

## The Effect of Key Demographic Diversity Characteristics on Individual Action propensity in Determining Job Stress in Public Sector Hospitals of Lahore

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### Abstract

A recently appeared continuum 'individual action propensity' that ranges from thinking before acting to acting before thinking has been identified to help understand, how individuals differ in their approaches towards problems, particularly in situations where they lack knowledge and/or experience. This study has explored and examined this construct in light of key demographic diversity characteristics and has further studied its relationship with employee job stress. The results are based on a survey conducted on the 290 doctors and nurses through purposive sampling. The structural equation modelling (SEM) technique has been used, the results indicate that individual action propensity is higher in women and decreases with higher formal education. Besides, individual action propensity has been found to be positively associated with job stress. The study also discusses practical and theoretical contributions; limitations and future directions.

**Keywords:** Individual action propensity, job stress, individual characteristics, regulatory mode theory, demographic diversity at workplace

The dynamic work environment is the particular situation where employees need more hard work, change, quick and fresh actions with new interpretations, they may feel lack of experience and/or knowledge during facing this situation (Shamir & Howell, 1999; Shamim, Zeng, Sharif, & Khan, 2019). Usually, it is difficult for the employees to make appropriate decisions or react effectively during these uncertain situations, which leads to job dissatisfaction, job stress, high turnover and low productivity etc. (Noone, 2008; Zavala, Day, Plummer, & Bamford-Wade, 2018). So, in this environment, employees feel job stress to handle that particular situation, because they have a deficiency of knowledge and/or experience. Stress can be defined as a state of emotional and physiological hostility which happens because of adverse working conditions, especially those which are uncertain and difficult to control (Hart & Cooper, 2001). In an organization, job stress may be linked to a specific workplace environment (Armstrong & Griffin, 2004). There are several factors which may influence job stress, like employment issues, work-life balance, and the working environment (Di Pietro & Di Virgilio, 2014). It has been noticed that prolonged job stress has a harmful effect on both employees and the organization (Itzhaki et al., 2018; Magtibay, Chesak, Coughlin, & Sood, 2017; Donaldson, 1993). Consequently, in this regard employees take some strategies to handle that particular situation. The enormous amount of losses increases considerable managerial worry for understanding the reasons and to find preventing strategies of job stress (Heinen et al., 2013).

Employees opt various tactics to lessen the job stress in uncertain situations (Jefferson, Bloor, & Maynard, 2015), such as naturalistic decision making, help-seeking behavior, and asking for assistance from people around them (Klein & Klinger, 1991; Hofmann, Lei, & Grant, 2009). The "individual action propensity" is one of the new techniques which can be adopted to handle the stressful situations and making decisions at individual level. In individual action propensity, employees choose to make the decision based on two aspects 'Acting before Thinking' or 'Thinking before Acting' in dynamic work environments. Likewise, it could be defined as "an individual tendency to take quick action and to use trial and error in a situation where they do not have knowledge and/or experience, in contrast, the tendency to focus on thinking before performing any action". According to Weick (2001), people who think before action have a low individual action propensity as compared to those who act before thinking. The stress will come about in the event when an individual does not have the experience, knowledge, or sources necessary to fulfil

the requirements connected with working environment as well as when the requirements of your job go beyond the capability of the individual (Ratnapalan, Bennett, Dopson, & Darwent, 2019; French, Caplan, & Van Harrison, 1982; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Spielberger & Reheiser, 1994). In this situation, there are two approaches that employee adopt to cope with uncertain situations, either “thinking before acting” when they feel the deficiency of knowledge and/or experience or otherwise adopt “acting before thinking” approach (Kruglanski, Pierro, Mannetti, & Higgins, 2013). However, the probability of the outcome is better, where thinking and planning took place before any action as compared to the quick response before a deeper insight into the situation (Kruglanski et al., 2013). So, employee may feel stress when he/she adopt “acting before thinking” strategy and vice versa.

