



A STUDY OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG PROFESSIONALS

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ABSTRACT "Feeling stressed," is the refrain people often hear from professionals. The study attempts to find out the level of occupational stress among people in different professions. The study adopted quantitative method. A survey of professionals from all across Ahmedabad city was conducted over a period of one month, using Occupational Stress Index. The inventory has 12 sub-scales (occupational stressors). The samples (150) were drawn from five professions: Anganwadi Worker, Traffic Police, Bank Clerk, Primary School Teacher and Nurse. Their work experience ranged from two years to ten. Result shows that the level of occupational stress was high on all sub-scales for Anganwadi Workers and Primary School Teachers. The level of stress for Traffic Police, Bank Clerk and Nurse, too, was mostly high. On some sub-scales they reported low or moderate stress level. Of the five occupations, the two that involves teaching, especially young ones, showed high level of occupational stress.

KEYWORDS : Occupational stress, Anganwadi worker, Traffic police, Bank clerk, Primary school teacher, Nurse

"Feeling stressed," is the refrain people often hear from professionals. So much so that it has become a given. Thanks to the changing lifestyle and technological disruptions, these days even government employees who have more or less secured tenure say the same about their level of stress.

Occupational stress describes the physical, mental, and emotional reactions of workers who perceive that their work demands exceed their abilities and/or their resources (e.g. time, access to help/support) to do the work (Nelson and Burke, 2002).

The definition cited above makes it clear that work place as also imbalance between the demands of the work environment and the needs, abilities or resources of an individual working there can give rise to stress. Occasionally, working individuals may experience and report some level of occupational stress. While many a time, stress is seen as undesirable, sometimes stress could play the role of motivator for the workers. Eustress, as the latter is called, could motivate workers to learn new skills and perform more efficiently. However, if a significant level of occupational stress persists for a longer duration, it could take a physical and psychological toll on the worker(s).

Individual traits and work environment both interact to produce stress. Efforts have been made to explore the origin of occupational stress (Addley, 1997; Hancock and Desmond, 2001; Jex, 1998; Levenstein and Wooding, 1997).

A team of researchers from B.M. Institute of Mental Health, Ahmedabad, led by this author, set out to study the occupational stress level of people in five different occupations, namely Anganwadi Worker, Traffic Police, Bank Clerk, Primary School Teacher and Nurse. While each profession and professional may report some level of stress, the reason for selecting these five occupations was that while being distinct from each other, these occupations are often seen as high stress jobs. Working in these areas require different skill sets, but each of these occupations demand long hours, patience and often working under time constraint.

OBJECTIVE:

The objective of the study was to find out the level of occupational stress among people in different professions.

VARIABLES AND HYPOTHESIS:

The study was exploratory in nature. It did not have any dependent or independent variables; nor was there any hypothesis. Hence, no statistical tool for testing any hypothesis was used.

METHODOLOGY:

The study adopted quantitative method. A survey of professionals from all across Ahmedabad city was conducted over a period of one month, using Occupational Stress Index (OSI) by Prof. A.K. Srivastava and Prof. A.P. Singh. The inventory has 12 sub-scales (occupational stressors). The respondents were drawn from five professions: Anganwadi Worker, Traffic Police, Bank Clerk, Primary School Teacher and Nurse.

With 30 respondents in each occupation, the total sample size was 150. These professionals had work experience ranging from two years to ten years. They were all drawn from different areas of and organisations in the city of Ahmedabad.

Table 1: Occupation and sample size

S.No.	Occupation	Sample size
1	Anganwadiworker	30
2	TrafficPolice	30
3	BankClerk	30
4	PrimarySchoolTeacher	30
5	Nurse	30
	Total	150

About The Test:

Occupational Stress Index (OSI) by Prof. A.K. Srivastava and Prof. A.P. Singh. The inventory has 12 sub-scales (occupational stressors). The Occupational Stress Index purports to measure the extent of stress which employees perceive arising from various constituent and conditions of their job. However, stress researchers have developed scales which measure the stress arising exclusively from job roles (Rizzo, et al 1970; Pareek 1981). The scale consists of 46 items, each to be rated on the five point scale. Out of 46 items, 28 are 'true-keyed' and rest 18 are 'false-keyed'. The items related to almost all relevant components of job life which cause stress in some way or the other.

