and Payne, 1980). Good relationships are a central factor in individual and organizational heath. French and Caplan defined poor relations as those, which include ‘low trust, low supportiveness, and low interest in listening and trying to deal with problems that confront the organizational member’ (French and Caplan, 1972). The different relationships to consider include those superiors, subordinates, and colleagues. Having a supportive social network where problems can be openly expressed and discussed is an important insulator against stress. Problems are exacerbated at highly competitive management levels, where problem sharing can be inhibited for fear of appearing weak and inadequate.
2.1.7 Sexual Harassment

Female managers also have the additional burden of being used or using their sexuality in office politics or career development. The pressure of sexual harassment, such as advances or exploitation, can create serious problems in the work environment. Many women managers do experience some kind of sexual advances from their male colleagues, but Litterer (1976) found that few of them ever had an affair with these men. Moreover, Larwood and Wood (1979) point out that if they did, the outcome could prove disastrous for a woman’s long term career advancement, since traditional sex roles assume women are less able than men. Although there is little evidence that this sexual role is played very often by female managers, one must be aware of how both male and female managers can utilize sexuality at work – a potentially dangerous game to play.

2.1.8 Career Development

The next group of occupational causes of stress is related to career development, which refers to the impact of overpromotion, underpromotion, status incongruities, lack of job security, thwarted ambition, etc. (Cooper and Marshall, 1978; Marshall and Cooper, 1979). Satisfaction with promotional opportunities and salary has been found clustered in low status management and are therefore more prone to the frustrations linked to blocked career development (Thackray, 1979). The reasons isolated as contributing toward this situation include pay, general discrimination and prejudice, blocked promotion and mobility factors and career tactics.

2.1.9 Organizational Structure and Climate

The final potential source of occupational stress in female managers is related to organizational structure and climate, which includes such factors as restrictions on behavior, office politics, lack of effective consultation and no participation in the decision-making process (Davidson and Cooper, 1981). Richbell’s (1976) comparison of male and female managers found that women entering management are often left to their own devices and have to learn their jobs via trial and error, whereas the men are given more direction and support. Richbell (1976) suggests that working in this type of climate of resentment and dissatisfaction, may encourage a woman to adopt such withdrawal tactics as absenteeism, or even quitting the job.

2.1.10 Home/Work Conflict

Although this research aims to investigate and isolate the causes and effects of stress in a specific occupational group, that is, women managers, it is important to be conscious of many of the extra-organizational sources of stress which can affect the mental and physical health of an individual at work. When investigating the disruption of home and social life as a direct outcome of occupational stress, one has to be aware that there is a feedback loop with stresses at work affecting home and social life, vice versa (Cooper and Marshall, 1978). As more and more women enter management, they will also have to face the stresses and strains of maintaining their dual managerial roles – corporate manager and family manager. Cooper (1982) argues that this will occur because of the slow moving change in
men’s attitudes towards female careers. In the short term, this will mean either an increasing number of women staying single or getting divorced, or a greater ‘real’ acceptance by men of the changing role of women and the accompanying social support this will require if women are to work and be involved in extended family life. Of course, organizations themselves could help in this process by providing the support facilities within the work site and in company policy (e.g. acceptance of promotion without mobility, paternity leave etc) (Cooper, 1982).

2.2 Coping Abilities

In review of specific individual responses to stress, two main variables will be discussed in this research paper, which previous research has identified as being particularly discriminant in relation to individual differences to stressors in female managers:

(1) The socialization process or the ‘culture trap’, and
(2) Personality and behavior, including ability to cope with stress and Type A coronary-prone behavior patterns

2.2.1 The Culture Trap

The ‘culture gap’ involves sex-stereotyped behavior and personality attributes, which are a potential source of pressure on female managers (Cooper, 1982). It is obvious that a great deal of sex-role learning takes place among women during the early phases of their lives, and that this can translate itself into an attitude of mind that creates difficulties later in working life. This can be called ‘the culture gap’. Recent research in the classroom, for example, has found it to be a man’s world, where boys get two-third of the teacher’s attention (even when they are in minority) and are accustomed to being teachers’ pets (Spender, 1982). Larwood and Wood (1977) describe a number of internal blocks that women experience which derive from early sex stereotyping and socialization.

