

Who is More Stressed?

An investigation into the effect that stress has on blue-collar workers versus white-collar workers.

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Abstract:

This research hones in on the differing stress levels between blue and white-collar employees. The research looked at the particular reasons for developing stress in the workplace of blue and white-collar workers, as the author found an opening for such research. Previous research states that it is the white-collar industry that has to endure the higher levels of stress, however further research states that blue-collar workers have to put up with similar and even more stress than those in the white-collar industry. Therefore this study will attempt to explore the different reasons for stress in both industries and see which sector has to deal with the most stress. The individuals who participated in this quantitative study participated in an online survey, which was comprised of 10 demographic questions, and a 35-question questionnaire developed by the Health Service Executive (HSE) put together to calculate participants stress level. The results showed that the only significant result displayed a negative correlation between work being brought home and stress. All the other correlations were not statistically significant.

Declaration:

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

Stress has become a huge factor in the life that employees and people in general find themselves in today. According to research, stress occurs due to the requirements and demands of a certain environment and that individual's inability to cope with it (Hudson *et al.*, 2015). Studies demonstrate that stress plays a role in both physical and mental illnesses and can be linked to both personal and professional environments (Sharma, 2015). However, further studies have found that early findings of stress can aid in to improving workers' health, safety, wellbeing and productivity (Jebelli *et al.*, 2018). Researchers have noticed that maintaining a certain standard of work-life balance can help people reduce stress levels and live a much healthier life (Choi and Kim, 2017).

As this study is mainly about stress within the workplace, the results have been divided into the two different sectors of blue and white-collar workers. It is important to differentiate between the two. The main difference is that workers who perform mostly manual labour are considered to be blue-collar whereas workers who perform mainly 'desk jobs' fall into the category of white-collar. Historically, blue-collar workers are associated with the stigma of poverty and are considered to be poorly educated (Forsey, 2015). This lack of education means that a large proportion of blue-collar workers are not aware of their basic employment rights. This is backed up in a study done by Schreurs, where he concluded that blue-collar workers were not as aware of their rights to the same extent as white-collar workers and due to this it is therefore felt that employment protection is considerably weaker for blue-collar workers (Schreurs *et al.*, 2010). This in turn directly affects a workers attitude and expectations in the workplace and can be the result of stress build-up as these blue-collar workers may not be getting their appropriate rest breaks, annual leave entitlements or even the minimum wage. The reason legislation gives this minimum requirement benefit to employees is to protect them from physical and mental ill health such as stress (Asiedu-Darko and Amanor, 2015). Further studies have found the reasoning for high stress levels in blue-collar workers is due to the lack of autonomy and control that comes with blue-collar roles. In a study done by Wilson and her colleagues based on autonomy and job satisfaction levels in 260 manual labours, the results showed that the more autonomy that workers had, the higher their job satisfaction was (Wilson *et al.*, 2015). Further studies have gone on to show that low levels of job satisfaction can directly lead to job stress (Sharma and Chalotra, 2017). Therefore the relationship of job satisfaction and job stress is indirectly affected by the levels of job autonomy in a particular role. Role here is defined as the function that an employee fills within an organisation. It is separate from job title as this is just a label whereas job role refers to the tasks that employees do on a day-to-day basis.

Other factors that need to be considered within this study are the gig-economy and part-time work. The gig-economy is a form of work within the labour market that is characterized by the prevalence of short-term contracts and freelance work instead of permanent jobs (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018). Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski suggest that people are opting to work in environments like the gig-economy and part-time work due to factors such as economic volatility and changes in technology. The author believes the reason why people choose to work in the

gig-economy is because it eliminates stresses that you typically find with permanent jobs such as commuting, long hours, changes within the organization, job insecurities and workplace bullying and harassment.

Workplace bullying is said to happen when an employee is regularly and over time is exposed to negative actions of personal or work-related nature performed by colleagues on the same or different hierarchical levels (Einarsen *et al.*, 2011). For example a member of staff may choose to pick on an employee simply because of their gender and this can cause huge amounts of stress to that employee. The same levels of stress can affect different genders in different ways. For example, studies have shown that women who receive adequate amounts of supervisor support show lower stress levels than men who receive the same amount of support. However, men who are faced with high levels of job insecurity tend to be less stressed than women who face the same amount of job insecurity (Padkapayeva *et al.*, 2018).

Stress comes with both the blue and white-collar industry but this study aims to see which industry is more stressed. The research indicates that it is the white-collar industry that endures the larger amount of stress. Dèdelè and his colleagues believe that it is the sedentary behaviour and lack of physical activity that is associated with stress in white-collar work (Dèdelè *et al.*, 2019). Research shows that sedentary behaviour effects both young and old as Lee and Kim's study demonstrates that sedentary behaviour promotes stress and anxiety in students who are sitting for a prolonged period of time (Lee & Kim, 2018). Whereas Ashdown-Franks and her colleagues have also found that greater amounts of sedentary behaviour to be associated with higher levels of stress, specifically in older adults (Ashdown-Franks *et al.*, 2018).

Employees experience stress in other aspects of their lives as well as in their work life. They then have to carry it into work life and this inevitably affects their work. Some of the main causes of stress outside of work include financial problems, personal relationships, parenting, daily life and lastly your personality. The stresses that come with financial problems, personal relationships and parenting speak for themselves. Not having enough money to support yourself and/or family is going to cause huge amounts of stress. If you have a strained relationship with a family member you were once close with or maybe you are going through a break-up, this too is going to have negative implications on your mental health. Trying to raise your children to be a benefit to society can also take its tolls. The running around of daily life can too develop stressors, from sitting in traffic to forgetting where you last saw your keys tend to stress people out. This daily life stress depends on your personality. Extroverts tend to deal better with daily life as they have greater social resources. Whereas perfectionists bring avoidable stress onto themselves because of their high standards (Scott, 2020).

This study intends on looking into factors that may cause stress to employees that previous literature has failed to look at. This includes the demands put on employees, the control employees are under, the support employees receive from their managers, the support employees receive from their

peers, the relationships employees have with others within the business, their current job role and lastly how change occurs and is dealt with within their business. These seven factors will then allow us to identify the differing stress levels of blue and white-collar roles and seeing if previous research is correct in stating that white-collar employees deal with the higher amount of stress due to their sedentary behaviour amongst other theories.

1.2 Problem Statement

Stress in the workplace is something that cannot be avoided however it can be reduced. The fear is that organizations are not doing enough to prevent the high level of stress in the workplace (Pannu and Tikku, 2014). When employees are happy, healthy and engaged in their jobs they are more likely to hit their key performance indicators (KPI's). However, when they are stressed or burned out, their performance as well as their relationship with other stakeholders within the business, will suffer (Kurniawan, Sularso and Titisari, 2018). The four questions that organizations need to be asking themselves in order to reduce stress levels for employees are; do they know their team? Are they leading by example and showing leadership to promote healthy working habits? Are they reviewing job design and workloads? Are they assessing the management style of senior employees (CIPD, 2019)? The author believes that specific legislation for example, auditing employers more regularly to ensure that they are providing a duty of care to all employees and that no harm is reasonably foreseeable, will help with this (Gorry, 2019). These four questions outlined by Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) can potentially help organisations deal with employee stress. This can then have a knock on effect of reducing stress in home life for the employee and their families.

