

IMPACT OF PROFESSIONAL STRESS ON EXECUTIVES: A STUDY OF GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVES AND CORPORATE EXECUTIVES

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Abstract

Stress can be used in different ways and for different purposes. If one says he is under stress, we know what it means, and, in this sense, we have come to view stress as a negative experience. Psychologists also distinguish between stress that is harmful (distress) and stress that is positive (eustress). In research terms stress now embraces biochemical, behavioral, physiological and psychological effects.

Organisational stress, according to the World Health Organization, is brought on by bad job design, unsatisfactory management and a missing employee support. The ramifications of job stress can be quite serious. Addressing the causes of organisational stress can reduce absenteeism, boost employee morale and reduce attrition in the workplace. According to a 2000 Gallup Poll published by the American Stress Institute, more than 80 percent of workers experienced stress on the job; more than half of those stated that they needed help in dealing with that stress.

Research by the World Health Organization shows that most job stress occurs when an organization values excessive demands and pressures that don't match employees' knowledge and abilities. This lacking job design is often accompanied by little opportunity for the employees to exercise choice or control in their positions. Offering employees more control over decision-making can boost employee morale and production, as well as eliminate job stress. Ignoring poor job design and work system design may result in increased employee absenteeism and illness. Employees can lose focus and become irritable and less committed to their work.

Diminishing the hazardous effects of organizational stress involves a high level of communication with employees. There are nine areas that should be analyzed, including individual job content, workload and pace, working hours, employee control in the job process, career development and pay, organizational roles, interpersonal relationships, organizational culture and work-home relationships. A thorough analysis of these areas can help management pinpoint stress-related areas that cause harm to employees and the organization. Eliminating these hazards promotes overall employee health, positive workplace morale and productivity.

The paper is aimed at finding impact of Professional Stress on Government executives and Corporate Executives.

Introduction

Dr. Hans Selye, one of the leading authorities on the concept of Stress has described stress as “the rate of all wear and tear caused by life.” Stress can be positive or negative:

Stress is good when the situation offers an opportunity to a person to gain something. It acts as a motivator for peak performance. Stress is negative when a person faces social, physical, organizational and emotional problems.

Stress is our body's way of responding to any kind of demand. It can be caused by both good and bad experiences. When people feel stressed by something going on around them, their bodies react by releasing chemicals into the blood. These chemicals give people more energy and strength, which can be a good thing if their stress is caused by physical danger. But this can also be a bad thing, if their stress is in response to something emotional and there is no outlet for this extra energy and strength.

Many different things can cause stress - from physical such as fear of something dangerous to emotional such as worry over your family or job. Identifying what may be causing stress is often the first step in learning how to better deal with it. Some of the most common sources of stress are as enumerated below: -

Survival Stress - When we are afraid that someone or something may physically hurt us, our body naturally responds with a burst of energy so that we will be better able to survive the dangerous situation (fight) or escape it all together (flight). This is survival stress.

Internal Stress - Internal stress is one of the most important kinds of stress to understand and manage. Internal stress is when people make themselves stressed. This often happens when we worry about things we can't control or put ourselves in situations we know will cause us stress. Some people become addicted to the kind of hurried, tense, lifestyle that results from being under stress.

Environmental Stress - This is a response to things around us that cause Stress, such as noise, crowding, and pressure from work or family. Identifying these environmental stresses and learning to avoid them or deal with them will help lower your stress level.

Fatigue - This builds up over a long time and can take a hard toll on our body. It can be caused by working too much or too. It can also be caused by not knowing how to manage your time well or how to take time out for rest and relaxation. This can be one of the hardest kinds of stress to avoid because many people feel this is out of their control.

Damages caused by stress are multiple, as much on the mental then on the physical aspects of our health. It has been proven that too much anxiety can lead to weight gain, delirium, sleep deprivation, anxiety and, further, burnout or depression.

While stress is the second most frequently reported work-related health problem and despite these dangerous side effects, less than half of large companies have actual measures in place to manage the risk faced by their employees. This explains why 50% of these workers find that anxiety is not well handled in their workplace. As a matter of fact, as much as 77% of people regularly experience physical symptoms caused by stress, whereas 73% of them regularly experience psychological symptoms coming from the same root.