First, many women begins to feel that their abilities are unequal to the requirements of the task, as the inevitable ‘vicious circle’ widens. And, of course, the more a person feels her/his ability may not be ‘up to’ a particular task, for example, managing other people, the lower the likelihood of success. Second, women often also learn to fear success. Horner (1970) suggests that many avoid success or ‘seeming successful’ in order to ‘behave in a socially approved manner’. This diffidence or ‘fear of success’, of course, ends up inhibiting further effort and achievement, and once again we are on the self-fulfilling merry-go-round! Third, women are often socialized not to be assertive or aggressive, or to seek power or control. Fourth, women have been expected, and encouraged, to pursue a dependent role vis-à-vis men. Some would suggest that this makes them less self-reliant and more amenable to influence.

2.2.2 The Type A Manager

Certain patterns of behavior – refer to as Type-A or ‘hurry sickness’ have actually been shown to contribute to high levels of stress. Two American cardiologists
Friedman and Rosenmann (1974) noticed that a great many of the people they saw with coronary heart disease and strokes were of a similar nature, and tended to be rather difficult individuals to rehabilitate, as they had difficulty adjusting to a lifestyle that would assist recuperation. They therefore carried out research project involving 3,400 people; results suggested a significant relationship between behavioral patterns and stress related illness. They reported that men with Type-A behaviors in the age group 39-49 years showed a rate of heart disease six times higher that that of men with Type-B behavior. Type-A behavior has four main patterns:

1. An intense sense of time urgency – the individual is always in a hurry, trying to get more done in less time.
2. Inappropriate hostility and aggression – the individual is excessively competitive and finds it more difficult to relax and enjoy fun activities; slight provocation or frustration may trigger off an outburst of hostility.
3. Multiple behaviors – the individual engages in two or more things simultaneously at inappropriate times.
4. Tries to achieve goals without proper planning – the individual rushes into their work without planning the steps to achieve require goals.

Type-B behavior, on the other hand, is the exact opposite, the individual characterized by being more relaxed, less hurried, and less inclined to compete. Type-A behavior appears to put particular stress on the cardiovascular system, provoking high blood pressure, high heart rate, heart rate variability, and high increased risk to heart attacks. According to Friedman and Rosenman (1974) Type-A behavior leads to excessive discharge of the stress hormones or adrenaline, adrenaline, and cortisol, and one result of and excess of insulin in the blood stream. This can mean that it takes three or four times longer to get rid of dietary cholesterol after meals. A potential result of this is narrowing of blood vessels, together with increased deposits of clotting elements in the blood. Cooper (1981) found that the most successful managers tended to be Type-A. However, the cost of that success can be stress-related illness. Cooper does not suggest getting rid of Type-A behavior person, as it is obviously and adaptive behavior in certain competitive situation; rather we should learn to manage it appropriately.

2.3 Stress Related Outcomes

Stress related outcomes could be divided into four categories, namely psychological consequences, physical consequences, behavioral consequences and organizational consequences (Table 1.1).

3. Methodology

The main sample consisted of a large proportion of female managers in junior, supervisory, middle and senior positions, and a matched smaller sample of male managers. A selection of 30 organizations within Klang Valley was obtained from the following major industrial categories: Banking, hotels, and business services. The package of questionnaire was sent or distributed to Personnel Officer or Human Resource Manager of the respective organization, each containing a covering letter, a copy of questionnaire and return stamped envelopes. The covering letter described the aims of the project and requested the Human Resource Manager to distribute
seven enclosed questionnaires to persons in their companies occupying the following management levels: One female senior manager; three female middle managers; one female junior/trainee manager and one female supervisor.