The previous studies have identified various strategies to cope with stress in a dynamic workplace environment, specifically where people have deficiency of knowledge and/or experience. However, existing studies have focused on organizational level or macro level stress coping strategies, but studies investigating the micro or individual level stress coping strategies are limited (Vera, Crossan, Rerup, & Werner, 2014). According to best of our knowledge, to date, no study has investigated the influence of individual action propensity strategy with its two dimensions ‘Acting before Thinking’ or ‘Thinking before Acting’ on the job stress. Therefore, first objective of this study is to investigate the relationship of individual action propensity with job stress in a dynamic work environment.

Demographic diversity factors at the workplace such as education, gender and age have also been studied as antecedents of individual action propensity (Vera et al., 2014). These factors have been identified as directly apparent demographics that define intellectual bases, behaviors, previous experiences and knowledge of individuals (Carpenter, Geletkanycz, & Sanders, 2004). The older employees prefer to act before thinking base on their previous experience and knowledge (Mikels, Cheung, Cone, & Gilovich, 2013). On the other hand, women are more prone to action instead of rationally based decision making. Because, women perform numerous responsibilities at the same time due to multiple responsibilities (Pierro, Giacomantonio, Pica, Kruglanski, & Higgins, 2013). Individuals who have higher education, prefer to handle complex situations based on rational decision making instead of intuition and hunches (Burke & Sadler-Smith, 2006). Therefore, second objective of this study is to explore the key demographic diversity characteristics as potential antecedent of individual action propensity. This study addresses the following research questions.

**Research Questions 1:** What is the impact of individual action propensity on employee job stress in a dynamic work environment?

**Research Questions 2:** What is the effect of key demographic diversity characteristics at the workplace on individual action propensity?

This research innovates and contributes to the existing literature in many ways. First, this study explores the relationships of individual action propensity with its two aspects (Acting before Thinking or thinking before Acting) and employee’s job stress in a dynamic work environment by applying regulatory mode theory. Second, this research also investigates key demographic diversity factors (age, gender and education) as antecedents of individual action propensity strategy in the context of developing country, i.e., Pakistan. Third, this research provides useful insights for the organizations to identify that what type of employees are suitable to work in high stress and dynamic work environment.

We establish this article as follows. Firstly, we propose research hypotheses after reviewing the literature on individual action propensity, job stress and related key demographic variables. Next, the research methodology, measures as well as data analysis and results are shown. We also shed light on key findings of the study and present the conclusion. Finally, the implications for theory and practice, limitations, and future research directions are also discussed.

## Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

### Key Antecedents of Individual Action Propensity

This study has identified important demographic diversity characteristics in the workplace, which influences individual action propensity. These characteristics include age, gender, and education.

### **Age**

According to regulatory mode theory (RMT), the presence of high locomotors leads to more activities as compared to assessors (Kruglanski et al., 2013). Similarly, older individuals are more prone to engage in movement and activities, therefore they will involve in “acting before thinking” instead of “thinking before acting” in complex situations (Vera et al., 2014). There are two reasons behind this behavior of older individuals. First, older individuals or employees have vast experience and knowledge, which enable them to react promptly in dynamic situations without taking analytical concerns into consideration (Klein & Klinger, 1991). Second, older employees base their decisions on intuition and hunches when facing complex situations rather considering rational analysis (Peters, Hess, Vastfall, & Auman, 2007; Mikels et al., 2013). This behavior and proclivity of older employees allow them to quickly perform actions because the experience and intuition-based thinking are rapid, whereas rational thinking is slow (Epstein, 1991). The quick action based on knowledge represents the relationship between skill and instinct that phenomenon is known as expert intuition (Behling & Eckel, 1991). Similarly, Peters et al (2007) observed a phenomenon which is consistent with the concept of expert intuition. They reported that rational decision making degrades with the increase in age, but the intuition-based decision making improves with age. Hence, older employees are more likely to act fast in complex situations based on their intuition, making them high on individual action propensity. Consequently, the following hypothesis entails empirical validation:

