

ORGANIZATIONAL ROLE STRESS AND JOB SATISFACTION IN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR INDUSTRY*

Rajinder Kaur, Ashiq Ali Shah, & Anis-ul-Haque

National Institute of Psychology

Centre of Excellence

Quaid-i-Azam University

Islamabad, Pakistan

The present study was conducted with a view to investigate the nature of role stress in the public and private sector industries. The study was conducted on a sample of 120 middle level managers, 60 from the public sector (Telephone Industry of Pakistan, Haripur); and 60 from the Private Sector (Kohinoor Textiles Mills, Rawalpindi, 30; and Sarhad Colony Textile Mills, Nosherah, 30). Results were non-significant except on the dimension of Inter Role Distance which was higher in the private sector. The correlational analysis revealed that there was not significant relationship between job satisfaction and the various sources of stress in the public sector. In the case of private sector, a significant relationship was obtained of job satisfaction with Role Stagnation, Role Expectation Conflict, Role Isolation, Personal Inadequacy, and overall stress. The step-wise regression showed a significant contribution by Role Erosion on job satisfaction for the total sample. A curvilinear relationship was also revealed between age and stress where the degree of stress is higher among the young and the old as compared to the middle aged group.

The problem of occupational stress has been of great concern to many industrial/organizational psychologists. During the last decade and a half, managements in several organizations have been deeply concerned over the negative effects of job stress on job performance and the physical well-being of their employees.

Stress, in general terms, refers to the pressures people feel in life. It is a condition of strain on one's emotions, thought processes, and physical condition. Stress is not necessarily bad in itself upto a moderate level as it enhances the motivation and performance of the individual; however, if stress is excessive, and prolong over a long

* Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Rajinder Kaur, A-5, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar-143005, India. She was a SAARC Fellow at National Institute of Psychology w.e.f 9.3.93 to 8.3.94 during which she completed this article.

period of time it can threaten one's ability to cope with the environment. As a result of continuous pressures at the workplace, the employees can develop various symptoms of stress that can adversely affect their performance. Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoeck, and Rosenthal (1964) described work stress as an individual's reaction to the characteristics of work environment which appear threatening and can not be handled effectively by the individual.

There are certain macro-level dimensions which are unique in the organization, which contain the potential stressors. These macro-level stressors can be categorized as organizational policies (arbitrary performance reviews, pay inequities, ambiguous procedures, unrealistic job descriptions), structures (too much of centralization, little opportunity for advancement, high degree of specialization, line-staff conflicts), physical conditions (crowding, lack of privacy, safety hazards), and processes (poor communication, ambiguous/conflicting goals, unfair control systems, inadequate information). As organizations become large and more complex, there are more and more accompanying stressors for the employees.

Managers are the backbone of any organization as they form the link between the management and the employees. Managers are generally vulnerable to various kinds of stressors within the organization. These stressors can be due to the new social challenges, higher responsibilities, or inadequacies in the organizational structure and policies. Job stressors, such as, role conflict, work load, role ambiguity, role inadequacy, role stagnation, managing time on job, and balancing personal life with work life strongly influence one's attitude toward his job, his degree of satisfaction with the job, and ultimately his performance on the job.

Considerable amount of research has been conducted on the level of role stress and issues pertaining to role stress among public and private professionals. Jasmine (1987) found that incumbents of public sector organizations experience significantly more stress than those of private sector organizations and speculates a number of causes for it. First of all, it is assumed that the management in the public sector does not give freedom to optimise its own performance in the pursuit of a single objective, whereas, in private organizations the management uses convergent means to achieve a single purpose. Secondly, the public sector is plagued by frequent changes in policies, whereas, centralization of control and decision making are characteristic of the

