

Comparative Study of Work Stress Among Employees of Public and Private Organizations

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Abstract— The aim of this study is to examine the work stress of full-time employees working in public and private organizations situated inside Kathmandu Valley and make the comparative study of work stress between them. The sample of the study consisted of 300 employees, 150 employees from 20 service sector public organizations and 150 employees from 15 service sector private organizations. Cross sectional descriptive study design was conducted and non-probability purposive sampling was used. Organizational Role Stress (ORS) Scale by Pareek (1983) was used to measure the work stress among the employees of public and private organizations. Data analysis included Independent Samples t-test and Pearson correlation to check the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Demographic factors such as age, gender, work organization, work experience and monthly salary were examined in relation to work stress. The study revealed that employees of both public and private organizations are having moderate level of stress however there is significant difference in work stress between the two organizations.

Keywords— Organizational Role Stress, Private organizations, Public organizations, Work Stress

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Stress has become a common phenomenon of routine life, and an unavoidable consequence of the ways in which society has altered. This change has occurred in terms of science and technology, industrial growth, urbanization and modernization on one hand; and an expanding population, cut-throat competition and unemployment on the other. The term “stress” was first used by Selye (1936) describing it as ‘the force, pressure, or strain exerted upon a material object or person which resist these forces and attempt to maintain its original state.’ Stress can also be defined as an adverse reaction that people experience when external demands exceed their internal capabilities (Waters & Ussery, 2007).

Workplace stress and role stress arise from a wider phenomenon ‘stress’ which is a psychological construct that people may experience everyday (Quick et al., 1997). It is a concept which is hard to avoid. The term stress has evolved over time and has long been recognized as an inevitable aspect of life.

Organizations are an important source of stress, and employees’ workloads and professional deadlines have increased manifold. These advancements have created stress among employees in the form of work stress, which Sauter, Lim, and Murphy (1996) define as the harmful physical and emotional responses that arise

when the demands of a job do not match the worker’s abilities and resources. Work stress is further defined as a situation arising from the interaction of people and their jobs, and characterized by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning (Beehr & Newman, 1978).

In Nepal during the past two decades, the public and private organization underwent rapid changes due to globalization and liberalization, increased competition from the entrance of more private (corporate) sectors, introduction of new technologies, and so forth. Due to these changes, the employees in the public and private organization are more susceptible to a high level of stress. The present study has been designed to focus on the work stress of organizational employees.

Stresses may vary; they may be in the form of day-to-day worries, major events, or prolonged problematic work situations or they may arise from certain ideas, thoughts and perceptions that stimulate negative emotions (Neelamegam & Asrafi, 2010). Some of the major internal and external factors for stress include role conflict, role overload, role stagnation, role ambiguity, lack of group cohesiveness, lack of supervisory support, inadequacy of role authority, work requirements, relationship with co-workers, relationships with superiors and subordinates, staff shortages, organizational structure, number of years spent with an organization, emotional reactions and coping skills of

employees, home-work interface, lack of consultation and communication, lack of control over the way the work is done, poor work conditions and insecurity and the threat of unemployment.

Other factors such as ambiguity in the nature of the job, conflicting job tasks, lack of social support, feeling isolated, unclear promotion prospects, family member's attitude towards career, and an absence of stability and dependability in home life would result in stress. With respect to career development and achievement, the pressures associated with starting, developing and stabilizing a career, a mismatch in expectations, feeling undervalued and frustration in attaining a sense of achievement are all common career stresses. There are two basic types of responsibility: responsibility for people and responsibility for things (such as, budgets, equipment, and buildings); for some employees, responsibility for other people's lives and safety is a major source of stress. Pareek (1983) has defined organizational role stress in terms of ten different role stressors namely inter-role distance, role stagnation, role expectation conflict, role erosion, role overload, role isolation, personal inadequacy, self-role distance, role ambiguity and resource inadequacy.

Outcome of work stress leads to unclear goals and objectives – role ambiguity, job dissatisfaction, lack of confidence, feeling of futility, a lowered sense of self-esteem, sadness, depression, low motivation to work, increased blood pressure and pulse rate, anger and intentions to leave the job; and these effect of work stress impairs the physical and mental health of employees. Work overload has been shown in a number of studies to produce multiple psychological and physiological strain in the employees (Lath, 2010). For the better performance of the employees, there is an imposing task on the part of management of organizations to cope with the work stress of their employees in the realm of human resource management. Amid this background, the present study titled "Comparative Study of Work Stress among Employees of Public and Private Organizations" has assumed greater significance than ever before.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The advent of technology with globalization and privatization policies has dramatically changed the existing patterns in both the public and private sector and that has resulted in stress in the employees of those organizations. Inherently in this context, certain

research questions arise, namely, what is the level of work stress of public and private employees? Is there relationship with work stress and work organizations in which the employees work? Is there any difference between the level of work stress between employees of private and public sector? And such other related questions. The present study attempts to provide answers to the above questions. As such, the present study would help find out the level of stress among employees which can be addressed for better performance of employees in the public and private organizations.