1.3 Research Question

The aim of this study is to try and establish the effect that stress has on the employees working in the blue and white-collar industry and see if previous research which states it is the white-collar industry that endures the largest amount of stress due to the sedentary nature of their roles is accurate. Further past studies have shown that other stress white-collar workers have to bear lies with organizational justice. This is a theory developed by Greenberg in the late 80's where the organization's behaviours, decisions and actions influence the employee's attitudes and behaviours in the workplace (Herr *et al.* 2015). This same study states that blue-collar workers struggle with Job-Demand-Control (Vassos *et al.*, 2017). This model focuses on the balance between the desires of the employees and their autonomy. This lack of autonomy and control in blue-collar roles is what seems to result in the most amount of stress in their jobs (Herr *et al.* 2015).

1.4 Relevance and Importance of the Research

Elser talks about there being an opportunity for further research by trying to identify the specific mechanisms by which certain blue-collar roles may predispose women, and potentially men, to adverse health issues resulting from stress (Elser *et al.*, 2018). The issues identified by Elser can also be applied to white-collar roles and the author intends to research these matters to try and isolate these mechanisms that can potentially benefit both men and women in the work place. Elser's studies are further reinforced by a study done on factory workers in Bangalore, which demonstrates men who work in a factory had a higher mental mastery than that of women and thus they are able to deal with high stress levels to better effect (Manjula and Manjula, 2012). There is also an opportunity to evaluate the gig economy. This is a form of work within the labour market that is characterized by the prevalence of short-term contracts and freelance work instead of permanent jobs (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018). The gig economy is often overlooked and is becoming more and more popular in big cities. For example, in London, the gig economy is due to rise to 6.5% in the next year (Geraint 2019). More and more people are forced to work in the likes of part-time work and gig economy due to factors such as expensive housing, the price of childcare and commuting costs. These types of labour too bring their own stresses such as the lack of a guaranteed salary every month, working in isolation, pressures of paying your own taxes and the lack of benefits (Keplinger *et al.*, 2018).

Chapter 2 – Aims and Objectives

2.1 Research Aim

According to the theoretical and applied research it is known that both sectors of workers are prone to a large amount of stress depending on a number of factors ranging from work-life balance to relationship with line managers. However, as mentioned, studies have shown that white-collar sedentary groups tend to be susceptible to the greater amount of stress (Dédélé *et al.*, 2019). The author's study will be looking closely at this statement to see if it obtains similar results. Sato, Kuroda and Owan claim that it is work schedules as opposed to work sectors that are the reason for avoidable work related stress, which will be covered in more depth in the literature review (Sato, Kuroda and Owan 2020).

The aim of this study is to compare stress levels between blue and white-collar workers. This study will focus on seven different factors including job demands, job control, managers' support, peer support, relationships, job role and change.

2.2 Research Questions

Main question:

- Is there a difference in levels of stress experienced by blue and white-collar workers?

Sub questions:

- What are the main causes of stress in workers?
- How can stress be avoided in the workplace?

2.3 Objectives

The data gathered from this study will be used to analyse the different reasons for stress in blue and white-collar occupations. The data will also be used to see apart from work, what other factors are causing stress to employees.

2.4 Hypotheses

Blue-collar workers have to cope with similar amounts of stress as white-collar.

Chapter 3 - Literature review

Employees are critical for an organisation to succeed therefore it is essential that senior management do all they can to make the employees job as stress free as possible (Xu *et al.*, 2017). Chapter three will discuss the relevant literature of the topic. This literature review will be split into three sub-sections;

1. Key concepts, theories and studies.
2. Key debates and controversies.
3. Gaps in the existing knowledge.

3.1 Key Concepts, Theories and Studies

In a study done by Dèdelè and his colleagues early last year on the perceived stress among different occupational groups, their results found that workers who are sedentary for more than three hours a day, usually white-collar, had a greater risk of developing higher stress levels than those who are active (Dèdelè *et al.*, 2019). Lee and Kim also noticed that in a study performed on Korean students who were sitting for an average of 7.97 hours a day, which is similar to the standard working day of 8 hours, as their sitting time increased, so did the students stress, anxiety and depression levels. This was despite controlling other factors in the students' lives such as finances, weight, underlying diseases and general self-management (Lee & Kim, 2018). Therefore by the logic of this study, reducing white-collar employees stress levels can be achieved by decreasing sitting time and promoting physical activity. This can be done by simply moving photocopiers, shredders and water dispersers to area's of the office that are further away from the employees desks, this forces the employee to complete a remedial task while putting more of an emphasis on physical activity. Other approaches can be taken such as encouraging regular breaks away from the employees' desk and

implementing standing desks (Chapman *et al.*, 2020).

The theory that white-collar workers endure more stress than blue-collar is further reinforced by a study done in Indonesia on the relationship of cardiovascular disease and stress in both white and blue-collar workers. It is well known that stress in the body can lead to cardiovascular disease which accounts for around 10,000 deaths a year in the Republic of Ireland (HSE, 2020). Results from the study done in Indonesia found that white-collar workers were 1.6 times more likely to be diagnosed with the disease than blue-collar workers were although blue-collar workers were more likely to show symptoms of the disease (Prihartono *et al.*, 2018). Kivimaki and Kawachi report that employees who have to deal with work stressors are 10% to 40% more likely to develop cardiovascular disease. It may be of the perception that age, gender and socioeconomic backgrounds are a factor in these figures however they had little part to play (Kivimaki and Kawachi, 2015). Along with cardiovascular disease another main disorder resulting from the knock-on effect of having a stressful occupation is the prevalence of musculoskeletal disorders. The results of a study done on white-collar employees showed that 50% of the participants had experienced waist and back pain believed to be the result from work stressors and job demands (Talab *et al.*, 2017).

Schreurs, van Emmerick, de Cuyper, Notelaers and Witte wrote a journal article where the results showed that it is white-collar workers that are more stressed when they found that early retirement rates are much higher in the white-collar industry than within blue due to being unable to keep up with job demands (Schreurs *et al.*, 2010). As many workers may dream of retiring early to pursue travel, leisure and other lifelong plans, statistics from a study performed by Fitzgerald in 2019 have showed that male blue-collar workers who retired one year early increased their chances of an early death rate by 1.85% before the age of 73 (Fitzgerald, 2019). This could be an underlying, subconscious reason as to why blue-collar workers do not retire until the mandatory retirement age. There may also be other reasons for this such as white-collar roles typically earning more money than that of blue-collar meaning they are afforded the luxury of being able to retire early (Lott, 2013). According to the Economic Research Institute (ERI), an average blue-collar worker in the Republic of Ireland with eight years experience earns €38,453 a year compared to €55,057 a year of the average white-collar worker with eight years experience (ERI, 2020).

