



Impact of Role Ambiguity, Role Conflict and Role Overload on Job Stress in Small and Medium Scale Industries

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Available online at: www.isca.in, www.isca.me

Received 9th November 2013, revised 14th November 2013, accepted 16th December 2013

Abstract

The paper examines the impact of work stressors on job stress of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In carrying out the study, random sampling technique was used to select 200 employees who have worked at least 3 years in an SME. Relevant data were collected using structured questionnaire. The correlation analysis was used to test the study hypothesis. The findings showed that work overload, work ambiguity and work conflict brings about job stress among workers resulting in poor concentration, mental block and poor decision making skills. Based on these findings, it was recommended that SMEs should reduce work conflict, work overload and role ambiguity through adoption of job redesign techniques. Organizational support activities such as counseling and stress reduction workshops should also be increased.

Keywords: Work overload, work conflict, work ambiguity and job stress.

Introduction

Small and medium-sized enterprises make an important positive contribution to the Indian economy. Small-scale industries provide employment mostly to illiterate people in rural areas in India. These units need short gestation period in establishment, are less dependent on imported raw material and machinery and help in meeting a substantial part of demand of consumer goods. These units also help in solving the problem of regional disparities in economic growth¹. In recent years, the small-scale sector in India has Role-related demands, lack of resources, lack of support and insufficient time to keep abreast with overall job demands are frequently reported as the sources of stress among the workers. Work-related stress is of growing concern because it has significant economic implications for SMEs. Stress is considered to not only affect the physical and mental health of employees, but the business as well. Stressed workers show withdrawal behaviors such as a cynicism toward work, lack of organizational commitment and intention to leave the organisation. Stress will lead to lower productivity and this is a threat to the organizational competitiveness. The impact of such pressures on the small business workforce is becoming apparent. The negative effect of stress levels, low morale and staff absence could be set to continue unless the economic environment improves. Improving human resources in SMEs can lead to a marked improvement in their business performance.

Literature Review: Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, and Snoek² defined role stressor as the pressure experienced by an individual as a result of organizational and job-specific factors in the form of demands and constraints that have been placed on them. Cooper and Marshal³ classified role, career development, relationship with others and organizational structure and climate as five

main clusters of work stressors. Ivancevich and Matteson⁴ divided work stressors in four categories like physical environment, role and career development, relationships and organizational structures, climate and job characteristics. Srivastava and Singh⁵ developed an occupational stress index. It assesses perceived occupational stress related to role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, group and political pressures, responsibility for persons, under participation, powerlessness, poor peer relations, intrinsic impoverishment, low status, strenuous working conditions and unprofitability. Schuler⁶ identified job qualities, relationship, organizational structure, physical qualities, career development, change and role as the main categories of work stressors. Parker and Decotiis⁷ proposed six specific causes of work stress which included job characteristics, organizational structure, climate and information flow, role, relationship, career development and external commitments and responsibilities. Quick and Quick⁸ proposed task demands, role demands, physical demands and interpersonal demands as four major categories of work stressors. Parasuraman and Alutto⁹ identified contextual, role-related and personal stressors as three general categories of stressors in organizational settings. Jackson and Schuler¹⁰ found out that Job or role ambiguity is also a potential source of job stress and this occurs when job or task requirements are not clearly outlined or when workers are unsure of their responsibilities and duties. Hendrix et.al.¹¹ identified workload, work autonomy and control supervision and support, role ambiguity and role conflict a major organizational stressors. Cummins¹² suggested role conflict and ambiguity, work overload, under utilization of skills, resource inadequacy and lack of participation as the main categories of work stressors. Summers, DeCotiis and DeNisi¹³ proposed personal characteristics, structural organizational characteristics, procedural organizational characteristics and role characteristics

as the main categories of work stressors in their model. Lack of career advancement, work load, risk taking and decision making and employee morale and organizational culture were identified as four broad categories of stressors.

Objective of the study: i. To study the impact of role ambiguity on job stress. ii. To study the impact of role conflict on job stress. iii. To study the impact of role overload on job stress.

Methodology

Sample Design: The present study was carried out in Hyderabad city by selecting employees from 10 Small and Medium Scale industries. A sample of 200 employees was selected for gathering primary data. To carry out the study in a more accurate and easier way, convenience sampling method was adopted.

Data Collection: Both primary and secondary data have been used to draw appropriate conclusions. The primary data was

collected by using interview and questionnaire method. The secondary data was mainly drawn from available literature pertaining to the field of knowledge.

