Effect of Type of School, Gender, Age, Qualification and Experience on Role Stress: An Empirical Study on Educational Administrators of Eritrea

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Abstract: The present investigation was planned to determine the influence of type of school, gender, age, qualification and experience on Principals/Directors to see role stress. The sample consisted of 100 Principals/Directors working in schools of Asmara, Eritrea, Africa. Organizational Role Stress scale developed by Pareek (1993) was administered on randomly selected sample. The data were analyzed using means, standard deviations and students-‘t’ test. The results revealed that (i) Private school Principals/Directors have had high job stress in comparison to public sector Principals/Directors (ii) female Principals/Directors showed significantly greater degree of job stress than male counterparts (iii) younger group of Principals/Directors showed significantly higher level of job stress than aged administrators (iv) less qualified Principals/Directors were found in experiencing high level of stress in comparison to highly qualified administrators and, (v) more experienced Principals/Directors had less job Stress than their less experienced counterparts. The present investigation can contribute to the better understanding of variables that lead to occupational stress and this can help principals to deal with effectively and successfully. Further, findings can help to implement effective preventing programs against occupational stress, considering how administrators perceive stress at work.

Keywords: Organizational Role Stress, Educational Administrators, Eritrea
1. Introduction

Undoubtedly work has a central role in people’s life. Apart from the fact that it occupies a lot of their time, it also provides the status and the financial basis of their lifestyles. Thus, people want to take more challenging jobs in their life, which may sometimes result stress. The many challenges in the work environments, characterized by heightened competition, lack of time, more uncontrollable factors, lack of space, continuous technological development, conflicting demands from organizational stakeholders (Hall and Savery, 1986), increased use of participatory management and computerization (Murray and Forbes, 1986), greater uncertainty, and others have resulted in higher job stress. In the pursuit for organizational excellence, managers need to work under highly stressful circumstances.

Job stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Job stress can lead to poor health and even injury. The concept of job stress is often confused with challenge, but these concepts are not the same. Challenge energizes us psychologically and physically, and it motivates us to learn new skills and master our jobs. When a challenge is met, we feel relaxed and satisfied. Thus, challenge is an important ingredient for healthy and productive work. The importance of challenge in our work lives is probably what people are referring to when they say "a little bit of stress is good for you”.

Selye (1976) has defined Job stress as the non-specific response of the body to any demands made upon it. It is considered to be an internal state or reaction to anything we consciously or unconsciously perceive as a threat, either real or imagined (Clarke and Watson, 1991). Robbins (2001) defines stress as a dynamic condition in which the individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint, or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important. Stress can be caused by environmental, organizational, and individual variables (Matteson and Ivancevich, 1999; Cook and Hunsaker, 2001). Organizational-based factors have been known to induce job stress for employees at the workplace (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). These factors are commonly termed as organizational stressors since they serve as agents that trigger the various stress reactions (Von Onciul, 1996).

Numerous studies have explored stress, primarily from the psychological, sociological and medical perspective. From the business perspective, researchers dealt with the issue of occupational stress, as Job causes a great deal of stress to contemporary employees. Researchers have studied individual differences in the belief that they influence reactions to objectively stressful events or appraisals of events as being stressful, or they simply add to the variance explained in the stress outcomes (Ganster & S’chaubroeck, 1991). While some studies find that women experience overall greater amounts of work-related stress (Eugene, J W 1999)), other researchers argue that different work factors account for gender-related stress (Schuler S 1980)), and still others report no gender differences when controlling for
occupation and position (Greenhaus J H 1985). Similarly conflicting findings are found in studies examining gender differences in coping strategies (Greenhaus J H 1985).

