

Stressors: A Challenge for the Faculty Members of the Higher Educational Institutions

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Abstract

There is a lot of research in the area of stress. The studies consider that the stressors vary according to the environment. With the changing environment, the higher education institutions also need to develop their competitive advantage and hence make it challenging for the stakeholders, especially the faculty members to contribute towards the competitive advantage. This leads to stress amongst the faculty members. The current paper is an exploratory research to investigate the role stressors of the faculty members of various universities from different countries. The research is based on Organizational Role Stress Instrument of Udai Pareek (2002).

Keywords: Organizational Role Stress, VUCA, Faculty members, Stressors

1. Introduction

Traditionally the faculty's job has not been considered stressful and hence there is a sparse research on this topic. But in the VUCA world the situations has changed and to corroborate that, the forbes magazine's survey concludes that the University Professors' job is not least stressful Job. (Forbes, 2013). Much can be attributed to the changing work demands, change in the policy and social status of higher Education.

The research demands are increasing and the faculty works in the environment of "publish or perish". Besides that, the faculty members have to work with an increasing number of students, who are also more demanding. The industry demands are changing and hence the faculty have to review the curriculum to adapt to these changes. They are also assigned administrative duties and all this together make their working day longer and stressful. The increasing expectation from the role as a faculty demands them to work mentally or physically for around twenty to twenty three hours and to aggravate that is the expectation of family and society. The sample size of current study is the faculty members of the higher education institutions.

2. Literature Review

The research in the area of stress is wide and varied. But not has been done to analyze the stress levels of the faculty members, teaching in the higher educational institutions. Besides that Occupational stress has been the focus of research and the role stress is not studied.

The literature shows that there are significant differences in the stress level when studied in reference to tenure, rank, age, gender and marital status. (Gmelch, Willse, & Lourich, 1986; Smith & Sanders, 1989; Slišković & Maslić, 2011). The other studies have proved the difference in the stress level on the basis of designation and work experience (Madhu, 1990; Chaudhary, 2013).

The stress levels of the faculty members also differ as per their designation, which seems to be a significant point to study role stress, as the change in designation leads to change in role. Slišković and Maslić (2011) show that the Full professors, reported lower exposure to stress at work than associate professors, assistant professors, and assistants.

The other studies have proved that the stress levels of females are more than males (Kausar & Bashir, 2004; Jreige, 2011; Ravichandran & Rajendran, 2007; Manthei, 1988; Spielberger & Reheiser, 1994; Repetti & Wood, 1997). But this is contradicted by the study of Kavitha (2012) and Areekkuzhiyil (2011) whose research proves that males have higher stress levels than the females. This is another point which makes it significant to study role stress as the difference in the results of the above researches can be attributed to the difference in their role.

Arnold and Feldman (1986) explored number of potential sources of job stress experienced by different persons and concluded that the role under load, role overload, role conflict, role ambiguity, and job characteristics are the major sources of the job stress.

Cooper, Dewe, & O'Driscoll (2001) have proved that role conflict is one of the significant stressor.

The faculty members are under stress (Gmelch, 1993; Dinham & Scott, 1998; Kyriacou, 2001; Kavitha, 2012; Mishra et al., 1997; Spector, 1997; Mohsin, 2004).

Kavitha (2012) concluded that the role overload and role conflict are the significant stressors for the faculty members, which are also noticed by Mishra et al. (1997), Spector (1997) and Mohsin (2004). The important discriminate role stress factors among the stressful and stress-free faculty members are role overload, and self role distance. In fact, the faculty members are stressed even because of the multiple task that they are required to handle, besides teaching. Not every faculty member have flair for administration but all the faculty members are assigned some or the other administrative responsibilities, which they find difficult to handle and also find themselves distant from this role.

The literature has a huge gap, in the study of role stress amongst the faculty members of higher educational Institutions and hence, the article has been an effort to bridge this gap. The study is conducted to find out the stress levels of faculty members from different institutions of different countries.

