

# Organizational Role Stress - Empirical Evidences from India during Economic and Political Resentment

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## **Abstract**

*Role stress has been a topic of significant research interest to many. It has always been a favourite for academicians and researchers alike owing to the policy implications it could create. The authors of this study have expressed interest in this field especially in the context of India because of the prevailing uncertainties, slow economic growth, increased rate of unemployment and poor growth forecasts. The present study empirically examines Organizational Role Stress (ORS) in the services sector in India by conducting a Principal Component Analysis to arrive at 16 factors. Study reveals that the ORS levels were significantly different across various industries and for the single and married segments as well. But surprisingly, no significant difference in the ORS levels was observed for the male and female segments, thus indicating that apathetic economic situations can equally impact both the genders.*

## **Organizational Role Stress – An Introduction**

With the growth in organizations and constant changing times, relevance of roles has increased. Role is now a potential component of the organizational system that defines the endurance of both the employee as well as the organization. The role related aspects have gained prominence in the Indian service sector context post liberalization period. Parallel to this, (Anand et. al., 2013) posit that Occupational stress is no longer considered an occasional, personal problem that can be taken lightly. It is a global phenomenon affecting all occupations and countries alike. In the context of India, we foresee a greater need to revise the concept of organizational stress. This is partly due to the current state of economic crisis in which India is operating. Role stress refers to the conflict and tension due to the roles being enacted by a person at any given point of time (Pareek, 2003).

Behavioural science research under organizational contexts has always considered stress as an integral part. With the growth in the occupational stress research, the definitions of stress have been offered at different points in time. Walter Cannon used the term *Stress* in 1926 to refer to external factors that disrupted what he called homeostasis. According to (Abdel-Halim, 1978) Stress is a complex and imprecise concept. Some adverse characteristics can

be catalogued under contextual, task and role variables that act as antecedents to organizational stress. (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; M. Mesko et. al. 2013) consider stress as the most common disease of the modern age and a pattern of negative physiological states and psychological responses that occur in an individual. When stressed, an individual feels that his well-being is menaced but is at the same time unable to cope with it. Role stress is known to pose problems of adjustment for the individual, and as a result it may adversely affect his/her attitudes and behaviour within the organization. Stress being ubiquitous, it nurtured the capacity of a potential influence on the individual worker's physical and mental health and has an equal repercussive effect on the overall organizational effectiveness. Stress is also viewed as an outcome of a complicated person-environment interaction which encompasses a variety of biological, psychological and sociological indicators (Leatt & Schneck, 1985). (Dijkstra et al., 2005) state that Stress is concerned with the (inadequate) adaptation of individuals to their environment and with the resulting physiological, behavioural, and psychological consequences. An actual or a perceived (imminent) loss of resources is envisaged as sufficient for producing a reaction of striving to minimize the net loss of resources. This reaction is associated with physiological and psychological responses.

In line with the thoughts expressed by researchers in the domain of role stress, it was further observed that prevailing economic conditions of a country could in addition potentially affect the role stress levels of the employees. (Vaidyanathan, 2013) entrusts the onus of sluggish economic growth during the period of 2004-2014 to the lacklustre performance of the Indian government. The article brings into light the various pitfalls in the implementation of the policies by the Indian government. During the aforesaid period, the economic growth rate has declined from around 8% in the mid part of the decade to less than 5% in the fiscal year 2013-2014. CAGR of unorganized manufacturing sector has fallen from 10% in the year 2008 to 4% in 2012, construction from 11 per cent to 7 per cent, trade from 10 per cent to 8 per cent and restaurants from 15 per cent to two per cent. Non-Railway transport fell from 9 to 7 per cent which led to the overall decline in the total growth rate of NDP to 7.4% from 9.4%. The Indian government which was in power for a decade period was even unable to check the depreciation of rupee against the US dollar. There are several factors which led to the failure of the visionless government to revive the economy. The corporate sector which contributes less than 15% to the national income guzzles nearly 50% of the bank credit and the most productive and growing unorganized or non corporate sector are starved of bank credit. 70% of the trade needs are met by the money lenders in the unorganized sector by providing gold as collateral which boosted the demand for gold in the market. Moreover the Indian government depended solely on the RBI to control the inflation through monetary policy. The economic challenge before the Indian government was to develop new mechanisms to solve the problems transmitted by the growth. The land

