A STUDY OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG EXECUTIVES OF PUBLIC SECTOR AND PRIVATE SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

This paper is conducted on executives of public sector vs. private sector. For this we take a sample of 120 executives, 60 from public sector and 60 from private sector. Occupational stress index is constructed by Dr. A.K. Srivastava and Dr. A.P. Singh was administrated on the sample. The result reveals significant difference between executives of public and private sector on dimensions namely, role ambiguity, role conflict, under participation, powerlessness, intrinsic improvishment, low status and unprofitability. Our finding indicates that private sector executives have more role conflict, role ambiguity, under participation, powerlessness, intrinsic improvishment, low status and profitability as compare to executives of public sector. So this study suggests that there is a need to understand the problems of private sector vs. public sector.

Keywords: Stress, Intrinsic improvishment, Occupational stress index, Role ambiguity, Public Sector, Private sector.

INTRODUCTION

We are living in an area of growing complexities and pressures where human constitution and capacities are being taxed severely. Our society has changed much, the 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. Stress can be defined as an adverse reaction that people experience when external demands exceed their internal capabilities (Waters and Ussery, 2007). The stress relating to job have become predominant feature of modern life, exerting far reaching effect on focal employee’s behaviour and adjustments on as well as off the job. This type of stress is known as 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 and Newman, 1978). Workplace stress is the harmful physical and emotional response that occurs when there is a poor match between job demands and the capabilities, resource, or needs of the worker. Stress related disorders encompass a broad array of conditions, including psychological disorders, emotional strain, maladaptive behaviours and cognitive impairment. In turn, these conditions may lead to poor work performance or even injury.

As we perceive effects of stress on an individual is not always negative. It is not always dysfunctional in nature, if positive, can prove one of the most important factors in improving productivity within an organization (Spielberger, 1980). If not positive, stress can create many physical and psychological disorders among employees, and can be responsible for frustration, haste and job dissatisfaction. As a result, the lack of work may cause complacency within the organization. Stress is therefore, multidimensional, and its results depend on whether employees perceive it as a problem or a solution.

There are two types of organization working in a country, namely public sector organization and private sector organization. Public sector organizations are considered those that are government owned and operated. Public sector organization focuses primarily on the administration of essential services and the control and maintenance of a country’s social and economic conditions. On the other hand private sector organizations are considered either profit-making enterprises or community service groups that operate independently of the government (Macklin, Smith, and Dollard, 2006).

Brook (1973) stated that qualitative changes in the job creates adjustment problem among workers. The interpersonal relationships inside the departments create qualitative difficulties within the workplace to a great extent. Ivancevich and Matteson (1980) signify that, lack of group cohesiveness may explain various behavioural and physiological outcomes in an employ desiring such sticks together. Negative interpersonal relations and workplace interpersonal conflict are prevalent sources of stress and are existed with symptoms of ill health and negative mood depression. Lack of effective consultation, lack of participation in the decision making process and communication, unjustified restriction on behaviour, no sense of belonging and office politics are identified as potential sources of stressors. Lack of participation in work activity is associated with negative behavioural response. The stress factors which have been taken for the study are forgetfulness; closeness to family, tiredness, accomplishment, role conflicts, ambiguity, role overload is widely examined individual stressors (McGrath 1976;)

The present study explores the Occupational Stress present with the Public Sector and private sector employees of Uttrakhand region (Hardwar, and Roorkee) with the help of Occupational Stress index developed by Dr. A.K.Srivastava and Dr.A.P.Singh. This study also presents recommendations to managers/administrators and policy makers on several Organizational Development interventions which can alleviate stress experienced by Public Sector and private sector employees.

**Review of Literature**

Several researchers reported that in industrial setting job satisfaction and job involvement increases with age and as a result occupational stress decreases. Several studies focused on
determining whether or not there is meaningful difference between the public and private sector in terms of occupational stress.

Several researchers reported various reasons of occupational stress. They try to explore the relationship between stress and job performance. It is reported that high level of job related stress decreases job performance. 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. Ahmad, Bharadwaj, and Narula (1985) assess levels among 30 executives from 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. Chaudhary (1990) probes the relationship between role stress and job satisfaction among bank officers. The author’s result indicates that role erosion and resource inadequacy act as dominant stressors while role ambiguity and role expectation conflict are remote contributors to role stress in the sample population. Srivastava (1991) surveys 300 employees of the life insurance corporation and reports that there is a 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. 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. Kumar and Acharnamba (1993) in their findings among public sector administrative staff their counterparts in public sector have greater job satisfaction than private sector using the job descriptive index.

Scheider and Vaught (1993) had made a study amongst 36 private sector employees and 68 public sector employees with the JDI methodology and there was no significant difference in job satisfaction levels between public and private sector employees. In a comparative study of Organizational role stress among managers of Government, Public and Private sectors by Mohan and Chauhan (1999) Public sector managers were found to experience high Occupational Role stress primarily due to rapid changes in the Indian Banking Environment which has led to higher work load and lower Work Life Balance. The long held Bureaucratic work culture and work practices have also been said to be unsuitable in the current demanding business scenario.