1.3 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

This study explored the work stress among the employees of public and private organizations. This study would provide information about the work stress and individual work stressors among employees of public and private organizations in Nepal. The results can be used for comparison with existing literature from different countries or places.

This research explored the comparative study of work stress among the employees of public and private organizations. Understanding the differences between work stress among employees of public and private organizations would help related organizations and policy makers in determining the steps needed to be taken for addressing the work stress and to be aware of the individual role stressors affecting the employees of the organizations. The research gap shown in this study will provide a direction for future researchers within this field of study.

Considering the above, the present study has been undertaken to add to the existing literature and to explore the unknown or less explored areas of work stress phenomenon of public and private sector employees.

1.4 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

- Employees of Public Organization: Full time employees working in the Public Organizations.
- Employees of Private Organization: Full time employees working in the Private Organizations.
- Work / Organizational stress: Stress arising from work and organization related factors.
- Full-time employees: Employees working at least 7 hours a day for organizations.

- Organizational Role Stress (ORS) Scale: A checklist questionnaire used in this study to measure work stress level of full time employees.

1.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study assumes work organization, age, gender, work experience and monthly salary as independent

- Role Stress: Work role stress faced by public and private employees while performing their assigned tasks based on their job designations.

variables and examine their effect in the dependent variable of work stress among full time employees working in public and private organizations as shown in the Fig. 1 below.

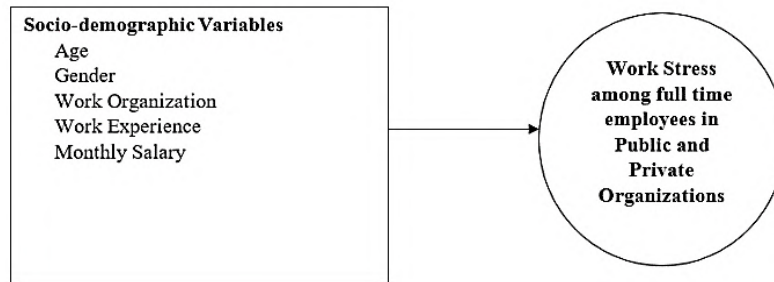


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Bano and Jha (2012) conducted a study to explore the difference in work related stress between public and private sector employees, based on ten role stressors. Stress level was found moderate in both public and private sector employees and no significant difference was found in overall stress level.

Awan and Jamil (2012) attempted to find out the differences in the overall organizational stress level of permanent employees in private and public sector banks. Significant difference was found in the overall work stress level of employees of both public and private sector banks. Employees of private sector banks were found more stressed than employees of public sector banks.

Study by Sankpal et al. (2010) focused on the role stress experienced in the banking sector, revealed that there is a significant difference in the role stress between public and private sector bank employees. Private bank employees experienced higher organizational role stress than their public bank counterparts.

D'Aleo, Stebbins, Lowe, Lees, and Ham (2007) examined a sample of 559 public and 105 private sector employees to assess their respective risk profiles. Findings of the study revealed that public sector employees face more stress than private sector employees. Malik (2011) collected data on 200 bank employees in Quetta, Pakistan, of which 100 work in public sector banks and the remaining 100 in private

sector banks. The author found that there is a significant difference in the level of stress to which both groups are subject, and that public sector bank employees face a high level of occupational stress.

Jasmine (1987) conducted a study to compare the level of job related stress among public and private blue collar employees. The analysis of the data revealed that role incumbents of public sector organizations experienced significantly more stress than those of private sector organizations. No significant relationship was found between stress and age.

3. OBJECTIVES

- To study the level of work stress among employees of Public Organizations.
- To study the level of work stress among employees of Private Organizations.
- To compare the level of work stress among employees of Public and Private Organizations.
- To explore the relationship of socio-demographic factors (age, gender, work experience, monthly salary) on work stress among the employees.

4. HYPOTHESIS

- Ho1: There is no significant difference in work stress among employees of Public and Private Organizations.
- Ho2: There is no significant difference in work stress among different age groups of employees.
- Ho3: There is no significant difference in work stress among employees of the two genders.