private sector. Third, the role incumbents of the public organization are more educated than private sector professionals, and therefore, their expectations from work and organization may have been higher and difficult to fulfil. Pestonjee (1987), and Singh (1987) further argue that lack of firm, clear, and formal code of job expectations, conflicting and frequently changing policies, numerous and more ambiguous objectives, which characterize public enterprises lead to higher stress. On the contrary, private organizations have clear, firm, and formal code of job expectations and employees have the freedom to optimize their own performance in the pursuit of a single or stable objective. It helps them to clearly plan, coordinate, motivate, and control others toward desired goals resulting in lower stress. However, Singh (1987) found role erosion and role isolation as dominant contributors of role stress in both public and private organizations, with role ambiguity and role expectation conflict as remote contributors of role stress. Interestingly, he also found that managers of private organizations were high on job satisfaction inspite of their high scores on overall role stress as compared to their counterparts in public organizations. Singh (1987) also reveals that perception of achievement, expert influence, and extension climate are negatively associated with role stress, and positively associated with job satisfaction. On the other hand, perception of control, affiliation, and dependency climates are positively associated with role stress, and negatively associated with job satisfaction.

Keeping in view the nature of the above findings, the present investigation was undertaken with the following objectives in view: (i) To study the nature of role stress in the public and private organizations; (ii) to find out the relationship between the various dimensions of role stress and job satisfaction among managers in the public and private organizations; and (iii) to study the relationship between age, education, and role stress in the two types of organizations.

METHOD

Sample

The study was conducted on a sample of 120 middle level executives, in order to make a comparison between the private and the public sector industries. 60 executives were selected from Telephone

Industry of Pakistan, Haripur (public sector); and 30 from Kohinoor Textile Mills, Rawalpindi, and 30 from Sarhad Colony Textile Mills, Noshera (private sector). The age of the total sample ranged from 22 to 71 years with a mean age of 44.8 years, 9.9 per cent of the managers were superannuated and belonged to the private sector. As far as education is concerned 53.3 per cent of the managers were graduate and above, and 46.3 per cent were intermediate and below. The managers in the public sector were more educated than in the private organizations.

Instruments

Organizational Role Stress (ORS) Scale

In order to measure the relative strength of various stressors among managers in the public and private sector industries, the ORS scale developed by Pareek (1983) was used. This scale gives an index of individual's perceived role stress on the following ten dimensions:

- i) **Inter Role Distance (IRD):** A person usually performs more than one role in different capacities. At times there can be a conflict between various roles which is indicated in his score, for example, a manager may face conflict between demands of his organizational roles and the family roles.
- ii) **Role Stagnation (RS):** When a person feels that he has reached a dead end in his career and he can not grow further in his role, he experiences role stagnation.
- iii) **Role Expectation Conflict (REC):** When the person perceives that other people's expectations of him are mutually incompatible, he experiences role expectation conflict. For example, if a manager feels that the expectations of his valued customers for significant concessions from the bank clash with the branch profitability expectations of the regional manager, the branch manager experiences REC.
- iv) **Role Erosion (RE):** When a role occupant feels that some functions which he performed in the past are now being performed by others, he experiences role erosion, a feeling that there is not much challenge in the functions given to the role.

- v) **Role Overload (RO):** When a role occupant feels that there are too many expectations from others with which he is unable to cope, he experiences role overload or a feeling of excessive strain.
- vi) **Role Isolation (RI):** When a person feels that rather than being integrated with other organizational roles, his role is isolated from the main stream of organizational life, he experiences role isolation.
- vii) **Personal Inadequacy (PI):** A sense of personal inadequacy can be a major stressor for people who feel that they lack adequate skills and knowledge to handle their jobs.
- viii) **Self Role Distance (SRD):** If a person occupies a role which he may find conflicting with his self concept and personal values, he experiences stress in terms of self role distance.
- ix) **Role Ambiguity (RA):** When a person is not clear about the various expectations that others have of his role, he experiences role ambiguity.
- x) **Resource Inadequacy (RIN):** When a role occupant feels that he lacks adequate resources to perform his role effectively, he experiences resource inadequacy, for example, a dynamic manager could feel constrained in his role due to a severe shortage of manpower or modern technological resources.