However, these studies can be contradicted by the work of Sato and her peers. She suggests that the irregular working hours and switching shifts on a regular basis such as from day to night often leads to mental ill health, such as stress. It was previously suggested that the shorter rest periods were the reason for this but her study shows that it is in fact shift work, especially working after midnight that is the reasoning for these adverse health effects. This is something that the majority of white-collar workers do not have to deal with as they usually stick to consistent working hours such as nine to five (Sato, Kuroda and Owan, 2020). Amongst this, Biomed Central published an article that supported Sato's argument. They performed a study that concluded with results showing that there was very little evidence that showed stress was associated with sedentary behaviours. While past

studies have suggested that sedentary jobs could potentially be linked to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, Biochem Central's study found this to be not the case (Teychenne *et al.*, 2019).

This study can be reinforced by the research of De Spiegelaere and his colleagues as they claim that a lot of organisations have a one size that fits all model. These researchers performed a survey where they were looking for the innovative work behaviour (IWB) of all employees. The results showed that white-collar workers had a high contribution to IWB but blue-collar not so much. The researchers concluded that job content insecurity can be very detrimental to employees leading to stress and other mental health diseases. Job content insecurity is when workers do not believe that the work they are undertaking is actually contributing to the overall objective of the business, for example constantly performing remedial tasks (De Spiegelaere, Van Gyes and Van Hootegeem, 2012).

Physical burnout is known to be a contributor to stress. As blue-collar occupations are often associated with large amounts of physical activity, they are more susceptible to this burnout (Wang *et al.*, 2017). Burnout has been identified as stress related process. For example, a study was done with firefighters, a blue-collar role, that showed that burnout is now considered a safety concern within the fire service (Smith *et al.*, 2018). The author feels that more businesses need to understand that physical labour leads to burnout and stress. This could be the root of unnecessary physical and mental health problems for the businesses employee, and, indirectly for the employee's family. The stress coming from work inevitability increases the stress within home life. There are studies showing that having high levels of job stress can lead to high levels of home stress. This has a knock on effect to home life and leads to elevated symptoms of depression and anxiety (Fan *et al.*, 2015) and (Ju *et al.*, 2017). This knock on effect is known as 'stress spillover', another way to describe this is when stressful experiences in one area of someone's life, spillover into other areas to have deteriorating effects (Barton *et al.*, 2018). This also works the other way as having a stressful home life can lead to a lack of productivity in the workplace. A study done on service employees showed that organizations that offer greater support to employees who struggle with work-life imbalance could have positive effects on the employees' productivity and morale levels. This in turn proves to be good for business. (Cheng, Zhou & Guo, 2019). Santhanam and Srinivas found that one reason for employee burnout is disengagement from work; which is often associated with blue-collar roles due to the repetitive nature of some jobs within that industry. Their study focuses on working-class, blue-collar employees who have received limited attention with the organizations they have researched. They believe by introducing and improving quality management systems and initiatives within the organization, may improve the employee's organizational commitment and in turn reducing stress and burnout (Santhanam and Srinivas, 2019).

Women in blue-collar roles suffer different stresses than men in these roles. Women are not historically thought of when blue-collar workers are mentioned however this does not mean that they are exempt from the industry and from the stress that comes from working within it. The results of a

study done in the USA (United States of America) showed that blue-collar female employees are more likely to be treated for depression than white-collar workers. However in the same study it was concluded that both blue-collar men and women were less likely to use depression and stress related healthcare than those in the white-collar industry (Elser *et al.*, 2019). Elser and her colleagues go on to state the reasons that women come forward to get their depression treated may include the fact that as men dominate the blue-collar industry, women who work within it are prone to physical strain, sexual harassment and discrimination, job insecurity as well as lack of control over their work. All of the above can be stresses for women in blue-collar roles and all have all originated from the workplace.

3.2 Key Debates and Controversies

Prior to beginning this study the research supported the theory that white-collar workers are the more stressed of the two sectors. Multiple studies are provided to support this hypothesis such as Hanifa's and Oktafani's article where the evidence shows that 46.3% of office workers that took part in their survey are stressed due to work (Hanifa and Oktafani, 2019). However that is not to say that blue-collar workers are not stressed

There is a point to be argued that white-collar jobs spill over more into home and family lives due to work phones, company laptops, working from home policies, always being available and never being able to turn off from work due to new technologies (Hyland and Prottas, 2016). Villadsen backs up this theory as he has done work to show that the adaptation of technology is accompanied by an increase in stress as well as collective control and work intensification (Villadsen, 2016). This generally is not something that applies to blue-collar workers, as their roles require them to be in their place of work to perform their duties.

It can be argued that due to blue-collar workers earning less salary than white, this lack of financial stability can be the result of stress to home life. Some of the most common jobs in Ireland according to the 2016 census figures are blue-collar roles such as farming. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) report states that there are 69,375 farmers in the country or 3.5% of the workforce according to the latest census in 2016. The same report claims there are 90,746 sales and retail assistants, cashiers and checkout operators in the country, 59,392 administration workers, 53,910 nurses and midwives, 44,605 care workers and primary and nursery teachers have 41,654 workers (CSO, 2016). In Ireland, according to The Salary Expert run by the ERI, an entry level blue collar worker (1-3 years of experience) earns an average salary of €25,052. On the other end, a senior level blue-collar worker (8+ years of experience) earns an average salary of €38,453. When this is compared to a standard white-collar job, an entry-level sales representative for example (1-3 years of experience) earns an average salary of €25,482. On the other end, a senior level sales representative (8+ years of experience) earns an average salary of €55,057 (ERI, 2020). The CSO posted similar

figures where they suggest that the average weekly wage for an industrial worker is €685.53 or €35,647.56 per year (CSO 2019). While white-collar employees such as those in information and communication sector earned on average of €56,506 per year in 2018 (CSO, 2019). This is a huge gap, especially between the more experienced workers. Due to this, blue-collar workers are more likely to live in more unsubstantiated occupations, in poorer areas and struggle financially. This financial stress developed from having a poorly paid job can then impact on home life and vice versa (Wilson and Maume, 2013). For example, as the world was hit by the Covid-19 pandemic at the end of 2019 and start of 2020, more and more countries went into lockdown with all businesses closing apart from those considered essential. The Irish government put a scheme in place where anyone who lost their job or had to close their business due to the lockdown restrictions were entitled to a government paid €350 a week. A large number of employees in white-collar roles have the luxury of working from home as they have the technology to work remotely. However this is a lot more rare in blue-collar jobs as, the nature of their role means that they have to be in their place of work to perform their job. These blue-collar workers would potentially have to be laid off and forced to sign on to the government's scheme of €350 a week. This may be enough money for some employees to survive however it may not for others thus leading to large amounts of financial worry and stress that the vast amount of white-collar employees may not have to endure (Raja, 2020).

Mental health issues are not the only burden that employees have to endure. High levels of physical injuries are very common with blue-collar workers where their role is based on Occupational Physical Activity (OPA) (Holtermann, 2015). Studies have shown that OPA related jobs lead to the likes of absenteeism due to sickness as well as premature retirement which contradicts Schreurs, van Emmerick, de Cuyper, Notelaers and Witte's study who believe that it is the white-collar industry who are forced into early retirement due to job demands. The continued working on your feet that comes with a lot of blue-collar roles coupled with performing physically exerting activities that are conducted for multiple hours per day are believed to promote adverse health effects (Clays *et al.*, 2020). Albeit this OPA does not always result in stress to the worker, however the worker who develops physical injuries are more likely to develop depression (Sareen *et al.*, 2013). Many other studies support the theory that stress at work can directly lead to depression such as Gray-Stanley's article on work stress and depression where the study calls for the need for strong work social support systems as well as interventions to aid staff manage work stressors (Gray-Stanley *et al.*, 2010) and (Forbes, 2018).