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. Sharma (2005) who studied Role stress among fifty Private and Government hospital doctors from Jaipur, Rajasthan also found that Government doctors experience higher levels of stress than Private ones. An ASSOCHAM report (www.assocham.org/prels) states that those working in the banking sector have to attract a large pool of customers for their various schemes. At the same time they also have to ensure timely recovery of loans which is quite likely to create stress. 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.

D’Aleo et al. (2007) examine a sample of 559 public and 105 private sector employees to assess their respective risk profiles. They find that public sector employees face more stress than private sector employees. Malik (2011) collects data on 200 bank employees in Quetta, Pakistan, of which 100 work in public sector and the remaining work in private sector banks. The author finds that there is a significant difference in the level of stress to which both groups are subject, and that public sector bank employees face a high level of occupational stress.

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. In this study we try to find out occupational stress in executives of public sector and private sector employees.

**Objective of the Study**

The objective of the study is to examine the difference in occupational stress level of executives of public sector and private sector.

**Hypothesis**

The executives of public sector as well as of private sector would differ significantly in dimensions of occupational stress index namely role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, unreasonable group and political pressure, responsibility for person, under participation, powerlessness, poor peer relation, intrinsic impoverishment, low status, strenuous working condition, and unprofitability.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

(i) **Sample:** The sample population for this study comprises a total of 120 executives drawn from public sector and private sector. Of which 60 are from public sector and 60 are from private sector. The age of executives range from 25 to 45 years.

(ii) **Tools used:** Occupational stress index constructed by Dr. A.K.Srivastava and Dr.A.P.Singh is used for present study. There are twelve dimension of the scale namely role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, unreasonable group and political pressure, responsibility for person, under participation, powerlessness, poor peer relation, intrinsic impoverishment, low status, strenuous working condition, and unprofitability. The scale consist of 46 items each to be rated on the five point scale.

(iii) **Procedure:** The various public sector organizations from where executives were selected from Uttrakhand (Hardwar, and Roorkee) namely BSNL, LIC, SBI, etc. the private sector organization chosen for the research were ICICI Bank, and private industries. The sample was collected on basis of convenience sampling. The OSI was administered individually at their working place in their extra time. Respondent were asked to fill the question according to instructions. They are requested to respond truly as they feel in their present state and were assured that their responses would be kept confidential. Later on the questionnaires were collected from them and scoring was done as per instruction given in the tool. Mean, standard deviation was calculated for analyzing data. The differences between the two groups have been examined by computing the t-test between them.
RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Table 1: Occupational stress among the executives of public sector vs. private sector Mean,S.D.,t.value.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.no.</th>
<th>Dimensions of Occupational Stress Index</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t.value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Role Overload</td>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>19.75</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.15</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Role Ambiguity</td>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.075*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.73</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Role Conflict</td>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>3.5**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.78</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Unreasonable group &amp; Political Pressure</td>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>11.87</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.25</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Responsibility for Person</td>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Under Participation</td>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>11.35</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>2.70**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.08</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Powerlessness</td>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>2.19*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.07</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Poor Peer Relation</td>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Intrinsic Improvishment</td>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>2.44*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.03</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td></td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Low-Status</td>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.75**</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Strenuous Working Condition</td>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>10.85</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>0.603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Unprofitability</td>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>2.97**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result of the Table 1 reveals that in dimension of occupational stress index (OSI) namely role overload, the value of t (0.61) was not found to be significant at any level of confidence. The mean of public sector executives is (M=19.75) and mean of private sector executives is (M=19.15), it shows very small difference between two groups. So we can say that public sector and private sector executive’s faces almost same level of role overload in their jobs.

In second dimensions of (OSI) namely role ambiguity the value of t is (2.075) was found to be significant at 0.05 level of confidence. The mean of public sector executives is (M= 10.9) and mean of private sector executives is (M= 11.73). It indicates that private sector executives face more role ambiguity as compare to executives of public sector.
In third dimension result shows that in role conflict the value of t is (3.5) was found to be significant at 0.01 level of confidence. The mean indicate that private sector executives mean (M= 15.78) is more as compare to public sector executives mean (M=13.4). It shows that private sector executives have more role conflict in comparison to public sector executives. Private sector executives are experiencing incongruent role demands and commitments.

In fourth dimension of (OSI) namely unreasonable group and political pressure the value of t (0.68) was not found to be significant .the mean (M=11.87) of public sector is less than mean of (M=12.25) private sector, so we can say that public sector and private executives faces almost same level of unreasonable group and political pressure.

In fifth dimension of (OSI) namely responsibility for person the value of t (0.91) was not found to be significant at any level of confidence. There is negligible difference between the mean of two groups. So we can say the responsibility for person is almost same in both groups.

In sixth dimension of (OSI) namely under participation the value of t (2.70) was found to be significant at 0.01 level of confidence. The mean of public sector executives (M=11.35) and the mean of private sector executives is (M=10.08). It indicates that private sector executives feel more under participation as compare to executives of private sector executives.

