

ORGANIZATIONAL ROLE STRESS AT INDIAN AIRLINES AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

Sanjay Kumar Singh*

Megha Singh**

ABSTRACT

The present study deals with perception of role stress on the part of the middle level managers in an Airlines Organization in India. It aims at assessing and explaining different role stress felt by the middle level managers and also to understand the relationships of biographical information with perceived role stress for three groups of managers understudy. Finally, an attempt has been made to discuss the findings of the study in the light of the past researches in the area of organizational role stress.

Introduction

Stress is the spice of life, but excess amount of stress experienced is dysfunctional for effective functioning of individuals in organizational life. The research literature is abound with good amount of findings that extreme experience of role stress in organizational life make the individual employee inefficient as well as ineffective in personal, interpersonal, and organizational lives. This study is an attempt to assess the level of role stress experienced by the organizational members and also to help the concerned organization to go for some sort of intervention to minimize the level of role stress, if any, and also to make the organization to have a sound mental health.

The extent of stress is, however, a matter of degree. Some organizations manage to generate a harmonious work atmosphere, whereas, others have greater friction and

tension. Human behavior in an organization is influenced or directed by several physical, social and psychological factors. One of the key concepts to understand the integration of the individual with an organization is the role assigned to him within the overall structure of the organizations. It is through this role the individual interacts and gets integrated with the system. An organization can be defined as a system of roles.

However, role itself is a system. Pareek (1983a) has defined role as any position a person holds in a system (organization) as defined by the expectation of various significant person, including himself/herself have from that position.

The definition of role indicates that there are inherent problems in the performance of a role and, therefore, stress is inevitable. The

* Dr. Sanjay Kumar Singh is Assistant Professor in OB & HR at Lal Bahadur Shastri Institute of Management, Sector III, R. K. Puram, New Delhi - 110022

** Megha Singh, PGDBM Student, New Delhi Institute of Management, Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi - 110062

concept of role and the related concepts of 'role space' and 'role set' have a built-in potential for conflict and stress (Pareek, 1993). From the point of view of an individual, two role systems are important: role space and role set. Role space, thus, can be defined as 'the dynamic interrelationship both between the self and the various roles an individual occupies from among these roles'. Whereas, the individual's role in the organization is defined by the expectations of other significant roles, and those of the individual himself/herself. The role set is 'the pattern of relationship between the role being considered and other roles'.

Role Stress-Some Empirical Findings

The concept of organizational role stress has many more correlates. Some of the research literature reviewed in the area of organizational role stress are being presented as:

Singh and Dhillon (2004) obtained in their study of newspaper organizations negative and significant relationships between perception of organizational role stress and potential effectiveness in a role in an organization for both the lower level and the higher level reporters.

Pange (1997) in a study observed Indian managers scoring significantly higher on role stress than their U.K counterparts.

Patnayak and Mishra (1997) in their study found executives and supervisors to differ significantly on job stress; where the supervisors showing higher job stress than the executives. But no significant differences were observed between shift and non-shift employees on job stress scores.

Roy (1997) reports that junior scientists to score higher and also to differ significantly from senior scientists on the dimensions of

role stagnation, role erosion, and resource inadequacy.

Mittal (1992) in the study found that doctors experiences higher amount of role stress followed by stress on inter role distance. Further, it was also found that private doctors were experiencing more of role stress emanating from role overload and self role distance than the government doctors, male doctors were found to experience more of stress coming from perception of role erosion and self role distance than the female doctors.

Ahmad et al. (1991) found organization role stress to be significant but negatively correlated with the job satisfaction, whereas, the organizational role stress was found to be significantly and positively associated with neuroticism-stability, dimensions of personality.

Dhadda (1990) in a study found role overload to cause maximum and role ambiguity to cause the least amount of stress among railway officials, whereas, role erosion causing maximum and role overload causing minimum stress among the aviation officials.

Pestonjee (1987) found that younger age employees experiencing significantly higher stress due to perception of role stagnation, role erosion, self role distance, role ambiguity and over all role stress than the older age employee.

Srivastava and Sehgal (1984) in a study found occupational stress to be relatively and significantly associated with the level of work motivation.

Ramamurthi et al. (1984) in the study found executives to score significantly higher on all the four factors of stress prone behavior than the non-executives.