3. Research Methodology

The data is collected through Organizational Role stress instrument (Pareek, 2004). The sample size of the study is 108, out of which 40 are females and 68 are males. The sample consists of faculty members from the institutions of various countries like India, UAE, some African countries, US etc. The Independent Sample t-test has been conducted to analyze the data.

3.1 Organisational Role Stress (ORS)

Organizational role is a position assigned to the individual, in the organization, which is defined by the expectations of the stakeholders for that role. The role occupant performs certain functions in the organization in response to his/her role expectation (Pareek, 2004). The concept of organizational role has in-built potential for stress. Stress from occupation of an organization role and performing therein, is known as Organizational Role Stress (ORS). Framework of ORS developed by Pareek (1983) defines ten components of a role stress. These are: i) Inter-Role Distance; ii) Role Stagnation; iii) Role Expectation Conflict; iv) Role Erosion; v) Role Over load; vi) Role Isolation; vii) Personal Inadequacy; viii) Self Role Distance; ix) Role ambiguity; and x) Resource inadequacy.

Inter-role Distance (IRD): When there is conflict between the organizational role and other roles, e.g., an executive not being able to divide his time between work demands and family demands.

Role Stagnation (RS): when there are few opportunities for learning and growth in organization.

Role Expectations Conflict (REC): When there are conflicting demands made on the role by different people in the organization.

Role Erosion (RE): When an individual feels that some important functions which are related to his work are given to someone else to carryout he/she feels that the job which he is doing is not challenging. The stress indicators found to be related to role erosion are a feeling of worthlessness, low self-esteem, mood swing, low motivation to work, etc.

Role Overload (RO): When there is a feeling that too much is expected from the role than what the occupant can cope with.

Role Isolation (RI): When there is a lack of appropriate linkage of one's role with the others' role in the organization .

Personal Inadequacy (PI): When there is a lack of knowledge, skills or adequate preparation to be effective in a particular role.

Self-Role Distance (SRD): When there is conflict between one's values and self-concepts with the requirements of the organizational role.

Role Ambiguity (RA): When an individual does not have a clear picture of work objectives, co-workers' expectations and the scope and responsibilities of his/her job. The stress indicators found to relate to role ambiguity and depressed mood, lowered self-esteem, low motivation to work and intention to leave the job.

Resource Inadequacy (RI): When there is non-availability of resources needed for effective role performance.

3.2 Hypothesis

The literature review provides evidence that the stress levels of females are more than males. (Kausar, Fatima, & Bashir, 2004; Jreige, 2011; Ravichandran & Rajendran, 2007; Manthei, 1988; Spielberg & Reheiser, 1994; Repetti & Wood, 1997).

- 1) The stress levels of the faculty members are not significantly different on basis of gender.
- 2) The stress levels of faculty members of Government Institutions is less than the faculty members of private owned Institutions.

There is difference in the stress level on the basis of designation and work experience (Madhu, 1990; Chaudhary, 2013).

The stress levels are not significantly related to the work experience of the faculty members.

3.3 Hypothesis Testing

- 1) The stress levels of the faculty members are not significantly different on basis of gender.

Table 2 shows that there is no significant difference in the stress level of the faculty members on basis of gender. As the significance value for the variable stress is .119.

Hence, the hypothesis is accepted.

- 2) The stress levels of faculty members of Government Institutions is less than the faculty members of private owned Institutions.

The stress levels of the faculty members in the government institution have higher stress levels (Mean=125) than the stress levels of their counterparts in the private institutions (Mean=58.5) (Table 3). Even Table 4 shows the value of “p” is 0.

Hence, the hypothesis is rejected.

3) The stress levels are not significantly related to the work experience of the faculty members.

The stress levels of the faculty members with experience less than 5 years (Mean=51.5) is less than those with the experience more than 5 years (Mean=70) (Table 5). The table 6 also shows that the ‘p’ value is 0.008. This shows that the hypothesis is accepted.