With these high levels of stress and potentially other diseases that come with certain occupations, what inevitably comes with that are high levels of absenteeism. A study was developed for a company within the airline industry where they were trying to reduce absenteeism amongst its employees. Their results showed that job stress and work-life balance were the main contributors to absenteeism while job satisfaction had very little impact on the matter (Geydar, 2020). This study suggests that if employers can keep job stress low and help their employees keep a satisfactory

standard of work-life balance then they should be able to keep absenteeism low and in return this will promote productivity for the company.

Many may argue that the white and blue-collar dichotomy is no longer valid within the 21st century and that the likes of gig economy and part-time employment makes the blue and white-collar industry somewhat redundant. However, Lips-Wiersma, Wright and Dik believe that both these occupational groups still provide meaningful work to society. White-collar employees believe they provide meaningful work by employing their potential to their organisations as well as serving others. Whereas blue-collar workers provide meaningful work by assisting others in order to maximise their strengths (Lips-Wiersma *et al.*, 2016). The author personally believes that the white and blue-collar contrast is still valid as both sectors provide critical work. Blue-collar employees are responsible for driving the future of personal development in multiple industries such as construction, manufacturing, oil, gas and agriculture. Businesses need to utilize the skills of blue-collar workers in order to achieve better integration and collaboration to reach business goals and further down the line of continuing economic growth (Hennequin, 2007). The same applies to white-collar positions. They are often expected to develop specialized skills overtime and thus making them indispensable assets for their organization and just like the blue-collar employees this will in turn lead to positive economic growth.

3.3 Gaps in Existing Knowledge

In 2012 Von Bonsdorff and his colleagues did a similar study to the one the author is proposing. Within the conclusion of that study it states that there is room for further research on job strain, or stresses, in different occupational groups, as they are not well known (von Bonsdorff *et al.*, 2012). The author intends to investigate the differing levels of job strains in different occupational groups in organisations in Ireland such as Roughan & O'Donovan (ROD) Consulting Engineers who are mainly a white-collar organisation and Lir Chocolates who have up to 250 blue-collar employees at their peak season, and see if previous research is correct in suggesting that white-collar workers are more stressed than blue. The research is suggesting that it will be the white-collar workers that will be more stressed however there is potential for the results to show more stress in blue-collar workers due to the financial restraints and physical demands.

Another gap in the research that is open to further investigation is when Elser talks about there being an opportunity to identify specific mechanisms by which certain blue-collar roles may predispose women, and potentially men also, to these adverse health issues resulting from stress (Elser *et al.*, 2018). Studies that have taken place in Japan have showed that women who work in blue-collar environments suffer larger amounts of job stress and thus have lead to greater risks of developing the likes of cardiovascular diseases (Hwang & Lee, 2014). There are studies to show that shift work, which comes with a lot of blue-collar roles, has different effects on men than that of women. These studies believe that women who partake in shift work are more at risk of developing

cardiovascular disease than men are (Hulsegge *et al.*, 2018). Although this study is not looking to measure the rate of cardiovascular disease in employees, the level of stress is proportional to cardiovascular development.

The authors study aims to look into the above-mentioned gaps within the research and apply it with a focus on organizations and employees within the Irish work force.

Chapter 4 - Research Methodology

According to Cambridge English Dictionary, research is defined as a “detailed study of a subject, especially in order to discover new information or research a new understanding” (Woodford, 2005). Alike, Singh states research to be seeking the answers of particular questions that have not yet been answered where these answers depend on human efforts (Singh, 2006). Furthermore research methodology is defined by Crotty as the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods to the desired outcomes (Crotty, 1998). This chapter will be used to illustrate the reasons for conducting the research and how the research process was identified and conducted. The research method that was used for this study will be discussed along with the method of data collection, the sampling, the ethical considerations and lastly the limitations that arose from this method.

4.1 Research Question Revised

The original research for this study was: ‘who is more stressed? Blue or white-collar workers? As the author did some more in-depth research on the topic the research question was changed to look at a number of more specific areas around this topic such as; is the white-collar industry more stressed than the blue due to their prolonged periods of sedentary behaviour? Is the blue-collar industry more stressed due to financial burdens? Does stress affect different genders in different ways? How can stress be avoided in the workplace?

4.2 Research Design

The research design is used to set out the procedure of the process. Research can be split into a number of categories including; exploratory, descriptive and casual. Each category of research has advantages and disadvantages and can be used for all types of studies to obtain optimal results. For example, exploratory research is used to define an ambiguous problem such as why the sales in a certain product are falling or to gain a better understating of a certain issue. Descriptive research is used to describe an idea or a theory. An example of when this is used is when researchers want to estimate the size of consumer groups in a population that act in a certain way such as how often young people may purchase the same item from a company brand. Lastly casual research is used to measure

if there is relationship between two or more variables and is often used to manipulate, measure and control these variables, (Sreejesh, Mohapatra and Anusree, 2013).

For this study, descriptive research was used. This is a form of quantitative research. Quantitative research allows for the collection of data so that information can be quantified and exposed to statistical analysis so that it can support the theory of this research. Quantitative research is used to test or confirm theories or assumptions. This style of research can be used to establish generalizable facts, for example in this case, showing that white collar workers are more stressed than blue (Barnham, 2015). Primary research provides raw information and first hand information. It is more credible as evidence. However the main reasoning behind the authors' decision to use it is because it gives answers to specific questions that directly affect the researchers study.

4.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations had to be taken into account for this study and were explained throughout. These considerations were addressed to the participants of this study in the survey cover page through the medium of a consent form. This cover page let the participants know that they would be kept anonymous and all the information that was gathered throughout the survey would be confidential and stored on an electronic password protected format. The author let the participants know that their participation in the survey was voluntary and that they could chose to leave the survey at anytime without collecting their data. The participants were also given the option to contact the author with any questions that arose from doing the survey by giving his email address which can be found in the appendix along with the survey information sheet, consent form and survey itself. Ethical approval was granted by the NCI before starting this dissertation.

4.4 Survey Development

The survey questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section one consisted of ten questions and was developed by the author to gain an understanding of the demographic that was taking part in the survey. The second section was a stress at work related survey that focused on seven different standards that included; Demands, Control, Managers' Support, Peer Support, Relationships, Role and Change. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) developed this section of the survey (Cousins *et al*, 2004), (MacKay *et al*. 2004) & (Kerr, McHugh and McCrory, 2009). It consists of 35 questions that ask about working conditions that are known to be associated with causing stress. The participants' answer the questions based on how they feel about that aspect of their job. The HSE provided an analysis tool that was used to analyse the results. The analysis tool gives an average figure for each of the management standards for all respondents or particular sub-groups. The tool works by using Excel utilities to cut the survey results using demographic category data that was

collected.