**H1:** Age is positively associated with individual action propensity in dynamic and complex situations.

### **Gender**

The women have a higher proclivity towards movement than men, and are more likely to perform “action before thinking” instead of “thinking before action” in dynamic or complex situations. First, RMT states that locomotors always engage themselves in activities through multitasking, like performing many tasks at the same time (Kruglanski et al., 2000; Pierro et al., 2013). According to RMT, the locomotion induces a drive, which is followed by multitasking (Pierro et al., 2013). Similarly, many studies reported that women are frequently engaged in multitasking (Paton & Dempster, 2002; Bluedorn, 2002; Ruderman Ohlott, Panzer, & King, 2002). A study conducted by Offer and Schneider (2011) on dual-earner families, which shows that the mother spends more time in multitasking in a week at work as compared to fathers. Moreover, women have a higher tendency to do multitasking as compared to men when handling activities both at work and at home (Manrai & Manrai, 1995). Second, women’s inclination towards recognition-primed decision making and intuition further support the association between gender and action propensity. The women score higher on several measures of intuition, which includes “preference for intuition and deliberation” scale (Graham & Ickes, 1997). Therefore, the following hypothesis has been proposed for testing:

**H2:** Being a female is positively associated with individual action propensity in dynamic and complex situations.

### **Education**

Education refers to “academic skills and something which indicates a person’s knowledge, cognitive base, competence, and confidence” (Organisjana & Koke, 2012; Stasz, 2001). Researches show that higher level of education has a negative influence on individual action propensity because advance levels of education or formal education follow rational approaches instead of intuition, feelings and flexibility in problem-solving (Taggart & Robey, 1981; Evans, 2004; Burke & Sadler-Smith, 2006). It is cognitive-based which is developed through education and helps individuals to incorporate competence and confidence in the dynamic work environment. RMT indicates that assessment depends on extensive evaluation and comparisons, which helps assessors in becoming more precise by slower than high locomotors (Kruglanski et al., 2013). Research shows that more educated individuals have a great urge for formal cognitive thinking and have a positive outlook for rationality, therefore they will focus more on “thinking before acting” instead “acting before thinking” (Vera et al., 2014). Similarly, people who have an educational level less than or equal to high school, are high on impulsivity as compared to those who have an educational level more than high school (Wiehe, 1987). Moreover, education is an important factor in distinguishing high and low impulsive people (Stanford, Greve, Boudreux, Mathias, & Brumbelow, 1996). Hence, the subsequent hypothesis has been suggested for verification:

**H3:** The Higher level of education has a negative influence on individual action propensity in dynamic and complex situations.

### **Individual Action Propensity and Job Stress**

Stress can be conceptualized as a modified expression of any employee in an unfavorable work situation (Saini, Kaur, & Das, 2014), and can be defined as “a biological state, which arises as a result of the lack of experience and/or knowledge, especially where there is a lot of ambiguity and lack of control among the employees” (Gelsema et al., 2006). Job stress usually has an adverse impact on employees’ behaviors and a firm’s economic conditions (Heinen et al., 2013). The particular negative effects associated with job stress are manifested in the form of production, absenteeism, and may also result in employee’s health-related issues (Shen, Yen, Yang, & Lee, 2016). The consequences of such a situation can then bring a decrease in the performance that caused by the insufficient of knowledge, skills, experience and ability etc. (Cox, Griffiths, & Gonzalez, 2000). Normally a person feels stressed when he feels disequilibrium in dynamic work environment, which demand different degrees of hard work, new interpretations, smart and immediate reactions (Schneider, Wehler, & Weigl, 2019). Extremely stressed individuals do less effective work in their job duties (Di Pietro & Di Virgilio, 2014).