Role conflict has been found to have a positive relationship with job stress (Roberts et al, 1997). When individuals are required to play two or more role requirements that work against each other, they are likely to experience job stress. This is because role conflicts create expectations that may be hard to reconcile. Foot and Venne (1990) discovered a positive relationship between barriers to career advancement and job stress. When employees perceived a lack of career opportunities, they are likely to feel uncertain about their future in the organization, which in turn, are likely to induce stress. Alienation at the work place can also lead to stress. Thoits (1995) discovered that alienation has a positive effect on job stress. Feelings of alienation are likely to result when employees are required to work alone. According to Kanungo (1981), when workers believe there is a separation between their own job and other work related contexts, a sense of frustration that finally manifested in a behavioral state of apathy is likely to occur. This is particularly intense for employees with high social needs. Working alone on one's job without social support from one's peers and supervisors would lead to job stress (Eugene, 1999). Work overload both quantitatively and qualitatively has been empirically linked to a variety of physiological, psychological, and behavioral strain symptoms (Roberts et al 1997; Miller and Ellis, 1990). According to Greenhaus et al (1987), heavy workload lowers one's psychological well-being resulting in job stress. Additionally, a work environment associated with unpleasant organizational climate, lack of privacy, a lot of hassle in conducting work, and distractions can result in higher stress (Eugene, 1999).

In the 1970s, research was advanced to examine gender-role effects on women's career development and adjustment, particularly to understand their experiences in traditional employs offering low pay, low status, and low prestige (French J 1974). Gender-specific expectations may thus influence both the perception of events as stressful and the type of coping mechanism utilized (Rahim A, 1996). Gender-role identity is contingent on one's self-perception of prior success or failure experiences with gender-role-related behaviors, developing from early socializing experiences. Williams (1994) reported strong cross-cultural agreement in perceptions of gender-appropriate traits; men were described as active, rational, and competent, while women were characterized as passive, emotional, and compassionate.

Kang and Singh (2004) conducted a study on employees working in an Indian electronic industry. The findings revealed that out of ten organizational factors, only six factors such as poor organizational structure and climate, poor interpersonal relations, considerable superior, role ambiguity and work inhibitors have been found to be associated with stress. Further, they pointed out that work overload, unmet financial need and job insecurity, rigid rules and monotonous job has a significant relationship with stress.
Pandey (1997) studied the relationship between personal demographics and organizational role stress. Analysis revealed that experience was reported to be positively and significantly associated with inter-role distance, role expectation conflict, role ambiguity, personal inadequacy, role stagnation, role erosion and self-role distance. Study also reveals that length of service has negative and significant relationship with stress.

According to Farrah T, Steve W (2004) that school principals are so stressed by the pressure of their jobs that nearly half have work-related medical problems and some find it hard to have intimate relationships. They have to contend with high levels of internal conflict between what they consider to be their primary responsibility - to the students - and the demands placed on them by the department," the report says. The study found nearly half the principals surveyed and more than a third of assistant principals had a medical problem linked to work, the most common being weight control, heart disorders and headaches. But most tended to ignore their health problems and often came back work without fully recovering from illness. Some said the job robbed them of time with their families, and some admitted they often found it "difficult to maintain a fully satisfying intimate relationship.

Friesen, D and Richards, D.( 1984) examined the work-related stress experienced by principals and teachers in public schools. The researchers worked under the assumption that some of the stress related to a job situation comes from the environment. Four observations made as a result of the findings may lead to a better understanding of occupational stress and research on stress in organizations: (1) the main stress factors identified were similar to those in previous studies, suggesting a stability of factor structures and the possibility that stress factors can be identified for work groups; (2) background variables did not contribute significantly to overall work stress--again, consistent with previous studies--suggesting that work-related stress is not related to background variables; (3) personal life stress, as in previous studies, failed to account for variance in overall work stress, suggesting work stress results from experiences on the job; and (4) a very significant difference occurs between teachers and principals in their stress experience. Teachers face frequent encounters with high stress, whereas principals infrequently encounter highly stressful situations.

R.Ravichandran and Rajandran (2007) conducted a study on stress aimed to investigate and identify the various sources of stress experienced by higher secondary teachers and also to study their relationship with certain demographic variable like age, gender, educational qualification, work experience and marital status. The result of the study indicated that, there is gender difference on perceived personal stress. Female teachers reported more stress as compared to their male counterpart. Likewise on the factor of teaching assignment both male and female teachers differ significantly in their perception of this source of stress. As regards to age variable, the finding revealed that teachers differ in personal stress, teaching evaluation, facilities available at school and organizational policy. While in
remaining factors no relationship was found. Work experience was contributing to the source of stress among teachers’ personal stress, lack of support from parents, organizational policy and parental expectations.