Standard 1 - Demands

The demand questions looked at what was expected of each participant at work. This ranged from meeting deadlines to how intensely they were expected to work to being able to take sufficient breaks to working long hours. The rationale behind this group of questions is to see if the participants are being put under unnecessary pressure.

Standard 2 – Control

This group of questions is used to see how much control the employee has at work. If a worker is micromanaged and has little control of their duties, this can develop into stress (Swida-Barteczka and Szweykowska-Kulinska, 2019).

Standard 3 – Manager Support

The aim behind asking questions looking into manager support was to see if the managers of the participants were helping their staff when work was getting overwhelming and if the worker felt supported. Helping staff through periods of high workloads can significantly reduce stress. Studies have shown that manager behaviour has a significant influence on common mental health disorders (Petrie *et al.*, 2018).

Standard 4 – Peer Support

The questions from this section focused on the support that the participants received from their peers. Were they willing to help when their workload got too large? Do they get the respect they deserve from their colleagues? Are their colleagues willing to listen to their work related problems?

Standard 5 – Relationships

Relationships with others play a massive part in causing unnecessary work related stress. This section focused on seeing if the participants have a good relationship with their colleagues. Bullying and harassment feature heavily in this section as bullying has been shown to bring on stress related symptoms (Malik and Björkqvist, 2019).

Standard 6 – Job Role

This standard focuses on the job role of an employee in their current job. Do they know what is expected of them and are they clear of the goals and objectives of their department? Not being aware of this can lead to low employee morale and be a trigger for stress (Abraham *et al.*, 2018).

Standard 7 – Change

People usually don't like change and when they aren't consulted about it and it is forced upon them this can be a very stressful situation (Zakaria, Balan and Lee, 2019). This group of questions focuses on how the participants have to deal with change in their respective organisations.

4.5 Methods and Sources

The method of this study was done through the use of surveys and had a total of 316 participants, 303 of which completed the survey in full giving a 95.8% completion rate. The researcher opened the survey for one month. When the one-month period ended, the survey was closed with the data uploaded to HSE survey analysis tool and SPSS. A survey was posted on social media (LinkedIn, Facebook & Whatsapp) as well as being distributed to the employees of the author's work place to participate in. The author used the resources at his disposal such as social media and therefore it was open to complete by anyone who came across the survey that was currently employed. The social media sites used included LinkedIn and Facebook. The author also requested the permission of organisations from current and past employment with the aim to send the questionnaire out to their employees to participate in. This style of sampling is known as non-probability sampling with a focus on voluntary sampling (Sakshaug *et al.*, 2019). The other type of sampling that could have been used was probability sampling. This is when every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected to carry out the survey. As this survey was voluntary, this means that non-probability sampling was used. Non-probability sampling is defined as "a sampling technique where the odds of any member being selected for a sample cannot be calculated" (Yang, Kim & Song, 2020). The main advantage of non-probability sampling over probability sampling is that it is more cost and time efficient. It can also be a lot more efficient with smaller samples. The main disadvantage with non-probability sampling is that it is very difficult to know how well you are representing the population (Acharya *et al.* 2013). The data was analysed based on the answers within the surveys using the HSE analysis tool. This tool helps to answer the research questions of this dissertation.

4.5.1 The Stress Scale

The stress scale prompted the frequency to which respondents thought they were exposed to stressors within their work environment. The stress scale used numerical data through a Likert scale. All questions were scored according to the frequency with which these situations are assessed as stressful, from (1) never, (2) seldom, (3) sometimes, (4) often and (5) always. The survey questions were based around the seven standards that are believed to bring on stress in the workplace; Demands, Control, Manager Support, Peer Support, Relationships, Role and Change. The participants answered the questions on a scale of one to five. One being not in agreement with the question and an indicator of low stress levels and five being in agreement with the question and an indicator of high stress levels.

4.6 Limitations of Methodology Design

There were two key limitations that the author found after designing the methodology. The first being that the survey was intended to be sent to a number of construction and manufacturing companies to bring up the amount of blue-collar participants, however due to the Covid-19 pandemic that was on-going at the time of completing this research, this was not possible as the country went into lockdown (Sky News, 2020).

The second limitation was a concern that the author highlighted during the submission of this dissertation proposal. This was the possibility of organisations not allowing their employees to take part in the survey due to the fact the work related stress is a sensitive topic. ROD kindly allowed their employees to engage in the survey however Lir Chocolates declined.

Both of these limitations resulted in the number of blue-collar participants being considerably lower than white-collar participants (61 blue vs. 255 white).

Chapter 5 - Research Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will go through the results and analysis of the study. The findings were acquired through the survey that was distributed. It looks at the descriptive and inferential results that were obtained by submitting the results into SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences.) By performing statistical analysis this allows the author to answer the below research objectives:

1. To investigate the different reasons for stress in blue and white-collar occupations.
2. To investigate what other factors apart from work are bringing stress upon employees.

5.2 Demographics

Table 1. Demographics of all participants.

	White-Collar	Blue-Collar
Total	81.01%	18.99%
Age		
Under 18	00.00%	00.00%
18-24	10.93%	15.00%
25-34	53.51%	50.00%
35-44	14.06%	08.33%
45-54	14.45%	10.00%

55-64	06.25%	13.33%
65+	00.39%	01.66%
Non-responders	00.39%	01.66%
Gender		
Male	48.43%	45.00%
Female	51.57%	55.00%
Shift		
9am-5pm Monday to Friday	78.12%	26.66%
Weekend work	00.00 %	01.66%
Evening work	00.78%	06.66%
Night shifts	00.00%	00.00%
On call	00.39%	00.00%
A combination of the above	15.23%	50.00%
Other	05.46%	15.00%
Marital Status		
Single	48.04%	46.66%
Cohabiting	13.28%	15.00%
Engaged	03.12%	01.66%
Married	32.32%	28.33%
Separated	01.17%	01.66%
Divorced	00.78%	03.33%
Widowed	00.78%	01.66%
Non-responders	00.39%	01.66%
Children		
0	72.65%	60.00 %
1	09.37%	10.00%
2	10.54%	11.66%
3	03.90%	10.00%
4	01.95%	08.33%
5	01.17%	00.00%
5+	00.39%	00.00%
Non-responders	00.39%	00.00%
Conflict		
Never	21.09%	18.33%
Seldom	52.73%	50.00%

Sometimes	21.87%	28.33%
Often	03.90%	03.33%
Always	00.00%	00.00%
Non-responders	00.39%	00.00%
Bring Work Home		
Never	23.43%	31.66%
Seldom	26.17%	18.33%
Sometimes	26.95%	30.00%
Often	15.62%	08.33%
Always	07.81%	10.00%
Non-responders	00.00%	01.66%
Work Related Injury		
Yes	03.90%	11.66%
No	96.09%	88.33%

5.3 Results

5.3.1 Reliability & Validity

Before the researcher could determine which survey to run, it is very important to make sure that it is reliable and validated. This is important as it gives the researcher an indication of the consistency of the survey. The original 35 questions that is shown in section two of the distributed survey was already pre-validated by the HSE. However when the researchers additional 10 demographic questions were added in, the survey had to be re-validated. Therefore a Cronbach Alpha test had to be carried out to determine the reliability. For a survey to be considered reliable the coefficient has be .70 or above. The reliability results of the 45 question survey was .85 where n=45. This indicates that the survey has an adequate level of reliability.