4. Findings

The research shows that the role stress is prevalent amongst the faculty members of the higher Educational institutions. Although the stress levels does not have significant difference, on the basis of gender, but, there is a difference. The stress level of male faculty members (61) is less than the female faculty members (71). (Table 1). The table 2 shows that except IRD, RI and RIn, all other stress variables differ as per the gender. Table 3 and 4 shows that the stress level of the faculty members in government owned institution is higher than the private owned institution. The faculty with more than 5 years of work experience, exhibits higher stress than their colleagues with less experience in job, which can be attributed to increasing expectation from the faculty members, who have higher work experience. It is expected of them to take up significant administrative role and also to devote time towards research.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of stress on basis of gender

Group Statistics					
	Gender(0=M,1=F)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
IRD	0	60	8.40	6.137	.792
	1	48	8.00	4.105	.593
RS	0	60	6.40	4.798	.619
	1	48	9.00	3.713	.536
REC	0	60	5.60	1.870	.241
	1	48	7.00	4.105	.593
RE	0	60	4.00	3.827	.494
	1	48	6.00	4.347	.627
RO	0	60	6.80	5.158	.666
	1	48	8.50	3.679	.531
RI	0	60	5.40	5.046	.651
	1	48	6.75	3.145	.454
PI	0	60	2.60	2.264	.292
	1	48	4.75	3.739	.540
SRD	0	60	9.60	3.227	.417
	1	48	6.25	1.495	.216
RA	0	60	5.40	3.411	.440
	1	48	7.00	4.405	.636
Rin	0	60	7.20	5.683	.734
	1	48	8.25	2.709	.391
Stress	0	60	61.40	36.708	4.739
	1	48	71.50	28.210	4.072

Table 2. Independent sample t test of stress on basis of gender

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
IRD	Equal variances assumed	2.678	.105	.387	106	.699	.400	1.033	-1.647	2.447
	Equal variances not assumed			.404	103.002	.687	.400	.989	-1.562	2.362
RS	Equal variances assumed	6.364	.013	-3.086	106	.003	-2.600	.843	-4.270	-.930
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.174	105.900	.002	-2.600	.819	-4.224	-.976
REC	Equal variances assumed	40.775	.000	-2.356	106	.020	-1.400	.594	-2.578	-.222
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.188	62.534	.032	-1.400	.640	-2.679	-.121
RE	Equal variances assumed	4.895	.029	-2.540	106	.013	-2.000	.787	-3.561	-.439
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.505	94.433	.014	-2.000	.799	-3.585	-.415
RO	Equal variances assumed	8.584	.004	-1.925	106	.057	-1.700	.883	-3.451	.051
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.996	104.730	.049	-1.700	.852	-3.389	-.011
RI	Equal variances assumed	8.256	.005	-1.618	106	.109	-1.350	.834	-3.004	.304
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.700	100.475	.092	-1.350	.794	-2.925	.225
PI	Equal variances assumed	20.068	.000	-3.690	106	.000	-2.150	.583	-3.305	-.995
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.503	73.574	.001	-2.150	.614	-3.373	-.927
SRD	Equal variances assumed	10.067	.002	6.640	106	.000	3.350	.504	2.350	4.350
	Equal variances not assumed			7.141	87.030	.000	3.350	.469	2.418	4.282
RA	Equal variances assumed	2.119	.148	-2.128	106	.036	-1.600	.752	-3.091	-.109
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.069	86.962	.042	-1.600	.773	-3.137	-.063
Rin	Equal variances assumed	45.507	.000	-1.177	106	.242	-1.050	.892	-2.819	.719
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.263	88.335	.210	-1.050	.831	-2.702	.602
Stress	Equal variances assumed	2.190	.142	-1.571	106	.119	-10.100	6.431	-22.850	2.650
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.617	105.850	.109	-10.100	6.248	-22.488	2.288

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of stress on basis of ownership of the institute (government or private)