Srivastava and Sinha (1983) view perceived role stress of the managerial personnel as

function of their ego strength and job involvement. Further, they also observed employees with high ego strength to report experiencing mild stress pertaining to role overload, role ambiguity, and role conflict than moderate or low ego strength groups. Similarly, employees manifesting higher job involvement to report less of felt role stress due to role overload and role ambiguity as compared to their counterparts who are not highly involved with their jobs.

So, while looking at these empirical findings it may be said that the amount and nature of perceived role stress depends upon the nature of functions performed by the employees as well as the kind of business that the organizations find themselves in. Further, the above mentioned research findings also indicate upon the influence of other personal, interpersonal and organizational variables/factors onto the experience of role stress by employees functioning in different roles and functions in the organizations.

The Study

The present research is an attempt to access and understand the level of role stress experienced by the middle level employees in an Airline organization. The study has also been designed to investigate significant difference, if any, between the male and the female middle level employees on their perception of role stress. Finally, it also aims at finding out the relationship between biographical information and perception of role stress. The following variables were studied:

- 1) Biographical Information
- 2) Organizational Role Stress

Objectives

The following were the main objectives of

this study:

1. To develop a profile of male, female, and employee as a whole in terms of their biographical information and the perceived level of role stress.
2. To study significant difference, if any, between male and female employees in their biographical information and perception of their role stress.
3. To investigate the relationship between biographical information and perception of role stress for male, female and employee as a whole.

Hypotheses

The following hypothesis were formulated in this study, as

1. There will be significant difference between male and female employees in their perception of role stress.
2. There will be a significant relationship between biographical information and perception of role stress for male, female and employee as a whole.

Psychological Instruments Used

- 1) Organizational Role Stress Scale (Pareek, 1983c)
- 2) Personal Data Sheet (Investigators, 2004)

Description of Psychological Test Used

Organizational Role Stress Scale (ORS Scale)

The scale used in this study has 50 items divided into ten dimensions as Self Role Distance, Inter Role Distance, Role Stagnation, Role Expectation Conflict, Role Overload, Role Isolation, Role Inadequacy, Personal Inadequacy, Role Ambiguity, and Role Erosion.

This ORS scale has the reliability coefficient of 0.73 at .001 level of significance.

Personal Data Sheet

This data sheet was prepared by the investigator (2004). It includes the dimensions as age, sex, marital status, number of dependents, length of service, total number of promotions, and designation.

Design

The present research study has the sample size of 50, which includes 25 male and 25 female employees. The sample in the study was picked randomly so that it should represent the population in all its attributes. Finally, the sample under the study is of middle level managers which was drawn from the Indian Airlines office, New Delhi.

Precautions

The following precautions were taken by the investigator:

1. The sample under study was picked randomly.
2. All the sample in the study was assured of the confidentiality of the opinions expressed in the questionnaires used.
3. It was ensured during the data collection that the respondents do not leave any statement unanswered.

Statistical Tools Used

The following statistical tools were used to treat the data collected, as:

1. Descriptive Statistics (Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviation).
2. Inferential Statistics (Student t-test)
3. Correlation Analysis (Pearson's Product - Moment Correlation)

Results and Discussion

The study was an attempt to develop a profile in terms of the biographical information and the perception of role stress on the part of male, female, employees as a whole. It was also the purpose of the study to assess whether there exist any significant difference between male and female employees on their biographical information and experience of role stress while working in different roles and functions in the organization. Finally, the study aimed at investigating the relationships of biographical information and role stress, separately for male, female, and employees as a whole. It should be noted in the very beginning that the study was conducted in an organization operating in the field of airlines.

The Table 1 shows that the employees as a whole had an average age of approximately 37 years, exactly 50 % each were for both male and female employees, majority of them were living a married life, had close to two dependents to look after, and had been in the job for approximately 13 years.

On the other hand, the Table 1 also depicts biographical information of male and female employees, separately. It says that both male and female were approximately 37 years of age, close to third male and female employees had a married live, the male employees had to two or more dependent upon them, whereas, the female had to look after one or two persons in their family lives. The length of work experience for the male employees was fourteen years and for the female employees it was close to eleven years. Finally, both the male and the female employees had so far earned close to two promotions in their life.