This is probably due to the fact that today, technology has us reachable at all times. As we're always connected and accessible, whether through our phones, tablets or computers, work-related problems tend to follow all the way home. This makes it hard, if not impossible, to relax. Since this distressing feeling doesn't dissipate when the day is over, the supposedly short-term state turns into a chronic stress, extremely difficult to deal with. That's why we reunited some ways to help you cope with this stress, not only at work, but also back at home.

We take home stress to work and workplace stress home with us, and the two can exacerbate each other. Imagine this scenario. You have an argument with your partner one morning and then go to work. When you arrive, you find out that one of your team hasn't finished their work, and you get very angry with them. Equally, you may find that if you have a particularly bad day at work, that you take this stress home with you and take it out on your family. These examples are quite simplistic, and the effects of stress are often subtler and the boundaries between workplace and home stress more blurred

In view of the above facts, an attempt has been made in this paper to find answers to following research questions:

1. To understand the nature and extent of the relationship between Professional Stress of Government Executives and Corporate Executives.
2. The variables used for the study are: -
 - (a) Role Overload
 - (b) Role Ambiguity
 - (c) Role Conflict
 - (d) Unreasonable group and political pressures.
 - (e) Responsibility for persons
 - (f) Under participation
 - (g) Powerlessness

- (h) Poor peer relations
- (i) Intrinsic Impoverishment
- (j) Low Status
- (k) Strenuous working conditions
- (l) Unprofitability

Research Methodology

Tools Used for data Collection

A well developed and widely used Professional Stress Questionnaire is Occupational Stress Index (OSI) in the Indian context (Srivastava and Singh, 1981) was chosen to assess the occupational stress of the sample. The questionnaire is consisted of 46 statements with five alternative responses e.g., 5 for strongly agree, 4 for mildly agree 3 agree, 2 for disagree and 1 for strongly disagree. Total score on this scale was considered for the assessment of occupational stress. More the score on this scale indicates more stress.

Main features of the Tool

The scale consists of 46 items, each to be rated on the five- point scale. Out of 46 items, 28 are 'true- keyed' and rest 18 are 'false- keyed'. The items relate to almost all relevant components of the job life which causes stress in some way or the other, such as, role over- load, role ambiguity, role conflict, group and political pressures, responsibility for persons, under participation, powerlessness, poor peer relations, intrinsic impoverishment, low status, strenuous working conditions, and unprofitability.

The following Table gives an account of the items constituting various sub- scales of the O. S. I. along with their indices of internal consistency.

Sub-Scales (Occupational Stressors)	Serial number of the items in the schedule	Range
Role over load	1,13,25,36,44,46	.30-.46
Role ambiguity	2,14*,26,37	.20-.48
Role conflict	3,15*,27,38,45	.36-.53
Unreasonable group	4,16,28,39	.21-.52
Responsibility for Persons	5,17,29	.30-.57
Under participation	6*,18*,30*,40*	.55-.73
Powerlessness	7*,19*,31*	.44-.62
Poor peer relations	8*,20*,32*,41*	.24-.49
Intrinsic Impoverishment	9,21*,33*,42	.32-.64
Low status	10*,22*,34	.48-.63
Strenuous working Conditions	12,24,35,43*	.40-.62

Unprofitability	11,23	.48-.51
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Reliability

The reliability index ascertained by split half (odd-even) method and Cronbach's alpha-coefficient for the scale as a whole were found to be .935 and .90 respectively. The reliability indices of the 12 sub-scales were also computed through the split half method.

