ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Commerce

KEY WORDS: Role stress, public sector, private sector.

ORGANIZATIONAL ROLE STRESS AMONG PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYEES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

K. Shanthi Part-Time Ph.D Scholar, Category B, Bharathiyar University Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

Dr. Ramachandren* Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Annamalai University, Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu *Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explore the differences in job-related stress, if any, between public and private sector employees, based on ten role stressors. It also examines the role of demographic variables on the stress levels of both public and private sector groups. In this study methodology entails a survey of 182 public and 120 private sector employees in Karaikal, Puducherry U.T India, whose responses are measured according to an occupational role stress scale. The researcher also used secondary data provided by the literature review. The sample was collected through convenience sampling. On applying the t-test and ANOVA test to the data, the researcher found that both public and private sector employees are facing moderate levels of stress. While there is no significant difference between public and private sector employees in terms of total stress levels, certain individual stressors—such as work experience and educational qualifications—do yield differences. The major limitation of this study is that it was conducted in Karaikal puducherry UT alone, while the work culture of organizations other than in Karaikal puducherry U.T may be different.

INTRODUCTION

Stress has become a very common phenomenon of routine life, and an unavoidable consequence of the ways in which society has changed. This change has occurred in terms of science and technology, industrial growth, urbanization, modernization, and automation on one hand; and an expanding population, unemployment, and stress on the other. The term "stress" was first used by Selye (1936) in the literature on life sciences, describing stress as "the force, pressure, or strain exerted upon a material object or person which resist these forces and attempt to maintain its original state." Stress can also be defined as an adverse reaction that people experience when external demands exceed their internal capabilities (Waters & Ussery, 2007).

Organizations are an important source of stress, and employees' workloads and professional deadlines have increased manifold. These advancements have created stress among employees in the form of occupational stress, which Sauter, Lim, and Murphy (1996) define as the harmful physical and emotional responses that arise when the demands of a job do not match the worker's abilities, resources, or needs.

Occupational stress is further defined as a condition arising from the interaction of people and their jobs, and characterized by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning (Beehr & Newman, 1978). The perception of the effects of stress on an individual has changed. Stress is not always dysfunctional in nature, and, if positive, can prove one of the most important factors in improving productivity within an organization (Spielberger, 1980).

Further, public sector organizations are considered those that are government-owned and -operated. Such organizations are considered to focus primarily on the administration of essential services and the control and maintenance of a country's social and economic conditions. In contrast, private sector organizations are considered either profit-making enterprises or community service groups that operate independently of the government (Macklin, Smith, & Dollard, 2006). Stress is measured using a number of instruments. Our focus, however, is organizational role stress (ORS), which measures total role stress. The researcher used Pareek's (1983) scale, which evaluates respondents' quantum of stress in terms of total ORS scores. It also measures the intensity of the following ten role stressors that contribute to the total ORS score. It has the following dimensions

Inter-role distance (IRD), Role stagnation (RS), Role expectation conflict (REC), Role erosion (RE), Role overload (RO), Role isolation (RI), Personal inadequacy (PI), Self-role distance (SRD), Role ambiguity (RA), Resource inadequacy (RIn),

A Review of the Literature

Sharma (1987) focuses on the managers and supervisors of public and private pharmaceutical organizations to ascertain the role of a motivated climate on four psychological variables: (i) job satisfaction, (ii) participation, (iii) alienation, and (iv) role stress. The study's sample comprises 150 respondents, including 75 managers and 75 supervisors. Sharma's findings indicate that employees of public sector organizations score lower than and differ significantly from those of private sector organizations. However, public sector employees score significantly higher in terms of role stagnation.

Ahmad, Bharadwaj, and Narula (1985) assess stress levels among 30 executives from both the public and private sector, using an ORS scale to measure ten dimensions of role stress. Their study reveals significant differences between public and private sector employees in three dimensions of role stress—role isolation, role ambiguity, and self-role distance. The authors also establish the insignificant effect of several background factors, such as age, level of education, income, marital status, and work experience.

Srivastava (1991) surveys 300 employees of the Life Insurance Corporation and reports that there is a significant positive correlation between various dimensions of role stress and symptoms of mental ill health. Stress arising from role ambiguity and role stagnation is the most intensively correlated with anxiety. Finally, Dwivedi (1997) assesses the magnitude of trust, distrust, and ORS to determine the extent of this relationship among public and private sector organization. Surveying 55 executives from the public sector and 62 from the private sector, the author finds that stress levels are low in high-performance organizations and high in low-performance organizations.

