

















### **Gender and AQ**

The relationship between the gender of respondents and their AQ was examined. H1<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant difference in respondents' AQ due to gender

The Independent-samples T-test was used to identify whether there was any significant difference in AQ among male and female middle-level managers. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was met as the Levene's test for equality of variances value 0.60 was greater than the level of significance ( $p > 0.05$ ). Males indicated greater level of AQ ( $M=135.93$ ,  $SE = 1.96$ ) than females ( $M = 130.28$ ,  $SE$

= 3.29). This difference was not significant  $t(221) = -1.51$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ; however, it represented an effect of  $r = 0.01$ . It was concluded that there is no significant difference in respondents' AQ regardless of being male or female. Therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

### **Relationship between AQ and Type of NGO**

The second hypothesis of the study explored whether AQ levels differ among respondents due to the type of NGO (LNGO/INGO) they work in.

stress levels of NGO sector middle-level managers

### **Influence of Type of NGO on AQ**

H2<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant difference in respondents' AQ due to type of NGO

The Independent-samples T-test was used to identify whether there was any significant difference in AQ among LNGO and INGO middle-level managers. The assumption of homogeneity of variances was violated, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ( $p < 0.45$ ). Therefore, the results of the Welch t-test were interpreted. INGO managers indicated greater level of AQ ( $M = 141.86$ ,  $SE = 2.51$ ) compared to LNGO managers ( $M = 127.34$ ,  $SE = 2.08$ ). This difference was significant  $t(210) = -4.44$ ,  $p > 0.05$  and represented an effect of  $r = 0.28$ . It can be concluded that there is a significant difference in AQ between LNGO and INGO middle-level managers. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

In investigating the third hypothesis, hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to determine whether AQ, demographic factors, and the type of NGO predict the variance in perceived stress. As per the summary of results, *Model 1*, which consisted of the sub dimensions of AQ explained 64.3% ( $R^2 = 0.643$ ) of the variation in perceived stress and the model was significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). The addition of demographic factors (work experience, academic qualifications, marital status, age, gender) led to an increase in the predictability power of the model to 71% ( $R^2 = 0.710$ ) as indicated in *Model 2*. The *Model 3* – full model that included sub dimensions of AQ, demographic factors (work experience, academic qualifications, marital status, age, gender) and the type of NGO explained 71.1% ( $R^2 = 0.711$ ) of variation in perceived stress. However, the addition of the type of NGO in *Model 3* did not significantly improve the variance explained.

### **The Impact of AQ, Demographic Factors, and the Type of NGO on Perceived Stress**

H3<sub>0</sub>: AQ along with work experience, academic qualifications, marital status, age, gender, and type of NGO do not explain the variance of the perceived

The Beta Coefficients of the overall model (model 3) indicated that when 'control' increases by one SD unit, it results in decrease in perceived stress of a middle-level manager by 0.16 SD units. Similarly, increase of 'ownership' by one SD unit



will cause a decrease of 0.31 SD units in perceived stress, 'reach' will cause 0.14 decrease in SD units of perceived stress, and 'endurance' will cause decrease in perceived stress by 0.11 SD units. All relationships were found to be statistically significant at 0.05 level. However, except for age and single (marital status), all other variables (gender, work experience, academic qualifications, and type of NGO) had no statistically significant impact ( $p > 0.05$ ) to explain the variance in perceived stress.

The results indicated that the four dimensions of AQ could explain 64.3% of the variance in perceived stress of middle-level managers. However, besides age and marital status (i.e. single), other variables including gender, work experience, The moderation effect or the interaction between AQ and demographic factors was not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). Further, the moderation did not contribute to the overall model of explaining perceived stress level ( $R^2$  change = 0.003,  $p > 0.05$ ). It can be concluded that AQ does not moderate the relationship between demographic factors and perceived stress. Therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. As an additional analysis, moderation of AQ was tested between each demographic factor and perceived stress. However, none of the relationships was significant.

## Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between perceived stress and AQ. Results indicated that AQ of male middle-level managers was not significantly different from that of the females. Results revealed that AQ levels of middle-level managers increase as work experience increases. This finding is contrasting to majority of previous findings that have concluded influence of work experience on AQ as not significant (Bantang et al., 2013). Shen (2014) has similar findings as this study that revealed

academic qualifications, and type of NGO did not explain the variance in perceived stress. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

### The Moderation Effect of AQ

H4<sub>0</sub>: AQ does not moderate the relationship between demographic factors and perceived stress levels of NGO sector middle-level managers

In investigating the fourth hypothesis, regression-based PROCESS moderation was conducted to determine whether AQ has a moderating effect on the relationship between demographic factors and perceived stress.

difference in seniority results in a significant effect on levels of AQ indicating higher AQ levels for workers with longer work experience. It is probable that working in a particular context over a long period of time shapes an employee through training and extensive exposure. Shen (2014) states that ability to deal with adversities accumulates through life experience as well. These can result in the development of AQ capacity over the experience gained through years of service.

The level of academic qualifications revealed a significant effect on AQ where higher AQ levels were recorded for middle-level managers with higher academic qualifications. This finding strengthened the findings of Tripathi (2011) that identified a significant difference in AQ based on academic qualifications whereas studies by Bantang et al. (2013) have identified no such influence on AQ. Those who excel in the academic field are also found to be intelligent in dealing with adversities (Matore, Khairani, & Razak, 2015). It can be assumed that AQ levels are higher among those with higher levels of education compared to that of lower levels of education.



Marital status had no significant effect on AQ level of NGO managers. This strengthened the findings of studies by Bantang et al. (2013), and Paramanandam and Shwetha (2013) that concluded marital status of a person does not influence AQ. It is probable that AQ as a capability of a person to handle adversities across vast areas of life is not determined by the marital status of a person (Kumar, 2016).

Further, effect of gender on AQ has mixed findings in literature. De Gulan, Rosalia, and Caballero (2013) have found women to have higher mean scores of AQ compared to that of men. Findings of this study confirmed the majority of previous findings that indicated gender has no significant influence on the level of AQ of an individual (Bantang et al., 2013; Huijuan, 2009). A possible assertion is that AQ is a mental capacity that extends beyond the masculine and feminine traits of people.

This study revealed that the level of AQ of middle-level managers has increased with the increase in age. Some studies have indicated that age has no significant influence on AQ (Huijuan, 2009). Findings of this study indicated that the age group of 25 to 34 years had the lowest AQ levels while the age group 55 to 64 years had the highest levels of AQ. This finding was consistent with the findings of Paramanandam and Shwetha (2013) who found increase of AQ with age. It can be assumed that employees in higher age categories (with more exposure and experience overtime) have developed AQ abilities. Experiences and encounters have possibly made them more resilient and better able to cope with adversity, and thus superior to that of those in younger age groups. According to Stoltz (1997), the more hardships a person experiences, the more that person learns how to deal with them.

Results revealed a significant difference in AQ in terms of the type of NGO. INGO middle-level managers indicated a higher

mean of 141.86 for AQ compared to middle-level managers of LNGOs. A possibility could be the difference between the two types of NGOs in terms of operations. Ghimire (2003) has highlighted that INGOs and LNGOs differ based on level of operations where the former category is headquartered in developed countries having operations both locally and in multiple countries, while the latter category operates on a national scale. This leads to the assumption that employees in INGOs deal with local and international situations, and hence are exposed to diverse opportunities to gain versatile experience in facing adversities. Although literature lacks evidence on the relationship of this classification with AQ, this finding contributes to enrich and provides new insights to AQ literature by exploring these two types of organisations in the same sector.