Group Statistics

	Private/Govt(Private=1)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
IRD	0	12	19.00	.000	.000
	1	96	6.88	3.907	.399
RS	0	12	12.00	.000	.000
	1	96	7.00	4.496	.459
REC	0	12	9.00	.000	.000
	1	96	5.88	3.156	.322
RE	0	12	11.00	.000	.000
	1	96	4.13	3.776	.385
RO	0	12	14.00	.000	.000
	1	96	6.75	4.258	.435
RI	0	12	14.00	.000	.000
	1	96	5.00	3.482	.355
PI	0	12	5.00	.000	.000
	1	96	3.38	3.332	.340
SRD	0	12	15.00	.000	.000
	1	96	7.25	1.995	.204
RA	0	12	9.00	.000	.000
	1	96	5.75	4.044	.413
Rin	0	12	17.00	.000	.000
	1	96	6.50	3.409	.348
Stress	0	12	125.00	.000	.000
	1	96	58.50	27.617	2.819

Table 4. Independent sample t-test of stress on basis of ownership of the institute (government or private)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
IRD	Equal variances assumed	78.612	.000	10.705	106	.000	12.125	1.133	9.879	14.371
	Equal variances not assumed			30.403	95.000	.000	12.125	.399	11.333	12.917
RS	Equal variances assumed	27.895	.000	3.837	106	.000	5.000	1.303	2.416	7.584
	Equal variances not assumed			10.897	95.000	.000	5.000	.459	4.089	5.911
REC	Equal variances assumed	15.747	.000	3.416	106	.001	3.125	.915	1.311	4.939
	Equal variances not assumed			9.700	95.000	.000	3.125	.322	2.485	3.765
RE	Equal variances assumed	28.289	.000	6.281	106	.000	6.875	1.095	4.705	9.045
	Equal variances not assumed			17.839	95.000	.000	6.875	.385	6.110	7.640
RO	Equal variances assumed	36.902	.000	5.875	106	.000	7.250	1.234	4.803	9.697
	Equal variances not assumed			16.685	95.000	.000	7.250	.435	6.387	8.113
RI	Equal variances assumed	35.333	.000	8.916	106	.000	9.000	1.009	6.999	11.001
	Equal variances not assumed			25.323	95.000	.000	9.000	.355	8.294	9.706
PI	Equal variances assumed	24.231	.000	1.683	106	.095	1.625	.966	-.290	3.540
	Equal variances not assumed			4.779	95.000	.000	1.625	.340	.950	2.300
SRD	Equal variances assumed	41.222	.000	13.404	106	.000	7.750	.578	6.604	8.896
	Equal variances not assumed			38.067	95.000	.000	7.750	.204	7.346	8.154
RA	Equal variances assumed	36.642	.000	2.772	106	.007	3.250	1.172	.926	5.574
	Equal variances not assumed			7.873	95.000	.000	3.250	.413	2.431	4.069
Rin	Equal variances assumed	132.696	.000	10.626	106	.000	10.500	.988	8.541	12.459
	Equal variances not assumed			30.179	95.000	.000	10.500	.348	9.809	11.191
Stress	Equal variances assumed	41.551	.000	8.307	106	.000	66.500	8.005	50.629	82.371
	Equal variances not assumed			23.593	95.000	.000	66.500	2.819	60.904	72.096

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of stress on basis of work experience

Group Statistics					
	Experience(m orethan5=1)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
IRD	0	24	4.00	1.022	.209
	1	84	9.43	5.427	.592
RS	0	24	8.00	4.086	.834
	1	84	7.43	4.652	.508
REC	0	24	3.50	2.554	.521
	1	84	7.00	2.845	.310
RE	0	24	6.50	5.618	1.147
	1	84	4.43	3.561	.389
RO	0	24	5.00	1.022	.209
	1	84	8.29	4.978	.543
RI	0	24	4.00	2.043	.417
	1	84	6.57	4.652	.508
PI	0	24	5.00	5.108	1.043
	1	84	3.14	2.245	.245
SRD	0	24	5.50	1.532	.313
	1	84	8.86	3.015	.329
RA	0	24	4.00	4.086	.834
	1	84	6.71	3.714	.405
Rin	0	24	6.00	2.043	.417
	1	84	8.14	5.028	.549
Stress	0	24	51.50	27.070	5.526
	1	84	70.00	34.077	3.718