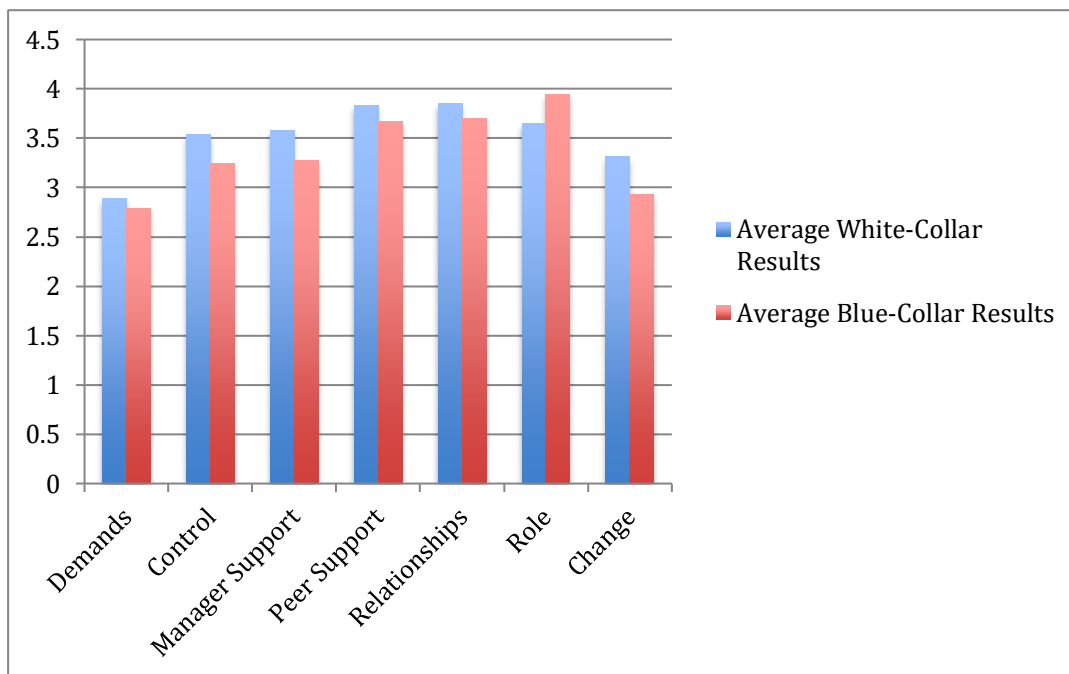
5.3.2 Descriptive Analysis

Table 2 indicates the mean results that were obtained when the data was entered into the HSE analysis tool. Each number refers to the mean result from each stress standard. All the stress standard results were then added up and the mean was gotten to show the result for both white and blue-collar participants. This number represents the level of stress for the blue and white-collar sectors.

Table 2. Mean results from HSE analysis tool.

Standard	White-Collar Mean (n=255)	Blue-Collar Mean (n=61)
Demands	2.89	2.79
Control	3.54	3.24
Manager Support	3.58	3.27
Peer Support	3.83	3.67
Relationships	3.85	3.70
Job Role	3.65	3.94
Change	3.31	2.93
Mean Results	3.52	3.36

Figure 1. Comparison of white and blue-collar stress score results



The early indications from the descriptive results show that white-collar workers struggle most with their Relationships than any of the management standards. Blue-collar workers struggle with the standard of Role than any of the other standards. Role scored highest in blue-collar workers than any other standard in each occupational group. White-collar workers scored highest in Relationships and lowest in Demands. Blue-collar workers scored highest in Role and lowest in Demands also. White-collar workers scored higher than blue in all the standards excluding Role, these included Demands, Control, Manager Support, Peer Support, Relationships and Change. What the descriptive results can tell us is that blue and white-collar workers run each other closely. The domains that one group score high in, the other group also score high in. So really, there doesn't appear to be much difference in terms of what elements of work cause stress to both groups. It is also seen that the demands domain is not as stressful as relationships, job role and peer support. It is also

visible that in all domains bar one, the white-collar workers score slightly higher in terms of stress than the blue collars, except for role.

When the average results are added up for all seven standards, white-collar totalled an average result of 3.52 out of 5, while blue-collar totalled an average result of 3.36 out of 5. High levels of stress are believed to occur at 3.75 out of 5 (Cousins *et al*, 2004).

5.3.3 Bullying and Harassment Results

The results also showed that 8% of white-collar participants who responded report that they are always, often or sometimes bullied and 56% of the participants who responded report that they are always, often or sometimes subject to personal harassment in the form of unkind words or behaviour. When this is compared to blue-collar workers, 18% of participants who responded report that they are always, often or sometimes bullied and 46% of the participants who responded report that they are always, often or sometimes subject to personal harassment in the form of unkind words or behaviour.

5.3.4 Inferential Analysis

The author tested to see if there was a correlation between the factors that may potentially cause stress to employees such as the shift that they work, conflict that occurs in their home life and if the employees bring work home with them. The author also tested the correlation between gender and stress level to see if there is there is a differential between male and female. These relationships between stress level and gender, shift, conflict at home and work brought home were analysed using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The correlations for the white-collar and blue-collar are on separate tables below.

5.3.4.1 White-Collar Correlations

Table 3. White-collar correlations.

		Level of Stress
Gender	Pearson Correlation	.024
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.713
	N	247
Shift	Pearson Correlation	-.051
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.421
	N	247
Conflict	Pearson Correlation	-.041
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.522

	N	246
Work Brought Home	Pearson Correlation	-.211**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	247

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The white-collar correlations show that for gender and stress level there is a small positive level of correlation however it is not statistically significant. For shift and stress level there is a small negative degree of correlation this is also not statistically significant. Conflict and stress level there is a small negative level of correlation, which is also not significant. Lastly, for work brought home and stress level there is a small negative degree of correlation and this is significant.

5.3.4.2 Blue-Collar Correlations

Table 4. Blue-collar correlations.

		Level of Stress
Gender	Pearson Correlation	-.008
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.951
	N	56
Shift	Pearson Correlation	.207
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.127
	N	56
Conflict	Pearson Correlation	-.096
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.483
	N	56
Work Brought Home	Pearson Correlation	-.001
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.994
	N	55

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The blue-collar correlations show that for gender and stress level there is a small negative level of correlation however it is not statistically significant. For shift and stress level there is a small positive degree of correlation this is also not statistically significant. Conflict and stress level there is a small negative level of correlation, which is also not significant. And for work brought home and

stress level there is a small negative degree of correlation, this is also not significant.

5.3.4.3 T-Test

For this section the author is trying to evaluate if there is a significant difference between the blue and white-collar participants. As the author is using the mean of both the blue and white-collar results, it was felt that the T-Test would be best used for this section of analysis. The T-Test assesses whether the mean of two different groups are statistically different from each other. The results for the T-Test are displayed below.

Table 5. Group Statistics.

	Sector	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Level of Stress	Blue	56	3.3180	.47325	.06324
Level of Stress	White	247	3.4612	.44266	.02817

Table 6. Independent samples test.