It was found that teachers’ qualification play an important role as a source of stress on personal stress and teaching assignment. In terms of marital, it was contributing as a source of stress among teacher’s personal stress, teaching evaluation and facilities available at school.

The topic is, therefore, still popular, although it occupies academics’ and practitioners’ attention now for more than half a century.

2. Objectives

The following objectives have been achieved in the study:-

1. To study the role stress level in principals/directors working with Public and Private sectors
2. To compare the role stress level in male and female principals/directors
3. To compare the role stress in principals/directors as per their age
4. To compare the role stress level in principals/directors as per their Qualifications
5. To compare the role stress in principals/directors as per their experience

3. Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested.

$H_{01}$ There is no significant difference in role stress as per type of schools of Principals/Directors.

$H_{02}$ There is no significant differences in role stress as per gender of Principals/Directors

$H_{03}$ There is no significant differences in role stress as per ages of Principals/Directors.

$H_{04}$ There is no significant differences in role stress as per qualifications of Principals/Directors.

$H_{05}$ There is no significant differences in role stress as per experiences of Principals/Directors.

4. Method

The sample of 100 principals/directors working in Eritrean public and private schools was taken. Their mean age was 43.94 (SD =7.70) years and they had 9.68 (SD = 7.57) years working experience.

5. Instruments

The Organizational Role Stress Scale (ORS) (1993) developed by Udai Pareek was administered on principals/directors. The scale measures the role set conflicts and role space conflicts. Role set conflict has seven components namely -role ambiguity, role expectation conflict, role overload, role erosion, role
inadequacy, personal inadequacy, and role isolation. Whereas the role space conflict has three components namely self-role distance, role stagnation and inter role distance. Each component carries five items. The composite score of all ten components measures the stress. The scale consists of 50 items and each item rated on 5 point rating scale ranging from Never to Very Frequently with a weighted score of 1-5.

6. Procedure

One psychometric measure was administered on 100 educational administrators working in Eritrean Schools. Participants were randomly selected from the different schools and educational sectors of Eritrea. The respondents were given the instrument at their offices and to take their own time to complete the inventory. Furthermore, the participants were assured that their responses to the inventory would be held in strict confidence and they will be used only for academic research purposes.

7. Ethics

Various ethical considerations were taken into account during the conduction of research study. First we received a supporting letter from the administrative office to conduct the study. Second, participants were given information by the investigators about the objectives of the study. They were also informed that participation was voluntary. Finally, they were assured of confidentiality in their responses and that the research is for academic purposes only.

8. Results

Mean values and standard deviations are presented in Table-1. Independent sample t test showed significant differences regarding- School type, gender, age, qualifications and experiences. As table-1 indicates that five out of five groups i.e. School type, Gender, Age Qualification and Experience differ significantly. Mean score presented in table 1 reveals that the higher the mean score the higher the stress level among principals/directors. Government and private school principals/directors differ significantly in their stress level as Table 1 reveals that the calculated t value is 3.79 which is higher than table value. In regards of gender the calculated t value is 3.11 which is higher than the table value which strongly reveals that females tend to have more stress than male. Age, qualifications and experience wise result indicates that these three groups also differ significantly from their counterparts as the calculated t value is 4.10, 4.44 and 3.49 respectively which is higher than to table value.
Table 1: Group wise Showing N, Mean, Standard Deviations, df, and t value of School Principals/Directors on Organizational Role Stress Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group No.</th>
<th>Compared Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D.F.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Government School Principals</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>98.55</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private School Principals</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>103.60</td>
<td>7.19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Male Principals</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>106.80</td>
<td>6.71</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female principals</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>111.10</td>
<td>7.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Age more than 45 years</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>101.5</td>
<td>7.41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age(30-44)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>107.9</td>
<td>8.12</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>High Qualification (M.Phil and Above)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qualification less then M.Phil</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>105.9</td>
<td>7.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Experience more than 5 years</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>107.20</td>
<td>7.11</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experience less than</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>112.30</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: * P < .01, ** P < .05 Level of significance.