The summation of individual perceptions by managers about the strength of each dimension can provide a useful insight into the major and minor stresses experienced by managers. The scale has a high construct validity and test-retest reliability. Earlier, it has been successfully used in India (e.g., Bhatnager & Bose; 1985; Khanna, 1985; Pestonjee, 1987). This scale consists of 50 items, 5 items measuring each dimension on a 5-point scale.

Job Feeling Scale

The Job Feeling Scale was developed by Wysocki and Kromm (1986). It measures the attitude of the individual towards various facets of the job such as nature of work, supervision, colleagues or co-workers, pay, and promotion on a semantic differential scale. The scale gives a valid estimate of the individual's level of job satisfaction, as the scores on each dimension have a high positive correlation with the total score.

Procedure

The scales were administered individually to all the respondents. In addition, the information on demographic variables such as age, education, and experience were also taken.

RESULTS

The *t*-test was computed on all the dimensions of role stress for the public and the private sector industries.

Table 1
Comparison of means for the ten dimensions of stress in public and private industries

Sources of Stress	Public (<i>n</i> = 60)		Private (<i>n</i> = 60)		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Inter Role Distance	4.70	3.34	7.78	4.83	4.07*
Role Stagnation	4.13	2.90	4.82	3.50	1.16
Role Expectation Conflict	4.93	3.31	5.25	4.07	0.76
Role Erosion	7.95	3.50	7.40	3.71	0.84
Role Overload	4.88	3.72	6.03	4.13	1.60
Role Isolation	5.50	3.50	6.12	3.81	0.91
Personal Inadequacy	6.23	3.78	5.97	4.08	0.37
Self Role Distance	4.78	3.41	4.50	2.84	0.49
Role Ambiguity	2.95	3.19	3.40	3.28	0.76
Resource Inadequacy	6.10	3.79	6.08	3.89	0.02
Overall Org. Role Stress	5.20	2.30	5.74	2.61	1.20

d.f = 118, **p* < .01

Results in Table 1 show non-significant differences between managers in the public and private sector industries on various sources of stress except for Inter Role Distance. This means that the managers in the private industry are unable to combine the demands of their organizational life with those of their family lives. The several roles which they perform as a manager within the organization leave little time for their other important roles in the personal life.

In spite of the non-significant differences on various indices of role stress among managers in the two types of organizations, on comparing the means, it is interesting to note that Role Erosion, Personal

Inadequacy, and Resource Inadequacy are dominant, whereas, Role Overload, Role Stagnation, Self Role Distance, and Role Ambiguity are remote sources of stress in the public sector. On the other hand, in case of the private sector, Inter Role Distance, Role Erosion, Role Isolation, Resource Inadequacy, and Role Overload are dominant, and Role Stagnation, Self Role Distance, and Role Ambiguity are remote sources of stress. This is indicative of the fact that work pressure is definitely higher in case of the private organizations.

Table 2 shows that the correlation between overall job satisfaction score on the Job Feeling Scale and the various sources of stress in the public sector have not significant relationship.

Table 2

Correlations coefficients between job satisfaction and sources of stress in public and privates sector industries

Sources of Stress	Job Satisfaction	
	Public (n=60)	Private (n=60)
	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>
Inter Role Distance	-.26	.25
Role Stagnation	-.12	.32*
Role Expectation Conflict	-.10	.31*
Role Erosion	.14	.42**
Role Overload	-.16	.20
Role Isolation	-.11	.32*
Personal Inadequacy	-.13	.34*
Self Role Distance	-.14	.29
Role Ambiguity	-.23	.26
Resource Inadequacy	-.15	.01
Overall Org. Role Stress	-.19	.40**

p < .01, ***p* < .001

This shows that in public sector job satisfaction is not related to different aspects of role stress but may be to some other factors, such as, job security and monetary benefits which the managers may be enjoying. On the other hand, the correlations between overall job satisfaction and the various sources of stress in private sector show that the job satisfaction has significant positive relationship with overall

organizational role stress, and five sources of stress, these are Role Erosion, Role Stagnation, Role Expectation Conflict, Role Isolation, and Personal Inadequacy. It may be noted that Role Stagnation, Role Expectation Conflict, and Personal Inadequacy are not major stressors in private sector industry and these significant positive correlations suggest that these stressors do not adversely affect the degree of satisfaction among managers.