The Table 1 also shows the t- value for all the dimensions of the biographical information and it says that there exists no significant

Table 1
Biographical Information & Organizational Role Stress
Difference Between Male & Female Employees

	EAW (n = 50)		MALE (n = 25)		FEMALE (n = 25)		't' Value
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D.	
Age	37.40	8.98	37.56	10.10	37.24	7.91	0.90
Gender	1.50	0.51	1.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	0.00
Ms	1.78	0.42	1.80	0.41	1.76	1.76	0.74
Desl	2.68	0.84	2.68	0.90	2.68	0.80	1.00
Nod	1.84	0.99	2.24	1.02	1.44	0.82	0.004
Los	13.26	8.42	14.12	9.69	11.24	7.01	0.48
Tnp	1.92	1.38	2.04	1.46	1.80	1.32	0.54
IRD	5.94	3.99	7.04	4.21	5.84	2.36	0.84
RS	7.12	3.57	7.20	4.24	7.04	2.82	0.88
REC	6.00	4.11	6.56	4.78	5.44	3.31	0.34
RE	9.18	2.91	11.00	2.96	9.89	2.74	0.09
RO	5.74	4.07	6.96	4.38	4.52	3.39	0.03
RI	5.40	3.84	6.52	4.60	4.28	2.53	0.04
PI	4.38	3.92	5.64	4.41	3.12	2.92	0.02
SRD	5.38	3.14	6.12	3.82	4.64	2.08	0.10
RA	4.56	4.14	5.96	4.50	3.16	3.26	0.02
Rin	4.76	3.71	5.56	4.02	3.96	3.25	0.13
ORS	56.88	30.74	65.48	36.06	52.28	19.85	0.01

difference between male and female employees on their background variables. It may mean that both these groups of employees under study have more or less similar chronological age, work experience, number of promotions, number of dependents to look after, and almost equal number of both male and female employees were having a married life. Thus, the stated hypothesis is rejected.

The mean score on the perception of role stress as well as for all its dimensions for, employees as whole, male and female employees have been depicted in the Table 1. The overall perceived role stress as well as experience of stress on the part of the employees as a whole emanating out of perception of being in the stagnating roles, getting/receiving conflicting expectations and demands from the boss, the subordinates,

and the fellow colleagues, not being very clear about the roles that they have been performing, and doing too much of work in too little time is above average which is not functional for their effective functioning in their respective roles in the organization. On the other hand, they do experience just average amount of role stress due to self not being satisfactorily integrated with the roles that they perform, perception of lacking some personal resources in terms of knowledge and skills as well as financial, material, and human resources to get the work done successfully, and their roles not being satisfactorily integrated with other similar roles around in the organization. It's only onto the dimension of role isolation that they experience below average role stress.

The Table 1 also depicts mean score of male

Table 2
Correlation Between Biographical Information & Organizational Role Stress
(Employees As A Whole, n=50)

	Age	Gender	Ms	Desi	Nod	Los	Tnp
IRD	-.065	-.538**	-.012	-.049	.432**	.019	.084
RS	-.144	-.023	-.162	-.129	.176	-.114	-.134
REC	.074	-.148	.107	-.128	.309*	.108	.208
RE	.028	-.244	-.028	-.014	.339*	.033	.018
RO	-.159	-.305*	-.098	-.104	.315*	-.095	-.017
RI	-.167	-.299*	-.224	-.106	.286*	-.094	-.082
PI	-.164	-.327*	-.307*	-.289*	.156	-.279	-.235
SRD	-.398**	-.249	-.187	-.157	.081	-.221	-.164
RA	-.238	-.344*	-.152	-.224	.193	-.202	-.137
Rin	-.237	-.226	-.059	-.101	.297*	-.175	-.068
ORS	-.206	-.399**	-.144	-.134	.294*	-.155	-.077

* < p0.05, ** < p0.01

and female employees on their perception of over role stress as well as amount of stress experienced onto the dimensions of organizational role stress. It says that the male employees do experience above average amount of role stress, whereas, the female employees do experience below average amount of overall role stress. But both male and female employees do experience either average or/and above average amount of role stress due to perception of stagnating in the present roles, receiving conflicting demands and expectations from the boss, the subordinates, and the colleagues around, perception of doing too much of work in too little time, and the likes. It's especially for the female employees that they do experience below average amount of role stress due to isolation in their roles, inadequate personal as well as interpersonal and organizational resources for getting the work done efficiently, and the likes. Finally, the Table 1 also depicts the 't' value for total role stress and its dimensions. The results show that there exists no significant difference in the amount of organizational role stress experienced by both the male and female employees. It may mean that they do experience more or less same amount of stress due to organizational

procedures, processes, and practices. Therefore, the stated hypothesis has been rejected.