Table 6. Independent sample t-test of stress on basis of work experience

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
										Lower	Upper
IRD	Equal variances assumed	26.634	.000	-4.860	106	.000	-5.429	1.117	-7.643	-3.214	
	Equal variances not assumed			-8.647	99.348	.000	-5.429	.628	-6.674	-4.183	
RS	Equal variances assumed	.026	.872	.544	106	.587	.571	1.050	-1.510	2.653	
	Equal variances not assumed			.585	41.613	.562	.571	.976	-1.400	2.542	
REC	Equal variances assumed	.087	.769	-5.430	106	.000	-3.500	.645	-4.778	-2.222	
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.769	40.788	.000	-3.500	.607	-4.726	-2.274	
RE	Equal variances assumed	44.342	.000	2.185	106	.031	2.071	.948	.192	3.951	
	Equal variances not assumed			1.711	28.479	.098	2.071	1.211	-.407	4.550	
RO	Equal variances assumed	74.085	.000	-3.204	106	.002	-3.286	1.026	-5.319	-1.252	
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.647	101.324	.000	-3.286	.582	-4.440	-2.132	
RI	Equal variances assumed	14.366	.000	-2.629	106	.010	-2.571	.978	-4.510	-.632	
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.914	88.072	.000	-2.571	.657	-3.877	-1.266	
PI	Equal variances assumed	157.907	.000	2.589	106	.011	1.857	.717	.435	3.279	
	Equal variances not assumed			1.734	25.587	.095	1.857	1.071	-.346	4.060	
SRD	Equal variances assumed	2.410	.124	-5.253	106	.000	-3.357	.639	-4.624	-2.090	
	Equal variances not assumed			-7.396	76.183	.000	-3.357	.454	-4.261	-2.453	
RA	Equal variances assumed	4.489	.036	-3.088	106	.003	-2.714	.879	-4.457	-.971	
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.927	34.609	.006	-2.714	.927	-4.598	-.831	
Rin	Equal variances assumed	24.624	.000	-2.035	106	.044	-2.143	1.053	-4.231	-.055	
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.110	93.713	.002	-2.143	.689	-3.511	-.775	
Stress	Equal variances assumed	.146	.703	-2.445	106	.016	-18.500	7.565	-33.498	-3.502	
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.778	45.933	.008	-18.500	6.660	-31.907	-5.093	

5. Discussion

The stress level of faculty members is increasing. They experience high role stress as shown in Table 7. The major area of concerns is Inter role distance, Self role distance and Resource Inadequacy. This is probably because of the changing expectation of different stakeholders from the faculty members of higher educational institutions. The research shows that the faculty with more than 5 years of experience in this field exhibits higher stress, this seems plausible, as it has been observed that there is lot of pressure to perform, not only in teaching but also in research, for the career progression.

Table 7. Descriptive statistics of role stress

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
IRD	108	2	19	8.22	5.311
RS	108	0	13	7.56	4.521
REC	108	1	12	6.22	3.134
RE	108	1	12	4.89	4.168
RO	108	0	14	7.56	4.619
RI	108	0	14	6.00	4.341
PI	108	0	10	3.56	3.181
SRD	108	4	15	8.11	3.085
RA	108	0	12	6.11	3.947
Rin	108	2	17	7.67	4.616
Stress	108	19	125	65.89	33.437
Valid N (listwise)	108				

6. Conclusion

The field of education is not unscathed of VUCA world and hence the high role stress of the faculty members is observed. With the increasing expectations, the adequate resource supply should be maintained and the congruence in other role requirements should be given due importance.

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