

## THE DYNAMICS OF CORPORATE ROLE STRESS MANAGEMENT IN AN ORGANISATION: (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PRIVATE BANKS IN INDIA

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*Stress is an adaptive response to a situation that is perceived as challenging or threatening to a person's well-being. Stress has become a part of human life and is more pronounced in corporate life. Stress has got to do with a person's attitude and the priority of things in life. People want to achieve too much in too short a time. In this process people land up in lot of stress and the associated problems. Organizational climate is the key aspect of organizational setup. It is an influencer of contextual receptiveness to change and development. It also affects the success of managerial interventions. Occupational stress is an increasingly important health problem. Occupational stress may produce overt psychological and physiological disabilities. The health and wellness of workers is not only a matter of serious concern for the employees themselves, but also for the employers. It is a well acknowledged truth that better the health of workers, the greater will be the productivity, profit and corporate success. It is, therefore, the duty of the employers to ensure that workers are made to work in a congenial environment which is conducive to their well-being by keeping them free from excessive mental, physical and social stress. The research paper identifies the important role stressors in different age-groups, sex, educational background, types of family and place of stay of bank employees and suggests the type of role stress involved at different demographic factor.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Stress is an adaptive response to a situation that is perceived as challenging or threatening to the person's well being. As we shall see, stress is the person's reaction to a situation, not the situation itself. Moreover, we experience stress when we believe that something interferes with our well-being, that is, with our innate drivers and need fulfillment.

Stress is the sum of all the non-specific effects of factors that can act upon the body. It is an adaptive response to a situation that is perceived as challenging or threatening to a person's well-being. Stress has become a part of human life and is more pronounced in corporate life. It has got to do with a person's attitude and the priority of things in life. People want to achieve too much in too short a time. In this process, they land up in stress and the associated problems. People are stressed because of overwork, job

uncertainty, information overload and the increasing pace of life, etc. Stress is a condition of strain that has direct bearing on emotions, thought process and physical condition of a person. Steers (1981) indicates that occupational stress has become an important problem for study due to several reasons, viz.:

1. Stress has harmful psychological and physiological effects on employees,
2. Stress is a major cause of employee turnover and absenteeism,
3. Stress experienced by one employee can affect the safety of other employees,
4. By controlling dysfunctional stress, individual and organization can be managed more effectively.

We often hear about stress as negative consequences of modern living. People are stressed from overwork, job insecurity, information overload, and the increasing pace of life. These events produce *distress*-the degree of physiological, psychological and behavioral deviation from healthy functioning. There is also a positive side of stress, called *eustress* that refers to the healthy, positive, constructive outcome of the stressful events and the stress response. Eustress is the stress experience in moderation, enough to activate and motivate people so that they can achieve goals, change their environments, and succeed in life's challenges. In other words, we need some stress to survive. Employees frequently experience enough stress to hurt their job performance and increase their risk of mental and physical health problems.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Stress is often developed when an individual is assigned a major responsibility without proper authority and delegation of power. Interpersonal factors such as group cohesiveness, functional dependence, communication frequency, relative authority and organizational distance between the role sender and the focal persons are important issues in organizational behavior.

The fact, that emotions play a key role in organizational work life, seems to be widely accepted. Though the recognition of the existence of emotions in organizations and the importance of such emotional experiences in the physical and psychosocial well-being have long since existed, organizational behavior framework started accepting and considering this only recently (Brief and Weiss, 2002). This recognition and importance attached to emotions (emotions of the self as well as of others) in organizational worklife not only facilitate effective communication with others but also permit an understanding of how to motivate others to do what we want (Brown and Brooks, 2002).

Brown and Brooks (2002) consider the prevailing view that sees organizations as entities in which actions and activities happen due to rationality and logic. Though rationality exists within organizations, it cannot prevail over work-experiences such as pleasure, sadness, jealousy, rage, guilt, and love, etc., which comes in packages of varying levels of intensity depending on the work contexts. But emotional work and emotional labor are quite different from each other. Emotional work is the effort that employees put in to suppress their private feelings like boredom so as to stay in tune with the

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socially accepted norms. But emotional labor is more institutionalized and commercial way of exploiting employees wherein an employee is required to display emotions in accordance with the organization's prescribed rules.