Further, AQ significantly explains the variance in perceived stress. Prakaew and Leesattrapai (2017) in a study conducted among students in Bangkok also have concluded that increase in AQ by one SD unit decreases stress by 0.66 SD units. Further their study concluded that AQ significantly predicts 44% ( $R^2 = 0.440$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) of variance in stress. This study indicates that perceived stress can be significantly predicted through their AQ. This implies that higher AQ levels lead to lower stress levels. As stated by Shen (2014), AQ develops the attitudes and capability of an individual to deal with stressful situations. Stoltz (2000) claims that individuals with higher AQ levels are able to control events that create adverse circumstances, have sense of accountability towards the outcome of the adverse situation, not allow the effect of adversities to reach other areas in life, and see adverse events as temporary. Therefore, it is probable that there is a strong inter-linkage between AQ level and perceived stress of middle-level managers as found by this study.



Results further indicated that increase in age by one SD unit will cause 0.21 units decrease in perceived stress of middle-level managers. This finding is consistent with the study by Trevisani (2015) on undergraduates that concluded increase in age by one standard deviation causes 0.22 decrease SD units of perceived stress of students. Age has been identified as an influential factor on stress (Dua, 1994). This study also identified that ability to deal with stressful events as age increases – indicating lower levels of perceived stress as age increases. In contrast, younger employees are found to experience higher levels of occupational stress since they are concerned about factors that determine the career ahead of them (Dua, 1994). The negative impact of age on stress can be a result of life and work experience of a person (Shen, 2014). Results also indicated that compared to those who are ‘married’, perceived stress of ‘single’ middle-level managers is less by 0.13 SD units. Additionally, perceived stress of ‘divorced’ middle-level managers is less by 0.02 SD units whereas ‘widowed’ middle-level managers experience more perceived stress by 0.01 SD units in comparison to perceived stress of ‘married’ middle-level managers. Nonetheless, results indicated that difference between ‘married’ and other groups of marital status (‘divorced’ and ‘widowed’) as not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, all other variables viz., gender, work experience, and education qualifications, and also the type of NGO had no statistically significant impact ( $p > 0.05$ ) to explain the variance in perceived stress of middle-level managers.

The finding of single employees experiencing lower stress compared to married employees has been highlighted by Vadivu (2017) who concluded that married managers experience higher levels of stress compared to single managers which supports the findings of this study. It can be assumed that those married have different life patterns,

commitments, roles, and work/life obligations (Parveen, 2009) which could account for married managers to experience higher stress.

In line with the finding of this study, Vadivu (2017) also has concluded that there is no significant effect of gender, work experience, and education qualifications on stress in their respective studies. Although literature lack evidence on the effect of type of NGO on perceived stress, this study enriched existing literature by revealing there is no significant effect on perceived stress of middle-level managers due to the type of NGO.

Study has extended the existing literature by investigating the moderation effect of AQ. This implies that the effects of demographic factors and AQ should be considered in explaining perceived stress level of a person. Further, AQ does not change the direction of the relationship between demographic factors and perceived stress. For instance, even though an increase in age reduces the perceived stress level of a person (hypothesis 3), AQ neither changes the amount of stress reduced by age nor does it change the direction of that relationship.

These findings apprise the significance of AQ for both theory and practice. Future research on stress can consider AQ as an important construct in their models and practitioners could realise the significant role AQ plays in coping with adversities encountered at work. Organisations would benefit more by identifying and conducting programmes to strategically enhance the dimensions of AQ that are low among the employees, which would enhance their ability to cope with stress. Age, work experience, and academic qualifications have a significant influence on AQ levels of managers. Gender and marital status have no such significant influence. Organisations need to invest more training and development on young and inexperienced employees to develop



their AQ capacities to cope with stress. Development of AQ can be utilised as a strategy to enhance overall organisational performance. INGO managers indicated a higher AQ level compared to LNGO managers. Hence, LNGOs need to rethink initiatives to increase the level of AQ among employees. Human resource management practices such as training and development, and performance management of employees would benefit through incorporation of AQ management practices.

Study has focussed only middle-level managers. Further insights can be gained from extending the investigation to other layers of management. In order to validate the results in other sectors, future research can conduct an integrated study among NGO, private, and public sector organisations. This will also facilitate the comparison of results among different sectors or industries.

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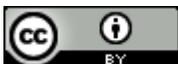
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