This distribution of management levels was chosen in an attempt to represent the proportion of women occupying different levels of the management hierarchy. As more women tend to be concentrated in the lower levels of management compared to men, it was anticipated that many organizations would not have women occupying senior or middle management positions. Thus, the personnel officers or Human Resource Manager was asked to match the distribution as far as possible but when this was not feasible, to distribute the questionnaires to women managers at any level. As it was also important to include a smaller sample of male managers, for comparison, every personnel officer was also asked therefore, to distribute one questionnaire to either: One male senior manager, or one male middle manager, or one male junior/trainee manager or supervisor.

Stratified random sampling was used to choose the sample because the population could be divided into meaningful samples – banking, hotels and services. In order to assure the validity and reliability of questions being asked, upon approval given by Davidson and Cooper (1983), authors resorted to the questionnaire being used by these two researchers. The questions asked are in the five point Likert scale format. Questions test on the respondent’s opinion on the stress related issues in various areas. Eight hypothesized statement were tested in this study. All hypotheses were meant to compare and contrast the demographic issues as well stress related issues between male and female managers in the sample. Hence, each hypothesis had its own data measurement scale and various variables were taken into account.

The first hypothesis (Ho1) was meant to obtain the quantitative results concerning the major differences between female and male managers in relation to work, home,
social and personality pressures they reported through the questionnaire. Variables being taken into account here range from factors intrinsic to the job, career development, relationships at work, organizational structure and climate, to home and social factors. For the purpose of analysis, pressures dimensions are scored on a 5-point, Likert-type scale from 1 (no pressure at all) to 5 (a great deal of pressure).

In order to test on hypothesis two (Ho2), where the degree to which respondents adopted positive stress-reducing coping strategies had to be measured, items from the reliable and validated coping section of the Conflict/Stress Questionnaire by Steinmetz (1979) were used. The coping dimensions are scored on a 5-point, Likert-type scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always); the question being “How often do you use the following to relax?” The lists of techniques given included relaxation techniques, informal relaxation techniques, exercise, talk to someone you know, leave work are, use humor and such.

As for hypothesis three (Ho3), ten different management styles identified from previous research findings had been in the list for respondent to choose from. The management styles are scored on a 5-point, Likert-type scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always); the question being: “How often do you adopt the following management/supervisory styles at work?” Among management styles in the list are flexible, efficient, directive, authoritative and a few more.

Interestingly, hypothesis four (Ho4) required authors to look into the scores obtained by female and male managers, so as to determine on Type A coronary-prone behavior pattern. The adapted scale consists of 12 items, each with an 11-point rating scale which includes items from the four subscale sections: hard driving, job involvement, speed, impatience, and general Type A behavior. This inventory yields scores ranging from 12 to 132, the higher scores being indicative of Type A behavior.

Lastly, to test on the final hypothesis, Ho5, the criteria that were looked into was the modified version of the Gurin Psychosomatic Symptom List (Gurin, Veroff and Feld, 1960) so as to measure psychosomatic health. Respondents were asked to rate each symptom into one of five categories – never, rarely, sometimes, often or always – based on their behavior over the previous three months. An overall health score was then calculated, which could range from 25 (extremely good health) to 107 (extremely bad health).

As authors were concerned with ascertaining the difference and similarities between female and male managers, female and male respondents were treated as two separate sub-populations of the main sample throughout the analysis. Firstly, application of descriptive statistics allowed for the measures, which could be computed from the sample of collected data to give an estimate of responses to items in the population. This permitted the measure of central tendency via the arithmetic mean to be computed for both female and male manager respondents’ scores, along with sample percentage distributions and standard deviation (SD) measures to gauge the variability. Therefore, the utilization of descriptive statistical methods allowed comparisons between female and male managers. Secondly, in order to compare the statistical differences between the female and male manager samples in terms of responses, t-tests were used.
4. Findings and Discussion

A total of 63 female and 37 male managers returned completed questionnaires. This was considered to be a good response rate taking into account that: (i) a large proportion of organizations who received questionnaire packages did not have women occupying the specified management positions; and (ii) distribution of the questionnaires to respondents was dependant both on the personnel officer and permission from top management.