Organizational climate is the key aspect of organizational setup. It is an influencer of contextual receptiveness to change and affects the success of managerial interventions. It can be described as the "feeling in the air" that one gets as one walks around an organizational climate by way of the established procedures, practices and rewards, etc. These perceptions, about climate, change on a regular or perhaps, on a day to day basis (Schneider, *et al.*, 1994). Schneider and Bartlett have defined organizational climate as "enduring organizational or situational characteristics that members perceive". But in the later decades, a shift occurred in the way organizational climate was defined. Organizational climate was largely defined on the basis of individual characteristics rather than the organizational characteristics (James, *et al.*, 1978; and Jones and James, 1979).

A key element of organizational climate is the array of largely shared emotions that have only recently stimulated overt attention in organizational research. There is also a growing recognition that an important aspect of any firm is its emotional climate (Brown and Brooks, 2002). Hence, emotional experiences in organizational contests are largely seen in association with emotional work contexts and emotional climates existing within the organizations.

Occupational stress is an increasingly important health problem and a significant cause of productivity loss. Occupational stress may produce both overt psychological and physiological disabilities. However, it may also cause subtle manifestation of morbidity that can affect personal well-being and productivity (Quick, Murphy, Hurrell and Orman, 1992). A job stressed individual is likely to have greater job dissatisfaction, increased absenteeism, and increased frequency of drinking and smoking, increased negative psychological symptoms and reduced aspirations and self esteem (Jick and Payne, 1980). The use of role concepts suggests that occupational stress is associated with individual, interpersonal and structural variables (Katz and Kahn, 1978; Whetten, 1978).

Beehr and Newman (1978) defined occupational stress as, "A condition, arising from the interaction of people and their jobs, characterized by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning."

Cobb (1975) has the opined that, "The responsibility load creates severe stress among workers and managers." If the individual manager cannot cope with the increased responsibilities it may lead to several physical and psychological disorders. Brook (1973) reported that qualitative changes in the job create adjustmental problem among employees. The interpersonal relationships within the department and between the departments create qualitative difficulties within the organization to a great extent.

Miles and Perreault (1976) identify the following four different types of role conflicts:

1. Intra-sender role conflict,
2. Inter-sender role conflict,

3. Person-role conflict; and
4. Role over load.

The presence of supportive peer groups and supportive relationships with supervisors are negatively correlated with role conflict (Caplan, *et al.*, 1964).

There is evidence that role incumbents with high level of role ambiguity also respond to their situation with anxiety, depression, physical symptoms, a sense of futility or lower self esteem, lower levels of job involvement, organizational commitment, and perceptions of lower performance (Brief and Aldag, 1981).

Ivancevich and Matteson (1980) indicated that, "Lack of group cohesiveness may explain various physiological and behavioral outcomes in an employee desiring such sticks together." Workplace interpersonal conflicts and negative interpersonal relations are prevalent sources of stress (Dewe, 1993; Long, B.C., *et al.*, 2000), with negative mood depression, and symptoms of ill health (Israel, *et al.*, 1989; Karasek, Gardell and Lindell, 1987; Snap, 1992).

Lack of participation in the decision making process, lack of effective consultation, communication, unjustified restrictions on behavior, office politics and no sense of belonging are identified as potential sources of stress. Lack of participation in work activity is associated with negative psychological mood and behavioral responses including escapist drinking and heavy smoking (Caplan, *et al.*, 1975).

## **STRESS IN ROLES**

Role (Pareek, 1993, pp. 3-20) is a position assigned in a social system (or an organization) with accompanying obligations and responsibilities. It is defined by the expectations of significant persons called role senders. In the context of organizational roles, the role senders may be the boss, peers and subordinates. The role occupant performs in the organization to satisfy the expectations of his/her role senders with whom interactions are necessary for successful role performance. Role-related stressors include conditions where employees have difficulty in understanding, reconciling, or performing the various roles in their lives.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL ROLE STRESS (ORS)**

The extent of stress is, however a matter of degree. Some organizations manage to generate a more harmonious work atmosphere whereas others have greater friction and tension. Human behavior in an organization is influenced or directed by several physical, social and psychological factors. One of the key concepts to understand the integration of the individual with an organization is the role assigned to him within the overall structure of the organization. Framework for Organizational Role Stress (ORS) developed by Pareek. (1993, 2002), identified the following ten types of role stresses:

- *Inter-Role Distance (IRD)*: It is experienced when there is a conflict between organizational and non-organisational roles. Generally, a role occupant has to play multiple roles. Typically, there is an organizational role and a non-organizational role, e.g., manager in office and father at home.