The causes of job stress which is experienced by employees can be outside or within the work environment like, when their knowledge, skills and need not fulfil the requirement of the job. This is particularly genuine when they have almost no influence over the current workload in conjunction with a lack of support for accomplishing their destinations (Isikhan, Comez, & Danis, 2004; Sarmad & Bashir, 2016). The opposite is valid for a stressful situation portrayed by an acknowledgement of inability to cope with the set requested demands with concern for failing (Basu, Qayyum, & Mason, 2017).

The concept of action propensity at the individual level in the setting of work circumstances where people have lacked information, know-how, or both are used. People feel lack of knowledge whenever they cannot have information about a job or work, state of education, courses, books, or perhaps physical activity, and so they lack experience when they have never legislated a specific job or work setting previous too. Throughout applying competing strategies, techniques, people within corporations face several unknowns at both the planned as well as strategic levels (Vera et al., 2014). Individual action propensity is a characteristic or approach of individuals, in which some individuals adopt thinking before acting strategy and some acting before thinking strategy in complex situations when these individuals have less knowledge, experience or both to handle the stressful situations (Jefferson et al., 2015; Magitbay et al., 2017).

To explain the individual action propensity continuum, regulatory mode theory (RMT) with its two dimensions of locomotion and assessment is used (Kruglanski, Orehhek, Higgins, Pierro, & Shalev, 2009; Higgins, Kruglanski, & Pierro, 2003). According to RMT, a high assessor (individual) would always first try to analyze and understand an uncertain situation and engage in numerous assessments before executing his/her plan of action. He/she mostly adopts “thinking before acting” strategy instead of “acting before thinking” strategy. Whereas, a high locomotor (individual) is more likely to adopt other way round and start working on his/her plan right away making spontaneous judgments. So, he/she prefers to adopt “acting before thinking” strategy instead of “thinking before acting” strategy (Santos Alves, Silva, & Brito Guirardello, 2017).

It means individuals who act without thinking about the situation, they feel greater stress as compared to those individuals, who adopt thinking before acting strategy, because probability of outcome may not better due to quick response without deeper insight. We can say that acting before thinking has a positive impact on job stress in dynamic work environment. On the other hand, we can say that thinking before acting has a negative impact on job stress, means those individuals who first think and analyze the situation, they feel no stress in dynamic work situations as compared to those individuals, who adopt acting before thinking strategy. As, the probability of the outcome is better, where thinking and deeper insight took place before action. Hence, in order to verify these assumptions following hypotheses have been proposed:

**H4:** Acting before Thinking has a positive impact on employee job stress in a dynamic work environment.

**H5:** Thinking before Acting has a negative impact on employee job stress in a dynamic work environment.

The following figure describes the relationship between different variables. The relationship of individual action propensity and demographic diversity characteristics at workplace

forms the hypothesis H1, H2, and H3 respectively. The relationship of individual action propensity and job stress forms the hypothesis H4, H5 respectively.

