ORGANIZATIONAL ROLE STRESS (ORS) AMONG THE TEACHERS OF STATE AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY OF INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Work stress is recognized worldwide as a major challenge to employees' health and the healthiness of organizations. Employees who are stressed are also more likely to be unhealthy, poorly motivated, less productive and less safe at work. Organizational role stress originates in organizational demands experienced by the individual. Although, it does have galvanizing effects to some extent making the life more challenging and charming; beyond a certain level, it leads to disturbances in personal as well as professional life. Hence, to ensure excellence in imparting quality education, fostering result oriented research activities, and to be recognized as a premier academic setup, Universities will have to create congenial work culture and induce the teachers to ignite inner urge to contribute their level best, and develop a sense of belongingness. This ultimately paves the way for transforming the university into a world class university. In this regard, to ensure benchmark standards in the tripartite functions of education, research and extension at the State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) of India; taking care of the stress level of the teachers is the need of the hour. The present Empirical Paper, utilizing the published theoretical literature and Communication Approach of the Cross-sectional Descriptive research design, examines the relation between the Organization Role Stress (ORS) and demographics among the teachers of a State Agricultural University located in the coastal region of Gujarat State in India. Data collected from 100 respondents, using the ORS scale developed by Udai Pareek, highlight that ORS is well within the burnout limits; and Inter-Role Distance (IRD), Role Isolation (RI), Role Overload (RO) and Resource Inadequacy (RIn) are found to be the prominent role stressors. The demographic variables of experience and age are found to be closely associated with the ORS.

Keywords: Organizational Role Stress (ORS), Role, State Agricultural University (SAU), Stress

I.   INTRODUCTION

It is a widely accepted phenomenon that people are the real assets that can make or mar an organization. In today's ever-competitive scenario, only this people dimension can be a long term competitive advantage for any organization. But,

competing through people basically requires attracting, recruiting and retaining talented people. Hence, the concern for hiring the best people has multiplied in the knowledge economy, since the knowledge workers as intangible assets are estimated to constitute 70% of the value of the companies today, a whopping rise from mere 20% in 1980. Consequently, nearly 80% of HR Managers across the world; are reported to be busy in "attracting and retaining talent" treating it as their top priority item (Prasad, 2007). This is also because attracting, recruiting and choosing the right person for the job and ensuring the availability of talented people at all levels of the organization through systematic recruitment and selection strategies has long been a problem that many employers have struggled to address (Thakkar, 2008).

Further, after recruiting competent people, for building high performing work culture and thereby increase the retention rate of people, the organization needs to make sure that employees have homely feeling, clear role expectations and low level of stress. Hence, every organization needs to make sure that employees have homely feeling, clear role expectations and low level of stress. Managing stress of employees has become extremely important for modern organizations to safeguard human wellbeing (Srivastav, 1995). Work stress is recognized worldwide as a major challenge to employees' health and the healthiness of organizations. Employees who are stressed are also more likely to be unhealthy, poorly motivated, less productive and less safe at work. Their organizations are less likely to be successful in a competitive market (Stavroula et al., 2004). The same is true even for the institutions of higher education and learning like University.

Further, in case of stress, we can't use the age old proverb – "prevention is better than cure"; as it can't be eliminated completely. As organization become more complex, the potential for stress increases and there being no escape from stress in modern life, we need to find ways of managing it (Pareek, 2002). Stress is unavoidable in modern life (Pestonjee, 1999). However, stress is a dynamic condition; it is created when an individual confronts an opportunity, constraint, or demand for which the outcome is perceived to be both important and uncertain (Robbins and Sanghi, 2006). The phenomenon of increasing occupational stress was formally identified in 1989, when the Commonwealth Commission for the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation of Commonwealth Employees initiated several research projects. During, the same period the

percentage increase in claims for work-related psychological injury has been greater than any other injury (Pearson et al., 1999). Stress in the modern day organizational life is nothing new, not anything unknown. Stress has been experienced by employees since time immemorial, but its toll is higher than ever before (Ramaniah and Subrahmanian, 2008).

When we talk about the strongest pillars – the teachers - of an institution of higher learning like University, the toll of stress becomes the top most concern. So, to ensure excellence in imparting quality education, fostering result oriented research activities, and to be recognized as a premier academic setup, Universities have to work for creating congenial work culture and induce the employees to ignite the inner urge to contribute their level best, and develop a sense of belongingness. This ultimately paves the way for transforming the university into a world class university.