Table 2 depicts the relationships between biographical information and role stress and its dimensions for the employees as a whole. It says that almost all the dimensions of the biographical information, except for the number of dependents, have negative relationships with the perception of role stress. It may be interpreted as the employees in the organization grow older in age; settle for a married life, progress higher up in the hierarchical ladder, have more number of work experience, and the more and more promotions achieved they experience less of role stress emanating out of perception of self being at a greater distance from the roles being performed, conflicting expectations received from different role occupants around, too much of work to be done effectively in too little time and the likes. On the other hand, as for the positive relationships between number of dependents to look after and the role stress experienced, it may be said that with increase in number of dependents to look after by them there is corresponding increase in perception of role stress emanating from the

Table 3
Correlation Between Biographical Information & Organizational Role Stress
(Male Employees, n = 25)

	Age	Ms	Desi	Nod	Los	Tnp
IRD	-.193	-.248	-.228	.198	.178	-.093
RS	-.258	-.279	-.246	.299	-.246	-.227
REC	-.123	-.227	-.159	.122	-.137	-.035
RE	-.431*	-.336	-.396*	.278	-.289	-.334
RO	-.414*	-.399*	-.427*	.125	-.398*	-.277
RI	-.317	-.454*	-.269	.198	-.256	-.258
PI	-.412*	-.605**	-.415*	-.029	-.399*	-.358
SRD	-.398*	-.334	-.258	.029	-.343	-.209
RA	-.308	-.237	-.329	.190	-.376	-.226
Rin	-.303	-.282	-.248	.227	-.369	-.157
ORS	-.397*	-.436*	-.327	.188	-.318	-.246

* < p0.05, ** < p0.01

role space and the role set in the organization.

The Table 3 shows that age, marital status, designation, length of service, and total numbers of promotions achieved have negative relationships with the overall role stress experienced by the male employees in the organization. Thus, it may be said that as the male employees grow older in age as well as role in the organization, get married, go higher up in the organizational hierarchy, and having more number of promotions there is corresponding decrease in perception of role stress. But for the positive relationships

between number of dependents and the overall role stress and its dimensions, it may be said that as the male employees have to look after more and more number of dependents they do experience more of role stress emanating from organizational processes, procedures, and practices.

The Table 4 shows some positive and some negative relationships between biographical information and the overall role stress and its dimensions for the female employees. Broadly, it may be said that as the female employees in the organization grow older in

Table 4
Correlation Between Biographical Information & Organizational Role Stress
(Female Employees =25)

	Age	Ms	Desi	Nod	Los	Tnp
IRD	.188	.295	.288	.123	.217	.319
RS	.064	-.035	.508**	.043	.144	.018
REC	.439*	.513**	.566**	.546**	.536**	.558**
RE	.029	.278	.407*	.259	.447*	.379
RO	.178	.175	.299	.397*	.258	.305
RI	.146	.069	.219	.086	.187	.146
PI	-.339	.028	-.047	.124	-.269	-.178
SRD	.205	-.015	.037	-.124	-.125	-.169
RA	-.179	-.128	-.118	-.188	-.158	-.115
Rin	-.148	.207	.097	.227	-.038	.027
ORS	.067	.177	.244	.176	.097	.148

* < p0.05, ** < p0.01

age, get married, progress in hierarchical ladder, have more of dependents to look after, have more number of working experiences, and getting more and more promotions in the job, they do experience less of role stress emanating due to the perception of inadequate personal, interpersonal, financial, and organizational resources, performing ambiguous roles, and feeling that their self not being well integrated with their roles in the organization. On the other hand, while growing older in age, getting married, having more number of dependents to look after, getting more of promotions, and the likes make the female employees to experience more of role stress due to perception of stagnating in the roles, getting conflicting expectations and demands from the people around in the organization, performing too much of work in too little time and the likes.

Overall, it may be said that for the employees as a whole and the male employees a similar trend has been observed whereas for the female employees a mixed relationships (some positive and some negative) between the biographical information and the role stress and its dimensions has been found. Last, but not the least, the findings of the present study with regards to the relationships of biographical information and perception of role stress are more or less same as other empirical enquiries have also come up with same findings.