- Ho4: There is no significant difference in work stress among employees with different years of experience.
- Ho5: There is no significant difference in work stress among employees with monthly salary.

the work stress among full-time employees working in public and private organizations. The study was conducted among 300 full time employees working in different public and private organizations in the Kathmandu Valley. Non probability purposive sampling was used for choosing members of population to participate in the study.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative design was used for the research. Cross sectional descriptive study design was applied to find

5.1 Sample Design

Table 1: Sample Design

| Organization | Male | Female | Total |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Public | 80 | 70 | 150 |
| Private | 78 | 72 | 150 |
| Total | 158 | 142 | 300 |

Source: Field Study, 2020

Table 2: Demographic profile of the respondents

| Demographic Profile | Public | Private | Total |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Age | | | |
| 20-29 | 86 (49.1%) | 89 (50.9%) | 175 (58.3%) |
| 30-39 | 49 (48.5%) | 52 (51.5%) | 101 (33.7%) |
| 40-49 | 13 (65%) | 7 (35%) | 20 (6.7%) |
| 50 and above | 2 (50%) | 2 (50%) | 4 (1.3%) |
| Gender | | | |
| Male | 80 (50.6%) | 78 (49.3%) | 158 (52.7%) |
| Female | 70 (49.4%) | 72 (50.7%) | 142 (47.3%) |
| Work Organization | | | |
| Public | 150 (100%) | | 150 (50%) |
| Private | | 150 (100%) | 150 (50%) |
| 1-5 years | 85 (51.8%) | 79 (48.2%) | 164 (54.7%) |
| 6-10 years | 44 (43.6%) | 57 (56.4%) | 101 (33.7%) |
| 11-15 years | 11 (52.4%) | 10 (47.6%) | 21 (7%) |
| More than 15 years | 10 (71.4%) | 4 (28.6%) | 14 (4.6%) |
| Monthly Salary (NRs) | | | |
| Up to 15000 | 8 (21.1%) | 30 (78.9%) | 38 (12.7%) |
| 15000 – 30000 | 47 (64.4%) | 26 (35.6%) | 73 (24.3%) |
| 30000 – 45000 | 31 (44.9%) | 38 (55.1%) | 69 (23%) |
| 45000 above | 64 (53.3%) | 56 (46.7%) | 120 (40%) |

Source: Field Study, 2020

5.2 Data Collection Tools

Organizational Role Stress (ORS) Scale by Pareek (1983) was used to measure total role stress which evaluates respondent's quantum of stress in terms of ORS scores. There are altogether 50 items divided among 10 role stressors (5 items for each role stressor). These items are measured on a 5-point scale, ranging from 0 to 4, '0' being 'if you never or rarely feel this

way', and '4' being 'if you very frequently or always feel this way'. The ORS scale is a comprehensive tool to analyze different role stressors affecting a respondent.

The total score for each role stressor ranges from 0 to 20 and the total ORS score ranges from 0 to 200. The ratings of five items are added to get the total score for each role stressor and the total of ten role stressors are

added to get the total ORS score. Higher ORS score indicates higher level of stress and vice versa.

Srivastava (1993) reported high reliability and validity of the instrument which was conducted in 400 executives in a public sector company.

In the present study, reliability coefficient was calculated for total role stress as well as for all the ten role stressors. Cronbach alpha for total role stress is $r = 0.947$ indicating that the scale is highly reliable for this particular study.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Objective 1: Level of Work stress among employees of Public Organizations

Table 6.1: Level of Work stress among employees of Public Organizations

| Work Organization | Level of Stress | | | | Total | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------|---------------|-------|----------------|
| | Low | Moderate | High | Very High | | | |
| Public | 37 (24.67%) | 85 (56.67%) | 25 (16.67%) | 3 (2%) | 150 (100%) | 72.46 | 30.18 |

Source: Field Study, 2020

The above table 6.1 shows the level of Organizational Role Stress among the employees of Public organization. It shows that 24.67% of the employees of public organization have low level of stress, 56.67%

have moderate stress, 16.67% have high stress and 2% of the employees have very high stress. Average work stress for the employees of public organization is 72.46 with $sd = 30.18$.

Objective 2: Level of Work stress among employees of Private Organizations

Table 6.2: Level of Work stress among employees of Private Organizations

| Work Organization | Level of Stress | | | | Total | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|---------------|-------|----------------|
| | Low | Moderate | High | Very High | | | |
| Private | 21 (14%) | 78 (52%) | 45 (30%) | 6 (4%) | 150 (100%) | 83.77 | 33.59 |

Source: Field Study, 2020

The above table 6.2 shows the level of Organizational Role Stress among the employees of Private organization. It shows that 14% of the employees of private organization have low level of stress, 52% have

moderate stress, 30% have high stress and 4% of the employees have very high stress. Average work stress for the employees of private organization is 83.77 with $sd = 33.59$.