Table 1.2 Personal Demographics of Respondents

<table>
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<th>Females Percentage/number</th>
<th>Males Percentage/number</th>
<th>Total</th>
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Ho1: Both female and male managers experience similar pressure levels stemming from stress factors at work, home and social.

There were only two significant differences between male and female in terms of the stresses that they had faced. Findings show significant differences between the two samples on a variable associated with being in a position of authority i.e. ‘disciplining subordinates’. In fact, male managers found them to be a significantly higher pressure compared to their female colleagues. Certainly, these results seemed to dispel any previous suggestions that women managers find it more difficult and stressful to cope with the authority aspects of leadership than do male managers. However, women managers reported significantly higher pressure compared to male managers on the other variable, which was ‘business travel and staying at hotels alone’. ‘Traveling and being alone whilst staying in hotels on business’ was also a pressure reported by high proportion of women managers. Significantly, women managers reported significantly higher pressure scores on four questionnaire items related to sex discrimination and prejudice. The highest average pressure scores for the female managers were for two items: (1) ‘colleagues of the opposite sex being treated more favorably by management’; (2) sex discrimination and prejudice. As far as equality of opportunity for female managers in the area of training and job experience is concerned, it also appears that women are ‘losing out’ compared to their male colleagues. The average pressure score for female respondents to the question ‘inadequate job training experience compared to colleagues of the opposite sex’ was significantly higher than for men.

Average pressure scores for ‘rate of pay’, however, were higher for men than for women managers. This in itself is an interesting finding, as it suggests that although women in management tend to earn less than men, their rate of pay causes them somewhat less pressure. It appears, therefore, that female managers seem to be slightly more satisfied with ‘their lot’ in terms of pay, even though ‘their lot’ tends to be less than men in their own professions. In addition, men managers also faced a significant higher pressure in respond to ‘underpromotion – employed beneath my competence’ than women managers.

On five independent variables dealing with relationships at work, female respondents were under significant pressure in contrast to men. Once again, questions dealing with prejudice yielded significantly higher scores from women managers: ‘experiencing prejudiced attitudes from member of the opposites sex at work because of my sex’, ‘experiencing prejudiced attitudes from members of the same sex at work because of my sex’, etc. While the average pressure score for the latter item for women respondents was not high in comparison with men, the result does indicate that a proportion of women managers are being subjected to prejudiced attitudes from other women they work with, whether it be from female subordinates, colleagues or superiors.
Overall, reported pressure associated with sexual harassment (of either a verbal or physical nature) was not particularly high for women at work. As one might expect, however, average pressure scores for women were higher than for men at every level of the management hierarchy, other than the supervisory level (where women tend to work in predominantly female environments). ‘Lack of social support from people at work’ and ‘lack of support from superiors’ were associated with higher levels of pressure by women than men. Certainly, these causes of stress can have detrimental effects on women, both in terms of hampered career development and overall job stress. In addition, female managers reported greater pressure than male managers on the question of ‘feeling uncomfortable on training courses when a member of the minority sex’. Therefore, one can safely assume that being in the male-dominated field or management, a far greater proportion of female respondents will have actually experienced being the minority sex on training courses.

As for organizational structure and climate, it was not surprising that men managers reported extremely higher pressures stemming from these two particular variables – ‘lack of control in my work environment’ and ‘lack of power and influence’ – than women managers. Undoubtedly, in this male dominated working society, one can expect that male managers have to compete all time not only with their female counterparts, but also among their male counterparts, in order to gain more control over their work as well as gain power to influence others at work.