As far as higher education in the domains of agriculture and allied disciplines is concerned in India, the State Agricultural Universities, popularly abbreviated as SAUs, are dominating the academic landscape under the ambit of the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi. Entrusted with tripartite functions of education, research and extension education, these SAUs of India also need to take care of the stress level of the teachers, in order to ensure benchmark standards of performance.

Considering this, the present Empirical Paper, utilizing the published theoretical literature and Communication Approach of the Cross-sectional Descriptive research design, examines the relation between the Organization Role Stress (ORS) and demographics among the teachers of a State Agricultural University located in the coastal region of Gujarat State in India.

Conceptual framework of stress and organizational role stress

Stress: The word Stress has been derived from the Latin word, "Stringere" which means to draw tight. The term is used to refer to hardship, strain, adversity or affliction and have been used as synonymous of anxiety, frustration, pressure and so on. Acc. to Arnold H. J. (1960), "Stress is any condition that disturbs normal functioning".

Acc. to Harrison R. V. (1976), stress is experienced when there is lack of fitness between a person and his/her environment, in case there is inability to cope with the constraints or demands encountered.

Acc. to Beeher T. A. & Newman S. E. (1978), "Stress is 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".

Role Stress and Organizational Role Stress:

Role Stress refers to the conflict and tension due to the roles being enacted by a person at any given point of time. Enacted in the context of organizations, such role stresses are called organizational role stress. In a sense, stress due to occupation of an organizational role is called 'Organizational Role Stress (ORS)' (Pareek, 2004).

Here, role is defined as a set of functions, which an individual performs in response to the expectations of significant members of a social system, and his own expectations about the position that he occupies. The concept of role and the two role systems – role space and role set have a built-in potential for conflict and stress.

(A)   Role Space Conflicts/Stress

It refers to the dynamic relationship between the various roles an individual occupies and his self. It has three main variables: self, the role under question, and the other roles he occupies. Any conflict among these is referred to as role space conflict or stress. It has the following types of ORS.

(1) Self-Role Distance (SRD) refers to the stress due to conflict between the self-concept and the expectations of the role, as perceived by the role occupant (Items nos. 8, 18, 28, 38, 48).

(2) Inter-Role Distance (IRD) refers to the stress that arises out of conflict between the organizational role and other roles (Items nos. 1, 11, 21, 31, 41).

(3) Role Stagnation (RS) refers to the stress from the feeling of the individual that there are very few opportunities for learning and growth in the role (Items nos. 2, 12, 22, 32, 42).

(B)   Role Set Conflicts/Stress

It refers to the stress arising out of the conflicts as a result of incompatibility among the expectations of the significant others (and by the individual himself/herself). It may take the following forms of ORS.

(4) Role Isolation (RI) emanates due to lack of linkages between one's role with other roles in the organization (Items nos. 6, 16, 26, 36, 46).

(5) Role Ambiguity (RA) stress arises when an individual is not clear about the various expectations that people have from his/her role (Items nos. 9, 19, 29, 39, 49).

(6) Role Expectation Conflict (REC) means conflicting demands made on the role by different persons in the organization (Items nos. 3, 13, 23, 33, 43).

(7) Role Overload (RO) is the result of large variations between the expected output and the actual output (Item nos. 5, 15, 25, 35, 45).

(8) Role Erosion (RE) is feeling that some important functions a role occupant would like to perform are being performed by some other person (Item nos. 4, 14, 24, 34, 44).

(9) Resource Inadequacy (RIn) stress is experienced due to non-availability of resources needed for effective role performance (Item nos. 10, 20, 30, 40, 50).

(10) Personal Inadequacy (PIn) stress is experienced when a role occupant feels that he/she is not prepared to undertake the role effectively (Item nos. 7, 17, 27, 37, 47).

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Kahn et al. (1964) were the earliest to draw attention to organization stress in general and role stress in particular. In their opinion, any aspect of role expectation which exceeds the resources may be termed as role stress.

In the study conducted on the eve of World Health Day by Ahmad (2009) for the ASSOCHAM Research Bureau Survey of 210 corporate employees from 200 companies across 18 broad sectors focused on the health issues of corporate workforce, financial services sector emerged as the fourth hard hit sector with 47 percent of total sick employees.