Subscales'	Reliability Index(r)
1. Role overload	.684
2. Role ambiguity	.554
3. Role conflict	.696
4. Unreasonable group. & pol. pressure	.454
5. Responsibility for persons	.840
6. Under participation	.630
7. Powerlessness	.809
8. Poor peer relations	.549
9. Intrinsic Impoverishment	.556

Validity

The validity of the O.S.I. was determined by computing co-efficient of correlation between the scales on the O.S.I. and the various measures of job attitudes and job behaviour. The employees' scores on the O.S.I. is likely to positively correlate with the scores on the measures of such work-manifest attitudinal and motivational and personality variables which have proved lowering or moderating the level of occupational stress. The co-efficient of correlation between the scores on the O.S.I. and the measures of job involvement (**Lodhal & Kejner, 1965**), Work motivation (**Srivastava, 1980**), Ego-strength (**Hasan, 1970**), and Job satisfaction (**Pestonjee, 1973**) were found to be -.56 (N=225) -.44 (N=200) -.40 (N=205) and -.51 (N=1000), respectively. The correlation between the scores on the O.S.I. and the measure of Job Anxiety (Srivastava, 1974) was found to be 0.59 (N=400).

The employees' scores on the O.S.I. have been found to be positively correlated with their scores on the measures of mental ill Health, standardized by Dr. A.K. Srivastava (Prof. of

Psychiatry). The following Table presents the indices of ill mental health of the high and low occupational stress groups of the employees:

Symptoms of ill Mental health	HOS Group		LOS(N=97)		P
	(N=103)				
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Free floating Anxiety	6.17	3.46	4.12	3.55	4.1*
Obsessive traits & symptoms	7.86	3.09	7.69	3.24	0.47
Phobic Anxiety	6.13	3.62	4.43	3.15	3.54**
Somatic Concomitant Anxiety	6.50	3.77	4.35	3.39	4.23**
Neurotic Suppression	5.35	3.30	4.29	3.60	4.90**
Hysterical Traits	5.24	2.88	4.44	2.78	2.00*

**P<.1,*P<.05

Scoring

Since the questionnaire consists of both true keyed and false- keyed items. Two different patterns of scoring must be adopted for two types of items. The following table provides guide line to score the responses given to two categories of items:

Categories of response	Scores	
	For true-keyed	For false-keyed
Never/ Strongly disagree	1	5
Seldom/Disagree	2	4
Sometimes/ Undecided	3	3
Mostly/ Agree	4	2
Always/Strongly agree	5	1

Population of the Study All the Government Officers (in the Grade pay Rs 8000/- and above) working in the state of Uttarakhand and the Senior Corporate Executives working in the state of Uttarakhand, comprise the population of study.

Sample of the Study About 115 Government Officers and 115 Senior Corporate Executives were contacted and only those who filled more than 90 percent of questionnaire were included in the sample of the study. Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling Technique was employed for selecting the Officers

and Executives for their inclusion in the sample. Stratification was done on the factors of Professional Experience, Sex, Birth Order and Academic Stream.

Data Collection For the purpose of fulfilling the objectives and research questions and carrying out study on Professional stress and Spiritual Intelligence data collection was carried out on both Corporate Executives and Government Executives. The data was collected using the questionnaire and valuable comments from the executives during the interview using personal and electronic means.

The investigator took data of executives from SIDCUL and Administration, Police and Judicial Services of Government, government and private colleges located in the state. The data collection was carried out using the tool mentioned above and with due deliberation/ discussion and the executives were identified with thorough analysis. The total sample comprise of 230 executives.

Hypothesis: Government Executives and Corporate Executives do not differ significantly in their Professional Stress

To see, if there are any significant differences between on the variables of Professional (Occupational) Stress of Govt. Executives and Private Executives, t-test was calculated, and the results are given at table