Findings shows the home and social factors in which significant differences exist between the average pressure scores for female and male managers. On all seven items, women managers reported significantly higher stress than men managers. These result, therefore, substantiate previous research findings (e.g. Larwood and Wood, 1979; Davidson and Cooper, 1980a) that women managers, compared with men managers, are far more susceptible to additional extra-organizational stress linked to their home and social environment. The highest level of stress for female rather than male managers concerned ‘my career-related dilemma concerning whether to start a family’. Clearly, this is a major source of pressure for women managers who by the age of 30 are often beginning to establish themselves in their careers and yet at the same time are reaching the ‘older primate’ years in terms of child-bearing.

This finding appears to be evident, where it highlighted the fact that women managers living with a partner do far more when it comes to running a home and a family, which produces greater workload, tiredness, etc. In addition, the female respondents reported greater stress from the ‘lack of domestic and emotional support at home’ than their male counterparts. As indicated in the earlier research ‘earning more than my spouse/partner’ was a significantly greater stress for women managers and is undoubtedly related both to problems of adjustment by the woman’s partner as well as her own conflicts. Since we found that a high proportion of single female managers in the sample tend to be taken more seriously than the married woman managers, it is not surprising that single female respondents reported higher pressure scores in their career-related dilemma concerning whether to marry/live with someone’.

Finally, stress factors associated with remaining single are more pronounced in women managers than in men. Females reported significantly higher pressure scores to the two items dealing with being single: ‘Other people sometimes label me as a bit of an oddity’ and ‘I am sometimes excluded from social and business events
such as dinner parties’. In particular, the latter can prove especially detrimental for the single woman manager who is more prone to exclusion from the business social network. Not only are there more unattached women than men managers (who are more likely to be married), but socially single men are often viewed as an ‘asset’ compared to the ‘lone female’.

**Ho2: There are no significant differences between female and male managers in the use of positive coping strategies.**

Overall, female and male managers were very similar in their use of positive coping strategies in order to relax. Women managers, however, as a method of dealing with stress, use positive strategies more often than male executives. The relaxation coping strategies used most often by both women and male managers were ‘exercise’ and ‘leaving the work area and going somewhere’ (e.g. time out, sick days, lunch away from the organization etc). On the other hand, the least popular measures were informal relaxation techniques (i.e. taking time out for deep breathing, imagining pleasant scenes) and relaxation techniques such as meditation and yoga. There are also other techniques which are often used by female and male managers such as listening to music, sleep, have a cup of coffee or tea while reading the newspaper. In addition, some of the woman managers will prefer going out for a holiday to relax their mind or participate themselves in dangerous activities such as bungee jumping.

**Ho3: There are no significant differences between female and male manager in adopting management style at work.**

When examining the differences between women and men in relation to the frequency with which they adopt different management/supervisory styles at work. While a significantly greater number of male managers maintained they most often used a directive and authoritative management style at work in contrast to their women colleagues, women managers maintained they adopted an effective and flexible style of management more often than men.

In addition, female managers overall, reported using more frequently the sensitive and sympathetic style, as well as the cooperative approach compared to male managers. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that significant differences between sexes in terms of how often they used different management styles at work, were found in only four of the ten supervisory styles. No significant differences were found in the following management orientation: cooperative, sensitive and sympathetic, positive, dogmatic, consultative or assertive approaches. The management styles most often adopted by both women and men managers were the cooperative, positive and effective styles.

**Ho4: There is no significant difference in the Type A coronary-prone behaviour pattern between female and male managers.**
As predicted by the authors in the earlier chapters, women in management have significantly higher average coronary-prone behavior, Type A, scores as opposed to Type B (low risk of CHD) compared with men. The inventory authors adopted yields scores ranging from 12 to 132, the higher scores being indicative of Type A behavior. As well, these scores can be used roughly to designate an individual either as a Type A1 (score range 93-132), Type A2 (score range), Type B3 (score range), or Type B4 (score range). Type A1 signifies the most highly developed Type A behavior and Type B4 the most extreme Type B behavior (Bortner and Rosenman, 1967). Therefore, the mean score of 81 for female managers rests at the lower end of the Type A2 category, whilst the mean score of 79 for male managers is placed at the top end of the Type B3 category.