Conclusions

The study is concluded as follows:

1. Both the employees as a whole and the male employees experience above average amount of role stress in their job, whereas, the female employees experience below average overall role stress.
2. For the employees as a whole age,

gender, marital status, designation, length of work experience, and total number of promotions dimensions of the biographical information have a negative relationship with overall role stress and its dimensions. On the other hand, it's the number of dependents, dimension of the biographical information which has a positive relationship with the organizational role stress.

3. For the male employees, almost all the dimensions of the biographical information have negative relationships with almost all the dimensions of role stress and total role stress. But the numbers of dependents, dimension of the biographical information have a positive relationship with the organizational role stress and its dimensions.
4. For the female employees, there is a mixed relationship between the biographical information and the perception of role stress. In other words, some of the dimensions of the biographical information are positively associated with the organizational role stress and some of the dimensions of the biographical information are negatively related with the role stress experienced by the female employees.

Implications

The findings of the present research investigations have some implications for the organization where this study was conducted, and also for the organizations operating in more or less same businesses as the organization studied. The implications are, as

1. The organization needs to mobilize

its efforts to restructure its organizational policies, practices, and procedures in such a fashion, whereby, both the employees as a whole, the male and the female employees experience just an average level of role stress so as they could be effective as well as efficient in their different role and functions in the organization.

2. Some kind of balance needs to be achieved between organizational and personal lives so that increment in number of dependents does not lead to increase in experiencing more of role stress by the employees as whole, male employees, and the female employees.

Limitations and Suggestions

Not a single research investigation in any field of knowledge is limitation free and so is the case with the present study. Here, the limitations of the study along with the suggestions are discussed simultaneously, as:

1. The size of the sample was just 50 consisting of 25 male and 25 female employees; therefore considerable generalization based on the findings of the study cannot be made.
2. In the present study is focused only on the organizational role stress has been taken into consideration and other factors like personal, interpersonal, as well as organizational variables have not been taken into account.

REFERENCES

- Ahmad, S., James, J. and Ahmad, S. (1991), "Organizational Role Stress : A Psychological Study of Middle Manages", *Journal of Personality and Clinical Studies*, 1 (2), 47 – 50.
- Dhadda, N. (1990), *A Study of the Relationship of Role Stress, Job Involvement, and Personality Types in Aviation and Railway Official*, Unpublished M. Phil. Dissertation, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur.
- Mittal, U. (1992), *Coping Styles as Related to Role Stress, Locus of Control, and Personality Type*, Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, India.
- Pange, S. D. (1997), *Stress, Job Satisfaction and Coping Among Type - A/Type - B Managers : Their Effect on Performance*, Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, University of Poona, Pune, India.
- Pareek, U. (1983a), *Organizational Role Stress*. In L. D. Goldstein and J. W. Pfeiffer (Eds.), *The 1983 Annual for Facilitators, Trainers, and Consultants* (pp. 115–118). San Diego, California : University Associates.
- Pareek, U. (1983c), *Role Stress Scale : ORS Scale Booklet, Answer Sheet, and Manual*. Ahmedabad : Navin Publications.
- Pareek, U. (1993), *Training Instruments for Human Resource Development*, Tata McGraw Hill, New Delhi.
- Patnayak, B. and Mishra, P. K. (1997), *Life in Organizations*, A. H. Wheeler & Co., New Delhi/Allahabad:
- Pestonjee, D. M. (1987). *Executive Stress : Should It Always be Avoided?* *Vikalpa*, 12 (1), 23 – 30.
- Ramamurthi, P. V., Jamuna, D. and Ramamurthi, S. (1984). "A Study of Coronary Prone Behaviour Among a Sample of Executives and Non-executives", *Indian Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 2, 75 –77.
- Roy, A. (1997). *Executive Stress and*

Social Support : An Exploratory Study.
Abhigyan, 15 (4), 25 - 31.

- Singh, S. K. and Dhillon, P. K. (2004). "Newspaper Reporters' Role Effectiveness :A Comparative Study of Two Levels of Hierarchy", *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology, 30 (2), 85 - 89.*
- Srivastava, A. K. and Sehgal, V. (1984).

Perceived Occupational Stress and Coping Strategies as a Function of Need for Achievement. Managerial Psychology, 5(2), 9 - 16.

- Srivastava, P. K. and Sinha, M. M. (1983). *Perceived Role Stress As A Function of Ego Strength and Job Involvement of Managerial Personnel. Psychological Studies,28, 8 - 12.*