Statistical tool used: The researcher used the statistical package for social sciences. Factor analysis was used to test the construct validity within each factor. Karl Pearson's Coefficient of correlation was computed to find out the degree of relationship among role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload and job stress.

Results and Discussion

The table-2 shows that there are positive loadings on all the role ambiguity variables. Ambiguity in goals, objectives, authority, responsibilities and no proper guidance are all causes of Job Stress. Role Ambiguity has emerged as a separate factor with an eigen value of 2.55. The table-2 shows that the variable "I am not properly guided" has got the highest loading of 0.677.

Table-1
General Profile of Respondents

Factors	Classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Age	20 – 25 Years	46	23%
	26 – 30 Years	108	54%
	31 – 35 Years	26	13%
	Above 35 years	20	10%
Sex	Male	114	57%
	Female	86	43%
Civic Status	Single	96	48%
	Married	104	52%
Experience	1-2 years	110	55%
	3-5 years	30	15%
	5-7 years	34	17%
	7-9 years	20	10%
	Above 9 years	6	3%
Income- Level	Rs 10000 - Rs 15000	97	48.5%
	Rs 15001- Rs 20000	69	34.5%
	Rs 20001 – Rs 25000	28	14%
	More Than Rs 25000	6	3%

Table-2
Factor Loadings for Role Ambiguity Variables

Role Ambiguity Variables	Loadings
Goals and objectives are not clear for my job	0.634
I am not sure of how much authority I have	0.599
I am not sure of what is expected of me	0.656
I am not clear of my responsibilities	0.668
I am not properly guided	0.677
I am uncertain about how my job is linked to other jobs	0.575

Table-3
Factor Loadings for Role Overload Variables

Role Overload Variables	Loadings
I work under extreme time pressure	0.711
I experience work pressure often	0.698
I have to perform tasks that are too difficult	0.652
I work on unnecessary things	0.594
My supervisor's behavior is inconsiderate	0.603

The above table shows that there are positive loadings on all the Role overload variables. Time pressure, work pressure, performing too many difficult tasks, working on unnecessary things and inconsiderate supervisor's behavior are all the causes of Job Stress. Role overload with an eigen value of 2.89 has also been identified as one of the important stressors. The above table reveals that the variable "I work under extreme time pressure" has got the highest loading of 0.711.

Table-4
Factor Loadings for Role Conflict Variables

Role Conflict Variables	Loadings
I do not have adequate resources and materials to perform my duties	0.688
There is a mismatch between my abilities and requirements of my job	0.665
I have to do things that should be done differently	0.621
I receive incompatible requests from two or more people	0.599
I have to buck a policy in order to carry out an assignment	0.578

The above table shows that there are positive loadings on all the Role Conflict variables. Inadequate resources, mismatch between abilities and requirements, incompatible requests from two or more people, compulsion to do things differently are all causes of Job Stress. Role conflict has been identified as a separate factor with an eigen value of 2.62. The above table reveals that the variable "I do not have adequate resources and materials to perform my duties" has got the highest loading of 0.688.

Table-5
Means, standard deviations, and correlations among study variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
Stress	2.74	0.605	1			
Role Overload	3.85	0.799	0.21**	1		
Role Ambiguity	2.15	0.788	0.46**	0.11	1	
Role Conflict	3.21	0.974	0.33**	0.28**	0.31**	1
** indicate significant at 1% significant level						

The correlation matrix given in the above table reveals that the stress is positively associated with Role Overload, Role

Ambiguity and Role Conflict. All the three stresses were significantly related to job stress ($r = 0.21$, $p < 0.01$; $r = 0.46$, $p < 0.01$; $r = 0.33$, $p = 0.01$) for role overload, role ambiguity and role conflict respectively).

Conclusion

From this paper, it can be concluded that to be effective, organizational members must recognize when to increase and when to decrease stress. The key to managing stress is to first recognize its energizing or destructive effects. When employees are required to fulfill conflicting role requirements, they are likely to experience job stress. This is because role conflicts create expectations that may be hard to satisfy. Work overload and work ambiguity were also found to have a positive relationship with job stress. Seeing one's opportunities for career advancement being diminished is perceived as a threat, which in turn, leads to increased job stress. The organisations can encourage productive stress by helping employees build challenges assume responsibility and autonomy over time. They can help employees to reduce stress by helping them secure treatment at work for the symptoms of stress through counseling and organizing stress-reduction workshops and encouraging stress-reduction activities such as diet, exercise, relaxation and psychological support. Finally, organizations can change or remove the stressors by redesigning jobs to reduce role conflict, role overload, role ambiguity, or conversely, boredom. They can also change organizational policies to give individuals more control over their work activities.

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