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Level of Stress	Equal variances assumed	1.740	.188	-2.157	301	.032	-.14318	.06637	-.27378	-.01258
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.068	78.296	.042	-.14318	.06923	-.28099	-.00536

As shown from table 6, Independent Sample Tests, as the significance is .188 and greater than .05 we can assume that the variances are equal. As the significance in the 2-tailed column is less than .05, this means the mean score between the groups are significantly different and the null hypothesis of blue-collar employee's being more stressed than white therefore has to be rejected.

5.4 Completion & Response Rate

The survey had 316 participants, 255 white-collar participants and 61 blue-collar participants. Of the 316 participants, 303 completed the survey in full. The overall completion rate was 95.88%. Of the 255 white-collar participants, 247 of them completed the survey in full giving a completion rate of 96.86%. Of the 61 blue-collar participants, 55 of them completed the survey in full giving a completion rate of 90.16%. The HSE state that in order to reflect the results adequately, a response rate of over 50% must be achieved to maintain adequate results. 60% is considered desirable, 70% is good and 80% or over is considered very good (HSE, 2020).

Chapter 6 - Discussion and Analysis of Findings

This chapter will discuss the results and the analysis of the findings and will compare and contrast them to past studies. When the results are analysed it shows that white-collar workers are more stressed than their blue-collar counterparts. Previous studies and existing literature supports these results, which will be discussed in more detail below.

The author will discuss the hypothesis of this study, which was that blue-collar workers have to cope with similar amounts of stress as white-collar workers highlighting the results and discussing the literature that supports and disproves the above stated hypothesis. The author will also discuss the results of the objectives and sub-objectives of this study.

The main objectives of this study was to investigate the different reasons for stress in blue and white-collar workers and also to investigate what other factors apart from work, is bringing stress upon employees. This study shows that the main reasons for stress in both blue and white-collar workers were role, relationships and peer support. The role of an occupation whether it's blue or white-collar can give unwarranted stress to an employee (Abraham *et al.*, 2018). Further studies have shown that the role an employee has in an organisation can be overloaded and thus leading to stress (Duxbury *et al.*, 2018). This study has shown another reason for stress in both blue and white-collar workers is relationships. Relationships have proven to play a huge part in causing unnecessary work related stress. Relationships with colleagues including team members and line managers have the ability to develop into very stressful situations for employees. For example, if employees are subject to bullying or harassment in the workplace, this is going to lead to workplace stress (Malik and Björkqvist, 2019). The last main reason of stress is peer support, having uneven workloads and poor line manager delegation leads to employees developing stress. It is proven that peer support at work supports psychological resilience by enhancing coping skills and providing social support. The results of a study done on peer support within an organisation showed that peer support programmes in the workplace increases employee morale and relationships between employees (Agarwal *et al.*, 2019).

The researchers last sub-question was, 'can stress be avoided within the workplace?' The results from the researchers study would indicate that stress could be avoided within the workplace. In a study done on job role in nurses, the results showed that empowering employees reduced role stress and increased job satisfaction (Orgambidez and Almeida, 2020). Stress can also be avoided when it comes to the standard of change. By interacting and communicating change with employees, this can reduce stress in an organisations workforce. Studies have shown that the risk of receiving stress related medication increases for employees in organisations that don't communicate change with their employees in a clear and timely manner (Dahl, 2011). Avoiding stress related to relationships in the workplace can be avoided also. This can be done in numerous ways, examples including bullying and harassment training have proved to be very effective. Employee inclusion has also shown to boost

employee self-efficacy and decrease stress levels that are associated with relationships in the workplace (Sarwar *et al.*, 2019). Stress can be reduced with adequate peer and manager support. It has been proven that improving organisational support in the workplace can heavily reduce work related stress as a lack of these supports have proven to be one of most detrimental causes of stress in the workplace (Lecca *et al.*, 2020). By minimising the standard of control, stress can be avoided in the workplace. If an employee is micromanaged and has little control of their duties, this can develop into avoidable work related stress (Swida-Barteczka and Szweykowska-Kulinska, 2019). Employees who are given more control feel more empowered and this can be a critical solution to decreasing stress (Cooper, 2020). Lastly, stress can be avoided within the workplace through the standard of demands. Job demands are seen as any physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of a job, that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort or skills. Therefore, they are associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs. Examples include, work pressure, emotional demands. Therefore by reducing these demands this should directly reduce stress levels.

The authors original hypothesis wanted to see which industry had to cope with the higher levels of stress. When studying the literature the author seen that both blue and white-collar employees have to cope with high levels and different types of daily stresses. As can be seen from the above chapter, the author ran the statistical test Bivariate Pearson Correlation as this test determines if there is a significant relationship between two variables (Bishara *et al.*, 2017). Before running this particular test on the software SPSS, a test for reliability was preformed on the 45-question survey. The author then ran the Bivariate Pearson Correlation test in which the analysis confirmed that there was a significant relationship in white-collar workers, stress and participants who brought home work with them. In line with this theory, the literature in chapter three highlighted the relationship between stress and work being brought home in white-collar workers. As workloads continue to be as heavy as ever, organisations need to find a solution to employees bringing work home. Even though the authors results showed a negative correlation, it is clear from the literature that employees bringing work home is bringing unnecessary stress upon employees. Of the 256 white-collar participants, over 76% of them bring work home on a seldom basis or more. Employees may feel it is necessary to bring work home and finish off or catch up on their work that they were not able to complete in the workplace but studies have shown that there is no evidence to indicate that this leads to a growth in productivity compared to those who leave their work in the office (Eldridge and Pabilonia, 2010). In Ireland, money has become less of a benefit for employees whereas a good standard of work-life balance is becoming more of a priority for job seekers (Farrell, 2020). Organisations need to find a way for their employees to get their work done in their contracted hours in order to reduce stress levels.

The authors test did not find any significant correlations with any of the other relationships with both blue and white-collar workers.

When performing this study the researchers main question was, 'Is there a difference in stress

level experienced by blue and white-collar workers?’ When descriptive analysis was performed for this study, white-collar (3.52 / 5.00) workers showed a higher average stress level than blue (3.36 / 5.00). The results have indicated that there is a difference in stress levels between the two industries with white-collar workers enduring more stress than that of blue. However as there were over four times as many white-collar participants than blue, this was not a fair study to draw comparisons from.

6.1 Strengths and Limitations

There were a number of strengths and limitations of performing this study. For example, the findings of this research can be generalised if the selection process if the sample is representative of the study population. However in this study’s case this was a limitation as there was uneven blue to white-collar worker participation. Other strengths included that the data was relatively easy to analyse however the limitation of this is that it’s not robust enough to explain the issue. When the survey responses were inputted into the HSE analysis tool they indicated that the white-collar participants were the more stressed of the two occupations. However as the white-collar to blue-collar participant ratio was 81:19, this gave a biased and unreliable set of results. The researcher continued with the study as if there was a more even distribution of blue and white-collar participants for the purposes of completing the dissertation. Large data imbalances such as in this study can introduce biases towards certain groups. These biases can have unwelcome consequences on the results of the study. This imbalance could have been rectified with the use of Data-Level and Algorithm-Level solutions. The solutions cover sampling, feature selection, over-sampling and under-sampling. These solutions would help bridge the sample number gap of the two different classes and give more meaningful results (Leevy *et al.*, 2018). Another way that the author could have dealt with the uneven distribution of the two groups would be to multiply the white-collar participants by a factor of 2 and multiply the blue-collar participants by a factor of 8.5. This would compensate for the uneven response rate. This is a method of social research known as weighing (Brem, 2015).