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- *Role Stagnation (RS)*: It is the feeling of being stuck in the same role. Such a type of stress results in perception that there is no opportunity for the furthering or progress of one's career. On lacking skills for the new role, the role occupant keeps on stagnation in the old role in which he/she feels comfortable/ secured and experiences role stagnation. Lack of opportunities for growth also gives rise to role stagnation.
- *Role Expectation Conflict (REC)*: This type of stress is generated by different expectations by different significant persons, i.e., superiors, subordinates and peers, about the same role; and the role occupant's ambivalence as to whom to please. Role expectation conflict is experienced when the role occupant faces conflicting expectations from the role senders.
- *Role Erosion (RE)*: This type of role stress is the function of the role occupant's feeling that some functions which should properly belong to his/her role are transferred to or performed by others. This can also happen when the functions are performed by the role occupant but credit for them goes to someone else. Another manifestation is in the form of under-utilization in the role. Role erosion is experienced when some of the important functions belonging to one's role are performed by others or when credit for tasks performed in ones role is given to others. Role erosion is common in organizations under restructuring or technology up-gradation.
- *Role Overload (RO)*: When the role occupant feels that there are too many expectations from the significant roles in his/her role set, he/she experiences role overload. There are two aspects of this stress, i.e., quantitative and qualitative. The former refers to having too much work to do, while the latter refers to things being too difficult.
- *Role Isolation (RI)*: This type of role stress refers to the psychological distance between the occupant's role and other roles in the same role set. Role isolation is experienced when the role occupant does not have the required extent of interaction with others in his or her role set. It may be due to systemic or geographic isolation of role set members or because of their unhealthy attitude.

*Personal Inadequacy (PI)*: It arises when the role occupant feels that he/ she does not have the necessary skills and training for effectively performing the functions expected from his/ her role. This is bound to happen when the organizations do not impart periodic training to enable the employees to cope with the fast changes both within and outside the organization. Personal inadequacy is experienced when the role occupant lacks the necessary competence, knowledge or skills needed for effective role performance.

- *Self-Role Distance (SRD)*: When the role which a person occupies goes against his/ her self-concept, then he/ she feels self-role distance type of stress. This is essentially a conflict arising out of a mismatch between the person and his/ her job. Self-role distance is experienced when the role occupant has to do something conflicting with his or her interest, needs and values or when his or her special skills or strengths remain unutilized.

- *Role Ambiguity (RA)*: It refers to the lack of clarity about the expectations regarding the role which may arise due to lack of information or understanding. It may exist in relation to activities, responsibilities, personal styles and norms.
- *Resource Inadequacy (RIn)*: This type of stress is evident when the role occupant feels that he/ she is not provided with adequate resources for performing the functions expected from his/ her role. Resource Inadequacy is experienced by the role occupant when adequate resources (manpower, infrastructure, material, machines, and tools, etc.) are not available for carrying out the role responsibilities.

### **ORGANISATIONAL ROLE STRESS SCALE USED**

To develop the “ORS Scale”, a number of managers were interviewed to find out the stresses they experienced in their roles. These managers were asked to write down the type of stresses they experienced in their organizational roles. The instrument (Pareek, 2002) used for the study comprised of total 50 items, which had ten sub-scales for measuring the above-mentioned types of role stresses. Each of these sub-scales had 5 items. This five point scale has been used for scoring each item and each types of stress is scored in the range 1 to 20. Total Role Stresses (TORS), which is the sum of the ten types of role, stresses ranges from 0 to 200.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study aims at enhancing the understanding about stress experienced in organizational roles and the impact of aging and other demographic factors. The research aims at the following to identify the most prominent role stressor(s) in different groups of bank employees. However, the causal factors responsible for role stresses and their redressal strategies are out of purview of this research. Similarly, the study will not attempt to identify the manifestation resulting from different types of role stresses. Multivariate analysis of role stressors is also out of purview of this study.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A large private Indian bank having multi-locations was selected for the study. The name of the institution is not being disclosed for reasons of secrecy desired by the organisation. Care was taken to ensure that the respondents represented the diversity in the organization. Total number of respondents that participated was 120.

The study was conducted in Lucknow (India). Primary data has been used, which was collected through a questionnaire from a sample of 120 respondents. The questionnaire used was such that the respondents could express their opinions easily. The random sampling method was used to select 120 respondents. The statistical tools used to analyze the data, in tune with the objectives of the study were as follows:

1. Rank Method.
2. Mean Analysis.
3. Percentage Analysis.

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Respondent's age was also recorded; it ranged from 25 to 55 years. The sample was divided in three parts, i.e., the lower age group comprised from 25 to 35; the middle age group comprised from 36 to 45; the higher age group consisted of respondents from 46 to 55. The age profile of respondents is given in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Respondent's Age Profile**

	<i>Lower Age (25-35 Years)</i>	<i>Middle Age (36-45 Years)</i>	<i>Higher Age (46-55 Years)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Number	26	61	33	120
Percentage	21.7%	50.8%	27.5%	100%

*Source:* Primary Data Collected Through Survey.