acquisition law was delayed and was full of flaws; shortage of skilled labour raised the skill premium and ineptness and corruption led to the failure of ambitious legislation and schemes like NREGA, RTI, Right to education and land acquisition bill.

Though we could experience growth in the real GDP, growth in the stock market performance and Annual FDI inflow, adding to the existing woes was the rising general and food inflation. The relevant statistical values are indicated under Table 1.

| <b>Table 1. Key Economic Indicators</b>    |              |            |            |            |
|--|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Annual Average                             | Period       |            |            |            |
|  | (1998 -2004) | (2004 -09) | (2009 -13) | (2004 -13) |
| Growth rate of real GDP (%)                | 5.9          | 8          | 7          | 7.6        |
| General inflation (industrial workers) (%) | 5.4          | 6.1        | 10.4       | 8.1        |
| Food inflation (industrial workers) (%)    | 4.2          | 7          | 11.6       | 9          |
| BSE sensx, average annual growth (%)       | 5.9          | 15         | 13.9       | 14.5       |
| Fiscal deficit (% of GDP per year)         | 5.5          | 3.9        | 5.5        | 4.6        |
| Annual FDI inflow (billion \$)             | 2.85         | 15.44      | 26.19      | 20.22      |
| Source: Ghatak et. al.(2014)               |              |            |            |            |

We hereby draw an inference that the average educated worker is more worried about the inflationary aspects as against the general performance of the economy. This signifies that the general mood or feel of a nation is drawn from an average worker perspective and can even largely influence other aspects of employee experiences also.

After reviewing sufficient literature and analyzing the current economic scenario of India, the authors were convinced that organizational role stress still holds relevance. Thus a study has been undertaken to investigate the presence of organizational role stress and its linkages in the Indian service sector organizations by taking into account three demographic factors namely gender, marital status and industry. The purpose is to improve the understanding of the employee experiences during weak economic outlook and political environmental changes.

## Methodology

The present study has chosen a sample of 411 employees who are currently employed on a permanent basis in the services sector within India. The organizational role stress variable, that was primarily investigated in this study, was administered using ((Pareek, 2003) standardized instrument. Since the services sector was larger in scope and it created a time and cost limitation to the researchers, to systematize the sample selection, this study has

limited the industries to seven as per the information listed on [www.business.gov.in](http://www.business.gov.in) web portal. The industries thus chosen were Education, Health, Information Technology & Information Technology Enabled Services (IT & ITES), Media, Real Estate, Retail and Tourism. The study was conducted for an overall period of 18 months from October 2012 to February 2014. This particular duration for the study was chosen, as it was found to be the most suitable time period for the assessment of the political and economic resentment prior to the general elections in India. Around 35 major cities were considered for the study for which around 1050 hard copy questionnaires and close to 400 mailers were sent out for the purpose of data collection. Around 467 questionnaires were returned of which 411 were found usable. Thus, an effective response rate of 28.34% was achieved. The overall sample distribution stands as below:

**Table 2. Sample Distribution of the Study**

|                       |                        |                   |   |                  |                     |                |                 |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|---|------------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| <b>AGE</b>            | Under 20<br>(4)        | 21-30<br>(232)    | 31-40<br>(141)  | 41-50<br>(23)    | Over 50<br>(11)     |                |                 |
| <b>INCOME</b>         | 0-5L (376)             | 6-10L<br>(28)     | 11-15L (7)  |                  |                     |                |                 |
| <b>GENDER</b>         | Male (304)             | Female<br>(107)   |   |                  |                     |                |                 |
| <b>EDUCATION</b>      | Undergraduate<br>(36)  | Graduate<br>(208) | Post Grad<br>(141)  | Others<br>(26)   |                     |                |                 |
| <b>EXPERIENCE</b>     | Lessthan 5yrs<br>(197) | 6-10yrs<br>(148)  | 11-15yrs<br>(38)  | 16-20yrs<br>(15) | Over20yrs<br>(13)   |                |                 |
| <b>MARITAL STATUS</b> | Married (173)          | Single<br>(238)   |   |                  |                     |                |                 |
| <b>INDUSTRY</b>       | Education<br>(48)      | Health<br>(63)    | Information Technology &<br>Information Technology<br>Enabled Services (IT & ITES) (96) | Media<br>(49)    | Real Estate<br>(46) | Retail<br>(68) | Tourism<br>(41) |
| <b>GEOG. REGION</b>   | Central (62)           | East<br>(83)      | North (96)  | South<br>(112)   | West<br>(58)        |                |                 |

Based on the literature reviewed, we argue that role stress creates negative feelings within employees and has the capacity to impact the overall psychological climate of organizations. It also can influence the relationships with pay, satisfaction and turnover intention. Therefore, we hypothesised as under:

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference between the levels of Organizational Role Stress of single and married employees working in the services sector in India.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference between the levels of Organizational Role Stress of male and female employees working in the services sector in India.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference between the levels of Organizational Role Stress of various employees working in the various industries in the services sector in India.

### Statistical Method Analysis

The data analysis adopted in this study was primarily Factor Analysis or the Principal Component Analysis. The Factor Analysis or the Principal Component Analysis was done using the SPSS 16.0 Windows version. After the classification of the instrument items into sixteen factors, ANOVA was conducted in MS-Excel and results were accordingly interpreted at the 5% significance level.

### Findings and Discussion

The standardised instrument of organizational role stress was once again checked for its reliability and thus the Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.915 was obtained. This indicated that the instrument proved to be reliable for the conditions in which the study was conducted. Prior to the running of ANOVA, factor analysis was administered on the Organizational Role Stress Scale and accordingly 16 factors were scaled down that explained a total variance of 62.93%. The factor analyses are as follows:

**Table 3. Test of Sampling Adequacy and Test of Sphericity**

| KMO and Bartlett's Test                          |                    |         |
|--|--------------------|---------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. |                    | .845    |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity                    | Approx. Chi-Square | 6.272E3 |
|  | df                 | 1225    |
|  | Sig.               | .000    |

Before conducting the data reduction exercise for the organizational role stress, the appropriateness of factor analysis for the data collected was assessed. This meant that the conditions of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity should hold good. Table 3 indicated a KMO value of 0.845, a measure of sampling adequacy. According to Kaiser (1974), this value is marvellous and is way above the guideline of 0.60 as recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (1996). Table 3 also indicated that the Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant ( $p=0.000$ ) and allows for the assumption of the factorability.

**Table 4. Factor Loadings**

|            |              |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |
|------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>ORS</b> | F1<br>0.5875 | F2<br>0.6978  | F3<br>0.5113  | F4<br>0.6332  | F5<br>0.5324  | F6<br>0.4746  | F7<br>0.6202  | F8<br>0.6582  |
|            | F9<br>0.5954 | F10<br>0.6103 | F11<br>0.6072 | F12<br>0.6132 | F13<br>0.6001 | F14<br>0.5049 | F15<br>0.4551 | F16<br>0.6070 |