9. Discussion

The purpose of the current study was twofold: first, to determine the effects of organizational stressors (Role Space Conflict and Role Set) on principals/directors within the educational sector of Eritrea and, second, to test whether these relationships vary according to type of school, gender, age, qualification and experience. Five out of five variables namely type of school, gender, age qualification and experiences have significance differences on job stress.

Comparison between secondary school principals/directors from the two sectors reveals significant differences. Hence the current findings go in the same direction of Dick R; Wagner U (2001) found that private sector school administrators are highly stressed in compression to govt. sector school administrators.

As per gender, current study indicates that there is significant difference in stress level between male and female as a result of ORS; and the study reveals that females are more prone to stress than males. The finding of the current study in regard to gender is consistent with previous researches conducted, example, Schuler S (1980) found that males have statistically significant lower Job stress.
scores. Koteswari V B and Allam Z (2005) found that female teachers experienced significantly higher level of occupational stress compared to their counter parts.

The reason as to why females experience high level of stress might be because of the pressure that they are expected of being responsible and caring for people both inside and outside of their home. Moreover, they are vulnerable to the demands of work to the extent that they often have more non-work demands than male (Ganster & S’chaubroeck, 1991).

In terms of age, the present study suggests that there is significant difference in stress level as per their age. That, younger groups are more tending to experience Job stress than the older ones. Reason for this might be because of people whose age ranges from 30-44 are in the young and middle adulthood stage of live. At this stage, people try to fulfill various work and personal demands that can lead them to experience higher level of stress.

The findings of the present study in relation to age, is consistent with the previous research findings of Dua (1994) that younger administrators reported more Job stress than the older administrators.

As per educational qualification, the present study reveals that school principals vary in their stress level as their educational qualification varies. Result indicates that higher the mean value higher the stress level Hence, less qualified Principals are more stressed than their counter parts. This might be due to the superiority of highly qualified principals in identifying the problems and dealing with in it using their knowledge.

So the findings suggested that there is a relationship between stress and educational qualification. Example, R. Ravichandran and R. Rajendran’s (2007) study revealed that educational qualification as a source of stress and the people who feel educationally under prepared are more likely to experience high level of occupational stress ad more likely to have negative manifestation of stress than their counterpart.

In terms of work experience, this study reveals that there is significant difference in the occupational stress level as the year of experience of principals varies. Less experienced principals are more prone to work stress than highly ones. Perhaps, the reason for this might be because, less experienced principals are relatively do not acquire much practical knowledge that can help them to control and adjust their work demands. As a result they can feel that they are less efficiently to perform to particular roles that direct them to experience higher level of stress.

Similarly to the present study, Friesen D, Richards, D (1984) support the proposition that the relationship between stress and experience is quadratic, with stress highest in middle experience group and low in high experience group. Moreover, work experience is contributing to the source of stress among teachers’ personal stress, lack of support from parents, organizational policy and parental expectation (R. Ravichundran and R. Rajendran, 2007).
Based on the obtained results, the current study concludes that the variables: school type, age, gender, qualification and working experience; determines the level of stress experiences at work as a result of Role Set Conflict and Role Space Conflict. Apart from this, current study comes to conclude that, there is a connection between work experience and occupational stress also. The more the number of years of experience, the less the level of stress is likely to occur.

10. Conclusion

Eritrea, a newly born state in African continent, called, the horn of Africa where resources are very limited, in spite of that government is putting all efforts to provide all the necessary resources, facilities, and support. However, there is need to give proper training to the employees having stress and burnout to overcome/cope such situations for better performance at individual , organizational level and overall for effective supervision of a school. Finally, the study has certain limitations, but has avenues for the future research. Hopefully, the present study can contribute to the better understanding of variables that lead to occupational stress and this can help principals/directors to deal with if effectively and successfully. Further, findings can help to implement effective preventing programs against occupational stress, considering how administrators perceive stress at work.

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