

Occupational stress of the assistant employees of Assam Agricultural University of Jorhat

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ABSTRACT

Occupational stress is the interaction of the worker and the conditions of work. The study was conducted to identify the level of occupational stress of the Assistant Professors and equivalent rank at Assam Agricultural University. A total number of 50 respondents including Assistant professors, Subject Matter Specialist and Junior Scientists were selected randomly for the present study. A well developed and widely used tool known as occupational stress index (OSI) in the Indian context (Srivastava and Singh, 1984) was used to assess the occupational stress of the sample. The questionnaire consists of 46 statements. The items relate to almost all relevant components of the job life which cause stress in some way or the other. Total score on this scale is considered for the assessment of occupational stress. More the score on this scale indicates more stress. The findings of the present study revealed that (68%) of the respondents were highly stressed due to overload of work and 54 per cent of the respondents were moderately stressed due to the reason of under participation. Due to unreasonable group and political pressure 46 per cent of the respondents showed low level of stress.

INTRODUCTION

Occupational stress is the interaction of the worker and the conditions of work. Downsizing, increased workloads, high competition, growing population etc are taking their toll. "Stress, in essence, is a feeling of doubt about being able to cope, a perception that the resources available do not match the demands made. When it persists, stress can cause physical and psychological ill health and adversely affect social functioning." In general, occupational stress has been viewed as an antecedent of job satisfaction, and the two constructs have

been treated as related yet distinct (Stanton *et al.*, 2002). Occupational stress is the result of individuals to know alarming issue in their work environments. Obviously, it is stress on the job that occurs in a person. The worker when involved in problem, bring occupational stress as result (Arnold and Feldman, 1986). Job or occupational stress is something we all face as employees or employers and we all handle it differently. It is a mismatch between the individual capabilities and organizational demands. Also it is a mismatch between the expectations of both individual and organization. Stress not only affects the physical, psychological and financial balances of an

employee but also the employers as well. Survey of the literature on occupational stress reveals that there are a number of factors related to job, which affect the behaviour of the employees and as a result of it, normal life is disturbed (McLean, 1979 and Brief *et al.*, 1981). Occupational stress has become a common and costly problem, leaving few workers untouched. Not all stress is bad. Learning how to deal with and manage stress is critical to maximizing job performance, staying safe on the job, and maintaining physical and mental health. Keeping these facts in view the present study entitled "Occupational stress of the employees of Assam Agricultural University of Jorhat district" has been undertaken to identify the level of occupational stress of the assistant professors and equivalent rank at Assam Agricultural University.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A total number of 50 respondents including Assistant professors, Subject Matter Specialists and Junior Scientists were selected randomly for the present study. A well developed tool known as Occupational Stress Index (OSI) in the Indian context (Srivastava and Singh, 1984) was used to assess the occupational stress of the sample. The questionnaire consists of 46 statements. Each of the statement are rated on the five-point scale with five alternative responses e.g., 5 for strongly agree, 4 for agree 3 for undecided, 2 for disagree and 1 for strongly disagree. The items relate to almost all relevant

components of the job life which cause stress in some way or the other. Total score on this scale is considered for the assessment of occupational stress. More the score on this scale indicates more stress. The collected data were then thoroughly coded, analysed and appropriate tables were formulated.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

It was cleared from the results (Table 1) that the highest per cent (68%) of the respondents were highly stressed due to work overload. It was also found that due to role ambiguity 56 per cent of the respondents were highly stressed. The stress level of 52 per cent of the respondents were low due to poor peer relation. It was found that 38 per cent of the respondents were highly stressed due to role conflict. Due to unreasonable group and political pressure 46 per cent of the respondents showed low stress level. A medium level (46%) of stress was reported by the respondents because of responsibility for persons. 54 per cent were moderately stressed due to the reason of under participation. Powerlessness was a cause of low stress for 48 per cent of the respondents. It was also clear from the results (Table 1) that the highest percentage (48% and 50%) of the respondents reported low stress due to intrinsic impoverishment and low status, respectively. A medium level (52%) of stress was reported by the respondents because of strenuous working condition. The results showed that low level of occupational stress was reported by 48 per cent of the respondents.

Stressors	Low		Medium		High	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Role overload	7	14	9	18	34	68
Role ambiguity	9	18	13	26	28	56
Role conflict	13	26	18	36	19	38
Unreasonable group and political pressure	23	46	17	34	10	20
Responsibility for persons	18	36	23	46	9	18
Under participation	10	20	27	54	13	26
Powerlessness	24	48	15	30	11	22
Poor peer relations	26	52	14	28	10	20
Intrinsic impoverishment	24	48	16	32	10	20
Low status	25	50	17	34	8	16
Strenuous working conditions	11	22	26	52	13	26
Unprofitability	24	48	15	30	11	22

It was also cleared from the results (Table 1) that highest level of occupational stress arises mostly due to work load followed by role ambiguity and role conflict in work place. This can be supported by the findings of Mansor *et al.* (2003) that workloads, working conditions, and relationship at work were the main concern of the managers that lead to stress at the work place. Another study by Cooper and Marshall (1976) stated that occupational stress includes the environmental factors or stressors such as work overload, role ambiguity, role conflict and poor working conditions associated with a particular job. From the results we can be interpreted that these problems arise may be due to lack of proper planning and time management practices. On the other hand poor peer relation was less stressful for them. They have a good understanding and cooperation with their colleagues. All working people have certain level of occupational stress. The degree and depth may vary from one another. Both employer and employee must understand that work should be valued and not excessive. Work should not compromise on health and family life; rather offer happiness, peace of mind, certainty, variety and flexibility. As a general rule, actions to reduce job stress should be given top priority in the process of organizational change to improve working conditions and to avert the situation of brain drain. But even the most conscientious efforts to improve working conditions are unlikely to eliminate stress completely for all workers.

A survey by UK Institute of Directors in 1998

revealed that 40 per cent said that the immediate problem of their companies at that time was stress and 90 per cent viewed that work practices could be a factor for stress.

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