**Table 5. Factor Analysis (Total Variance)**

| Table 5. Factor Analysis (Total Variance) |               |              |                                     |               |              |                                   |               |               |
|---|---------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Initial Eigenvalues                       |               |              | Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings |               |              | Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings |               |               |
| Total                                     | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total                               | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total                             | % of Variance | Cumulative %  |
| 9.842                                     | 19.684        | 19.684       | 9.842                               | 19.684        | 19.684       | 2.577                             | 5.154         | 5.154         |
| 2.662                                     | 5.324         | 25.008       | 2.662                               | 5.324         | 25.008       | 2.484                             | 4.968         | 10.121        |
| 2.120                                     | 4.240         | 29.248       | 2.120                               | 4.240         | 29.248       | 2.334                             | 4.668         | 14.789        |
| 1.710                                     | 3.419         | 32.667       | 1.710                               | 3.419         | 32.667       | 2.227                             | 4.455         | 19.244        |
| 1.622                                     | 3.244         | 35.912       | 1.622                               | 3.244         | 35.912       | 2.092                             | 4.184         | 23.428        |
| 1.567                                     | 3.134         | 39.045       | 1.567                               | 3.134         | 39.045       | 2.022                             | 4.045         | 27.473        |
| 1.407                                     | 2.813         | 41.859       | 1.407                               | 2.813         | 41.859       | 2.009                             | 4.017         | 31.490        |
| 1.333                                     | 2.666         | 44.525       | 1.333                               | 2.666         | 44.525       | 1.934                             | 3.867         | 35.357        |
| 1.279                                     | 2.557         | 47.082       | 1.279                               | 2.557         | 47.082       | 1.791                             | 3.582         | 38.939        |
| 1.254                                     | 2.508         | 49.590       | 1.254                               | 2.508         | 49.590       | 1.762                             | 3.523         | 42.462        |
| 1.221                                     | 2.441         | 52.031       | 1.221                               | 2.441         | 52.031       | 1.761                             | 3.523         | 45.985        |
| 1.177                                     | 2.353         | 54.384       | 1.177                               | 2.353         | 54.384       | 1.757                             | 3.514         | 49.498        |
| 1.138                                     | 2.277         | 56.661       | 1.138                               | 2.277         | 56.661       | 1.742                             | 3.483         | 52.981        |
| 1.109                                     | 2.219         | 58.880       | 1.109                               | 2.219         | 58.880       | 1.706                             | 3.412         | 56.393        |
| 1.019                                     | 2.039         | 60.919       | 1.019                               | 2.039         | 60.919       | 1.658                             | 3.315         | 59.708        |
| 1.005                                     | 2.011         | 62.930       | 1.005                               | 2.011         | 62.930       | 1.611                             | 3.222         | <b>62.930</b> |

Tables 4 and 5 indicated that all the 16 factors that were extracted had high loadings that are greater than 0.5 and thus are of practical significance. All the 16 factors accounted for 62.930% of the total variance. Thus it can be concluded that the factors so extracted explained a reasonable and acceptable amount of variance.

After obtaining the results of the factor analysis, further testing of each hypothesis was done. The results obtained are given below:

**Table 6. ANOVA - Single Factor for Single & Married Employees**

| SUMMARY             |          |       |          |          |          |          |
|---------------------|----------|-------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Groups              | Count    | Sum   | Average  | Variance |          |          |
| Single              | 173      | 13397 | 77.43931 | 808.4454 |          |          |
| Married             | 238      | 20124 | 84.55462 | 718.0962 |          |          |
| ANOVA               |          |       |          |          |          |          |
| Source of Variation | SS       | df    | MS       | F        | P-value  | F crit   |
| Between Groups      | 5071.887 | 1     | 5071.887 | 6.708034 | 0.009941 | 3.864295 |
| Within Groups       | 309241.4 | 409   | 756.0914 |          |          |          |
| Total               | 314313.3 | 410   |          |          |          |          |

unemployment and ineffective management by the government of the recessionary impact on various industries can diversely affect the employees irrespective of their marital status.