Table 2 represents the respondent's profile according to their Age, Sex, Educational Background, Types of Family and Places of Maximum Stay. All the data presented in the Table 2 shows the percentage of each group.

**Table 2**  
**Respondents Profile**

<i>Personal Data</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Age Group of Respondents	25-35 Years	21.7
	36-45 Years	50.8
	46-55 Years	27.5
Sex of Respondents	Male	71.7
	Female	28.3
Educational Background	BBA/B.Com/BA	33.3
	B.Tech/BCA/BE	6.7
	M.Tech/MBA/MCA	60.0
Types of Family	Nuclear	80.0
	Joint	20.0
Place of Maximum Stay	Rural	11.7
	Urban	88.3

*Source:* Primary Data Collected Through Survey.

## RESULTS

Table 3 furnishes the rank ordering of role stressors under each age group. It is found that Personal Inadequacy was the most prominent role stressor (having first rank) in the lower age-group (25-35 Years). In the middle age-group (36-45 Years) Role Stagnation was the most prominent role stressor (having rank first), whereas in higher-age group (46-55 Years) Role Erosion was the most prominent role stressor (having rank first). Second to the last rank role stressors were also not the same across the different age-groups. Thus, it may be concluded that role stressors differ according to the variation in age of bank employees.

**Table 3**  
**Role Stress Across Age Groups**

<i>(Mean and Rank)</i>						
<i>Variables</i>	<i>Lower Age Group (25-35 Years)</i>		<i>Middle Age Group (36-45 Years)</i>		<i>Higher Age Group (46-55 Years)</i>	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Rank</i>
IRD	5.083	7	6.916	6	4.512	10
RS	8.319	2	9.127	1	6.009	6
REC	4.863	9	7.514	4	6.386	5
RE	7.886	3	5.314	8	8.914	1
RO	5.421	6	7.219	5	5.146	8
RI	7.148	4	7.963	2	7.429	3
PI	9.015	1	4.681	10	7.216	4
SRD	4.981	8	5.019	9	6.195	7
RA	4.218	10	7.601	3	4.731	9
RIN	6.912	5	6.492	7	7.866	2
TORS	63.846		67.846		64.404	

*Source:* Primary Data Collected Through Survey.

Table 4 Represents gender-wise rank ordering of role stressors of the respondents. It has been observed that Role Expectation Conflict was the most prominent role stressor (having first rank) among the male respondents. On the other hand, in female respondents Role Ambiguity was the most prominent role stressor. The role stressors from Rank 2 to Rank-10 were also not the same for male and female respondent. Hence, it may be concluded that role stressors differ gender-wise.

**Table 4**  
**Role Stress Gender-Wise**

<i>(Mean and Rank)</i>				
<i>Variables</i>	<i>Male Respondents</i>		<i>Female Respondents</i>	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Rank</i>
IRD	6.893	7	8.662	3
RS	7.680	5	7.140	5
REC	9.418	1	6.028	7
RE	8.431	4	9.468	2
RO	9.214	2	6.412	6
RI	4.698	10	8.147	4
PI	5.066	9	5.340	9
SRD	6.146	8	4.960	10
RA	7.188	6	9.629	1
RIN	8.992	3	5.739	8
TORS	73.726		71.525	

*Source:* Primary Data Collected Through Survey.

Table 5 Represents the rank ordering of role stressors of the respondents having different educational background. It has been observed that Role Overload was the most prominent role stressor (having first rank) among the respondents having



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educational background of BBA/B.Com/B.A. The respondents having B.Tech/BCA/B.E. qualification had Self-Role Distance as the most prominent role stressor. In the respondents having educational background of M.Tech/MBA/MCA, the Role Isolation was the prominent role stressor. Likewise, the role stressors from Rank 2 to Rank-10 were not the same for the respondents having different educational background. Thus, educational background of bank employees also affect the nature of role stressors.