Lewig and Dollard (2001) find that public sector employees are subject to greater work-related stress than private sector employees. Dollard and Walsh (1999), however, report that private sector workers in Queensland, Australia, had made twice as many stress claims as public sector workers. Macklin et al. (2006) survey 84 public and 143 private sector employees to assess any significant difference in their stress levels. They conclude that there is no significant difference between employees on the basis of sector, but that there is a significant difference between genders, i.e., female employees are subject to greater stress than males.It is clear that different studies have generated different results on the basis of their particular contexts. Some studies argue that public sector employees are subject to greater stress while others argue the opposite. The literature review shows that work-related stress is almost equal in both the public and private sector, and that research on this topic remains a popular field of enquiry.

OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

This study's aims are to (i) examine the difference in stress levels between public and private sector employees, and (ii) assess the impact of socio-demographic factors on employees' stress levels. To do so, thr researcher propose the following hypotheses:

- 1: There is no significant difference in ORS among different age groups of employees.
- 2: There is no significant difference in ORS among employees of different marital status.
- 3: There is no significant difference in ORS among employees with different levels of work experience.
- 4: There is no significant difference in ORS among employees with different educational qualifications.
- 5: There is no significant difference in ORS between public and private sector employees.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The sample population for this study comprises a total of 302 employees drawn from different public and private organizations—182 from the former and 120 from the latter. The sample was collected on the basis of convenience sampling, and is located in Karaikal, Puducherry U.T.

Data Analysis

The data is analyzed in the form of variables such as ORS scores for public and private sector employees, in which the researcher consider low, medium, and high levels of stress among public and private sector employees, their educational qualifications, duration of service, marital status, and age. Table 1 groups employees by different variables. Using SPSS 16.0 to analyzed the results, tabulated the findings separately.

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents

Variable	Description	Responden
Educational qualifications	Non-Technical (up to 12th standard)	70
	Technical (graduate and postgraduate)	232
Age	Non-Technical (up to 35 years)	176
	Technical (36–50 years)	126
Work experience	Non-Technical (Below10 years)	188
	Technical (Above 10 years)	114
Sector	Non-Technical (public sector employee)	182
	Technical (private sector employee)	120
Marital status	Non-Technical (unmarried)	80
	Technical (married)	222

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to rank various stressors, the author calculated their mean values and standard deviations, followed by those of the total ORS scale. Table 2 shows that all nine individual stressors give rise to moderate levels of stress among the employees sampled. The mean value of total role stress is 1.4913, implying that employees face moderate levels of total ORS. The highest mean value of role erosion is 1.778, implying that employees are subject to this stressor the most. The highest standard deviation value of role overload is 1.009, indicating that some groups experience role overload more than others.

In order to analyze the role of socio-demographic factors on employees' stress levels, we run a t-test and ANOVA test on the sample. The latter helps assess the difference in total stress between age groups. Table 6 indicates that the age factor is not significant. H01, which states that there is no significant difference in the stress levels of employees of different age groups, is therefore an acceptable hypothesis.

Table 2: Status of stressors

Stressor	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank	Status
IRD	1.675	0.972	2	Moderate
RS	1.597	0.931	4	Moderate
REC	1.358	0.820	8	Moderate
RE	1.778	0.890	1	Moderate
RO	1.365	1.009	7	Moderate
RI	1.562	0.820	5	Moderate
PI	1.393	0.911	6	Moderate
RA	1.112	0.926	9	Moderate
RIn	1.663	0.990	3	Moderate
ORS	1.491	0.654		Moderate

Note: The Researcher have calculated the mean score on a scale of 0 to 4, and divided stress levels into "low" (0–1), "moderate" (1–2), and "high" (more than 2 and up to 4).

Table 3: Impact of socio-demographic factors on ORS

Hypothesis	Stress	Demographic	Significance value	Remarks
H0 1	ORS	Age	0.280	Accepted
H0 2		Marital status	0.282	Accepted
H0 3		Work experience	0.005**	Not accepted
H0 4		Qualifications	0.002**	Not accepted

Note: ** = significant at 99-percent confidence level.

The Researcher used the t-test to analyze the role of marital status on employees' stress levels, and, again, find no significant value. Table 3 also shows that there is no significant difference in ORS among employees of a different marital status. Thus, H02, which states that there is no significant difference in ORS among employees of a different marital status, is an acceptable hypothesis.

Work experience, the third socio-demographic factor, does, however, affect employees' stress levels. Running an ANOVA test on the sample reveals that there is a significant difference in ORS between groups with different degrees of work experience. This implies that H03, which states that there is no significant difference in ORS among groups with different levels of work experience, is not an acceptable hypothesis.