Furthermore, when the mean Type A scores are broken down by management levels, the highest score of 83 emerges for females in middle management, which is significantly higher than the mean score of 78 for male middle managers. This would tend to support earlier studies (e.g. Waldron, et al. 1977) which have suggested that working professional women usually show maximum Type A scores after the age of 30 years (i.e. predominantly middle management years), and gradually their scores decrease in their later years of working life.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the lowest Type A scores for both sexes were from men and women supervisors. This is not particularly unexpected finding, considering that several studies in the past have associated higher Type A scores with higher occupational status (Rosenman, et al. 1964; 1966).

*Ho5: Both female and male managers experience similar stress outcomes.*

Having reviewed the reported sources of stress of managers of both sexes, we now turn our attention to the cost of stress in terms of health and behaviour. The five major study were general health symptom list, cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption, job satisfaction, and work performance factors. No significant differences were found between female and male managers overall or within different management levels in relation to any aspect of their cigarette smoking habits or degrees of job satisfaction. Differences were found, however, in their general health, alcohol consumption and work performance.

Of the 20 symptoms itemized in the modified version of the Gurin Psychomatic Symptom List (Gurin, et al., 1960), female managers had significantly higher scores on general health symptoms. An examination of the data reveals that the only symptom for which male managers gave a significantly higher average score was associated with ‘having trouble getting to sleep or staying sleep’. The symptom ranked as most common by women managers was ‘finding it difficult to get up in the morning’. Predictably, this was followed by ‘being bothered by having an upset stomach’, and then by the desire ‘tending to cry easily’ and ‘having spells of dizziness’. The other symptom over which women had significantly higher scores were ‘feeling like she was going to have nervous breakdown. Lastly, it has been sad to note that women reported significantly higher than men that they had particular physical or health problem.
When examining the overall health scores of the female and male managers, not surprisingly, females are much more at risk. As the emphasis was on the current physical state and all respondents were requested to report their frequency of symptoms for the previous three months only, one can conclude that, overall, women reported poorer health compared with men managers. Nevertheless, there are two important issues, which need to be emphasized. Firstly, female sample were a slightly older population than the male sample, and health tends to worsen with age (Seyle, 1976). Secondly, the potential range of total health scores was from 25, indicating extremely good health, to 107, indicating extremely poor health. Neither the female nor male managers’ scores were particularly high, and both were in the middle range between good and poor health.

In order to determine the frequency with which the female and male samples took drugs in order to help them relax, respondents were asked how often (1 = never to 5 = always) they used tranquilizers or other medication; drank coffee or Coke or ate frequently; smoked and had an alcoholic drink (Steinmetz, 1979). The only significant difference was that male managers were more likely to have an alcoholic drink than female managers. In fact, with the exception of male and female supervisors, having an alcoholic drink was the most popular method of coping with stress for men and women at all levels of management. Drinking coffee or Coke or eating frequently was the next common method of relaxation adopted by both female and male managers, followed by smoking, taking aspirin and tranquilizers or other medication. The alcohol-drinking habits of both samples were examined in more detail and it was seen that male managers drank significantly more alcohol than female ones.

For women managers, alcohol consumption increased with management level and the heaviest drinkers were women in senior management. However, males in middle management drank the most alcohol, followed by senior, junior and supervisory managers, in that order. Of the total female management group, 38 percent did not drink at all, compared to 15 percent of male managers, 24 percent of women as opposed to 20 percent of men drank regularly one or two drinks a day, and 1 percent of the women and men managers drank regularly three to six drinks a day. No female manager reported drinking regularly more than six drinks a day in contrast to 1 percent of her male counterparts.