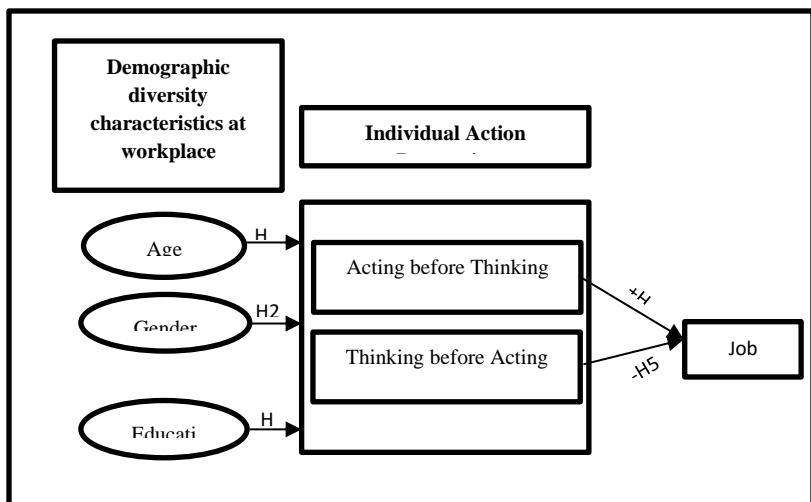


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

### Research Methodology

The purposive sampling technique has been chosen in order to collect a sample from the three tertiary care hospitals of Lahore, i.e., Jinnah Hospital, Mayo Hospital, and Services Hospital. Firstly, the author contacted the management to access the participants and assured that the information will be used for only research purpose. After getting the willingness, the aim of the study was explained and then survey was conducted and 400 questionnaires were distributed among doctors and nurses, 290 questionnaires were duly filled and returned making up 73% response rate. According to the rule of item ratio (10:1) (Randall & Gibson, 2013), the sample size would be 280 because the questionnaire contains 28 items. But in this study the sample size is 290, which is more than recommended sample size. This would lessen the sample error and study generalizable issues (Bryman, 2016). The study is quantitative and cross sectional.

In order to cater for dynamic and complex situations, the whole research is conducted in the emergency area of hospitals. In an emergency, the work pressure is very high, staff need to take quick actions for upcoming trauma patients and they have very less time to think (Schneider et al., 2019; Ratnapanal et al., 2019). This study explored how medical staff exhibit individual action propensity in ambiguous or uncertain situations. Furthermore, assess whether they act before thinking or take their time to think before taking action.

### Measures

#### *Individual action propensity*

Individual action propensity is the independent variable of this study and was measured with two dimensions "act before thinking" and "thinking before act."

#### *Acting before thinking*

This construct was measured with three items developed by Vera et al (2014), scale ranging from 1 = rarely to 5 = several times daily. The sample items of acting before thinking is "How frequently do you solve tasks where you had insufficient knowledge by immediately starting to solve the task and discover a solution through trial and error?"

#### *Thinking before acting*

This construct was measured with three items developed by Vera et al (2014), scale ranging from 1 = rarely to 5 = several times daily. The sample item of thinking before acting is "How frequently do you solve tasks where you had insufficient knowledge by sitting down and thinking really hard before your start?"

#### *Job Stress*

The dependent variable job stress was measured with 22 items questions developed by Alves, Chor, Faerstein, Lopes and Werneck, (2004). The questions related to job stress with the

options ranging from 1 "often" to 5 "almost never" were asked from the respondents. The sample items of this scale are "Do you have to work very fast?" and "Does your work often involve conflicting demands.

### Data Analysis and Results

In table 1, the information about descriptive statistics showed that 68 per cent of the total sample consisted of female respondents. The majority of the respondent fall between the age bracket of 18 and 25 (55%) and followed by 26 and 33 (36%) of age. The majority of the qualification showed that 35% have a nursing diploma and 30% have M.B.B.S degree.

The acting before thinking has a positive significant correlation with job stress ( $p<0.01$ ). The thinking before acting has a negative significant correlation with job stress ( $p<0.01$ ) (see table 2).

The means and standard deviations were calculated for assessing sample characteristics. As in table 2, the acting before thinking (Mean=3.5598, SD=.95842), which is highest among other variables of the study. The thinking before acting (Mean=3.4046, SD=.78889), and job stress (Mean=2.3212, SD=.38551).

*Table 1. Respondents Characteristics (n=290)*

Description	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	81	27.9
Female	209	72.1
Age (years)		
18-25	160	55.2
26-33	105	36.2
34-41	23	7.9
41-48	02	0.7
Qualification		
F.sc (Nursing diploma)	98	33.8
B.sc (Nursing diploma)	102	35.2
M.B.B. S	90	31.0
Profession		
Nurses	200	69.0
Doctors	90	31.0
Job Experience		
1-5 Years	266	91.7
6-10 Years	20	6.9
11-15 Years	04	1.4
Total	290	100.0

*Table 2. Descriptive Statistic and Correlation Matrix*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	1	2	3
1. Acting Before Thinking	3.5598	.95842	1		
2. Thinking before Acting	3.4046	.78889	.127*	1	
3. Job Stress	2.3212	.38551	.160**	-.202**	1

### Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

The CFA is done in order to assess the convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs. For that purpose, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is employed to develop the measurement model.