Similarly, we use the ANOVA test to analyze the impact of educational qualifications on employees' stress levels. As Table 6 shows, there is a significant difference in ORS among groups with different levels of educational qualification groups. Thus, H04, which states that there is no significant difference in ORS among groups with different qualifications, is not an acceptable hypothesis.Calculating the mean, standard deviation, and t-test values for different stressors allows us to compare role stress between the public and private sector. Table 4 shows that there is no significant difference between the two sectors in terms of employees' total stress level. H, which states that there is no significant difference between the two sectors with regard to total role stress, is an acceptable hypothesis.

Table 4: Comparative levels of stress among public and private sector employees

	Public sector		Private sector		Significance
Stressor	Sample = 182		Sample = 120		value
IRD	Mean	1.613	Mean	1.770	0.029*
	SD	0.911	SD	1.054	
RO	Mean	1.228	Mean	1.573	0.843
	SD	1.008	SD	0.980	
RI	Mean	1.534	Mean	1.606	0.000**
	SD	0.882	SD	0.718	
RE	Mean	1.806	Mean	1.736	0.441
	SD	0.919	SD	0.846	
REC	Mean	1.312	Mean	1.430	0.536
	SD	0.835	SD	0.795	
PI	Mean	1.470	Mean	1.276	0.000**
	SD	0.990	SD	0.765	
RS	Mean	1.492	Mean	1.756	0.698
	SD	0.909	SD	0.944	
SRD	Mean	1.362	Mean	1.420	0.788
	SD	0.788	SD	0.759	

RA	Mean	1.076	Mean	1.166	0.815
	SD	0.948	SD	0.893	
RIn	Mean	1.742	Mean	1.543	0.156
	SD	1.026	SD	0.923	
ORS	Mean	1.464	Mean	1.532	0.687
	SD	0.677	SD	0.618	

Note: ** significant at 99-percent confidence level, * significant at 95-percent confidence level. Source: Authors' calculations.

However, on applying the t-test separately to different dimensions of ORS, we find that three factors reflect a significant difference among public and private sector employees. These factors include role isolation, personal inadequacy, and inter-role distance. Table 4 also shows that employees face a moderate level of total role stress, but that the mean values of most of the stressors—apart from role erosion, personal inadequacy, and resource inadequacy—to which private sector employees are subject, is greater than that of public sector employees.

8. CONCLUSION

In this study has led the researcher to conclude that employees in both the public and private sectors face moderate levels of stress, of which they are subject to role erosion the most and resource inadequacy the least. Further, there is no significant difference in total role stress among public and private sector employees. These results support the findings of a number of earlier studies, e.g., Macklin et al. (2006), although we have noted that private sector employees facing slightly more stress than those in the public sector. Our analysis of the impact of various socio-demographic factors on stress level reveals that educational qualifications and work experience have a significant impact on employees' stress levels.

REFERENCES

1. Agarwala, U. N., Malhan, N. K., & Singh, B. (1979). Some clarifications of stress and its applications at work. Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, 15(1), 41–50.
2. Ahmad, S., Bharadwaj, A., & Narula, S. (1985). A study of stress among executives. Journal of Personality and Clinical Studies, 1(1–2), 47–50.
3. Akinyokun, C. O., Angaye, C. O., & Ubaru, M. O. (2009). Factor analysis of the performance indices of information and communications technology projects in the public sector of the Nigerian economy.
4. Journal of Technology Research, 1, 1–15.
5. Beehr, T. A., & Newman, J. E. (1978). Job stress, employee health, and organizational effectiveness: A facet analysis model and literature review. Personnel Psychology, 31(4), 665–699.
6. Burke, R. J. (1993). Toward an understanding of psychological burnout among police officers. Journal of Social Behavior and Personality, 8(3), 425–438.
7. Chaudhary, A. (1990). A study of the relationship between job satisfaction and role stress of bank officers. Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Rajasthan, India.
8. Cooper, C. L., & Marshall, J. (1976). Occupational sources of stress: A review of the literature relating to coronary heart disease and mental ill-health. Journal of Occupational Psychology, 49(1), 11–28.
9. D'Aleo, N., Stebbins, P., Lowe, R., Lees, D., & Ham, D. (2007). Managing workplace stress: Psychosocial hazard risk profiles in public and private sector Australia. Australian Journal of Rehabilitation Counselling, 13(2), 68–87.
10. Dollard, M. F., & Walsh, C. (1999). Illusory correlation: Is work stress really worse in the- public sector? Journal of Occupational Health and Safety, 15(3), 219 231.
11. Dwivedi, R. K. (1997). Trust and role stress. In D. M. Pestonjee & U. Pareek (Eds.), Studies in organizational role stress and coping. New Delhi: Rawat.
12. Srivastava, A. K. (1991). A study of the role stress-mental health relationship as a moderator by adopting coping strategies. Psychological Studies, 3, 192–197.
13. Waters, J. A., & Ussery, W. (2007). Police stress: History, contributing factors, symptoms, and interventions. Policing: An International Journal