Objective 3: Comparison of level of work stress among employees of Public and Private Organizations.

Table 6.3: Descriptive statistics and t-test for comparison between Public and Private Organizations.

| Work Organization | | N | Mean | SD | t | df | Sig. | H01 |
|----------------------------|---------|-----|-------|-------|--------|---------|------|----------|
| Organizational Role Stress | Public | 150 | 72.46 | 30.18 | -3.067 | 294.652 | .002 | Rejected |
| | Private | 150 | 83.77 | 33.59 | | | | |

Source: Field Study, 2020

Table 6.3 shows the relationship between organizational role stress and work organization of the employees, public ($m=72.46$, $sd=30.18$) and private ($m=83.77$, $sd=33.59$). The Independent Samples t-test reported a

significant difference in work stress between public and private employees, $t(294.652) = -3.067$, $p = .002$. Hence the null hypothesis (H01) is rejected.

Objective 4: To explore the relationship of socio-demographic factors (age, gender, work experience, monthly salary) on work stress among the employees.

Table 6.4: Correlation of Work stress with variables Age, Work Experience and Monthly Salary

| Pearson's correlation between variables | N | Sig. (2-tailed) | Pearson Correlation | H0 Results |
|---|-----|-----------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Age of Respondents and ORS | 300 | .647 | -.027 | H02 Accepted |
| Work Experience and ORS | 300 | .459 | -.043 | H04 Accepted |
| Monthly Salary and ORS | 300 | .000 | -.209** | H05 Rejected |

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Source: Field Study, 2020

Table 6.4 shows the correlation between work stress and age of the respondents. Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between these two variables. The result showed negative correlation between work stress and age, $r = -.027$, $p = .647$. It signifies that increase in age of the respondents is correlated with decrease in work stress. However since the 'p' value is not statistically significant, the null hypothesis (H02) is accepted.

Likewise, table 6.4 shows the correlation between work stress and work experience. Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between these two variables. The result showed negative correlation between work stress and age, $r = -.043$, $p =$

.459. It signifies that increase in work experience years is correlated with decrease in work stress. However, since the 'p' value is not statistically significant, the null hypothesis (H04) is accepted.

Similarly, table 6.4 shows the correlation between work stress and monthly salary of the respondents. Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between these two variables. The result showed negative correlation between work stress and monthly salary of the respondents, $r = -.209$, $p = .000$. It signifies that increase in monthly salary is correlated with decrease in work stress. Hence the null hypothesis (H05) is rejected.

Table 6.5: Descriptive statistics and t-test for work stress by Gender

| ORS and Variables | N | Mean | Sd | t | df | Sig. | H0 Results | |
|-------------------|--------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|------------|--------------|
| ORS | Male | 158 | 76.51 | 33.49 | -.903 | 298 | .367 | H03 Accepted |
| | Female | 142 | 79.89 | 31.12 | | | | |

Source: Field Study, 2020

Table 6.5 shows the relationship between organizational role stress and gender of the employees, male (with mean and sd, $m=76.51$, $sd=33.49$) and female (with mean and sd, $m=79.89$, $sd=31.12$).

The Independent Samples t-test shows no significant difference in work stress between male and female employees, $t(298) = -.903$, $p=.367$. Hence, the null hypothesis (H03) is accepted.

7. CONCLUSION

The present study is the comparative study of work stress for employees working in public and private organizations. Different socio-demographic variables like age, gender, work organization, work experience and monthly salary have been considered.

The results showed that both public and private sector employees have moderate levels of work stress. However, employees of private organizations are having more work stress than employees of public organizations and there exists a significant difference in stress level between the two.

8. RECOMMENDATION

The findings of this research may be useful for the public and private organizations where a lot of employees work to fulfil their dreams and help their organizations reach the goal. Becoming aware of the work stress among the employees including individual work stressors can be beneficial for management for motivating the employees, providing privileges, raising productivity and to reduce the employee's turnover. If the issues related to work stress are not resolved, an employee

under consistent work stress may experience physical, psychological and behavioral changes that may last permanently. The stressed-out employee may also undertake risk-taking behaviors. Hence, it is essential to work out this issue to prevent any negative consequences pertinent to the employee's personal as well as professional life.

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APPENDIX

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