The following Table gives an account of the items constituting various subscales of the O.S.I.

Table 2: Sub-scales

No.	Sub-scales (Occupational stressors)
I	Role overload
II	Role ambiguity
III	Role conflict
IV	Unreasonable group and political pressures
V	Responsibilities for persons
VI	Under-participation
VII	Powerlessness
VIII	Poor peer relations
IX	Intrinsic impoverishment
X	Low status
XI	Strenuous working conditions
XII	Unprofitability

Norms

Norms have been prepared for the scores on Occupational Stress. Index as a whole as for its twelve sub-scales separately operating in various production and non-production organizations. The distribution of scores on the O.S.I. was found to be slightly skewed in negative direction. To prepare the norms three methods were adopted i.e., normal distribution, percentile point and division of upper and lower halves.

Reliability

The reliability index ascertained by split-half (odd-even) method and Cronbach's alpha-coefficient for the scale as a whole were found to be .935 and .900, respectively. The reliability indices of the 12 sub-scales were also computed through split half method. The following Table records the obtained indices of reliability.

Table 3: Reliability Index of Sub-scales

No.	Sub Scales (Occupational stressors)	Reliability Index
I	Role over load	.658
II	Role ambiguity	.554
III	Role conflict	.696
IV	Unreasonable group and political pressures	.454
V	Responsibilities for persons	.840
VI	Under-participation	.630
VII	Power lessness	.809
VIII	Poor peer relations	.549
IX	Intrinsic impoverishment	.556
X	Low status	.789
XI	Strenuous working conditions	.733
XII	Unprofitability	.767

Validity

The validity of the O.S.I. was determined by computing coefficients of correlation between the scores on O.S.I. and various measures of job attitudes and job behaviour. The employees' scores on the O.S.I. is likely to positively correlate with the scores on the measures of such role related attitudinal, motivational and personality variables which have proved lowering or moderating the level of occupational stress. The coefficients of correlation between the scores on O.S.I. and the measures of Job Involvement (Lodhal & Kejner, 1965), Work motivation (Srivastava, 1980), Ego-strength (Hasan, 1970), and Job satisfaction (Pestonjee, 1980), were found to be -.56 (N=225), -.44(N=200), -.40(N=205 and -.51(N=500), respectively.

Scoring

Since the questionnaire consists of both true-keyed and false-keyed items two different patterns of scoring have to be adopted for two types of items. The following table provides guidelines to score the responses given to two categories of items:

Table 4: Scoring key

Categories of response	Scores	
	True-keyed Items	False keyed Items
Never/Strongly disagree	1	5
Seldom/Disagree	2	4
Sometimes/Undecided	3	3
Mostly/Agree	4	2
Always/Strongly agree	5	1

Procedure

Keeping in mind the objective of the present study, the samples were selected with the help of Purposive Sampling Method. For this purpose, different professionals were contacted and after taking due permission from them, the questionnaire was administered. After collecting the data, scoring was done as per the norms. Thereafter, the mean and the median were calculated for each profession and the scores were interpreted.

RESULTS

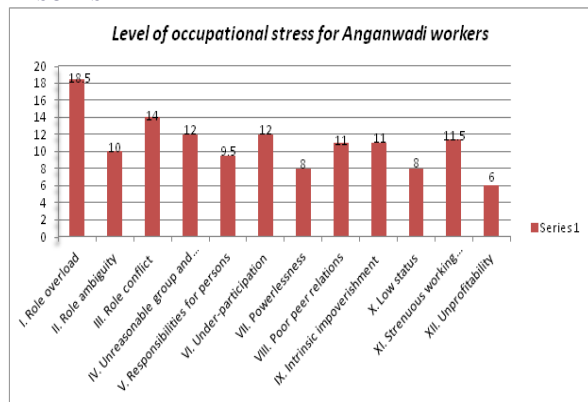


Table 5: The interpretation of median scores obtained on the questionnaire: Level of occupational stress for Anganwadi workers