## Measurement model

The measurement model is assessed by certain fit indices: normed chi-square index ( $\chi^2/\text{df}$ ), non-normed fit index (NNFI), confirmatory fit index (CFI) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The measurement model considered good fit when  $\chi^2/\text{df} < 0.30$ , NNFI and CFI  $\geq 0.90$ , and RMSEA  $< 0.08$  (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hu & Bentler, 1999). Table 3 showed good fit model values as it met the set suggested criteria.

**Table 3. Fit Indices of Measurement Model**

$\chi^2$	Df	$\chi^2/\text{df}$	NNFI	CFI	RMSEA
241.144	165	1.461	0.900	0.906	0.040

## Reliability analysis

The value of Cronbach's Alpha greater than 0.7 consider as good reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The results in table 4 show that the Cronbach's Alpha value of individual action propensity (acting before thinking and thinking before acting) and job stress is also greater than 0.70. Hence, all study variables have good reliability.

## Convergent validity

The convergent validity is satisfied as shown in table 4. Because, the values of AVE are greater than 0.5 and CR (composite reliability) are also greater than 0.70 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

**Table 4. Fit Indices of Measurement Model**

Variables	CR	AVE
Acting Before Thinking	0.78	0.521
Thinking before Acting	0.79	0.542
Job Stress	0.80	0.514

## Discriminant validity

The discriminant validity is also satisfied because the values of the square root of AVE (in diagonal) are greater than the squared correlation of each pair (Zait & Bernea, 2011) (see table 5).

**Table 5. Fornell-Larcker Criterion**

	Constructs	1	2	3
1	Acting before thinking	<b>0.72</b>		
2	Thinking before acting	.262	<b>0.74</b>	
3	Job stress	.153**	-.166**	<b>0.72</b>

\*\* $p<0.01$  and \* $p<0.05$

## Structural Model

### Testing of antecedents of individual action propensity.

In order to test the influence of individual characteristics on individual action propensity, the main variable of individual action propensity is developed by incorporating acting before thinking and thinking before acting into one variable. A structural model is developed as shown in figure 4.2, which represents the relationship between antecedents and individual action propensity. This model has good fit as  $\chi^2/\text{df} < 0.30$ , NNFI and CFI  $\geq 0.90$ , and RMSEA  $< 0.08$  (see table 6).

**Table 6. Fit Indices of Antecedent Model**

$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/\text{df}$	NNFI	CFI	RMSEA
60.33	27	2.23	0.900	0.901	0.054

The results related to the antecedent model is given in table 7. Hypothesis 1 posits that age can be positively associated with individual action propensity in situations where people lack knowledge and experience and it is not supported with  $t < 2$  and  $p > 0.05$ . Hypothesis 2 posits that being a female is positively associated with individual action propensity in a situation where people lack knowledge and experience and it is supported with  $t > 2$  and  $p < 0.05$ . Hypothesis 3 posits that

education has a negative influence on individual action propensity in dynamic or complex situations and it is supported with  $t > 2$  and  $p < 0.05$ .

**Table 7. Results of Antecedent Model**

Hypotheses	Hypothesized Paths	Standard Weight ( $\beta$ )	Regression	t-value	Result
H1	Age → Individual Action Propensity	0.046		0.587	Not Supported
H2	Gender → Individual Action Propensity	0.457**		7.152	Supported
H3	Education → Individual Action Propensity	0.523*		6.512	Supported

\*\* $p < 0.01$  and \* $p < 0.05$

#### **Testing of impact of individual action propensity on job stress**

The structural model is evaluated for testing the impact of individual action propensity (acting before thinking and thinking before acting) on job stress. The model is good fitted as  $\chi^2/df < 0.30$ , NNFI and CFI  $\geq 0.90$ , and RMSEA  $< 0.08$ .