**Table 5**  
**Role Stress among Respondents with different Educational Background**

<i>(Mean and Rank)</i>						
<i>Variables</i>	<i>BBA/B.Com/B.A.</i>		<i>B. Tech/BCA/BE</i>		<i>M. Tech./MBA/MCA</i>	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Rank</i>
IRD	5.667	6	5.881	7	5.783	5
RS	4.391	10	8.794	2	8.143	2
REC	7.875	3	7.189	5	4.144	10
RE	4.616	9	5.464	8	5.713	6
RO	9.810	1	7.918	3	4.618	9
RI	5.314	7	6.714	6	9.618	1
PI	7.146	4	4.981	9	4.817	8
SRD	8.618	2	8.912	1	6.184	4
RA	5.819	5	4.338	10	5.168	7
RIN	4.817	8	7.410	4	7.418	3
TORS	64.073		67.601		61.606	

Source: Primary Data Collected Through Survey.

Table 6 Contains the rank ordering of role-stressors among the respondents according to type of their family. It has been observed that Inter-Role Distance was the most prominent role stressor (having first rank) for the respondents having nuclear family and Resource Inadequacy played the prominent role for the respondents having joint family. The role stressors from Rank 2 to Rank-10 were also not the same for both types of family groups.

**Table 6**  
**Role Stress Due to Type of Family**

<i>(Mean and Rank)</i>				
<i>Variables</i>	<i>Nuclear Family</i>		<i>Joint Family</i>	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Rank</i>
IRD	8.819	1	8.361	3
RS	4.366	9	6.212	6
REC	7.413	4	5.418	8
RE	8.146	2	7.219	5
RO	5.092	6	8.616	2
RI	4.181	10	4.398	9
PI	6.819	5	7.838	4
SRD	7.711	3	4.315	10
RA	4.464	8	5.886	7
RIN	4.815	7	9.417	1
TORS	61.826		67.680	

Source: Primary Data Collected Through Survey.

Table 7 Shows the rank ordering of role-stressors under the respondents place of maximum stay. It has been observed that Role Ambiguity was the most prominent role-stressor (having first rank) in the respondents staying in rural areas and Role Erosion among the respondents staying in urban areas. The role stressors from Rank 2 to Rank-10 were also not the same for the rural and urban dwellers.

**Table 7**  
**Role Stress due to Place of Maximum Stay**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>(Mean and Rank)</i>			
	<i>Rural Areas</i>		<i>Urban Areas</i>	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Rank</i>
IRD	4.664	9	5.316	8
RS	7.819	2	6.891	5
REC	6.168	5	8.464	3
RE	4.816	8	9.418	1
RO	5.219	7	7.521	4
RI	7.614	3	4.319	10
PI	4.294	10	5.412	7
SRD	6.313	4	4.798	9
RA	8.769	1	8.964	2
RIN	5.246	6	6.591	6
TORS	60.922		67.694	

*Source: Primary Data Collected Through Survey.*

## **FINDINGS**

The analysis contained in Table 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 leads to the following major findings:

1. The rank ordering of role stressors under each-age group of bank employees differs. It was found that Personal Inadequacy (PI) was the most prominent role stressor (having first rank) in the lower age-group (25-35 Years). In the middle age group (36-45 Years) Role Stagnation (RS) was the most prominent role stressor (having rank first), whereas in higher age group (46-55 Years) Role Erosion(RE) was the most prominent role stressor (having rank first). From second to the last role stressors, however, are not the same across the different age groups.
2. Among male respondents the Role Expectations Conflict (REC) was found as major role stressor, whereas among female respondents Role Ambiguity (RA) was the most important role stressor.
3. Educational background also affects the role stress. Among respondents having BBA/B.Com/BA qualifications the Role Overload (RO) was the most significant role stressor while in respondents with B.Tech/BE/BCA qualification Self Role Distance (SRD) was most significant stressor. Likewise, among people with qualifications, like M.Tech/MCA/MBA, etc; Role Isolation (RI) was most significant stressor.

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4. Among people with nuclear families the major stressor was Inter-Role Distance (IRD) and among people living in joint families it was Resource Inadequacy (RI).
5. Among people living in Rural and Urban areas the important stressors were Role Ambiguity (RA) and Role Erosion (RE) respectively.

## CONCLUSION

Stress is negative consequences of modern living. People are stressed because of overwork, job insecurity, information overload and the increasing pace of life. Stress has become a part and parcel of human life and is more pronounced in corporate life. Stress has got a lot to do with a person's attitude to start with and the next is the priority of things in life. In a nutshell, role stress exists among bank employees in India. However, most significant role-stressors differ according to difference in age, gender, educational background, type of family and place of dwelling.

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