In order to measure work performance, 16 measures were included and respondents were asked how often they felt the following to be a source of stress at work (using the 5-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 5 (always). From the data presented, it can be seen that only two work performance factors – ‘unable to produce a satisfactory quantity of work’ and ‘unable to be successful’ did male managers report a significantly higher score than women managers. Conversely, women managers reported significantly higher detrimental work performance scores on five behaviour items: ‘being unable to “make decisions”; ‘lacking confidence in putting forward their point of view’ (e.g. at meetings’); ‘reacting too emotionally when faced with problems at work’; ‘making mistakes’ and ‘lacking of self confidence in the ability to do my job’. Hence, overall, women in management appear to suffer more frequently in terms of satisfactory work performance. This particularly seems to be the case in relation to behaviour associated with confidence and assertion.
5. Conclusion

Figure 1.1 shows the sources of work stress that are problems for women in contrast to men managers while Figure 1.2 indicates those that are difficulties for male as opposed to female managers. First, one can quickly conclude after an examination of these figures that for both work stressor and health outcome variables, female managers reported a far greater number of stress factors than their male counterparts. Therefore, while all these stress precursors and manifestations were not all necessarily ‘high’ stressors or ‘high’ stress outcomes, assessed cumulatively, women in management are experiencing higher pressure levels stemming from stressors in the work, home/social and individual arenas, and more manifestations of psychosomatic symptoms and poorer work performance than are men.

A review of the high mean pressure scores reported by female managers in the work arena reveals interesting, if somewhat disturbing findings (see Figure 1.1). Nearly every one of the 16 high pressure items categorized under ‘factors intrinsic to the job’, ‘token woman factor’, ‘career development’, and ‘relationships at work’, were in some way associated with prejudice and sexual discrimination, coupled with being of the minority sex in a male-dominated occupation. Furthermore, this extended to demographic differences between female and male managers, with women usually being the first of their sex to hold their particular job title, at a lower managerial level, and earning a lower salary than their male counterparts.

In sum, the higher pressures at work to which female managers are being subjected, tend to be beyond their control, i.e. external discriminatory-based pressures. On the other hand, this is not the case for the male manager. Significantly higher pressure scores unique to the male manager compared with his female counterpart at work, involved pressure stemming from the leadership/authority aspects of management and rate of pay (even though his salary tends to be higher than his female colleagues).

In the home and social arena, compared to men managers, women managers reported significantly higher pressure scores in respect to career and spouse/partner conflicts, career/home conflicts, and career and marriage/child bearing conflicts. Clearly, married women managers are still now getting required emotional and domestic support from their partners. In addition, single women managers face higher pressures than male counterparts in relation to marry/live with someone. Both single and married women managers reported higher pressure over their career-related dilemma concerning starting a family in the foreseeable future.

In the individual arena, women managers had significantly higher Type A coronary-prone behaviour scores. There was only little difference connected to positive coping strategies. Interestingly, women managers maintained that they adopted effective and flexible style of management more often than men. Also, women reported using the sympathetic and sensitive style as well as cooperative approach more than their male counterparts.

As far as the manifestation of stress was concerned, female managers reported experiencing often, a far greater number of psychosomatic symptoms (i.e.6) in contrast to men (i.e.1). However, male managers drank more alcohol than female managers. The other stress outcome concerned work performance. Unfortunately, women managers reported significantly poorer work performance scored on five items compared to only two (‘unable to produce satisfactory quantity of work’ and...
‘unable to be successful’) scored significantly higher by men. For women managers, the poor work performance factors were predominantly associated with lack of assertion and confidence – skills which undoubtedly require emphasis in future management training.

As a conclusion, in sum, after reviewing the comparative results highlighted in Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2, authors might conclude that, cumulatively, women managers are experiencing significantly more pressure and a greater number of stress outcomes than are men managers.