**Table 8. Fit Indices of Structural Model**

$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	NNFI	CFI	RMSEA
241.144	165	1.461	0.900	0.906	0.040

H4 is supported as shown in table 9 with  $t > 2$  and  $p < 0.05$ . The acting before thinking has a positive significant impact on job stress. Furthermore, H5 is also supported with  $t > 2$  and  $p < 0.05$ . The thinking before acting has a negative significant impact on job stress.

**Table 9. Results of Structural Model**

Hypotheses	Hypothesized Paths	( $\beta$ )	t-value	Result
H4	Acting before thinking → Job stress	0.143*	2.728	Supported
H5	Thinking before acting → Job stress	-0.166*	-2.488	Supported

\* $p < 0.05$

#### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The first purpose of the study was to analyze the effect of 'individual action propensity' (acting before thinking' and 'thinking before acting) on employee job stress. The second purpose of the study was to observe the repercussions of 'individual action propensity' as the key demographic diversity characteristics age, gender and education in a dynamic work environment. The dynamic work environment is a situation, where employee feel a lack of knowledge, experience or both.

Consistent with the former studies, finding show the positive impact of female on individual action propensity (Pierro et al., 2013; Ruderman et al., 2002; Zafar, Hashim, Halim, & Attique, 2020), because, mothers keeping a balance between their homes and jobs tend to do more multitasking as compared to the fathers (Offer & Schneider, 2011). Furthermore, individual action propensity has negative impact on education (Evans, 2004; Burke & Sadler-Smith, 2006). Because, an individual with higher level of education will be more logical, intelligent and sensible and thus will have a higher level of assessment (Stasz, 2001). Nevertheless, the results indicated that age doesn't have a positive association with the individual action propensity, hence hypothesis 1 is not supported. However, hypothesis 2 and 3 results are significant and are unswerving with the

prior studies (Vera et al., 2014). We hypothesized that aged people have broader experience, which enables them to take action in situations for which they lack knowledge and/or experience (Baltes, Freund, & Horgas, 1999). These findings may be a result of competing claims of fluid and crystallized intelligence. The difference between fluid and crystallized intelligence are given by (Baltes et al., 1999). According to Baltes et al (1999), crystallized intelligence which related to learned knowledge and experience increases with age. In contrary, fluid intelligence decreases with age like speed and working memory. These two bits of intelligence may be acting in opposite directions, so in this case, age has no positive impact on individual action propensity. The results are in line with the regulatory mode theory (Kruglanski et al., 2013), the individual action propensity has an association with the key demographic characteristics (Vera et al., 2014) and an impact on job stress (Isikhan et al., 2004).

Hypothesis 4 is supported as the acting before thinking has a positive significant impact on job stress. Furthermore, H5 is also supported as the thinking before acting has a negative significant impact on job stress. The results of H4 and H5 are consistent with the study of Belanger et al (2015). A study conducted by Basu et al (2017), reviewed a number of factors, which causes job stress i.e. lack of role clarity, long working hours, high work intensity, time pressure, patient demands and work interruptions. As different organizations in the world are trying to revisiting their systems for alleviating the stress of their employees (Guo et al., 2019; Abbasi & Janjua, 2016). So, this study also try to discuss and explore empirically this globally issue. Pertinently, the aforementioned construct has been developed in the west and for the first time, it is being examined in the context of Pakistan. Likewise, it is to be noted that its impact on job stress has also not been studied before.