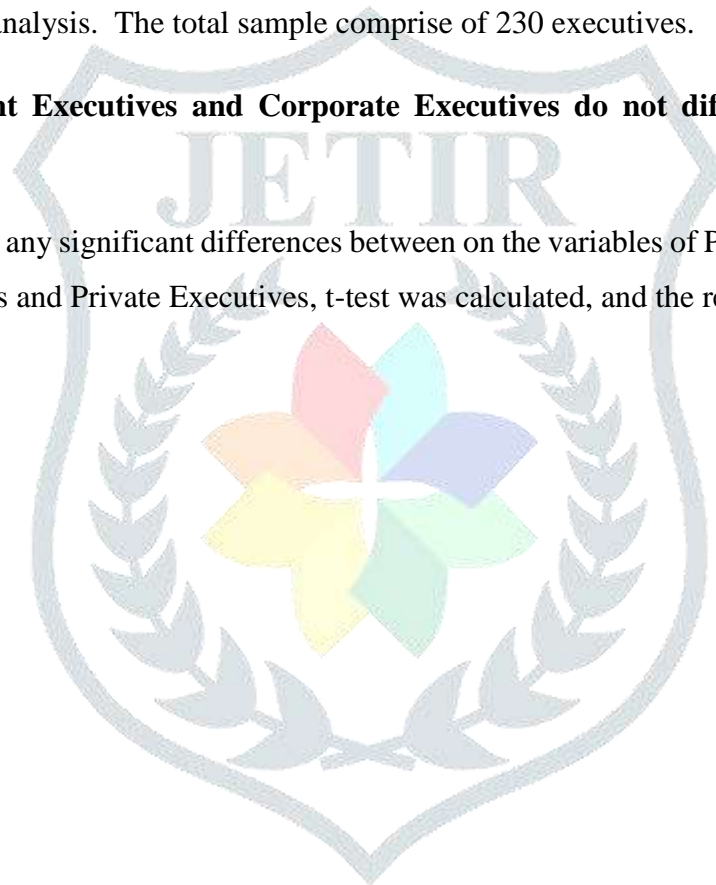


Table: Showing the Mean, SD, and T values of Govt & Private Executives on Professional Stress Variables	Type of Sector	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T.VALUE
1. Role Overload	Govt	115	13.28	8.430	.786	.836
	Private	115	12.34	8.612	.803	
2. Role Ambiguity	Govt	115	12.21	5.990	.559	-4.600**
	Private	115	15.53	4.908	.458	
3. Role Conflict	Govt	115	10.53	6.049	.564	.14 3
	Private	115	10.42	5.912	.551	
4. Unreasonable group & Political pressures	Govt	115	11.86	7.035	.656	-3.289**
	Private	115	14.75	6.256	.583	
5. Responsibility for Persons	Govt	115	10.54	4.355	.406	-3.822**
	Private	115	12.59	3.767	.351	
6. Under participation	Govt	115	8.70	3.903	.364	2.823**
	Private	115	7.30	3.564	.332	
7. Powerlessness	Govt	115	10.23	4.184	.390	-3.300**
	Private	115	11.92	3.586	.334	
8. Poor peer relations	Govt	115	7.96	3.538	.330	3.568**
	Private	115	6.50	2.600	.242	
9. Intrinsic Impoverishment	Govt	115	15.51	3.996	.373	-3.200**
	Private	115	17.11	3.576	.333	
10. Low status	Govt	115	9.05	5.605	.523	-3.496**
	Private	115	11.43	4.649	.434	
11. Strenuous working Conditions	Govt	115	15.34	3.927	.366	-2.743**
	Private	115	16.70	3.564	.332	
12. Unprofitability	Govt	115	6.60	2.840	.265	-2.403*
	Private	115	7.47	2.644	.247	

**P < 0.01 level of significance;

* P < 0.05 level of significance;

It may be seen from table 4.4 that on **Role Ambiguity** variable the mean score & SD of Govt. executives is 12.21 and 5.990 respectively, and that of Private Executives mean score and SD is 15.53 and 4.908 respectively and t-value is -4.600. Thus, it is noted that Private Executives scored more and differ significantly on **Role Ambiguity** from Govt. Executives and this difference is significant at $P < .1$ level of significance.

Further, it may be seen that on **Unreasonable group & Political pressures variable** the mean score & SD of Govt. executives is 11.86 and 7.035 respectively, and that of Private Executives mean score and SD is 14.75 and 6.256 respectively and t-value is -3.289. Thus, it is noted that Private Executives scored more and differ significantly on **Unreasonable group & Political pressures variable** from Govt. Executives and this difference are significant at $P < 0.01$ level of significance.