Chapter 7 - Conclusion and Recommendations

Within this study the researcher attempted to discover which industry is more stressed, the blue-collar or the white-collar industry and offer some recommendations that organisations, line-managers and employees themselves can do to help prevent stress within their roles. The literature revealed that there ample reasons as to why employees in both sectors are stressed and revealed that it is the white-collar sector that is more stressed of the two due to their sedentary behaviour and higher job demands. The authors own studies backed this up however the reasoning is due to white-collar employees bringing work home. Regardless of the results the survey can be used in organisations to track employee stress levels on a yearly basis, implement change and test again the following year to see if the changes that were implemented have reduced employee stress.

The recommendations that the author would make for this dissertation research if it were to be replicated in the future would be to try and get a more even distribution of blue and white-collar participants to ensure less biased and more reliable results. For any potential replications of this study it is important to certify reliability of all findings. As can be seen from the above study, not all the findings were in agreement with similar past studies.

Other recommendations that the author would make based on findings from this study to try and reduce stress in both blue and white-collar workplaces would be for both employees and employers to identify stressors. This can be done by analysing the reasons for drastic changes and using reports and metrics to check productivity levels, absence and change in behaviour to name a few. The author also recommends providing time management training to employees. Studies have shown that improving time management skills to coincide with job demands can lessen stress to a large extent. The author's last recommendation is to try and restructure cognitive skills. Implementing emotional based approaches to overcome criticism that can bring on stress can be a useful stress management approach (Tripathy, 2018).

To conclude, from the research performed it is highly important that organisations work on lowering and eliminating work related stress as much as possible so that employees remain both physically and mentally healthy. Findings from this research may provide a platform to help future researchers explore this area or stress in the blue and white-collar industry.

Chapter 8 - CIPD Personal Learning Reflection

The reason that I decided to do my Masters in Human Resource Management in the National College of Ireland was due to by my lack of passion in the line of work in my previous jobs. I feel like my characteristics are best suited to helping others be the best they can be. Having worked in food science, sales, retail and the food and drink industries, this has allowed me to view how people want to be treated. The lecturers and course content in NCI have helped teach me how to do this in such a short period of time.

My time completing my Masters has been a rollercoaster. I originally started as a full-time student but had to switch to the part-time course in order to facilitate going back to work full-time. I struggled to find the balance of work, life and study and probably underestimated the workload that was needed to complete this course. This wasn't the only obstacle that I had to dodge as Covid-19 hit. This pandemic meant that I couldn't reach certain audiences when looking to distribute my survey leaving my results of this dissertation very one sided. It also meant that any communication I needed to have with lectures and my supervisor had to be done over email. This wasn't optimal but the feedback I constantly received on my work was always second to none and I wouldn't have been able to complete the dissertation without this direction.

I felt the hardest part of the whole course was completing the dissertation. As my dissertation

in my undergrad was a completely different format to this one, I struggled to write the dissertation academically but also in a way that would make sense to someone with no background in HR. This was particularly difficult in the results section. I had never used SPSS in the past and this was another challenge. Trying to figure out which test to use was very difficult as using the wrong test would not give the results that would be needed for the discussion section.

Taking this course has allowed me to develop in areas that I feel I would have stayed stagnant in had I stayed in my previous line of work. I am now a lot more confident working as part of a team and giving my opinion within that team. Previously this is something that I would have gone out of my way to avoid however now I feel a lot more comfortable within these situations and I believe it is down to the learning opportunities I received from the NCI.

To sum up, this masters has been the most overwhelming experience of my life however I feel that the reward and feeling of accomplishment when graduating will far outweigh the stressful days and I'm personally delighted that I decided to push myself by leaving my job to go back and study full-time in a completely different industry.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Monkey Questionnaire:

Work Related Stress Survey

Information & Consent

Thank you for participating in this survey. The purpose of this research is to analyse the differing stress levels in different employment sectors. This is a research project being conducted by a masters student at the National College of Ireland (NCI). Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time up to the point of data submission. If you decide not to participate in this study after this point, it will not be possible to identify your data in order to remove it.

The procedure involves filling in an online survey that will take approximately 4-5 minutes. Your responses will be confidential and no identifying information will be collected such as your name, email address or IP address. The survey answers should be based on your current job.

We will do our best to keep your information confidential. All data is stored in a password protected electronic format. To help protect your confidentiality, the surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only and may be shared with NCI representatives.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact x18183930@student.ncirl.ie.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT:

Clicking on the "Next" button below indicates that:

- you have read the above information
- you voluntarily agree to participate
- you are at least 18 years of age

If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by exiting the survey.



Work Related Stress Survey

Section 1

1. What sector do you work in?

2. What is your job title?

3. What age are you?

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64

4. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

5. Pick the below which best describes your working schedule

- 9am-5pm Monday to Friday
- Weekend work
- Evening work
- Night shifts
- On call
- A combination of the above
- Other

6. What is your marital status?

- Single
- Cohabiting
- Engaged
- Married
- Separated
- Divorced
- Widowed

7. How many children do you have?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5+

8. Please rate the level of conflict that occurs in your home

- Never
- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

9. How often do you bring home work with you?

- Never
- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

10. Have you had any work related injuries in the last 12 months?

Yes

No

Work Related Stress Survey

Section 2

11. I am clear what is expected of me at work

1

2

3

4

5

12. I can decide when to take a break

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

13. I know how to go about getting my job done

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

14. I am subject to personal harassment in the form of unkind words or behaviour

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

15. Different groups at work demand things from me that are hard to combine

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

16. I have achievable deadlines

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

17. If work gets difficult, my colleagues will help me

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

18. I am given supportive feedback on the work I do

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

19. I have to work very intensively

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

20. I have a say in my own work speed

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

21. I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

22. I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

23. I am clear about the goals and objectives for my department

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

24. There is friction or anger between colleagues

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

25. I have a choice in deciding how I do my work

- Never
- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

26. I am unable to take sufficient breaks

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

27. I understand how my work fits into the overall aim of the organisation

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

28. I am pressured to work long hours

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

29. I have a choice in deciding what I do at work

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

30. I have to work very fast

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

31. I am subject to bullying at work

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

32. I have unrealistic time pressures

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

33. I can rely on my line manager to help me out with a work problem

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

34. I have some say over the way I work

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

35. I get help and support I need from colleagues

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

36. I have sufficient opportunities to question managers about change at work

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

37. I receive the respect at work I deserve from my colleagues

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

38. Staff are always consulted about change at work

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

39. I can talk to my line manager about something that has upset or annoyed me about work

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

40. My working time can be flexible

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

41. My colleagues are willing to listen to my work-related problems

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

42. When changes are made at work, I am clear how they will work out in practice

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

43. I am supported through emotionally demanding work

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

44. Relationships at work are strained

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

45. My line manager encourages me at work

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5