Generally, employees are demographically diverse at the workplace on the bases of gender, age, education level and social background etc. Furthermore, employees face different circumstances in which they lack the knowledge and/or experience in a dynamic and complex work environment. It is important that they know how to handle these situations and what actions to take in order to deal with these situations because individual actions establish the foundations for organizational actions. Thus, the study will provide useful information to the organizations for understanding that particular situation in which employees may lack knowledge/experience or both in a dynamic and complex work environment. Today, globalization, technology and diversification of business have increased the competition manifold, in order to stay competitive, the employees need to upgrade their skills regularly. As, it has been noted from the results of the subject study that individual action propensity is associated with gender and education. Further, its two dimensions acting before thinking associated positively with job stress and thinking before acting associated negatively with job stress. The awareness generated by the subject study could help the individuals and organizations both in effectively managing the challenging, dynamic, complex and stressful situations at work.

### ***Practical and Theoretical Implications***

This research study will provide useful information to the organizations that might help them in understanding how employees act in an uncertain situation specially if they also lack knowledge and experience or both regarding the problem at hand; what employees do when they have a trade-off at hand between deciding quickly or deciding accurately only after duly assessing the situation. How do employees react after making a decision under this trade-off and how much stress do, they undergo after facing such situations? In current era, where competition is high among organizations and their employees faces a lot of situations where they lack knowledge, experience or both be abundant, so the important implication for practice of construct 'individual action propensity' is that, it enables managers to better understand the individual preferences, whether they take action or not. If organization demands quick action or where uncertain situations makes assessment less valuable and their employees are not fit to this environment, means they have not traits which are required by organization, then employees will feel stress, which lead to turnover intention, decreasing performance and job satisfaction. Knowing antecedents can help organizations increase the action propensity of their employees, where it is highly desirable. So, manager can shape employees' behavior through training, staffing strategies, job design. Manager can also shape their employees' behavior through organizational culture. Organizations which demand employees' spontaneity behavior and discourages helping behavior will promote 'acting before thinking' strategy in their culture. On the other hand, if organizations are conservative and demand helping behavior and discourages spontaneous behavior, it will promote 'thinking before acting' strategy in their culture. So, in current study organization should

promote 'thinking before acting' strategy, because employees face and deal the highly trauma patient. Furthermore, it will also enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the employees working in a dynamic environment.

Furthermore, this study enhances the applicability of regulatory mode theory (Kruglanski et al., 2013) with its two dimensions of locomotion and assessment. As this study used individual action propensity construct with its two dimensions "acting before thinking" and "thinking before acting". According to this theory, individuals with high assessment orientation would always first try to analyze and understand an uncertain situation before executing their plan of action. Whereas, those with high locomotor orientation are more prospective to make spontaneous judgments (Santos Alves, Silva, & Brito Guirardello, 2017). However, the predictability of the outcome is better, where thinking and planning took place before any action as compared to the quick response before a deeper insight into the situation (Kruglanski et al., 2013). By following this theory assumptions, our study also confirm that thinking before acting associate negative with job stress, as high assessor first analyze the situation then take the action and feel less stress. On the other hand, acting before thinking associate positive with job stress, as high locomoter just take action without any prior understanding of the situation and feel more stress.

#### **Limitations and Future Directions**

The current study has various theoretical and practical implications, yet it is not free from limitations. The sample was limited to public hospitals situated in the city of Lahore, Pakistan region. So, the results cannot be generalized to other cities of the country and organizations. It is therefore suggested that the future studies could be conducted by taking a sample from other public/private hospitals of other cities, for generalization. Furthermore, in our research we used cross sectional research design. So, future research should be conducted in the same area by using experimental/longitudinal research designs for further understanding of the concept.

In the subject research, the only effect of three demographic diversity characteristics was studied on individual action propensity, hence, for generalization, it is proposed that more diversity characteristics be included in the future studies and data be collected from different geographical/cultural settings. Moreover, the mediating/moderating effects of individual action propensity between the relationship of different demographic diversity characteristics and the stressful situations at jobs could generate interesting insights regarding. Finally, in this study non-probability research design was used, future studies can be explored on the basis of probability research design techniques.

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