It is also seen from the table that on **Responsibility for Persons** variable the mean score & SD of Govt. executives is 10.54 and 4.355 respectively, and that of Private Executives mean score and SD is 12.59 and 3.767 respectively and t-value is -3.822. Thus, it is noted that Private Executives scored more and differ significantly on **Responsibility for Persons** from Govt. Executives and this difference is significant at $P < 0.01$ level of significance.

It may also be noted from the table that on **Under participation** variable the mean score & SD of Govt. executives is 8.70 and 3.903 respectively, and that of Private Executives mean score and SD is 7.30 and 3.564 respectively and t-value is 2.823. Thus, it is noted that Private Executives scored less and differ significantly on **Under participation** from Govt. Executives and this difference is significant at $P < 0.01$ level of significance.

It may also be seen from table 5. 4 that on **Powerlessness** variable the mean score & SD of Govt. executives is 10.23 and 4.184 respectively, and that of Private Executives mean score and SD is 11.92 and 3.586 respectively and t-value is -3.300. Thus, it is noted that Private Executives scored more and differ significantly on **Powerlessness** from Govt. Executives and this difference is significant at $P < 0.01$ level of significance.

It is observed that on **Poor peer relations** variable the mean score & SD of Govt. executives is 7.96 and 3.538 respectively, and that of Private Executives mean score and SD is 6.50 and 2.600 respectively and t-value is 3.568. Thus, it is noted that Private Executives scored less and differ significantly on **Poor peer relations** from Govt. Executives and this difference is significant at $P < 0.01$ level of significance.

It is seen from above table that on **Intrinsic Impoverishment** variable the mean score & SD of Government executives is 15.51 and 3.996 respectively, and that of Private Executives mean score and SD is 17.11 and 3.576 respectively and t-value is -3.200. Thus, it is noted that Private Executives scored more and differ significantly on **Intrinsic Impoverishment** from Govt. Executives and this difference is significant at $P < 0.01$ level of significance.

It may be seen from table 4.4 that on **Low status** variable the mean score & SD of Govt. executives

is 9.05 and 5.605 respectively, and that of Private Executives mean score and SD is 11.43 and 4.649 respectively and t-value is -3.496. Thus, it is noted that Private Executives scored more and differ significantly on **Low status** Ambiguity from Government Executives and this difference are significant at $P < 0.01$ level of significance.

It may be observed from table 4. 4 that on **Strenuous working Conditions** variable the mean score & SD of Govt. executives is 15.34 and 3.927 respectively, and that of Private Executives mean score and SD is 16.70 and 3.564 respectively and t-value is -2.743. Thus, it is noted that Private Executives scored more and differ significantly on **Strenuous working Conditions** from Government Executives and this difference is significant at $P < 0.01$ level of significance.

It may be seen from table 4. 4 that on **Unprofitability** variable the mean score & SD of Govt. executives is 6.60 and 2.840 respectively, and that of Private Executives mean score and SD is 7.47 and 2.644 respectively and t-value is -2.403. Thus, it is noted that Private Executives scored more and differ significantly on **Unprofitability** Ambiguity from Government Executives and this difference is significant at $P < 0.05$ level of significance.

It is concluded that, that on professional stress out of 10 variables, Govt. Executives differ significantly with that of Private Executives, thus hypothesis Government Executives and Corporate Executives do not differ significantly in their Professional Stress is rejected.

Further, it is concluded that Govt Executives have scored more on Under participation and Poor peer relations, whereas Private Executives have scored more on Role Ambiguity, Unreasonable group & Political pressures, Powerlessness, Responsibility for Persons, Intrinsic Impoverishment, Low status, Strenuous working Conditions and Unprofitability.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it has been ascertained that Corporate Executives and Government Executives do differ in their Professional Stress.

It is also concluded that Government Executives have scored more on Under participation and Poor peer relations, whereas Private Executives have scored more on Role Ambiguity, Unreasonable group and Political pressures, Powerlessness, Responsibility for Persons, Intrinsic Impoverishment, Low status, Strenuous working Conditions and Unprofitability.

It can be concluded that Corporate executives do differ from Government Executives in their Professional stress. Professional stress can be reduced by working on some attributes listed in the paper, and better working environment can be provided.

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