Dasgupta and Suresh (2009) indicated that Role Overload is the most significant source of ORS among the doctors and male doctors are more stressed than the female doctors in cases of – Inter-role Distance and Role Inadequacy. Srivastav (2008) in his pioneering study of 453 respondents entitled "Stress in Organizational Roles across Qualification Levels" studied the role stress in public sector industry; and indicated that Role Erosion was the most prominent role stressor across qualification levels but role stress across qualification levels is non-uniform.

Ramaniah and Subrahmanian (2008) examined the relation between ORS and demographics of 300 IT professionals and found that there was high stress level; and marital status and ORS are related. It was also found that the stress among females is due to role isolation, inter-role distance and role overload. Bhattacharya and Basu (2007), while studying 101 professionals (60 men and 41 women) in IT domain, revealed that women experienced greater wellness and older personnel experienced more distress. Based on his study of 264 women professionals in the IT sector; Aziz (2004) reported resource inadequacy as the most potent role stressor, followed by role overload and personal inadequacy. The level of education was not found to be a significant differentiator of stressors.

Naveen (2016) reported that Organizational Role Stressors among College Teachers are different for male and female teachers. Nazneen and Bhalla (2014) reported that the faculty members of Private and Public Universities are suffering with organizational role stress and low level of organizational commitments, the dominant stressors are role erosion, inter role distance, role isolation, self role distance, personal inadequacy and personal inadequacy. Akbar & Akhter (2011) found high level of pressure among Management Faculty members of Pakistan University. They also found that women faculty members had shown high level of pressure than their male counterparts. Ahmady et al. (2007) found high level of stress among medical school faculty members of Iran. Singh (2007) studied the effect of stress on job satisfaction and work values among female teachers of secondary education and found that stressed and displeased teachers had less attachment and less dedication to their profession. Longford (1987) examined the relationship between stress and job satisfaction among boarding academy teachers and found that stress was a significant determinant of teacher's job satisfaction. Pestonjee & Mishra (1999) examined role pressure and work satisfaction among low-ranking and senior doctors and found that job satisfaction variables correlated negatively with all the dimensions of role stress.

III.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Problem Statement & Operational Definitions:

The present study attempts to assess the extent of organizational role stress (ORS) experienced by the teachers of one of the State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) of India and suggest measures to overcome/reduce the same. Specifically, this study is focused on the following research question: "How to assist the teachers of SAU to reduce/overcome ORS?"

Sub-questions of this central research query were formulated as follows:

- What is the existing level of ORS among the teachers of SAU?
- Whether there is any association between demographic variables and the level of ORS?
- How can we help the teachers to reduce/overcome the ORS?

Here, the Operational Definitions of various constructs are as follows:

- Organizational Role Stress: Organizational Role Stress means stress due to occupation of an organizational role. This is measured through the ORS scale developed by Udai Pareek (1983; 2002); which contains five statements for each role stress using the 5-point Likert Scale. The total score of the ORS scale ranges between 0 to 200 and each role stress ranges from 0 to 20. A simple summation of the scores on each role stress would indicate the scores on that dimension.
- Teachers: Teachers refers to the permanent on pay-roll teachers working in Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professor Cadres working in SAU covered under the study.
- State Agricultural University of India: This study is undertaken at one of the State Agricultural University (SAU) operating in the coastal region of South Gujarat in Gujarat State working under the ambit of Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi.

Research Objectives:

- To assess Organizational Role Stress (ORS) level among the teachers of a State Agricultural University (SAU) of India.
- To identify the prominent role stressors among these teachers.
- To find out the association between demographic variables and level of ORS among the teachers.
- To suggest measures to reduce/overcome the ORS among the teachers.

Research Design:

This study, using Descriptive-Cross Sectional Research Design, describes the level of ORS among the teachers of a SAU in India (Descriptive) at a particular point of time (Cross Sectional). Initial exploration stage focused on careful review of relevant literature and in-depth interviews and discussions with key informants from the SAUs. The focus of these interactions was mainly on understanding the working of SAUs in general and the role and responsibilities

of teachers of SAU in particular. This exploration helped the researcher in fine tuning the contents of the ORS scale.

Data Collection:

(i) Primary Data: The study is mainly based on primary data collected from the respondents – the teachers – through the ORS scale developed by Udai Pareek (1983; 2002); which contains five statements for each role stress using the 5-point Likert Scale.