In seventh dimension of (OSI) namely powerlessness the value of t (2.19) was found to be significant at 0.05 level of confidence. The mean public sector executives is (M=9.10) and the mean private sector executives is (M=8.07). It indicates that private sector executives feel more powerlessness as compare to executives of public sector.

In eight dimension of (OSI) namely poor peer relation the found t value (0.41) was not significant at any level of confidence. The mean of public sector executives (M=10.8) and the mean of private sector executives (M=11.01). This shows that both groups’ executives have almost same level peer relation.

In ninth dimension of (OSI) namely intrinsic impoverishment the value of t (2.44) was found to be significant at 0.05 level of confidence. The mean of public sector executives (M=10.40) and the mean of private sector executive (M=9.03). It indicates that in public sector executives are more intrinsic impoverishment as compare to executives of private sector.

In tenth dimension of (OSI) namely low status the value of t (t=2.75) was found to be significant at 0.01 level of confidence. The mean of public sector executives (M=7.90) and the mean of private sector executives (M=6.80). It indicates that public sector executives feel high status in their jobs as compare to executives of private sector.

In eleven dimension of (OSI) namely strenuous working condition the found t value (0.603) was not significant. The mean of the public sector executives (M=10.8) and the mean of private sector executives (M= 10.5). It indicates that sometime private sector executives work in strenuous condition, but there is not much difference in working condition of public sector vs. private sector executives.

In twelve dimension of (OSI) namely unprofitability the found t value (2.97) was found to be significant at 0.01 level of confidence. The mean of public sector executives (M=6.15) and the mean of private sector executives is (M=5.11). It indicates that public sector executives. It indicates that public sector executives feel more profitability in their jobs as compare to private sector executives.

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Discussion

Stress has been a functional role amongst individuals across the globe and with organization and its impact on organizational health and job satisfaction of employees. The present study was planned to investigate the occupational stress among public and private sector employees. On occupational stress index we found very encouraging results. The found results are significant \((t= 3.5, 2.70, 2.75, 2.97)\) at 0.01 level of confidence in 4-dimension of occupational stress index namely role conflict, under participation, low status and unprofitability. When people experience role conflict their performance get down. Such stresses are more prone in private sector executives. Under participation is a situation when a person experience that he have potential but he is not properly using his potential in such situation performance gets down. This is dominating factor of occupational stress. Private sector executives face under participation more as compare to public sector executives. Many times private sector executives feel low status and profitability. They work hard for maintaining their jobs. They also have job insecurity. Expect this we found \((t= 2.075, 2.19, 2.44,)\) significant result on 0.5 level of confidence in dimensions namely role ambiguity, powerlessness, and intrinsic improvishment. Role ambiguity when there is a lack of clarity about the role and the expectations of others from the role, or inadequate feedback on how one’s performance is regarded by others, stress due to Role Ambiguity may happen. Behrman and Perreault (1984) suggest that when management expectations are vague, when a person has insufficient information to carry out job duties or when uncertainty exists concerning job requirements, Role ambiguity can occur. Four types of roles, according to Kahn and Quinn (1970) are most likely to experience ambiguity a) New Roles in the organisation, b) Roles in expanding or contracting organisations, c) Roles in organisations subjected to repeated changes, d) process related roles. In such situations, people may experience stress because they are uncertain about how their performance is being evaluated and whether they are doing the right things. Kahn (1973) also differentiated between present role ambiguity and future-prospect ambiguity. People suffering from role ambiguity according to Kahn et.al. (1964) may also experience high job related tension, low job satisfaction, low self-confidence and a sense of futility. Such types of feeling are high among private sector executives. Powerlessness is also very contributing factor. Private sector executives sometime feel powerlessness in their jobs. This feeling could be related to shortage of supplies manpower information, infrastructure or even money in private sector do more work in less money. Intrinsic improvishment is also dominating factor of occupational stress among executives of private sector. These results support the findings of a number of earlier studies, Macklin et.al. (2006). Srivastav (2009) suggests that Control Climate discourages delegation of power and responsibilities and can debilitate the development and growth of employees. In a study of the control climate in Public Sector and its relationship with stress, Srivastav (2009) found that Control Climate is positively correlated with Role Expectation Conflict, Role Stagnation, Role Isolation, Role Erosion, Role Ambiguity,Self Role Distance, Resource Inadequacy as well as Total Role Stress. Sandra and Frans (2002) suggest that control is generally stronger in Public Sector.

Conclusion

This study has led us to conclude that employees in both the public and the private sectors face moderate levels of stress, but executives of private sector face more stress than their
counterparts. Our analysis of the impact of various socio demographic factors on stress level reveals that educational qualification and work experience have a significant impact on employees stress level. Some stressors through the study revealed that they can be controlled by providing additional manpower wherever required, integrating some structural interventions. Management development activities can also be initiated to create awareness on the nature and the level of stress and help executives to cope effectively. We should make better condition for working.

REFERENCES

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