	Sub-scales		Score obtained	Interpretation
	High (Above median)	Low (Below median)		
I. Role overload	6-19	20-30	18.5	High
II. Role ambiguity	4-12	13-20	10	High
III. Role conflict	5-15	16-25	14	High
IV. Unreasonable group and political pressures	4-12	13-20	12	High
V. Responsibilities for persons	3-10	11-15	9.5	High
VI. Under-participation	4-12	13-20	12	High
VII. Powerlessness	3-9	10-15	8	High
VIII. Poor peer relations	4-11	12-20	11	High
IX. Intrinsic impoverishment	4-11	12-20	11	High
X. Low status	3-9	10-15	8	High
XI. Strenuous working conditions	4-12	13-20	11.5	High
XII. Unprofitability	2-6	7-10	6	High

Table 6: The interpretation of median scores obtained on the questionnaire: Level of occupational stress for Traffic Police

	Sub-scales		Score obtained	Interpretation
	High (Above median)	Low (Below median)		
I. Role over load	6-19	20-30	19.5	Moderate*
II. Role ambiguity	4-12	13-20	11	High
III. Role conflict	5-15	16-25	15.5	Moderate*
IV. Unreasonable group and political pressures	4-12	13-20	12	High
V. Responsibilities for persons	3-10	11-15	9	High
VI. Under-participation	4-12	13-20	12	High
VII. Powerlessness	3-9	10-15	9	High
VIII. Poor peer relations	4-11	12-20	11	High
IX. Intrinsic impoverishment	4-11	12-20	12	Low
X. Low status	3-9	10-15	9.5	Moderate*
XI. Strenuous working conditions	4-12	13-20	10.5	High
XII. Unprofitability	2-6	7-10	6	High

*Scores obtained between High and Low.

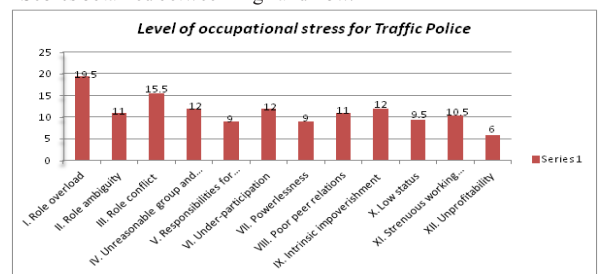


Table 7: The interpretation of median scores obtained on the questionnaire: Level of occupational stress for Bank Clerk

	Sub-scales		Score obtained	Interpretation
	High (Above median)	Low (Below median)		
I. Role overload	6-19	20-30	18.5	High
II. Role ambiguity	4-12	13-20	11	High

III. Role conflict	5-15	16-25	14	High
IV. Unreasonable group and political pressures	4-12	13-20	9	High
V. Responsibilities for persons	3-10	11-15	9.5	High
VI. Under-participation	4-12	13-20	13	Low
VII. Powerlessness	3-9	10-15	9	High
VIII. Poor peer relations	4-11	12-20	11	High
IX. Intrinsic impoverishment	4-11	12-20	11.5	Moderate*
X. Low status	3-9	10-15	8	High
XI. Strenuous working conditions	4-12	13-20	11.5	High
XII. Unprofitability	2-6	7-10	7	Low

*Scores obtained between High and Low.

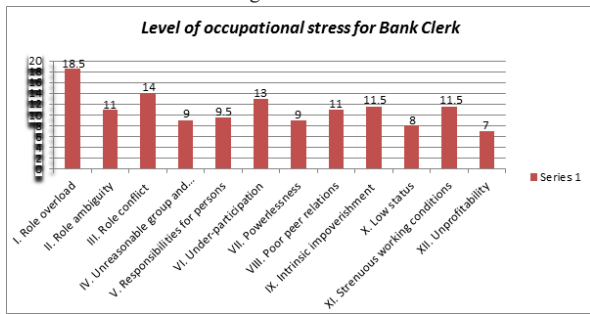


Table 8: The interpretation of median scores obtained on the questionnaire: Level of occupational stress for Primary School Teacher

Sub-scales				
	High (Above median)	Low (Below median)	Score obtained	Interpretation
I. Role overload	6-19	20-30	17	High
II. Role ambiguity	4-12	13-20	11	High
III. Role conflict	5-15	16-25	13	High
IV. Unreasonable group and political pressures	4-12	13-20	10	High
V. Responsibilities for persons	3-10	11-15	8	High
VI. Under-participation	4-12	13-20	12	High
VII. Powerlessness	3-9	10-15	8	High
VIII. Poor peer relations	4-11	12-20	11	High
IX. Intrinsic impoverishment	4-11	12-20	10.5	High
X. Low status	3-9	10-15	7.5	High
XI. Strenuous working conditions	4-12	13-20	10	High
XII. Unprofitability	2-6	7-10	6	High