(ii) Secondary Data: Secondary data were collected from books, journals, periodicals, and electronic databases relevant to the topic of the study.

Sampling Collection:

By using quota sampling method of non probability sampling, 100 respondents – the teachers of various institutions working at one of the SAUs of India – the Navsari Agricultural University (NAU), located in the coastal region of South Gujarat in Gujarat State of India; were selected and surveyed.

IV.   DATA AND EMPIRICAL RESULTS

The collected data were analyzed by employing appropriate statistical tests/tools; to derive meaningful conclusions from the data, and draw inferences about the Organizational Role Stress (ORS) among the Teachers of SAU of India. Table 1 presents the Ranking of various ORS Variables based on the Frequency Analysis.

We can see from Table 1 that,

(1) Inter-Role Distance (IRD) has emerged as the dominant ORS among the respondents. This may be due to the dominance of young workforce (the new entrants, especially the Asst. Professors) who may be finding it difficult to adjust with the multitude of demands from roles inside the organization (Formal/Organizational) and roles outside the organization (Informal/Personal/Social).

(2) Role Isolation (RI) is the Second major ORS variable, indicating the requirement to focus on strengthening the communication linkages within the organization as well as promoting/facilitating frequent interactions among the teachers at different levels not only at formal forums but also in informal settings.

(3) Role Overload (RO) is found to be the Third major ORS variable. Here, the departmental heads need to work out some strategies to ensure balanced workload distribution to make the job less burdensome for quite a few.

Open non-confronting discussion and frequent meetings for reviewing work distribution is highly desirable.

(4) Importantly, Personal Inadequacy (PIn) is the least bothering variables in the ORS category. So, the teachers' own perception regarding their own preparedness is very positive and they seem to be very much equipped with the required skill sets and competencies to perform their roles.

Cross Tabulation & Chi-square Test

Cross Tabulation and Chi-Square Test performed at 0.05 Significance Level revealed the following findings:

(1) Experience has significant relationship with ORS. Teachers with more experience are feeling less ORS than those who have relatively less experience.

(2) The Age of respondents and the ORS are found to be related in the sense of higher the age, more is the ORS experienced by the respondents.

(3) The Education and Gender of the respondents were not found to be the major differentiator in terms of the ORS experienced by the teachers.

V.   CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to assess the Organizational Role Stress (ORS) among the teachers of one of the SAUs of India. This study found that the overall ORS in terms of Total ORS score is 64.4356 seems to be well within the burnout limits. Hence, there is no major issue or problem. However, the 4 prominent role stressors namely the Inter-Role Distance (IRD), Role Isolation (RI), Role Overload (RO) and Resource Inadequacy (RIn) needs to be taken care of by following the suggestions given below.

Suggestions: The Road Ahead:

• As the IRD is the dominant ORS variable, the departmental heads need to analyze their work schedules and work distributions minutely to find out flows (if any) leading to IRD. On the other hand, the young workforce must be trained and counseled by the experienced ones about effectively meeting the demands of various roles. This will not only help to reduce IRD, but it will also help to build harmonious superior-subordinate relationships at work. It will also provide scope for increased interactions and discussions; possibly leading to reduction in Role Isolation (RI) as well.

- To reduce the Role Isolation among the teachers working at various levels, frequent meetings and informal get-to-gathers should be organized, so that exchange of information can take place. This will also help to create healthy atmosphere at the work place, which is an essential prerequisite for building high performance work culture.

- To take care of Role Overload (RO), the departmental heads need to work out some strategies to ensure balanced workload distribution to make the job less burdensome for quite a few. Open non-confronting discussion and frequent meetings for reviewing work distribution is highly desirable.

- Resource Inadequacy has to be treated with top most urgent matter, as this indicates lack of aids/resources to carry out the assigned responsibilities. This is frustrating for the teachers and resource inadequacy in terms of lack of information, people, material, finance or facilities and so on need to be dealt with.

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List of Tables

Table 1: Frequency Analysis and Mean Values – Ranking of ORS Variables

ORS Variable	Finding		ORS Variable	Finding	
	Mean			*Mean*	*Rank*
SRD	5.6732	6	REC	4.8765	7
IRD	9.5324	1	RO	8.7567	3
RS	4.3657	9	RE	6.5655	5
RI	9.0511	2	RIn	7.7542	4
RA	4.4082	8	PIn	3.4521	10
Total - TORS	64.4356				

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