**Table 7. ANOVA - Single Factor for Various Industries**

| SUMMARY             |          |      |          |          |          |          |
|---------------------|----------|------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Groups              | Count    | Sum  | Average  | Variance |          |          |
| Education           | 48       | 4175 | 86.97917 | 853.4251 |          |          |
| Health              | 63       | 4917 | 78.04762 | 525.7558 |          |          |
| IT & ITES           | 96       | 7948 | 82.79167 | 890.5035 |          |          |
| Media               | 49       | 4081 | 83.28571 | 614.0417 |          |          |
| Real Estate         | 46       | 4169 | 90.63043 | 897.7048 |          |          |
| Retail              | 68       | 5005 | 73.60294 | 826.8997 |          |          |
| Tourism             | 41       | 3226 | 78.68293 | 520.672  |          |          |
| ANOVA               |          |      |          |          |          |          |
| Source of Variation | SS       | df   | MS       | F        | P-value  | F crit   |
| Between Groups      | 10907.75 | 6    | 1817.958 | 2.420703 | 0.026065 | 2.121025 |
| Within Groups       | 303405.5 | 404  | 751.0038 |          |          |          |
| Total               | 314313.3 | 410  |          |          |          |          |

Since  $F > F$  Critical as shown in Table 7, therefore we reject Hypothesis 2 and conclude that the ORS (Organizational Role Stress) levels for the employees across various industries is significantly different. Thus, we can draw an inference that, role stress levels of employees tend to vary across industries because each industry operates within its own environmental, economic and lifecycle fluctuations. Depending on the age and the regulations in which each industry operates, it could simultaneously create role stress levels for the employees.

**Table 8. ANOVA- Single Factor Gender wise**

| SUMMARY             |          |       |          |          |          |          |
|---------------------|----------|-------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Groups              | Count    | Sum   | Average  | Variance |          |          |
| Male                | 304      | 24348 | 80.09211 | 761.7407 |          |          |
| Female              | 107      | 9173  | 85.72897 | 764.0674 |          |          |
| ANOVA               |          |       |          |          |          |          |
| Source of Variation | SS       | df    | MS       | F        |          | F crit   |
| Between Groups      | 2514.728 | 1     | 2514.728 | 3.298681 | 0.070067 | 3.864295 |
| Within Groups       | 311798.6 | 409   | 762.3437 |          |          |          |
| Total               | 314313.3 | 410   |          |          |          |          |

Since  $F < F$  Critical as shown in Table 8, therefore we accept Hypothesis 3 and conclude that the ORS (Organizational Role Stress) levels for the employees across genders has no significant difference. Though, this result seemed quite uncommon, the researchers strongly felt that the economic and political turmoil in which the study was conducted was a strong factor in this direction. Under uncertain conditions, weak growth forecasts for the country and general lacklustre atmosphere are likely to create an even impact across all genders. In addition to this, the demographic structure of India has changed tremendously off late. With rise in dual career couples, nuclear families, greater workforce diversity or trending choices that opt against marriage or kids have been some of the reasons for an equal share in the stress levels too. Such people opting against marriage or kids cannot be considered as well adjusted, fully functioning members of the society (e.g. spouse, family member etc.) because they only deal largely with workplace emotions and issues (Gopinath and Ganesan, 2014).

## Conclusion

Many in-depth studies in the role related areas have been conducted continually over the years. The findings of previous studies conducted by Slattery et al. (2008), Bedeian & Armenakis (1981), Teas (1983), Li & Shani (1991) and Jaramillo et al. (2006) indicate that significant differences do exist for the role stress and satisfaction. One interesting study conducted on work stress of police officers revealed that customary positive coping strategies were adopted (Agolla, 2009). However it was scrupulously observed that studies in the area of role stress either explored job satisfaction, coping or its related aspects. None of the studies chose to examine role stress from an employee resentment perspective. Such studies are particularly significant as they portray the true character and spirit of a nation. India is regarded as one of the largest democracies with a colossal workforce base in the world. This makes it imperative for India to take sufficient measures to sustain and shield its

workforce, their attitudes and contributions from any kind of unconstructive force, be it political or environmental. As India is still on the developing continuum, it is yet to build more organised sectors, create self-sustenance and safeguard its industries from global slowdowns.

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