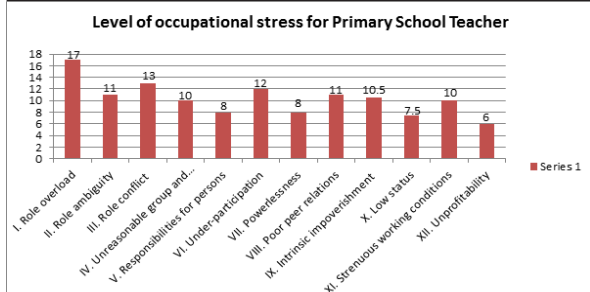
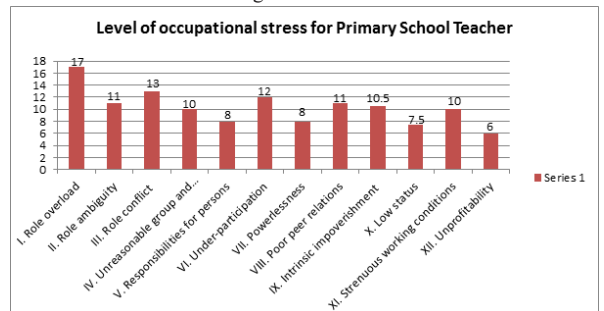


Table 9: The interpretation of median scores obtained on the questionnaire: Level of occupational stress for Nurse

Sub-scales				
	High (Above median)	Low (Below median)	Score obtained	Interpretation
I. Role overload	6-19	20-30	21	Low
II. Role ambiguity	4-12	13-20	12	High
III. Role conflict	5-15	16-25	16	Low
IV. Unreasonable group and political pressures	4-12	13-20	12.5	Moderate*
V. Responsibilities for persons	3-10	11-15	10	High
VI. Under-participation	4-12	13-20	12	High
VII. Powerlessness	3-9	10-15	8	High
VIII. Poor peer relations	4-11	12-20	11	High
IX. Intrinsic impoverishment	4-11	12-20	12	Low
X. Low status	3-9	10-15	9	High
XI. Strenuous working conditions	4-12	13-20	12	High
XII. Unprofitability	2-6	7-10	7	Low

I. Role overload	6-19	20-30	21	Low
II. Role ambiguity	4-12	13-20	12	High
III. Role conflict	5-15	16-25	16	Low
IV. Unreasonable group and political pressures	4-12	13-20	12.5	Moderate*
V. Responsibilities for persons	3-10	11-15	10	High
VI. Under-participation	4-12	13-20	12	High
VII. Powerlessness	3-9	10-15	8	High
VIII. Poor peer relations	4-11	12-20	11	High
IX. Intrinsic impoverishment	4-11	12-20	12	Low
X. Low status	3-9	10-15	9	High
XI. Strenuous working conditions	4-12	13-20	12	High
XII. Unprofitability	2-6	7-10	7	Low

*Scores obtained between High and Low.



DISCUSSION

The survey involved respondents a total of 150 respondents drawn from five occupations: Anganwadi Worker, Traffic Police, Bank Clerk, Primary School Teacher and Nurse (30 respondents each). These professionals had work experience ranging from two years to ten years and hailed from different areas of and organisations in the city of Ahmedabad.

Survey result shows that the level of occupational stress was high on all sub-scales (domains) for Anganwadi Workers and Primary School Teachers (Tables 5 and 8). The level of occupational stress for Traffic Police, Bank Clerk and Nurse, too, is mostly high. However, on some sub-scales they report low and moderate stress level as Tables 6, 7 and 9 show.

It must be noted that of the five occupations, the two that involves teaching, especially young ones, showed high level of occupational stress.

Traffic police reported moderate level of stress on the Role overload, Role conflict and Low status domains. They showed low level of stress on Intrinsic impoverishment.

Bank clerks showed moderate level of stress on Intrinsic impoverishment and low level of stress on Unprofitability.

Nurses reported low stress on role overload, role conflict, Intrinsic impoverishment and Unprofitability whereas when it came to Unreasonable group and political pressures, the stress level was moderate. In rest of the sub-scales, these three groups of professionals reported high level of occupational stress.

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