In the step-wise regression of the total sample, the regression of various stressors on job satisfaction indicate a significant contribution by Role Erosion ($B=.27, p < .003, R^2=.07$), although it contributes only a small amount of variance, however, this shows that Role Erosion significantly affects the degree of job satisfaction among managers.

The effects of age and education were also examined on various dimensions of stress. Education does not seem to have any effect on stress, however, in case of age it was found that the degree of overall stress is higher among the young and the old than the middle aged managers. May be, the young managers are overburdened with the challenges of the new jobs or anxiety about their future growth and development. High stress among the old could be due to their anxiety over losing their jobs.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study provides valuable informations about the nature of stressors within the public and private sector industries. The overall degree of stress is moderate in both the organizations. Clear cut differences have not been obtained between the two types of organizations on the various indices of role stress. However, on the basis of the results it may be concluded that Inter Role Distance, Role Erosion, Role Isolation, Role Overload, and Resource Inadequacy being the dominant sources of stress in the private industry, can develop distress among the managers as a result of continuous work pressure, lack of authority, responsibility and challenge at job, and insufficient resources. On the other hand, in the public sector industry, Role Erosion, Personal Inadequacy and Resource Inadequacy being the major sources of stress, reveal the necessity for democratization of decision making, adequate supply of resources and proper training facilities to increase the potential abilities of managers. Role Erosion which is a dominant source of stress in both the organizations indicates

that managers perceive their jobs as unchallenging and can not function effectively as a result of insufficient authority and responsibility. Democratization of decision making would increase the involvement and commitment of managers and make them more effective. Interestingly, it may be noted that job satisfaction is not influenced by the various sources of stress, rather in the private industry moderate stress is positively associated with job satisfaction. Singh (1987) also found managers of private organizations high on job satisfaction, inspite of their high scores on overall role stress as compared to their counterparts in the public organization.

The present study merely provides some basic information about the perception of role stress by managers in the public and private industries. Further investigations may be conducted on large samples, with organizational climate as a moderator variable to find out the factors influencing job satisfaction and the effect of stress on performance.

REFERENCES

- Bhatnager, D., & Bose, B. (1985). Organizational role stress and branch managers. *Journal of Social and Management Sciences*, 14, 349-357.
- Jasmine, R. (1987). *A comparative study of private and public sector blue-collar employees on job related stress*. Unpublished M.Phil. dissertation, Calicut University, Calicut.
- Kahn, R. L., Wolfe, D. M., Quinn, R. R., Snoeck, J. D., & Rosenthal, R. A. (1964). *Organizational stress: Studies in role conflict and ambiguity*. New York: Wiley.
- Khanna, B. B. (1985). *Relationship between organizational climate and organizational role stress and their impact upon organizational effectiveness: A case study*. Doctoral Dissertation, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.
- Pareek, U. (1983). *Role Stress Scale*. Ahmedabad: Naveen Publications.
- Pestonjee, D. M. (1987). *A study of role stress in relation to Type-A and anger*. Working Paper No. 670. Indian Institute of Management: Ahmedabad.

- Singh, G. P. (1987). *Organizational climate as a moderator of role stress-job satisfaction relationship in case of different job categories of computer professionals*. Doctoral dissertation, Gujrat University, Ahmedabad.
- Wysocki, J., & Kromm, G. M. (1986). The Job Feeling Scale. In J. L. Price, & C. W. Mueller (Eds.), *Handbook of organizational measurement*. Marshfield, MA: Pitman Publishing.

Received: February 9, 1994.